

# **Councillors in West Lothian awarded hefty pay rise after Government review**

**Councillors in West Lothian have been awarded hefty pay rises of more than 20 per cent following a review by the Scottish Government.**

Council leader Lawrence Fitzpatrick will see his salary rise to more than £50,000 a year following a review, while a basic salary for a councillor will rise 21 per cent by £4,637 to almost £26,000 a year.

The increases have been agreed following the first review of salaries since 2011. They are based on the recommendations of the Scottish Local Authority Remuneration Committee (SLARC), which was commissioned in 2023 to look at how the role of councillors has changed and grown in recent years.

SLARC said that the growth of social media means that councillor's workloads have increased significantly and being a councillor should not be considered a full time job.

The Scottish Government says the increases are also needed to attract a wider cross section of the public to stand for public office.

Pay for councillors has slipped significantly in the last 18 years compared to surging salary packets for MPs and MSPs, the leader of West Lothian Council told a meeting of the council's executive this week.

The SNP group leader called for senior councillors to have their work reviewed in the way any council employee earning the proposed salary of £37,000 would.

Councillor Janet Campbell asked: "How do we ensure that portfolio holders are carrying out the role properly and competently?"

"Senior councillor remuneration here is stated as £37,059 for the year 2025/26. For any other person, including persons working for this council who receive a salary of this magnitude, their competency would most definitely be taken into account and they would have regular supervision to ensure that they are carrying out their role properly."

She told the leader of the council, Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick: "It would appear you don't feel that should happen in this case."

Councillor Fitzpatrick responded: "From time to time and it has happened in the past, if someone is considered not to be fulfilling that role prudently and adequately, then it is up to the council to remove that person."

Councillor Campbell continued: "This is a concern that has been raised by numerous people within West Lothian who, at the end of the day, pay council tax to West Lothian Council, so I think it's a fair and reasonable question to ask, how do we ensure that portfolio holders are carrying out the role competently and properly."

Councillor Fitzpatrick said: "No-one's raised that issue with me and I'm in regular contact with constituents through parent councils and community councils etc, but remember that political scrutiny is through PDSPs."

He added: "The position in our council is the same in all 32 Scottish local authorities."

Councillor Sally Pattle, the Lib Dem for Linlithgow told the meeting: "I think it's very uncomfortable to be discussing giving ourselves a pay rise when we know the cuts and the difficulties the service across the council have, but I think also that, for a very very long time, putting yourself forward to be a councillor has been almost the reserve of a select group of people because the remuneration is just not there for the amount of extra responsibility we take on within our communities since we have become elected members.

"The remuneration is probably still not what a lot of people would consider to be an average salary for the type of work that we undertake. I appreciate that this is difficult on paper, but I do think councillors deserve to be remunerated for roles and responsibilities that they carry out for their communities."

In a short debate Councillor Fitzpatrick told members of the executive that councillors' pay had been £15,400 in 2007. It will now rise to £25,982. In contrast an MP's salary has risen from £60,675 to £93,904 in the same time, more than £33,000 more. An MSP's salary has risen £21,000 to more than £74,000 in the same time frame.

While the basic salary rise amounts to a 21 per cent increase. The £7,365 rise in the council leader's pay will take Councillor Fitzpatrick's salary to from £42,698 to £50,063. This represents a 17 per cent increase.

Labour's Tom Conn said: "I think it's unfortunate that Councillor Campbell focuses on pay of councillors." He suggested that she had "diminished the wider investigation" of the pay review by SLARC.

"I would draw her attention to where it says that one of the biggest barriers to elected office is payment and increasing the payments available for councillors, aims to encourage under-represented groups such as women, those with

disabilities, people under 55 and those from less affluent backgrounds to consider standing for election.”

Linlithgow SNP, Councillor Pauline Orr said: “If you work in a bank or any other organisation there is an expectation that you have annual reviews etc, so that you can pick up what you’re doing well and what you’re not doing well. That is the point of being transparent to the public.”

By Stuart Sommerville, Local Democracy Reporter