

# WL2028 – YOUR COUNCIL, YOUR SAY (PHASE 2)- COMMENT CATEGORISATION

Our Budget 2023/24 to 2025/26

West Lothian Council  
Data Label: PUBLIC

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January 23, 2023

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## 1 Modernising the Council

1. **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.**
2. There were twelve proposals contained in this section of the consultation. A summary of the proposals and the emergent themes from the analysis of the 13,467 comments received is outlined.

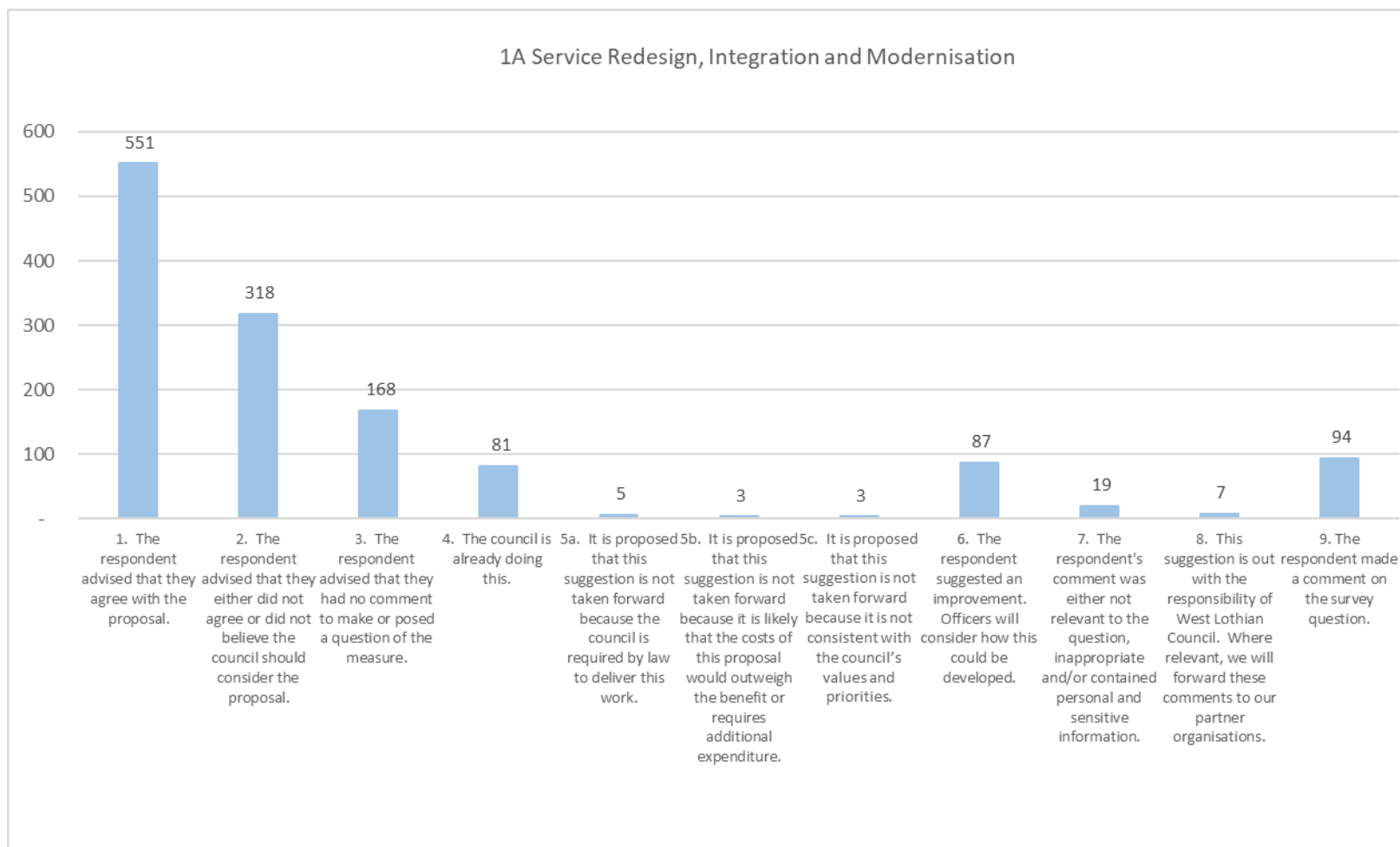
### Proposal 1a: Service Redesign, Integration and Modernisation

Estimated saving: £1.2 million

3. **Proposal:** 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.

## WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say (Phase 2)- Comment Categorisation

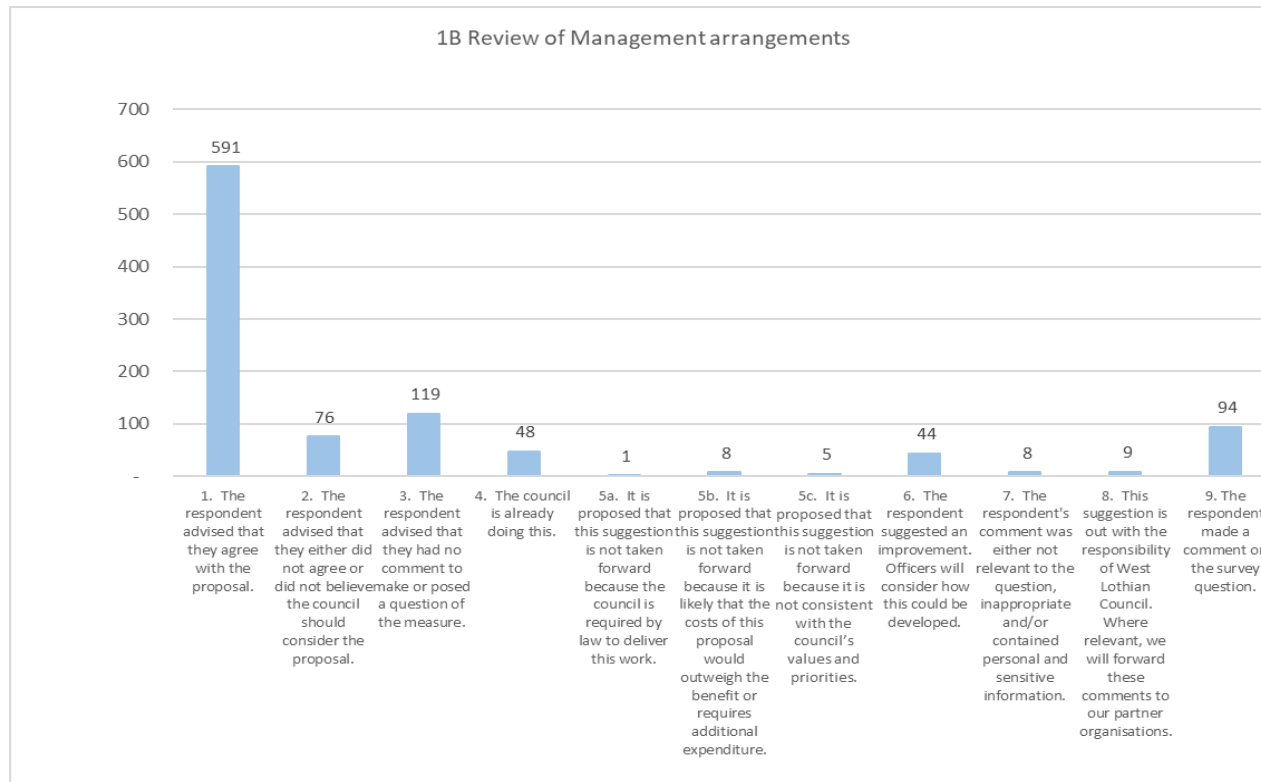
4. A total of 1,336 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 1b: Review of Management arrangements / Management efficiencies

Estimated saving: £500,000

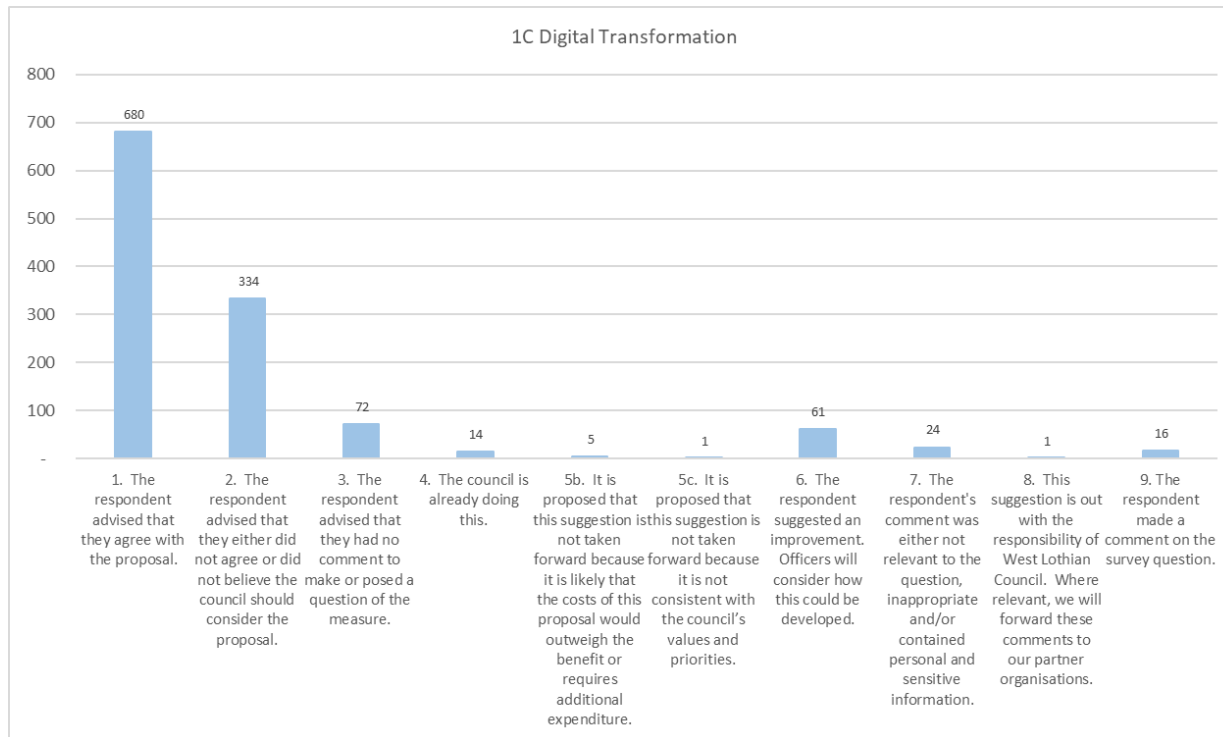
- 5. **Proposal:** Some management arrangements will be reviewed in conjunction with changes to services and resource re-alignment, where it is appropriate. The council will ensure that the management structure continues to support effective delivery of council services and statutory duties, whilst also seeking to make council governance and decision-making more efficient.
- 6. A total of 1,003 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 1c: Digital Transformation

Estimated saving: £502,000

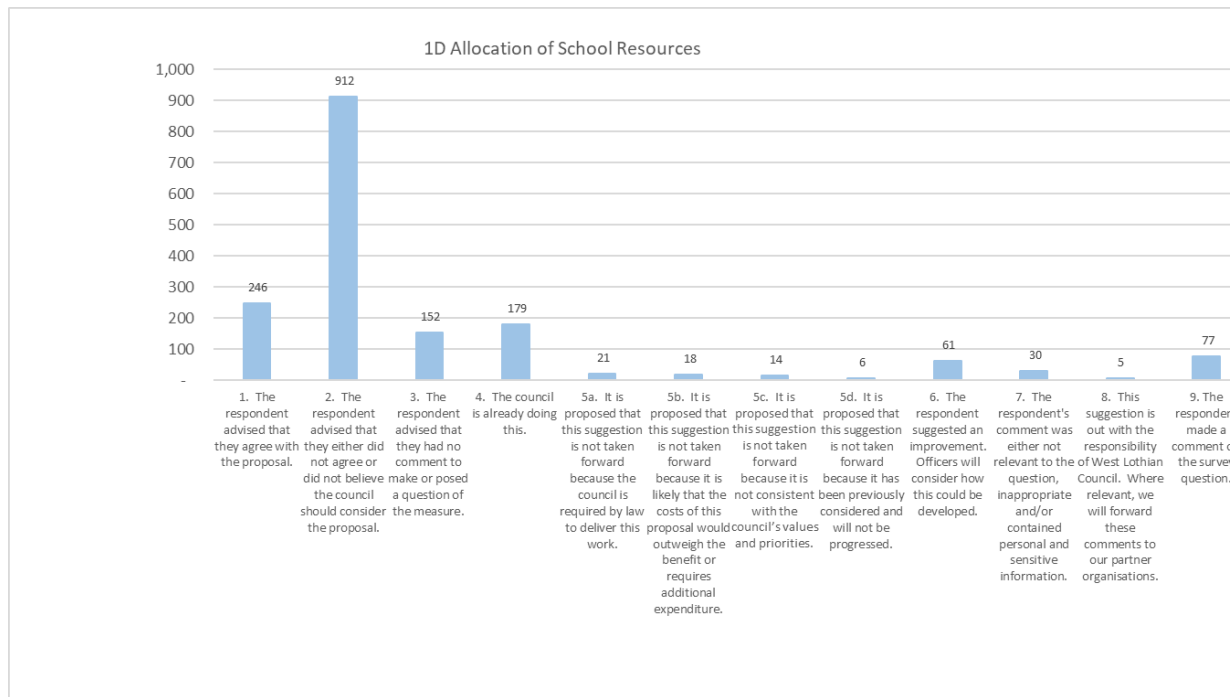
- 7. **Proposal:** The council must continue to match provision with the way that customers access services, which increasingly requires investment in digital solutions to meet demand. The council will adopt technologies that will deliver automated processes and a reduction in staff costs and will also 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.
  
- 8. A total of 1,208 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 1d: Allocation of School Resources

Estimated saving: £5 million

- 9. **Proposal:** 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.
  
- 10. A total of 1,721 comments were received for this proposal.

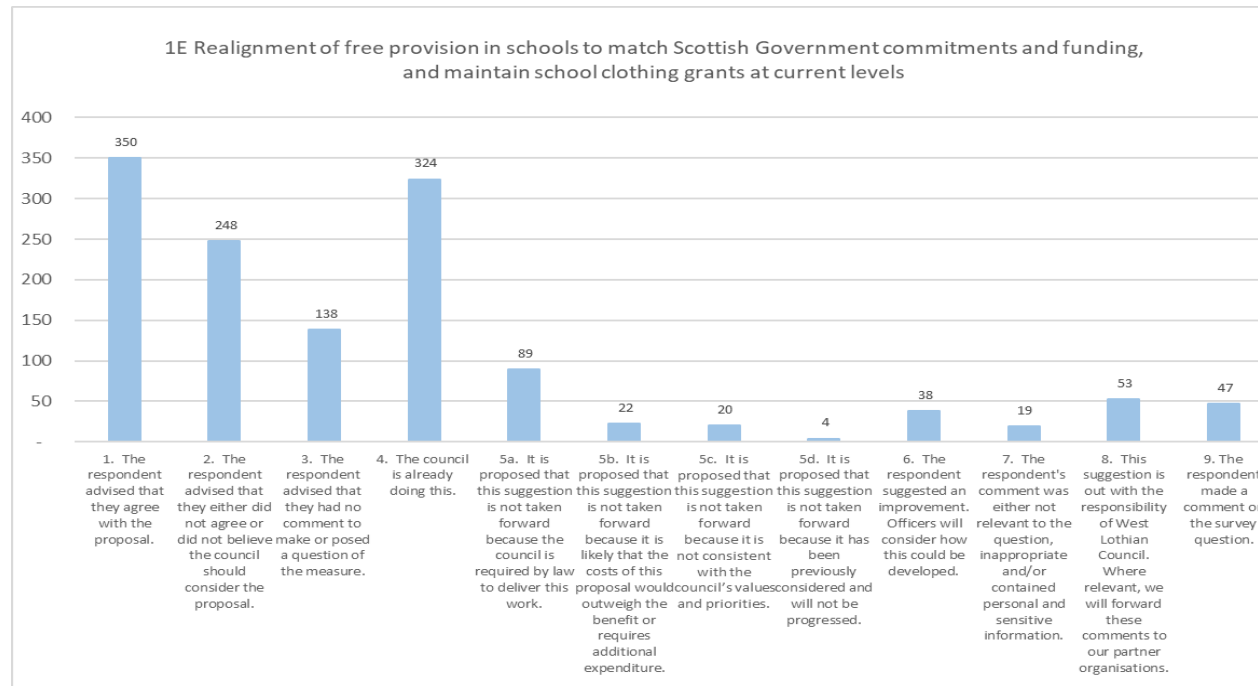




Proposal 1e: Realignment of free provision in schools to match Scottish Government commitments and funding, and maintain school clothing grants at current levels

Estimated saving: £890,000

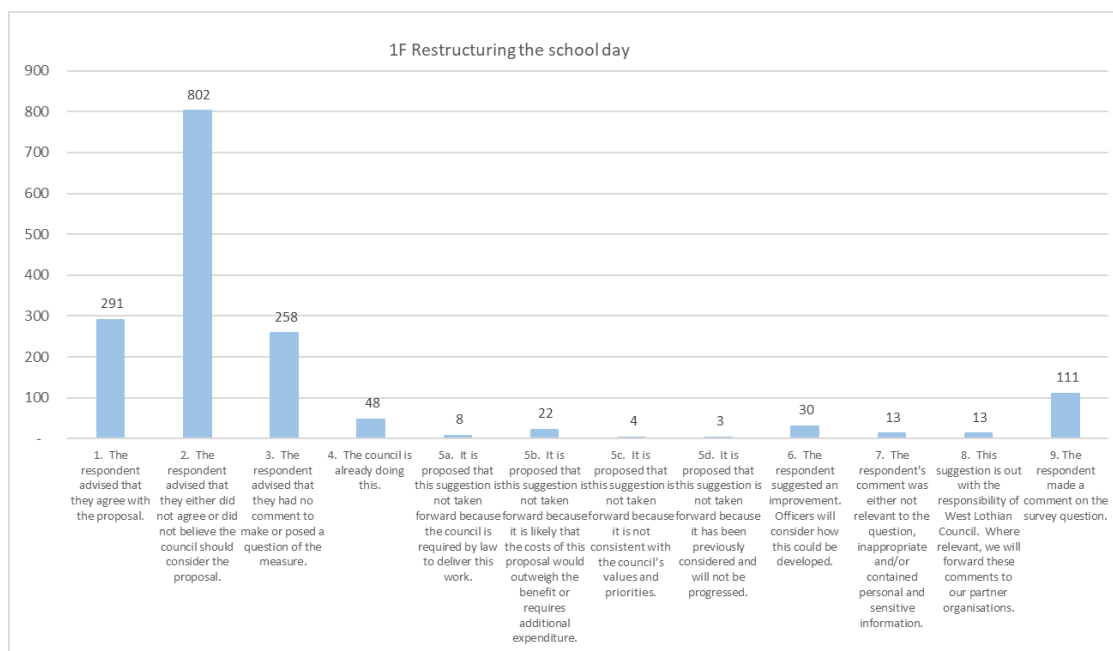
- 11. **Proposal:** The council would propose to align free school meal, breakfast club and instrumental music provision with Scottish Government funding levels. The council would continue to deliver these vital services for our children and young people. The council would also maintain school clothing grants, which are above the amounts paid by many councils, at existing levels.
- 12. A total of 1,352 comments were received for this proposal.



### Proposal 1f: Restructuring the School Day

Estimated saving: £2.4 million

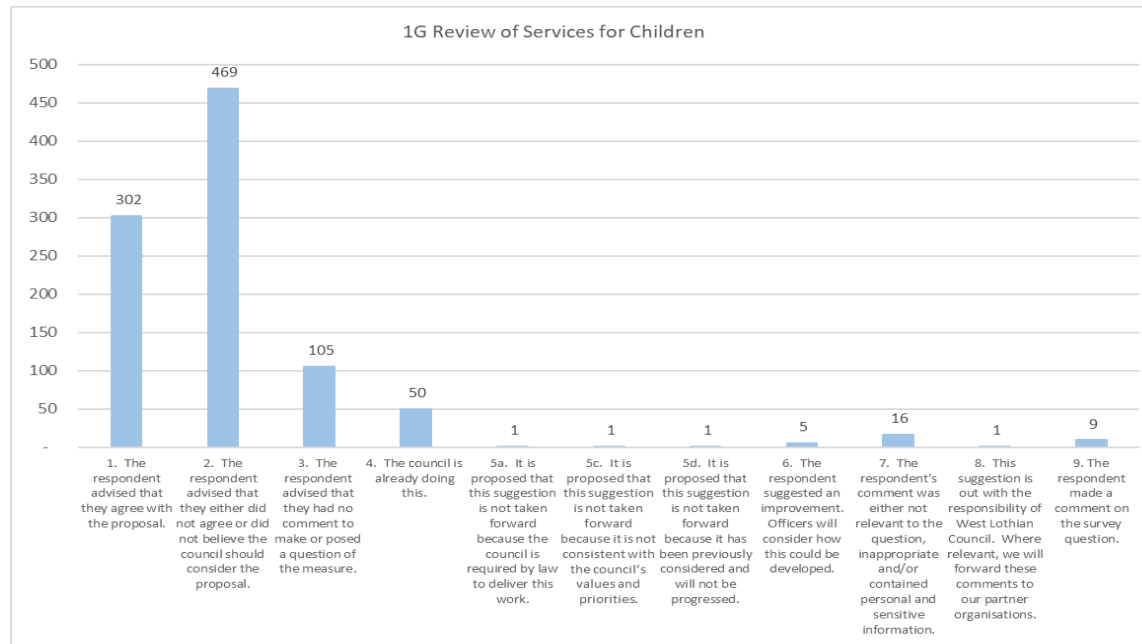
13. **Proposal:** West Lothian has developed an agile learning culture and approach and delivered improved school attainment results and improved learning experiences for pupils. Teacher contact time is currently 22.5 hours per week and there is an opportunity to re-align the primary school day to match 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.
14. A total of 1,603 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 1g: Review of Services for Children

Estimated saving: £1.2 million

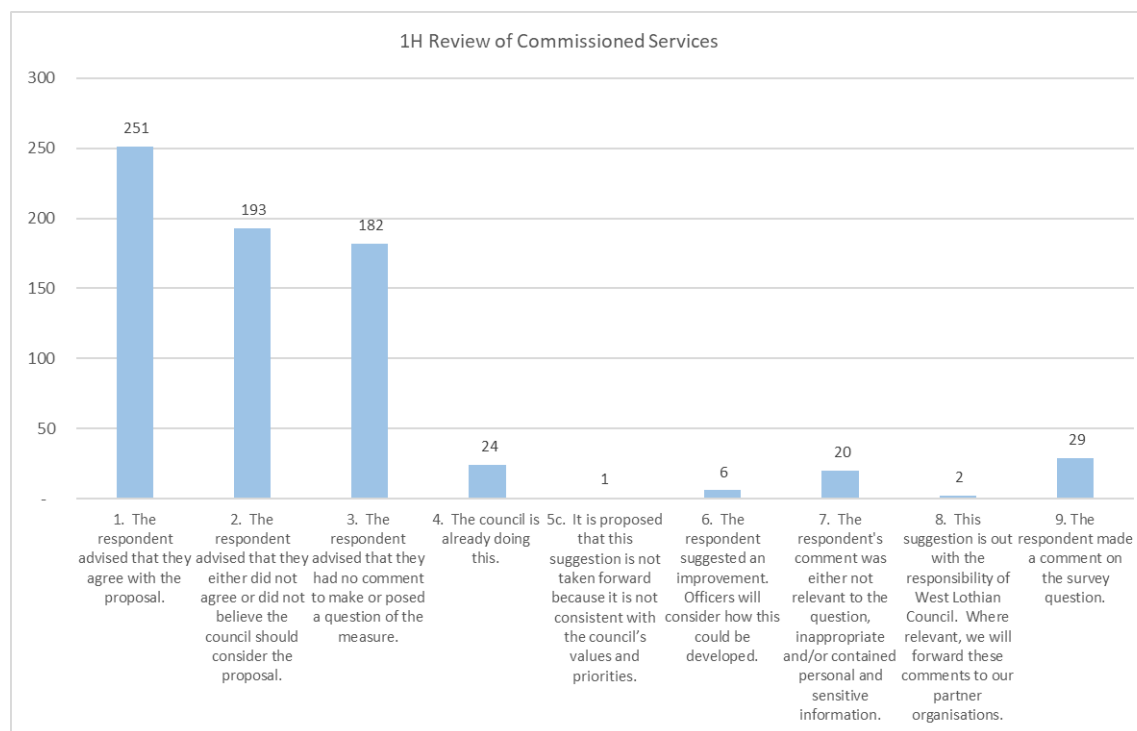
- 15. **Proposal:** The proposal includes a review of all Social Policy children's services to achieve further efficiency by redesigning and aligning teams more closely to deliver more streamlined teams and reduced staffing. The service will maintain its focus on supporting children most at risk and 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.
  
- 16. A total of 960 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 1h: Review of Commissioned Services

Estimated saving: £533,000

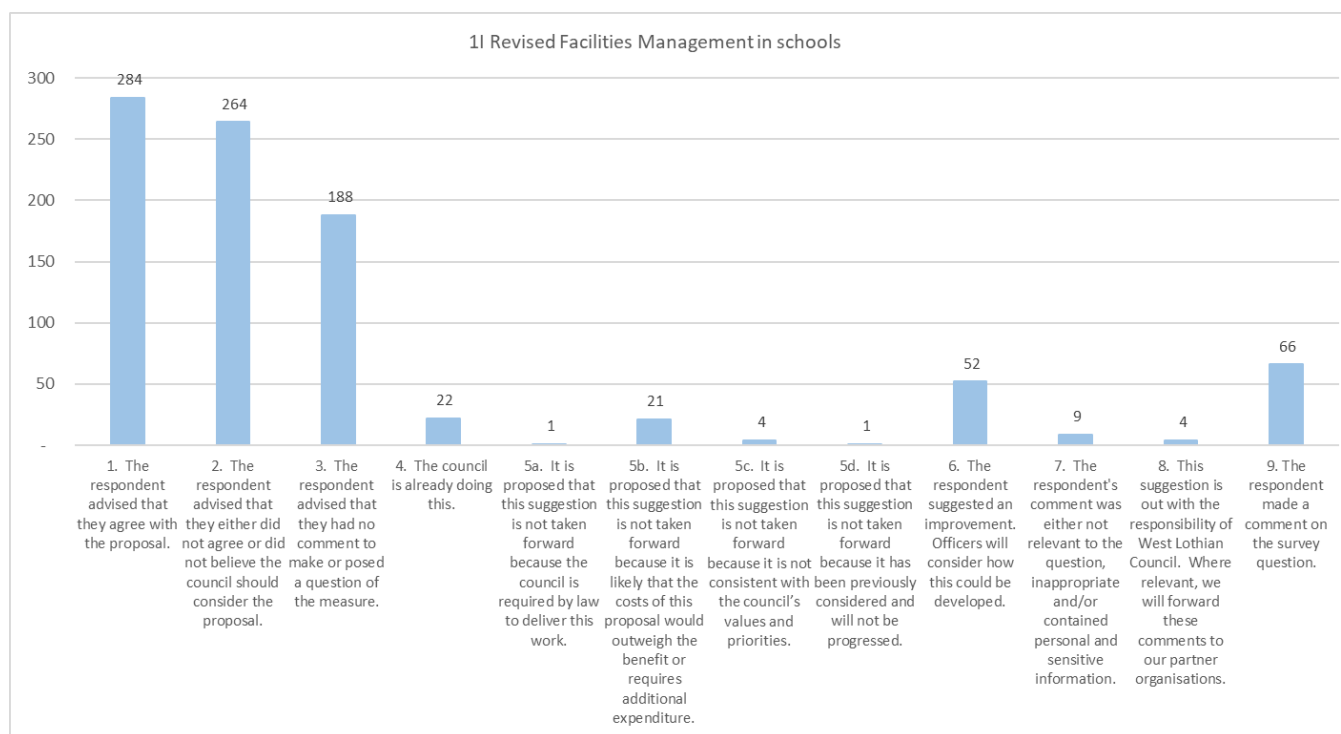
- 17. **Proposal:** This proposal includes a review of all commissioning arrangements with third parties in place for children’s services ensuring that they are aligned with the services current priorities and taking account of all new developments and approaches in place. This review will lead to cost reductions and the delivery of commissioned services targeted at the highest areas of priority.
  
- 18. A total of 708 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 1i: Revised Facilities Management in Schools

Estimated saving: £1.1 million

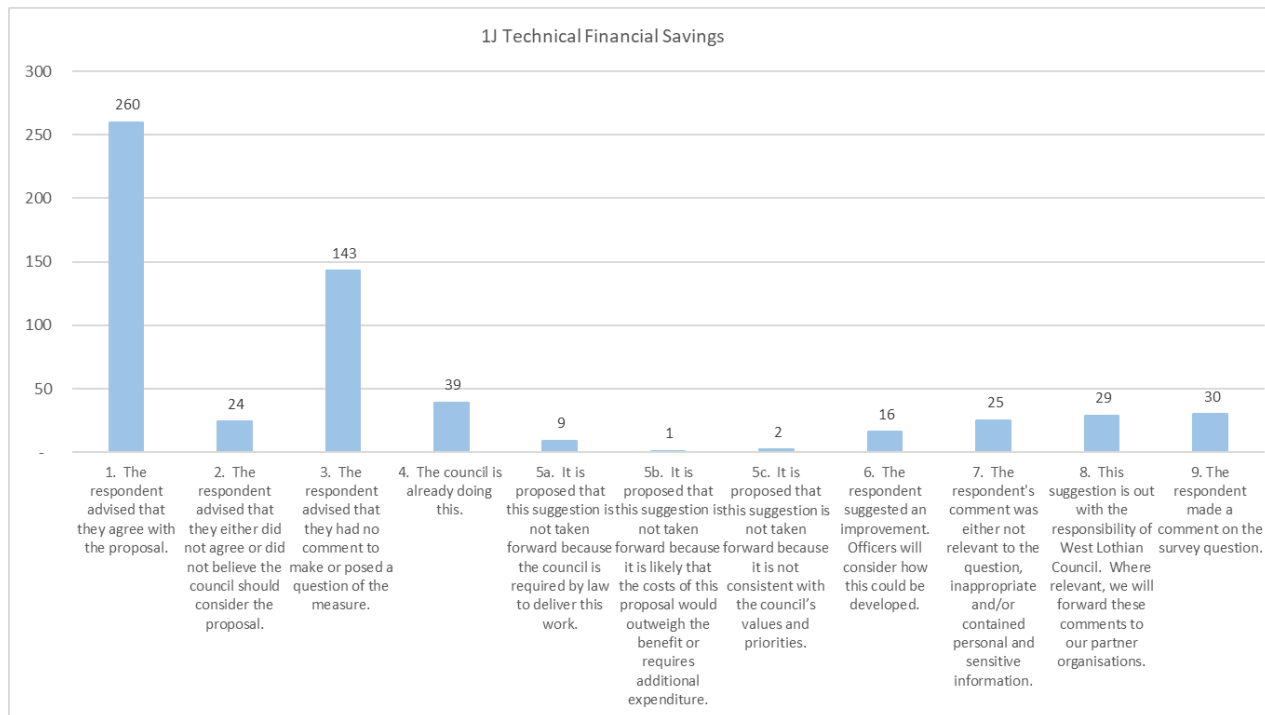
- 19. **Proposal:** It is proposed that the facilities management service will be reviewed to seek better scheduling of activities and revised cover arrangements and opening hours in schools.
- 20. A total of 916 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 1j: Technical Financial Savings

Estimated saving: £1 million

- 21. **Proposal:** 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.
  
- 22. A total of 578 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 1k: Review Funding Models in Partnership with West Lothian Leisure

Estimated saving: £750,000

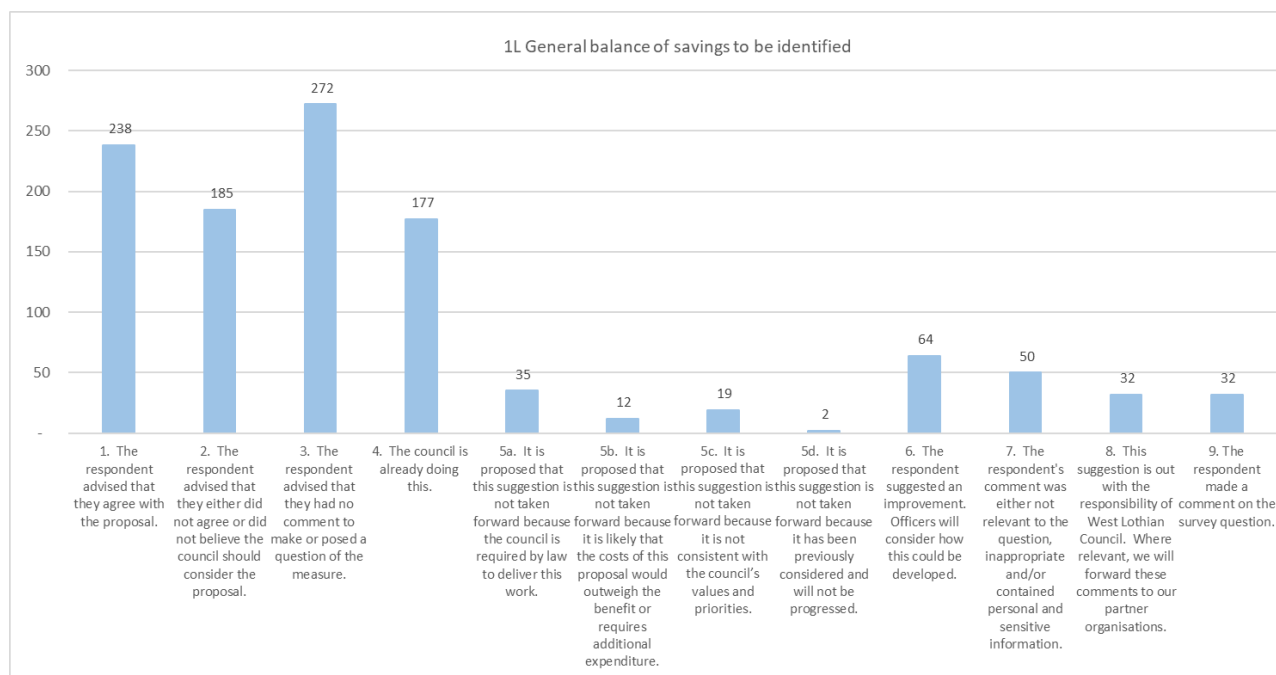
- 23. **Proposal:** Reflecting the council's reduced income, the core funding provided to West Lothian Leisure will be removed and it will become largely self-funded. The council would continue to engage and support West Lothian Leisure in reviewing its business model and service delivery for communities.
- 24. A total of 964 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 1I: General balance of savings to be identified

Estimated saving: £6.2 million

- 25. **Proposal:** 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.
- 26. A total of 1,118 comments were received for this proposal.





### 3 Community Empowerment and Partnership

27. **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.**
28. There were three proposals contained in this section of the consultation. A summary of the proposals and the emergent themes from the analysis of the 2,073 comments received is outlined.

#### Proposal 3a: Empowering Communities and Reducing the Number of Council Facilities

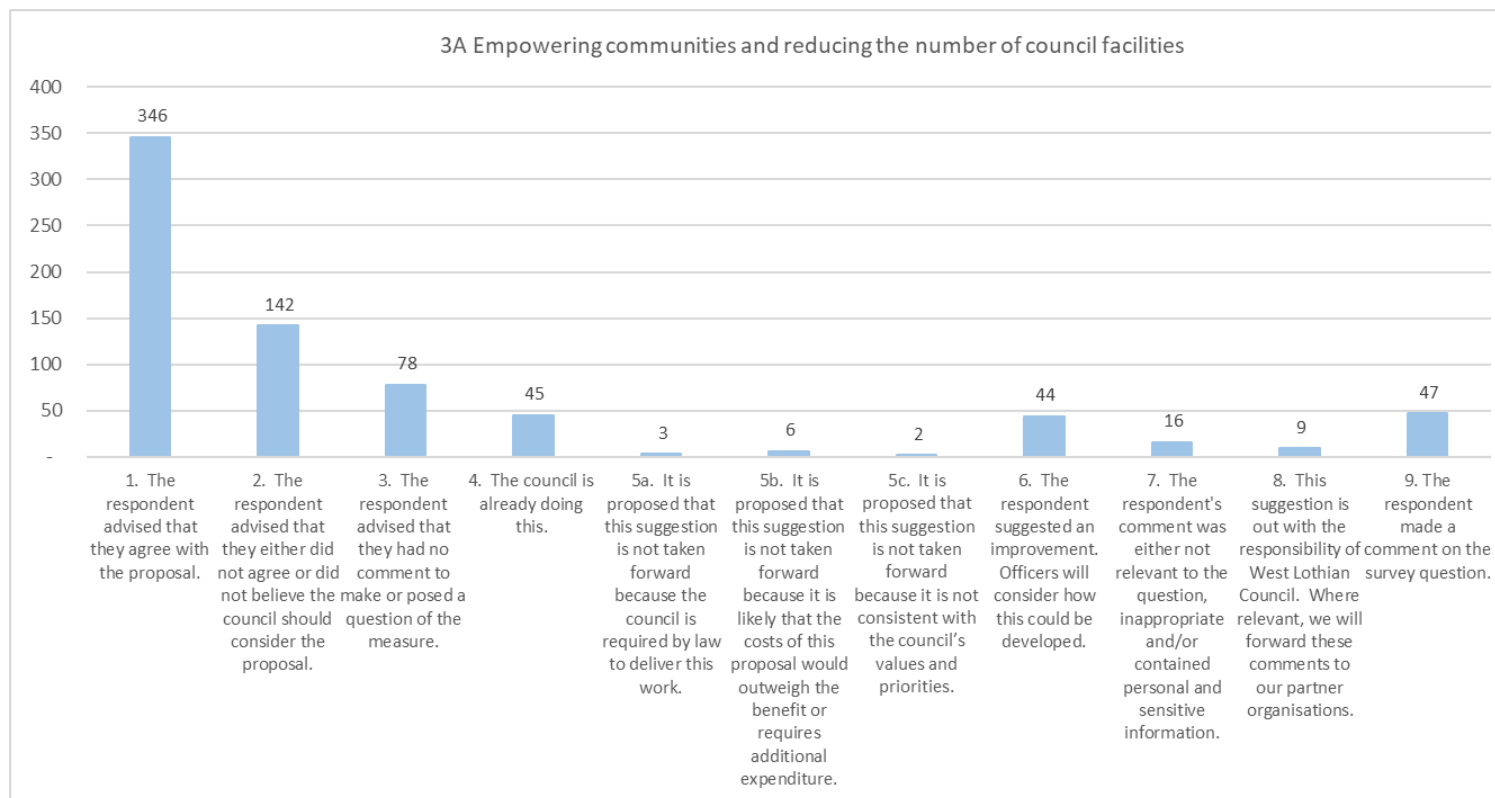
Estimated saving: £1.1 million

29. **Proposal:** 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.

## WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say (Phase 2)- Comment Categorisation

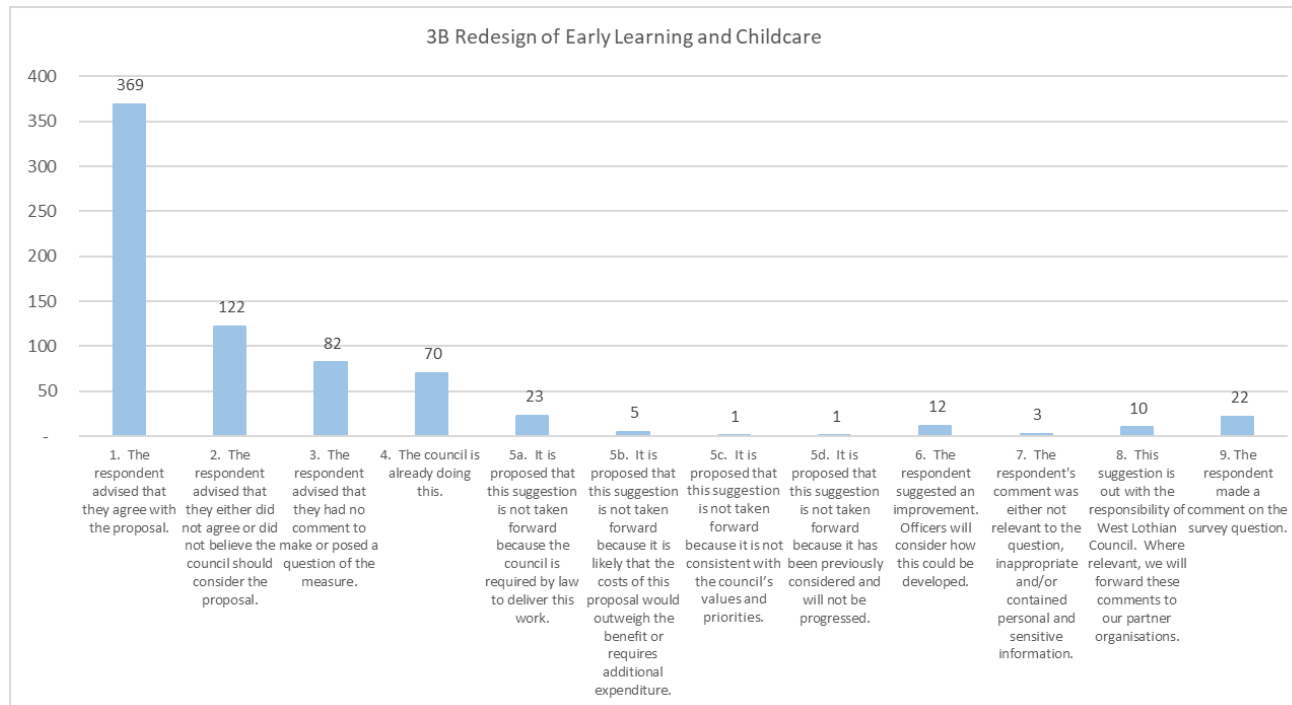
30. A total of 738 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 3b: Redesign of Early Learning and Childcare

Estimated saving: £2.3 million

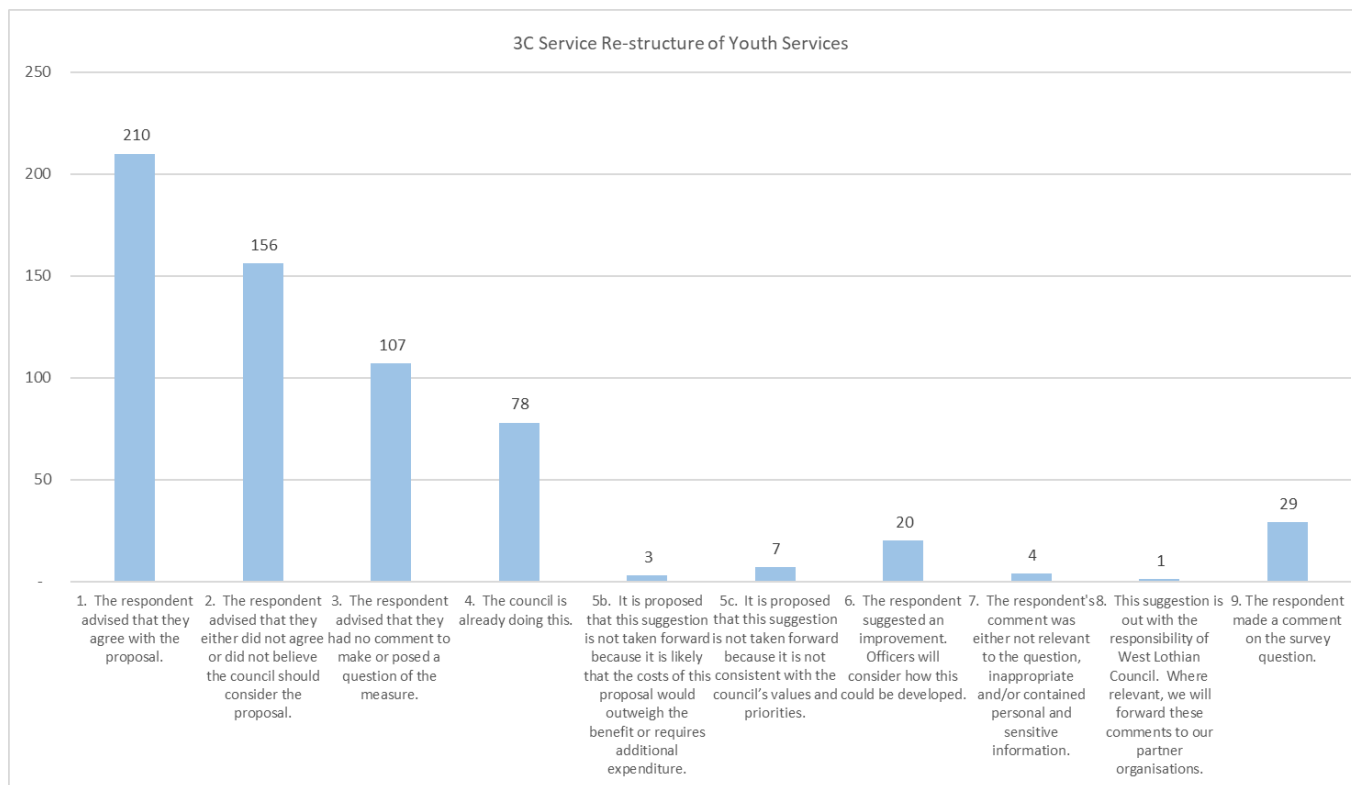
- 31. **Proposal:** The council will make sure that all resources available for early learning and childcare are fully utilised to support high quality service delivery. The council will realign provision and staffing in nurseries to match parental choice for nursery placements, and deliver an option for parents/carers to purchase additional hours of early learning and childcare in council settings.
- 32. A total of 720 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 3c: Service Re-structure of Youth Services

Estimated saving: £500,000

- 33. **Proposal:** 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.
- 34. A total of 615 comments were received for this proposal.



## 4 Environment, Climate Change and Reducing Energy Use

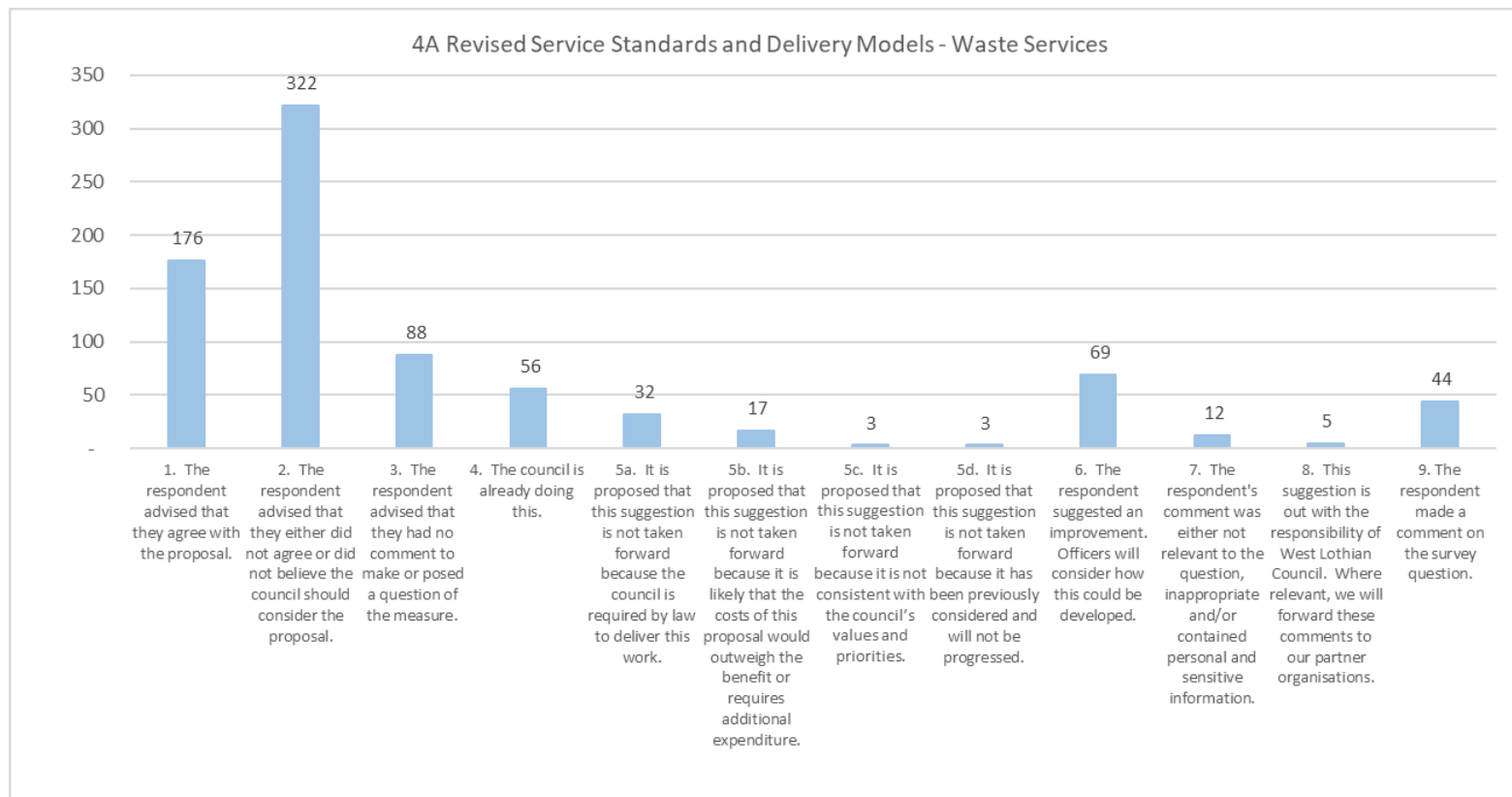
35. **Measures totalling £4.8 million over the next three years have been identified that would change the services we provide to improve the local environment and infrastructure, and ensure that the council continues to have efficient and effectively managed assets to support service delivery. This will include new standards and delivery models that will ensure we continue to protect the built and natural environment in West Lothian more effectively.**
36. There were seven proposals contained in this section of the consultation. A summary of the proposals and the emergent themes from the analysis of the 5,094 comments received is outlined.

### Proposal 4a: Revised Service Standards and Delivery Models – Waste Services

Estimated saving: £336,000

37. **Proposal:** 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.

38. A total of 827 comments were received for this proposal.



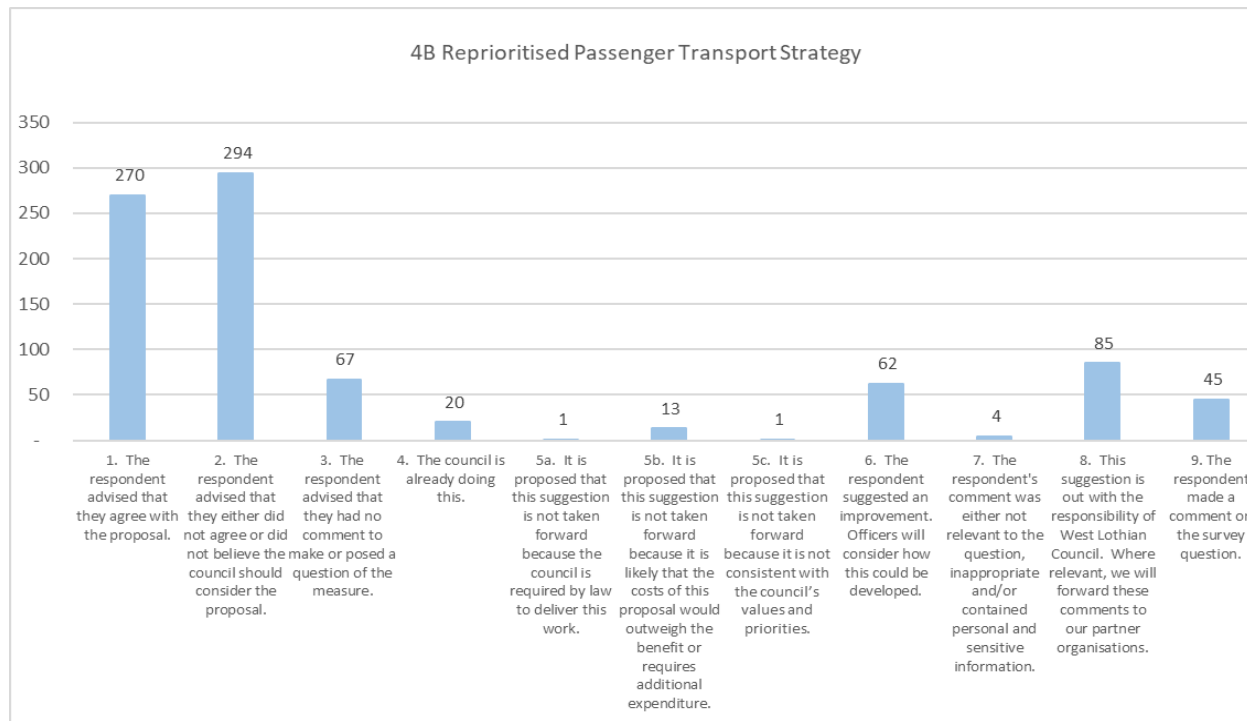
Proposal 4b: Reprioritised Passenger Transport Strategy

Estimated saving: £2.2 million

39. **Proposal:** 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 which are in addition to existing national schemes.

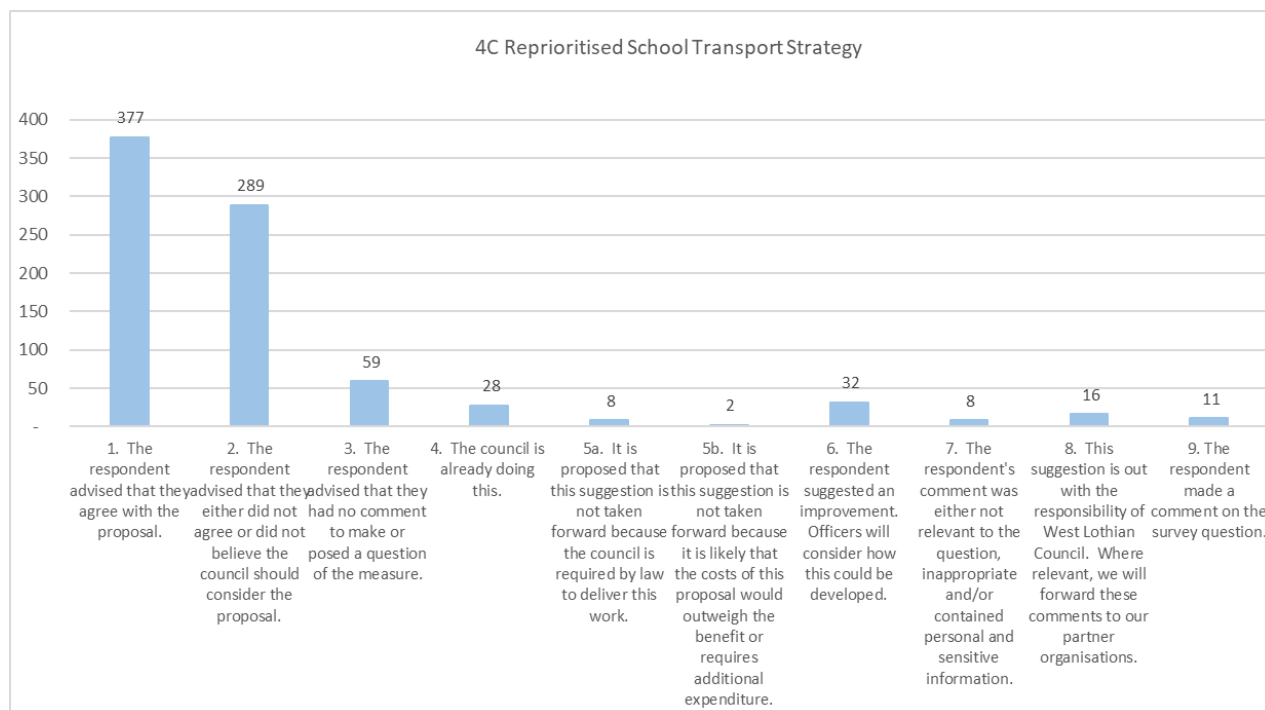
40. A total of 862 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 4c: Reprioritised School Transport Strategy

Estimated saving: £1.4 million

- 41. **Proposal:** 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.
- 42. A total of 830 comments were received for this proposal.

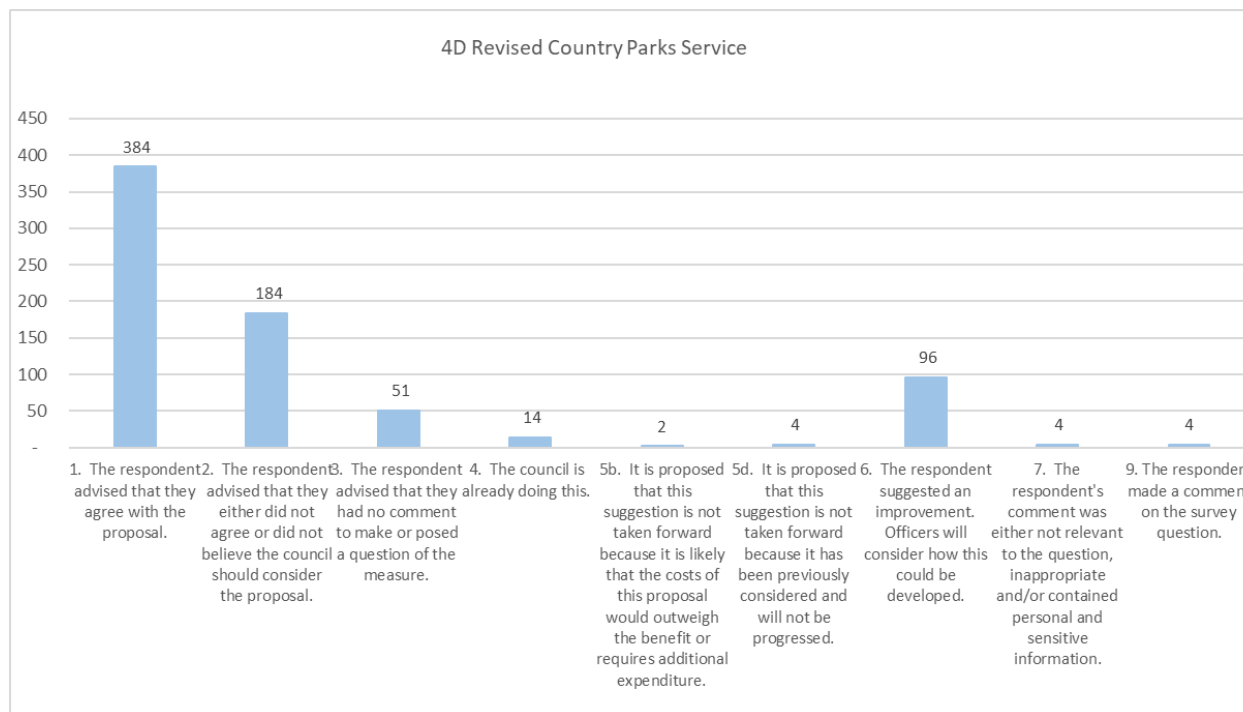




Proposal 4d: Revised Country Parks Service

Estimated saving: £95,000

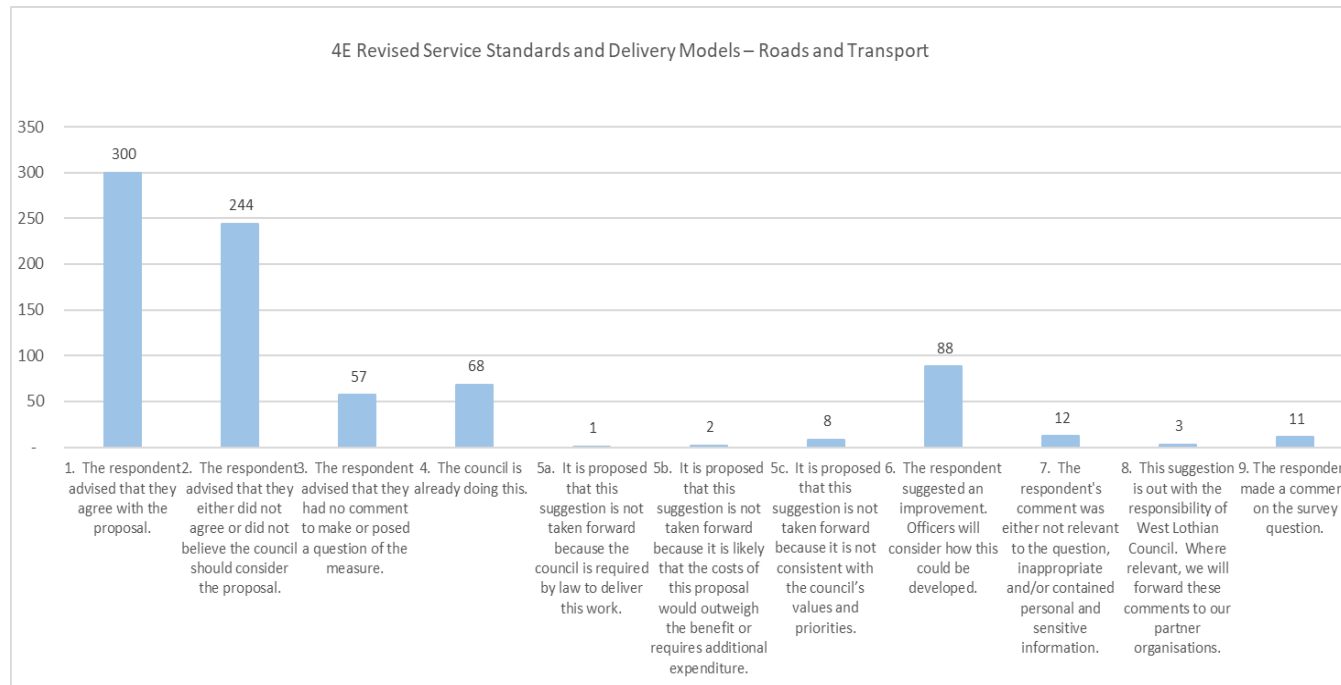
- 43. **Proposal:** It is proposed that animal attraction at Beecraigs Country Park is closed, with the animals being relocated to alternative animal attraction venue(s) out with council operations. This attraction currently operates at a net loss and closure is expected to have minimal impact on future visitor numbers.
- 44. A total of 743 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 4e: Revised Service Standards and Delivery Models – Roads and Transport

Estimated saving: £246,000

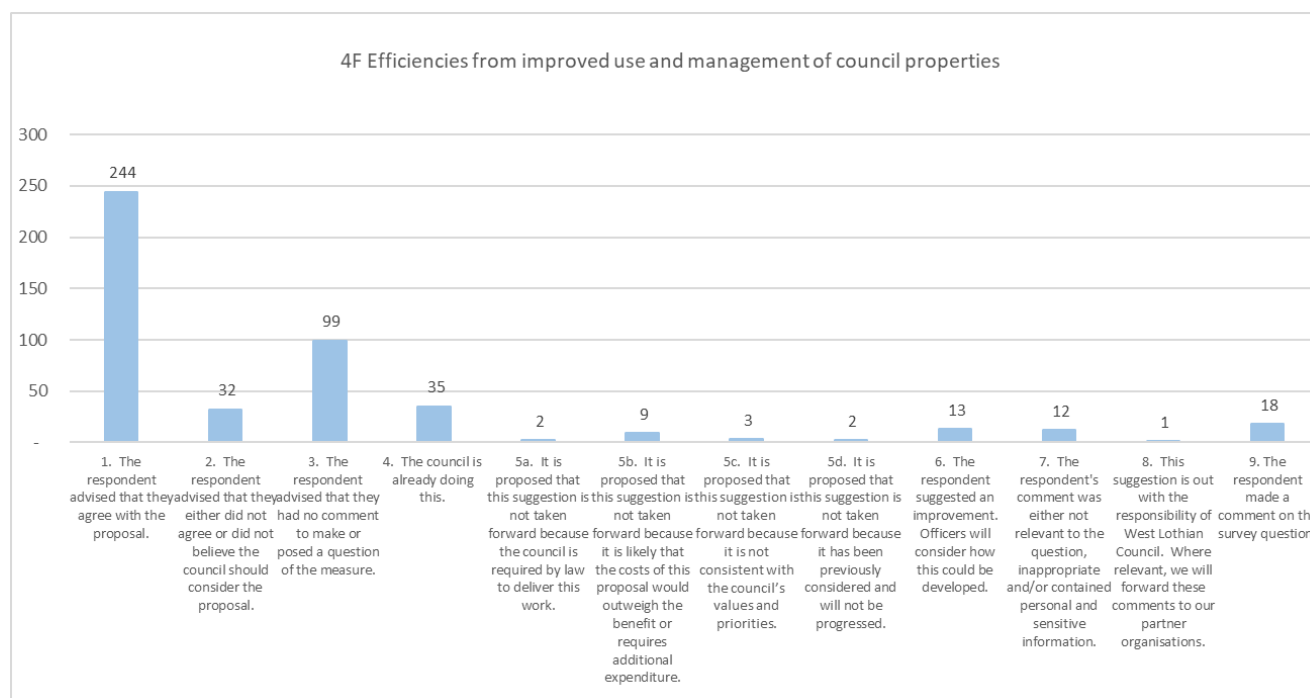
- 45. **Proposal:** There is a requirement to review service provision and standards to make sure that the service is delivered in an effective and efficient way whilst meeting council priorities. Service delivery, including winter maintenance, will be changed to focus on statutory (legal) requirements with an updated approach to asset management. This will mean some services, such as festive lighting, will no longer be provided by the council.
- 46. A total of 794 comments were received for this proposal.



Proposal 4f: Efficiencies from Improved Use and Management of Council Properties

Estimated saving: £279,000

- 47. **Proposal:** 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.
- 48. A total of 470 comments were received for this proposal.

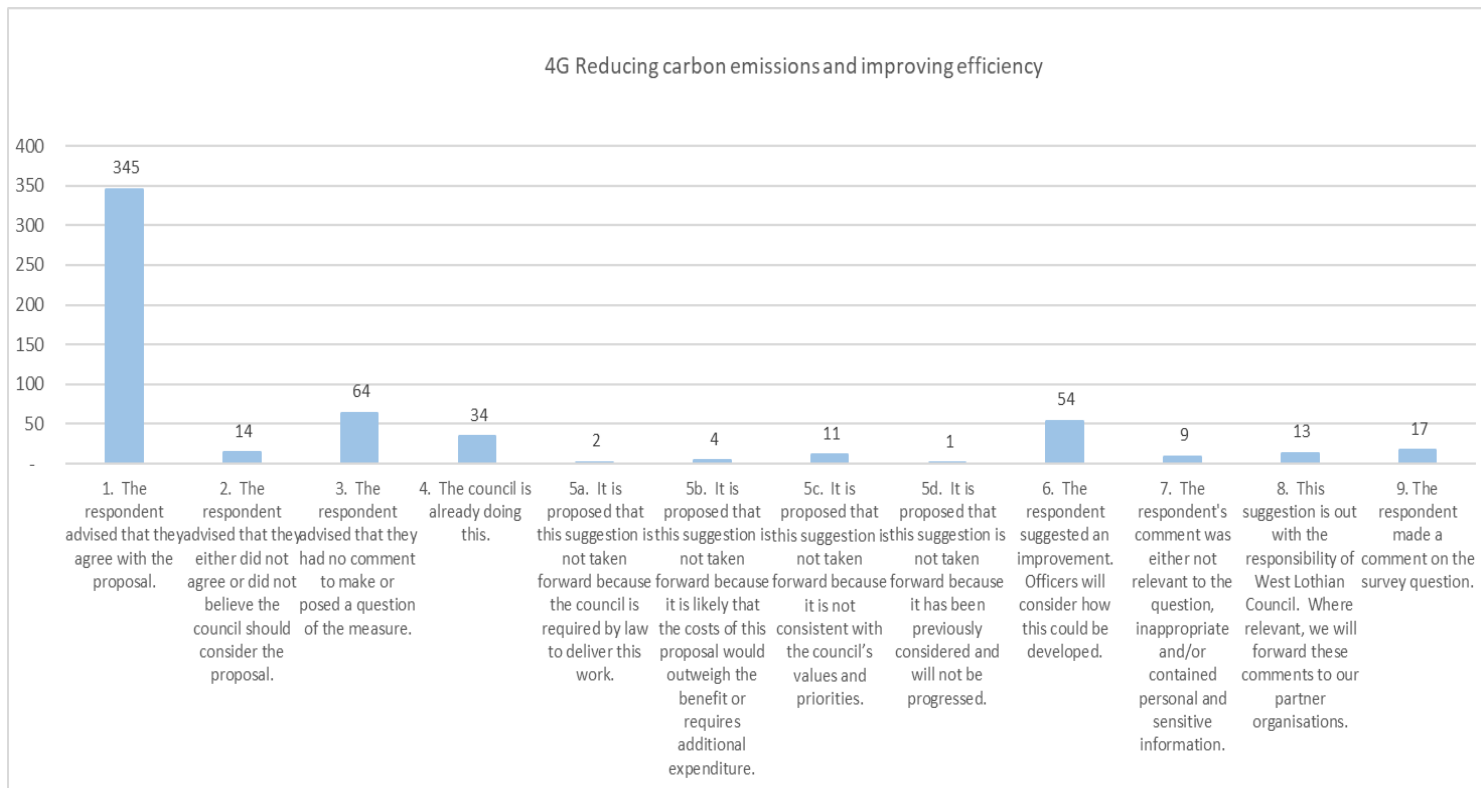


Proposal 4g: Reducing Carbon Emissions and Improving Efficiency

Estimated saving: £245,000

49. **Proposal:** 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.

50. A total of 568 comments were received for this proposal.

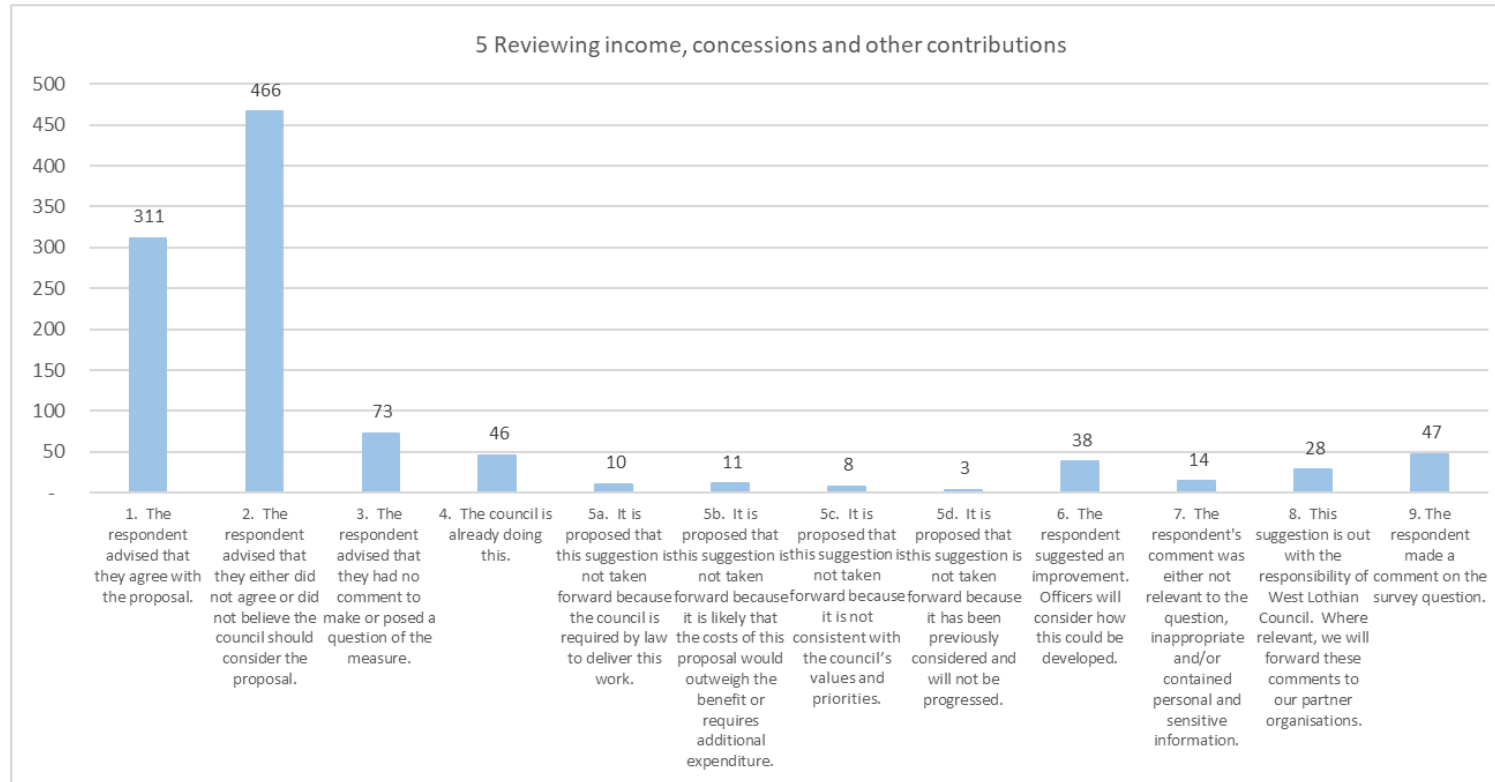


## 5 Reviewing Income, Concessions and Other Contributions

51. **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.**
52. **Proposal:** 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. 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

## WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say (Phase 2)- Comment Categorisation

53. A total of 1,055 comments were received for this proposal.



# Consultation – Council Tax

## 6 Have your say on Council Tax

54. **Proposal:** The majority of funding for council services (81%) comes from Scottish Government grant. In addition, 19% of total funding needed to deliver essential services to our local communities is from council tax. The council is required by law to agree council tax levels in advance of each financial year. Council tax levels for the next years have not yet been agreed by West Lothian Council, however the council is basing its long-term financial planning on the assumption that council tax will increase by at least 3.5% for all properties each year between 2023/24 and 2027/28. For a band D property, a 3.5% increase would represent an annual increase in 2023/24 of £46 (or 88p per week).
55. West Lothian Council has the tenth lowest council tax level in Scotland and the current band D rate is £32 lower than the average rate across all Scottish councils and over £650 lower than the average rate across councils in England. Although council tax is applied to all houses, not all households are eligible to pay council tax.
56. Various council tax reductions, exemptions and discounts are available to reduce the tax burden for the most vulnerable in society and to protect low income households. Most properties in West Lothian (75%) are in the lowest council tax bands of A to D.
57. Increases in council tax would help reduce the amount of cuts necessary and increase the amount of funding the council has to spend on local services. The council has budgeted to raise £93.249 million from council tax in the current year (2022/23) and a 1% increase in council tax in 2023/24 would only raise an additional £934,000. If council tax is not increased by 3.5% each year, the council's projected budget gap would increase by a further £17.9 million, requiring additional cuts to services. The council is keen for you to comment on how council tax can be used to support local services.
- The council's future budget estimates assume increases in council tax of at least 3.5% each year. If council tax was not increased by 3.5% per annum over 2023/24 to 2027/28 this would increase the budget gap by £17.9 million. If you don't support the annual increase how would you find the additional income to bridge the increased budget gap?

- Would you support an increase of more than 3.5% if all funding raised above this was spent on key identified priorities, such as schools and social care?

58. There were 1,175 comments received relating to the questions in this section of the consultation.

