

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Thursday 16 July 2026

Options Appraisal of Environmental Services

The Council is recommended to:

- **Agree that officers undertake an options appraisal of the environmental services currently delivered under the Memorandum of Understanding with Northumberland County Council, in accordance with the scope set out in Appendix 1.**
- **Receive a further report setting out the findings of the options appraisal, including officers' assessment of the advantages, disadvantages, costs, risks and implications of each option, to enable Council to determine the future delivery model for these services.**

Ward
All

Risk Management

At this stage there are no direct risks arising from the proposal to undertake an options appraisal. However, each delivery option identified within the appraisal should be subject to a detailed risk assessment. Officers should identify the strategic, financial, legal, operational, workforce and reputational risks associated with each option, together with proposed mitigation measures, to enable Members to make a fully informed decision.

Crime Prevention

There are no direct crime prevention implications arising from this report. However, community safety priorities will be considered during an options appraisal.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Equality impacts will be considered throughout the options appraisal.

Objective

To promote the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of the town.

Report

Councillor Rolls has submitted the proposal set out in Appendix 1, requesting that Council authorise officers to undertake an options appraisal of the environmental services currently delivered under the agreement with Northumberland County Council (NCC).

The partnership between Blyth Town Council and Northumberland County Council (NCC) commenced in March 2014 as an initial five-year agreement to deliver enhanced environmental services over and above NCC's core statutory provision. The agreement focused on enhanced street cleansing, grounds maintenance, environmental improvements, apprenticeships and improved local responsiveness.

Since 2020, service priorities have also changed to reflect local needs. In 2023, the enhanced grass cutting programme was revised, moving away from additional cuts to amenity areas in favour of enhanced maintenance of key gateway routes. In spring 2024, the original agreement was replaced with a rolling 12-month Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), reviewed annually. Following the April 2025 review, the enhanced grass cutting of gateway routes ceased and resources were redirected to enhanced weed management. A further review in April 2026 increased the level of enhanced weed management through the provision of an additional operative.

Since 2020 the partnership has also developed a greater emphasis on performance monitoring, governance and value for money through oversight by the Partnership Board and Environment Committee.

The current MoU has an annual budget of £318,000. The services funded through the agreement are detailed in Appendix 2, alongside Northumberland County Council's core standard service provision for comparison.

The environmental services partnership has evolved significantly since its introduction in 2014. The proposal provides an opportunity to undertake a comprehensive review of alternative delivery models, enabling Council to consider whether the current arrangements continue to represent the most effective and efficient means of delivering enhanced environmental services. No changes to service delivery are proposed at this stage; the report seeks approval only to undertake the appraisal and report the findings back to Council.

Elaine Brown
Deputy Town Clerk

Thursday, 08 July 2026

Appendix 1

Motion

Proposed – Cllr Natalie Rolls

Seconded – Cllr Denise Nicholson

I propose council agreed for officers to undertake an options appraisal of environmental services currently provided under agreement with Northumberland County Council, including grounds maintenance, grass cutting, weed control and related services.

Option 1 – Maintain the existing Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Northumberland County Council without change.

* Option 2 – Renegotiate the existing SLA to improve value for money, service standards, performance measures, or reporting arrangements.

* Option 3 – Bring some services in-house, where this may be practical and cost-effective.

* Option 4 – Procure services through external contractors following the council's procurement procedures.

* Option 5 – Develop partnership arrangements with neighbouring town or parish councils where shared service delivery may offer efficiencies.

* Option 6 – Adopt a mixed delivery model, retaining some services under the SLA while delivering others through alternative arrangements.

For each option, officers should, where reasonably practicable, provide:

* Estimated costs.

* Staffing implications.

* Legal and contractual considerations.

* Procurement requirements (where applicable).

* Benefits and disadvantages.

* Risks and mitigation measures.

* Impact on service quality and responsiveness.

- * Performance monitoring arrangements.
- * Estimated implementation timescale.
- * Any transitional costs.

The report should conclude with officers' professional assessment of each option, enabling councillors to determine which approach offers the best balance of value for money, service quality, resilience, and accountability.

Appendix 2 - NCC Partnership Core Services and Enhancement Analysis

STREET CLEANSING	CORE	ENHANCED
SWEEPING RESIDENTIAL ST	EVERY 13 WEEKS	AS CORE + EVERY 4 WEEKS
KERB EDGES	4 X A YEAR	NO ENHANCEMENT
BUS SHELTERS	<i>No core service as BTC responsibility</i>	MONTHLY
HIGH FOOTFALL BUS SHELTERS (BUS STATION + EXTRAS)	<i>No core service as BTC responsibility</i>	FORTNIGHTLY
LITTER BINS	WEEKLY BIN EMPTYING	UPGRADED TO TWICE WEEKLY
HIGH FOOTFALL AREAS BINS	A DAILY BIN EMPTY IN HIGH FOOTFALL AREA	AS CORE/ LITTER PICKING
HIGH FOOTFALL AREAS CLEANSING	TWICE DAILY (WEEKDAY) CLEANSE IN/AROUND MARKET PLACE/ TOWN CENTRE	PLUS WEEKEND OPERATIVE IN TOWN CENTRE AND OTHER AREAS
LITTER PICKING	1 EVERY 8 WEEKS	TWICE WEEKLY WITH SOME BINS BEING EMPTIED 3 TIMES
GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	CORE	ENHANCED
FLY TIPPING	85% REMOVED WITHIN 3 DAYS	AIM TO SIGNIFICALLY IMPROVE ON THAT PERCENTAGE AND TIME
WEED CONTROL ON SOFT AREAS	2 X APPLICATION (1X MAR/APR THEN 1X JULY/AUG)	3 OPERATIVES ON WEED CONTROL JUNE TO OCTOBER
WEED CONTROL ON HARD AREAS	2 X APPLICATION (1X APR/MAY THEN 1X AUG/SEPT)	
SEASONAL BEDDING		2 OPERATIVES CARRY OUT PLANTING
SEASONAL BEDDING WATERING		1 OPERATIVE SUMMER BEDDING ONLY
PLAY AREA GRASS CUTTING/STRIMMING		CARRIED OUT BY 3 WEED OPERATIVES
GRASS CUTTING/ HEDGE CUTTING/ SHRUB CUTTING/ PATH EDGING	ONLY CORE	NO ENHANCEMENT

