

Midlothian: council tax freeze put forward as £5m budget gap tackled

Councillors set to agree council tax freeze and cutbacks proposed to the spend on the school estate

Midlothian councillors will be asked to approve a council tax freeze for the coming year with a 5 per cent increase proposed for next year.

Elected members will meet on Tuesday to set the budget for the year ahead and the next four years.

The council's proposed budget recommends accepting Scottish Government funding in place of a council tax rise for the year.

It also asks for the go ahead to charge home owners double council tax on second properties in line with new government legislation.

Councillors faced a £5.4million budget gap to fill to balance its books for the year ahead.

A separate report to go before the meeting tomorrow will set out proposed changes to the council's capital plan for the year ahead, including removing a new secondary school for Gorebridge from it.

it also removes plans to refurbish or extend King's Park Primary School in Dalkeith and Newtongrange Primary School.

Planned extensions at Bilston Primary and Mauricewood Primary will be fully funded by developers' contributions, which will also be looked into for Shawfair school provision and projects to support demand for spaces at Bonnyrigg, Easthouses and Woodburn Primary Schools.

A report on the capital plan says the changes to the Learning Estate plans will reduce net borrowing needs by over £80million.

Plans for a recycling improvement fund which will see investment in new bins and an extension at Stobhill Recycling Centre are being put forward for approval while planned investment in the council's fleet of vehicles is being brought forward a year.

Additional funds from external sources are also identified for Millerhill Asphalt park and Roswell and Roslin pump tracks in the capital plan.

A more detailed report on the capital plan prioritisation and strategic framework due to be placed before councillors at tomorrow's meeting is expected to be heard behind closed doors after it was included in private matters.

Also on the list of private items are a report on the upgrades at council headquarters Midlothian House and the A701 Relief Road and A702 Spur Road phasing report.

by Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter

