

# East Lothian Council Budget Consultation 2026-27

## Overview

East Lothian Council is facing significant financial pressures due to rising costs, increasing demand for services, and limited funding growth. At the same time, ours is one of the fastest-growing areas in Scotland, meaning more people who need schools, housing, social care and other local services. Our Government grant, which makes up around 75% of our funding, is falling in real terms while developers may contribute to building new facilities but not to the ongoing costs to run them. This means our running costs increase each year without the additional funding to cover them.

To set a budget that balances our spending plans and the income we expect to receive, we must make difficult decisions about how services are funded and delivered in the years ahead.

This consultation asks for your views on our financial strategy and priorities – including which services should be protected, thoughts on council tax levels, the use of digital services, and ideas for improving efficiency and fairness. Your feedback will help shape how resources are allocated and ensure decisions reflect the needs and values of East Lothian’s communities.

You can find out more here: [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/our-budget](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/our-budget) <<https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.eastlothian.gov.uk%2Ffour-budget&data=05%7C02%7Ctrenouf%40eastlothian.gov.uk%7C33e503e497a24bb2cf4f08ddf68bcae%7C85e771afe90a4487b4071322ba02cc82%7C0%7C0%7C6389431>>

The closing date for this consultation is 12th November 2025.

A paper copy can be requested by emailing: [trenouf@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:trenouf@eastlothian.gov.uk) or by phoning 01620 827827

## East Lothian Council Budget Consultation 2026-27

1 The council faces significant funding gaps over the coming years that will mean that we need to make some big changes to the way that we currently work. Our Financial Strategy sets out five key themes to support this process. We would like to hear your views on these areas. Please rank the themes to show the your preferences (1 = most preferred, 5 = least preferred)

	1	2	3	4	5
Asset rationalisation and energy efficiency – reducing costs by reviewing and rationalising buildings and exploring opportunities to raise income through renewable energy <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>				
Income generation – increasing the income the council receives, including through charges and commercial activity <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>				
Transformation, service redesign and digitalisation – changing how services operate to make them more efficient, including online <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>				
Early intervention and prevention – services that offer earlier support for people to prevent larger/ longer term issues that require expensive interventions <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>				
Service reduction – reducing services to deliver savings. <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>				

- 2** The council is having to make hard choices to balance its budget.  
Please tick the statement which best describes your views on each of the areas below.

	The council should invest more in this service	The council should protect this service	The council should reduce this service to make savings
Schools & Early Years <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adult Social Care & Support for Older People <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Children's Services & Child Protection <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Roads, Transport & Infrastructure <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing & Homelessness Services <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Waste, Recycling & Street Cleaning <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sport, leisure and countryside <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Libraries & community centres <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planning & development <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Climate Action & Sustainability <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Customer and support services <i>Please select only one item</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- 3** If savings must be made, which areas would you least object to being reduced?

Please type here

**4** Every 1% increase to the council tax charge equates to a weekly increase of £0.30 for an average property in East Lothian. Would you support an increase to council tax charges from April 2026 in order to protect council services?

*Please select only one item*

- Yes – I would support an increase as long as it wasn't more than £3 per week
- Yes – I would support an increase as long as it wasn't more than £5 per week
- Yes – I would support an increase of more than £5 per week
- No – I would not support any increase
- Don't know

**5** How important is it that the Council protects services for vulnerable groups (e.g., older people, children at risk, low-income families), even if this means reducing other services?

*Please select only one item*

- Very important
- Important
- Neutral
- Less important
- Not important

**6** Would you support more services being delivered online if this saved money?

*Please select only one item*

- Yes, strongly support
- Yes, somewhat support
- No opinion
- No, prefer in-person
- No, strongly oppose

**7** What suggestions do you have for making council services more efficient or cost-effective?

Please type here

**8** If savings are necessary, which principle do you think is most fair?

*Please select only one item*

- Everyone experiences a small reduction in services
- Larger reductions in non-essential services to protect essentials
- Focus on efficiency and digital transformation to avoid reductions
- Increase charges/fees for certain services instead of reducing them

**9** Would you or your community group be interested in playing a larger role in delivering or supporting local services (e.g., volunteering, partnerships)?

*Please select only one item*

- Yes  
 Maybe  
 No

**10** Looking beyond 2026–27, what do you think should be the Council's top financial priority?

Please type here

**11** Do you think there would be any equality, human rights, or wellbeing impacts arising from the areas considered in this consultation?

*Please select only one item*

- Yes  
 No  
 Don't know

If yes, please provide details

**12** Do you have any other comments or ideas you would like to share about the council's budget?

Please type here

## Equalities monitoring

*We ask a few equalities questions to make sure we're hearing from all parts of our community – whatever your age, background or circumstances. This helps us see whether our budget plans might affect some groups more than others, so we can make fairer decisions that work for as many people as possible. Your answers are anonymous, kept confidential and will only be used to help us understand who we are hearing from as part of this consultation – not for any other purpose.*

**13 What is your full postcode?**

Please type here

**14 What gender do you identify as?***Please select only one item*

- Male
- Female
- Non Binary
- Other
- Prefer not to say

**15 What age group are you?***Please select only one item*

- 16-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-59
- 60-64
- 65-74
- 75+
- Prefer not to say

**16 What is your working status? Please select one only.***Please select only one item*

- Working – full time (35+ hrs)
- Working – Part-time (16-34hrs)
- Working – Part time (less than 16 hours)
- Working – zero hours contract
- Self-employed
- Unemployed / Seeking work
- Permanently retired from work
- Full time parent or carer
- Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability
- Student
- Other
- Prefer not to say

**17** How would you describe the composition of your household?

*Please select only one item*

- Single Adult under 65 years
- Single Adult over 65 years
- Two adults both under 65
- Two adults at least one aged over 65 years
- Three adults all over 16 years
- 1-parent family with children, at least one under 16 years
- 2-parent family with children, at least one under 16 years
- Other
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**18** Do you own your home, or rent it?

*Please select only one item*

- Owned outright
- Buying on mortgage
- Rented from the council
- Rented from housing association or other social landlord
- Rented from private landlord
- Shared ownership
- Other
- Prefer not to say

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