



and continues to do this while facing increased pressure on its finances.

We are now consulting on a five-year rent strategy to provide certainty for long-term planning for investment in our housing stock. We want to continue to invest in homes and communities and provide you with affordable and excellent housing, repairs and advice services. This special tenants news tells you about the options for rent and how you can participate.

You can also view the consultation on our website and complete your rent survey online via:

www.westlothian.gov.uk/haveyoursayonrent

Taking part will help shape our rent strategy for the next five years.



What have we done since the last consultation?



We invested £78 million in improving council homes; this investment has seen over 3000 new heating systems installed, 12000 smoke detectors, and 700 new roofs.



400 properties across West Lothian have benefited from **new kitchens, bathrooms and windows.**



The Housing Service carried out **119,668 emergency repairs** and **75,955 non-emergency repairs** and achieved, on average, 98% customer satisfaction.



We continue investing in our **apprenticeship programme** to help provide skilled workers for the future and **recruited 79 apprentices.**



We had 20 sites constructing new build properties that **delivered 1,081 new homes.**

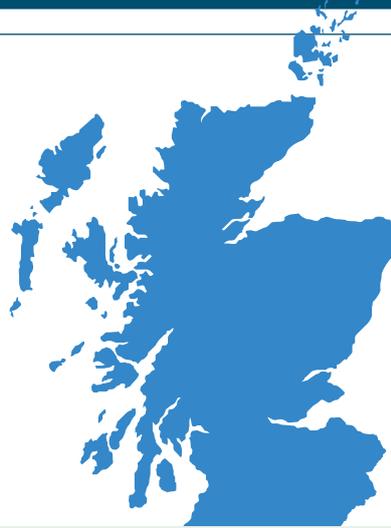


We purchased 212 former council houses through the Open Market Acquisition Scheme

Have your say on rent

Rent Levels

The average council house rent in West Lothian this year is **£80.70** per week.



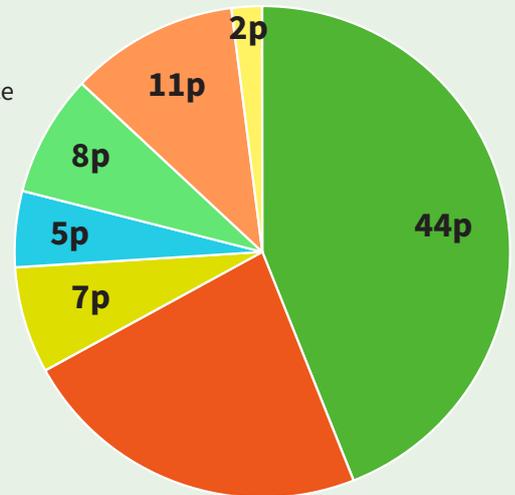
Scotland's Average Weekly Rent is £80.71

What your rent pays for

The rent we receive from council properties allows us to maintain and improve the Council's housing stock, so we must make the best use of our resources.

The pie chart shows how your rent money was spent last year; you will see that over 67 pence in every pound collected is spent on Repairs, Maintenance and Planned Investment work on tenants' homes.

- Planned Investment
- Repairs & Maintenance
- Supplies & Services
- Support Services
- Employee Costs
- Premises Costs
- Voids, Irrecoverable Rents & Bad Debts



Repairs and Maintenance

In West Lothian, Building Services carry out repairs to our housing stock. Between April 2021 and March 2022, they carried out 37,606 routine and emergency repairs on our council properties.

Our Plan for the next five years

We want to keep investing in our properties and continue to provide you with quality housing, repairs and tenancy management services.

We believe in spending sensibly and improving the value you get for your rent. Universal Credit, increasing fuel costs, and general economic uncertainty continue to cause challenges for supporting tenants. We also have to budget for rising costs for materials used in repairs and new builds and staff costs.

Planned Housing Investment

We are committed to improving and maintaining your homes to a good standard. In recent years, we have focussed on ensuring that our properties meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). We have also embarked on an ambitious new build council housing programme.

For the five years covered by the new rent strategy, we will need to focus on works to ensure that all our properties meet new standards laid down by the Scottish Government for energy-efficient homes.

This work will vary across the housing stock. It will follow a "Fabric First" approach which is focused on the external envelope of the house and could include installing external wall insulation and/or increasing loft insulation and replacing windows and doors to improve the overall energy performance of the houses. Work will also involve replacing existing boilers with more energy-efficient boilers as part of the central heating replacement programme. This work will help make our existing housing stock more energy efficient, reduce carbon emissions and ultimately positively impact tenant fuel bills.

Our planned investment programme aims to ensure that our properties meet the new standard for energy-efficient homes by 2032 and the Council's commitment to net carbon zero by 2045.

An average rent increase of 3% per year would be required to maintain current levels of services and maintain our housing stock while investing to meet increased compliance and quality standards.



To maintain our housing stock to an appropriate standard through the housing capital programme, we will need to invest around £24 million each year, over the next five years, totalling around £122 million.

This level of investment will be funded from tenant's rents and is broken down as follows:



● Major Upgrades – 20%

Long-term maintenance work is generally non-routine, where structural elements such as roof and external walls are beyond economical repair by routine maintenance.

● Planned Programmes – 35%

Preventative maintenance upgrades include kitchens and bathrooms, window and door replacement, external painting, fencing, etc. This work is planned as necessary, based on conditions and is intended to ensure standards are maintained.

● Statutory Compliance Works – 44%

Statutory works must be carried out to recommended timescales and standards and include electrical testing and gas central heating programs. These also include works in support of EESSH2 (Energy Efficient Standards for Social Housing) and reducing carbon emissions.

● Miscellaneous Works – 1%

Miscellaneous works such as other elements of providing asset management services, including stock condition surveys, structural investigations and feasibility surveys.

Customer Experience & Affordability

Over the last year, the Customer Experience (CX) team has spoken to our tenants every month about affordability.

- 83% of tenants who have spoken with the CX team have informed us that they consider their rent to be affordable;
- 63% of tenants who have spoken with the CX team believe their other outgoings are affordable;
- 56% of tenants who have spoken with the CX team feel that the council considers how affordable the rent is before offering a property to tenants.

Cost of Living

During our calls, some tenants have highlighted their concerns surrounding the cost of living crisis.

- The rising gas and electricity prices impact their ability to heat their homes adequately;
- Increased public transportation costs and the recent crisis that caused rising petrol and diesel prices are causing concern;
- Increase in weekly food shop costs.

What is the current housing situation?

Given the demand for rented housing in West Lothian, with 10,700 applicants on the Common Housing Register, it is considered that there is a strong case for adding to the supply of council houses over the next five years. We are therefore consulting on rent increase options of 3.5% and 4% per year as both options will support an increase in the supply of council houses.

Rent Increase Options – Which options are best for you?

Option 1

Annual Increase of 3.5% per year over five years*

This option would allow us to invest the required amount in our existing housing stock and support the build of 350 new council houses.

The table shows how this would impact on average weekly rent in West Lothian.

Average Weekly Rent	Weekly Increase	Monthly Increase	Annual Increase
£80.70	£2.82	£11.30	£135.58

*based on a 52 week average rent

Option 2

Annual increase of 4% per year over five years*

This option would allow us to invest the required amount in our existing housing stock and support the build of 500 new council houses.

The table shows how this would impact on average weekly rent in West Lothian.

Average Weekly Rent	Weekly Increase	Monthly Increase	Annual Increase
£80.70	£3.23	£12.91	£154.94

*based on a 52 week average rent

How to take part?

We want to ensure everyone has an opportunity to have their say. Therefore, we are providing different ways to take part.

To have your voice heard, you must complete/return the survey by:
Monday, 12th December 2022.

Online

By scanning this QR Code with your smartphone or tablet or by simply typing <https://bit.ly/3LP3qIK> into your search engine.



Virtual Poll

You can complete a virtual poll through our Tenant Participation Facebook page. To join our Facebook page, search West Lothian Tenant Participation and request to join or scan the QR code.



Drop in Sessions

We have arranged various drop-in sessions across West Lothian. Why not pop down and speak to one of our friendly staff members, who will help you complete the consultation.

Survey by post

If you want to complete the survey by post, you can email TP@westlothian.gov.uk or call **01506 282967** and request a paper copy.

Alternatively, complete and return the form below.

Location	Date	Time
Jim Walker Partnership Centre (Bathgate)	02/11/2022	10am to 12pm
Jim Walker Partnership Centre (Bathgate)	11/11/2022	2pm to 4pm
Jim Walker Partnership Centre (Bathgate)	22/11/2022	10am to 12pm
Strathbrock Partnership Centre	03/11/2022	10am to 12pm
Strathbrock Partnership Centre	24/11/2022	10am to 12pm
Strathbrock Partnership Centre	24/11/2022	2pm to 4pm
The David King Partnership Centre (East Calder)	31/10/2022	10am to 12pm
The David King Partnership Centre (East Calder)	31/10/2022	2pm to 4pm
The David King Partnership Centre (East Calder)	09/11/2022	2pm to 4pm
Linlithgow Partnership Centre	01/11/2022	10am to 12pm
Linlithgow Partnership Centre	01/11/2022	2pm to 4pm
Linlithgow Partnership Centre	02/11/2022	10am to 12pm
Fauldhouse Partnership Centre	01/11/2022	10am to 12pm
Fauldhouse Partnership Centre	01/11/2022	2pm to 4pm
Fauldhouse Partnership Centre	10/11/2022	10am to 12pm



Have Your Say on Rent

You must provide us with your name and address so we can verify you are a tenant.

Name:

Address:

Please confirm your preferred options by marking with a ✓.

Please let us know your age range?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16-19 | <input type="checkbox"/> 40-44 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20-24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 45-49 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50-54 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30-34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55+ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35-39 | <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say. |

What is your sex?

- Male
 Female
 Intersex
 Prefer not to say

Please let us know if you receive any support towards your rent, e.g. Universal Credit or Housing benefits.

- Yes No

Please complete and return this form to:

Tenant Participation Team,
West Lothian Council,
West Lothian Civic Centre,
HCBS,
Howden South Road,
Livingston,
EH54 6FF.

Please choose one option only:

Option 1

Annual Increase of 3.5% per year over five years

This option allows us to invest the required amount in our existing housing stock and would support the build of 350 new build council houses.

Option 2

Annual increase of 4% per year over five years

The option allows us to invest the required amount in our existing housing stock and would support the build of 500 new build council houses.