

Mayfield and Easthouses Community (MAECC) Minutes of meeting 1 February 2023 7pm - Meeting held in Mayfield Church

ATTENDEES

Robert Hogg (Chair), Judy Thomson, George Jackson, Stephen Liddell, Michael Hogg, Arthur Blackhurst, Susan Ryan, Linda Christison, Michele Lindsay, Peter Smaill, Stuart McKenzie, Cal Haston, Mabel Currie

Apologies

Tracylee Armit, Brian Martin, Theresa Morrison, Sharon Hill, Bryan Pottinger, Craig Gallier

1. Welcome and apologies

RH welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies (documented above).

It was noted that RH needed to carry forward an action about house names from the December meeting. Arthur reported that cars were still parking on the yellow lines in Easthouses and that there had been a complaint of cars parking in the park. There is a possibility that the garage has been working on the cars parked in the park. Litter continues to be an issue and the Nisa shop was still a mess. It was noted that the hot food takeaway had not gone ahead due to it being less than 400m away from a school; it did not get as far as Planning Committee, therefore the petitions and objections were not the deciding factor. The CC wish Mr Kivlin well in his future endeavors.

The minutes from the last meeting were approved by George Jackson and seconded by Michael Hogg.

Cal turns 16 in Feb so the CC intends to ask him to join officially at the March meeting.

2. Police Report

Michele read out the Police Report; it mentioned a garage fire in Bevan Road/Cook Crescent. The proposal from the Council to cut the CAT team was raised and the meeting agreed it would only make a bad situation worse to lose them. SL raised on behalf of BM (and Kippielaw Steading Owners Association), the speeds of cars and motorbikes along Easthouses Road from the Lauder Road to Easthouses Miners Club. Michele said she would look into the possibility of a temporary speed camera. It's a 30mph but used to be 40mph. Satellite Navigation system don't always have up to date information so cannot be trusted for speed limit information. Lynda mentioned the ongoing problem of motorbikes, mainly on Fridays and Saturdays, sometimes as late as 2am.

3. Proposed cuts from Midlothian Council

Midlothian Council have issues a list of proposed cuts to help to try to balance the budget. These are listed in the document **Savings proposals (appendix i)**. As part of the Midlothian Federation of Community Councils, the CC has contributed to an open letter in response – this is included in document **Midlothian Federation - Proposed cuts (appendix ii)**. The proposals were discussed at length with comments including the Scottish Government not funding schemes properly such as the Early Years offering and how class sizes are generally already at a maximum of 30 pupils. There was an idea to reduce council buildings and change them into housing and a question asked about the efficiency of the school transport as they seem to be half empty. It was unanimous amongst all in attendance that proposals put forward by council were all unpalatable as each one would have an adverse effect on our community.

4. Planning

The Bryan's School site was briefly mentioned as it is a mess and has an issue with sewage. Photos have been sent to Councillors. BM will give report at March meeting about Local Place Planning.

5. Councillor's Report

Cllr McKenzie told the meeting about a visit to Mayfield school (organised by Cllr Scott), where there is damage to the rendering and it has been fenced off. Letters have gone home to parents and an inspection is to be done. RH asked for a report to be given about this at the March meeting. He also mentioned a job that is in to fix a brick wall by Bogwood Court and the possibility of an exit road for the new school campus going through the site where garages were. Cllr McKenzie had previously looked at this site for potential site for Hebridean housing offsite building pilot, so is now looking for a new site. Cllr Smaill reported on the Easthouses Pavilion.

6. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer reported income and expenditure over December and January, due to lack of meeting in January, leave a current balance of £7049.44. Treasurer needs to submit an invoice to Midlothian council for the Christmas Lights event; better still would be to take the whole funding pot out from the council's control and leave it with CC to administer. Arthur asked if he could get some of the donated money back from MAEDT to give to a lad that helps – RH said yes but has to be done through MAEDT so he should speak to Sharon. Lynda mentioned Mayfield Primary helping at the Pavilion and maybe asking them to help with other projects.

7. AOB

MTRaP update was given, confirming that Ramsay Crescent is on the works list for this year. There has been a lot of work done on the roads in the area (and more in the pipeline) with £250,000 spent in Mayfield last year and £345,000 being spent in Easthouses this year.

There will be a Community Council training event on 25th March 2023 with all Community Councillors encouraged to attend. Full details have been emailed to members.

RH thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was closed.

Savings proposals for 2023/24 to 2025/26

Services for neighbourhoods such as libraries and parks

Libraries

Remove staff from libraries - saving £150,000 in 2023/24 rising to £781,000 by 2025/26

Each library would eventually either be self-service, run by community volunteers or closed.

Adopt e-book service - saving a total of £144,000 from 2023/24

Shift the focus on libraries to online services and do not replace or refresh the books or other materials on offer to customers.

Charges, fees and income

Increase Civic Licencing Fees by 50% to cover actual costs - estimated income £50,000 in total from 2023/24

Increase charges for services to customers applying for licences such as public entertainment licences.

Introduce discretionary charges for planning services currently free - estimated income £10,000 in total from 2023/24

The charges would be for extra advice and support over and above fees already set by the Planning Regulations.

Introduce fees for non-statutory Building Standards duties and continue virtual inspections - estimated income £6,000 in total from 2023/24

The charges would be for extra support and advice we don't have a legal duty to provide including document searches.

Increase burials charges to the Scottish average - income estimated at £80,000 in total from 2023/24

Midlothian charges less than other local councils for burials. In Midlothian, exclusive right of burial is £866 while coffin internment is £827. This compares with the Scottish averages of £943.43 and £860.46 respectively.

Charge commercial event organisers for Safety Advisory Group services - income estimated at £25,000 in total from 2023/24

Commercial events require a significant amount of time from various services across the council to make sure they can go ahead and safely. A charge would be introduced for this service (not planning or managing the event).

Change the way developers are charged for road construction consent - estimated income £93,000 in total from 2023/24

Instead of an hourly rate it is proposed that a fixed fee be charged in relation to the size of the Road Bond.

Offer commercial companies advertising space on vehicles and council areas such as roundabouts - estimated income £10,000 from 2023/24 rising to £25,000 in total from 2025/26.

Benefits

Reduce net cost of benefits by 6% - saving of £70,000 in 2023/24 rising to £210,000 in total by 2025/26

Reduce by 6% the costs of administering benefits including Council Tax and Housing Benefit by measures such as offering digital processing, more application forms online and being more effective at recovering overpayments and fraud.

School crossing patrols

Remove school crossing guides from controlled (traffic lights) and zebra crossings - saving £153,000 in 2023/24 rising to a total of £306,000 in 2025/26

This is a non-statutory service. An option to get sponsorship to pay for the service could be investigated. The reduction in the number of guides helping children cross the road at zebra crossings and crossings with traffic lights would aim to start after the Easter break.

Community events and facilities

Stop funding Christmas lights - saving of £60,000 in total from 2023/24

End all funding and support to communities in setting up and taking down Christmas lights. The council could look at both sponsorship or charging communities as alternative ways to pay for this service.

Stop supporting gala days and events - saving of £44,000 in total from 2023/24

Support includes providing and putting up marquees, staging, temporary fencing and generators. Staff also do litter-picks and clear-ups. The council can look at the potential to charge for this service to recover the full costs.

Stop maintaining Dalkeith Bowling Green - saving £25,000 in total from 2023/24

Stop all maintenance apart from occasional grass cutting. An alternative option is to charge for the service.

Parks and green spaces

Reduce shrub bed maintenance or grass over some shrub beds - saving £36,000 in total from 2023/24

The council would also look into getting advertising sponsorships to help pay for the service and/or encourage communities to help maintain and plant shrub beds.

Reduce how often grass areas are cut - saving £25,000 in total from 2023/24

The council cuts grass in towns and villages 12 times a year. This would go down to three times a year in some, but not every, area. Rural verges would continue to be cut to maintain visibility for road users.

School buildings and council properties

Close 7 primary schools' community spaces during school holidays - saving £40,000 in total from 2023/24

The primary schools affected would be Lawfield, Gorebridge, Loanhead, Moorfoot, Tynewater, Stobhill and Strathesk. This would mean the schools, which are PPP2 and managed by contractors, would not be available for community groups and clubs during holidays.

Cut the budget to maintain council buildings (not housing) - saving £300,000 in total from 2023/24

This would mean council buildings like offices and leisure centres would be kept safe and secure but other repairs would be limited.

Stop the night security service - saving £150,000 from 2023/24

With redeployable CCTV units, there is no longer a requirement to have a staff presence on site round the clock. Key holders would be on standby if needed outwith normal working hours.

Roads, footpaths and transport

Delay gritting footpaths (currently from 5.30am) until 7.30am - saving £73,000 in total from 2023/24

Roads would continue to be gritted outwith normal working hours. The saving would come from ending overtime payments to staff for gritting pavements.

End grants for commercial bus services - saving £60,000 in 2023/24 rising to a total of £120,000 by 2025/26

This would impact the 339 (since withdrawn by the operator from October); 101/102 bus station charges; 111 cross boundary service from Haddington to the Royal Infirmary; and the 51/52 cross border bus service from St Boswells, covering Fala, Pathhead, Edgehead, Dalkeith, Danderhall and going into Edinburgh City Centre. A lead in notice period of 6 months to withdraw the contract has been included in the savings.

Stop Community Transport funding - saving £157,000 in 2023/24 rising to a total of £314,000 by 2025/26

The council would stop funding HcL. HcL provides a Dial-a-Ride service, which transports people who can't use mainstream bus services because of a disability, and Dial-a-Bus services offering scheduled trips to shopping locations for the same client group.

Funding would also stop for services provided by Lothian Community Transport Services (LCTS). LCTS runs transport for voluntary and disabled user groups. They also provide community bus scheduled services in areas not served by mainstream operators.

Waste and recycling

Close Penicuik recycling centre - saving £109,000 in total from 2023/24

Closing the centre would save £86,000 of staff costs initially. Staff would fill current vacancies at Stobhill, which would remain open. Further savings of £23,000 would come from shutting the site.

Increase charges for the garden waste collection service - income estimated £26,000 in total from 2024/25

The cost to householders would go up from £35 to £37 from 2024/25.

Public toilets

Close all five stand-alone public toilets in Midlothian - saving £81,000 in total from 2023/4

People could still use toilets in our public buildings including the leisure centres and Dalkeith Arts Centre. The council could look at working with commercial premises to offer further toilets for the public to use. Alternative options such as transferring them to communities, commercial sale or demolition would be explored.

Staffing

Share or cut two trading standards officer posts - saving £90,000 in total from 2023/24

Alternatively, the council would also look at sharing this service with other neighbouring authorities.

Cut five full-time equivalent property facilities posts - saving £125,000 in total from 2023/24

These posts are currently all vacant and would not be filled.

Cut two full-time countryside rangers posts - saving £75,000 in total from 2023/24

A senior countryside ranger post would be retained and continue to work with local volunteers who support council services by doing work like path clearing.

Police

Stop funding the Midlothian Community Action Team - saving £436,000 in 2023/24 rising to £582,000 in total from 2025/26

This funding pays for two full-time equivalent Police Scotland sergeants and 12 full-time equivalent Police Scotland constables. The MCAT team is in addition to existing Police Scotland staff. The team's focus is on improving the quality of life for communities by preventing anti-social behaviour and crime.

Education and communities

Community and Third Sector funding

Review council grants - total saving of £520,000 in large grant funding from 2025/26 and £89,000 in small grants from 2023/24

The council offers large grant funding for a three-year period which currently supports 28 community and third sector projects. This proposal is to stop allocating large grants from 2025 onwards.

Small grants are also awarded annually to small locally based groups/organisations. The maximum grant awarded to any group is £3,000. This proposal is to stop allocating small grants from 2023/24 onwards.

Education

Reduce the Instrumental Music Service – saving of £444,000 in total from 2023/24

As a result of an agreement with the Scottish Government, there are no charging fees for children learning a musical instrument. This proposal is to operate an instrumental music service within the funding provided by the Scottish Government. Within the funding available, priority would be given to supporting those studying for music qualifications in secondary schools.

Reduction in non-statutory early years provision – saving of £215,000 in total from 2023/24

Good Time to be Two hours are available for 2-year-olds in Midlothian in certain situations, in line with the Scottish Government criteria. Councils have discretion to award further places based on circumstances beyond this. This proposal is to remove the use of these discretionary allocations.

End P4 swimming programme – saving of £27,000 in total from 2023/24

Swimming is currently provided free to all primary 4 pupils, in blocks of 12 weeks with lesson periods of forty minutes.

The Learn to Swim programme would be offered to all pupils who cannot swim and would otherwise have benefitted from school swimming lessons.

Reduction in commissioned services – saving of £500,000 in total from £2023/24

The proposal is to review all education service contracts as they come up for renewal.

Rationalise Home to School and ASN Transport – annual saving of £30,000 from £2023/24

Current legislation requires us to provide transport for all pupils over the age of eight years where the safe walking route is more than three miles, for those up to eight years the current legislation is for routes over two miles.

This proposal is to increase the distance for eligibility to free transport for all Secondary age pupils from two to three miles.

The introduction of the National Entitlement Card also provides an opportunity to replace some of the council's school transport with public transport, which would provide additional savings.

Neighbouring councils are already signposting pupils to public transport timetables and promoting the NEC cards.

Devolved School Management Budgets involving other staff groups and budgets – saving of £34,000 in total from 2023/24

It is proposed that each Associated School Group (ASG) area - based on a secondary school and its associated primary schools - would have their own Business Manager who would provide support to the primary schools in that area.

Service reduction in school library service – saving of £165,000 in 2023/24 rising to a total of £248,000 by 2025/26

This proposal would remove school librarians from secondary school libraries.

Rationalisation of school estate – saving of £290,000 in total from 2024/25

This proposal would see the council undertake a statutory consultation on the closure of St Matthew's RC Primary School. There are currently 51 children over three classes attending the school. Midlothian Council does not own the school building which is category C condition and suitability. The proposed savings relate to staffing and utility costs.

Reduction in the Devolved School Management Scheme allocation to schools by 1% – saving of £400,000 in 2023/24 rising to £607,000 in total by 2025/26

The Devolved School Management scheme (DSM) is the funding provided to early learning and childcare, primary, secondary and special schools. It includes staffing (teaching and non-teaching), educational supplies, staff development, property repairs, cleaning materials, excursions, copyright and other supplies. Staffing accounts for 98% of a schools DSM budget.

This measure would involve an initial 1% cut from each school budget or a cash target.

Increase shared head teacher posts – saving of £17,000 in 2023/24 rising to £27,000 in total by 2025/26

This proposal would see our smaller schools enter into joint Headships, within their Associated School Group (ASG) area. We currently have successful joint headships (Sacred Heart and St Matthew's), and this model could be replicated across the authority.

Reduction in Devolved School Management Budgets involving teachers – saving of £1.969 million in 2023/24 rising to £6.207 million in total by 2025/26

Within Education, there is very little flexibility to find efficiencies of the required scale other than staffing numbers. This proposal would involve reducing teacher numbers across the authority over the next five years.

Transformation of school week – £1.5 million in 2024/25 rising to £2 million in total by 2025/26

This proposal is to redesign the primary school week and review the secondary school curriculum.

[Sport, health and social care and other savings](#)

[Sport & Leisure](#)

Stop All Overtime – saving of £472,000 in total from 2023/24

Staff would work contracted hours only.

Community Asset Transfer or closure of Leisure Centre – Newtongrange (total saving of £136,000 from 2023/24) or Gorebridge (total saving of £222,000 from 2023/24)

Either close one of the two non-hub leisure centres in Midlothian – Newtongrange or Gorebridge – or undertake a Community Asset Transfer.

[Welfare Rights](#)

Reduction of Welfare Rights Services – saving of £27,000 in total from 2023/24

Reduce the number of Welfare Rights Officers by 0.6 Whole Time Equivalent.

Health and Social Care Integrated Joint Board - Delegated Budget

[IJB Delegated Budget](#)

The council contributes a total of £56,438,000 to the IJB. Members may wish to consider a reduction of their offer to the IJB for delegated services. This should be considered in the context of Scottish Government correspondence on maintaining a minimum cash flat IJB budget plus additional annual funding flowing through the Local Government Finance Settlement as described in sections 3.20 and 4.3 to 4.6 of the Medium Term Financial Strategy – 2023/24 to 2027/28 report.

[Additional Savings](#)

Continuous Improvement – non-recruitment to vacant post – saving of £28,000 in total from 2023/24

Internal Audit – reduce by 1 Full Time Equivalent post – saving of £55,000 in total from 2023/24

MIDLOTHIAN FEDERATION OF COMMUNITY COUNCILS

For the attention of:

Dr Grace Vickers

Chief Executive, Midlothian Council

Cllr Kelly Parry

Leader of the Council & SNP Group Leader Midlothian Council

Cllr Derek Milligan

Labour Group Leader, Midlothian Council

Cllr David Virgo

Scottish Conservatives Group Leader, Midlothian Council

Owen Thompson MP

Member of Parliament for Midlothian

Colin Beattie MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Midlothian North and Musselburgh

Christine Grahame MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale

Jeremy Balfour MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian

Sarah Boyack MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian

Miles Briggs MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian

Foysol Choudhury MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian

Sharon Dowey MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for South Scotland

Emma Harper MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for South Scotland

Craig Hoy MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for South Scotland

The Rt Hon. Alison Johnston MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian

Carol Mochan MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for South Scotland

Lorna Slater MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian

Colin Smyth MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for South Scotland

Sue Webber MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian

Martin Whitfield MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for South Scotland

Brian Whittle MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for South Scotland

Shona Robison MSP

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing & Local Government, The Scottish Government

27th January 2023

AN OPEN LETTER IN RESPONSE TO 'SAVING PROPOSALS FOR 2023/24'

On behalf of the Midlothian Federation of Community Councils, we write to express our deep disappointment and grave concern regarding the 'Saving Proposals for 2023/24' published by Midlothian Council on Friday 20 January 2023.

The consensus of all Midlothian Community Councils, representing our respective Communities, is that the proposed cuts are detached from any meaningful social analysis or consideration. They represent a rushed technocratic economic response; one which will disproportionately sacrifice community services and resources which are vital to the social cohesion of the county, relied upon by those most in need, and will damage the provision of education and safety within this Council area.

We note the lack of focus on inward expenditure; administration or management. Similarly, no mention of repurposing the considerable level of income received in recent years from developer contributions (Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)); works which largely proceeded against the wishes of the wider communities.

Given the timeframe for identifying, assessing, and agreeing proposed saving cuts is tight, we had hoped for much more visible challenge from our elected politicians; especially given the current political synergy between the Midlothian Council administration, our Holyrood & Westminster elected representatives, and the current Scottish Government. The proposals in their current form would devastate much of the progress which has been achieved over many years and would risk wiping out the efforts of many volunteer and community groups, merely on the grounds of economy.

The proposals place an unrealistic and wholly inappropriate dependence upon volunteers, presumably expecting volunteer groups across the county to make up for Midlothian Council withdrawing their own support, resource and expertise from numerous pieces of work and services. As a group we would gently remind the Council, both officers and the elected representatives, that volunteer groups themselves have been stretched for many years, especially during and since the COVID pandemic at a time when local authorities withdrew from providing visible, coalface services and support (many which have yet to return to pre-COVID levels). To rely upon volunteers to this degree (volunteers who themselves will be significantly disadvantaged by these cuts) speak of a mindset of panic in the Council. This at a time when we should all be focused on devising plans and priorities which serve the public and our communities as best as possible during the current challenging economic conditions. The plans published at present fall very short of achieving this.

The feedback we have received has remarked on the notion that these proposals were formulated or inspired by the responses to public consultation (a consultation which incidentally appeared to be administered predominantly online) is not persuasive.

While we recognise the considerable financial restraints facing the public purse over the coming years, the saving proposals published at the present time are entirely inappropriate in their present form. We believe the bigger issue is the formula that is used to determine how much funding each local authority receives. Midlothian Council has been one of the fastest growing areas in Scotland for some years, yet we receive the same proportion of funding from COSLA as we always did. To build and maintain the infrastructure required to host the many, many, new developments in Midlothian, a *much* fairer division is required. We insist that you apply pressure on The Scottish Government to conduct an independent review of Council Funding.

In conclusion, none of the proposed cuts would be necessary if Midlothian Council was funded appropriately and fairly. We do not accept them. We do not want to pit group against group trying to fight for whose cause is more important, they are all important. We must stand together in solidarity.

Signed:

Bonnyrigg and District Community Council

Dalkeith and District Community Council

Danderhall & District Community Council

Damhead and District Community Council

Eskbank & Newbattle Community Council

Gorebridge & District Community Council

Howgate Community Council

Loanhead & District Community Council

Mayfield & Easthouses Community Council

Moorfoot Community Council

Newtongrange Community Council

Penicuik & District Community Council

Rosewell & District Community Council

Roslin & Bilston Community Council

Tynewater Community Council

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