

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL

Special Full Council

Thursday 26 March 2026

Accommodation Working Group

Recommendation

The Council RESOLVE to agree:

1. A set of objectives governing the search for and assessment of properties which may form alternative office accommodation, as recommended by the Accommodation Working Group.
2. That £15,000 is earmarked for consultancy services related to properties, to be used as required.
3. That public consultation is undertaken at an appropriate point.
4. That consultation is undertaken with community groups/charities to determine the scope and nature of the space to be given over to community use.

Ward

Not specific to ward.

Risk Management

No additional resource required. These objectives are in addition to the agreed list of required features for a property which were proposed and agreed at the Special Full Council meeting on 11 November 2025.

Crime Prevention

Crime prevention will be considered in relation to any property proposed for further investigation.

Objective

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

Report

The Accommodation Working Group was introduced following the Special Full Council Meeting on 11 November 2025. It has met twice, on 26 February 2026 and 12 March 2026. It was recommended that a set of

guiding objectives around the purpose of the move and what it was hoped a move might deliver for the Council and resident was required, as the list of requirements initially proposed only addressed physical aspects.

Good discussion was had on the range of aspects, especially relating to the Council's model of engaging the public/holding meetings and therefore whether a council chamber ought to be included within the property or whether the Council could operate a community model with meetings being held across a rota of different venues.

Discussion also included what space for community groups might include – postal address, administrative hub, desk space, activity space, meeting space or a combination. No groups have yet been approached for their views or to determine need, so this should be explored further.

New ideas were raised around public services such as banking and a citizen advice online system, also to be further explored.

Space for a museum was originally listed as "desirable" in the requirements list, but it was felt a museum would be more fully realised in a separate and independent location so this requirement will be removed from the list.

It was also highlighted that "facility to expand" was included on the original list of requirements, but ought to be paid attention to as more duties and powers may fall to town councils in the medium-term.

Rental versus purchase was briefly discussed. It was noted that if the Council needed to borrow money a referendum would be required. Rental appeared to be preferred though purchase remained an option.

Conclusion

If the Council resolve to adopt these objectives, they will be used alongside the list of requirements in assessment of buildings suggested as potential office accommodation.

These objectives are:

- Include a council chamber
- Include space for community groups to use (in-person)
- Include wider public services such as banking and community information/advice
- Generally avoid retail space
- Not to include space for a museum
- Rental preferred but purchase could be discussed

Hannah Jenner

Principal Officer

Monday 16 March 2026