

**TOUGH CHOICES FEEDBACK RESPONSES  
FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDERS GROUP**

**DEVELOPMENT & TRANSPORT - PART 1  
5 AUGUST 2010**

Number	Representee	Comments	Tough Choices Ref
1	West Lothian Credit Union Forum	Legislation is being introduced either in August or October this year to enable credit unions to offer financial services to businesses and community groups. Small businesses in particular have suffered from lack of available credit since the recession, and credit unions will be in a better position to promote these services through WLCUF's existing links with businesses and West Lothian Financial inclusion Network partners. The building industry was a big employer in West Lothian. Many of the subcontractors employed less than 10 people - bricklayers, plasterers, block pavers etc and as the building industry finally moves out of recession these services will be required again. Helping restart these subcontractors and encouraging them to employ locally will reduce unemployment and the associated benefits provided by WLC.	DT4

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2	Craigshill Community Council	<p>Craigshill Community Council held a special meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> June to consider the matter and our comments are as follows.</p> <p><b>General</b></p> <p>We have no objections in principle to the Modernisation programme, to flexible working, pooling of administrative resources, changes to Procurement systems, changes to the Management structure, Buildings Rationalisation and Partnership Working. In theory, most of these proposals are common sense and worth supporting. We would like the relevant PDSPs to take account however of the following specific points:</p> <p>Craigshill is currently participating in a Better Community Engagement project, part of which involves looking at use of building spaces. We ask that no decisions are made, by your Council, regarding any buildings within Craigshill, until that consultation process is complete in mid 2011. The premises concerned include Shiel House, Craigs Farm and the library.</p> <p>Craigshill is an area of multiple deprivation – arguably the most deprived in the whole of the county. Your documents make reference to protection of the most vulnerable. Your Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels need to have, throughout this process, at the forefront of their thinking, the steps they should take to ensure the protection of the most vulnerable. We would like to know specifically what the PDSPs propose to put those nice words into actual practice.</p> <p>With regard to proposed staffing reductions of about 1,000, we note the assurance given, at the Howden Park meeting on 26 April, by the Chief Executive that the intention is to achieve that figure by natural wastage if possible. While this reduction method has advantages, we would point out that the turnover of “chiefs” is much less than that of “Indians”. Many more low-paid staff have to go to achieve the same figure as losing a department head. We note the proposed “saving” from the management structure changes but wonder if any of it has actually been achieved yet. We are however acutely aware of numerous staffing reductions having already been made amongst lower level frontline staff.</p> <p>Partnership working is a great concept, and one to be supported.</p>	

	<p>Craigshill Community Council Contd.</p>	<p>There are, however, issues with Council and NHS staff, for example, working together but on different systems/ servers. This needs to be addressed but without incurring extra consultancy costs.</p> <p>The Council needs to consider the importance of youth work and of adult education in an area of multiple deprivation such as Craigshill. Youth work, in partnership with local police, gives purpose to young people while adult education is essential to help people out of a cycle of deprivation. In particular, if services to young people in school and community are to be reduced, then we, in Craigshill, would like to see a real push on getting funding from other sources. And we would appreciate practical help from Council Officers to do this.</p> <p>We did consider whether or not to support a rise in Council Tax as one means of achieving the monetary target but rejected that idea. Craigshill Community Council would be against any Council Tax rise.</p> <p>Partnership and Resources</p> <p>We would be in favour of saving money by cutting out the Council’s Bulletin paper – it must cost a significant sum of money.</p> <p><b>Education</b> See comments in other sections.</p> <p><b>Culture and Leisure</b> There is a proposed saving of almost £600k in the provision of community facilities at secondary schools. We would like the relevant PDSP to carry out an impact assessment on each affected community group to see how best they can be helped to continue their activities elsewhere.</p> <p><b>Social Policy</b> We note “there will be constraints on the budgets available to support individuals to remain at home where 24 hours individual staff support is required”. We believe the key word there is “required” and we expect the PDSP to put in place measures to ensure those requirements are met.</p> <p>If charges are to be introduced for a range of care and support services, such as telecare, housing support and, particularly, personal care for those under 65, we have some issues we would want the PDSP to consider as follows: Consultation with users/ stakeholders is promised.</p>	
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	<p>Craigshill Community Council Contd.</p>	<p>What is to be the nature and timescale of this consultation? We would wish to be included.</p> <p>If charges are to be introduced, whatever the level, your Council should be aware that there will be increased expectations among service users and carers. People will be less likely to tolerate poor service, lack of continuity, late attendance and so on. You need to have a framework in place to deal with a much-increased level of complaints. How many people do you believe will be affected by charging amongst Craigshill's residents (we would like you to tell us the figure) and what steps do you propose to take to make sure the vulnerable still receive proper care and protection?</p> <p>Lastly, we wonder what proportion of the county's looked-after children are in Craigshill? Your PDSP also needs to be aware of the number of children from elsewhere being looked after at Beattie Campus. We are concerned that Craigshill will take a large hit amongst cuts for this particular grouping.</p> <p><b>Health and Care</b></p> <p>We have 3 specific queries for your PDSP to consider:</p> <p>The proposed reduction in Choose Life courses is of concern to us. Craigshill has recently experienced a significant number of suicides amongst young men aged between 17 and 34. We would wish to be consulted, as a matter of high importance, about how you propose to prevent unnecessary loss of life.</p> <p>We note the proposed reduction of £124k in Alcohol awareness projects. We believe positive progress is currently being made in Craigshill with regard to young people and the police. We are concerned this proposal may be a backward step.</p> <p>We see you are proposing to end the working agreement with the College for the Care Learning Centre, thus saving £33k. We would like the PDSP to be told specifically what current courses exist and where is the future provision within the council's learning and development functions?</p> <p><b>Voluntary Organisations</b></p> <p>We note that consultation is promised with "service users". Is that the organisations themselves or their clients? What is to be the nature and timescale of this consultation? We would wish to be included.</p>	
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	<p>Craigshill Community Council Contd.</p>	<p>Which organisations in Craigshill are to have cuts imposed and how much? Your PDSP needs to be able to assess the overall impact on Craigshill.</p> <p><b>Services for the Community</b> No specific comment.</p> <p><b>Environment</b> We have a number of comments under this heading as follows: Why no proposed savings in Country Parks £1.31 million spend? Why no savings in the Civic Catering budget of £280k? Why no cuts in the £179k Internal Mail delivery service if the number of buildings is being reduced from 43 to 17? No cuts at all seem to be suggested in the finance function of £350k! The proposal to reduce gully cleaning from once a year to once every 2 years is a short term expedient, perhaps costing more in the long term. After the problems experienced over the last winter, the idea that winter maintenance be reduced to normal working hours only, except on main roads, is unlikely to gain widespread public support. Has the Council no thought of improvement of service? The proposed termination of 30 mini tractor leases, for footway winter maintenance, may be the right approach but it needs to be combined with proposals to deal with the snow and ice. Many years ago, in Edinburgh, there was a byelaw requiring businesses and householders to clear their own frontages during winter weather. It was normal practice for youngsters to help elderly neighbours with this. Could something along these lines be considered? With regard to the proposal to charge £25 for bulky uplifts, the relevant PDSP needs to build in costs for clearing the resultant fly tipping. The Facilities Management proposals for primary schools to be only open term time goes on to suggest consolidation of all letting to fully utilise community centres and high schools. Your PDSP needs to be reminded that there is no longer a high school in Craigshill. Please also refer to our opening comments, in this submission, about allowing the Better Community Engagement process in Craigshill to come to an ordered conclusion in the middle of next year.</p>	
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	Craigshill Community Council Contd.	<p>In the meantime proper consultation needs to take place with groups such as Letham Lemurs.</p> <p><b>Development and Transport</b></p> <p>The proposal to introduce charging at council owned car parks would destroy the Council's own argument against Land Securities proposed charges for Livingston.</p> <p><b>Finally</b></p> <p>We have 4 Councillors and I would hope to have constructive responses from each of them to our paper. Ideally we would appreciate meeting with any, or all, of them to discuss how they can help. In addition we believe we deserve the attention of a senior Council official, such as Graham Hope, and would welcome a meeting with him.</p>	
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3	Armadale Community Council	<p>Part 9C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider overall impact by inter-department consultation e.g. Why spend a great deal of money on creating a town centre space then ruin it with a derelict council office?</li> <li>• Why spend money building new facilities when there is no money and the old facilities are adequate and could wait a few years to be replaced?</li> </ul>	
4	Member of the Public	<p>Stop erecting so many traffic lights. In Livingston you sit at so many unnecessary traffic lights. Roundabouts were a much better idea.</p>	
5	FSB West Lothian Branch	<p>Many local authorities across Scotland are currently consulting stakeholder organisations on how and where to make savings in council services in the coming years. There is no doubt that councils face unprecedented financial pressures and this will mean cutbacks to various services and increases in charges and costs for services that remain.</p> <p>West Lothian Council is responsible for a vast range of services which affect the local business community. Cutbacks could seriously damage the services and infrastructure used by local businesses, as well as having a negative impact on economic recovery in Scotland. The FSB is keen to work closely with West Lothian Council to ensure that cutbacks, that affect small businesses within the county, are kept to an absolute minimum.</p> <p>When considering their cutbacks the FSB would like the council to carefully consider the following key areas.</p> <p><b>Economic Development &amp; Business Gateway</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The FSB believes that all councils should have economic growth as a key priority. This means creating and maintaining an environment which encourages businesses to grow and thrive. Small businesses in Scotland were responsible for creating most private sector jobs over the last ten years and they will be crucial to returning our economy to growth.</li> </ul>	



	<p>FSB West Lothian Branch contd.</p>	<p><b>Better Regulation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good regulatory practice is important for both consumers and businesses and councils have a key role to play, since they are responsible for much of the detail around implementation and enforcement of legislation that affects business. Recent evidence has shown that local authorities in Scotland have demonstrated examples of poor performance and have not developed a joined-up approach to regulation e.g. RRG report on implementation of the Licensing Act, Consumer Focus report on trading standards, poor implementation of the Services Directive.</li> <li>• Councils must take this responsibility seriously and implement adequate procedures to comply with the principles of better regulation. As a first step, some form of impact assessment should be introduced for new regulatory regimes and changes to existing conditions or charges which affect businesses – this is especially important in light of expected increases in fees.</li> <li>• The regulatory responsibilities of councils often fall across a number of departments and are not limited to trading standards and environmental health. A whole-council approach needs to be taken to ensure a consistent approach, to ensure discretionary activities such as advice and information for businesses are maintained, and to consider where activities (such as inspections) can be streamlined with other services and/or organisations to provide greater efficiency.</li> </ul> <p><b>Town Centres</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most communities value a vibrant town centre, but gradual decline in many areas has been compounded by the impact of the recession. Local authorities have a key role to play, helping to co-ordinate and support town centre regeneration, as well as the being providers of key town-centre services.</li> <li>• The Town Centre Regeneration Fund provided a welcome boost to many areas, but this investment will be worthless if not backed up by adequate levels of maintenance by the local authority. Rather than salami-slice maintenance and cleaning budgets, councils should seriously consider alternative options for maintaining our town centres, as part of wider discussions about town centre strategies.</li> </ul>	
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	FSB West Lothian Branch Contd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Town centre health checks should be maintained and inventive solutions considered to reduce empty units in high streets.</li><li>• Business Improvement Areas (BIDs) can play a bigger role but do represent an additional cost for businesses and any change in their responsibilities must be transparent.</li><li>• Businesses should be consulted regarding changes to parking charges and the impact of changes on the town centre should be assessed before decisions are taken.</li></ul>	
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6	W L Tourism Forum	<p>West Lothian Tourism Forum exists to represent the views of tourism businesses in West Lothian and to work in partnership to promote and develop West Lothian as a visitor destination. The Forum contributes towards the governance of VisitWestLothian. A modest investment to promote and develop local tourism has potential to yield substantial economic and employment benefits whilst enhancing the quality of life of local residents. Tourism is a growth industry, but one which is increasingly competitive so it is essential that investment is maintained in proportion to that of competing local authorities. The Forum is disappointed at the Council's proposal to substantially cut funding to VisitWestLothian. The proposed £75k reduction in funding would require the organisation to refocus its priorities and restrict its scope of action. We feel that any greater reduction would seriously compromise the organisation's capacity to achieve the purposes for which it was established. The Forum is conscious that building a West Lothian visitor brand and the development of local visitor products are long-term processes, and that many actions already set in train through VisitWestLothian will take some time to bear fruit. It is our real concern that too deep a cut at this stage may waste much of the investment that the Council has already made in VisitWestLothian, and nullify much of the substantial voluntary investment in the organisation made by the Forum and by other members of the VisitWestLothian board.</p>	DT 2
7	Murieston Community Council	<p>Overall, the Council's Tough Choices Ahead plans appear supportive of those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged and we would certainly support this broad principle of ensuring the most disadvantaged in society receive the most support - and would encourage the Council to maintain this position. We would also support the principle that any budget cuts should be targeted, as opposed to a straight line cut across all services, and that these should come from more efficient working which should enable a viable service level to remain. However, there seems to be scope to explore other avenues for achieving efficiencies which are yet to be explored.</p>	

	Murieston Community Council Contd.	We have put these alternative ideas, along with some concerns about the current proposals. <b>Planning:</b> Planning is of key importance for Murieston residents and we oppose any changes to the Planning Service which dilutes the application of planning law, particularly to the advantage of developers.	DT 7
8	Member of the Public	Where will Library and CIS staff members find the time - never mind the space - to do their own work as well as running "employability activities"? Is it proposed that staff should plan and run courses as well?	DT5