

Midlothian councillors set to introduce 10% council tax increase

Midlothian councillors looks set to follow their East Lothian neighbours and approve a 10% council tax increase next week.

The proposed increase is in budget papers already supported by its cross party business transformation steering group – and it comes with recommendations for further indicative increases of 9% next year and 8% the following year.

A meeting of the full council on Tuesday will be asked to approve the increase which will take the Band D council tax in Midlothian to £1,666.20 up from £1,514.73.

Earlier this week East Lothian Council became the first local authority in Scotland to confirm a 10% council tax rise after the Scottish Government lifted a freeze on an increase leaving them to set their own charges.

A report on the medium term financial strategy for the year ahead in Midlothian says the council faced a £10million budget gap this year if it stuck to original proposals of a 5% council tax but could reduce that to just over £4m by increasing it to 10%.

It says: “The budget gap, even after taking measures to reduce recurring costs and increase fees and charges, leaves council tax as the only recurring option remaining to balance budgets other than introduction of some very challenging savings

options.”

The remaining budget gap will be covered by using reserves after cuts proposed for services as well as new fees and charges proposed are introduced.

Among new charges set to be approved by councillors next week are fees for turning on and off traffic lights for private contractors, increased fees for tackling bedbugs and cockroach infestations in people’s homes and additional animal boarding fees for home boarders.

There are also proposals to create a one stop shop pilot at Gorebridge with a community hub based at the leisure centre which will include library services and meeting rooms.

And councillors will be asked to back income generation proposals including the introduction of a Ringo service for on-street parking, promoting commercial opportunities at Vogrie Country Park

o Introduction of a Ringo Service for on-street parking and providing out of school childcare provision and early learning 52 weeks of the year.

However the report says: “At this stage identification of savings or income generation for these areas is not sufficiently developed to be included in 2025/26 budget setting.

“Individual business plans will be developed, and timing of delivery will become clear.”

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter