

CORNSAY PARISH COUNCIL

At a Meeting of Cornsay Parish Council held on Wednesday, 26th November, 2025, at 7.00pm, in Hamsteels Community Centre, Esh Winning.

Present: Councillor D Robb (in the Chair)
and Councillors L Kendrick, H Pegum and A Scott

63. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bottoms and R Makepeace.

64. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest or requests for dispensations.

65. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

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

66. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 29th October, 2025, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

67. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

68. FINANCIAL REPORT

(a) Agreement was given for the payment of:

- (i) £334.48 in respect of Clerk's wages for the month of November
- (ii) £167.52 to HMRC in respect of PAYE for the months of November and December
- (iii) £334.48 in respect of Clerk's wages for the month of December
- (iv) £504.00 (including VAT of £84.00) to Makepeace Landscapes in respect of additional grounds maintenance work at the community centre

(b) Cheques issued:

(i)	29 th Oct 2025	£	859.20	Makepeace Landscapes	No.1411
(ii)	29 th Oct 2025	£	334.48	Clerk's wages	No.1412
(iii)	29 th Oct 2025	£	93.67	HMRC	No.1413
(iv)	29 th Oct 2025	£	50.00	Wag & Co (s137)	No.1414
(v)	29 th Oct 2025	£	931.90	Names.co.uk	No.1415

69. CORRESPONDENCE

(a) Durham County Council/Ethos Environmental Planning – information received regarding an update to the Open Space Needs Assessment.

Resolved: *That the Clerk provide any necessary information on current provision in the Parish.*

(b) Cornsay Colliery Resident – request for advice regarding the placing of memorial plaques on seating within the Millennium Garden.

Resolved: *That the resident be advised to seek further advice from those responsible for the seating.*

70. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

DM/25/02751 – 30A Commercial Street, Cornsay Colliery

Change of use from a dwellinghouse (C3) to a care home (C2) for three children with external alterations

This application had been considered at the last meeting of the Council when it was considered that there was insufficient information available on which to form a view on the application. Additional information had now been provided, the details of which were highlighted.

Resolved: *That the Council has no further comments to make.*

71. PRECEPT & BUDGET SETTING

The Clerk reported on the current situation around information required for setting the Precept, given that only indicative information had been provided at this stage.

It was also reported that Durham County Council was proposing to withdraw the LCTRS grant to parish and town councils with immediate effect, despite a previous agreement covering the period to 2026/2027.

Resolved: *(i) That the January meeting of the Council take place on 21st January, 2026, to allow the precept to be set in advance of the deadline for notification.*

(ii) That the proposed withdrawal of the LCTRS grant be noted.

72. TIME TOGETHER – REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Time Together sessions offered activities for children as well as regular visits from a health visitor and other relevant organisations to support children and families in the local community.

The sessions took place every fortnight at the Community Centre and were well attended and highly beneficial to the local community. The sessions were delivered through the NHS however there was no budget towards the cost of room hire.

The Community Hall Association were offering a reduced rate of hire, given that it was a long term activity and also the benefits that the sessions offered to local residents.

Resolved: *That the Council would contribute 50% of the cost of the room hire to cover sessions for 1 year if the Community Hall Association covered the remaining 50%.*

73. HAMSTEELS COMMUNITY CENTRE – LEASE TO HAMSTEELS COMMUNITY HALL ASSOCIATION

The Community Centre was run on a day-to-day basis by Hamsteels Community Hall Association, with a leasing in place until January 2026.

The lease had been drafted by a local firm of solicitors and offered protection and security to both the Council and Community Hall Association. It also provided the Community Hall Association with more opportunities to seek grant funding.

The Community Hall Association was willing to enter a new lease on the same terms as the existing.

Resolved: *That a Lease be entered into with Hamsteels Community Hall Association on the same terms as the existing, the Lease to be signed at a meeting of the Council in January, 2026.*

**74. HAMSTEELS COMMUNITY CENTRE –
UPDATE REPORT**

A range of events and activities were coming up over the Christmas and New Year period. These included Christmas Dinner, Fool's Gold Acoustic returning with their Christmas Show, this year's panto and Breakfast with Mrs Claus.

Resolved: *That the report be noted*

The Meeting closed at 7.55pm

Signed as a correct record:

Chairperson Date

Clerk Date

CORNSAY PARISH COUNCIL

21 January 2026

REPORT OF THE CLERK

FINANCIAL REPORT

(a) Accounts for Payment

	<u>Goods/Service</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>VAT</u>
(i)	Clerk's wages	January	334.48	
(ii)	HMRC	January	83.76	

(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	20,703.81	0.00	0.00	0.00
less Payments	17,026.11	0.00	0.00	0.00
(uncleared payments)	905.07	0.00	0.00	0.00
CASH AT BANK	17,614.20	60.00	26.77	22.21
 TOTAL CASH AT BANK	 17,700.97			
Add PETTY CASH	22.21			
 TOTAL CASH	 17,723.18			
 RECEIPTS	 20,703.81		PAYMENTS	 17,026.11
			Petty cash payments	0.00
			<i>Less uncleared payments</i>	
			905.07	
Less transfers	0.00		<i>Less transfers</i>	0.00
 TOTAL	 20,703.81		 TOTAL	 16,121.04
Add B/F cash at bank	13,118.20		Add cash at bank	17,700.97
Add B/F petty cash	22.21		Add petty cash	22.21
 BALANCE	 33,844.22			 33,844.22

PRECEPT 2026/2027

In order to meet the timescales for notification of the Council's precept requirements it is necessary to consider the amount the Council wishes to precept for the forthcoming year.

Current Position

As at 31 December, the balances on the Council's accounts are:

Virgin Money Current Account	17,614.20
Barclays Current Account	60.00
Barclays Savings Account	26.37
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	17,770.57

Less uncleared payments (905.70)

Less budgets to year end

Wages	1,250.00
Environment	800.00
Office Expenses	100.00
Community Centre	1,000.00
Contingency	7,500.00
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	(10,650.00)

Add payments due

VAT Reclaim	1,130.00
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BALANCE	7,334.87
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Current Year Budget

Budget	Budget	Spend to Date	Est to year end	Total at year end	Difference
Wages	5,100.00	4,377.59	1250	5,627.59	-527.59
Insurance	2,400.00	2,257.08	-	2,257.08	142.92
Environment & Parks	5,200.00	4,964.00	800	5,764.00	-564.00
Audit	400.00	357.00	-	357.00	43.00
CDALC	200.00	201.89	-	201.89	-1.89
ICO	35.00	47.00	-	47.00	-12.00
Office Expenses	250.00	50.00	100	150.00	100.00
Community Centre	5,200.00	3,839.65	1000	4,839.65	360.35
Elections	0.00	0.00	-	0.00	0.00
Website	500.00	931.90	-	931.90	-431.90

Wages – An overspend is predicted of around £500, mainly due to wages due for March 2025 being paid within the year 2025/2026 and the impact of the Local Government pay settlement. The lowering of the threshold at which Employers NI is paid has also affected the Council this year.

Insurance – this budget has been adequate for the current year

Environment & Parks – An overspend is predicted of around £564 due to the need to carry out additional items of work during the year including repainting of swings and additional work at the community centre.

Audit - this budget has been adequate for the year.

CDALC – this budget has been adequate for the current year.

ICO – the registration fee has increased by a small amount this year resulting in an overspend.

Office Expenses – replenishment of the petty cash is anticipated before the year end, resulting in an underspend on the budget.

Miscellaneous – no budget was allocated towards miscellaneous items for this year.

Community Centre – an overspend of around £360 is anticipated at this stage, however it should be noted that there are some items requiring repair/replacement including the hot water heater and entrance doors in the near future.

Elections – no budget was allocated towards elections during the current year.

Website – the website was renewed for a 2 year period and is next due for renewal in November 2027. The amount allocated this year covered approximately 50% of the renewal cost with the remainder having been brought forward from the previous year.

Contingency – the Council maintains a contingency of £7,500. This has not been used for any purpose but the amount held should be kept under review to ensure that it remains adequate for the Council's needs.

Tax base and LCTRS Grant

The tax base will decrease from 283.5 for the year 2025/2026 to 281.7 for the year 2026/2026. This results in a loss of £115.44 on the previous year.

Durham County Council propose to withdraw the LCTSS grant in its entirety this year. This results in a loss of £325.

Taken together, this results in a reduction in income to the Council of £440.45.

The current **band D precept is £64.14**

Budget for 2025/2026

- Making no change to the current band D precept of £64.14 would reduce in a reduction in income of £440.45
- To raise the same amount as 2025/2026 (£18,508) would require an increase in the Precept of 2.43%, equivalent to £1.56 per year on band D.

While most budgets have generally been adequate, it should be noted that the wages, environment and community centre budgets have all resulted in varying overspends and that this has been a consistent theme across recent years.

The Council may wish to consider increasing these budgets in particular for the forthcoming year. Other budgets may also require increasing to reflect rising costs across many goods and services.

As an example, increasing the wages, environment and community centre budgets by £400 and smaller increases across all others in line with rising costs would require an increase in cash terms of around £1,500.00 per year.

Taking into account the reduction in tax base and loss of the LCTSS grant, to produce a precept of £20,000 per year would require an increase in the band D of 10.69%, or £6.86 per year.

	2025/2026	2026/2027?
Clerk's wages	5100.00	5600.00
Insurance	2400.00	2500.00

Environment	5200.00	5600.00
Audit	400.00	425.00
CDALC	200.00	225.00
ICO	35.00	50.00
Office Expenses	250.00	250.00
Miscellaneous	0.00	0.00
Contingency	-	-
Community Building	5200.00	5600.00
Elections	0.00	0.00
Website	500.00	500.00
TOTAL	19285.00	20750.00
Precept	18183.00	20000.00
LCTSS Grant	325.00	0.00
VAT Reclaim	850.00	1130.00
TOTAL	19358.00	21130.00
Band D Precept	64.14	71.00

Recommendations

- (i) That a precept be set based on the Council's budgetary needs for the forthcoming year
- (ii) That funds remaining at the year end be allocated as the Council agrees.

Cornsay Parish Council - Register of Assets

Ref No.	Description	Date acquired	Value		Location	Disposal
001	Cornsay Village Green	1982 approx	£1.00	Nominal	Cornsay Village	
002	Play Area (2222 square yards)	19th Nov 1985	£1.00	Nominal	Cornsay Colliery (opp. Royal Oak public house)	
003	Land Hamsteels Estate (1550 square yards)	1973 approx	£1.00	Nominal	Junction of Western Ave and Valley Drive to rear of Deerness Grove	
004a	Hamsteels Community Centre	1973 approx		Professional Valuation 28th May 2008	On land as 003	Demolished Dec 2015
004b	Hamsteels Community Centre	Rebuilt 2016	£523,729.00	Build Cost	On land as 003	
005	Street furniture (6 x seats)	3x unknown 3x February 2009	£1,470.00	Actual cost	Various	
006	Fencing & Gates to former play area	unknown		Insurance Valuation		Written off Feb 2013 - condition deteriorated, unsuitable for reuse
007a	Swings	unknown	£115.80	Insurance Valuation	Cornsay Village Green	
007b	Adventure Trail	February 2009	£2,974.00	Actual cost	Cornsay Village Green	
008a	Wooden sleeper seats (each 4 sleepers high)	April 2011		Actual cost	Cornsay Colliery Park	Removed 2023 due to damage/wear and tear - original cost £880
008b	Horse springy	April 2011	£1,430.00	Actual cost	Cornsay Colliery Park	
008c	Motorbike springy	April 2011	£1,430.00	Actual cost	Cornsay Colliery Park	
008d	Wooden ship	April 2011	£7,530.00	Actual cost	Cornsay Colliery Park	
008e	5 a side goal posts	April 2011	£804.00	Actual cost	Cornsay Colliery Park	
008f	Dux rebound 868 panels	April 2011	£106.72	Actual cost	Cornsay Colliery Park	
008g	Climbing boulder	April 2011	£12,732.00	Actual cost	Cornsay Colliery Park	

008h	Single mast net pyramid	April 2011	£9,814.00	Actual cost	Cornsay Colliery Park	
	Playground equipment (swings & adventure frame)	unknown		Insurance Valuation + Actual Cost	Play areas Cornsay Colliery & Cornsay Village	Deleted and itemised at nos 7 and 8
009	Sports equipment (football & basketball posts)	unknown	£500.00	Insurance Valuation	Playing field, Burnside, Esh Winning	
010	Planters x 8	2006 approx	£300.00	Purchase price	Western Avenue & Rowley Crescent, Esh Winning	
011	Northern Rock Shares (500)	unknown	nil		In custody of Clerk	
012	Youth shelter	December 2014	£9,999.00	Purchase price	Burnside, Esh Winning	
014	AV equipment (3no TVs & Projector)	October 2016	£2,437.89	Purchase price	Hamsteels Community Centre	
015	Furniture (as per Banks Grant)	December 2016	£5,037.11	Purchase price	Hamsteels Community Centre	
016	Furniture (as per Lottery Grant)	August 2020	£1,590.01	Purchase price	Hamsteels Community Centre	
017	Timber play tower	March 2023	£10,642.00	Purchase price	Cornsay Village Green	
TOTAL VALUE OF ASSETS		£592,644.53				

RISK ASSESSMENT

Area	Risk	Control Measures	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Review
Compliance with Acts of Parliament, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct	Lack of knowledge of regulation and codes	Copies of relevant Acts available Councillors have copies of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Code of Conduct	1	1	1	Annually or as applicable
	Lack of Standing Orders	Standing Orders are produced and regularly reviewed	1	1	1	At Annual Meeting
	Council acts outside its powers	Copies of relevant Acts available Advice sought where appropriate	1	3	3	As applicable
	Purchases without proper tendering procedure	Ensure councillors aware of procedure Financial Regulations set out expenditure limits	1	2	2	As applicable
	Payments made without approval	Payments approved by Council and recorded in Council minutes Financial Regulations set out payment limits	1	1	1	As applicable
	Lack of control over cheque signatories	Keep signatories on each account to the minimum required for the efficient transaction of business	1	1	1	Annually
	VAT not accounted for	VAT recorded in account book VAT claims made annually or more frequently when required	1	2	2	Annually
Identify and review the Council's priorities	Lack of knowledge and priorities	Set at Annual Meeting and recorded in minutes	1	1	1	Annually
Influence Council departments and other bodies and organisations	Lack of effective communication with other organisations	Publicise role of Parish Council Effective use of noticeboards, newsletters and website				
	Lack of preparation on matters requiring influence	Councillors speak with local people/residents' associations to gauge community views Ensure all relevant information is available when making decisions	1	1	1	As applicable
	Lack of confidence by	Make information available to all	1	3	3	Annually

Area	Risk	Control Measures	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Review
	Parish Councillors	Delegate responsibility for specific tasks Make use of individual councillors specific skills and strengths				
Awareness of responsibilities and liabilities	Lack of knowledge	Familiarisation with Standing Orders Attendance at training courses	1	3	3	Annually
	Inadequate insurance cover	Review policy schedule regularly Seek advice from insurance company	1	3	3	Annually at insurance renewal
Ensure books of account are kept up to date throughout the year	Lack of knowledge of accounting requirements	Ensure councillors and clerk are familiar with financial requirements Regularly review Standing Orders and Financial Regulations	1	2	2	Annually
	Lack of commitment to accounting requirements	Financial reports to all meetings Internal audit reports circulated to all councillors	2	1	2	Annually
	Bank charges unnecessarily incurred	Books of account kept up to date	1	2	2	Annually
	Inaccuracies in account books	Books cross referenced with bank statements Regular financial reports	1	2	3	Annually
	Inadequate control of cash	Cash balance kept to a minimum Reconciliation undertaken regularly Cash checked regularly Insurance cover	1	2	2	Annually
	Books of account not kept up to date	Regular financial reports All items recorded promptly	1	3	3	Annually
	Delayed or missed payments	All invoices reported to next meeting of Council for approval	2	2	4	Annually
	Clerk taken ill or leaves unexpectedly	Ensure adequate documentation in place to allow a councillor to take over Account books kept up to date	1	3	3	Annually
	Fraud	Internal controls in place Fidelity guarantee insurance	1	3	3	Annually
Ensure	Lack of knowledge of	Consult resident on major issues	2	2	4	Annually

Area	Risk	Control Measures	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Review
payments represent value for money and reflect residents' wishes	wishes of residents	Publicise role of parish council Use of noticeboards, newsletters and website Seek parishioners views				
	Failure to achieve value for money	Effective budget planning Obtain estimates/quotes where necessary	1	2	2	Annually
	Use of funds not in accordance with residents' wishes	Consult resident on major issues Publicise role of parish council Use of noticeboards, newsletters and website Seek parishioners views				
	Lack of knowledge of budgetary process	Standing orders Delegate responsibility for managing budgetary process to Clerk	1	1	1	Annually
Precept set from adequate budget and budget regularly monitored	Inadequate consideration of precept requirement	Considered by Council in sufficient time to identify requirement Priorities for forthcoming year identified when setting precept	1	3	3	Annually
	Reserves too low	Regular reports to meetings	1	3	3	Annually
	Inadequate internal controls	Regular reports to meetings Financial monitoring Internal audit	1	2	2	Annually
Ensure expected income is fully received	Lack of knowledge of potential sources of income	Obtain details of relevant grants and funding opportunities	1	1	1	Annually
	Receipts not banked promptly	Regular financial reports Clerk responsible for banking income Use of electronic transfers where possible	1	2	2	Annually
	VAT claims not made promptly	Claims made annually or more frequently where large sums due	1	3	3	Annually
Ensure wages are paid correctly and monitored	Incorrect wages payments	Rates of pay reviewed annually Wage claims approved by Council and recorded in minutes	1	1	1	Annually
	Incorrect tax and NI	Council registered as employer with HMRC	1	2	2	Annually

Area	Risk	Control Measures	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Review
	arrangements	Payments made to HMRC monthly				
Ensure accounts are prepared on correct basis	Late or non submission of annual accounts	Monitor progress against timetable Accounts prepared as soon as possible following year end	1	3	3	Annually
	Accounts not prepared properly	Accounts approved by Council Internal audit	1	2	2	Annually
	Inadequate audit trail	Checks by Responsible Financial Officer Internal Audit	1	2	2	Annually
Identify, value and maintain assets	Lack of knowledge of Council assets	Assets recorded on asset register Asset register regularly reviewed	1	2	2	Annually
	Assets lost or misappropriated	Assets recorded on asset register and regularly checked	2	2	4	Annually
	Risk of damage/third party claims	Regular monitoring Council's contact details available for reports of damage Insurance cover	1	3	3	Annually
	Inadequate or inaccurate valuation of assets	Periodic review of valuations	1	2	2	Annually
	Lack of information on properties, buildings and equipment	Asset register maintained Land registered at Land Registry	1	1	1	Annually
	Lack of knowledge of safety requirements	Ensure current legislation and advice is obtained	1	2	2	Annually
Compliance with legislation – equalities, freedom of information, data protection etc	Lack of knowledge of legislation	Ensure appropriate legislation is available Policies and procedures in place				
	Failure to comply with legislation	Ensure appropriate legislation is available Policies and procedures in place Registered with ICO as a data controller	1	2	2	Annually

Area	Risk	Control Measures	Likelihood	Impact	Score	Review
Play Areas and structures	Slips, trips and falls	Sites and equipment checked weekly Sites well maintained	1	3	3	Annually
	Litter, glass, sharp objects	Sites checked weekly, litterbins provided Users requested to remove litter Regular grass cutting	1	2	2	Annually
	Animals on site/dog waste	Sites secured by fencing where practicable Dogs not permitted in play areas Regular checks	1	2	2	Annually
	Damage/wear and tear to equipment	Regular checks Annual safety inspections carried out Council contact details available for reports of damage	1	2	2	Annually
	Physical injuries	Regular checks for damage or defects Repairs undertaken where necessary Signs requiring adult supervision Insurance cover	1	3	3	Annually

REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT

In accordance with the Accounts and Audit (Amendment)(England) Regulations 2006, the Council has to review of the effectiveness of the internal audit process. The review should cover five areas as set out below. I have suggested ways in which the Council can demonstrate these.

Scope of Internal Audit

- Terms of reference are identified

Independence of Internal Audit

- Auditor has direct access to those charged with the Council's governance
- The Auditor's report is submitted to the Council in his own name
- The Auditor has no other role within the Council

Competence of Internal Audit

- No evidence that audit has not been undertaken objectively
- The Auditor has carried out audits for a number of years and has raised such issues as he considered appropriate.

Responsibilities

- The RFO is consulted on the scope of the Audit
- Responsibilities in relation to finances are set out
- The responsibilities of Members are understood

Planning and Reporting

- The Council is aware of the timescale for the completion of the audit and any subsequent report
- Any recommendations are fully considered by the Council

It is recommended that the Council satisfies itself as to the effectiveness of its internal audit arrangements.

FIDELITY GUARANTEE INSURANCE

Fidelity Guarantee Insurance provides cover for the Council's money in the event of misappropriation by officers. The level of cover should be sufficient to ensure that all monies held by the Council are covered.

Cover is currently in the sum of £150,000, and the funds held by the Council have not exceeded this amount during the course of the year. Cover has therefore been adequate and it is extremely unlikely that the Council's funds will exceed the level of cover; the amount currently covered is therefore more than adequate for the Council's needs.