



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL Full Council meeting held on Thursday 15 January 2026, at 6:00pm, in the Council Chamber, Arms Everytne House, Blyth, NE24 2AS.

Present:

Councillors: D Swinhoe (Mayor), RA Baker (Deputy Mayor), D Campbell, D Carr, A Cartie, TE Elliott, D Johnson, C Jones, D Nicholson, M Nicholson, K Nisbet MBE, M Peart, N Rolls, J Woods

Officers:

M Wilkinson (Town Clerk), E Brown (Deputy Town Clerk), H Jenner (Principal Officer), E Mullen (Democratic Services Officer)

Members of the Public: 1

Questions from the public:

A member of the public asked if Blyth Town Council have commissioned a consultant for £15,000 to find new office accommodation. The Town Clerk clarified that Members recognised that Officers do not have the expertise relating to architecture to make an informed decision on the best office accommodation for the Council's needs and that a professional may need to be consulted to ensure the building's suitability. It was clarified that a budget has been put in place to fulfil that if required, as agreed by Members.

The finish of the pavements in the Market Place was also queried, it was advised that this question should be directed to Northumberland County Council.

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1	Apologies for absence Apologies were received and noted from Cllrs BW Elliott & B Erskine.
2	Disclosure of Interests and Grant of Dispensations None.
3	Mayor's Announcements The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor, Councillors, and Officers for supporting the Council's achievements in 2025. The Mayor gave an overview of areas he would like to see improved in 2026 to offer the best service for residents. Meetings have taken place to improve partnership services, and positive impact has been recorded from more police presence in hotspot areas. The Mayor thanked Councillors for the opportunity to serve as Mayor; in his year he has seen a positive change in the community and increased footfall in the town.
4	Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 25 November 2025 for approval. RESOLVED: The minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 25 November 2025 were agreed and subsequently signed by the Chair as a true record.
5	Actions from Previous Minutes Verbal updates were given on the following items from the previous minutes: <u>Play Areas/SEND</u> Following the decision at the previous Environment Committee, Officers have been investigating options for a new inclusive play area. Draft consultation documents have been created but it is acknowledged that Officers have limited expertise with SEND services. The Deputy Town Clerk reached out to the Northumberland Parent Carer Forum who are interested in the project and are writing proposals for them to carry out the consultation on our behalf. They are writing a proposal to do an independent review of our existing play areas and their suitability for those with SEND. We are awaiting further information.

	<u>Partnership Agreement</u> The Town Clerk requested that this update be provided as part of Agenda Item 10. <u>Office Accommodation</u> The Principal Officer updated the Council on the status of enquiries made about office accommodation. From eight suggested properties, six are available for viewing. Following agreement with the Chair of Community Development Committee, the next steps will be to create an Office Accommodation Working Group which all Members are welcome to be a part of, and to arrange viewings of suitable properties with a representative of each party present and accompanying two Officers for each visit. This would enable the properties to be whittled down for consideration of the working group.
6	Committee Minutes to be agreed: It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the following meetings were agreed as a true record, and signed by their respective Chairs: Community Funding Sub Committee 11 November 2025 Community Development Committee 25 November 2025 Environment Committee 9 December 2025 Governance Committee 6 January 2026
7	Blyth Trust for Youth The minutes from the Blyth Trust for Youth meeting which took place on 6 January 2026 were approved with the Council endorsing the proposed amendments to the Trust Deed. The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the next steps for moving forward with the Charity, including setting up a bank account.
8	New Membership Proposals It was RESOLVED unanimously to adopt the new membership proposals to committees following December 2025's by-election result
9	Internal Audit Report The Internal Audit Report originally presented to Governance Committee on 6 January 2026 was noted by Full Council.

	The auditor has agreed to attend the next Governance Committee on 23 April 2026 to present his recommendations following his end of year review.
10	Decision Report – Budget & Precept 2026/27 The Town Clerk updated the Council on the Partnership Agreement, as agreed in Agenda Item 5 as there would be budget implications. It was explained that there would be contractual savings in the Partnership Budget of £18,000 for 2025/26 and a further £5,000 saving for 2026/27. The Environment Committee requested an additional (third) weed management cycle when presenting their budget to Governance Committee on 6 January 2026; this would incur an additional cost of £17,000. The contractual savings that have been received since have given an opportunity to present the option of an additional weed management to Council. It was confirmed that there would be no change to the required precept if this was agreed as balances would increase by £6,000, however the revised net budget would increase by £12,000. It was RESOLVED unanimously to increase the Environment Committee budget by £12,000 to allow for an additional weed management cycle. This would be monitored closely to assess the effectiveness. It was RESOLVED unanimously to agree the budget for 2026/27 at £1,590,373 and the precept with a 2% increase for 2026/27 would be £1,526,573 with £63,800 of balances being used.
11	Council Policies 11.1 Standing Orders, with the inclusion of 3i and 4v. It was RESOLVED to adopt 'hands up, called upon, stand up' procedure at Full Council meetings only, with 'hands up only' at committee meetings. It was RESOLVED to adopt substitutes on committees. 11.2 Data Protection Policy It was RESOLVED to adopt this policy, with the addition of alternative wording of 'right of access' alongside Subject Access Requests. 11.3 Freedom of Information Policy It was RESOLVED to adopt this policy.

	11.4 IT Policy This policy was deferred to a future meeting. 11.5 Risk Management It was RESOLVED to adopt this policy. 11.6 Investment Strategy It was RESOLVED to adopt this policy with five additions to strengthen the policy. 11.7 Mayoral Handbook It was RESOLVED to adopt this policy.
12	Date & Time of Next Meeting The Annual Meeting of the Council will be held on Thursday 14 May 2026 in the Council Chamber, Arms Everytne House. Public Question Time starts at 6:00pm and Council will commence directly afterwards.
13	Part II It was RESOLVED that pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960; that in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, that the press and public be excluded, and they were instructed to withdraw.
14	Good Citizen Award It was RESOLVED to agree the submitted nomination for a Good Citizen Award. The nominee will be contacted and invited to be presented with their award. Cllr D Nicholson requested verbal approval for an intended nomination, rather than wait until the next meeting. The suggestion was discussed and it was RESOLVED to agree the nomination for a Good Citizen Award, with the paperwork to be completed retrospectively. Further discussions followed about how we can further celebrate the Good Citizen Award and the achievements of people in Blyth. The policy will be brought to the next Community Development Committee for discussion.

15	Independent Examiner It was RESOLVED to agree to the NCC choice regarding the appointment of an Independent Examiner.
16	Properties for Office Accommodation The Principal Officer gave a further insight to the properties for consideration as office accommodation, including locations. No costs for the properties have been obtained as of yet.

The meeting closed at 7:25pm

Members of the Council:

D Swinhoe (Mayor)	D Johnson
R A Baker (Deputy Mayor)	C Jones
D Campbell	D Nicholson
D Carr	M Nicholson
A Cartie	K Nisbet MBE
B W Elliott	M Peart
T E Elliott	N Rolls
B Erskine	J Woods