

**BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Community Development Committee**  
**Thursday 26 June 2025**  
**Decision Report**

**1. Committee Membership**

**Recommendation:**

**To avoid compromising the voting rights of 'dual hatters' in the decision-making process at NCC by recommending to Town Council the amendment of:**

- 1. Membership of the Community Development Committee,**
- 2. Membership of Planning and Development Sub Committee, and**
- 3. Delegation arrangement to the Town Clerk in conjunction with members regarding planning matters.**

**Ward**

Not ward specific.

**Risk Management**

There are no budgetary requirements for Committee membership.

**Crime Prevention**

There are no crime prevention implications.

**Objective**

To promote good governance and be a voice for the community in all matters which impact the town and the community.

**Report**

Blyth Town Council is a statutory consultee in the planning process and must be informed of all planning applications and any amendments to those applications within the parish<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (the 2015 Order)

Northumberland County Council as the Local Planning Authority is the decision-making body for planning matters, not Blyth Town Council.

The eight Town Councillors, who are also Northumberland County Councillors (dual hatters), sit as decision makers on the Ashington and Blyth Local Area Committee (LAC), and three sit on the NCC Strategic Planning Committee (SPC).

Both the LAC and SPC have delegated decision making powers from NCC.

It is important that Blyth is represented through the LAC and SPC. Members need to 'avoid any appearance of bias or having 'predetermined' views when making a decision on a planning application or policy' (LGA, 2019:11). Clearly expressing an intention to vote in a particular way before a meeting (predetermination) is indicative of a 'closed mind' approach and may leave the grant of planning permission vulnerable to challenge by Judicial Review.

The dual hatters risk losing their input into decision making on planning matters through NCC if they participate in the Town Council role as statutory consultee.

The Town Council has delegated powers regarding the handling of planning matters to:

- Community Development Committee,
- Planning and Development Sub-Committee, and
- Town Clerk in Consultation with three Committee Chairs and the Chair of the Council (or Vice Chair).

### **Community Development Committee**

The Community Development Committee consists of thirteen members and requires a quorum of five to make decisions. Eight members are members of the Planning LAC, three of these are also on the SPC. Five members remain. Meetings can proceed with the existing membership, but dual hatters should declare an interest and withdraw from the meeting during the consideration of any planning matters. However, if any of the five members are unable to attend the meeting, the meeting would be inquorate and planning matters would be unresolved.

Community Development Committee has a wider remit than planning and this should be considered.

To retain political proportionality across this committee, and avoid the risk of being inquorate, it is recommended that any two Reform UK members are removed, and Cllrs TE Elliott and J Woods be invited to join the Committee membership.

## **Planning and Development Sub-Committee**

The Sub-Committee consists of ten members and requires a quorum of four to make decisions. Seven of the members are also members of the LAC, two of which are also members of SPC.

This Sub Committee has no remit other than planning.

It is recommended that all dual hatters be removed from this Sub Committee and Cllrs D Campbell, TE Elliott, K Nisbet MBE, W Ploszaj and J Woods be invited to join the Sub Committee membership. Whilst political proportionality would be lost, it should be noted that the subcommittee acts only as a consultee and has no decision-making powers; this safeguards the voices of dual hatters in the decision-making process at NCC. A new Chair and Vice Chair would need to be appointed from the new membership. The total membership of this subcommittee would then be reduced to 8 and the quorum would change to three as a result of this.

## **Town Clerk in Consultation with Chairs/Vice Chairs of Committees and Council.**

The Town Clerk has the power to respond to any urgent planning applications subject to consultation with a panel of the three Committee Chairs and the Chair of the Town Council (or Vice-Chair). As all Chairs and Vice Chairs are members of the LAC or SPC it is recommended that the Scheme of Delegation be amended to read 'a panel of any three members of the Planning and Development Sub-Committee to include the Chair or Vice Chair.'

Should the Committee decide against the recommendations, they:

- risk losing the ability to represent the community as a Statutory Consultee in planning matters, or
- risk planning decisions at NCC being open to challenge by Judicial Review.

**Elaine Brown**  
**Deputy Town Clerk**

**16 June 2025**

## **References**

Local Government Association (2019) Probity in Planning available at [https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/34.2 Probity in Planning\\_04.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/34.2_Probity_in_Planning_04.pdf)

## **Appendix 1.**

### **Committee membership – Blyth Town Council**

<b>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (13)</b>	
M Peart (Chair)	D Johnson
D Nicholson (Vice Chair)	C Jones
R A Baker	K Nisbet MBE
D Campbell	W Ploszaj
D Carr	N Rolls
B W Elliott	D Swinhoe
B Erskine	

<b>P&amp;D SUB COMMITTEE (10)</b>	
B W Elliott (Chair)	D Johnson
D Swinhoe (Vice Chair)	C Jones
R A Baker	D Nicholson
A Cartie	M Peart
B Erskine	N Rolls

### **Blyth Town Council 'dual hatter' membership**

#### **NCC - Ashington and Blyth Local Area Planning Committee**

Cllrs R Baker, D Carr, B Elliott, D Johnson, D Nicholson, M Peart, N Rolls.  
D Swinhoe

#### **NCC - Strategic Planning Committee**

Cllr D Carr, D Nicholson, and N Rolls

## **Appendix 2**

### **Extract from Scheme of Delegation**

#### **Terms of Reference - Community Development Committee**

The Committee will be responsible for the management, research, and development of the following areas.

Consideration of any strategic or contentious planning applications which are subject to consultation by the principal authority e.g. Northumberland County Council. Making recommendations to the Council on any plans or proposals for the development, or wellbeing of the town. Management and development of the Council's grants scheme in conjunction with the development of a programme of events which will deliver the Council's strategic objectives with regard to the economy, social, and environmental priorities. To review priorities and policies in relation to the economic wellbeing of the town and to make recommendations to the Council regarding any changes in those priorities and policies. Preparation of an annual service budget, both capital and revenue, with proposals over a three-year period, and submitting these proposals through the Governance Committee within a timetable to enable the Council to set a fixed budget and agree a precept within the statutory guidelines. To agree service action plans on service standards and outcomes to be achieved in line with its approved budget. To monitor and review those action plans and budget performance at each committee meeting and report to the Council through the Governance Committee.

#### **Planning & Development Sub-Committee (Community Development Committee)**

The above Sub-Committee is delegated to consider any minor planning issues that have a bearing on the area and make the necessary comments to the County Council. Any strategic or contentious planning issues will be considered by the Sub-Committee and a recommendation made to the Standing Committee or Council if appropriate. The Sub-Committee is delegated with resolving other quasi planning related issues without recourse to the Standing Committee e.g. heritage issues etc. providing budget provision is available.

#### **Powers delegated to the Town Clerk**

Power to respond to any urgent request for response to consultation requests in connection with any planning application subject to consultation with a panel of the three Committee Chairs and the Chair of the Town Council. (or Vice-Chair) Routine consultation on proposed planning applications will be dealt with by the Committee if they are within the required timescale, otherwise they will be referred to the delegated powers (as above). Either the Committee or the panel will have the power to refer a planning item to a planning Sub-Committee as and when necessary.