CORNSAY PARISH COUNCIL

At a Meeting of Cornsay Parish Council held on Wednesday, 24th September, 2025, at 7.00pm, in Hamsteels Community Centre, Esh Winning.

Present: Councillor L McKendrick (in the Chair)
and Councillors D Bottoms, R Makepeace and A Scott

40. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Robb and H Pegum.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest of requests for dispensations.

42. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

There were no County Councillors present at the meeting or reports received.

43. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 20th July, 2025, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. MATTERS ARISING

Minute 38 - The swings at Cornsay had now been painted.

45. FINANCIAL REPORT

(a) Agreement was given for the payment of:

- (i) £386.48 in respect of Clerk's wages for the month of September (including back pay)
- (ii) £96.60 to HMRC in respect of PAYE for the month of September
- (iii) £1,148.40 (including VAT of £191.40) to Makepeace Landscapes in respect of grounds maintenance, grass cutting and painting of the swings

(b) Payments made having fallen due over the summer recess:

- (i) £780.00 (including VAT of £130.00) to Durham County Council in respect of broad band and filtering services
- (ii) £45.00 to the Information Commissioners Office in respect of data protection registration

(c) Cheques issued:

(i)	30th July 2025	£	324.08	Clerk's wages	No.1401
(ii)	30th July 2025	£	162.00	HMRC	No.1402
(iii)	30th July 2025	£	837.60	Makepeace Landscapes	No.1403
(iv)	30th July 2025	£	290.00	Cornsay Village Residents Association	No.1404
(v)	27th August 2025	£	324.08	Clerk's wages	No.1405
(vi)	20th August 2025	£	780.00	Durham County Council	No.1406

46. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence for the Council's attention.

47. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

DM/25/02468 – 14 Rose Court, Esh Winning
Crown reduce and reshape alder

Resolved: *That the Council has no objection to the application.*

48. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN

The Annual Governance & Accountability Return had been received from Mazars. No matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and requirements had not been met.

They did, however, note that the Annual Governance & Accountability Return had been approved by the Council before the internal audit report had been completed and requested that in future the internal audit should be fully completed prior to the AGAR being approved.

Mazars had also noted that the AGAR has not met the requirements of the Regulations, in that it had not been published as soon as possible following approval. The earliest date on which it could have been published was 2nd June and it had been published on 6th June. This had been due to the resources available at the time.

Resolver: *That the report be noted.*

49. HAMSTEELS COMMUNITY CENTRE

(a) Additional grounds maintenance

A neighbour had reported that the bushes and shrubs along side the community centre were overgrowing her boundary and asked if they could be cut back to prevent this.

Resolved: *That Makepeace Landscapes be requested to assess and quote for the required work.*

(b) Update report

Many groups were returning following the summer break. The summer holiday activity sessions has been well attended and feedback extremely positive with the activities having been enjoyed by all the children.

Gentle chair yoga had now started and numbers were hopefully building up. A country and western night and a new LCBTQ+ cafe session that was being supported by the PCP were coming up nect week while a range of activities for the Christmas period were also being planned.

Resolved: *That the report.*

50. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS & PUBLIC

Resolved: *That in view of the confidential nature of the following item of business, and in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the public and press be temporarily excluded and they be instructed to withdraw from the meeting.*

51. CLERK'S WAGES

The Clerk was paid on NJC payscales and a pay agreement had been reached for the year 2025-2026 which offered an increase of 3.2% across all scales, backdated to 1st April, 2025.

The new rates were noted.

Resolved: *That the report be noted.*

The Meeting closed at 7.25pm

Signed as a correct record:

Chairperson	…………………………………………………..	Date	…………………………….
Clerk	…………………………………………………..	Date	…………………………….

CORNSAY PARISH COUNCIL

29 October 2025

REPORT OF THE CLERK

FINANCIAL REPORT

(a) Accounts for Payment

		Goods/Service	Details	Amount	VAT
(i)	Clerk's wages	October		334.48	
(ii)	HMRC	October		83.76	
(iii)	HMRC	September (recalculated)		9.91	
(iv)	Mazars LLP	Audit Fees			
(v)	Names.co.uk	Renewal of website hosting/email (2 yrs)		478.55	79.76
(vi)	Names.co.uk	Renewal of website builder package		453.35	75.56

(b) Receipts & Payments

ACCOUNT	Virgin Money	Barclays Current	Barclays Saving	Petty Cash
Balance B/F	13,031.43	60.00	26.77	22.21
add Receipts	20,700.36	0.00	0.00	0.00
less Payments	12,156.15	0.00	0.00	0.00
(uncleared payments)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
CASH AT BANK	21,575.64	60.00	26.77	22.21

TOTAL CASH AT BANK	21,662.41
Add PETTY CASH	22.21
TOTAL CASH	21,684.62

RECEIPTS	20,700.36	**PAYMENTS**	12,156.15
		Petty cash payments	0.00
		Less uncleared payments	0.00
Less transfers	0.00	*Less transfers*	0.00
TOTAL	20,700.36	TOTAL	12,156.15
Add B/F cash at bank	13,118.20	Add cash at bank	21,662.41
Add B/F petty cash	22.21	Add petty cash	22.21
BALANCE	**33,840.77**		**33,840.77**

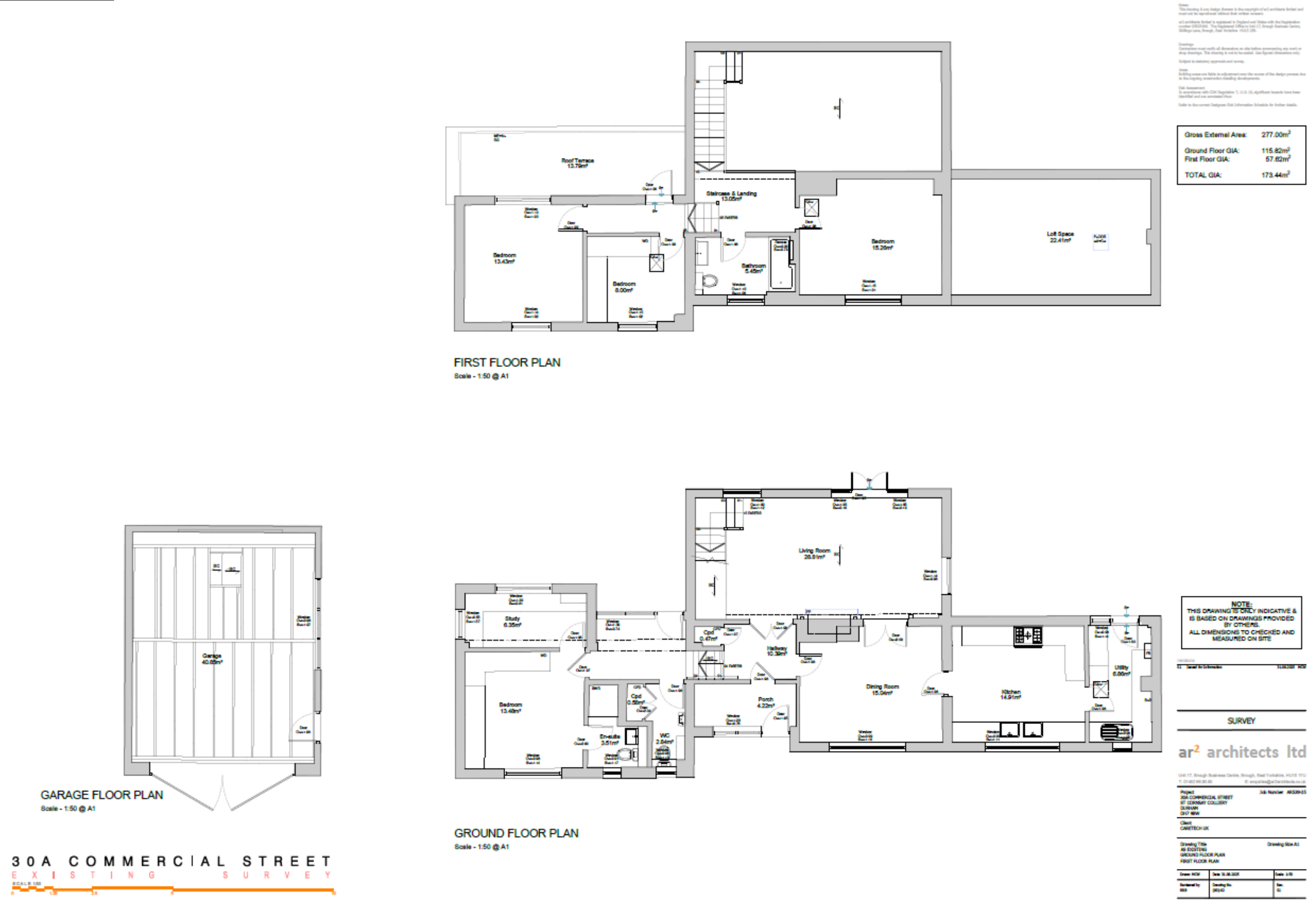
DM/25/02751/FPA | 30A Commercial Street Cornsay Colliery Durham DH7 9BW
Change of use from a dwellinghouse (C3) to a care home (C2) for three children with external alterations

SITE LOCATION PLAN
Scale - 1:1250 @ A2

SITE BLOCK PLAN
Scale - 1:500 @ A2

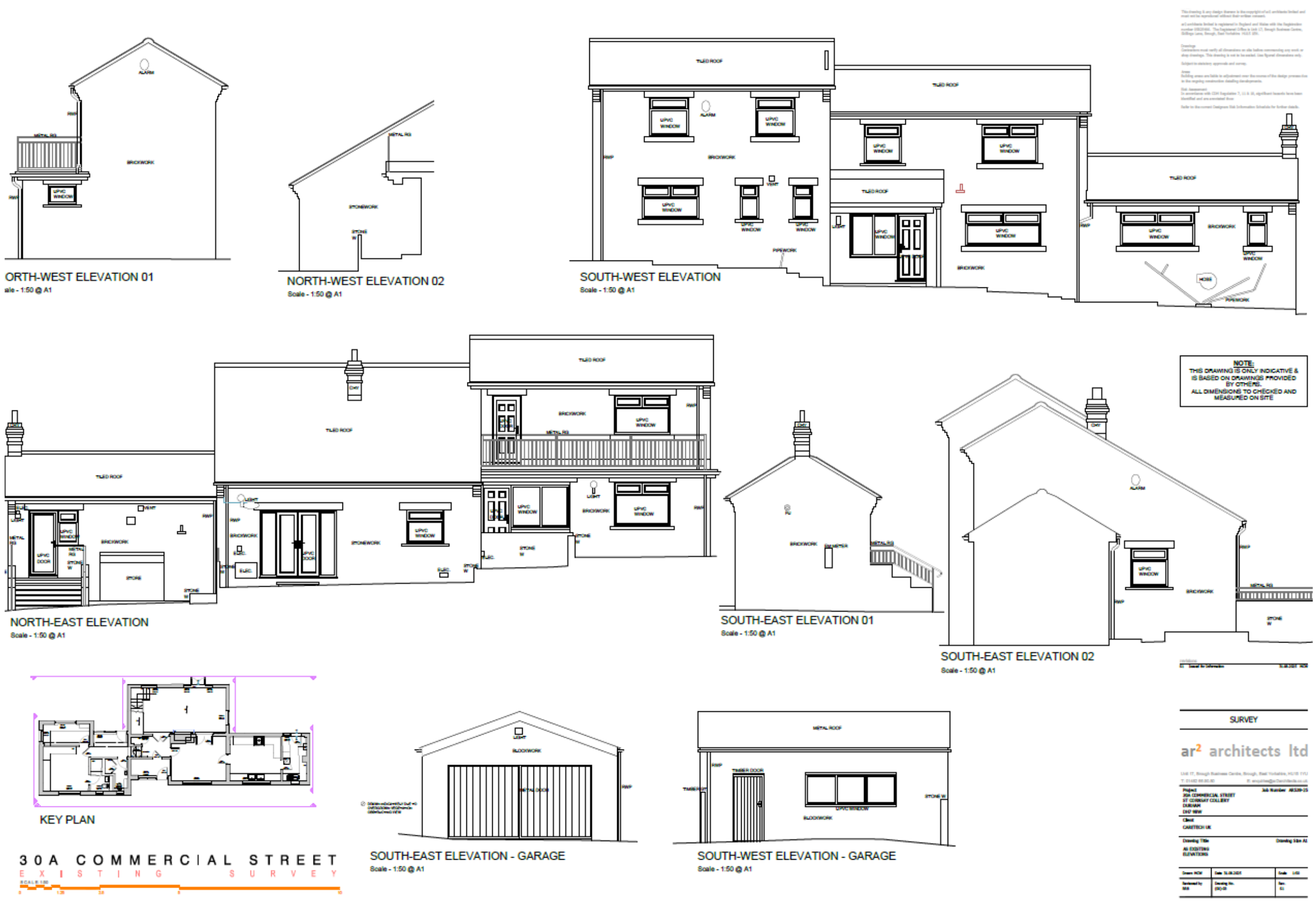
30A COMMERCIAL STREET
EXISTING SURVEY

Existing

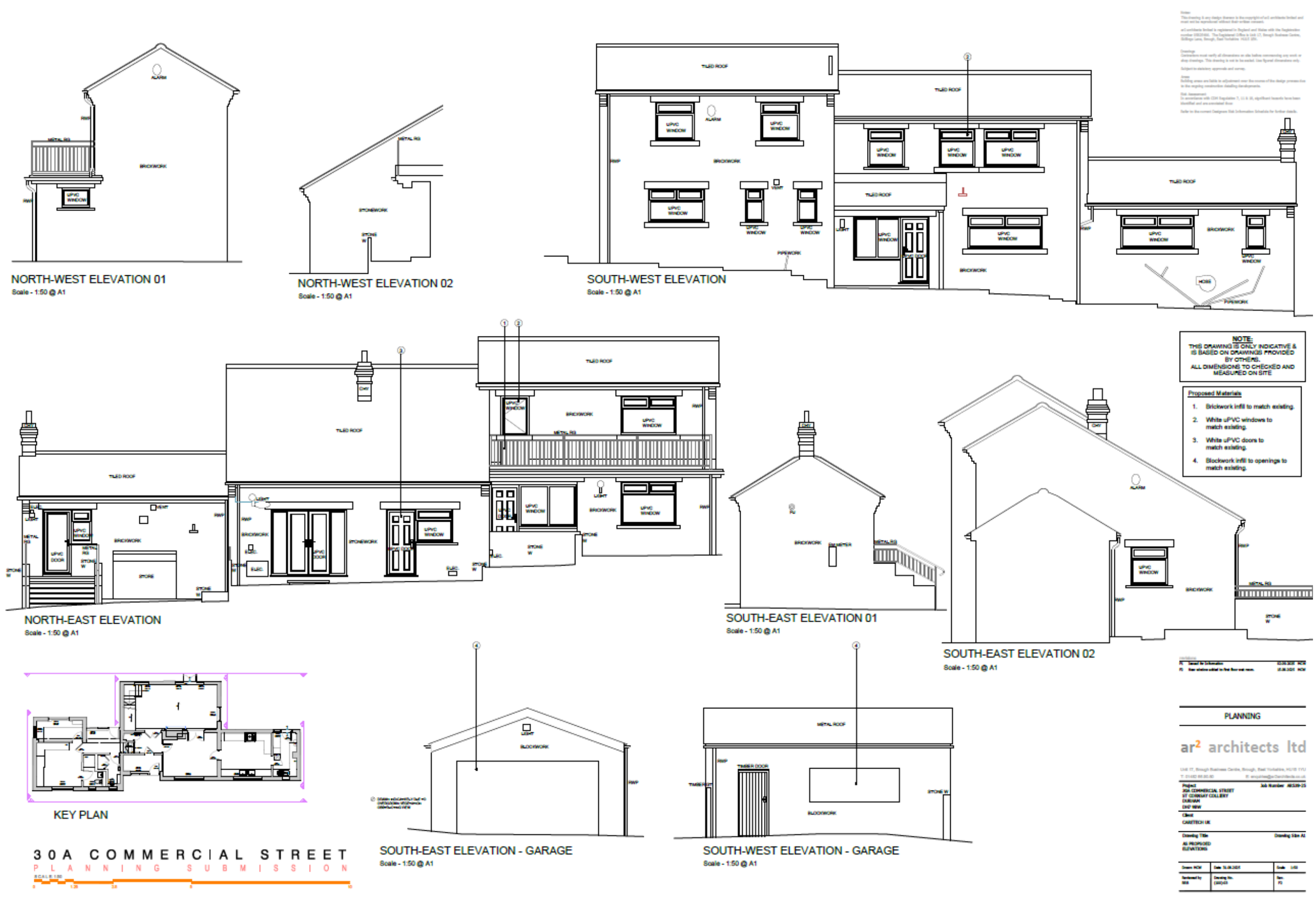


Proposed

Existing



Proposed



Contact: Paul Darby
Direct Tel: 03000 261 930
email: paul.darby@durham.gov.uk
Your ref:
Our ref:

19 September 2025

Dear Colleague

Consultation on further proposals to balance the Council budget

On 17 September 2025, the Council published an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period between 2026/27 and 2029/30, which was presented to our Cabinet – I have attached a link to the report here.

The report reflects several updated financial assumptions, including a long-awaited commitment from the Government to reform how local government is funded, to address some of the inequities in local government funding and provide a three-year financial settlement. However, the scale and timing of these funding changes remain uncertain and will not be confirmed until late December 2025, which makes financial planning particularly for 2026/27 very challenging. The Government has also indicated that it expects councils to raise council tax by the maximum permitted levels over the next three years – which in our case would be an annual increase of 5% per annum – and has factored this into its core spending power that local authorities have available to spend. If the Council does not apply increases in line with the Government's expectations, then it faces a real terms cut in funding over the next three years.

As a council, we also continue to operate in a period of significant financial uncertainly due to the impact of high levels of inflation and increased demand for many of our statutory services, particularly Children and Adult Social Care, Special Educational Needs and

Disability Services and in Home to School Transport. These concerns continue to impact significantly on our financial planning, with the council's spending pressures influenced by matters outside its control relating to national pay bargaining arrangements and national Government policy, particularly in relation to the National Living Wage and on changes to waste management.

Our Cabinet recognise the severe financial challenges which the Council faces and accept that there remains significant uncertainty around the scale of funding changes the Government has indicated it will make. Cabinet has also indicated it wishes to ensure Council Tax increases are kept to an absolute minimum and ideally that we do not increase the Council Tax at all. As a result, we have as a default position, assumed that Council Tax increases will not take place across the four-year period of the medium-term financial planning period for financial forecasting purposes.

The Council has cost pressures across the next four year period totalling £117.8 million (of which £33.6 million fall in 2026/27). None of these cost pressures are local policy driven or "nice to haves", they are unavoidable cost pressures linked to inflation or national policy decisions.

Based on no council tax increases being applied, and modest assumptions for the potential impact of the proposed local government funding reforms, we estimate total savings required at this stage for 2026/27 to balance the budget to be circa £21.0 million, and circa £71.0 million across a four-year period. These assumptions are after delivery of circa £5.662 million of savings across the next three years that were agreed as part of the last MTFP planning process, and which include a range of areas, including:

- Savings from the back office and efficiencies - £1.993 million
- Income raising and reductions in third party contributions - £1.162 million
- Savings in how we deliver front-line services - £2.507 million.

As part of these £5.662 million of savings proposals, the Council is undertaking a separate consultation on changes to our Section 13A Policy, which provides discretionary exemptions to the Council Tax premiums on long-term empty and unfurnished properties and on second homes. This consultation will run until 14 November 2025 and will inform decisions on potential changes to that policy, with options to tighten and limit the scale of discretionary exemptions applied.

Over the summer we have also consulted on a range of potential changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme, to reduce the cost of the scheme, which provides a means tested reduction in council tax liabilities for pensioners and working age households based on their household income and circumstances. The consultation and potential changes relate to the scheme that covers working age households only, as pensioners are fully protected. Our current scheme for working age claimants is more generous than most other local councils, and therefore any increase in uptake in this scheme has an impact on the level of Council Tax generated.

We have provided options to move towards an income banded scheme and to potentially cap the support provided, but this comes with the risk of potentially not recovering some of the additional Council Tax charges that would be levied as a result.

The financial impact of these proposals and any changes are not factored into the MTFP forecast at this time, and the consultation results will be reviewed by our Cabinet on 19 November 2025. The consultation on the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme continues to run until 26 September 2025.

In 2025/26, we used £3.503 million of reserves to balance the budget, which will have to be addressed in 2026/27. We may need to use a certain level of reserves again in 2026/27, however such an approach is only a temporary and very short-term measure, with more long-term options needing to be identified, to address our budget shortfalls.

Recognising the budget gap we face, we have agreed with Cabinet that we must consider options to also raise Council Tax. As part of the Cabinet report on 17 September 2025 we have presented four options for Council Tax, based on:

- Option 1 – a 0% rise in council tax.
- Option 2 – a 2% rise in council tax - specifically relating to the adult social care precept element.
- Option 3 – a 3% rise in council tax – the core element of Council Tax.
- Option 4 - a 5% rise in Council Tax – based on a combined 3% rise in core council tax and 2% rise in the adult social care precept element.

Every 1% increase in Council Tax raises an addition £3 million for the Council, and this has a significant impact on the funding position of the Council and the potential scale of any savings that will need to be made, on top of the £288 million of savings the council has had to find over the last 16 years. The impact on the deficits for various council tax increases is set out below (please note all figures are in millions):

Options	Description	Deficit for 2026/27	Deficit for 2027/28	Deficit for 2028/29	Deficit for 2029/30	Total deficit over the 4-year period
Option 1	No Council Tax increase across the 4-year period.	£20,047	£16,926	£19,995	£14,051	£71,019
Option 2	A 2% annual increase in Adult Social Care Precept each year across the 4-year period.	£14,047	£10,826	£13,795	£7,751	£46,419
Option 3	A 3% annual increase in the core Council Tax each year across the 4-year period.	£11,047	7,726	£10,595	£4,451	£33,819
Option 4	A 5% annual increase in Council Tax (3% core Council Tax and 2% Adult Social Care Precept) each year across the 4-year period (in line with the Government's assumptions).	£5,047	£1,726	£4,495	£1,649 surplus	£9,619

The Council intends to undertake a two-phase consultation on its budget and MTFP planning this year. The first phase of the consultation seeks views on the size of the financial challenges faced by the council and views on how further savings can be found, including considering options 1-4 outlined above for raising council tax, and outlines the already agreed savings. This consultation commences today, Friday 19 September, and will run through to Friday 14 November 2025.

February 2026. These meetings are quite late in the budget planning cycle but reflect the timescales of Government funding announcements and the challenges this creates.

Thank you for your consideration and should you have comments, please forward them to letstalkcountydurham@durham.gov.uk by **Friday 14 November 2025**.

Yours sincerely

Paul Darby
Corporate Director of Resources
Durham County Council

On 19 November 2025, Cabinet will consider a further update report on its financial forecasts, and this will include any budget savings proposals which are being developed to help balance the 2026/27 budget, alongside an outline of progress to develop more substantial transformational savings. A second public consultation on these savings measures will take place between late November 2025 and January 2026.

It is very important that we continue to involve key partners and the public in our decision-making process. We would be grateful if you could consider the contents of this report and take time to read the Cabinet report dated 17 September 2025 and submit any comments to the first budget consultation by **Friday 14 November 2025.** There is a useful and detailed executive summary contained within the 17 September 2025 Cabinet report, which you can access here.

When commenting on the consultations, please consider:

- If any of the proposals will have a negative impact on your organisation's priorities and workload.
- If you consider this will be the case, please let us know how these might be minimised.
- If you feel a proposed change should not go ahead, please let us know what alternatives the council could consider to meet its budget reduction target.
- If you consider that the proposals will have a detrimental impact on priority or characteristic groups, please let us know.

In addition to consulting with organisations such as yours, the public is being encouraged to give its views by:

- Completing our online survey - paper copies are available from any of our libraries.
- Attending online consultation events happening on 14 and 22 October
- Emailing letstalkcountydurham@durham.gov.uk

Full details of this consultation, and consultation covering our Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for working age people and Exceptions to the Empty and Unfurnished Properties and Second Homes Council Tax Premium are available at Let's Talk County Durham

The results of these consultations will be reported and summarised in subsequent Medium Term Financial Planning Cabinet reports, including the Council's budget reports to Cabinet on 21 January 2026 and 11 February 2026, followed by a decision by Full Council on 18