

DATA LABEL: OFFICIAL



COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

YOUR COUNCIL YOUR SAY 2025 – BUDGET CONSULTATION

REPORT BY DEPUTER CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report provides the Council Executive with an update on the responses received from respondents to the Your Council Your Say budget consultation.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council Executive:

1. Notes the update on the engagement process and responses received to the Phase 3 consultation;
2. Notes a response rate of 10,051 responses and over 28,400 comments received for the Phase 3 officer budget options and council tax; and
3. Agrees the remaining key dates and activities associated with the budget consultation.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I.	Council Values	Open, honest and accountable; and collaborate, inclusive and adaptive.
II.	Policy and Legal	The council is required to approve a balanced revenue budget for each financial year. Audit Scotland and CIPFA best practice guidance recommends medium term financial plans are prepared.

An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) provides a framework to enable the council to comply with its statutory obligations taking account of equality, socioeconomic disadvantage, sustainability, child poverty, the environment, climate change and the need to promote human rights, including the rights of children and young people. The options set out in the report will, where required, be subject to an IIA to be reported as part of the budget setting process.

The Consumer Scotland Act 2020 places a duty on the council, when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise their functions, to have regard to: a) the impact of those decisions on consumers in Scotland, and b) the desirability of reducing harm to consumers in Scotland. The options set out in this report will, where required, be

		subject to a Consumer Duty Impact Assessment as part of the budget setting process.
III.	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	No implications at this stage.
IV.	Impact on performance and performance indicators	Ongoing government financial restraint has implications for the council's budget and performance.
V.	Relevance to Local Outcome Improvement Plan	The revenue budget provides resources necessary to help deliver the Local Outcome Improvement Plan. Effective prioritisation of resources is essential to achieving key outcomes.
VI.	Resources (Financial, Staffing and Property)	The consultation noted that, at that time, the council faced a projected funding gap of £23 million in 2026/27 and 2027/28 before any application of previously agreed budget savings. Officers are continuing to update the budget model, but given the pressures faced and uncertainty around the local government finance settlement, the budget gap is expected to increase.
		The public consultation will assist in the prioritisation and allocation of resources to activities that have the greatest impact, whilst ensuring balanced budgets for the remaining two years of the five-year period to 2027/28.
VII.	Consideration at PDSP	It is proposed to consider the feedback from the consultation at Special PDSPs at the start of February 2026.
VIII.	Details of consultations	None at this stage.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

WL2028 Your Council, Your Say

The council has an agreed three stage approach to public consultation on the council's priorities and future revenue budget strategy. Phase 1 of the consultation focused on the strategic direction and priorities for the council and Phase 2 included budget saving options to help address the anticipated budget gap along with questions relating to local taxation.

Across the two phases 7,605 responses and over 36,000 individual comments were received. The results from both phases were reported to Council Executive and PDSPs during 2022 and 2023. The results of Phase 1 helped inform the Corporate Plan, approved by Council in May 2023, and Phase 2 helped inform the five-year financial strategy approved by Council in February 2023.

The approach agreed by Council Executive in June 2022 included a further phase of consultation focusing on savings options for 2026/27 and 2027/28. Council Executive agreed on 26 June 2024 that Phase 3 of the public consultation be rescheduled to 2025 to allow a review of the council's operating model to ensure it aligns with agreed priorities and statutory obligations, whilst identifying savings to address the remaining budget gap in 2026/27 and 2027/28.

The re-phasing of the third strand of the consultation to Autumn 2025 was done to provide some further time to understand the impact of risks that may crystallise in areas such as pay awards, Scottish Government funding for teachers and national insurance and inflation.

As noted in the consultation, the council faced a revenue funding gap of £23 million in 2026/27 and 2027/28. At that time, based on assumptions in the revenue budget report to West Lothian Council on 25 February 2025 and after application of previously agreed savings, it was forecast that the council will have a remaining revenue budget gap of £9.7 million over the next two years. In line with the established approach to budget strategy, officers have been updating assumptions in the revenue budget model. With the later announcement of the Scottish Budget and local government finance settlement in January 2026 and continued uncertainty around elements of the budget, specifically recurring budget pressures in the current year, a finalised budget gap for 2026/27 and 2027/28 is currently not available. An update on the local government finance settlement and its implications for the council's budget model will be presented to Council Executive in early February 2026 for consideration.

On 14 October 2025, Council Executive was provided with an update on the engagement process and timescales associated with Phase 3 of the public consultation which commenced on 16 October 2025 and closed on 16 November 2025. The remainder of this report provides an update on the results associated with this strand of the consultation.

D.2 Engagement Approach

The council used a wide range of well tested consultation methods to promote the consultation and to engage with customers, staff and partners. The consultation document was included as a pull-out in the Winter edition of Bulletin which was delivered to all households in West Lothian from 27 October 2025. Paper (physical) copies were also available in libraries and Partnership Centres from 16 October 2025.

An online version of the consultation featured on a specially designed micro-site and was promoted via the council's website. QR codes were widely promoted to drive participants to the consultation and the micro-site attracted significant traffic. There was also specific and targeted messaging used across a wide range of social media platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram and TikTok, etc. The messaging directed users of these platforms to the online survey and key community partners received a direct email with details and a link to the consultation. A Facebook live question and answer session was also held with senior accountants in the Financial Management Unit to answer queries and questions posed by members of the public to generate interest and encourage participation in the consultation. The local media also promoted the council's consultation.

Parents and carers of young people based in early learning and childcare settings and schools received a link to the consultation via Group Call.

Internal staff global emails and messages via Teams were also issued to staff and Heads of Service were asked to encourage all staff to participate and to ensure staff had the time and resource to take part. Regular reminders were issued and participation was encouraged via senior management teams and team meetings within service areas.

The West Lothian Integrated Joint Board (IJB) have also recently consulted with people in West Lothian to seek their views on proposals and associated changes to service delivery in certain social care services. Results of the IJB consultation will be reported separately by the IJB.

Engagement with under-represented groups and individuals

As in previous consultations, the council delivered an engagement programme with specific groups and individuals who may be less likely to take part to help provide support in completing the consultation. This work was largely delivered by staff engaging with key groups through in-person consultation response gathering, either with individuals or groups. Prior to the consultation launching, services identified key groups and individuals, the techniques to be used and how engagement should

take place. In the planning there was a focus on ensuring that support was provided to enable engagement from individuals with protected characteristics and key representative groups.

A Lead Officer was responsible for carrying out the engagement and reporting the engagement on a weekly basis while the consultation was live. The key principles of the engagement and consultation were based on:

- Engagement being undertaken by staff within Service areas already engaging with the client or resident, often as part of existing engagement or an arranged meeting. This was to ensure a familiarity and trust in the officer supporting the engagement.
- A range of engagement techniques being utilised to ensure the maximise engagement. Techniques will match the needs to the individual or groups. Officers provided support to complete the consultation response for those who needed it.
- Officers supported residents and groups to respond to the consultation via digital methods in the first instance. Paper copies were made available where required, these were returned to the Civic Centre for inputting centrally.

Examples of engagement included:

- Regeneration Officers focused on engaging residents in areas of deprivation to support completion including, engaging with residents in community settings or attending groups within the community such as community gardens, local Foodbanks and libraries. Electronic devices and paper copies were taken to enable engagement. Areas included Boghall, Armadale, Fauldhouse, Stoneyburn, Whitburn, Blackburn, Knightsridge and Craigshill.
- Housing staff provided support to residents in Blackburn Homeless Unit, Strathbrock Homeless Unit, Hotel Accommodation at Kaim Park, Simpson Hotel, Bluebell Hotels and to young people in temporary accommodation.
- Clients engaged in employability services and those accessing Advice Shop Services were supported to complete the consultation as part of their appointment with an advisor or while waiting to see an advisor.
- Housing with Care staff provided support to tenants with one-to-one support and arranged group sessions to support tenants to complete the consultation. The responses were completed via paper copies for this client group.
- A series of engagement sessions were held with Day Care parents and carers to make them aware of the consultation and support completion if required.
- One-to-one support was provided during appointments for adults using the service based at the Ability Centre and during outreach community sessions.
- Both the West Lothian Community Race Forum and Faith Group were supported during one of their meetings to complete the consultation as a group.

1,296 residents, either as an individual or as part of a group least likely to engage in the consultation completed a response. The specific groups of clients and residents supported are noted in the table below:

Table 1

Unemployed residents being supported by Access2employment including young people	Adults with dyslexia/literacy/IT needs/numeracy issues being supported by Adult Learning
Those accessing the Advice Shop and Advice Shop services	Kinship carers
Resident being supported by the Supported Employment Service	Clients on statutory orders/unpaid work with Justice Services
Housing with Care Tenants	Parents engaged in parenting and Early Years provision through Social Policy
Older People's Day Services	Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking young people

Day Services Parents and Carers	Adults engaged in ESOL provision
Service users at the Ability Centre	Parents engaged in adult and family learning programmes
Adults being supported by Occupational Therapists	Young people attending youth clubs ran by Youth Services
Service users of the Mental Health Advocacy Project	Young people participating in employability skills development and training programmes
Carers	Young people attending the Glitter Cannons LGBT Youth Group
Young people entitled to Aftercare Service	Care experienced young people in secondary schools
Homeless Unit residents	Young people engaged through street work provision
Homeless customers in Emergency Accommodation	Members of the Community Race Forum
Refugees as part of Afghan programme	Members of the Faith Group
Residents living within regeneration areas	

Engagement with young people and the school community

During the consultation there was intensive work carried out within Education to ensure that young people were able to participate in the consultation. This was the first time this engagement had been carried out in this format.

Specific support was put in place within schools to enable young people to engage and complete the consultation. Education officers created mechanisms to maximise engagement with the young people within both Primary and Secondary schools.

In-person and online sessions were delivered that brought together young people from across Primary and Secondary School. The sessions focused on providing children and young people with information on the current budget position to set the context and purpose of the budget consultation and used service design tools, such as personas, to support them in considering the diverse range of needs and priorities within the community and understand what is being asked of them.

In small groups children and young people went through the consultation and completed the questions. This was done via a digital app used by young people, which ensured views were captured in a way that they were comfortable with. This was then inputted into the main consultation.

Those who took part in the sessions were provided with the information and tools to encourage others within their schools to complete the consultation. Staff were also provided with the resources to run the session with classes or with key groups within the school setting. This included pupil councils in secondary schools and care experienced young people. Specific support was put in place for those groups to engage.

1,567 children and young people engaged and completed the consultation, from the engagement carried out highlighted above, from a total of 74 Primary and Secondary schools. This is in addition to the numbers of young people reported above via the community-based engagement.

Feedback from pupils and staff on the involvement and engagement approach was very positive and will be used as a mechanism for engaging going forward.

D.3 Phase 3 Consultation

The Phase 3 consultation was open for over a four-week period from 16 October 2025 until 16 November 2025. The Your Council Your Say budget consultation sought views on how the projected £23 million budget gap over the next two years can be met.

The consultation explained the reasons for the budget gap and suggested five key ways (themes) to balance the council's budget, become more sustainable and allow the council to deliver core services:

1. Increasing Efficiency and Developing New Ways of Working
2. Generating Income
3. Reducing the Number of Council Facilities
4. Responding to Demographic Change
5. Reducing Spending on Non-Statutory Services

Respondents were asked whether they agreed if these are the ways the council should make budget savings and, if so, how they should be implemented. If respondents disagreed with what was being proposed, they were asked to provide suggestions on alternative ways they think the council could make the savings.

Under each of the five themes in the consultation, there was a list of options proposed by officers for further exploration. The options came from three sources:

- Suggestions from Heads of Service
- An analysis of savings measures implemented by other local authorities
- An analysis of the services provided by West Lothian Council, and whether they are statutory and non-statutory

The consultation also sought views on Council Tax and respondents were asked if they would support an increase in Council Tax if all funding raised was spent on key services.

Unlike previous consultations, the proposed saving options set in the Phase 3 consultation did not add up to exactly the amount that needs to be saved. The consultation highlighted that the proposed options were not agreed measures, but rather an illustration of action as suggested by council officers that could be taken under each of the five themes identified.

D.4 Phase 3 Results

The council has received 10,051 responses to the Phase 3 consultation from a wide range of stakeholders, with the majority of responses being received via the online survey, with 310 responses received via a paper copy of the consultation document. The response rate is unprecedented and exceeds the response rate of any other budget consultation undertaken by the council as set out below.

Table 2

Consultation	Response	Individual Comments
YCYS Phase 3 – 2025	10,051	28,430
YCYS Phase 2 – 2022	2,560	21,689
YCYS Phase 1 – 2022	5,045	14,004
Transforming Your Council – 2017	7,026	45,000+
Delivering Better Outcomes – 2014	3,467	40,145
Delivering Better Outcomes – 2012	2,953	17,738
Tough Choices - 2010	1,502	Unknown

The majority of the respondents (79.86%) are identifying themselves as individuals, with the remainder identifying as employees (16.31%) and groups/organisations (3.83%). The groups/organisations named as having responded are listed in Appendix 1 at section 25.

View of officer options

The Phase 3 consultation comprised 48 officer options, grouped under 5 themes. A summary of the results is set out in Table 3.

Table 3

Theme and Question	Yes	No	Number of Officer Options	Total number of comments
1 – Increasing Efficiency and Developing New Ways of Working: do you agree that Council should look for more efficient ways of working?	9,002 (91.37%)	850 (8.63%)	11	6,593
2 – Generating Income: do you agree that the Council should look for opportunities to generate income, including by raising fees and charges?	4,465 (59.48%)	3,042 (40.52%)	4	3,904
3 – Reducing the Number of Council Facilities: do you agree that the Council should reduce the number of facilities and building to help focus spending on maintaining key services?	3,895 (55.59%)	3,112 (44.41%)	4	3,475
4 – Responding to Demographic Change: do you agree that the Council should respond to demographic change and shape services around the local population/demographic?	5,084 (76.36%)	1,574 (23.64%)	3	3,006
5 – Reducing Spending on Non-Statutory Services: do you agree that the Council should reduce spending on non-statutory services?	3,730 (61.0%)	2,385 (39.0%)	26	10,346
Total			48	27,324

Views on Council Tax

The consultation also sought views on council tax, the results of this are noted below.

Table 4

Question	Yes	No	Total number of comments
Would you support an increase in Council Tax if all funding raised was spent on key services?	3,083 (51.79%)	2,870 (48.21%)	1,106

Commentary Overview

The total number of individual comments received on the 5 themes and on council tax was **28,430**.

Officers are reviewing the individual comments, considering the merits of the comment made and suggesting a response from the following options:

1. The respondent advised that they agree with the proposal.
2. The respondent advised that they either did not agree or did not believe the council should consider the proposal.
3. The respondent advised that they had no comment to make.
4. The council is already doing this.
- 5a. It is proposed that this suggestion is not taken forward because the council is required by law to deliver this work.
- 5b. It is proposed that this suggestion is not taken forward because it is likely that the costs of this proposal would outweigh the benefit.
- 5c. It is proposed that this suggestion is not taken forward because it is not consistent with the council's values and priorities.
- 5d. It is proposed that this suggestion is not taken forward because it has been previously considered and will not be progressed.
6. The respondent suggested an improvement. Officers will consider how this could be developed.
7. The respondent's comment was either not relevant to the question, inappropriate and/or contained personal and sensitive information.
8. This suggestion is out with the responsibility of West Lothian Council. Where relevant, we will forward these comments to our partner organisations.
9. The respondent made a comment on the survey question

The summary feedback from the consultation will be available to view online on the council's website at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/yourcouncil> when the results are reported to Special Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel meetings (PDSPs). Further information on the Phase 3 consultation responses is set out in Appendix 1.

D.5 Special PDSPs

In February 2026 the council will set detailed revenue budgets for 2026/27 and 2027/28 and council tax levels for 2026/27.

On 14 October 2025, Council Executive agreed that Special PDSP meetings would be scheduled to allow elected members to consider the responses received at the Phase 3 consultation stage. Elected members will also have the opportunity at these meetings to consider the detail of the officer budget saving options in advance of the Council budget setting meeting. This is also consistent with the approved approach to financial planning where PDSPs should consider budget saving options, where possible, before presentation of the annual revenue budget to Council for approval.

It is therefore proposed that Special PDSP meetings are scheduled at an early opportunity at the start of February.

Each PDSP will consider a report which will include the following:

1. Statistical information relating to the consultation responses received on each officer option associated with the remit of that PDSP;
2. A high-level summary of the consultation comments and feedback received relevant to the remit of that PDSP; and
3. Further information on the officer budget saving options set out in the Phase 3 consultation, including equality impact considerations.

The summary feedback from the Phase 3 consultation will be available to view online on the council's website at <https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/yourcouncil> when the results are reported to the Special PDSPs. The summary feedback will be categorised and summarised to make the process more user friendly, therefore allowing Panel members to consider the key issues and trends.

Officers will have also carried out a thorough analysis of the feedback to respond to each of the issues being raised and will be included on the council's website. A high-level summary of the comments and feedback received relevant to the remit of individual PDSPs will also be reported.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on latest assumptions, it is forecast that the council will have a revenue gap of approximately £23 million over the next two-year period 2026/27 to 2027/28, although this is expected to increase as the budget model is finalised.

The Your Council Your Say budget consultation will assist in the budget setting process and the prioritisation and allocation of resources to activities that have the greatest impact, whilst ensuring balanced budgets for the two-year period to 2027/28.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Reports to Council Executive on 14 October 2025, 20 December 2022, and 21 June 2022
Revenue Budget 2025/26 to 2027/28 report to West Lothian Council 25 February 2025

Appendices/Attachments: Phase 3 Consultation Results Overview

Contact Persons:

Carrie.heron@westlothian.gov.uk Phone: 01506 281675

Lynda.ferguson@westlothian.gov.uk Phone: 01506 281294

**Elaine Cook
Depute Chief Executive**

13 January 2026

WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say (Phase 3)

Our Budget 2026/27 to 2027/28

Abstract

A summary of the findings and recommendations from a public consultation on officer Options to address the funding gap and rising costs.

West Lothian Council
Data Label: PUBLIC

Welcome

A public consultation in October – November 2025 was held to ask local people about council officer savings options and Council Tax.

Background

Like other local authorities in Scotland, West Lothian Council faces constrained funding and substantial cost increases in the next five years. The council had projected a budget gap of £23 million over the two-year period at the time the Phase 3 consultation was launched in October 2025.

Although the Council has received increased funding from the Scottish Government, and has increased Council Tax, this is not enough to pay for the increased demand for some services, and the increased costs of providing services.

Inflation has affected the cost of providing services, as everything the Council has to pay for has become more expensive.

Council officers identified five main ways in which we can balance the council's budget, become more sustainable and which would still allow us to deliver core services in future.

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

In preparation for the challenges ahead, we want to work with our community and partners in shaping the future of Council services in West Lothian.

This report provides a summary of the feedback from the Your Council Your Say Budget Consultation – the final one in a series of engagements to help the council to become more sustainable and meet the challenges ahead.

Graham Hope, Chief Executive

WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say (Phase 3)

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Summary

Overview

1. The council held a public consultation on Your Council Your Say, to gather feedback on options to address the funding gap in years 2026/27 to 2027/28. The consultation asked people to:
 - ▼ Consider the **officer savings options** that are set out in the consultation to address the projected funding gap of £23 million.
 - ▼ Suggest any **other ways that may reduce council expenditure** and/or changes to council services to make them more efficient.
 - ▼ Have their say on **Council Tax** in West Lothian.
2. **Response rate:** A total of **10,051 people** responded to the consultation that was open for over 4-weeks (from 16 October to 16 November 2025). This total comprised; 79.9% who were responding as members of the public, 16.3% who were responding as council employees and 3.8% who were responding on behalf of a group or organisation. The council received over **28,400 comments** from respondents.
3. **Engagement approach:** The council used a variety of methods to engage customers, staff and partners, including a dedicated pull-out in the council's quarterly newsletter, Bulletin which is delivered to households, an online survey, face-to-face discussions and support provided to residents, and paper questionnaires made available in council offices.

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Consultation Feedback – Key Findings

Your Council Your Say

4. **Increasing Efficiency and Developing New Ways of Working:** Comments favoured using AI/digital tools and process redesign to cut administration workload and allow staff to focus on key service delivery functions. Some comments highlighted that accessibility should be considered when services become more digitised. There were differing views on reviewing how education is delivered and the impact this would have on young people's learning. A recurring view suggested that savings could come from an organisational review and removal of any duplication in service processes and activities.
5. **Generating Income:** The parking levy was identified as a potential source of income but consideration was to be given to the impact on town centres and families on low income. A number of respondents did not agree with the workplace parking charges. There was support for generating additional commercial income (e.g. advertising, pest control and better use of council assets) and there were suggestions that visitor levies could be introduced to increase revenue.
6. **Reducing the Number of Council Facilities:** Some respondents supported combining libraries into partnership centres or shared spaces, as long as services stay accessible. Many felt community facilities support wellbeing, inclusion, and local quality of life. Overall, there was broad backing for toilet closures, particularly where alternatives are available in partnership centres or nearby premises. Several comments also suggested other ways to keep services available to the public such as partnership working, community led management or shared facilities.
7. **Responding to Demographic Change:** Many respondents accept that education and service provision should adapt to population change and demand but note that the impact on local families and communities should be considered if schools or nurseries are consolidated. Some respondents highlighted the role of early intervention and children's services and some commented that reductions in these areas could lead to higher long term costs. Comments also suggested that service planning should be coordinated with housing growth and infrastructure, so new developments do not place demand beyond local service capacity.
8. **Reducing Spending on Non-Statutory Services:** Comments highlighted differing views about prioritising statutory and non-statutory services, with some noting that services classed as non-statutory could still play a preventative role. There is relatively strong support for savings in areas perceived as non-essential such as funding for gala day bunting, parts of festive lighting, subsidised golf course maintenance, and broadcasting meetings with introducing or increasing charges for some discretionary services. Many comments also favoured exploring efficiencies and reductions in overheads first, alongside clearer information about what would change and the reasons for those changes.

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Council Tax

9. **Have your say on Council Tax:** Affordability was raised in a number of responses, with some noting that council tax increases could be more difficult to manage alongside wider cost-of-living pressures. Several comments suggested that improvements in collection and the efficient use of resources could be addressed. Some respondents also proposed reviewing council tax banding to better reflect current property values.

Next Steps

10. The council will continue to analyse the detailed comments provided in the consultation and use this information to shape the Budget Strategy 2026/27 to 2027/28 for the council, due to be considered and approved in February 2026.
11. The comments provided through this consultation will be used as a valuable source of information for council officers and elected members to help inform decisions in the next few years.

Response to the Consultation

Response Rate

12. The consultation was open from 16 October to 16 November 2025 and received a total of **10,051 responses**. Most respondents engaged through the online survey, but we also received paper survey responses.

Total number of responses	Online survey responses	Paper survey responses
10,051	9,741	310

13. A significant proportion of paper responses were obtained through our in-person survey work with targeted customer groups, with the remainder submitted via the Bulletin pull-out that was distributed to West Lothian households in October 2025.

Engagement Approach

14. The council has a strong record of involving the public, staff and partners in its corporate and financial planning. We recognise that to secure the long-term sustainability of our plans and services, it is essential that we actively engage all representative groups and ensure their voices inform our decision-making.

15. This consultation focuses on officer-developed options for closing the budget gap, identifying further ways to reduce council expenditure, and making changes to council services so they operate more efficiently. It also seeks views on the level of Council Tax in West Lothian. It is the third stage in a three-phase consultation programme that underpins the council's corporate and financial planning for the period 2026/27 to 2027/28.

16. This staged approach ensures our corporate and financial planning is informed by meaningful engagement at each step, and that all representative groups have the opportunity to influence both the direction and the detail of our proposals.

17. The engagement approach was wide-ranging, using targeted messages across multiple channels to raise awareness and encourage participation. To ensure accessibility, consultation surveys were available both online and in print, and specific campaigns – including in-person engagement – were carried out with the third sector, schools and a range of representative groups to capture and record all comments. The consultation was also promoted directly to staff and partners through email and other correspondence, ensuring their feedback was actively sought and included in the overall findings.

WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say (Phase 3)

18. To maximise reach, accessibility and participation, the council used a variety of communication and engagement methods to involve residents, young people, staff, partners and representative groups in the consultation. These included:

- ▼ the council newspaper, delivered to every household, to share information and invite responses
- ▼ the council's Facebook page to reach a wider audience
- ▼ direct engagement sessions with a range of representative groups, including third sector organisations
- ▼ an engagement programme with specific groups and individuals who may be less likely to take part to help provide support in completing the consultation
- ▼ school focus sessions to capture the views of children and young people
- ▼ regular global emails and internal communications to staff
- ▼ discussion of the consultation at service team meetings to gather feedback from staff and managers

Response Rate Comparison

19. The council has undertaken previous public consultations on our priorities and transformation/budget setting plans. The response rates, as they compare to the current consultation programme, are set out below:

Public Consultation 2025 (WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say) – Phase 3	Public Consultation 2022 (WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say) – Phase 1 and 2	Public Consultation 2017 (Transforming your Council)	Public Consultation 2014 (Delivering Better Outcomes)
10,051	7,605	7,026	3,467

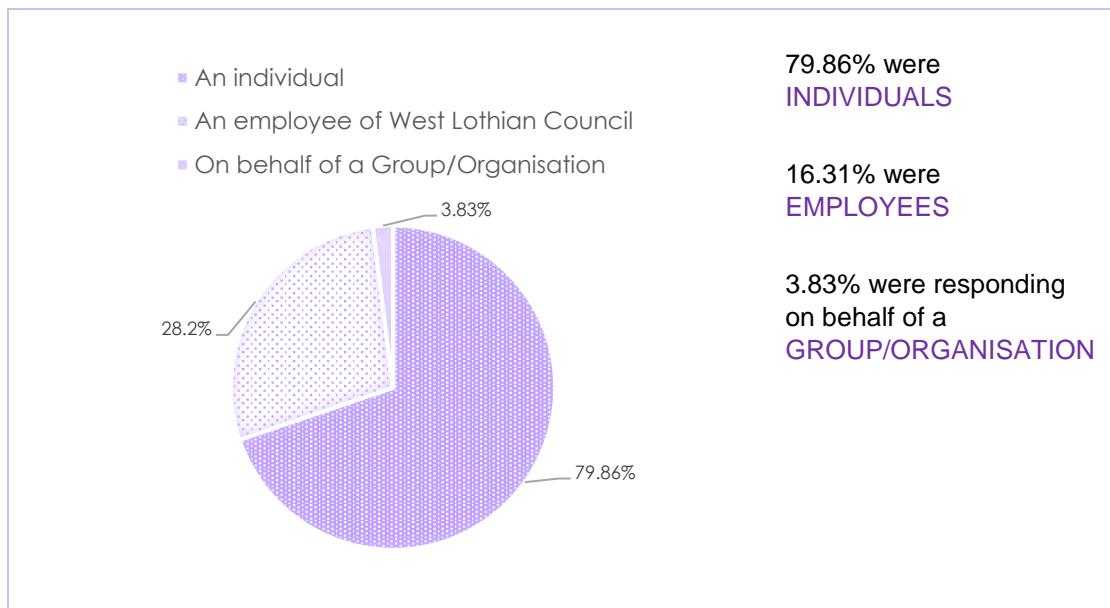
20. Both the Transforming Your Council and Delivering Better Outcomes consultations asked for views on council priorities, five-year officer savings options and council tax within a single exercise. In contrast, Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the WL2028 Your Council, Your Say consultation were deliberately split to improve accessibility for respondents, with council priorities considered in Phase 1 and savings options and council tax questions addressed in Phase 2. Taken together, the two phases helped to increase overall participation and response levels.

21. The Your Council, Your Say Phase 3 consultation, which focused on the budget strategy and transformation options for 2026/27 and 2027/28, generated a markedly higher number of responses than previous consultations, demonstrating a significant increase in engagement.

WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say (Phase 3)

Respondents

22. Whilst it was not mandatory for respondents to provide this information, the majority of respondents were individuals – those who live, work or visit West Lothian. The council also received responses from respondents who identified themselves as Council employees, but it should be noted that over 70% of Council employees also live in West Lothian.



23. The council aims for an inclusive approach, engaging a range of representatives and capturing a diverse range of responses through the consultation. It is vitally important that we engage the public, in particular, on our priorities and options for change and that we use their feedback to shape future service provision. This is why the council continues to use a broad range of media to promote the consultation and continues to offer paper consultation surveys in order to ensure that we involve as many people and sections of the community as possible.

24. Gaining a good response from council staff is also important as they have a lot of knowledge and experience that will be key to shaping and delivering any transformation options that emerge from the full programme of engagement that the council has planned.

Groups and Organisations

25. The council invited key partners, community groups, and other organisations to participate in the survey. A total of **143** named Groups/Organisations (as identified in the survey response) took part in the consultation, which represented **over 1600** people:

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	Group / Organisation
1.	Acredale House
2.	Addiewell Primary School pupils
3.	Almond Housing Association
4.	Armadale Academy pupils
5.	Armadale Primary School pupils
6.	Association of Heads & Deputies in Scotland
7.	Bankton Primary School pupils
8.	Bathgate Academy pupils
9.	Bathgate Community Council
10.	Bathgate FABB Club
11.	Bellsquarry Primary School pupils
12.	Blackburn Primary School pupils
13.	Blackridge Primary School pupils
14.	Boghall Primary School pupils
15.	Braid House
16.	Bridge community project
17.	Bridgend Primary School pupils
18.	Broxburn academy parent council
19.	Broxburn Academy pupils
20.	Broxburn parish church
21.	Broxburn Primary School pupils
22.	Calderwood Primary School pupils
23.	Carmondean Primary School pupils
24.	Chair of parent council of our lady of Lourdes primary school
25.	Children First
26.	Citizens advice
27.	CoWL Disability Social Group
28.	Craigsfarm Community Development Project Ltd
29.	Craigshill community council
30.	Crofthead Farm Community Garden volunteers
31.	Croftmalloch Primary School pupils
32.	Cyrenians OPAL
33.	Deans Community High School pupils
34.	Deans Primary School pupils
35.	Deans senior club
36.	Deans south road residents
37.	Dechmont Infant School pupils
38.	Dedridge Primary School pupils
39.	Disability West Lothian
40.	Eastertoun Primary School pupils
41.	Elev8 group
42.	Falla Hill Primary School pupils
43.	Fauldhouse and Breich valley community development trust
44.	Friends of Polkemmet
45.	Girls Brigade
46.	Glitter Cannons
47.	Greenrigg Primary School pupils
48.	Harrysmuir Primary School pupils
49.	Hawkhill Primary School pupils

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	Group / Organisation
50.	Holy Family RC Primary School pupils
51.	Home start
52.	Howden St Andrew's RC Primary School pupils
53.	Inveralmond Community High School pupils
54.	James Young High School pupils
55.	Kirkhill Primary School pupils
56.	Kirknewton Primary School pupils
57.	Kirsteen Sullivan MP
58.	Knightsridge Primary School pupils
59.	Knightsridge Tenants and Residents Association
60.	Ladywell Neighbourhood Network service users
61.	Letham Primary School pupils
62.	Linlithgow Academy Parent Council
63.	Linlithgow Academy pupils
64.	Linlithgow Bridge Primary School pupils
65.	Linlithgow Day Care Centre
66.	Linlithgow Heritage Trust
67.	Linlithgow Primary School pupils
68.	Livingston and District Dolphins
69.	Livingston new farm breeders
70.	Livingston United Parish Church
71.	Livingston Village Primary School pupils
72.	Livingston Youth Action Project
73.	Longridge Primary School pupils
74.	Low Port Primary School pupils
75.	Meldrum Primary School pupils
76.	Mental Health Advocacy Project
77.	Mid Calder Primary School pupils
78.	Murieston Community Council
79.	Murrayfield Primary School pupils
80.	Narcotics Anonymous
81.	Our Lady Of Lourdes RC Primary School pupils
82.	Parkhead Primary School pupils
83.	Pathways day centre
84.	Peel Primary School pupils
85.	Polkemmet Daycare Ltd
86.	Polkemmet Primary School pupils
87.	Pumpherston & Uphall Station Community Primary School pupils
88.	Ramblers Scotland
89.	Riverside Primary School pupils
90.	Riverside Social Work
91.	ScotWays (Scottish Rights of Way & Access Society)
92.	Seafield Community Council
93.	Seafield Primary School pupils
94.	Second Steps Baby and Toddler group
95.	Simpson Primary School pupils
96.	Sinclair Academy pupils
97.	Southdale Primary School pupils
98.	Springfield Primary School pupils

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	Group / Organisation
99.	St Anthony's RC Primary School pupils
100.	St Columba's RC Primary School pupils
101.	St John Ogilvie RC Primary School pupils
102.	St John The Baptist RC Primary School pupils
103.	St Joseph's RC Primary School (Linlithgow) pupils
104.	St Kentigern's Academy pupil council
105.	St Margaret's pupil house captains
106.	St Mary's RC Primary School (Bathgate) pupils
107.	St Mary's RC Primary School (Polbeth) pupils
108.	St Nicholas RC Primary School pupils
109.	St Ninian's RC Primary School pupils
110.	St Paul's RC Primary School pupils
111.	Stoneyburn and Bents Future Vision Group
112.	The Larder
113.	The Pitstop
114.	Toronto Primary School pupils
115.	Torphichen Community Council
116.	Torphichen Primary School pupils
117.	Uphall Primary School pupils
118.	Voluntary action fund
119.	West Calder High School pupils
120.	West Lothan Faith Groups
121.	West Lothian 50+ Network
122.	West Lothian College
123.	West Lothian College Students
124.	West Lothian Community Race Forum
125.	West Lothian Food Network
126.	West Lothian Secondary Head Teachers and Acting Head Teachers
127.	West Lothian Tenants Housing Network meeting
128.	West Lothian Youth Action Project
129.	West Lothian youth action project young persons forum
130.	West Lothian Youth Foundation
131.	Westfield Primary School pupils
132.	Whitburn Academy - Pupil council
133.	Whitburn Academy pupils
134.	Whitdale Primary School pupils
135.	Williamston Primary School pupils
136.	Willow Wood
137.	Winchburgh Academy pupils
138.	Winchburgh Primary School pupils
139.	Winchburgh schools partnership
140.	Winchburgh Seniors
141.	Windyknowe Primary School pupils
142.	Woodland Trust
143.	Woodmuir Primary School pupils

26. Many of the named groups and organisations identified in the survey responses were contacted directly and invited to take part in the consultation. The council will continue to encourage partners, community organisations and representative groups

WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say (Phase 3)

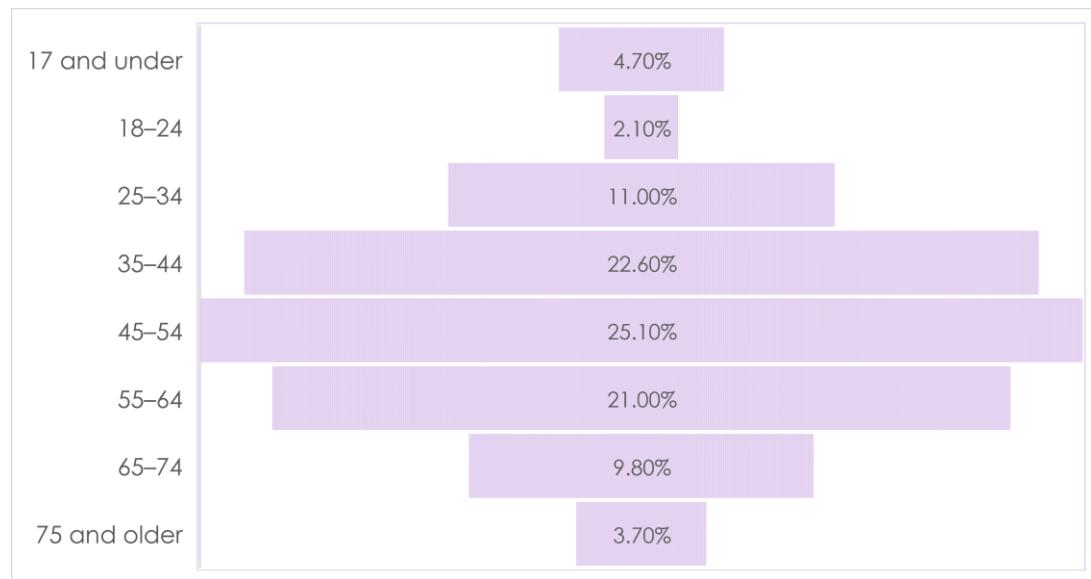
to engage in our consultations, to ensure that a wide range of views and the potential impacts on our partners are fully considered in our decision-making and future planning.

Individual Respondents

27. Respondents had the option to provide information about them as part of the response to the survey. This information will be used by the council to understand how successfully we are engaging with different groups across the community and how we might improve upon those engagement methods moving forward.
28. **Gender:** the highest number of respondents were women:

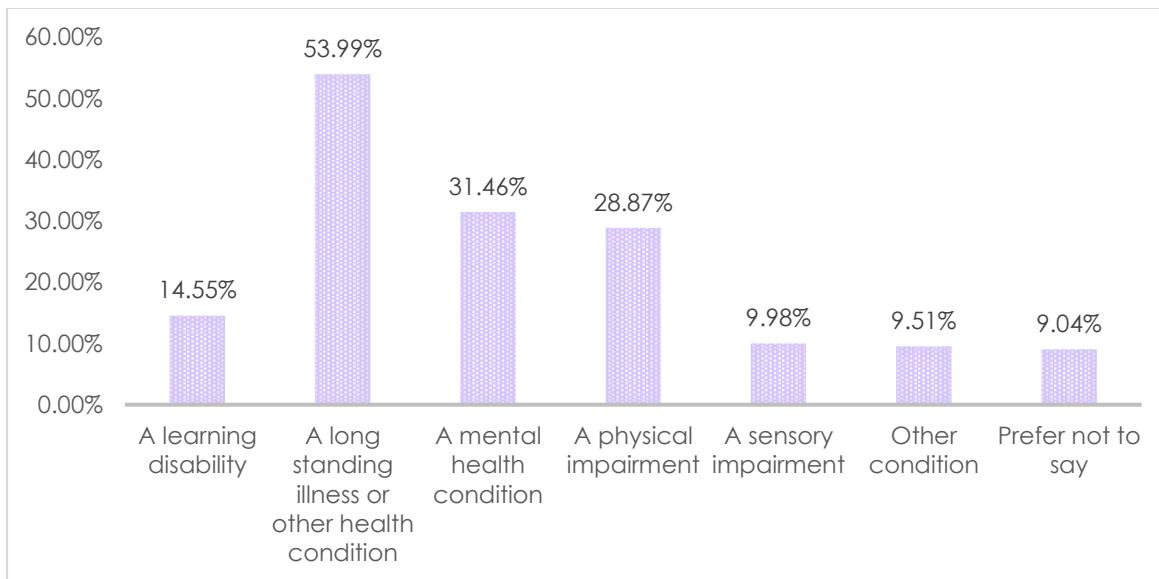
Women	Men	Identify in another way	Preferred not to say
55.02%	36.06%	0.48%	8.43%

29. **Age:** 48 was the average age of respondents, with an age range of 7 to 95 years. The age profile by band is set out in the chart below:

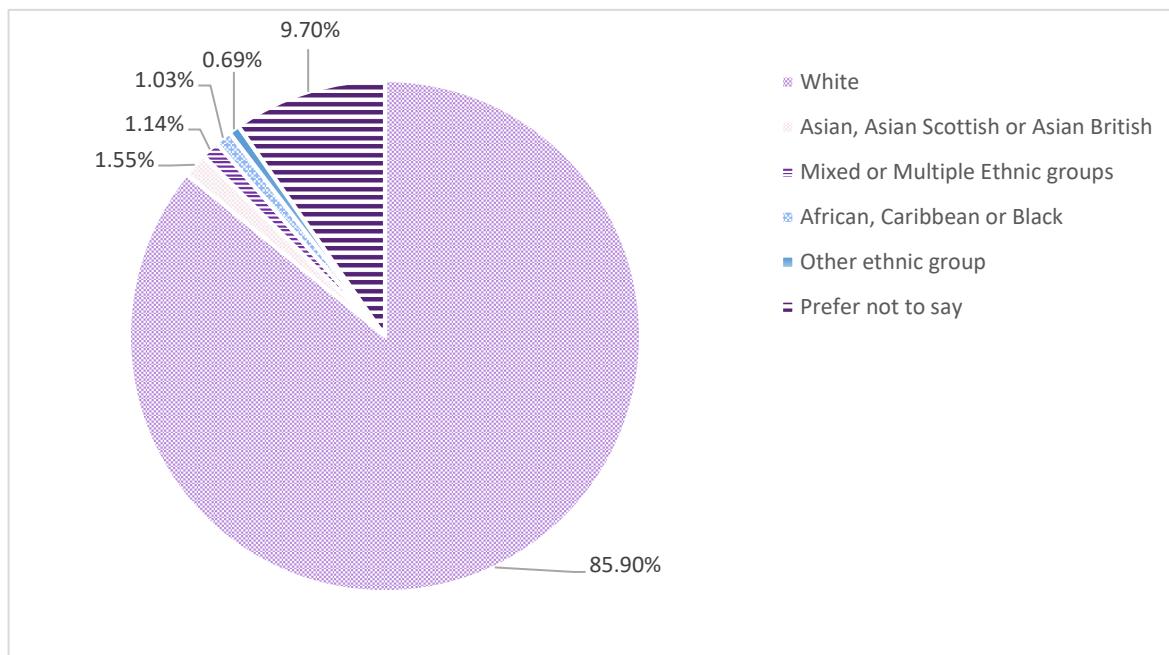


30. **Disability:** a total of 18.05% of respondents consider themselves to have a disability. Of those who identified as having a disability, some respondents elected to provide details of their condition:

WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say (Phase 3)

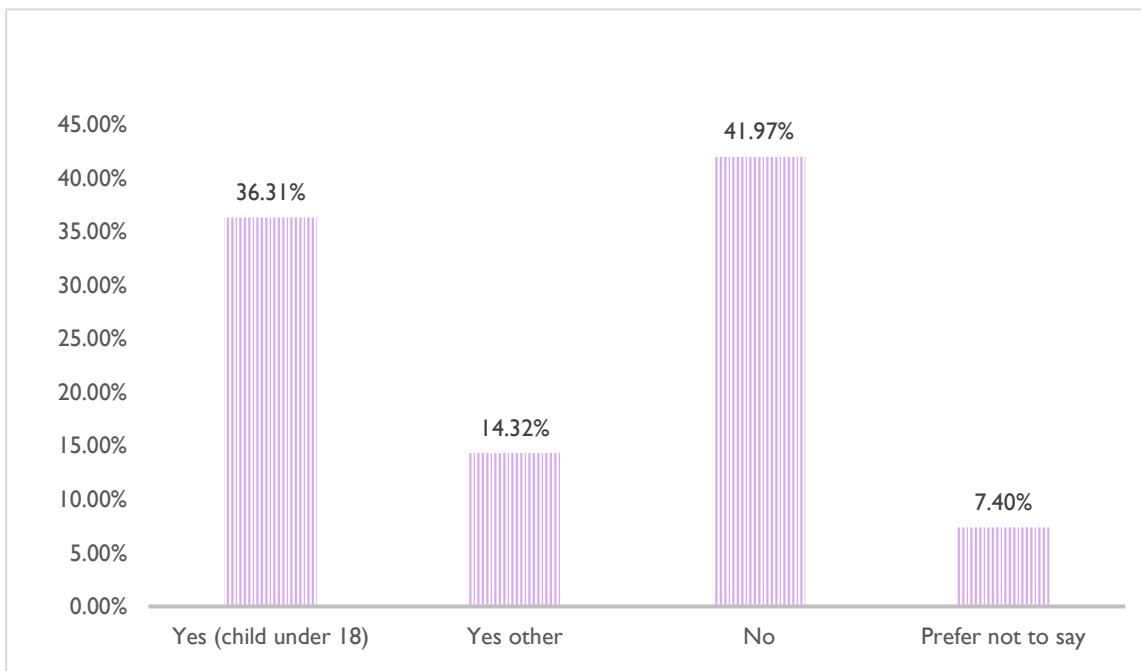


31. **Ethnicity:** the biggest proportion of respondents were White (85.90%), with responses also from Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British (1.55%), Mixed or Multiple Ethnic groups (1.14%), African, Caribbean or Black (1.03%), Other ethnic group (0.69%) and Prefer not to say (9.70%).



32. **Caring responsibility:** 50.63% of respondents to the survey have a caring responsibility.

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Towns / Village

33. The council asked respondents to tell us their town or village in their survey response. This information is intended to be used to analyse need and improvements that are required in the different towns and villages in the area.

34. 71 towns and villages were named by respondents. The highest proportion of respondents come from the larger settlements; 25.87% from Livingston, 15.77% from Bathgate, 8.24% from Linlithgow, 6.76% from Whitburn, and 5.80% from Broxburn.

Town/Village	Percentage of all respondents	Town/Village	Percentage of all respondents	Town/Village	Percentage of all respondents
Livingston	25.87%	Livingston Village	0.44%	Glasgow	0.05%
Bathgate	15.77%	Addiewell	0.42%	Harthill	0.05%
Linlithgow	8.24%	East Whitburn	0.42%	Wester Inch	0.05%
Whitburn	6.76%	West Lothian	0.42%	Wilkieston	0.05%
Armadale	6.54%	Dechmont	0.39%	Airdrie	0.02%
Broxburn	5.80%	Longridge	0.39%	Bagaduish	0.02%
East Calder	3.88%	Knightsridge	0.37%	Balerno	0.02%
Winchburgh	3.18%	Uphall Station	0.37%	Bents	0.02%
West Calder	2.59%	Eliburn	0.35%	Calders	0.02%
Blackburn	2.44%	Ladywell	0.30%	Dalkeith	0.02%
Fauldhouse	1.85%	Torphichen	0.30%	Dunbar	0.02%
Uphall	1.63%	Edinburgh	0.27%	Ecclesmachan	0.02%

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Mid Calder	1.53%	Greenrigg	0.27%	Falkirk	0.02%
Blackridge	1.01%	Westfield	0.27%	Harburn	0.02%
Kirknewton	0.77%	Breich	0.22%	Kelty	0.02%
Stoneyburn	0.74%	Bridgend	0.20%	Lanark	0.02%
Deans	0.69%	Calderwood	0.20%	Motherwell	0.02%
Pumpherston	0.64%	Bellsquarry	0.17%	Newmains	0.02%
Polbeth	0.57%	Howden	0.17%	Shotts	0.02%
Craigshill	0.52%	Newton	0.15%	Tarbrax	0.02%
Seafield	0.52%	Carmondean	0.10%	Threemiletown	0.02%
Murieston	0.47%	Philpstoun	0.10%	Uddingston	0.02%
Boghall	0.44%	Linlithgow Bridge	0.07%	Westwood Park	0.02%
Dedridge	0.44%	Adambrae	0.05%		

Consultation – Our Budget

35. It is expected that West Lothian Council will have to make significant savings over the next two 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.
36. The council is legally required to set a balanced budget – we cannot spend more than we receive through funding and Council Tax. Because our budget is insufficient, we must reduce spending on some local services. Our aim is to make sure the resources we do have are focused on the services that matter most to our communities.
37. The purpose of this consultation was to consult with local people, staff and partners on officer options, from the senior leadership team in the council, to save £23 million over the next three years – from 2026/27 to 2027/28.
38. The council invited people to comment on the proposed savings options and to put forward any other ideas that could help reduce spending while protecting local services. This feedback will support the council in making the difficult decisions required to achieve a balanced budget.
39. There were **27,324 comments** received relating to the questions in this section of the consultation.
40. The savings options were grouped under themes:
 - ▼ 1 Increase Efficiency and Developing New Ways of Working - 6,593
 - ▼ 2 Generating Income - 3,904
 - ▼ 3 Reducing the Number of Council Facilities - 3,475
 - ▼ 4 Responding to Demographic Change - 3,006
 - ▼ 5 Reducing Spending on Non-Statutory Services - 10,346
41. Each comment has been categorised, assigned to an appropriate council service and topic and responded to by a council officer.
42. The information contained in this section will be used to influence and shape the development of council services, transformation options and the budget strategy in the next five years.

WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say (Phase 3)

1 Increase Efficiency and Developing New Ways of Working

43. A total of 9,852 respondents provided a response to the question “Do you agree that the Council should look for more efficient ways of working?”
44. 91.37% said they agreed, demonstrating very strong public support for the Council’s efforts to improve how it operates and make better use of resources.
45. Council services are designed to meet customer needs in a cost-effective way, but we will continue to look for new ways to reduce costs and reduce duplication. Overall, we will look at opportunities to make all services more efficient, including by new ways of working and reductions in council facilities.
46. There were eleven options contained in this section of the consultation. A summary of the options and the emergent themes from the analysis of the 6,593 comments received is outlined below.

Option 1a: Introducing the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to improve customer service and to provide the Council with enhanced systems to better understand service needs and performance.

Estimated saving: £390,000

47. **Option:** Introducing the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to improve customer service and to provide the Council with enhanced systems to better understand service needs and performance.
48. A total of 476 comments were received for this option.
49. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:
 - ▼ Many respondents liked the idea of modern, joined-up digital systems and AI to reduce paperwork, speed up processes and improve efficiency.
 - ▼ A minority made comment about changes to job roles, data security and AI replacing face to face contact, particularly for older or vulnerable customers.
 - ▼ Some comments suggested using AI only where it clearly adds value, and keeping phone or face-to-face options for those who need them.

Option 1b: Review of Management arrangements / Management efficiencies

Estimated saving: £940,000

50. **Option:** Ensuring that the Council has the right number of managers and staff to deliver its services as part of an organisational review. Integration of some services and removing and not recruiting to some vacancies.

WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say (Phase 3)

51. A total of 1,317 comments were received for this option.
52. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:
 - ▼ A number of comments suggested that the council's structure should be reviewed, including the review of processes to reduce the administrative burden for frontline staff.
 - ▼ A number of comments suggested reviewing a range of HR functions including pay and benefits, alongside strengthening performance management, including how sickness absence is managed.
 - ▼ Concerns that reducing posts without redesigning key processes may lead to an increased burden on staff and an impact on the quality of services.

Option 1c: Reviewing how learning is delivered

Estimated saving: £5.4 million

53. **Option:** Reviewing how learning is delivered across the primary school day. Recognising different approaches to learning enhance children's experiences and wellbeing, consideration could be given to supervised activities and learning opportunities as well as breaks across the school day for play and learning. In addition, timetabling across all secondary schools in West Lothian would be reviewed to ensure consistency.
54. A total of 551 comments were received for this option.
55. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:
 - ▼ There were favourable comments in relation to the review of timetables, holiday patterns and education staffing provision with the caveat that children's learning is not negatively affected.
 - ▼ Concerns were raised around the possible reduction of teaching time or that it may lead to reduced support for additional support needs (ASN) pupils.
 - ▼ Some respondents suggested that savings in central or administrative education functions and improving the use of buildings could be progressed before reducing classroom support.

Option 1d: Increasing salary savings

Estimated saving: £280,000

56. **Option:** Increasing salary savings by extending the employee benefit salary sacrifice scheme.
57. A total of 142 comments were received for this option.

WL2028 – Your Council, Your Say (Phase 3)

58. The main theme emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Most respondents agreed that this option was a favourable way to achieve savings that could benefit both the council and staff.

Option 1e: Reviewing the range of vehicles used for school transport

Estimated saving: £220,000

59. **Option:** Reviewing the range of vehicles used for school transport and use of smaller vehicles where possible.

60. A total of 353 comments were received for this option.

61. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Support for using smaller vehicles or changing routes where buses are under-used which would provide a cost saving.
- ▼ Some respondents highlighted that changes could lengthen journey times for service users, particularly in rural areas.
- ▼ Comments included suggestions to review eligibility rules, look at the sharing of taxis, and promote active travel and public transport where appropriate.

Option 1f: Reviewing contracts

Estimated saving: £200,000

62. **Option:** Reviewing contracts for commissioned care services within Children's Services, to align with targeted identified need.

63. A total of 193 comments were received for this option.

64. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Comments supported the review of contracts and to align them more closely with assessed need, particularly where this reduces duplication.
- ▼ Comments felt that children's care services are a priority area and that any savings should not compromise safeguarding or the quality of support.

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Option 1g: Reviewing contracts for goods and services

Estimated saving: £160,000

65. **Option:** Reviewing contracts for goods and services purchased. For example, reducing the costs of maintaining the council's fleet of vehicles required to deliver front line services.
66. A total of 416 comments were received for this option.
67. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:
 - ▼ There was support for smarter procurement, renegotiation of contracts, working in partnership with other councils and reducing the size and cost of the vehicle fleet.
 - ▼ Some respondents suggested bringing more work in-house to reduce reliance on external contractors and consultants.
 - ▼ Comments noted that changes to maintenance or vehicles need to be managed well to avoid increasing costs and affecting essential frontline services.

Option 1h: Reviewing the council's mail service

Estimated saving: £533,000

68. **Option:** Reviewing the council's mail service and utilising a digital alternative, where appropriate.
69. A total of 178 comments were received for this option.
70. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:
 - ▼ Comments indicated that reducing paper mail and printing is seen as a practical efficiency and environmental improvement, with email and online options used where appropriate.
 - ▼ Some respondents raised that older and digitally excluded customers would still require access to paper forms.
 - ▼ Comments suggested reviewing large paper packs for meetings and mass mailings as potential areas for savings.

Option 1i: Introducing a facility to reduce waste disposal costs

Estimated saving: £1.1 million

71. **Option:** Introducing a facility to reduce waste disposal costs and the need to use a contractor.

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72. A total of 215 comments were received for this option.
73. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:
 - ▼ Comments indicated this could be a practical way to reduce waste disposal costs and reliance on external contractors.
 - ▼ Comments linked this to improved recycling, reduced contamination and greater value from recovered materials.
 - ▼ Comments noted the setup costs and the need to ensure that efficiency measures do not lead to wider service reductions.

Option 1j: Bringing together teams

Estimated saving: £80,000

74. **Option:** Bringing together teams to focus on Transformation and Business Support.
75. A total of 127 comments were received for this option.
76. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:
 - ▼ Comments indicated agreement that a joined-up approach to transformation and business support could help improve efficiency and reduce duplication.
 - ▼ Suggested that transformation and business support functions should be closely aligned with frontline services.

Option 1k: Stop using one-use water cartons in schools

Estimated saving: £50,000

77. **Option:** Stop using one-use water cartons in schools and replacing with a reusable bottle, which is also more environmentally friendly.
78. A total of 317 comments were received for this option.
79. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:
 - ▼ Most comments supported ending single-use cartons, seeing this as an easy environmental and cost saving, and noting many pupils already bring reusable bottles.
 - ▼ Some respondents were concerned about families who cannot afford bottles, children forgetting them, or the cost of the council supplying bottles.

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- ▼ There were several suggestions that the council should ensure no child loses out because of affordability.

Theme 1: General comments

80. A total of 2,308 comments were received that were general comments.
81. The main themes emerging from responses to the Theme 1 general comments include:
 - ▼ Many respondents provided efficiency suggestions around council assets, vehicles, energy use and digital systems. This included: rationalising or better using council buildings, reducing vehicle/ fleet costs and travel, improving energy efficiency (for example, insulation, solar panels) and making more use of online and digital processes.
 - ▼ There was a general theme in the comments that any efficiencies should avoid further cuts to schools, social care and support for children, young people and the vulnerable in the community.
 - ▼ A number of comments were linked to reducing bureaucracy, reviewing the organisational structure, reviewing councillor and officer pay, and cutting non-essential spending before reducing frontline services.

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2 Generating Income

82. A total of 7,507 respondents answered the question “Do you agree that the Council should look for opportunities to generate income, including by raising fees and charges?”
83. Overall, 59.48% of respondents agreed, indicating a clear majority in favour of the Council exploring opportunities to generate income, including through increases to fees and charges.
84. West Lothian Council currently set the lowest level of charging and fees for some services, per head of the population in Scotland. There are areas in which we could look to generate more income to put towards funding for key services.
85. There were four options contained in this section of the consultation. A summary of the options and the emergent themes from the analysis of the 3,904 comments received is outlined.

Option 2a: Increasing current fees and charges

(Income to be determined)

86. **Option:** Increasing current fees and charges, and introducing new fees and charges.
87. A total of 1,084 comments were received for this option.
88. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:
 - ▼ There was support for targeted or modest increases in charges, particularly for non-essential services, planning, commercial users or visitors, as a way to raise income.
 - ▼ Comments highlighted the cost-of-living pressures, potential impacts on vulnerable residents and possible effects on town centres and local businesses.
 - ▼ A number of comments suggested a more targeted approach to charging rather than across-the-board increases, including higher fees for tourists and improved enforcement of fines such as those for littering and dog fouling.

Option 2b: Car parking charges

(Income to be determined)

89. **Option:** Bringing in car parking charges at council-owned car parks.
90. A total of 1,071 comments were received for this option.
91. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

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- ▼ Charging for parking in busy or central locations was seen as a potential income stream, with suggestions for different rates for visitors, workers and residents.
- ▼ Comments also noted that parking charges may affect town centres, encourage a shift to out-of-town or online shopping, and have an impact on residents with limited alternatives to driving.
- ▼ Comments expressed concern about parking being moved into residential areas and suggested that there should be effective enforcement in place including fines for illegal parking.

Option 2c: Increasing the use of advertising

(Potentially in excess of £100,000)

92. **Option:** Increasing the use of advertising on council-owned property and facilities, for example roadside and bus shelter advertising, which could generate in excess of £100,000.
93. A total of 464 comments were received for this option.
94. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:
 - ▼ Supportive comments saw advertising as a way to raise income and preferable to service cuts.
 - ▼ Some suggested additional areas to expand advertising including the sponsorship of roundabouts, buildings and events.

Option 2d: Increasing the charge or outsourcing services

(Saving approximately £30,000)

95. **Option:** Increasing the charge or outsourcing services such as pest control, to make sure the income received covers the full cost of delivering the service.
96. A total of 243 comments were received for this option.
97. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:
 - ▼ Supporters felt it was reasonable for businesses and users of optional services to cover the full cost rather than being subsidised.
 - ▼ Suggestions included careful impact assessment and tiered or means-tested approaches, to help ensure low-income households can still access essential support.

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Theme 2: General comments

98. A total of 1,042 comments were received that were general comments.
99. The main themes emerging from responses to the Theme 2 general comments include:
 - ▼ A number of comments suggested specific ways for the Council to generate income or make better use of its assets including increasing or introducing targeted fees (e.g. planning, specialist services), visitor/tourist levies, more advertising, and selling or better using under-used land, vehicles and buildings.
 - ▼ Comments were mixed on increasing charges overall. A number of comments mentioned fees and charges in general. Some supported carefully targeted, fair increases (e.g. on non-essential services, businesses, visitors or higher-value properties), while some did not agree with further rises.
 - ▼ Some respondents stressed protecting vulnerable customers and essential services when raising income. The impact of the cost-of-living crisis was commented on, suggestions included new or higher charges could be means-tested or offered with flexible payment options, and emphasised safeguarding services for families, children and young people and those on low incomes.

3 Reducing the Number of Council Facilities

100. A total of 7,007 respondents answered the question “Do you agree that the Council should reduce the number of facilities and buildings to help focus spending on maintaining key services?”
101. Overall, 55.59% of respondents agreed, indicating a clear majority in favour of this approach.
102. We have reduced the number of council owned facilities and buildings significantly over recent years in an effort to reduce costs and protect services.
103. The Council will continue to provide services but with fewer buildings and facilities. This will allow us to spend money on maintaining services, rather than maintaining buildings.
104. There were three options contained in this section of the consultation. A summary of the options and the emergent themes from the analysis of the 3,475 comments received is outlined.

Option 3a: A review of facilities

Estimated saving: £390,000

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105. **Option:** A review of leisure, arts and cultural facilities

106. A total of 824 comments were received for this option.

107. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Rationalising or consolidating some facilities was viewed as appropriate where this helps protect priority services and direct resources to areas of highest demand.
- ▼ Reducing the facilities were seen as potentially affecting the role of local leisure, arts and cultural spaces in supporting communities, wellbeing and opportunities for young people.
- ▼ Other feedback proposed alternative savings, including improved management, additional income generation and partnership working, before reducing or centralising facilities.

Option 3b: Increasing our digital library stock

Estimated saving: £2.3 million

108. **Option:** Increasing our digital library stock to meet the increasing demand for online library services, enhancing the library services available at our Partnership Centres and reduce the number of standalone library facilities.

109. A total of 541 comments were received for this option.

110. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Comments recognised the increase in digital use and viewed more e-books and online resources as positive, particularly if it broadens access.
- ▼ Some comments noted the role of libraries as an inclusive space, particularly for children, older people and people on low incomes.
- ▼ Several comments suggested improving and promoting existing libraries, co-locating services, or reviewing opening hours.

Option 3c: Closing the four remaining automated public toilets

Estimated saving: £500,000

111. **Option:** Closing the four remaining automated public toilets at Livingston, Linlithgow, Bathgate and Broxburn, where alternative toilet facilities are available at Partnership Centres and other premises.

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112. A total of 695 comments were received for this option.

113. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Feedback indicated that where suitable alternative toilets are available in places such as Partnership Centres or other premises, closing the automated public toilets was viewed as a reasonable saving.
- ▼ Some statements raised issues around accessibility for older people, disabled people, families with young children and visitors, and about the adequacy and opening hours of alternative facilities.
- ▼ Some other comments suggested charging for public toilets or widening access to toilets in public buildings as ways to balance cost and provision.

Option 3d: Continuing to support groups in the delivery of community asset transfer

(Saving to be determined)

114. **Option:** Continuing to support groups in the delivery of community asset transfer, where the ownership and operation of Council buildings and facilities are transferred to community groups to deliver the services they choose.

115. A total of 522 comments were received for this option.

116. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Support was expressed for empowering communities through ownership or management of local assets.
- ▼ Some comments noted the need to maintain a clear council role, ensuring the sustainability of the community group model.
- ▼ Other feedback focused on practical requirements, such as clear transition support, fair funding and ensuring facilities are not transferred in poor condition and have a clear business plan.

Theme 3: General comments

117. A total of 893 comments were received that were general comments.

118. The main themes emerging from responses to the Theme 3 general comments include:

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- ▼ A number of comments were suggesting consolidating office space, making more use of home working, sharing or co-locating services in fewer buildings, selling or repurposing unused sites, and in some cases renting out council facilities.
- ▼ Some accepted consolidation of council facilities if front-line access is protected.
- ▼ Some comments noted there is already limited opportunities to carry out further reductions. It was highlighted the impact of losing local leisure, library, toilet and community services on wellbeing, older people, disabled residents and low-income communities.
- ▼ A number of comments suggested using buildings and spaces to raise income by renting out rooms or parts of buildings, increasing hall hire charges, sharing space with other organisations, or converting vacant properties for housing or business use to protect services.

4 Responding to Demographic Change

119. A total of 6,658 respondents answered the question “Do you agree that the Council should reduce the number of facilities and buildings to help focus spending on maintaining key services?”
120. Overall, 76.36% of respondents agreed, showing clear support for this approach and giving the Council a strong basis to focus spending on key services by reducing the number of buildings and facilities.
121. Changes in the size and age structure of the population will have an impact on the demand for public services across Scotland. As demographics change, so does demand for services. To allow us to run services efficiently, services need to continually change to allow us to meet changes in demand. The population of West Lothian has grown significantly over the last 10 years and this is forecast to continue. The largest areas of growth are within those aged over 65. Over the next 25 years, West Lothian is forecast to have the fastest growth in people of pensionable age in Scotland. At the same time the number of children being born and entering our schools in some parts of West Lothian is forecast to fall.
122. There were three options contained in this section of the consultation. A summary of the options and the emergent themes from the analysis of the 3,006 comments received is outlined.

Option 4a: Reducing the number of school buildings

Estimated saving: £3.4 million

123. **Option:** In many areas, there is an over supply of schools when compared to the demand for places. Reducing the number of school buildings in communities where the number of available school places is more than is needed to meet future demand,

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and where pupils can access an alternative school, would allow the council to maintain the quality of learning in the remaining schools.

124. A total of 1,390 comments were received for this option.

125. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ There was support for reviewing and rationalising the school estate where school rolls are low and buildings are expensive to run, provided educational quality is maintained.
- ▼ Some comments included possible longer or less safe journeys, loss of local community schools and impacts on children, particularly in rural or growing areas.
- ▼ Feedback suggested analysing demographic data, considering future housing growth before deciding to close schools, and looking at options like sharing or re-using buildings instead of closing them.

Option 4b: Review of the delivery of Children and Justice Services (Savings to be determined)

126. **Option:** Review of the delivery of Children and Justice Services social work and family support services to inform future provision of targeted earlier intervention and intensive whole family support.

127. A total of 347 comments were received for this option.

128. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ A number of responses recognised the need to prioritise statutory duties, target resources more effectively and focus on earlier intervention and intensive whole-family support.
- ▼ There were comments that further efficiencies may increase pressures on social work teams and impact on preventative work around children, families and people in the justice system.
- ▼ Other comments suggested clearer thresholds, stronger partnership working with organisations such as health and third sector partners, and ensuring any redesign is informed by social workers' experience.

Option 4c: Reviewing nursery capacity

Estimated saving: £260,000

129. **Option:** Reviewing nursery capacity in council facilities to better meet demand.

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130. A total of 549 comments were received for this option.

131. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ There was support for matching nursery provision more closely to where children live and to actual demand.
- ▼ There were comments that highlighted the potential loss of local provision, limited hours in council nurseries, impacts on working parents and the possibility that families may have to use more expensive private options.
- ▼ Other feedback emphasised the need for detailed analysis of demographics prior to implementing change, fair access across communities and careful planning so that changes to capacity do not affect the quality of early learning.

Theme 4: General comments

132. A total of 720 comments were received that were general comments.

133. The main themes emerging from responses to the Theme 4 General comments include:

- ▼ Feedback highlighted the importance of protecting older people, disabled people, those with long-term conditions and other vulnerable groups, while balancing support fairly across age groups and not reducing essential care.
- ▼ Views varied on how services should adapt to demographic change, with some supporting reshaping services to better meet changing needs. There was a view that any changes should protect frontline services, focus on efficiencies and be planned using good data.

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5 Reducing Spending on Non-Statutory Services

134. A total of 6,115 respondents answered the question “Do you agree that the Council should reduce spending on non-statutory services?

135. Overall, 61% of respondents agreed. This demonstrates clear support for reducing spending on non-statutory services so that essential services can be protected.

136. Statutory services are the services the Council is required by law to provide and receives funding from the Scottish Government to provide. Broadly, these include education, waste collection and disposal, housing and social care. Although the Council must provide these services by law, they can be made more cost effective, and can benefit from the use of new technology and new ways of working. It may also be possible to provide services using fewer facilities, and the amount of money spent on them can change in response to demographic change, as we have explained earlier in this consultation.

137. Non-statutory services are the services the Council is not required by law to provide. Some are funded by the Scottish Government and others rely on funding generated by the Council. The non-statutory services which are funded by the Scottish Government are normally ‘ring-fenced’ which means that the Council cannot spend the money on anything else. Out of the Council’s total annual revenue budget of £545 million, £503 million is spent on statutory services, and the remaining £42 million is spent on non-statutory services. It is important to be aware that a number of these non-statutory services help to improve lives and are considered vital to many people. With this in mind, there may be options to reduce or change spending in non-statutory services.

138. There were 26 Options contained in this section of the consultation. A summary of the Options and the emergent themes from the analysis of the 10,346 comments received is outlined.

Option 5a: Providing environmental enforcement and education.

Current budget: £192,000

139. **Option:** Providing environmental enforcement and education.

140. A total of 312 comments were received for this option.

141. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ There was support for removing environmental enforcement and education to protect statutory services
- ▼ Comments also highlighted that cuts may increase fly-tipping or longer-term impact to the local environment.

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Option 5b: Broadcasting council committee meetings online.

Current budget: £51,000

142. **Option:** Broadcasting council committee meetings online.

143. A total of 396 comments were received for this option.

144. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ The majority of comments suggested that live streaming was non-essential with a limited audience and suggested that costs could be reduced by stopping streaming.
- ▼ There were some comments where live streaming was seen as helpful for transparency and public access, with suggestions for lower-cost or alternative approaches.

Option 5c: Funding support for non-West Lothian Children

Current budget: £700,000

145. **Option:** Funding support for non-West Lothian Children at Private Partner Provider Early Learning and Childcare settings.

146. A total of 432 comments were received for this option.

147. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ The majority of comments suggested that the council should not subsidise childcare for children from other council areas. The priority should be to west Lothian residents.
- ▼ Some comments suggested that cutting any support linked to early years and in the childcare setting should be carefully considered.

Option 5d: An adult learning service

Current budget: £516,000

148. **Option:** An adult learning service which delivers a wide range of courses for adults.

149. A total of 360 comments were received for this option.

150. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Supportive comments suggested that adult learning could be reduced, or include more charging, with some activities viewed as non-essential
- ▼ Some comments saw the role of adult learning in a positive way, particularly for disadvantaged adults.

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Option 5e: Provision of a Counter Fraud Service

Current budget: £133,000

151. **Option:** Provision of a Counter Fraud Service which investigates and tackles instances of fraud against the council.

152. A total of 332 comments were received for this option.

153. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Many comments supported a continuation of the counter-fraud service, where it potentially saves more than it costs.
- ▼ A small number of comments questioned whether the dedicated team could be reduced.

Option 5f: Support to gala day committees

Current budget: £45,000

154. **Option:** Support to gala day committees for installing bunting.

155. A total of 527 comments were received for this option.

156. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Most comments felt that galaday bunting is non-essential and could be funded by communities rather than the council.
- ▼ A minority of comments highlighted the importance of gala days which enhances the sense of community and indicated that the council could provide a modest level of support.

Option 5g: Providing school transport

Current budget: £192,000

157. **Option:** Providing school transport where the distance from home to school is below the statutory minimum and where a suitable walking route exists.

158. A total of 557 comments were received for this option.

159. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ There were suggestions that providing council-funded transport where walking routes exist or distances are within statutory limits was difficult to justify, particularly given free bus travel for under-22s.

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- ▼ Some comments highlighted safety issues, including longer routes on rural paths.

Option 5h: Education improvement and performance service

Current budget: £800,000

160. **Option:** Education improvement and performance service which helps to drive improvement across all schools and increase attainment for learners.

161. A total of 326 comments were received for this option.

162. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Education improvement and performance functions were seen as an area where activity could be streamlined, allowing more resources to be directed to schools.
- ▼ Some comments suggested that school improvement support is important for maintaining standards and attainment and noted that reducing this support could affect educational outcomes over time.

Option 5i: Providing a subsidised bulky waste collection service.

Current budget: £240,000

163. **Option:** Providing a subsidised bulky waste collection service.

164. A total of 388 comments were received for this option.

165. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ There was a general acceptance that a reduction in subsidy or higher charges is appropriate. There was a view that people using the service should meet a greater share of the cost.
- ▼ Some comments suggested that removing the subsidy for bulky uplifts could lead to increased fly-tipping and higher remedial costs over time.

Option 5j: Support to employability and businesses

Current budget: £740,000

166. **Option:** Support to employability and businesses and match funding for external grants and funding provided by other organisations to local businesses.

167. A total of 323 comments were received for this option.

168. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

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- ▼ Many comments saw this as an area where some savings could be made or funding better targeted.
- ▼ There were a number of comments suggesting that employability and business support are crucial for developing local job opportunities and that care should be taken when reducing programmes that bring in external funding.

Option 5k: Provision of financial support to bus services

Current budget: £192,000

169. **Option:** Provision of financial support to bus services whereby the council provides a subsidy to private and commercial bus operators.

170. A total of 385 comments were received for this option.

171. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ There were a number of comments that questioned subsidies to private bus companies and wanted to see better value from contracts, with support focused on essential bus routes.
- ▼ There were comments that valued subsidised bus routes since they were perceived to be important for rural areas, older people and those without cars.

Option 5l: Installing and removing festive lighting

Current budget: £88,000

172. **Option:** Installing and removing festive lighting across the area.

173. A total of 474 comments were received for this option.

174. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ The majority of comments viewed festive lights as non-essential and something that could be reduced or funded by communities particularly when core services are under pressure.
- ▼ A minority of comments noted the positive effect of festive lights in town centres and their role in supporting a sense of community.

Option 5m: Supplying school crossing patrols.

Current budget: £723,000

175. **Option:** Supplying school crossing patrols.

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176. A total of 403 comments were received for this option.

177. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ The majority of comments made a range of suggestions including removing patrols where traffic lights or pelican crossings are already in place.
- ▼ A number of comments emphasised that crossing patrols have an important safety role, particularly for younger children and at busy junctions, and were cautious about reducing this provision

Option 5n: Provision of a non-statutory winter footway service

Current budget: £192,000

178. **Option:** Provision of a non-statutory winter footway service, in which the service treat footpaths as well as carriageways (roads)

179. A total of 346 comments were received for this option.

180. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Suggestions for making savings included limiting overtime, focusing on main routes and carrying out more gritting within normal working hours.
- ▼ Other views emphasised that gritting footpaths is important for preventing falls and keeping routes to schools and services usable.

Option 5o: The provision of income maximisation, energy and housing advice.

Current budget: £1.4 million

181. **Option:** The provision of income maximisation, energy and housing advice. The service provides advice, assistance and advocacy to individuals.

182. A total of 376 comments were received for this option.

183. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Some comments noted the service should be reviewed to identify any overlap with other advice providers
- ▼ Other comments described advice on issues such as debt, energy and housing as important for low-income households and a key way of addressing poverty and inequality.

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Option 5p: Instrumental Music Service

Current budget: £501,000

184. **Option:** Instrumental Music Service which provides free instrumental music lessons to primary and secondary school pupils, which goes beyond the statutory minimum.

185. A total of 391 comments were received for this option.

186. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Comments highlighted the value of free instrumental tuition for children and young people, noting a range of benefits and preferred to see the service maintained.
- ▼ Other comments saw this as an area where charging could be considered before making changes to the service.

Option 5q: The delivery of youth services.

Current budget: £1.6 million

187. **Option:** The delivery of youth services, including support to youth clubs and outreach work with vulnerable groups and individuals.

188. A total of 422 comments were received for this option.

189. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Some comments saw youth work, clubs and outreach as important for young people's safety, wellbeing and the prevention of anti-social behaviour.
- ▼ Other comments regarded youth services as a non-statutory service where some savings might be made, while still recognising their benefits.

Option 5r: Providing Summer of Play activities

Current budget: £450,000

190. **Option:** Providing Summer of Play activities and support during the school holiday period.

191. A total of 349 comments were received for this option.

192. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ A range of comments accepted that short-term or one-off programmes such as Summer of Play could be reduced or reshaped if required.

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- ▼ Others highlighted the importance of affordable holiday activities for children and families.

Option 5s: Providing information, education and news to customers.

Current budget: £56,000

193. **Option:** Providing information, education and news to customers on both council and local services, and events via the council's social media channels, and the council's newspaper, Bulletin.

194. A total of 347 comments were received for this option.

195. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ The majority of comments favoured reducing or restructuring communications, with numerous suggestions to stop the Bulletin newspaper and rely more on digital channels.
- ▼ A minority of comments suggested that not everyone is online and that clear communication from the council is important for accountability and information, especially for older or digitally excluded customers.

Option 5t: Providing environmental education, management and patrols of open space assets.

Current budget: £322,000

196. **Option:** Providing environmental education, management and patrols of open space assets, such as country parks and play parks, by the Ranger Service and Waste Services.

197. A total of 337 comments were received for this option.

198. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Suggestions included a review of the roles across these activities where there is potential for partnership working in line with wider changes to environmental enforcement.
- ▼ Other responses emphasised that rangers and environmental education are important for biodiversity, outdoor learning and responsible use of parks, and that reductions could affect both the environment and community use of country parks.

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Option 5u: Grounds maintenance and upkeep of public amenity golf courses.

Current budget: £252,000

199. **Option:** Grounds maintenance and upkeep of public amenity golf courses.

200. A total of 369 comments were received for this option.

201. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ A majority of comments regarded golf course maintenance as a non-essential leisure spend that could be reduced, rationalised or moved towards more self-funding.
- ▼ Some comments suggested that affordable public golf provides physical and social benefits.

Option 5v: Education business and customer support service.

Current budget: £1.8 million

202. **Option:** Education business and customer support service which provides pupil placement and support to individual schools with HR, health and safety, and financial advice for head teachers.

203. A total of 321 comments were received for this option.

204. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ A number of comments indicated that the support services were seen as larger than necessary with suggestions including shared services or more streamlined processes.
- ▼ Some comments highlighted that head teachers rely on HR, health and safety and financial advice, and that reducing this support could increase the workload on schools.

Option 5w: Planning enforcement action beyond the statutory minimum.

Current budget: £137,000

205. **Option:** Planning enforcement action beyond the statutory minimum and delivering initiatives such as the promotion of tree preservation orders.

206. A total of 285 comments were received for this option.

207. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Comments saw scope to scale back non-statutory planning enforcement or focus on the most serious breaches, to help prioritise limited resources.

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- ▼ Other responses highlighted the importance of effective planning enforcement, including protection of trees and the local environment.

Option 5x: Membership of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA).

Current budget: £113,000

208. **Option:** Membership of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). COSLA works on the behalf of Councils to engage with governments and others on policy, funding and legislation.

209. A total of 297 comments were received for this option.

210. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Some comments raised questions on the value of COSLA membership during a period of budget cuts and saw it as an area where the council could show it is reducing costs.
- ▼ Others noted that COSLA represents councils nationally on funding and legislation and expressed concern about the council losing the collective voice.

Option 5y: The provision of a service which works with individuals and community based projects to assist regeneration.

Current budget: £1.5 million

211. **Option:** The provision of a service which works with individuals and community based projects to assist regeneration, and to deliver targeted campaigns and support to reduce inequality in these communities, and associated financial support to the voluntary sector.

212. A total of 404 comments were received for this option.

213. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ Comments were made which recognised that some rationalisation of the regeneration and voluntary sector support may be required.
- ▼ Comments noted that community work and voluntary organisations play an important role in addressing inequalities and supporting vulnerable people, and that reductions in this area could have wider impacts.

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Option 5z: Disbursement payments.

Current budget: £98,000

214. **Option:** Disbursement payments which are small sums of monies provided to community groups for local projects.

215. A total of 302 comments were received for this option.

216. The main themes emerging from responses to the option include:

- ▼ There was a view that small grants could be reduced or more tightly targeted, with stricter criteria used so that statutory and critical services can be prioritised.
- ▼ Additional comments noted that even relatively small amounts of funding can make a significant difference to local groups and to maintaining a strong sense of community.

Theme 5: General comments

217. A total of 585 comments were received that were general comments.

218. The main themes emerging from responses to the Theme 5 General comments include:

- ▼ Some comments accepted that savings are needed but said they should be carefully targeted, with reductions focused first on services the council is not legally required to provide. Suggestions included making proportional reductions or redesigning services rather than stopping them completely.
- ▼ A number of comments highlighted that many of these non-statutory services are still important for communities, families and vulnerable people.
- ▼ Other comments said the council should reduce waste and overheads before changing frontline or community services, for example by reviewing non-essential spending, councillor costs and management structures.

Consultation – Council Tax

6 Have your say on Council Tax

219. A total of 5,953 respondents answered the question “Would you support an increase in Council Tax if all funding raised was spent on key services?”

220. Overall, 51.79% of respondents agreed. This gives the Council a clear and positive basis to consider this option.

221. Council Tax provides significant positive impacts for communities and is vital to the council’s ability to balance our budget, which is a legal requirement. It supports local capital investment in key areas, from the construction of new community facilities to maintaining vital local infrastructure such as roads and schools. It is a key element of local democratic decision-making. Council Tax rates are set by democratically-elected councillors based on the needs of local communities.

222. Increases in Council Tax rates can, therefore, help prevent reductions to vital frontline services throughout communities. Council Tax, however, only makes up around 19% of the total funding that Councils receive. This is a significant amount of money, but within the context of the total spent by Councils each year on essential local services such as education, collecting bins, maintaining roads and providing care services, Council Tax income is a relatively small amount. Because of the relatively small proportion of total council spending met by Council Tax, increasing Council Tax alone cannot resolve the financial challenges facing Councils.

223. Council Tax contributes towards the cost of council services but 80% of the council’s budget is provided by the Scottish Government. Council Tax income makes up less than 20% of the council’s budget. Whilst Council Tax is an important source of funding, it does not pay for all council services.

224. There were 769 comments received relating to the questions in this section of the consultation.

225. The main themes emerging from responses to the Option include:

- ▀ Some comments expressed concern about further Council Tax rises, noting that bills already feel high for the level of service received and referring to ongoing cost-of-living pressures
- ▀ A number of comments supported some level of increase, usually on the basis that rises should be modest, clearly linked to protecting key services, and combined with stronger recovery from non-payers and better use of existing income.
- ▀ General comments raised points including Council Tax banding, discounts and the need to tackle waste and inefficiency before increasing council tax

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Theme 6: General comments

226. A total of 337 comments were received that were general comments.

227. The main themes emerging from responses to the Theme 6 general comments include:

- ▀ Many respondents highlighted that households are under financial pressure and felt any future Council Tax increases should be kept to a minimum and clearly linked to visible improvements in services.
- ▀ Some comments suggested that before increasing Council Tax, the council should look at reducing waste and bureaucracy and reviewing internal costs, including checking for unnecessary spending, management layers and duplicated activity.
- ▀ Some comments suggested exploring ways for contributions to better reflect ability to pay including through property revaluation, higher charges for larger or second homes and stronger action on persistent non-payment.
- ▀ Other comments suggested that key services should be better funded by national government or through changes to wider spending priorities and asked for more transparent information about how council tax income is used.

Next Steps

228. The council will continue to analyse the detailed comments provided in the consultation and use this information to shape the Budget Strategy 2026/227 to 2027/28 for the council, due to be considered and approved in February 2026.
229. The comments provided through this consultation will be used as a valuable source of information for council officers and elected members to help inform decisions in the next few years. More immediately, we will:
 - ▼ Use the comments to shape and develop the budget savings options, taking into consideration the views that have been expressed;
 - ▼ Analyse and assess the feasibility of any suggested efficiencies or service changes that have been proposed through the consultation;
 - ▼ Use any feedback on the consultation approach to inform future engagements and consultations.
230. The council will also share the feedback and suggestions that relate to other organisations with the appropriate partners, for example, NHS Lothian and Police Scotland.