

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Governance Committee

Thursday 9 July 2026

Strategic Planning

The Committee is recommended to:

- approve the commencement of a comprehensive review of the Council's Strategic Plan;
- agree that the review will include the development of:
 - a new Strategic Plan;
 - a Medium-Term Financial Strategy;
 - a revised Performance Management Framework; and
 - any consequential amendments to supporting strategies, including the Investment and Reserves Strategy;
- approve the proposed programme of Member and community engagement.
- authorise the Town Clerk to procure external facilitation, if required, within the approved consultancy budget; and
- receive a further report setting out the draft Strategy for approval.

Ward

All

Risk Management

Failure to review the Strategic Plan may result in the Council's priorities no longer reflecting the needs and aspirations of the community. Without an updated strategic framework, resources may not be aligned with agreed priorities, financial planning may remain focused on the short term, and service delivery may become increasingly reactive rather than strategically planned. Failure to engage Members and stakeholders throughout the review process could also reduce confidence in the Strategy and its outcomes.

Approximately £9,000 remains available within the Professional and Consultancy Fees budget, which would be sufficient to procure external support to facilitate the review and undertake community engagement if required.

Crime Prevention

There are no direct crime prevention implications arising from this report. However, community safety priorities will be considered during development of the Strategic Plan where appropriate.

Public Sector Equality Duty

The review process will include appropriate engagement with all sections of the community. Equality impacts will be considered throughout the development of the Strategy to ensure that the Council's priorities promote equality of opportunity and do not disadvantage protected groups.

Objective

To establish a modern strategic framework that aligns the Council's priorities, financial planning and performance management arrangements to support effective governance and sustainable service delivery.

Report

The Council's current Strategic Plan was adopted in 2015 (Appendix 1) and covered the period 2013–2023. In 2021, it was reviewed to reflect the Council's priorities and objectives during the COVID-19 pandemic (Appendix 2). The Plan has now reached the end of its intended lifespan and no longer reflects the Council's current operating environment or future ambitions, e.g. Civic Hub, improved inclusive park, reviewing core/enhanced service delivery models.

Since the Strategy was first adopted, the Council has experienced significant changes, including increasing financial pressures, higher staffing costs, inflation, changes to local government finance, greater expectations for digital service delivery, expanded asset management responsibilities, neighbourhood growth and the wider impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Collectively, these changes provide a timely opportunity to undertake a comprehensive review and establish a clear strategic direction for the next planning period.

A Strategic Plan provides the Council with a shared vision, setting out its priorities, objectives and intended outcomes over the medium term. It enables Members to make informed decisions, ensures resources are directed towards agreed priorities and provides a framework against which performance can be measured and reported. The review will therefore consider the Council's current responsibilities, future ambitions and the needs of the community to ensure the new Strategy is both ambitious and achievable.

A proposed timetable that aligns with the budget timetable for the review is:

- August – Member workshops
- September to October – Community consultation
- November – Draft Strategic Plan and Draft Delivery Plan

Community engagement will be central to the review and may include a residents' survey, online consultation, community workshops and engagement with local stakeholders.

Effective strategic planning should be supported by robust financial planning. Currently our forward planning addresses current objectives for service delivery and maintaining assets, and any Council Tax increases. Although town councils are not required to prepare a formal Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), its adoption is recognised as good practice and would strengthen the Council's financial governance.

A MTFS provides a structured approach to planning over the medium term (5-7 years) and enables the Council to:

- align financial resources with strategic priorities;
- assess the affordability of future ambitions;
- plan for known financial risks and opportunities;
- maintain appropriate reserves; and
- support long-term financial sustainability.

The review should also consider the Council's Investment and Reserves Strategy, which is constantly reviewed, to ensure investment decisions and reserve levels continue to support the Council's longer-term financial objectives.

Best practice is achieved through an integrated planning framework that links strategic priorities with financial planning, operational delivery and performance monitoring. The proposed framework comprises:

- Strategic Plan
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Annual Budget
- Investment and Reserves Strategy
- Service Delivery Plans
- Performance Management Framework

This framework will ensure that strategic objectives are translated into measurable actions, supported by appropriate financial resources and monitored through a clear performance management process. Regular reporting against agreed performance indicators will enable Members to monitor progress, identify emerging issues and inform future decision-making.

Subject to Members' approval, a programme of work will be developed to deliver the review. This will include Member workshops, community engagement, consideration of the Council's medium-term financial outlook and the preparation of supporting strategies, including the MTFS and revised Performance Management Framework.

Consideration will also be given to the most appropriate method of delivering the review. While the work could be undertaken internally, appointing an external facilitator would provide independent challenge, facilitate Member workshops, support stakeholder engagement, benchmark the Council against recognised good practice and assist in developing a robust strategic framework, while enabling officers to maintain focus on day-to-day service delivery.

The review will provide the Council with a single, integrated strategic framework comprising:

- New Strategic Plan
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Performance Management Framework
- Corporate Key Performance Indicators
- Annual Delivery Plan
- Review Timetable
- Communications Plan

Elaine Brown
Deputy Town Clerk

Thursday, 02 July 2026

As agreed at the Town Council on 17 September 2015



BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN 2013 TO 2023

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Our Mission

“Blyth Town Council is committed to participating fully in the development of a vibrant and growing community that will encourage business, community activity and become a destination of choice”.

1. FOREWORD

Blyth Town Council has been in existence since 1 April 2009 and is the largest Local Council within Northumberland with 36,000 inhabitants. With the demise of the District Councils in South East Northumberland there was an obvious gap in the Local Council structure within the County and nine new Town and Parish Councils were established. This means there are now 148 Town and Parish Councils within Northumberland; all delivering a variety of local services.

Blyth Town Council has an obligation to be open and to be able to demonstrate that it is spending money wisely. This Town Plan is intended to provide clarity for both the Council and for the people of Blyth and will show how everyone can contribute to making Blyth a better place to live, work in and visit.

Blyth Town Council, in addition to its responsibility for Allotments, is responsible for:

- Play Areas (excluding Ridley Park and the Links)
- Public Seats (excluding Parks and the Links)
- Bus Shelters
- War Memorials
- Broadway Public Convenience

Many of these are delivered in partnership with Northumberland County Council

In addition the Town Council is also acting on requests to:

- Facilitate Town Twinning
- Enhance the Gateway Roundabouts into Blyth
- Add colour and vibrancy into the Market Place
- Provide a Programme of varied Events throughout the Year
- Support Town Centre Management
- Support Blyth Town Team
- Planning Consultation
- Community Engagement

Over the coming years residents and businesses will have the opportunity to become more involved in the review of our delivery against agreed goals and the ongoing planning for an improved Blyth. Continuous improvement in everything we do is essential and integral to the Council's development.

Blyth Town Council is committed to:

- Providing excellent services direct through partnership and by contracting with third parties for the benefit of the people of Blyth Town.
- Encouraging people to participate fully in their Town Council.
- Supporting and contributing towards economic, social and environmental improvement of the town and seek opportunities that will benefit the people of Blyth.

2. INTRODUCTION

- Northumberland County Council was established as the new Unitary Council for Northumberland on 1 April 2009 and is responsible for the provision of all major local government services.
- Blyth Town Council is the largest Local Council in Northumberland and will work closely with Northumberland County Council to achieve common goals.
- This provides a summary of Priorities and Actions for the years up to 2023 and sets out how consultation with and involvement of the community will review and revise future Priorities.
- The Plan will be reviewed each year by the Town Council, but in 2017/18 and 2021/22 (following the Town Council's elections) it will be subject to a detailed review.
- Blyth Town Council has eight Wards each with two Town Councillors (see Appendix 1).
- Blyth Town has a population of some 36,000 people and covers an area of 3 square miles extending to the River Blyth in the North, the North Sea in the East, the boundaries of Cramlington Town in the West and Seaton Valley in the South.
- Future planning activities will be based on consultation with and the involvement of the community through a variety of opportunities.
- This Plan is intended to itemise agreed priorities and actions that the community has identified as important and requiring local action or influence. It is a statement of how the community sees itself developing over the next ten years.
- It is important that the Plan is also a living document and that continuous improvement is achieved through ongoing review of achievements against corporate targets.

The Mission Statement encapsulates the priorities and actions in a short statement:

"Blyth Town Council is committed to participating fully in the development of a vibrant and growing community that will

encourage business, community activity and become a destination of choice”.

- Blyth Town Council has identified the following Strategic Objectives:
- To provide excellent services direct, through partnerships and by contracting with third parties for the benefit of the people of Blyth Town.
- To encourage people to participate fully in their Town Council.
- To support and contribute towards economic, social and environmental improvement of the town and seek opportunities that will benefit the people of Blyth.
- Most of the finance for the Town Council is raised through the precept. Monies raised in this way allow the Town Council to carry out its work. Budgets are developed on an annual basis and reflect the range of services and projects being provided.

3. THE VISION

- The Vision for Blyth:
 - The community will have the opportunity to participate in a process of regular consultation which will influence local, county and regional decision making.
 - The Town Council will endeavour to provide services and support in line with the agreed priorities of the community.
 - The Town Council will deliver excellent services direct, through partnerships or and contracting with third parties for the benefit of the people of Blyth.
 - The Town Council aims to achieve a more positive and vibrant atmosphere that will benefit all.
- Blyth Town Council's role will be:
 - To deliver democratic representation for the community.
 - To provide support and contribute towards economic and social regeneration.
 - To provide excellent services representing value for money.
 - To make the most effective and efficient use of its resources.
 - To act in partnership with other organisations and agencies to provide public services where appropriate.
 - To support, value and develop staff enabling them to continuously improve the excellence of Town Council services.

4. SETTING THE SCENE

- **The Environment:**

- Maintain and develop the existing landscape in line with the town's historic past and its future as a National Centre for alternative power sources.
- Encourage the regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods.
- Work in partnership with local, regional and national organisations that can assist in improving the environment for the people of Blyth.

- **The Economy:**

- Blyth Town Council will seek opportunities to increase the viability of the town offering the community a full range of shopping and service opportunities.
- Facilitate a range of activities and events that will promote a more positive image of Blyth.
- Encourage the development of meaningful training and job opportunities within Blyth.
- Support the development of retail and commercial networks that will benefit existing, new and potential businesses in Blyth.
- Make Blyth a destination of choice for people within Blyth, Northumberland, the region and nationally.
- Work in partnership with Northumberland County Council and others to ensure investment into Blyth is co-ordinated and focused on sustainable jobs.

- **Social and Community:**

- Ensure community participation in the development of Blyth.
- Influence the provision of affordable housing to meet the needs of all members of the community.
- Work in partnership with local organisations to develop and provide a varied and more inclusive entertainment and leisure programme.
- Recognise and build on cultural differences within Blyth, encouraging understanding and the sharing of knowledge and experiences.
- Encourage greater participation in the democratic process.

- **Transport and Accessibility**

- Encourage sustainable transport links.
- Maintain free parking within the town to encourage people into the centre and to utilise its retail/service offering.

- Work in partnership with Northumberland County Council to influence and support the delivery of their strategic objectives.
- Support and encourage the County Council's efforts to reopen the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne Railway for passenger traffic

5. SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES AND ASSOCIATED ACTIONS

Mission Statement:
"Blyth Town Council is committed to participating fully in the development of a vibrant and growing community that will encourage business, community activity and become a destination of choice".
How will this be measured?
1. An annual critical analysis of the published data on the economic, environmental and social well-being of Blyth in a report presented to the Town Council each autumn.
Strategic Objectives:
▪ To provide excellent services direct, through partnership and by contracting with third parties for the benefit of the people of Blyth Town.
1. To continue the partnership with the County Council for the provision of environmental services and to publish photographs of the standards of work to be attained. 2. To improve at least one play area every year 3. To improve the allotments by an agreed programme of works
▪ To encourage people to participate fully in their Town Council.
1. To seek increased contract through social media, including the publication or audio records of council meetings. 2. To continue a programme of public information sessions on issues affecting the Town
▪ To support and contribute towards economic, social and environmental improvement of the town and seek opportunities that will benefit the people of Blyth.
1. To use the Town Council's Planning & Development Committee to provide supplementary reports and guidance for local businesses to use. 2. To critically examine all significant planning applications within Blyth

APPENDIX I

BLYTH TOWN COUNCILLORS AND WARDS

Elected May 2013

Ward:	Councillor:	Councillor:
Cowpen	Margaret Parker	Bob Parker
Croft	Carol Bruce	Kath Nisbet
Isabella	John R Potts	Olga Potts
Kitty Brewster	Doug Rutter	Ken Ellis
Newsham	Barry Elliott	Gordon Thompson
Plessey	Gordon Knox	Jeff Reid
South Blyth	Lesley J Rickerby	Alisdair Gibbs-Barton
Wensleydale	Angie Turnbull	Adrian Cartie

Priorities Working Group
15 December 2021

Blyth Town Council - Priorities



1. To agree a comprehensive and flexible Covid strategy and policies for the Council in safeguarding Members, staff and the public in all areas of the Council's administration and delivery of its services:
2. To investigate and initiate the delivery of a Neighbourhood Plan for Blyth;
3. To work in partnership with Northumberland County Council in the development of the County Council's proposals for the "Energising Blyth" project and to develop a Council understanding and policies in respect of the proposals to enable the Council's representatives to contribute fully in the delivery of the project;
4. To initiate a fundamental review of the Council's Partnership Agreement with Northumberland County Council in delivering services on behalf of the Town Council to enable the Town Council to agree its requirements for the future and how these are to be delivered when the current agreement ends;
5. To consider a Communications Strategy for the Council which takes account of social media platforms which will enable the Council to be more proactive and effective in delivering its objectives.



Blyth Town Council - Objectives

1. To promote the environmental, social, and economic wellbeing of the town and its community; and to develop a Covid strategy and policy statement on Climate Change for the Council:

2. To provide high quality core services in the most effective and efficient manner which will deliver the Council's agreed priorities and objectives:

3. To provide leadership and be a voice for the community in all matters which impact on the town and its community:

4. To work in partnership locally and regionally to meet common goals and outcomes :