

# **East Lothian councillors set to agree 10% council tax rise**

## **East Lothian Councillors are set to approve a 10% council tax rise next week despite additional funding from Scottish Government.**

A cross party budget paper due to go to elected members for final approval includes the increase for the year ahead – with further 5% hikes annually for the next four years.

The move will mean an increase of more than £3 a week for more than one in three households in the county next year.

A report to a meeting of the full council next Tuesday says that despite an increase in the funding from national government, the increase is still needed.

It says: “Income from council tax covers approximately a quarter of the council’s annual running costs. The proposed budget includes a council tax increase of 10% in 2025-26, aligned to previous planning assumptions along with indicative annual increases of 5% in the subsequent 4 years.

“Despite seeing an uplift in revenue funding through the settlement, the council continues to face significant demand and pressures which have resulted in budget overspends in recent years.

“Council tax increases are applied in order to balance the budget after taking account new funding and planned savings.”

The report from officers goes on to say a residents survey carried out last year found the majority of people preferred a moderate council tax increase to cuts to services with 61% indicating that they would support a council tax increase of not more than £3 per week.

It says the increase will mean for an average Band D property a weekly rise of £3.76, however it acknowledges that a third of residents live in higher band homes.

The report says: "Approximately 37% of households fall within bands E-H for council tax purposes, and will therefore see an increase to the standard charge which is in excess of £3 per week.

"However, 2,671 of these households are eligible for reductions or exemptions which reduce the weekly increase below this level, meaning that just under 68% of households will see an increase in their council tax bills of below £3 per week."

The budget proposals set to go before councillors next Tuesday, February 18, have been drawn up with cross party approval.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter