Your views on our plans for investing, saving and innovation in 2027-2028

We want to hear what you think about our plans for how we deliver services and our proposed budget for 2027-2028. We also want your views on how we balance saving money with investing in services for Newcastle. Here's what we are planning.

Change and Innovation

We are continuing with our **Change and Innovation Programme**, which we launched in the 2026-27 budget. We have used this programme to look at new ways to deliver services, use technology, and spend less on outside contracts. The programme is expected to deliver savings of over £17 million by the end of 2027-28, as part of our ongoing efforts to address significant financial pressures facing local government.

Our aim is to save money for the future, keep our budget balanced, and still provide services people need. These include road repairs, neighbourhood services, and help for people who need us most. We want to cut waste and work more efficiently.

Our plans are set out in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), which shows how we will manage our resources for the next three years. This will include greater investment to deliver on our ambition for attractive, safe, clean and sustainable neighbourhoods in which residents are proud to live. We have also strengthened opportunities to invest in local priorities through the proposed establishment of ward capital budgets and we have accelerated investment into roads and footpaths.

The **efficiencies** delivered through our Change and Innovation Programme are not enough to fully close our budget gap. We have a been required to propose an increase in Council Tax of 3% and the adult social care precept of 2%, in line with government assumptions. This is not a decision that we have taken lightly and we have proposed changes to our Council Tax Support scheme to provide additional targeted relief. We have also increased the band thresholds for our Council Tax Support scheme by inflation to protect existing reliefs.

We also plan to change the way we provide **support to kinship carers** (where a child or young person is raised full-time by a close relative or family friend, not a birth parent), and to promote independence within **school transport services for children** and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). We are also seeking views on options available to revise our **SEND transport provision for those aged 16 and over**. This is just a summary. You can read more about our proposals in these reports:

- Medium Term Planning for 2027-28 to 2029-2030 – Cabinet Report
- Change and Innovation – update for November 2026
- Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2026-2027 to 2028-2029 – Revenue and Capital Plan

You can find full details, including risks, costs, and investment plans here: View the 2027-28 Budget and Medium-term financial plan for 2027-28 to 2029-30 paper

If you have questions about this, or you need this information in another format, such as large print, please contact us at: letstalk@newcastle.gov.uk or call: 0191 278 7878.

What we would like you to do

We want to know what you think about our plans for the next three years. We have already asked people for general views through the **Newcastle People's Budget**, which you can see here: Newcastle People's Budget for 2027-28.

Now we want your views on the MTFP proposals. Please answer the questions below! We would encourage everyone to read through the proposals in full before giving your views. You can find them online here: Your views on our plans for investing, saving and innovation in 2027-2028. You can read our service specific plans here:

1. Council Tax and Adult Social Care Precept
2. Children's Transport
3. SGO (Kinship Care) Pathways and Support
4. Post-16 Travel Support for Young People with SEND

Other ways to have your say

You can also share your views through:

- Joining the discussion at: www.letstalknewcastle.co.uk/
- Emailing: letstalk@newcastle.gov.uk
- Writing to **FREEPOST Letstalk** – this is the full address, and you do not need a stamp.

Data Protection

Your answers will be kept private. We will not share them, and you cannot be identified. You do not have to answer if you do not want to. For more details, read our Privacy Policy: https://www.letstalknewcastle.co.uk/page/privacy-policy

What happens next

The consultation runs from **16 November to 29 December 2026**. We will use your views when we update the MTFP in early 2027. The final plan will go to Full Council in March 2027 for a vote.

Give us your views

1) Generally speaking, do you agree or disagree with our overall approach to transforming services whilst making savings over the next three years?

- Strongly agree ☐
- Agree ☐
- Neither agree nor disagree ☐
- Disagree ☐
- Strongly disagree ☐

2) Do you think this is a fair and reasonable approach (or not)?

- Very fair and reasonable ☐
- Quite fair and reasonable ☐
- Not very fair and reasonable ☐
- Not fair and reasonable at all ☐

3) What is most important to you?

Here's a list of the different ways we are trying to change how we deliver services to be more efficient and make savings. If you had to **choose three out of all of these** that you think are **most important** for us to work on, which would they be? (Please tick up to three **only**.)

Investing, efficiency, and economic growth

1. Invest in **safeguarding frontline services** such as highway repairs, waste collection, neighbourhood services and social care ☐
2. Invest in a **culture programme** to create a platform for creative workers and boost economic growth in Newcastle ☐
3. Use a multi-year settlement to introduce a more **strategic three-year transformation plan** to achieve the necessary efficiencies. ☐

Using new technology and improving customer experience

4. Use **digital solutions** to make it easier to contact us and generally improve customer experience ☐
5. Take advantage of **artificial intelligence** and upskill our staff to boost productivity and performance ☐
6. Improve how we use **performance data and analytics** to be more efficient ☐

Structure, support services and spending

7. Review how our services are organised, to ensure that we have a **sustainable structure** that delivers best value for money ☐
8. **Streamline support services** to provide more efficient and effective back-office functions (such as payroll, recruitment, and others) ☐
9. **Review third-party spending**, such as using agency staff, and adopt a more robust approach to procurement to get better value for money ☐
10. Invest in a **new integrated system** for finance, HR, payroll and procurement services to cut down on duplication, boost productivity, and deliver better value for money in the long-term ☐

Protecting the vulnerable

11. Consider how best we can continue to **protect vulnerable children** while also delivering best value for money ☐
12. Introduce a **transformation programme** that helps to manage demand in adult social care, education and provision for children with specialist educational needs and disabilities (SEND) ☐
13. Prioritise an **increase in council tax** and the adult social care precept over cuts to frontline services ☐

4) **Do you have any thoughts about what the possible consequences or impacts of these proposals could be – good or bad? Can you see any ways we could reduce any negative impacts?** Please tell us about this here.

IIA1 – Council Tax and the Adult Social Care Precept

Whilst we have received an increase in government funding, this does not match the rate of increasing demand for services, nor increased costs caused by inflation. Increasing Council Tax and the adult social care precept is one of the only mechanisms we have to make up that funding gap – our other alternative is cutting services. You can read the full proposal here: Council Tax and Adult Social Care Precept

5) **Thinking about the proposed increase in Council Tax and the adult social care precept, do you agree or disagree with this proposal?**

- Strongly agree ☐
- Agree ☐
- Neither agree nor disagree ☐
- Disagree ☐
- Strongly disagree ☐

6) **Thinking about the proposed increase in Council Tax and the adult social care precept, do you think it is fair and reasonable?**

- Very fair and reasonable ☐
- Quite fair and reasonable ☐
- Not very fair and reasonable ☐
- Not fair and reasonable at all ☐

7) **Do you have any comments about the proposed increase in Council Tax and the adult social care precept?** Please write them here:

IIA2 – Children's Transport

We provide this service for **children and young people who need help travelling to schools and colleges**, particularly those with SEND, and our proposal is to develop a more coordinated and sustainable transport offer for them. Our goal is to manage rising demand and costs, while supporting their safety and independence and continuing to meet our statutory duties.

We will first review the **evidence** of what works best, understand the different **factors** putting pressure on our services, and explore possible **options** with the people and organisations involved in the service. We are not proposing immediate policy changes. This is just a summary. You can read more about our proposals in the full proposal (IIA) here: 2027-2028 Appendix 15.3 - Children's Transport - IIA

8) Do you agree or disagree with the proposal for Children's Transport?

- Strongly agree ☐
- Agree ☐
- Neither agree nor disagree ☐
- Disagree ☐
- Strongly disagree ☐

9) Do you think the proposal for Children's Transport is fair and reasonable (or not)?

- Very fair and reasonable ☐
- Quite fair and reasonable ☐
- Not very fair and reasonable ☐
- Not fair and reasonable at all ☐

10) Do you have any comments about the proposal for Children's Transport? Please write them here:

IIA3 – SGO (Kinship Carers) Pathways and Support 2027-2028

The current service supports **children who are unable to live with their parents through kinship and other care arrangements**, including Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs), and provides support to carers and families to help maintain safe and stable arrangements. A kinship carer is a family member or close friend who steps in to raise or help raise a child when their biological parents are unable to do so. Children in care may also be supported to return to their parents or wider family network, where assessment has identified that this can be done safely.

Our proposals for 2027-2028 are about **strengthening existing kinship care and reunification pathways** so that more children can remain safely within their family network or return home from care, where this is assessed as appropriate and safe. The changes include:

- enhanced support for kinship carers
- Family Network Support Packages, and
- a more structured approach to family reunification, including dedicated reunification and return-home support.

Some elements have already begun to be implemented and will continue to develop during 2026/27. The proposal is intended to **improve support** for children, parents and wider family networks, promote safe and stable family arrangements, and reduce reliance on external residential care where family-based care is appropriate. This is just a summary. You can read more about our proposals in the full proposal (IIA) here: 2027-2028 Appendix 15.2 - SGO Pathways and Support IIA

11) Do you agree or disagree with the proposal for SGO (Kinship Carers) Pathways and Support?

- Strongly agree ☐
- Agree ☐
- Neither agree nor disagree ☐
- Disagree ☐
- Strongly disagree ☐

12) Do you think the proposal for SGO (Kinship Carers) Pathways and Support is fair and reasonable (or not)?

- Very fair and reasonable ☐
- Quite fair and reasonable ☐
- Not very fair and reasonable ☐
- Not fair and reasonable at all ☐

13) Do you have any comments about the proposal for SGO (Kinship Carers) Pathways and Support? Please write them here:

IIA4 – Post-16 SEND Travel Support for 2027-2028

We provide **travel assistance to eligible post-16 learners where it is necessary to access education or training**. The service covers learners aged 16 to 18, continuing learners who began their course before their nineteenth birthday, and young adults aged 19 to 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). We are considering changes to our post-16 SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) travel support offer from September 2027.

The aim is to provide young people who qualify for this, and their families, with greater choice and control, support preparation for adulthood and independence, make better use of Newcastle's accessible public transport network, reduce reliance on individually commissioned transport, and reduce the environmental impact of travel. We have considered **four possible options** for the future of post-16 SEND travel support and intend to explore these further through consultation:

- **Option 1**. A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) as the default for new applicants.
- **Option 2**. A Personal Travel Budget (PTB) as the standard offer for new and existing recipients.
- **Option 3**. End the general discretionary offer from age 19. We would retain individually assessed support where we are required to do this by law.
- **Option 4**. Phase in ending the general post-16 SEND travel offer.

This is just a summary, and we recommend that you read the proposals in full here: 2027-2028 Appendix 15.4 - SEND Post-16 Travel Support IIA

14) Do you agree or disagree with the proposal for post-16 SEND Travel Support?

- Strongly agree ☐
- Agree ☐
- Neither agree nor disagree ☐
- Disagree ☐
- Strongly disagree ☐

15) Do you think the proposal for post-16 SEND Travel Support is fair and reasonable (or not)?

- Very fair and reasonable ☐
- Quite fair and reasonable ☐
- Not very fair and reasonable ☐
- Not fair and reasonable at all ☐

16) Do you have any comments about the proposal for post-16 SEND Travel Support? Please write them here:

Your thoughts

17) Do you have suggestions for other ways we could make savings or generate income? Please write them here:

18) Finally, do you have any views you would like to share with us about any aspect of these proposals or any of the issues raised here? Please write them here:

About you

This information will only be used to explore if we have captured a range of different people's views on our MTFP Proposals for 2027-28. All replies are confidential, and you cannot be identified from them. You do not have to answer these questions if you do not want to.

What is your sex?

Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say ☐

Is your gender the same as the sex you were assigned at birth?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say ☐

Prefer to self-describe (please do so in the box): ☐

What is your postcode?

This will only be used to see which areas of the city people who have taken part in the MTFP 2027-28 consultation come from.

Which age group do you belong to?

13-18 ☐ 18-29 ☐ 30-44 ☐ 45-64 ☐

65-79 ☐ 80 and over ☐ Prefer not to say ☐

What is your ethnic group?

Asian or Asian British, including Chinese ☐ Black or Black British ☐ Mixed or multiple ethnicity ☐

White or White British ☐ Prefer not to say ☐

Other – please tell us about this ☐

Do you consider yourself to have a disability (a health problem or other disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months)?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer to not say ☐

Thank you for taking part