CORNSAY PARISH COUNCIL

At a Meeting of Cornsay Parish Council held on Wednesday, 28th October, 2026, at 7.00pm, in Hamsteels Community Centre, Esh Winning.

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

57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Bottoms and County Councillor A Neil.

58. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

There were no declarations of interest or requests for dispensations.

59. CO-OPTION OF MEMBER

Item deferred.

60. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

There were no reports from County Councillors.

61. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 30th September, 2026, were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

62. MATTERS ARISING

Minute 51 - The Clerk reported that Mazars invoice had been received and, as it had been due for immediate payment, arrangements had been made for the invoice to be paid.

Minute 52 - The Clerk had received no further response in relation to the request for financial assistance.

63. FINANCIAL REPORT

(a) Agreement was given for the payment of:

(i) £345.46 in respect of Clerk's wages for the month of October
(ii) £88.63 to HMRC in respect of PAYE for the month of October
(iii) £859.20 (including VAT of £143.20) Makepeace Landscapes in respect of grounds maintenance and planting of winter bedding
(iv) £252.00 (including VAT of £142) to Forvis Mazars in respect of external audit fees

(b) Receipts & Payments

Details of receipts and payments for the financial year to-date together with account balances had been circulated.

64. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence for the Council's attention.

65. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

DM/26/02624/FPA – 34 Commercial Street, Cornsay Colliery
Installation of EV charging point with Kerbo Charge EV channel from the property to the roadside

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

66. COUNCILLOR - OFFICER PROTOCOL

The Council had in place a Member-Officer Protocol which had been adopted a number of years ago. The purpose of the Protocol was to guide councillors and officers in their relationships with one another and maintain good relationships between councillors and officers.

The original document had been based upon the NALC model, with NALC having updated their model more recently.

The Clerk had made the necessary changes to the NALC model to ensure it suited the needs of the Council and its governance arrangements. Copies of the now named Councillor-Officer Protocol had been circulated.

Resolved: *That the Councillor – Officer Protocol be approved and adopted.*

67. CORNSAY COLLIERY PARKING

Various issues regarding parking at Cornsay Colliery had previously been raised and discussed with some options to attempt to improve parking provision in the village having been identified. None of these had, however, come to anything to date.

TRACC had been carrying out work within the village to gauge residents' views and opinions and to identify options for potential improvements.

While an invitation had been made to TRACC to attend the Council meeting and present their consultation and findings, unfortunately on this occasion, no officers were able to attend.

Resolved: *That the matter be considered further when representatives of TRACC were able to attend a Council meeting.*

68. CORNSAY COLLIERY PARK

(a) Dog fouling

Recently the issue of dog fouling in the park had been raised on the village Facebook page.

Councillor Pegum had been visiting the park regularly to check on the situation.

It was noted that there had been signage in place stating that dogs were not allowed in the play area however it was felt that this could be updated to be clearer and more obvious.

It was also noted that the Council regularly obtained supplies of dog poo bags and it was suggested that a supply could be provided to TRACC for the use of residents in the village to supplement those currently available near the park/yellow brick road.

Resolved: *That the Clerk obtain additional signage and that a supply of dog poo bags be made available to TRACC for use by residents of the village.*

(b) Bench

Once of the benches in the park was showing signs of damage/decay in the timber.

The Clerk had sought a quote from Makepeace Landscapes to replace the damaged bench. The option of a temporary repair was also considered.

Resolved: *That the bench be repaired temporarily for the time being with a view to seeking funding for its replacement in the future.*

69. HAMSTEELS COMMUNITY CENTRE – UPDATE REPORT

The PCP which had supported the setting up of the men's group, Deerness4Males, had recently done an article and video which had showed the Community Centre in a very positive light.

Upcoming events included the Halloween Disco on 30th October, and Breakfast with Mrs Claus, Christmas Panto, Carol Service and a comedy night in December.

Resolved: *That the report be noted.*

The Meeting closed at 7.45pm

Signed as a correct record:

Chairperson …….. Date …….

Clerk …….. Date …….

Cornsay Parish Council

25 November 2026

REPORT OF THE CLERK

FINANCIAL REPORT

(a) Accounts for Payment

		Goods/Service	Details	Amount	VAT
(i)	Clerk's wages	November		345.46	
(ii)	HMRC	November		88.63	
(iii)	Makepeace Landscapes	Grounds maintenance			
(iv)	Clerk's wages	December		345.66	
(v)	HMRC	December		88.43	

(b) Receipts/Payments

ACCOUNT	Virgin Money	Virgin NEW	Barclays	Petty Cash
Balance B/F	14,893.92	0.00	87.10	4.82
add Receipts	20,005.02	33,718.20	0.00	0.00
less Payments	34,898.94	15,140.87	0.00	0.00
(uncleared payments)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
CASH AT BANK	0.00	18,577.33	87.10	4.82

TOTAL CASH AT BANK	18,664.43
Add PETTY CASH	4.82
TOTAL CASH	18,669.25

RECEIPTS	53,723.22	**PAYMENTS**	50,039.81
		Petty cash payments	0.00
		Less uncleared payments	0.00
Less transfers	32,471.85	*Less transfers*	32,471.85
TOTAL	21,251.37	TOTAL	17,567.96
Add B/F cash at bank	14,981.02	Add cash at bank	18,664.43
Add B/F petty cash	4.82	Add petty cash	4.82
BALANCE	**36,237.21**		**36,237.21**

PRECEPT 2027/2028

Current Position

As at 14 November 2026, the Council held £18,669.25 in its bank accounts and petty cash.

Allowing for anticipated expenditure during the remainder of the financial year, the Council is expected to have a closing balance of approximately £12,934 at 31 March 2027.

This balance takes account of expenditure of £3,252 incurred during the year on repairs to the Community Centre hot water system, which was met from the Council's contingency fund.

A VAT reclaim of £1,400.57 is anticipated in respect of expenditure during 2026/2027. This will be claimed following the year end and received during 2027/2028, and has therefore not been included in the projected closing balance.

Current Year Budget

The Council agreed an expenditure budget of £20,750 for 2026/2027.

Expenditure to date, together with anticipated costs for the remainder of the financial year, gives the following forecast:

Expenditure	**Budget 2026/27**	**Forecast 2026/27**
Clerk's wages	£5,600	£5,723
Insurance	£2,500	£2,439
Environment and Parks	£5,600	£5,552
Audit	£425	£382
CDALC	£225	£211
Information Commissioner	£50	£47
Office expenses	£250	£100
Miscellaneous	£0	£150
Community Centre	£5,600	£5,207
Elections	£0	£0
Website	£500	£40
Total	**£20,750**	**£19,851**

Ordinary expenditure is anticipated to remain broadly in line with the agreed budget.

Clerk's wages are expected to be slightly above the original provision due to the NJC award for the year 2026/2027.

Environment and Parks expenditure is forecast at approximately £5,552, including allowances for grounds maintenance and additional work before the year end.

Community Centre expenditure is forecast at approximately £5,207.

Office expenses are expected to be below budget, while £150 has been included for miscellaneous expenditure.

The Council makes an annual provision of £500 towards website costs, although the principal renewal falls every two years. Following anticipated expenditure of £40 during the current financial year, the remaining £460 will be carried forward towards the next renewal.

After allowing for this committed funding, the Council is forecasting an effective underspend of approximately £439 against its ordinary expenditure budget.

(This excludes the expenditure of £3,252 met separately from the contingency reserve.)

Contingency and Reserves

The Council has, for many years, maintained a contingency fund of £7,500 to meet unforeseen expenditure.

During 2026/2027, £3,252 has been required for exceptional repairs to the Community Centre hot water system, reducing the remaining contingency to £4,248.

Given the Council's ownership of the Community Centre, its responsibilities for various other assets, and the potential for unexpected maintenance liabilities, it is considered appropriate to review the level of reserves maintained.

Guidance for smaller authorities generally recommends maintaining general reserves equivalent to between three and twelve months of net revenue expenditure, depending on the authority's circumstances and financial risks.

Based on forecast expenditure of approximately £20,000 during 2026/2027, a reserve of £10,000 would represent approximately six months of expenditure.

It is therefore recommended that the Council increases its general reserve to **£10,000** from existing balances. This can be achieved without making additional provision within the 2027/2028 precept.

A further increase to **£11,000** would also be advisable if the final year-end financial position permits. This would represent approximately six months of the proposed expenditure budget for 2027/2028.

Based on the projected closing balance, the position would be:

Allocation	**£10,000 Reserve**	**£11,000 Reserve**
Projected closing balance	£12,933.80	£12,933.80
General reserve	£10,000.00	£11,000.00
Website funds carried forward	£460.00	£460.00
Remaining unallocated balance	**£2,473.80**	**£1,473.80**

The remaining unallocated balance should be retained to accommodate any additional expenditure during the remainder of 2026/2027 and to provide flexibility for unforeseen costs or variations in expenditure during 2027/2028.

These balances have not been included as income when calculating the proposed precept.

Tax Base

Durham County Council has advised that the tax base for Cornsay Parish for 2027/2028 is 279.7, compared with 281.7 for 2026/2027.

This represents a reduction of 2.0 Band D equivalent properties.

The Council's precept for 2026/2027 was £20,000, representing a Band D charge of £71.00.

The reduction in the tax base means that maintaining the same Band D charge would generate a slightly lower income in 2027/2028.

Budget for 2027/2028

In preparing the proposed budget, consideration has been given to expenditure during the current financial year, anticipated increases in costs and the Council's ongoing responsibilities.

The following budget is suggested:

Expenditure	**Budget 2026/27**	**Proposed 2027/28**
Clerk's wages	£5,600	£5,800
Insurance	£2,500	£2,600
Environment and Parks	£5,600	£5,800
Audit	£425	£450
CDALC	£225	£250

Information Commissioner	£50	£50
Office expenses	£250	£250
Community Centre	£5,600	£6,000
Elections	£0	£0
Website	£500	£500
Total	**£20,750**	**£21,700**

The proposed budget represents an increase of £950 on the current year's budget.

The provision for Clerk's wages has been increased to £5,800 to allow for any increases in employment costs.

Insurance has been increased to £2,600, while modest increases have been allowed for audit fees.

The Environment and Parks budget has been increased to £5,800 to reflect anticipated grounds maintenance costs and provide some flexibility for additional work.

The Community Centre budget has been increased to £6,000 comprising regular expenditure plus approximately £1,000 towards any repairs and maintenance.

The annual website provision of £500 has been retained to provide for periodic renewal costs.

No provision has been made for election expenses during 2027/2028.

Proposed Precept for 2027/2028

The suggested expenditure budget of £21,700 could be funded principally through the Council's annual precept and anticipated VAT reclaim.

The Council expects to reclaim £1,400.57 in VAT following the end of the current financial year. As in previous years, this has been included as anticipated income when calculating the precept requirement.

A **2%** increase in the Band D council tax charge from £71.00 to £72.42 would, based on the reduced tax base of 279.7, produce the following:

Income	**Proposed 2027/28**
Precept	£20,257.00
Anticipated VAT reclaim	£1,400.57
Total anticipated income	**£21,657.57**
Proposed expenditure budget	£21,700.00
Difference	**£42.43**

This increase would represent an additional £1.42 per year for a Band D property.

Although the suggested expenditure budget is approximately 4.6% higher than the current year's budget, the anticipated VAT reclaim and a 2% increase in the Band D charge would meet virtually all of the expenditure.

The remaining difference of approximately £42 can be accommodated within normal budget variations.

The suggested precept does not rely upon the remaining unallocated year-end balances, which are intended to provide flexibility for unexpected expenditure and variations during the coming financial year.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Council:

(i) Approves an expenditure budget of £21,700 for the financial year 2027/2028.

(ii) Agrees a precept of £20,257 for 2027/2028, representing an increase of approximately 2% in the Band D council tax charge.

(iii) Approves an increase in the Council's general reserve to £10,000, funded from existing balances.

(iv) Agrees that a further increase in the general reserve to £11,000 should be considered once the final year-end financial position is known, provided sufficient funds remain available.

(v) Agrees that any remaining unallocated balances should be retained to accommodate additional expenditure during 2026/2027 and unforeseen expenditure or budget variations during 2027/2028.