

West Lothian Council to charge £50 for bulky uplifts

The cost of bulky rubbish uplifts in West Lothian is set to rise to £50 for five items in this month's budget.

A proposed 5.5% increase in service charges could also see burial and cemetery charges rise in line with proposals first agreed in February last year.

The council's current charge for bulky uplifts is £38.59 for five items.

News that the new charge could top £50 prompted online criticism in the weeks before the budget- which is expected at the end of this month-, along with suggestions that it could lead to a rise in fly-tipping.

The proposed increase in uplift charges would generate additional net income per annum of approximately £49,000.

A report to the Corporate Policy and Resources PDSP this week said: "This increase would move the financial position for this discretionary service closer to full cost recovery, but the service would still require some subsidy from council budgets to deliver.

"On the basis of a similar five item uplift service, the council's current charge of £38.59 is the 16th highest of the 31 councils who charge for bulky uplifts.

Moving to a charge of £50 would exceed the current average

charge of £41.91 and would move the council to 9th highest, for fees in Scotland, based on 2024/25 charges.”

The increase in discretionary fees and charges agreed in February 2024 was budgeted to generate additional income of £130,000 in 2024/25 and £165,000 in 2025/26.

The budget could also bring a rise in cemetery charges. The report to the PDSP detailed: “The council has a statutory responsibility as a burial authority to provide communities and families with a burial service. This service includes providing lairs within cemeteries and preparing and closing lairs for interments.”

The council currently applies separate charges for the sale of lairs and for preparing and closing lairs for interments for all funerals. However, the income generated through the sale of lairs and interment fees does not offset the full operating costs of delivering the service, with the cemeteries service heavily subsidised by the council.

The report added: “Whilst the council has a statutory responsibility to provide a burial service, it has discretion to set its own charges. It is therefore proposed to increase cemetery charges for the sale of lairs and interment fees to a charge where the service operates at a reduced subsidy level.

“An increase of 20% in 2025/26 would generate additional income of approximately £65,000 and decrease that subsidy to around £102,000.

“It is proposed that the council would move towards a full cost recovery model, through above inflation increases in the years beyond 2025/26.”

By Stuart Sommerville Local Democracy Reporter