

# **New council tax bills show first substantive rise in years**

**The largest homes in West Lothian will see their Council Tax rise by just over £300 a year from April as the new 8.95% increase comes in.**

It's still less than the 9.8% which the county's Conservative Association said was being considered pre-budget.

Councils such as East Lothian has gone for a 10% hike, and those authorities yet to make up their mind, such as neighbouring Falkirk, could be emboldened by big figures following Clamannanshire's decision to opt for a 13% rise.

At Tuesday's budget meeting in Livingston, Labour councillors criticised the SNP's refusal to reform Council Tax since it first promised in 2007 and called on Ministers to make good the latest promises of change from the Government.

Linlithgow veteran councillor Tom Conn told the meeting: "Ivan McKee, the public finance minister recently admitted that the Council Tax could have been changed before, which is a terrible admission from a member of a government elected in 2007 to scrap the Council Tax."

He added that the last freeze imposed after the SNP loss at the Rutherglen by-election cost West Lothian £1m.

In a pre-budget statement to the Local Democracy Reporting Service West Lothian Tories said: "The West Lothian

Conservative Councillors have supported the budget and welcome the £40million that is being spent on school property projects, the £2.8million in homeless and over £6million invested in roads, footways, street lighting, bridges and structures and flood prevention.

“However, we would not have supported this without the council tax being lower than an initially proposed 9.8%.”

SNP councillors had themselves accepted that Council Tax would have to rise beyond the initially expected 5.8% and proposed a 7.5% rise.

The party’s Budget amendment called on the council to agree “a Council Tax increase for 2025/26 of 7.5%; and a recommendation for an increase of 5% in both 2026/27 and 2027/28, as a means to protect West Lothian residents, as much as we are able, from the worst damage to our constituent’s standard of living caused entirely by Westminster created austerity, including the continued damaging effects of Brexit.”

The 8.95% increase is the largest faced by households in years, largely because of ten successive Council Tax freezes imposed by the Scottish Government. An increase of 8.95% from 2024/25 levels, generates £9.2 million of income – based on a 98% collection rate.

The estimated total income raised from 2025/26 council tax billing is £113.548 million, including £804,000 from new house building. Other council tax income of £1.668 million is based on the recovery of prior year council tax, with further income of £13,000 from the saving measure to maximise collection.

It will add £305 a year to the largest, Band H homes, but there are only 202 of those in the county.

At the lowest end, Band A, there are a fifth of the county’s homes – 16,2824. They will see the annual Council Tax rise

from £927.31 to £1,010.30.

Most homes are in Band B, with 24,550, or 29.5% of the total. The annual bill in this bracket rises from £1,081.86 to £1,178.68.

Nationally, Band D is used as the average. As reported earlier this week by the LDRS this will rise from £1,390.96 a year to £1,515.45. Band D homes make up just over 11% of the housing stock, with 9,384 dwellings.

The monthly increase in Band D is £10.37. At Band H the monthly increase is £25.42.

The budget report told councillors: "There are 14,937 households in receipt of a council tax reduction through the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) of which 12,019 are in receipt of a 100% reduction with the remainder receiving a tapered amount based on excess income above the council tax reduction threshold.

"The highest proportion of households receiving CTRS are in bands A and B where 78.8% of households receive CTRS."

The full list of annual Council Tax Band increases at 8.95% rise:-

A £927.31 to £1,010.30.

B £1,081.86 to £1,178.68.

C £1,236.41 to £1,347.07.

D £1,390.96 to £1,515.45.

E £1,827.57 to £1,991.13.

F £2,260.31 to £2,462.61.

G £2,723.96 to £2,967.76

H £3,407.85 to £3,712.85.

Total: 83,243 of homes

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter