

# **Warning it will take ‘years’ to get public services back**

**A council leader has warned it will take years to restore public services as residents face a 10% council tax hike and tenants could see rent rise up to £6 a week.**

A report to East Lothian councillors today warned that despite an estimated £12million ‘uplift’ in funds for the year ahead from national government, it will still require the 10% council tax increase to balance the books.

It says the indicative rise equates to an average of £2.75 extra a week for residents and will generate more than £9.4million in additional income for the local authority.

The report also sets out the impact of a 7% increase on council rents, which it says will mean tenants pay “an average weekly increase of £5.75”.

While no formal confirmation of the national funding which will come to the council has been made, officers estimate the budget will see an increase in funds of around £12m – although half of that is expected to be ringfenced for specific policy commitments.

The report said: “The budget model reflects a balanced position for 2025-26 with a 10% council tax increase.

“This means that any additional savings identified for 2025-26 could either provide additional resource to support Council Plan priorities, or be used to offset pressures arising in

future years.”

Council leader Norman Hampshire said that while the additional funding was welcomed it would not solve all the problems it faced.

He said: “It is going to take a number of years to get services back to the way they were. Every one per cent increase in council tax is a £700,000 investment in to our area.”

The budget model set out to councillors today is now open for each political party in the council to consider and submit their own draft proposals to the head of finance by January 27.

All proposals will then be considered for competency before final proposals are lodged by February 6. The full council will meet to agree the final budget on February 18.

Councillor Hampshire said: “Our communities look to us to ensure services can continue. This year we will be investing back into our services and hopefully we can find a cross party agreement to deliver our budget for the people of East Lothian.”

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter