

Newsletter issue 89 -January 2023

Forward

Midlothian

Disabled People

www.forwardmid.org.uk

Forward

Mid

Equality - Diversity - Inclusion



CARE DON'T CUT #CareDontCut

Forward Mid's response to Midlothian Council's proposed cuts to services. "if you agree with us copy this letter and send it to your local appointed Midlothian Councillor". You can find out your local Councillor. at www.midlothian.cmis.uk.com/live/Councillors.aspx

We are writing to you as members of Forward Mid, a Disabled People's Organisation which represents the view of disabled people and people with long-term conditions living in Midlothian

www.forwardmid.org.uk

We are deeply concerned by the damaging impact of the current proposed cuts and the crisis that will unfold should they be implemented. As well as opposing and protesting these cuts we consider the 'consultation period' deeply unethical – a one month period which took place over Christmas holidays, during a cost-of-living crisis, which did not allow anywhere near enough time for the citizens of Midlothian to respond to a consultation of such importance.

These cuts will affect the most vulnerable citizens and residents of Midlothian who will, disproportionately, feel the harmful impact that these proposals will bring should they be enacted. Disabled citizens are still struggling to gain social confidence and rebuild their lives following covid and are only now beginning to travel, socialize, reconnect with other people and take part in, activities within their local communities.

To exacerbate matters we have now been a hit with the cost-of-living crisis, which again, disproportionately affects disabled people. Now people must make serious choices about whether to heat their homes or to eat. Disabled people who are already disenfranchised and alienated from society are now, potentially, facing serious impacts on their physical and psychological well-being if these cuts go ahead.

Removing funding for Community transport will undo any post pandemic progress for many of our most vulnerable citizens, their lives will become hugely restricted, for some they will be isolated, lonely and unwell, for others effectively housebound. Closing a Leisure Centre and removing the human and humane aspect of Library services, where people feel welcome, known, respected and safe, will fracture an essential Community oasis of wellbeing for many.

A reduction in an already under resourced Welfare Rights Service feels indefensible in our current climate of citizen poverty, financial crisis and food bank subsistence.

Forward Mid fails to understand how these cuts can be implemented, in terms of the unethical, unfair impact on the most vulnerable citizens in our communities. We would like to request full details of the Equality Impact Assessments carried out and details on what citizen or service

user involvement tookplace.

Considering the comments above, we call on council members to undertake the following actions:

- Reconsider the cuts proposed to the Community Transport funding, Midlothian libraries, Leisure Centre's and Welfare Rights Service.
- Undertake genuine meaningful engagement and citizen involvement with appropriate timescales that goes well beyond just a survey, to ensure that the needs of people who struggle to complete surveys is also met, for example, people with long-term conditions, people with learning difficulties, people who may be housebound, disabled people, older people, people with mental health issues and people with literacy issues.

"If community places and libraries are closed or not staffed adequately as safe places then vulnerable people and disabled people become more isolated, isolated means more psychological illness. Physical injuries mean more hospital admissions but more worryingly mental health illness means there could, potentially, be an increased rates of self harm or even suicide."

Graham Thomson. Forward Mid.

Yours sincerely,

Jeff Adamson, Marlene Gill, Sheree Muir, Iain Tait, Graham Thomson. Tamzin McDonald.

Please  [#CareDontCut](#).

MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL SAVINGS PROPOSALS

Midlothian Council has published savings proposals to be considered by councillors at a special meeting of the full Council that was held on Tuesday 31 January. The proposals are to help bridge a projected budget gap of £14,481.00 million rising to £26,575.00 million by 2027/28. Council Leader Councillor Kelly Parry said, "no decisions will be made ahead of Tuesday 21 February when the full Council will meet again to set a balanced budget." However, she warned the council faces radical cuts and changes to the way it delivers services.



In brief the key saving proposals include:

- Removing the staffing costs of all Libraries.
- Removal of grants that currently support commercial bus services, who may then remove those services.
- Cuts to Dial-a-Ride and Lothian Community Transport Services.
- Closure of all stand-alone toilets.
- 100% cut to the Council's Large Grant Programme from 2025/26, and 100% cut to the Council's Small Grants budget from 2023/24.
- Savings of £500k to be made to the Children, Young People and Partnerships budget for contracting with third party services from 2023/24.
- Many other cuts to schools and other services.

Savings proposals for 2023/24 to 2025/26 in more detail

1) **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 from libraries to online services and do not replace or refresh the books or other materials on offer to customers.

2) **Buses**

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 Borders bus 339 (since withdrawn by the operator from October), Stagecoach buses 101/102 bus station charges, Prentice of Haddington 111 cross boundary service from Haddington to the Royal Infirmary, and the border buses 51/52 cross service from St Boswells to Edinburgh City Centre Via Midlothian. A lead in notice period of 6 months to withdraw the contract has been included in the savings.

3) **Community Transport**

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.

4) **Lothian Community Transport Services**

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.

5) **Public toilets**

Close all five stand-alone public toilets in Midlothian (Bonnyrigg, Dalkeith, Loanhead, Penicuik and Vogrie) - saving £81,000 in total from 2023/4

People could still use toilets in the 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.

6) **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.

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.

7) Schools

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

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

Rationalise Home to School and Additional Support Needs 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.

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.

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

8) Other proposed cuts

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.

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

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

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

Increase charges for the garden waste collection service from £35 to £37- income estimated £26,000 in total from 2024/25

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

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

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

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

Health and Social Care Integrated Joint Board
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.

Council Staffing

Share services with neighbouring authorities.

To find out about all about Bridging Midlothian council budget gap


 www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/200288/consultations/759/savings_proposals_for_202324_to_202526

Have your say at:  HaveYourSay@midlothian.gov.uk


Or complete general feedback at  www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MMV262J



Campaign Against the Cuts

The Midlothian TSI and its third sector partners are launching a campaign to  [#CareDontCut](https://twitter.com/CareDontCut) to prevent cuts and start an open dialogue with Midlothian councillors and the decision making process. The councillors will meet on the 31st January at 11am to discuss the proposed cuts and then there will be community engagement until the 21st February where they will make their final decision. If you are interested in lobbying your local MP and MSP then please find a link to the open letter signed by us and third sector partners which you can also sign and send out. at

 www.thirdsectormidlothian.org.uk/news/

We are calling this campaign against the cuts – care don't cut  [#CareDontCut](https://twitter.com/CareDontCut). With the aim of preventing councillors from signing off on cuts that will damage local communities and the services that the third sector provides. Outlined in the paper you will see proposed ideas for next steps to be taken forward publicly. Please think what commitment your organisation can make toward this or ideas you have for progressing and we will discuss this with you.

for more information  natalie.thomson@mvacvs.org.uk

Horizons Café
Friday mornings
(Café clients only)

Gorebridge Hive
Mondays
10 am - 1 pm

St Johns Church
Mondays
10 am - 1 pm

Gorebridge
Library
Thursdays
10 am - 1 pm

Newtongrange
Development Trust
1st and 3rd
Mondays
1 - 3.30 pm

**Community
Advice Sessions**

Bonnyrigg
Rose FC
Wednesdays
10 am - 2 pm



VOCAL
Tuesdays &
Wednesdays
(VOCAL clients
only)

All are drop in unless otherwise indicated

Mayfield Pavilion
Wednesdays
10 am - 2.00 pm

Midlothian Foodbank
Thursdays
12 noon - 2 pm

Dalkeith & District Citizens Advice Bureau, 8 Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith, Midlothian EH22 1HA
☎ 0131 660 1636, 📧 bureau@dalkeithcab.org.uk . 🌐 : www.DalkeithCAB.org.uk

Scottish registered charity no. SC 000593. Company Limited by Guarantee in Scotland, no. SC 332676.
Authorised & regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority to provide debt advice. FC ref. no. FRN 617446

SEStran's pilot

SEStran's pilot project to deliver a Mobility as a Service (MaaS) travel app to East Lothian and beyond to the rest of the region has now launched.

Funded through Transport Scotland's MaaS Investment Fund, the free app will allow users to plan, book and pay for journeys by different transport modes, initially that is via rail, bus and taxi. Further upgrades to the app over the coming weeks will integrate e-bike, car club and other new ways of getting around. It also shows how many kg of CO2 each choice will produce.

Originally launched to tie in with modes of transport available in the pilot East Lothian area, the app already has functionality in other parts of south east Scotland, and SEStran is in talks with other council areas to expand its usability as far as possible.

With hospital appointments across all the lothians this is an excellent tool to have on your mobile device

Go ahead and download off the [Apple App Store](#) or the [Google Play Store](#) now!



JD Wetherspoon

JD Wetherspoon 17 Waverly Bridge, Edinburgh

I am a wheelchair user and one of my medical conditions is I suffer with daily seizures. I have a Service dog for this requirement.

He had on his harness and wears a collar and bandanna – which shows he is a service dog. He as to be with me at all times because of my safety and he also knows before I do if im going to have a seizure.

One of your manager's from this establishment came over to me and asked if I had proof that I need a service dog? I told him I did not require this and as he could see I was in a wheelchair I don't think anyone would make this up to go into a pub? Not me, nobody knows my background and why I was out that day and its only because of my service dog I had come out. I am probably 90% at home because of my illness so this was a rare occasion.



He delt with me in a terrible manner and we had not even finished our drinks and he wanted us to leave!!!

When we got outside it clearly says the '**Service dogs are welcome**'

We then googled to check that what I said was correct and I went back in to show your manager. He was having none of it and just wanted me out. I did not cause a scene or swear at him but I told him I didn't want him to hold the door open for me.

I've never been treated like this in the 6 years I have been disabled and he did make me cry and then question why I bothered coming out.

I have a condition that I live in pain constantly, I have only partial vision as well, plus other conditions connected to my medical condition but I will not share with you as this is about your staff maybe getting training of not just how to deal with a customer that is different from regular customers but also learning to have a better manner especially if he is a manager. I also think all your staff need to be updated on service dog policies.

I actually work with a voluntary group called Forward Mid. You can look us up on goggle, Facebook or Twitter. We aim to raise awareness of the challenges that exist for disabled people both locally and nationally, by sharing information on issues that affect disabled people. By actively promoting the rights of disabled people. By working in partnership with public and private sector organisations in representing the interests of disabled people. We as a small team which all are in wheelchairs with different disabilities want to promote full equality and a equal life for disabled people in Edinburgh and Midlothian and beyond.

We create Newsletters which are Bimonthly and a Directory to help disabled people with practical useful information.

I have been working with St James Quarter and British Gas to do work with them to better and update there organisations with information about accessibility and employment so maybe there is some work here that this what happened to me can never happen again and we turn this into a positive??

This is a choice I'm offering to you but I would like an apology from the manager that treated me the way he did.

I note that a similar incident happened a few weeks ago and the person and there service dog was not allowed into the establishment. A statement was put out by you quoting 'Assistance dogs are allowed into Wetherspoon pubs and we will reiterate this to staff at the pub and the companys pubs in general. They are more than welcome to visit the pub with the dog' Source metro.co.uk.

It looks like all your pubs need updating with this information so it does not keep happening. If you would like to discuss this further then please get in touch with me

Please note I will be doing a article in our next newsletter about my experience and what happened to me.

Alternative Publications

Please like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/forwardmid/

Forward Mid newsletters are available in large print on request from Eric Johnstone ☎ : 0131-663-9471 or ✉ eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk write to him at MVA, 4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1AE with your request. Electronic copies can be found on www.forwardmid.org.uk. The latest Firefox browser has the reader symbol 📖 in the address bar, click and select narrate from left menu. The latest Safari Browser has the reader symbol **Reader** but does not read aloud. These only work on websites without errors. If you require help please contact Forward Mid and we will arrange to help you.

Edited by Iain Tait for Forward Mid