

Three-year £100m investment in housing for West Lothian

A three-year £100 million capital investment programme that will bring more new social housing and upgrades to council stock in West Lothian has been approved.

Councillors agreed the spending plan alongside a rent-setting programme which will see rents rise by £3 a week.

A £17m programme will see new homes built and more buy-backs by the council, and £33m will be spent in an extensive renovation programme for the existing housing estate.

Councillors agreed to the plans in a special meeting of the full council on Monday.

The new build programme will deliver 150 new council houses, including both new build and Open Market Acquisition additions, also known as buy backs, where the council buys properties to create council homes.

This will deliver an overall total of 427 new council houses over the three-year course of the investment programme.

Approximately, £33 million is planned to be spent to improve and maintain existing housing, ensuring council homes continue to meet the Scottish Quality Housing Standard (SQHS).

Works include projects to deliver energy efficiency measures, central heating replacements, aids and adaptations, electrical testing and repair and external wall insulation upgrades.

Fourteen individual projects will cost £17.9million. These include a variety of upgrades consisting of long-term maintenance work, where structural elements such as roof and external walls are beyond repair.

Planned programme works of £31.6million will take place – covering a broad range of activities, including kitchens and bathroom replacements, window and door refurbishments, painting and fencing programmes.

General environmental upgrades will cost £638,000, This programme will include tenant-led street improvement projects. Officers said this week that although many of these works are of a small scale, these projects can have a substantial impact on local amenities and will be informed by council tenants and local communities.

Councillor Robert De Bold, the opposition SNP group's housing spokesperson raised a verbal amendment against a Labour motion, passing the investment plans without the "political" claims it said the motion had contained in outlining the administration's record.

Councillor Pauline Stafford, the deputy SNP group leader, defended the Scottish Government's record on housing investment. She highlighted that Holyrood had green-lit £768m in housing investment, equivalent to 19% per 1,000 people, compared to only 11% per 1,000 by the Labour controlled Welsh Government in Cardiff.

The amendment was defeated in a vote.

Executive councillor for Housing George Paul said after the meeting: "We remain committed to the delivery of new high-quality affordable housing, with funds allocated towards increasing the social housing stock in areas of high demand in West Lothian."

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter