

Let's talk Newcastle
Medium-Term Financial
Plan 2026 – 2027
Consultation Report



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Executive Summary

We carried out this consultation to understand what local people and organisations think about our plans for spending and service delivery in 2026–2027. This took place in two stages. In October-November 2025, we used the People’s Budget tool, both online and in person, to engage and educate people about the challenges of setting the Council’s budget. In December 2025-January 2026, we ran our statutory consultation on our Budget proposals, including our Change and Innovation proposals, in an online survey, emails, community events and social media. The aim of the activity across both campaigns was to give residents and key stakeholders an opportunity to influence future decisions, while also raising awareness of the key challenges facing the council when it comes to delivering a balanced budget.

Who took part

This year we received 964 responses, which is an increase compared to the previous year (217 responses). This includes residents who took part in the People’s Budget, attended discussions at community venues, completed an online survey, sent an email, or commented on social media posts. Several charities and community organisations also gave detailed written feedback.

The People’s Budget

Around 593 people engaged in this way by either taking part online or through attending an event. Respondents showed a strong preference for protecting important services, particularly adults’ and children’s social care and early years and education. They were generally more comfortable with making savings in areas such as planning, business support, culture, leisure and libraries. Most participants chose to raise Council Tax by the highest amount allowed, because they believed this was necessary to avoid cuts to essential services. They also supported bringing in more income through service fees and parking charges.

Statutory Consultation – general issues

We received 371 responses to our statutory consultation, made up of 30 responses via Let’s talk Newcastle Online, 7 written submissions including five responses from stakeholder organisations such as Connected Voice, and around 334 responses to our social media posts. Residents raised concerns about whether people would be able to afford a rise in Council Tax and the Adult Social Care Precept, whether the Council spends money efficiently, and issues such as waste collection, potholes, fly-tipping, and keeping neighbourhoods clean were mentioned often, as were worries about how a move towards digital service provision might exclude people who are not confident online. Some residents felt that different parts of the city do not receive equal levels of investment, and others raised issues around traffic, public transport and support for children with special educational needs.

Local voluntary and community groups also gave thoughtful and detailed responses. These organisations said they understood why the Council needs to save money, but they were concerned about the impact on people who rely on support. They stressed the importance of keeping face-to-face services for people who struggle with digital systems, and they highlighted the financial pressures facing many community groups. They asked for better information, more communication and closer involvement in planning any major changes.

Statutory Consultation – Council Tax and Adult Social Care precept proposal

The Council's proposal for Council Tax in 2026–2027 is to raise the core rate by 2.99% and add a further 2.00% for the Adult Social Care Precept, to help cover the rising costs and increasing demand for social care. During the People's Campaign, prior to publication of this proposal, the majority of those who submitted a budget on our simulator tool tended to support a maximum increase. While many respondents in the statutory consultation said they would find the increase difficult, mainly because of cost-of-living pressures. Stakeholder organisations agreed that the rise might be necessary but emphasised the need to protect people on low incomes.

Communications and engagement

To reach as many people as possible, we used a wide range of communication methods. These included local press coverage, social media campaigns, email invitations, online tools, in-person events and accessible formats such as Easy Read and British Sign Language videos. A major part of the publicity campaign during both phases of the budget consultation and engagement work focused on helping people understand how the budget works, why demand for services is rising, and how national funding rules affect local decisions.

Summary

Overall, responses to the consultation showed strong public support for protecting key services, widespread concerns about affordability, fairness and efficient service provision, and a clear desire for continuing communication and involvement as the Council continues to make decisions about how to provide services in a challenging environment.

1. Introduction

This report summarises the main messages from our consultation on our budget proposals as set out in our medium-term financial plan 2026-2027. Our consultation and engagement activity took place over two periods of activity, primarily our People’s Budget campaign that ran in October-November 2025, followed by our statutory budget consultation that took place between December 2025-January 2026.

As in previous years, there were several different ways in which people and stakeholder organisations could take part. A ‘stakeholder organisation’ is an organisation which has a particular interest in commenting on our proposals – for example, a group which supports carers has an interest in commenting on proposals about how we deliver social care services – or represents or works with a group of people within Newcastle, such as people living in a particular area, or sharing a characteristic such as age, disability status and so on.

People’s Budget and Statutory Consultation

One way to take part was through the People’s Budget between 3 October to 11 November 2025, our interactive simulator (it can be seen online at: www.letstalkbudget.org.uk) that enables people to understand more about what services we provide, how we propose to spend our budget in future, and influence the Council’s decision by generating, submitting and sharing their own budget proposal.

Another way was to comment during the statutory phase of the consultation between 16 December 2025 to 21 January 2026, when we asked residents and stakeholder organisations for any comments they might have about our proposals for Change and Innovation, Council Tax & the Adult Social Care Precept, their ideas for saving money and generating income, and any general comments they wanted to make. A large part of this was through social media engagement.

Please note that this report focusses on presenting the views of individuals and organisations gathered through the consultation, which will be used by staff to update Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs) for specific proposals. To understand fully what we propose in our Medium-Term Financial Plan, the findings outlined here need to be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- [Change and Innovation – a summary of our 2026-27 savings proposals](#)
- [Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2026-2027 to 2028-2029 – Revenue and Capital Plan](#)
- [Council Tax and Adult Social Care Proposal – Integrated Impact Assessment \(IIA\)](#)
- [Consultation and Communication Plan 2026-2027](#)

2. How many people and organisations took part?

Over both campaigns **we received 964 responses**. When we remove those who engaged across both campaigns, we engaged around 854 people and organisations in our budget-setting process, a higher number than the **217** people and organisations who took part last year. We also know that many more people read or viewed information about our budget, both during the People’s Budget phase and the later statutory consultation.

Please note that many of the same people made comments on social media during both phases of the consultation, meaning that the total responses for each of the two phases of the consultation add to more than 853. We have counted each individual commenting on social media only once in the overall totals shown in the table below, regardless of how many posts they commented on, and which phase(s) of the consultation they took part in.

One way of taking part was during an engagement campaign based that took place between 3 October – 11 November 2025. This focused on our interactive digital People’s Budget tool where residents can try setting the budget themselves. We received 95 completed People’s Budgets, 22 responses from people who had started the tool but selected a “give up” button that demonstrates they found balancing a budget too difficult. Although the tool itself was a key part of the campaign, there was also wider pre-engagement including a social media campaign aimed at educating communities around balancing a budget, this saw 176 unique users comment on social media. We also held a series of in-person events where we discussed budget challenges and what council services mattered most to them. These events were attended by around 300 people, giving a total of **593 responses** during the first phase of our budget consultation.

Our statutory consultation, the second phase of our budget engagement, took place between 16 December 2025 – 21 January 2026. That saw 37 people and organisations respond either by email or by completing a survey via Let’s talk Newcastle Online. A further 334 gave feedback by commenting on our social media posts about our plans. The five organisations who commented were Connected Voice, the Elders Council, Healthwatch Newcastle, Newcastle Chamber of Commerce (NECC) and Newcastle Circus Arts CIC, giving a total of **375 responses** during this phase of the consultation.

The table below shows the total responses for both phases.

Budget Proposals	No of people / organisations
The People’s Budget - submitted	95
The People’s Budget – started but did not complete	22
The People’s Budget – attended an in-person event	300*
Statutory consultation – received via Let’s talk Newcastle Online	30
Statutory consultation – Member of the public by email	2
Statutory consultation – Stakeholder organisation by email	5
Feedback received via social media (note that we received 176 comments during the People’s Budget campaign and 334 during the statutory consultation, however, some individuals commented across both campaigns. The figure displayed is unique users.	400

* This is an estimate of the total number of individual people who have taken part. We sometimes had to estimate attendance at in-person People’s Budget events.

Please note that it is possible for an individual to take part in the consultation through several channels – for example, they might complete a People’s Budget, and later complete a Let’s talk Newcastle online survey. We would not be aware of this unless they chose to tell us, so we can only give our best estimate of the number of individual people and organisations who have taken part.

We have used Microsoft CoPilot to assist with the analysis of themes in social media and survey comments, but all findings have been checked for quality, accuracy and representativeness by the authors of the report, in line with Newcastle City Council’s guiding principles on the responsible use of AI tools.

3. The Newcastle People's Budget 2026-2027

On 3 October 2025 we relaunched our People's Budget simulator, which invites members of the public to consider how they would set the council's budget for the coming year. It can be viewed online at: www.letstalkbudget.org.uk. We asked people to make savings of £22m from our existing budget by either cutting spending on service areas, putting up council tax, increasing income generation from various sources, or a combination of all of these.

We provide context via pop-up notifications indicating the consequences of cutting spending in various service areas. For example, cutting spending on Children's Social Care by up to £3.0m provides the update: "There is a risk that demand for services may increase, with more children coming into care and there would be fewer places available to keep them safe." The People's Budget closed on 11 November 2025.

On social media, our content for the People's Budget campaign reached **230,200 people**, with **176 people** commenting across all the posts (some of whom also went on to comment on the statutory phase of the consultation). The data shows a small proportion of these individuals then completed a budget but given that the main objective was to raise awareness of the challenges of balancing a budget, this is a positive metric.

The People's Budget – main findings

The **main takeaway from the 2026-2027 People's Budget**, based on 95 budgets (including 28 that were submitted via paper forms at in-person engagement events), is that **people taking part wanted to protect adults' and children's social care services, and early years & education**. This has been consistent throughout the past nine years in which we have offered people the chance to take part in the People's Budget simulator, as has there being more willingness to make cuts to planning & development, enabling & business functions, and culture, leisure & libraries.

When we look at **risk levels**, for 2026-2027 there were no services at high risk in the People's Budget, but Refuse, Waste Collection and Disposal, Maintaining Highways, Maintaining Neighbourhoods, and Culture, Leisure and Libraries were all at 'medium risk'.

Overall, the People's Budget had a **Council Tax** increase of 4.99%, consisting of a 2.00% rise for the **Adult Social Care Precept**, and a 2.99% rise in Council Tax. This is the maximum allowed without triggering a referendum and is consistent with decisions made in previous years.

Looking at **income generation** in the People's Budget, those who took part increased income from fees, charges and other income (services such as registrars, school meals and so on) to generate income of £2.0M, and £1.0M from parking services. Again, this is consistent with decisions made in previous years. People prefer to increase charges to generate revenue to protect services.

How people engaged with our People's Budget campaign

As we reported earlier, for the first time we ran the People's Budget simulator during an engagement exercise prior to the publication of proposals. We did not include an option to complete the simulator during our statutory consultation. During this pre-engagement campaign, **947** people started the People's Budget challenge online, **95** submitted a budget, and **22** clicked the official "give up" button, which does give us useful insight as it demonstrates the challenges people face in setting a budget. (The 'missing' 830 people simply closed the People's Budget tool without completing a budget or clicking the 'I give

up' button). On average people took 11 minutes to complete a budget. Three people shared their budgets via social media. Around 300 attended in-person engagement events at community centres, ward committees, community group meetings and a youth event (full details in section 5). We will be analysing what opportunities there are to make the tool easier to complete, given that the 'conversion rate' comparing those who clicked onto the simulator to those who actually completed a People's Budget is around 10%. We believe there will be opportunities to generate more responses in future campaigns.

The People's Budget – views, bright ideas, and suggestions from events and social media

Comments received from people taking part in the People's Budget contained a mixture of opinions; some wanting Council Tax and the Adult Social Care Precept to go even higher than 4.99% to pay for more services, others thinking this should be lower to help low-income households. Some people wanted to reduce social care and waste collection costs, others wanted to prioritise children's social care and universal services such as parks and waste collection, and one person commented that they just wanted to better understand the Council's budget.

Social care services and waste collection were also mentioned in the '**bright ideas**' comments about people's thoughts on how we could save money or generate income. Some people wondered about whether it could be necessary to bring SEND transport completely back in-house, or even 'go back to basics' and redesign how all social care services are provided. Ensuring that all taxes and rent due are collected and fining people for fly-tipping in back lanes were also mentioned. The most common suggestion was to involve communities more in neighbourhood maintenance, such as litter picking and gardening.

As mentioned earlier, approximately 300 people attended **in-person events** such as ward committees, Newcastle Neighbourhoods meetings and community groups where we engaged residents in the People's Budget campaign. It is not always practical in such settings for everyone to submit a budget, so these events often took the form of group discussions with an opportunity to then submit comments at the end. From feedback gathered at the event, it is clear residents really appreciated the face-to-face discussions. Many said this was the first time they've had the opportunity to be involved in something like this, and they felt it was important for people to understand what the Government is asking of the local council.

We analysed themes in comments from People's Budget events, and the most common theme was that **central government should provide more funding for services**. Other suggestions were that we should look to increase revenue from events, raise Council Tax, have more stringent enforcement of parking regulations, and introduce a tourist tax.

The most common themes in **social media comments about the People's Budget** were: "Reduce council salaries and pensions" (mentioned by 37 people), 'Reduce spending on social care' (24 people) and 'Spend less on cycle lanes and transport' and 'Tackle waste and potholes' (16 people each mentioned these topics). Where people expressed opinions that were factually untrue, we replied to present the facts in response.

4. Feedback on our Change and Innovation Programme, and Council Tax & Adult Social Care Precept proposals

The number of formal responses to statutory consultation on the Medium-Term Financial Plan was low compared to previous years, with 30 people providing responses through Let's talk Newcastle Online, two emails, and five email responses from VCSE organisations. However, we received around 334 comments on social media, and analysis of what people told us through these channels is shown below, along with information about how we used social media to engage with people and educate them about local government funding and the challenges we face.

Findings from Let's talk Newcastle Online about the Change and Innovation Proposals

We would note that the low number of responses (30) to the statutory MTFP consultation via Let's talk Newcastle Online means the responses cannot be deemed as representative of the views of all Newcastle residents. However, they provide some insight into people's thoughts, alongside feedback from the People's Budget online and events, emails and social media comments.

When asked the question: "Here is 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?," the following approaches to service delivery were considered important by the biggest percentages of people taking part:

- **Invest in safeguarding frontline services** such as highway repairs, waste collection, neighbourhood services and social care = 24% of responses
- **Review third-party spending**, such as using agency staff, and adopt a more robust approach to procurement to get better value for money = 14%
- **Introduce a transformation programme** that helps to manage demand in adult social care, education and SEND provision (for children with specialist educational needs and disabilities) = 14%

27% of those who took part said that they agreed with our proposed approach to transforming services whilst making savings over the next three years (62% disagreed), and 31% said that they agreed that it was fair and reasonable (69% disagreed).

When we explore the thinking behind this through their comments, we find that people were concerned about:

- Whether Council Tax is **affordable**, particularly for households on low incomes,
- **Striking a balance** between using digital technology and artificial intelligence to be more efficient and not threatening jobs or risking inadvertently excluding people from services if they are digitally excluded,
- Concerns about waste, **efficiency**, use of reserves & procurement,
- Concerns about inequality & geographic **fairness of spend**, in other words ensuring that all areas of Newcastle receive a fair level of Council funding.

These are insights we can use to help us understand people's concerns and better address them when we engage with them in future as part of delivering Change and Innovation Programme.

Responses by email

Two people responded by email. One wanted to see better facilities for bus drivers provided in outlying areas of Newcastle, to support continued public transport in these areas. Another also commented on the situation in areas of Newcastle such as the Outer West, which they felt did not receive the same level of investment as other areas, and where in their view there was an ongoing issue with more houses being built without necessary infrastructure to support them, such as roads, schools and health services.

Social media responses, engagement and education

A key part of both the People's Budget social media campaign and the later statutory consultation phase is to raise awareness of the financial challenges facing Newcastle City Council and provide the context in which difficult decisions around the budget are made.

This year we had an additional focus on educating the public about aspects of council funding that are often misunderstood. Subjects addressed in social media posts included:

- The **cost of Adults and Children's Social Care, and Education** and how it makes up around 75% of council budgets.
- The **impact of inflation**, increased utility bills and the rising costs of services on balancing a budget.
- The **difference between grant funding and our base budget**, to bust myths on how we can allocate money.
- A **breakdown on how council tax money is allocated**, with a graphic acting as a visual aid.
- **Why we choose to increase council tax** when residents feel like they are paying more for less.
- The **difference between capital expenditure and revenue costs**, and how much of that funding is ringfenced.
- An **explanation of the Change and Innovation programme** and some of the themes that it will explore to achieve the required savings.

Our activity across social media reached a total of **510,621** users across the three primary platforms – **230,200** during the People's Budget campaign, and **280,421** relating to the statutory consultation on our MTFP. It is likely that some of these are duplicate users (for example, one individual viewing multiple posts about the budget) but it gives an indication of how widely shared the above key messages were in our region.

Note that when analysing social media feedback, we have amalgamated all comments made by the same individual into one comment, so that each person was only counted once, and we did not include people who did not make 'meaningful' comments. For example, a comment consisting only of another user's name to share the post with them would not be included. In total we have analysed **510 comments** across both campaigns but, once removing those who commented multiple times, we estimate that around **400 unique individuals** made comments on our budget during both the People's Budget and statutory consultation phases between 3 October 2025 to 21 January 2026.

The main findings from analysing social media comments made during the People’s Budget phase of consultation are provided above, in section three. The main concerns identified in people’s comments made during the statutory consultation phase are shown below.

Theme	Number of mentions
Council Tax increases and affordability	66
Executive pay, pensions, and staffing levels	36
Inefficiency, potentially risky investments, and use of reserves, including the loan to the Crowne Plaza hotel	35
Cycle lanes, bus lanes and pedestrianisation, including the Clean Air Zone	34
Litter, fly-tipping, parks, and anti-social behaviour	32
Scepticism about the consultation process and trust in the Council	31
Social care funding and fairness	23
Public transport services	21
Immigration, asylum, and housing allocation concerns	18
SEND, education and youth provision	18

Findings from stakeholder organisations

Connected Voice, representing the community and voluntary sector, commented on our proposals as follows:

- **The Change and Innovation Programme in general:** They understand the reasons behind this proposal but are concerned that “pushing the bulk of the required budget savings of over £40m into years 2 and 3 stores up problems for future years”, and at the possibility of job loss due to the proposed 75 FTE reduction in staffing.
- **Impact on Marginalised Groups:** They are concerned that marginalised groups in Newcastle could suffer disproportionate impacts and commented that the HAREF network was particularly keen to become involved in proposed work to consider the potential impact of proposals on different communities.
- **Improving Customer Experience:** They noted that the Change and Innovation Programme relies heavily on technology but were concerned at the possibility of inadvertently digitally excluding people. They want to see joined-up work on digital inclusion.
- **Reviewing Third-party Spending:** They expressed the hope that this could mean more work to encourage non-for-profit organisations to get involved in supplying services.
- **General Feedback:** They are concerned at recent closures of local voluntary and community sector organisations and emphasised the importance of this sector in delivering local public services, including meeting basic needs. They are also concerned at whether such groups will continue to have the capacity to support marginalised groups within Newcastle, including refugees, asylum seekers, and LGBTQIA+ people.

They are further concerned about a possible reduction in Council investments in local VCSE organisations and would like to see an assessment of the impact of this and of reducing staffing on wider society in the local area. ‘Future-proofing’ the changes being proposed was a concern, including working with organisations supporting groups of people who may be especially affected by them, including “older people, disabled people, and families with children who have special educational needs or disabilities.”

However, they also praised the Council’s ongoing investment in the VCSE, the ‘thoughtful’ leadership around the VSLG changes, and the positive role the leadership has played in Community Bridge Builders.

- **Information Provided:** They felt that they would have liked more detailed information, for example more Integrated Impact Assessments for proposals, and more opportunities for face-to-face discussions. However, they were pleased with the use of graphics to illustrate and explain the proposals and welcome increased engagement through the use of the People’s Budget.

The **Elders Council**, representing older people in Newcastle, commented on our proposals as follows:

- **Improving Customer Experience:** They noted that the Change and Innovation Programme relies heavily on technology, but were concerned at the possibility of inadvertently excluding people from services, saying “the drive to increase self-service, automation and digital... must not be at the expense of telephone and face-to-face support for those who cannot engage digitally, or when issues are complex and better solved by experienced face-to-face support”. They also emphasised a need to retain the knowledge of experienced staff.
- **Managing Demand for Adult Social care, Education, and provision for children with SEND:** They generally agree with this providing it does not involve tightening eligibility criteria and would like to see continued investment in prevention and early intervention.
- **Reviewing Third-Party Spending:** Like Connected Voice, they expressed the hope that this proposal would mean more use of local non-for-profit organisations, as they consider that these are more efficient as they are specialists and can use volunteers, which the Council cannot
- **Relevant Areas of the Elders Council’s Work:** They highlighted specific areas of work they are involved in which complement the work of the council, including Age-Friendly Cities, learning from good practice elsewhere, and the HAPRU (Healthy Aging Policy Research Unit) report on ‘Aging in the North,’ which they collaborated on. They would like to be involved in future proposals for policy and service redesign for older people.
- **Information Provided:** Like Connected Voice, they also felt that they would have liked more detailed information, for example more Impact Assessments for proposals.

Healthwatch Newcastle, representing health and social care service users, commented on our proposals as follows:

- **Improving Customer Experience:** Like the Elders Council, they welcome the goal of improving customer experience, but expressed concern about the potential for digital exclusion, particularly for people with limited digital access or skills. They comment: “It is essential that non-digital options remain available, consent to digital communication is meaningful, and that inclusive support is built into implementation.”

- **Maximising Independence Within SEND Transport:** They support the principle of independence but are concerned that some vulnerable young people would not be able to travel independently, and that their access to education must be preserved.
- **Reviewing Back Office Support:** They appreciate the need for efficiency but are concerned that “bringing services together and relying more on automation could make it harder for people to contact the Council and get the help they need,” focussing especially on people who are not online or who have complex health needs.
- **General Feedback:** Like Connected Voice, they are concerned at some recent closures of local voluntary and community sector organisations and emphasised the importance of this sector in delivering local public services. They welcome the move to a wider VCSE forum and would like to see continued opportunities to work with Newcastle City Council to support marginalised groups within Newcastle including refugees, asylum seekers, and LGBTQIA+ people. They welcome a move towards prevention in social care services but note the challenges of maintaining services given increased demand.

Newcastle Chamber of Commerce (NECC), representing nearly 2,000 businesses in the region, commented on our proposals as follows:

- **Inclusive Economic Growth:** They welcomed our commitment to inclusive economic growth in Newcastle, noting the issues the council and the region face due to growing demand for social care and other services, and the increasing cost of providing services.
- **The Change and Innovation Programme in general:** They welcome a focus on achieving efficiencies and protecting areas such as economic development, planning and social care. They are pleased to see a continued commitment to the Real Living Wage (RLW).
To mitigate any impacts of proposed job cuts, they would like to see the final budget statement identify and explain where posts have been retained, and in some cases increased, due to service restructuring or realignment.
- **Transformation Programme:** They welcome the Council’s proposal to generate £40m in savings through a three-year transformation programme based on service design reviews and increased use of artificial intelligence. They would like to see the council engage the business community in the programme’s roll-out, gathering feedback and sharing learning opportunities. They will contribute by providing member feedback on the national business rates reform consultation and sharing local findings with the authority.
- **Fair Funding Review:** The NECC is pleased to see that this will provide the first provisional three-year Local Government Finance Settlement in several years, as their view is that longer-term funding certainty helps to drive economic growth.

Newcastle Circus Arts CIC, a not-for profit organisation delivering circus arts training in the local community emphasises the role of local arts and ‘social’ voluntary and community sector organisations in providing health and social care services, for example social clubs for different groups of people such as socially isolated people, youth services, and local groups for women. They asked if the Council could look to work with these groups to provide these services more efficiently in Newcastle.

Finances – Council Tax and Adult Social Care Precept Proposal

The proposal, as set out in the IIA, is:

“As in previous years, we are expecting the government will assume in its calculation of core spending power that all local authorities will increase Council Tax by the maximum amount in 2026-27, which is expected to be 3% plus a 2% increase in the adult social care precept.

To set a balanced budget in 2026-27 we need to increase the amount of income raised through Council Tax. We are proposing to increase core Council Tax by 2.99%, which will increase income by £4.7 million (excluding any changes to the Council Tax base). We propose to use this income to avoid the need to make further reductions to service provision beyond those set out in the budget report. We expect this increase will be below the level that is defined as excessive by the Secretary of State for the purpose of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

In addition, we propose to apply the government’s 2% Council Tax precept for adult social care to help fund the increasing demand for and cost of adult social care. This will generate an additional £3.1 million of Council Tax income (excluding any changes to in the Council Tax base).”

In the statutory consultation phase, people who responded via Let’s talk Newcastle Online 23% agreed with this proposal (72% disagreed) and 24% thought that it was fair and reasonable (77% disagreed). However, when respondents to the People’s Budget campaign were asked to find efficiencies required to balance the budget, they all chose to increase council tax by the maximum amount in order to protect services. These findings are consistent with previous consultations on proposed increases in council tax.

Again, when we explore the thinking behind people’s responses through their comments, we find that they were concerned about affordability & financial hardship (five people said this), value for money, concerns about waste & lack of trust, the need to preserve the single person / household discount, and fairness in charging for services.

Findings from stakeholders

Stakeholder organisations commented on our proposals for Council Tax and the Adult Social Care Precept as follows:

- **Connected Voice:** They support the proposal to increase council tax by the maximum amount in order to increase income and noted that this was supported by people taking part in the People’s Budget. They welcomed both the increase in eligibility bands for council tax support based on inflation and additional support for veterans, people in poverty, and the terminally ill. They also commented that whilst they understood the need to increase business rates, they were concerned about possible adverse impacts on local independent businesses and diversity within the city centre economy.
- **Healthwatch Newcastle:** They understand the need for increasing Council Tax but are concerned about the possibility of entrenching health inequalities, or disproportionately affecting people on low incomes or those whose protected characteristics may disadvantage them (such as disability status).
- **Elders Council:** They note that “there is little choice in this matter” when considering the proposal to increase Council Tax and the Adult Social Care Precept rather than make cuts to frontline services but felt that this “requires sensitivity.”

Findings from social media comments

66 people commented via social media specifically about their concerns about Council Tax increases and their affordability. Some felt that they were continually paying more money and receiving the same or fewer services. Others observed that the Council faces increased costs from rises in utility prices and increased demand for services and noted that much public spending is controlled by central government. (We did not receive any comments by email specifically about proposals relating to Council Tax and the Adult Social Care Precept.)

5. How we engaged with residents, organisations, and other stakeholders, and who took part

Residents, partners and other stakeholders have been able to have their say through various routes, such as the People’s Budget – both online and in person at discussion events – the online survey. This section summarises how we engaged and how many people and organisations used these channels.

The People’s Budget

Our People’s Budget publicity campaign took place between 3 October and 11 November 2025, using these **communications channels** to invite people and organisations to take part:

- Press release (covered in the Chronicle here: [‘Newcastle City Council calls on local communities to shape how it uses budget’](#))
- Social media (18 posts on our Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, and X accounts)
- Direct email to over 150 stakeholder groups on our mailing list to invite them to take part
- Advertised on Let’s talk Newcastle Online, with an invitation email sent to over 400 people registered on the site to receive notifications of consultations
- Shared with partner agencies and internally with staff.

We offered to hold **in-person events** to run an offline version of the People’s Budget to VCSE organisations and schools across the city and several organisations took us up on this. Not all attendees at the events completed a People’s Budget, but their attendance meant that we could share key messages around the budget, and several gave general feedback, which we included in the People’s Budget comments. Drop-in events took place at:

- Arthur’s Hill Networking Event
- BiB Celebration event in Byker
- Engaged housing tenants
- ‘Monday Matters’ meeting at The Bostey community centre in Walker
- Newcastle Neighbourhoods network, run by Adult Social Care staff
- Volunteers Centre
- Ward committees being held during the duration of the campaign: Blakelaw, Ouseburn, Walkergate, West Fenham and Heaton
- Youth Council
- Production of information in BSL and Easy Read format to help make it more accessible for Deaf people and people with learning disabilities.

As ever, the People’s Budget cannot completely reflect the exhaustive nature of council budgets, as doing so would make it so complex it would discourage people from taking part. We intend it as a tool for educating people and communities on the financial challenges and issues we face, and we are happy with the reach achieved through the communication tactics described above.

Statutory consultation on our Medium-Term Financial Plan

We ran our statutory consultation on the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2026/27 between 16 December 2025 to 21 January 2026, using these communications channels to make people and organisation aware of it and asking them to take part:

- Press release (covered in the Chronicle here: [‘Newcastle council tax rise and 75 job losses planned in £3.9 million cost-cutting bid’](#))
- Social media (18 posts across Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube, and X)
- Direct email to over 150 stakeholder groups on our mailing list to invite them to take part
- Advertised on Let’s talk Newcastle Online, with an invitation email sent to over 400 people registered on the site to receive notifications of consultations
- Shared with partner agencies and internally with staff.
- Online meeting with Connected Voice and HAREF in January 2026
- Communication pack disseminated by Connected Voice to their mailing list of more than 2,000 members.

We did not arrange any in-person events for this phase of the consultation because extensive resources had been put into hosting in-person events as part of the People’s Budget campaign. All attendees at those events were invited to take part in the statutory consultation and encouraged to get in touch if they had any questions or needed further information.

About the respondents

This section provides some information about the personal characteristics of people who took part. We rely on people voluntarily providing this information to us, if they take part via the People’s Budget or online via Let’s talk Newcastle Online, and we do not have any way of asking people who take part via social media for this. The figures below are provided for information only.

Who took part – People’s Budget

- **Sex:** Of the 64 people who answered the question about their sex, 56% were male, 34% were female, and 9% preferred not to give any information about this.
- **Age:** All 95 people answered this question. 6% were aged 13-16, 7% were aged 16-25, 21% were aged 26-40, another 21% were aged 41-65 and 6% were aged over 65. 38% preferred not to give their age.
- **Location:** 47 people gave their postcodes. Of these, the largest numbers lived in Gosforth and Monument wards (five people each), followed by Kingston Park South & Newbiggin Hall, and Ouseburn (four people each). Seven people did not live in the Newcastle upon Tyne local authority area.

Who took part – statutory consultation

All 30 people who took part via Let’s talk Newcastle Online answered the questions about their personal characteristics, although some replied ‘prefer not to give details’.

- **Sex and gender:** Of the 30 people who took part via Let’s talk Newcastle Online, 11 were male, 12 were female, and 7 preferred not to give any information about this. 24

said their gender was the same as their sex assigned at birth, 1 said it was not, and 5 preferred not to say.

- **Age:** 11 respondents were aged 30-44, 7 were aged 45-64, 5 were aged 65-79, and 2 were aged 18-29. 5 people preferred not to give any information about this.
- **Ethnicity:** 21 said they were 'White British', 1 was Asian or Asian British, 1 was 'mixed or multiple ethnicity', and 1 gave their ethnicity as 'other'. 6 people preferred not to give any information about this.
- **Disability:** 17 people said they were not disabled, 9 people said that they were. 4 people preferred not to give any information about this.
- **Location:** 22 people gave their postcodes; 8 did not, or gave only a partial postcode. There was a spread of people from across the city, with three people (each) coming from Chapel ward and Parklands ward, and the rest spread across different wards.

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