

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL
FULL COUNCIL
Tuesday 11 November 2025
Decision Report

Officer Meal Allowance Proposal

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Council consider the motion from Councillor B Erskine and seconded by Councillor M Peart.

Ward

Not ward specific.

Risk Management

The implementation of this proposal, if agreed, can be accommodated within existing budgets.

Crime Prevention

No crime prevention implications

Objective

To provide a scheme for officers to claim an allowance to subsidise a light meal when attending evening meetings where appropriate.

Report

Councillor Erskine has submitted a motion which has been supported by Councillor Peart, that a meal allowance be introduced for Officers, on those occasions where they attend Council or Committee meetings, that extend past 7pm or at least 1 hour beyond normal finishing time.

This allowance would be for a light meal up to a maximum of £7.50 where an itemised receipt would be required.

A full copy of the motion submitted is attached below.

Malcolm Wilkinson

Town Clerk

3 November 2025

Blyth Town Council – Officer Meal Allowance Proposal

1. Executive Summary

This proposal seeks formal approval for Blyth Town Council to introduce an Evening Meeting Meal Allowance for officers required to attend Council or Committee meetings that extend past 19:00 (7:00 p.m.) or run at least one hour beyond normal finishing time.

The allowance reimburses actual cost of a light meal up to a maximum of £7.50, subject to presentation of an itemised receipt. A petty cash system will allow immediate repayment for low-value claims.

This proposal aligns with UK public-sector precedent (Newham, Glasgow Life, Durham CC), follows HMRC and LGA guidance, and supports fairness, welfare, and accountability.

Estimated annual cost: £600.

2. Background and Context

Since 1996, local authorities have determined their own subsistence rates (LGA Green Book). HMRC subsistence logic supports time-band triggers, additional cost reimbursement, receipts, and no alcohol. Blyth's £7.50 cap is conservative and fully compliant. Examples: London Borough of Newham, Glasgow Life, Durham CC, Hart DC—all use time triggers and receipts.

3. Rationale and Need

Evening meetings often extend beyond normal hours, causing officers to incur extra meal costs and personal inconvenience. A small fixed allowance ensures fairness and morale without burdening taxpayers. This policy removes ambiguity, upholds accountability, and keeps the budget impact negligible (<£1,000 annually).

4. Policy Design

Eligibility: Officers formally required to attend evening meetings beyond 19:00 or ≥1 hour beyond normal finish.

Amount: Actual cost up to £7.50 with receipt; one meal per night; no alcohol.

Claim Process: Within 30 days; approved by manager or Clerk; via expenses or petty cash.

Controls: No duplication or meals provided by Council; Finance audits; HR reviews annually.

5. Petty Cash Integration

Petty cash may reimburse qualifying £7.50 claims immediately with signed voucher and receipt. Managed by the Responsible Finance Officer (RFO); recorded in petty cash log and reconciled monthly. Ensures speed, proportionality, and transparency.

6. Financial Implications

Estimated annual cost: £600 (20 meetings × 4 officers × £7.50). Funded from Travel & Subsistence budget. Controls: low cap, receipts, single meal rule, annual reporting. Demonstrates strong value for money.

7. Legal, HR and Tax Compliance

Consistent with LGA Green Book local determination; HMRC compliance (EIM30240-EIM30255). Reimbursement of actual additional cost avoids taxable benefit status. Audited under Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

8. Equality Impact

Policy supports equality and staff welfare; benefits officers with caring responsibilities; neutral on protected characteristics. Paper and digital claim routes ensure accessibility.

9. Implementation Plan

Month 1: HR finalises policy and prepares forms.

Month 2: Policy launch and staff communication.

Month 5: Finance review.

Month 12: Annual review and report to Finance Committee.

10. Draft Resolution

That Blyth Town Council:

1. Approves the Evening Meeting Meal Allowance for officers extending past 19:00.
2. Sets allowance at up to £7.50 with receipt; no alcohol; one meal per evening.
3. Authorises petty cash reimbursements under RFO oversight.
4. Directs HR and Finance to implement and review annually.
5. Reports annually to Finance Committee.

Signed:

Councillor Brian Erskine

Cowpen Ward Member, Blyth Town Council