



Your Council Your Say



A message from the Chief Executive

The council is committed to meeting the needs of local people and high performance across all areas of service delivery.

Like other local authorities in Scotland, West Lothian Council faces constrained funding and substantial cost increases in the next five years.

This means that the council, along with the West Lothian community, will have to make difficult decisions about local services. Reductions in local government public spending have impacted council services for over 15 years and the council has made over £150 million worth of savings since 2007/08.

We also understand that local people and businesses are also experiencing difficulties from the Cost of Living increases and the next five years are also expected to be extremely challenging for the council as it will also face many of the same pressures from the Costing of Living crisis.

In preparation for the challenges ahead, we want to work with you – our community and partners – in shaping the future of council services in West Lothian. This consultation is the second in a series of planned engagements.

Your feedback will be used to help us become more sustainable, address the funding gap and meet the challenges ahead.

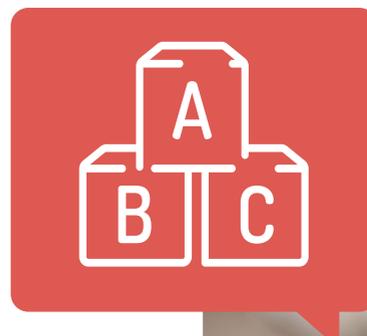
Phase 1 of the Council's consultation approach commenced in June 2022.

Following further developments in the Cost of Living crisis and related cost pressures on energy costs the budget gap has increased to £47.1million over the five-year period 2023/24 to 2027/28, with a budget gap of £36.5million over the three-year period 2023/24 to 2025/26.

The consultation on the officer savings proposals will only take around 5-10 minutes to complete but it is vital that you take the time to tell us what your views are on the officer budget proposals contained within this document; and what your views are on Council tax, which is used to help fund local services.

Your views are important and I would encourage every person who lives and/or works in West Lothian, local organisations and business to get involved

Graham Hope,
Chief Executive



Consultation Roadmap to 2028

The council is undertaking a three-stage consultation with the people, business and customers of West Lothian in order to form the Council's Priorities and Budget Strategy for 2023/24 to 2027/28, and also consult on the future direction of the Council.

PHASE 1 | CONSULTATION - COMPLETE

PHASE 2 | CONSULTATION

Autumn 2022 Budget savings 2023/24 to 2025/26

BUDGET SETTING

5-year financial plan 2023/24 to 2027/28

3-year detailed revenue budget 2023/24 to 2025/26

Agreement on taxation levels for 2023/24 to 2027/28

PHASE 3 | CONSULTATION

Summer 2023 - Budget savings 2026/27 to 2027/28

Phase 2 | Our Budget

Local voices matter and, in the second phase of our consultation, we want you to help us:

1

Consider the officer proposals that are set out in the consultation to address the funding gap of £36.5 million



2

Provide feedback on the proposals



3

Suggest any other ways that we may help to reduce council expenditure and/or changes to council services to make them more efficient



4

Have your say on Council Tax in West Lothian



How to take part in the survey:

Have your say by 20 November. The consultation is now open and closes on 20 November.



Online
Respondents are encouraged to complete the form online by going to www.westlothian.gov.uk/WL2028 or by scanning the QR code with your mobile device.

Paper copy

You can complete this form, Please read the proposals from pages 4 to 6 and share your views on pages 7 and 8. Post your completed form to:

West Lothian Council
Freepost BULLETIN SURVEY
Livingston
EH54 6FF

Hand survey in

Alternatively hand your completed survey into any partnership centre or Customer Information services (CIS) office.

It is expected that West Lothian Council will have to make significant savings over the next five years due to insufficient funding and rising costs.

This means that the council, along with the West Lothian community, will have to make difficult decisions about local services.

We are consulting on officer proposals, from the senior leadership team, to save £36.5 million over the next three years – from 2023/24 to 2025/26. The council must balance its budget – something we are legally required to do. Because we have insufficient budget, we are forced to reduce expenditure on local services. We want to ensure that the funding we do have is spent on services that matter most to our communities.



What you need to know

Background

Reductions in local government public spending have impacted council services for over 15 years and the council has made over £150 million worth of savings since 2007

Like other councils in Scotland, West Lothian Council faces further constrained funding and substantial costs over the next five years

The Scottish Government has advised that councils face a cash freeze in funding for 2023/24 to 2025/26. These funding constraints are combined with rising costs

which include growing number of pupils, an increasing number of older people with care needs, higher energy costs and meeting pay awards.

This means that the council, along with the West Lothian community, will have to make difficult decisions about local services.

It's clear that the council need to make changes to the way services are delivered in future

Are we consulting on proposed changes?

Yes, the council is consulting on the future direction of council services

At this stage, council officers have published a number of budget proposals which represent reductions and changes in services. Decisions on what will change will not be made by elected members (councillors) until after the consultation is complete

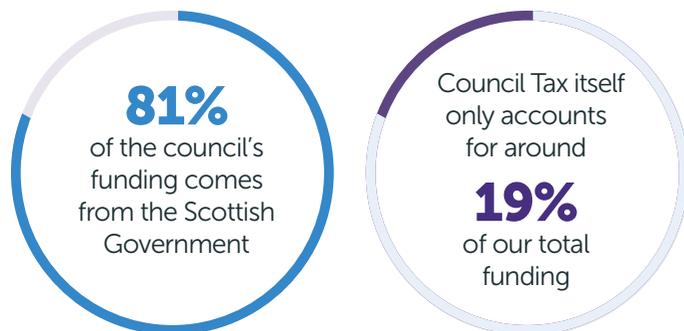
What might the future look like for local services?

The council has a legal duty to provide certain services and this will continue. The council will also continue to prioritise our resources and ensure we have the right people, partners and assets to deliver

positive outcomes for West Lothian
In future, the council will not deliver all of the services it currently provides – we simply do not have the resources to do so. Some services currently delivered will have to be delivered by partners, communities and other organisations

If all of these officer proposals (pages 4 to 6) are agreed, the council will be able to balance its budget – something we are legally required to do. If some of these proposals are not agreed, other ways to deliver a balance budget via additional savings proposals will have to be identified.

How is the council funded?



In 2022/23 our revenue budget (day to day running costs) amounts to: **£490 million**

How do we spend that budget?

<p>£10.5 million on public transport (including school transport) including and bus subsidies for privately owned bus providers</p> <p>£15.8 million on facilities management, including school meals, cleaning council buildings, janitorial staff and street crossing patrol guides</p>	<p> £5.8 million on the council's fleet of vehicles</p>	<p> £29.2 million is spent on social work services for children and families</p> <p>£36.6 million on services for vulnerable adults</p>	<p> £26.7 million on Early Learning and Childcare</p>	<p>£9.3 million on footpaths, street lighting, roads, winter maintenance, structures and flood prevention</p>
<p> £53.8 million on services for older people</p>	<p>£3.6 million on culture and sports services</p>	<p> £4.2 million on homelessness services and community safety</p>	<p> £19.5 million on support for children with additional needs</p>	<p>£70.5 million on Primary School education</p> <p>£60.5 million on Secondary School education</p>
<p> £4 million on planning, regeneration, economic development, trading standards and environmental health</p>	<p>£2.9 million on neighbourhood services, including libraries, registration services, community centres, and customer information services</p>	<p>£14.9 million on the council's property portfolio</p>	<p> £6.4 million on country parks/ open spaces, play areas, street cleaning and cemeteries</p>	<p> £13.3 million on waste management & recycling services</p>

Phase 1 | Consultation | Our Future

Local Voices matter and the first stage - Phase 1, aimed to:

- 1 Understand the services that local people want and need in the future
- 2 Identify priorities that will help West Lothian be a better place to live, work, learn and visit
- 3 Identify some principles for change that help us to transform the way that the Council works
- 4 Understand how you think we should address the funding gap.
- 5 Understand how you want the council to engage with communities and customers

A summary of the outcome from the Phase 1 consultation is set out below:

Your Community

? We asked

What are the best parts of living in West Lothian?

What parts of your community need to be improved?

What are the most important issues for your community?

What are the most important issues for you?

☰ You said

- Access to open spaces, parks and green spaces
- Access to shops and services
- The Transport links

- Better community facilities
- Availability and reliability of public transport
- Access to open spaces

- Access to health care
- Economy and the cost of living
- Crime and community safety

- Access to health care
- My mental health and wellbeing
- My physical health

What we will do

- The council will continue to protect and maintain the local environment through a range of council services.
- The council will continue to support the local economy through support for business and employability programmes.
- The council will develop a re-prioritised and demand led Public Transport Strategy (see proposal **4b**).
- The council will offer communities the opportunity to access community facilities in partnership with other organisations.
- The council will pass comments about access to health services to our partners NHS Lothian and will continue to work with them to increase the quality and responsiveness of local health services.
- The council will pass comments about crime to our partners in Police Scotland and will continue to work with them to improve community safety in West Lothian

Engaging with the Council

? We asked

What is your preferred way of engaging with the council on the future of council services

☰ You said

- By far the most popular option was through online surveys
- Some support for social media
- Only limited support for in-person public meetings, focus groups and road shows
- Only limited support for paper surveys

What we will do

- The council will continue to engage with people who live and/or work in West Lothian, local organisations and business through a range of methods, forums, and channels.

Council Commitments and Priorities

? We asked

Connect, Empower and Deliver as commitments for the Council?

☰ You said

- These are good commitments
- The council must put them into action
- The council must demonstrate achievement

What we will do

- The council will put these commitments into action, including; re-developing the council values, appraisal process and performance management system to ensure they are embedded in the delivery of our services and actions of all of our staff.
- Opportunities to connect and empower the community and our staff will also be advanced, such as under proposals **1a**, **1c**, and **3a**.

? We asked

Are the Eight Priorities for West Lothian still the right ones?

☰ You said

- Yes, they still matter
- Consider adding Housing & Homelessness
- The council must demonstrate achievement in the priorities

What we will do

- The council will realign our priorities using feedback from the community. This will be used as the basis for our Corporate Plan for the period 2023 to 2028 and will guide our decision making and resource prioritisation in the years ahead.
- The council will ensure that measurable progress and achievement in each of the priorities is reported to the community on a regular scheduled basis.

Reducing Council Costs

? We asked

To reduce costs, the council should?

☰ You said

- Sell some Council properties and assets
- Close some buildings that have low usage
- Empower local groups and communities to deliver some services

What we will do

- The council will continue to modernise and rationalise all properties across the estate.
- As the number of buildings required to deliver council services reduces, community groups will have the opportunity to request ownership of properties through the provisions of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, see proposal **3a**.

? We asked

The approach to Digital Council service provision should be?

☰ You said

- Continue to invest in the council website
- Increase the number of services that are accessible online via the council website
- Continue to provide telephone and face-to-face access to services for those who do not or cannot access digital services

What we will do

- The council will pursue opportunities to digitalise processes where there is a clear benefit to customers/efficiency, see proposals **1a** and **1c**.
- The council is committed to the partnership model that increases access and connectivity of council services for the public. We will also continue to provide a comprehensive customer service that is demand-responsive and preserves face-to-face and telephone contact as well as digital contacts.

1 Modernising the council

Measures totalling £21.3 million over the next three years have been identified, which would make the council more agile and cost effective. There are opportunities – due to new technologies, planned service changes and new ways of working – to increase the efficiency of council operations. This will mean changes and/or reductions to some of the services that we deliver and the council will also make changes to structures, resourcing and management arrangements in some services in order to achieve efficiencies.



1A Service Redesign, Integration and Modernisation

Estimated saving: £1.2 million

The internal business and financial support functions that are provided to council services to support statutory (legal) requirements would change through redesign, integration and greater use of technology to increase efficiency and effectiveness. This would include consolidating services, reducing staff numbers and the number of systems we use within the internal business and financial support functions that are provided to council services. There will be an impact on customers but we will seek to minimise the impact through redesigning services, integration of teams and further use of technology. The council will also review a small number of externally contracted services, with a view to achieving cost reductions.

1B Review of Management arrangements / Management efficiencies

Estimated saving: £500,000

Some management arrangements will be reviewed in conjunction with changes to services and resource re-alignment, where it is appropriate. The council will ensure that the management structure continues to support effective delivery of council services and statutory duties, whilst also seeking to make council governance and decision-making more efficient.

1C Digital Transformation

Estimated saving: £502,000

The council must continue to match provision with the way that customers access services, which increasingly requires investment in digital solutions to meet demand. The council will adopt technologies that will deliver automated processes and a reduction in staff costs and will also deliver multi-media customer services that will increase customer choice and accessibility. This would allow the council to continue to provide support whilst delivering a more efficient service at low cost.

1D Allocation of School Resources

Estimated saving: £5 million

It is proposed that the model for determining devolved school resources is revised further to identify opportunities for more efficient service delivery. This may include utilising resources provided to deliver additional support in schools for core staffing requirements, greater use of technology to deliver the curriculum, and changes to administrative and pupil support staffing arrangements.

The council proposes that changes made in the allocation of resources to schools, through a revised Devolved School Management funding model and through a review of provision by third party providers, will enable the council to continue service provision.

1E Realignment of free provision in schools to match Scottish Government commitments and funding, and maintain school clothing grants at current levels

Estimated saving: £890,000

The council would propose to align free school meal, breakfast club and instrumental music provision with Scottish Government funding levels. The council would continue to deliver these vital services for our children and young people. The council would also maintain school clothing grants, which are above the amounts paid by many councils, at existing levels.

1F Restructuring the School Day

Estimated saving: £2.4 million

West Lothian has developed an agile learning culture and approach and delivered improved school attainment results and improved learning experiences for pupils. Teacher contact time is currently 22.5 hours per week and there is an opportunity to re-align the primary school day to match this time. This could provide continuity for children and offer the opportunity to provide alternative learning experiences for the remainder of the time. This would result in teacher/pupil contact time being reduced but with no change to the length of the overall school day. This proposal would also lead to a review of the secondary school week by reducing the school week by 50mins, but again with no change to the start time and end time of the school day, and would bring the secondary school week in line with other local authorities.

1G Review of Services for Children

Estimated saving: £1.2 million

The proposal includes a review of all Social Policy children's services to achieve further efficiency by redesigning and aligning teams more closely to deliver more streamlined teams and reduced staffing. The service will maintain its focus on supporting children most at risk and providing earlier intervention services in line with statutory (legal) requirements.

There will also be a strengthening of the range of fostering options available locally to support children stay in West Lothian. This will support good outcomes and prevent children having to leave their home community of West Lothian to be cared for.

This proposal includes developing intensive foster care to support the most traumatised children, investing in

increasing the existing group of fostering families and also increasing the numbers of foster carers able to care for children with a disability.

1H Review of Commissioned Services

Estimated saving: £533,000

This proposal includes a review of all commissioning arrangements with third parties in place for children's services ensuring that they are aligned with the services current priorities and taking account of all new developments and approaches in place. This review will lead to cost reductions and the delivery of commissioned services targeted at the highest areas of priority.

1I Revised facilities management in schools

Estimated saving: £1.1 million

It is proposed that the facilities management service will be reviewed to seek better scheduling of activities and revised cover arrangements and opening hours in schools.

1J Technical Financial Savings

Estimated saving: £1 million

The council has strong financial planning and management arrangements in place and the effectiveness of those arrangements are recognised by our Audit and Regulators. The council intends to make efficiencies in the administration of our financial processes, with resources re-aligned to match the demand for support for customers and changes to processes such as Universal Credit.

1K Review funding models in partnership with West Lothian Leisure

Estimated saving: £750,000

Reflecting the council's reduced income, the core funding provided to West Lothian Leisure will be removed and it will become largely self-funded. The council would continue to engage and support West Lothian Leisure in reviewing its business model and service delivery for communities.

1L General balance of savings to be identified

Estimated saving: £6.2 million

Officer proposals amount to savings of £30.3 million for the three year period 2023/24 to 2025/26 against a budget gap of £36.5 million over this period, resulting in a general balance of savings of £6.2 million that has still to be identified. Given that the majority of the council's budget is staffing costs, it is highly likely that the balance will be met by changes to service delivery and staffing levels across the council's workforce.

2 Modernising Social Care

The **West Lothian Integration Joint Board (IJB)** has responsibility for planning for most of the health and social care services for adults in West Lothian.

The IJB role is to set the strategic direction for functions delegated to it and deliver the priorities set out in its Strategic Plan. The functions of the IJB include: Primary Care, Adult Social Care, Mental Health Services, Learning Disability Services, Physical Disability Services, Community Health Services, Community Pharmacy Services, Health Improvement, Unscheduled Care for Adults, Housing Support/Aids and Adaptations.

The IJB receives funding allocations from West

Lothian Council and NHS Lothian to enable delivery of local priorities for health and social care for adults. The Board gives directions to the council and health board as to how they must carry out their business to secure delivery of the Strategic Plan.

Over the three-year period, from 2023/24 to 2025/26, it is expected the IJB will have to make substantial savings as funding available will be insufficient to meet the increasing cost of service delivery. The

ongoing financial pressures and the increasing levels of demand mean that the IJB will need to change the way it delivers services.

A range of officer proposals totalling £5.45 million over the next three years have been identified for relevant social care services and the IJB will consult with people in West Lothian to seek their views on these proposals and associated changes to service delivery. The IJB's consultation can be accessed by visiting www.westlothianhscp.org.uk/consult2022.

3 Community Empowerment and Partnership

Through community empowerment the council is seeking to support people to working together with others in their community to increase control over their lives and the services they use. Measures totalling £3.8 million over the next three years have been identified which would enable the council to deliver more effective, flexible and affordable services.

3A Empowering communities and reducing the number of council facilities

Estimated saving: £1.1 million

Over the years the council has significantly reduced the number and cost of buildings and the council will continue to modernise and rationalise all properties across the estate.

As the number of buildings required to deliver council services reduces, community groups have the opportunity to request ownership of community centres and other council properties through the provisions of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. As the council has moved to the partnership model, there is an opportunity to consolidate the number of

community centres and village halls. It is therefore proposed to rationalise the provision of council facilities and community centres across West Lothian and support community access through council or partner facilities within each community.

3B Redesign of Early Learning and Childcare

Estimated saving: £2.3 million

The council will make sure that all resources available for early learning and childcare are fully utilised to support high quality service delivery. The council will realign provision and staffing in nurseries to match parental choice for nursery placements, and deliver an option for parents/carers to purchase additional hours of early learning and childcare in council settings.

3C Service Re-structure of Youth Services

Estimated saving: £500,000

A review of youth services has shown that the service makes its greatest impact through More Choices, More Chances (MCMC) – a programme that aims to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training.

The focus will be on MCMC, with other initiatives and work supported through closer working between schools and community learning partners.

Scan to Complete the survey online



4 Environment, Climate Change and reducing energy use



Measures totalling £4.8 million over the next three years have been identified that would change the services we provide to improve the local environment and infrastructure, and ensure that the council continues to have efficient and effectively managed assets to support service delivery. This will include new standards and delivery models that will ensure we continue to protect the built and natural environment in West Lothian more effectively.

4A Revised Service Standards and Delivery Models – Waste Services Estimated saving: £336,000

There is a requirement to review service provision at the Community Recycling Centres to make sure that the service is delivered in an effective and efficient way whilst meeting council priorities.

4B Reprioritised Passenger Transport Strategy Estimated saving: £2.2 million

The council currently subsidises around 20% of bus routes as well as providing a number of other services, such as school transport and concessionary transport schemes.

Many of the subsidised services are underutilised, and a public transport review is proposed to focus on connecting communities and businesses in a way that is affordable and effective. This will include ceasing some services and exploring alternative transport models. An updated transport strategy would focus on use of concessionary bus, Handicabs and Dial-a-Ride schemes, and removal of all subsidies for bus routes that are not commercially viable.

The council would also propose to remove concessionary rail schemes with are in addition to existing national schemes.

4C Reprioritised School Transport Strategy Estimated saving: £1.4 million

The council currently provides school transport to pupils who live less than the statutory (legal) distance of 2 miles for Primary School pupils and 3 miles for Secondary School pupils. An updated school transport strategy would apply the statutory (legal) minimum limits for school transport and the use of the Young Persons national entitlement scheme for free travel on commercial bus routes.

4D Revised Country Parks Service Estimated saving: £95,000

It is proposed that animal attraction at Beecraigs Country Park is closed, with the animals being relocated to alternative animal attraction venue(s) out with council operations. This attraction currently operates at a net loss and closure is expected to have minimal impact on future visitor numbers.

4E Revised Service Standards and Delivery Models – Roads and Transport Estimated saving: £246,000

There is a requirement to review service provision and standards to make sure that the service is delivered in an effective and efficient way whilst meeting council priorities.

Service delivery, including winter maintenance, will be changed to focus on statutory (legal) requirements with an updated approach to asset management. This will mean some services, such as festive lighting, will no longer be provided by the council.

4F Efficiencies from improved use and management of council properties Estimated saving: £279,000

The council has a ten-year programme for investing in its assets to support service delivery. This approach reduces the need for reactive maintenance work, improving how the council invests in property assets.

4G Reducing carbon emissions and improving efficiency Estimated saving: £245,000

Following the success of previous energy efficiency initiatives, the council will continue to reduce energy consumption and related costs through new energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

5 Reviewing income, concessions and other contributions



The council has one of the lowest levels of income through sales, fees and charges per head of population in Scotland. The council established an approach to income and concessions in 2015 where all discretionary charges are benchmarked with Scottish averages or other local providers. Measures totalling £1.1 million over the next three years have been identified, which would raise additional income.

Areas where the council could investigate opportunities for additional sources of income include:

- Introduction of charges for household garden waste collections
- Review of fees for planning advisory services and to maximise developer contributions
- Lease facilities to a commercial operator, social enterprise or franchise
- Review of rents and fees for the council's commercial properties

It is proposed that all opportunities for discretionary charging will be reviewed and benchmarked in addition to a standard indexation increase being applied in line with existing practice.



Scan to Complete the survey online

What will happen next

Following analysis of the feedback received, the results of the Phase 2 consultation will be reported to a meeting of the Council Executive Committee on 20 December 2022, and thereafter a series of special Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels will take place in January 2023. This will provide a platform for elected members and community organisation representatives to discuss the findings of the consultation and put questions to council officers relating to the consultation.

The feedback from the PDSPs will go towards shaping the council's budget will be set in early 2023.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this consultation document.
How to take part →

Have your say by 20 November. The consultation is now open and closes on 20 November.



Online
Respondents are encouraged to complete the form online by going to www.westlothian.gov.uk/WL2028 or by scanning the QR code with your mobile device.

Paper copy
You can complete this form, Please read the proposals from pages 4 to 6 and share your views on pages 7 and 8. Post your completed form to:
West Lothian Council
Freepost BULLETIN SURVEY
Livingston
EH54 6FF

Hand survey in
Alternatively hand your completed survey into any partnership centre or Customer Information services (CIS) office.

Have your say on West Lothian's proposals

Provide your comments here (please include the budget measure reference, for example: 1a)

Lined area for providing comments on the proposals.

