

General Questions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the population growth in Midlothian been reflected in the budget given by Scottish Government? 	<p>Longstanding and historic funding formula through COSLA. The Scottish Government gives the money to COSLA and they apply the formula before distributing to the Local Authorities. Everyone accepts that the current formula is out of date and this presents a difficulty for us. Some Councils are decreasing in population particularly in the West and some like Midlothian are increasing – we are the fastest growing authority in Scotland. This is recognised by Elected Members and Council Leader Kelly Parry has written to Scottish Government to express this. There is another factor referred to as 'The Floor' where we give money back to the Scottish Government every year, we pay £3,000,000. There is an anomaly there and we are vigorously asking for allocation from the Growth Fund so that we can get money back for Midlothian. There are also Ring-fenced Grants such as Early Years. Audit Scotland has commented earlier in the year that Midlothian are not receiving the appropriate level of funding given our growth because again the formula used for distribution doesn't recognise growth. We had expected in 2023/24 that there would be a new funding methodology in place that would have benefitted Midlothian but unfortunately that has been delayed. Nationally there is a decline in Early Years number which we are not experiencing in Midlothian.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the council considering any measures to increase its ability to generate revenue which could offset some of the budget challenges? 	<p>There is a Committee looking at income generation. Perhaps the Council hasn't been as good as it could have been with this. We have lots of assets such a Vogrie that we are now looking at to see if we can generate more money. Hillend is another example which could generate £1,000,000. There is also Midlothian Energy Company at Millerhill. All potential initiatives will require investment and it would be a case of invest to accumulate and we may not see the benefits for a while. We are absolutely committed to exploring potential avenues to increase our income. The challenge for us is that, for example, we could generate more income by increase our charges for lets to after school clubs by then they wouldn't be viable and it's finding the balance of getting that right.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can more detail be shared on each proposal to ensure we have absolute clarity? 	<p>Each proposal has been discussed in previous meetings and we simply don't have the time today to go through each one again. We have created a separate document to expand on each proposal and this is attached. All</p>

	published documents are available on the Council website.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For each proposal can you set out the impact it will have on people as well as the impact on budget. 	Similarly this has been discussed and potential impact will differ for each individual. Any feedback should be based on how you feel any proposals may affect your local community/school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One thing that comes up a lot is a complaint from the Council that the funding provided to it by the national (Scottish) government (via COSLA) doesn't accurately reflect the rising population of Midlothian. This is not a new issue. What progress has the Council made over the past few years to bridge this funding gap, and what additional steps will it take now to avoid additional cuts? 	<p>We've discussed the national funding in the first question.</p> <p>In terms of progress, we have had efficiencies in our Service areas over a number of years. We also have a performance factor applied to every single line of our budget. Within Education, Childrens Service and the Communities team, we have always come within the financial envelope available to us and met the efficiencies by, for example, holding vacancies as much as possible. This has been difficult for staff at times in terms of workload but we have tried our best to protect our school staff and ASN staff. It is the scale of the ask now that is presenting such a challenge. Cllr Scott has researched the budgets in other Local Authorities including in England and lots of Councils are going to find it very difficult. Over 24 Councils in England are facing a Section 114 where they will be made bankrupt so it seems that over time these difficulties are increasingly challenging for many. Everyone is doing as well as they can.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That said, the rising population of Midlothian is (presumably) driven mainly through new housing, and Developer Contributions should have been paid to the Council to account for (some of) the additional strain on the education system. Is that system working as well as it should and, if not, what can change over the next few years to help bridge the gap with income from private (housebuilding) companies, rather than the public purse, to protect education provision? 	<p>Midlothian's developer contributions (Section 75) are some of the highest in Scotland when benchmarked against other authorities. We are good at this. Most of these contributions go to Education such as Newbattle High School and Goreglen & Burnbrae Primary Schools. We can improve on things such as the Council suggesting where schools are built in advance instead of developers advising us of what land we can use. Roads is another area. They need to be adopted by us and maybe we could be building them in the first place to generate income and then there would maybe be a better standard. Health facilities such as Doctor/Dental surgeries are determined by NHS and not the Council and is out-with our remit. Developer contributions are also used within communities using the strict criteria available. Easthouses is another example. As well as using the contributions being used for the new school, the developer monies is also being used to improve the local community services and this is covered by our Place Directorate.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you ask what our council tax actually pays for? According to the website "Council Tax is a local charge on 	Council Tax only pays for a small part of the Council budget (approx 30%) and the main part is from the Scottish Government.

<p>all households and pays for local services. The tax is set by us to fund local services such as schools, libraries, leisure facilities and refuse collection"</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the council tax need to increase in line with everything else that's gone up? Our council tax has remained the same for years so without a gradual increase then surely services had to be cut? The Scottish government are able to vary income tax and already higher rate tax payers pay ever so slightly more. Surely what separates the Scots from the Conservative government ethos is that we are more socially minded. I would think most people in Scotland would rather pay an extra penny in the pound to get better services? 	<p>The debate about Council Tax was made at the Council Meeting on 31 January and an explanation was provided by the Head of Finance - Midlothian Council > Meetings (cmis.uk.com)</p>
<p>Teacher numbers</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the council concerned about your ability to attract and retain high quality teachers now and in the future given current unrest and the potential impact of these proposals on teaching staff? 	<p>This is a national issue and not unique to Midlothian. We are looking at a National reduction of Teachers. It is already an issue with around 40% less teachers looking to come into the profession. There is so much negativity of education generally. We are also looking at a National reform of education. It is a fantastic career for professionals. There is nothing more important than supporting children and young people to grow socially, emotionally and academically to prepare them for what comes after school, it is a privilege. A National campaign to share positivity would be welcome. In short, yes, it is a worry and it is a pity because it is one of the best jobs and an excellent career. There is a lot to be proud of in Scottish Education but it appears to be getting lost. As a parental community it is important that you use your voice about the investment needed in education for our children and young people's future and the future of the economy of Scotland.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you concerned that less people will be attracted to teaching as a career and the impact this could have on the councils ability to provide good quality education in Midlothian? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can the council justify reducing the number of teachers when our children have already suffered huge disruption to their learning due to the pandemic? 	<p>It is not something that anybody in the Council Chambers wants to do. We have savings that we need to make. A lot of people are doing a lot of work on all proposals so it may be pertinent to wait for the outcome of the next meeting.</p> <p>ADES, COSLA and Scottish Government is meeting at the moment to discuss this and other factors. Scottish Government is setting out specifics at the moment and discussions are ongoing about how this is going to be funded. The part about the learning hours is also being discussed, Education Scotland Act 2016, Section</p>

	<p>21, Sub Section 11. If the Government was to legislate changes to the number of hours, consultation is necessary. To be clear there is no definition of learning hours, this would also need to be defined. This is not a political points this is facts.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this proposal fit with Scottish Government's aim to reduce the poverty related attainment gap? 	<p>It becomes extremely challenging with the resources available to us. At the moment, we have a Building Back Better team supporting children across our schools who's learning has been impacted by Covid. That team go back into their team at the end of the session. We have re-structured the Central Team to meet our Statutory obligations such as ASN. In terms of additionally about what we can do about the poverty related attainment gap, schools are still receiving the Public Equity Funding so this will help but we have no extra funding available at the Centre now to back up that funding. This results in it becoming more challenging as we will have to depend on what schools can do with their PEF funding to address this.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If they plan to cut back teachers and teaching assistants what does that mean for say children in general or to those who require extra help within learning in the school environment? 	<p>We still have to meet our statutory duties in terms of additional support needs so we need to ensure we can deliver on that and we need to protect this to support the children in our schools. The difference will be in terms of secondary curriculum and its breadth. In primary schools we need a teacher in each class. So it is likely to affect Learning Assistants with fewer in each class to support pupils.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the council ensure that no child will get left behind and miss out on the vital help that's provided by teachers and assistants already in place as surely it would have an impact on the children? 	<p>Again we have a statutory duty in terms of our education provision and for our children and young people with additional support needs so we need to ensure we are meeting this. It may be that we will now only be able to meet this at a minimum instead of the level we would wish to provide it. This is very difficult but we are fortunate to have the experience of Fiona Robertson and Michelle Strong. No Elected Members want to make these decisions and it is a real challenge.</p>
<p>Transformation of the school week</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you share more information on the models that you're considering and the impact of each model on children? 	<p>This has been discussed in previous meetings. To recap, we were already looking at the transformation of the school week regardless of the budget. Within the programme for Government it stated that there was a commitment to provide teachers with an increase in their non-contact time from August 2024. We have seconded Campbell Hornell, HT at Lasswade High School and a DHT as well (funded by Capital funds) to look at this as well as the secondaries for the new Beeslack and Shawfair. Their work is looking at how we can</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If this goes ahead, how would you choose between models? 	

	<p>reconfigure the secondary week to get a broader curriculum offer across all of our secondary schools such as the timings of the school day and co-ordination of delivery of curriculum both face-to-face and online. Through the National Discussion feedback, our young people are telling us about the varied offer between our schools. This is not a criticism, Curriculum for Excellence allows each school to develop their curriculum in line with their context. Secondary HTs are working together to detail the curriculums available in each school and they are talking to our young people about how they can access subjects there are currently not able to. This could generate saving as well as enhance our curriculum offer. This would all be in line with consultation with parents and our children and young people.</p> <p>In terms of primary, feedback shared queried the productivity of Friday mornings. When we are looking at teachers getting more non-contact time it is reasonable to look at different ways to construct the week and design some models.</p> <p>Any decisions will be with full consultation and debate with all stakeholders. This would take about a year to get through transformational planning and consultation. We have demonstrated this commitment with appointing Gail Currie as our Parent & Learner Liaison Officer. We are ensuring that policies etc are coming through our parent community so again no decisions would be made without significant discussion.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the school week reduces, are you doing anything to increase childcare availability and help people with the cost of this? 	<p>We are able to carry out a review which will involve parents. Out of school childcare is not a statutory duty for education other than for a specific criteria such as children with disabilities (more information is available on this). We are conscious that there is not enough out of school childcare facilities so this is what we are going to consult on what are the needs of families in the area and how can we support. Again, this is not a statutory requirement but we are very conscious about parents getting back to work for example so we will look to find out how we can help the best we can.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you considering the potential increase in childcare demand from this proposal alongside the proposal to close school buildings during school holidays? Many out of school clubs rely on the holiday club income to remain financially viable. If schools are closed during holidays, many will cease to exist. 	<p>There is apparently £15,000,000 of Scottish Government funding going to be available to local authorities to support summer holiday programmes. We are still awaiting clarification on what this will mean for Midlothian and our Head of Finance is seeking confirmation about distribution of this.</p>

Shared Headships	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We previously had a shared headship in place in our school which put a lot of pressure on the HT, even with a DHT and PT in place. Do you really think that shared headships can be effective, both for the staff involved in running them and for the school community? 	<p>Yes. Shared headships are part of a national model and are being used increasingly particularly in the North of Scotland where recruitment has been a challenge. Some local authorities have gone beyond that and in some cases there are Executive Head Teachers of Associated School Groups so they are HT to the secondary and the primary schools attached. This model can work very successfully.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would a DHT in a school with a shared headship have a more expansive role than a DHT in a school with a dedicated HT? If yes, would this be reflected in their benefits package? 	<p>Yes it is a more expansive role for a DHT. It's not a case of a benefits package, it is a salary scale. Their salary would increase if they are taking on more duties due to a shared headship.</p>
School Closures	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are main reasons for possible closure of St Matthews Primary School? If closure does go ahead, where are all the children from St Matthews school going to go as St Mary's Primary in Bonnyrigg is already at full capacity 	<p>St Marys is not at full capacity, I has capacity 240+ children and it is currently sitting at 176. At St Matthews less than 50% are RC baptised so this would be factored in when allocating either St Marys or Rosewell.</p> <p>We have been asked to look at the viability of our schools including our small schools. St Matthews is our smallest school with around 50 pupils and next smallest is 100. The Local Authority Act states that we have to provide best value. We have to look at costs per pupil at every school, educational benefits of a being at a larger school etc.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is projected timeline for closure? 	<p>This proposal has been explained very clearly to Elected Members and they are aware that it cannot go ahead without a statutory consultation. This has happened previously around the closure of Glencorse and St Margarets, both were small schools. Consultation is a legal duty and there is a set process, more information is available.</p> <p>We cannot close St Matthews until we have a solution for Rosewell. Due to housing developments in the area, it needs an extension and this would be going on to a building that, like St Matthews, is also Category C. The Council permitted a bid to be submitted to the Scottish Government for a new joint campus in the area. This is awaiting an outcome and is currently paused.</p> <p>A timeline is dependent on a number of factors.</p>

	<p>Fiona Robertson has met with representatives from the Catholic Church as well as the Scottish Government team responsible for the learning estate regarding the Rosewell campus to express that the importance of a decision to enable us to progress.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>Less than two years ago, the Denominational Review concluded with a recommendation to close St Margaret's RC Primary in Loanhead. Several other statements and conclusions were noted therein, many of which are relevant to the current proposals affecting St Matthews RC Primary School. The following statement is noted on page 4 of the report from 29th June 2021:</p> <p><i>"St Matthew's Primary School serves the rural community of Rosewell and is included in the Scottish Government's list of rural schools. The school building it occupies is leased from the Church and the Council has no plans to make the <u>significant investment</u> that would be required to replace this capacity."</i></p> <p>The Council proposal to potentially close St Matthews states the rationale behind any closure is to save £290,000, derived from apparent 'staff and utilities' cost savings - Fiona Robertson confirmed on the Parent Council Meeting this week that: Savings would be achieved via 'janitorial', 'support staff' and 'running costs', in relation to St Matthews Primary School and the school building.</p> <p>c. These financial savings are the basis upon which the proposal to close the school would be based (when asked, there was no other reasons put forward for closure i.e. no educational/roll size/safety/any other reasons – purely the need to save £290,000 in relation to a 'budget challenge').</p> <p>With the above in mind: can you confirm that this proposal, being considered by Midlothian Council is being progressed on grounds of cost savings, looking to save an apparent £290,000?</p> 	<p>This question has been answered in terms of best value and costs per pupil. We don't won the St Matthews building but are tasked with maintaining it. It is currently category C. The preference is to go back to developer contributions and use this together with Scottish Government funding to build a new campus with a longer lifespan than to invest in a building that is older. In terms of Council monies, the Council's capital school project has been reprioritised because of the inflationary costs related to expansions and refurbishments.</p>
<p>Swimming</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>The proposal says that the Learn to Swim programme would be offered to pupils who can't swim. What is this?</p> 	<p>The programme is ran by Sport and Leisure. Currently we don't assess if children can or can't swim. This programme would mean that families would get vouchers for children to attend if applicable. In other local authorities, this is a proposal that is either being considered or already actioned.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>It can be difficult it is to get your child into lessons out-with school. Rather than cutting this beneficial life skill could this not be something that becomes similar to getting ski lessons and parents sub a payment for this? I'm sure I wouldn't be alone in saying I would happily pay for a block of swimming lessons through</p> 	<p>We appreciate this point. All services are currently review, includes Sport & Leisure which has recently concluded.</p> <p>No, we are not allowed to charge parents for core curriculum. We have asked for a definition from Legal about what core curriculum is and is not. We have received some funding for</p>

<p>school as it is virtually impossible to get into lessons these days.</p>	<p>curriculum expenditure but it is not enough to cover everything.</p>
<p>Instrumental Music Service</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you clarify exactly what is meant by a reduction? 	<p>There are a number of instructors that are currently temporary. The reason for this is that in 2021 the Scottish Government said we could no longer charge for instrumental music. We get funding in that varies year on year, currently £260,000 and the cost of the service is over £700,000. Previously with charging and other activities such as events would could manage to meet the cost but that loss of income means that we no longer have the budget to cover IMS. We are currently working with the IMS Lead Officer and there has been efficiencies but it is a challenge to deliver a service within the funding available. Again, Midlothian are not the only authority looking at this proposal.</p> <p>A reduction would mean that we would be unable to offer any instrumental music in primary settings, we would probably have to start at S1. It's not ideal or what we would want and we appreciate the benefits related but we have to look at the reality of the costs. The potential impact and implications have been fully discussed with Elected Members and these are difficult decisions for them.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our understanding is that music instruction would only be provided to secondary students who're studying music. How will children know they want to study music in secondary school if they aren't given the opportunity to try it in primary school? 	<p>It's likely that IMS would be available from S1 and with National Qualification choices not being made until subsequent years, this would offer young people time to make an informed choice if they are in receipt of lessons.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the council plan to have any children 'studying for music qualifications in secondary schools' if there is no opportunity to begin to learn an instrument? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will there be an option for parents to pay for tuition at P5-S2? 	<p>No we are not allowed to charge.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could there be an option for those who are able, to pay into a 'fund for all' to support children from lower income families to access lessons? 	<p>It's a significant amount of money and this would need to be explored further.</p>