

# Holyrood cash 'wont stop cuts' in West Lothian

**Scottish Government promises of £144m to help meet an upsurge in National Insurance costs will do nothing to stop cutbacks hitting West Lothian and other councils, it was claimed this week.**

Lawrence Fitzpatrick, the leader of the Livingston-based Labour minority-led administration warned that cuts would still happen as savings had to be found.

And CoSLA, the umbrella group for Scottish councils, warned that whatever funds come from Holyrood or Westminster local authorities are facing an £85m crisis in adult social care.

Shona Robison, the finance secretary, announced on Tuesday that the SNP Government would give local authorities £144m extra funding to help them meet increased National Insurance costs imposed by Westminster, saying the cash could also help avoid "inflation busting increases" in council tax.

Ms Robison insisted it was "unacceptable" that Westminster was not stumping up sufficient cash to cover the cost of the rise – which she said could be more than £700 million.

As MSPs debated the Scottish Budget for 2025-26, the Finance Secretary said ministers at Holyrood are "aiming to provide" funding to meet 60% of the increased charge.

Councillor Fitzpatrick told the Local Democracy Reporting

Service: “We have still to receive confirmation from the Scottish Government on West Lothian’s share of any additional funding.

“Whilst we welcome any and all additional funding, the Scottish Government’s decision to only provide 60% of the estimated direct costs will have an impact on services in West Lothian.

“Savings will need to be found to cover the remaining 40%, which leaves all elected members in West Lothian with tough decisions to make around raising tax or reducing services, as we are legally required to set a balanced budget for 2025/26.”

Speaking after Tuesday’s announcement, the CoSLA Resources Spokesperson, Councillor Katie Hagmann, said: “We note that the Scottish Government has announced it will fund 60% of the additional direct staffing costs that will result from the UK Government’s policy decision to raise Employers National Insurance. However, this leaves the remaining 40% with no additional funding – leaving a gap of £96 million Councils will still need to fill within their budgets.

“While we acknowledge that the UK government is still to announce additional resources, it is important to note that there has been no additional funding for commissioned services, the biggest of these being adult social care, which are also vital services and will see significant impacts.”

CoSLA added that adult social care alone faces £85m of funding pressure (equivalent to a 3% council tax increase), “risking vital services many in our communities rely upon.”

The full funding gap from the additional pressure of NI rises on the direct staffing costs for councils plus commissioned services and ALEOs is estimated at £236m. This would equate to an 8.2% increase in council tax before all other inflationary, pay, demand pressures and pre-existing budget gap are

considered.

At Holyrood deals with the Liberal Democrats and Scottish Green MSPs – as well as Labour's decision to abstain on the Scottish Budget – mean the proposals will pass, despite the SNP not having a majority.

And Ms Robison said that this “collaborative approach” highlighted how the Scottish Parliament was “designed to work”, with parties “negotiating to agree solutions for the benefit of Scotland.”

But the Tories made clear they would not support the “rotten Budget” from the SNP Government.

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter