

toughchoices

ahead for West Lothian

A Bulletin two-page special - The financial crisis and reductions in funding will result in difficult decisions for all public sector bodies in the UK.

Starting in March this year, a series of special features were included in Bulletin, that highlight the scale of the financial problems and the choices that will have to be made in order that the council delivers a balanced budget. The series is called 'Tough Choices ahead for West Lothian'.

In the third part of the series, this two-page special looks at the main challenges that lie ahead and lets you know how the consultation process between the council, community groups and residents is progressing.

Key areas for West Lothian Council:

1 An increased focus on the Modernisation and Business Change programme

We have undertaken a review of all spending across the council.

The council is looking to identify appropriate work that might benefit from a fresh approach.

The move to the Civic Centre has opened up opportunities to

develop new ways of working and a series of modern and innovative methods of working will be implemented this year. For example, a review to look at ways

of modernising administration and clerical services in the Civic Centre is currently underway.

2 Our Life Stages programme

Our Life Stages programme is innovative in its approach to target resources where they have most impact.

West Lothian is leading the way with this approach which focuses on shifting resources to prevention and helping people most at risk of

not reaching their full potential. The council, police, health and voluntary sector are among those involved in making sure changes

implemented now will have long-term benefits for communities across West Lothian.

3 Our future strategy

The council has always faced difficult issues proactively and delivered innovative solutions.

Our future strategy is to retain what we do best and to focus our reduced resources on delivering core priorities. We plan to do this by:

- Maximising savings through innovative approaches to service provision.

- Reducing, or discontinuing, services that are not cost effective or only make a limited

contribution to our desired outcomes.

- Actively pursuing integrated partnership working and the sharing of service provision with other local authorities.

- Managing and controlling growth of our expenditure.

- Maximising the contribution of the

voluntary sector.

Within our current proposals, efficiency measures in the council equate to over half of the total we need to save (56%). The remaining percentage has been split between new or increased charges or removal of subsidies (20%) and changes to service provision (24%).



■ Service changes
£10.9 million, 24%

■ Efficiencies
£25.3 million, 56%

■ Charges/subsidies
£8.8 million, 20%

What you need to know

1 Although exact figures are still to be confirmed, West Lothian Council may face an unprecedented funding gap of £45 million over the three year period 2011 to 2014.

2 The council is operating from a sound financial position and has a balanced budget for 2010/11. This is a good solid base to work from.

3 The council has been planning for an uncertain future and wants West Lothian's residents to know what options are available.

4 Future budget changes are not yet known. However, COSLA (the association which represents all Scottish local authorities) has

recommended that councils should plan on the basis of a 12 per cent real terms reduction in grant funding in the three years to 2013/14.

5 The national budget reductions will severely hamper the council's short-, medium- and long-term plans, and drastically constrain what the council can spend on local services.

6 The council is making significant efficiency savings but the reality is this will not be enough to close the gap.

7 Major service changes are needed and they will affect all services in West Lothian.

A snapshot of the Modernisation and Business Change programme:

Workforce planning:

Over the course of the three years 2011 - 2014 we may have to reduce the number of staff working for the council by approximately 1,000.

Flexible working:

Our flexible-working scheme - Worksmart West Lothian - is currently being piloted in various services across this council.

Management:

The council will also introduce a leaner management structure that aims to reduce senior management posts by approximately 25%.

Administration:

Recent advances mean that pooling administrative and clerical resource is now feasible.

Buildings:

Our property strategy has a challenging target of attempting to

reduce the number of council offices from 43 to 17.

Shared services:

Sharing services is about taking a fresh look at how we deliver our services, finding efficiency savings and identifying where these savings could be used to improve frontline services.

Procurement:

A full review of all of the council's procurement activity is being undertaken.

Resources:

Further efficiencies will be sought from a review of our IT platforms, software and support contracts.

Partnership working:

The move to the Civic Centre has opened up opportunities for reviewing how we work across our services and with our partners.



It is your future, help shape it

Continued from page one

Hugh MacRae, from the Senior People's Forum, said: "I firmly believe it's a responsibility as an older person in West Lothian to be engaged/involved and possibly influence any decisions that affect all of our lives, facing the inevitable cutbacks in services that will be taking place in the coming years." Chair of the West

Lothian youth congress, David Leitch, added: "At this difficult time, West Lothian has once again put young people at the heart of decision making by giving them a direct input to the Tough Choices process.

"Young people are often disproportionately affected by service reductions and rely

on the local authority to provide them with support.

"We are extremely grateful to have been given a real say in the Tough Choices programme and hope we can genuinely help to protect young people and help the authority devise ways of being more efficient and productive."

What you said:



Bulletin readers will be aware that the council is currently planning for an estimated budget shortfall of £45 million by 2014, and are in the process of consulting with the community over a large number of officer-led proposals to save money whilst focusing on providing core council services.

The deadline for feedback was 30 June and thousands of people took part in the process.

As Bulletin went to press, the Environment and Partnership and Resources PDSPs had already taken place.

Here are just a few examples of feedback we received on issues discussed at the meetings:

“Introduce charges for the Pest Control Service”

“Allow community councils or other community groups to manage the planting of bedding baskets and hanging baskets in towns”

“Partnership working is a great concept, and one that should be supported”

“Cut the grass less. It saves fuel and operational costs, and it also encourages biodiversity”

“Changes to the Registration Service could cause distress to users”

“I would be in favour of charging for bulky uplifts but would worry about an increase in fly tipping”

“Hours at recycling centres could be reduced”

“More partnerships are needed with other public sector bodies, voluntary sector and the private sector.”

No decisions will be made on these proposals until next year, as the consultation has to be completed then referred to councillors for discussion. Further updates will be available in future editions of Bulletin.

A closer look at the PDSP process



Voluntary groups, trade unions, councillors and community councils gathered at the first in a series of special Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels on Friday 9 July.

The services discussed at the first meeting were Property Management and Development, Construction Services, Area Services, Corporate Communications, and Quality and Performance.

Speaking after the meeting, Council Leader Peter Johnston, said: "There was a good selection of community and staff representatives and the scrutiny and discussion of the officer proposals was productive. I was particularly pleased to see new options come forward from council staff regarding how we can best deliver registration services and these alternatives will now be fully explored."

What community representatives thought about the first meeting:

Jim Gallacher, Chief Executive, Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian, said:

"I was pleased to be given the opportunity to take part in this process, as a representative of the voluntary sector.

"I was pleasantly surprised by

the atmosphere at the meeting considering the job that had to be done. The voluntary sector plays a vital part in service delivery in West Lothian. Its diversity, strength and purpose are valued by all sections of the community. Any cuts apportioned to the sector must be proportionate and mindful of any lasting negative impact to the community. With this said I was happy with the way it went. If all the PDSPs follow on like this, I think the consultation process will go well."

John Richardson, Chair of the Association of Community Councils, added: "It was an excellent meeting and very constructive. At the end of the day, £45 million has to be cut and we need to discuss where do we go from here and are the proposals concentrating on the right areas for the benefit of the West Lothian communities?"

"The first meeting proved that we are getting it right on the vast majority of occasions."

Information on the Tough Choices consultation is available online at www.westlothian.gov.uk/change

Dates for the diary - PDSP calendar (All PDSP meetings take place in the Civic Centre, Livingston)



The PDSPs are considering the officer-led proposals that were outlined in the Tough Choices booklet and all the meetings are open to members of the public.

23 August, Education PDSP, 10am, Services being considered: Pre-school Sector and central Education

24 August, Education PDSP, 10am. Services being considered: Primary and Secondary Sectors

24 August, Environment PDSP, 10am,

Services being considered: Roads, Fleet and Community Transport, Facilities Management, and Support

26 August, Culture and Leisure PDSP, 10.30am. Services being

considered: Arts, Community Learning and Development, Community Facilities

26 August, Social Policy PDSP, 2pm. Services being considered: Older People's Services

2 September, Culture and Leisure PDSP, 10.30am,

Services being considered: Libraries, Sport and Outdoor Education

2 September, Social Policy PDSP, 2pm. Services being considered:

Criminal Justice, Children and Families, and Voluntary Organisations

3 September, Partnership and Resources, 8.30am. Services being considered: Chief Executive, Financial Management, Revenues and Benefits, Procurement, Risk and Insurance, and Internal Audit

Information on the Tough Choices consultation with a feedback form is available online at

www.westlothian.gov.uk/change

What are Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels (PDSPs)?

PDSPs represent each of the council's main areas such as the environment, education, health and care, social policy and services for the community. These are small groups of councillors who develop new policies for the council, or review existing policies to see if changes are needed. PDSPs make recommendations to the Council or Education

Executive where decisions, which are binding on the council, are made.

Each of the PDSPs has the power to invite community representatives, stakeholders and community groups to participate in discussions and ultimately influence the decision-making process.