

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Environment Committee

Tuesday 9 December 2025

Decision Report – Budget 2026/27

BUDGET 2026/2027

Recommendation

Consider and recommend

- **the Environment Committee budget for 2026/27 to the Governance Committee, for further consideration and recommendation to Council**
- **the use of earmarked reserves as outlined for Partnership and potentially bus shelter projects**
- **enhancing the weed management delivery further within the Partnership Agreement with NCC**

Ward

Not ward specific.

Risk Analysis

An Environment Committee budget must be set for the next financial year to sit alongside other Committee's to ensure the finance available for services and ultimately the setting of the Council Tax.

Objective

To promote good governance of the Town Council by adopting transparent practices and promoting public participation.

Report

The preparation of the budget for 2026/27 has been carried out based on:

- rolling forward the services we are currently providing.
- consideration of the inclusive Play Area projects.
- looking at budgets to reflect savings where we can, without having a material effect on service.

The Committee's proposed budget is summarised in the table below, with the detail shown on Appendix 1.

Committee	Net Budget 2025/26	Probable 2025/26	Proposed Budget 2026/27
Environment	581,760	549,758	584,990

Probable 2025/26

As you will see there is an underspend in 2025/26 between the Budget and Probable of some £32k.

This is in the main, due to savings of:

Code	Item	Amount £k	Amount £k
Various	Allotments general	-3	
8005	Partnership Contingency	-27	
Other	Misc codes	-2	
	Projected Underspend		-32

The Significant underspend from the above is that re the Partnership Contingency. This budget was introduced to cater for the change from the previous partnership agreement in 2024/25 to the revised 2025/26, which mainly enhanced the street cleansing and weed management elements of the service and deleted any contribution to grass cutting. A contingency budget was created to cater for any unknown issues, arising from this.

Officers, through the Partnership Board have proposed improvements from this contingency budget to e.g. improving/removing some existing flower beds/planters, as well as Board members proposing more area pride/ownership within residential estates. This will include more voluntary groups that NCC are assisting us with. Officers still see that this balance of £27k being utilised but because of external factors this may not be possible by the end of the financial year. Officers therefore propose that this is an earmarked reserve that can be called upon after April, if needed, when suitable projects are fully identified and costed. Should this arise then Officers would report to both this Committee and Governance appropriately. For information Officers have also included another £20k for similar projects within the town, in the proposed budget for next year, 2026/27.

I would also propose that similar action be considered in relation to the budget within the current year for Bus Shelters. As you may recall the Council has been successful in securing funding from the North East Combined Authority, via NCC, to improve bus shelter provision within the town where the Council will contribute approximately 10% of the cost. Because of the procurement rules we need to follow as well as the manufacturers lead in time, we may not be able to have the shelters installed within this current financial year, although we have assumed this within our probable budget. Should this not be the case I propose that this potentially unspent budget be an earmarked reserve for use in 2026/27, with again appropriate reports to this and the Governance Committee.

Budget 2026/27

The proposed budget for 2026/27 is only £3k higher than the current year. The variances are listed below.

Code	Item	Amount £k	Amount £k
7013	Allotment Capital	-17	
8005	Partnership Contingency	-15	
15003	Allotment income inc.	-1	-33
8001-4	Partnership areas	10	
9001-15	Environment and Town	8	
10004-22	Play areas – cap/repairs	18	36
	Projected increase		3

With regard to the items above the following should be noted, where not already identified earlier within the report:

- Allotment capital – only one capital scheme has been identified
- Partnership areas/Environment and Town – inflation, and
- Play areas (capital and repairs) – this is an overall budget of £150k, which is £130k capital and £20k repairs. Originally there were no play area schemes identified for this financial year in line with the medium-term financial plan. Recent decisions at this committee have identified a need to review our play area provision taking into account SEND. This work is underway and at this stage costings cannot be provided or indeed other sources of income. To this end we have budgeted £130k as a net contribution we may have to make this coming year. Members will be updated as figures become more known, and where the use of balances will/may need to be considered.

Another aspect of the budget we have not been able to provide precise costings on is an idea from the Partnership Board for additional weed management. An indicative cost could be £26k. Currently the Council pay NCC for additional work between May and September (2 operatives for 18 weeks).

For information the impact of inflation has resulted in the following regarding allotment rents for which we have proposed an income budget of £45k.

Plot Rent 2025/26 (£)	Plot Rent 2026/27 (£)
85.50	88.00
112.00	116.00
123.00	127.00

Malcolm Wilkinson
Town Clerk

2 December 2025