

Council tenants in West Lothian face rent increase of £3 a week

Council tenants in West Lothian are facing a rent increase of £3 a week next year under plans set to be put to residents.

West Lothian council tenants will be asked for their views on the plans, which would see rents increase by 3.5%.

But SNP housing spokesman Robert De Bold complained that it was “hardly proper consultation” if tenants were given only one figure to consider.

A meeting of the Housing Services PDSP agreed to ask the Executive to press ahead with annual rent strategy consultation this week.

Tenants will be asked on-line, and by letter if they support the 3.5% increase.

The PDSP heard a report from Kirsty Weir, a performance and change manager with the housing department, who said: “The average weekly rent for homes is projected to be £89.14 in 2025/26, up from £86.13 in 2024/25.

“For garages, the weekly rent will rise to £6.71 in 2025/26, up from £6.48 in 2024/25.

“The 3.5% annual rent increase will support the delivery of a minimum of 409 additional council houses through new builds and open market acquisitions, with an average of £24.5 million

per year being invested in the existing housing stock.

“The council’s preventative approach to managing rent arrears will help mitigate the impact of the rent increase. Housing Officers will continue collaborating with the Advice Shop to help tenants maximise their income and improve budgeting skills.”

In February last year, the Council approved a 3.5% annual rent strategy, along with the updated Housing Revenue Account financial plan and Housing Capital Investment Programme for the five-year period from 2023/24 to 2027/28.

Both the approved financial plan and investment programme are based on an annual rent increase of 3.5% for the duration of the strategy period. In light of these requirements, it is proposed that tenant engagement will occur over a two-month period through social media channels, the West Lothian Council website, and by letter for tenants aged 60 and over.

Mrs Weir confirmed a question from Councillor De Bold as to whether 3.5% was to sole figure tenants would be asked to consider adding “We do take into consideration all comments that come forthwith.”

Councillor De Bold asked if the council would “then be beholden to implement that figure at rent-setting at the budget?”.

Mrs Weir replied: “No, council can consider any option that is put forth, but again we would give a full overview of the feedback that we got from our tenants.”

Councillor De Bold told the meeting: “I do not believe consulting on a solitary figure is actually a proper consultation and many tenants are likely to be aware that there are needs within the housing portfolio.”

He cited complaints about repairs and delays in re-letting

homes and how few new homes are being built.

Chairing the meeting Councillor George Paul reminded the councillor that the council would build more homes if it was adequately financed by the Scottish Government.

The final decision on rent consultation goes before Tuesday's meeting of the council's Executive.

By Stuart Sommerville Local Democracy Reporter