Decision Report

Meeting: Community Development Committee

Date of Meeting: 24 November 2026

Subject: Strategic Objectives Interim Report

Recommendation

The Committee is recommended to note the emerging consultation findings relevant to its service responsibilities.

The Committee RESOLVE to agree the trial of an electronic monthly newsletter.

Ward

All

Risk Management

This report seeks to highlight the emerging findings relevant to Community Development Committee and inform initial budget considerations. This is a recommendation to trial a monthly electronic newsletter, and this can be met from contingency within the committee budget.

Objective

Promoting the environmental, social, and economic wellbeing of the town and its community.

Crime Prevention

None at this stage.

Public Sector Equality Duty

To support inclusive access, the newsletter should use accessible formats and plain language, with alternative means retained of receiving information retained for residents who do not have access to, or are less confident using, digital services.

Report

This report provides a snapshot of the ‘Your Voice, Blyth’s Future’ public consultation evidence available on 27 October 2026 and is intended to support the Community Development Committee's budget-setting process. At the time of this snapshot, 538 questionnaire responses had been recorded. The consultation remains open until 30 November 2026 and continues to attract further responses, with the total now exceeding 950. Consequently, the findings presented should be treated as interim evidence rather than the final views of residents. The additional responses received since 27 October have not been incorporated into the figures in this report.

The full consultation findings will be considered alongside other relevant evidence at the Council's Strategic Objectives Workshop on 11 December 2026. This will provide an opportunity to consider the wider implications for the Council's strategic priorities and future direction.

The purpose of this report is to highlight the emerging findings relevant to Community Development Committee and inform initial budget considerations, not to establish final service priorities or make commitments ahead of the completed consultation and subsequent strategic discussion.

The consultation highlights strong public interest in a lively town with a strong heritage and opportunities to visit, shop and work. In the 27 October snapshot, 74.9% of respondents selected this as a future objective, while 83.0% considered events and activities important or very important. Events, heritage and a lively town were identified as a spending priority by 39.7%, and 64.9% felt that markets, independent businesses and community enterprise could encourage people to spend more time in Blyth.

The findings provide useful context for the Committee’s consideration of events, heritage projects and town-centre activity. They also highlight the importance of effective community engagement: 69.7% wanted better feedback on what residents had said and what action had followed, while 67.0% wanted clearer updates on local issues and Council decisions. There was also support for community groups having a voice (44.3%) and providing more opportunities for children and young people (48.6%). The survey did not, however, directly assess support for specific community grant schemes, blue plaques, festive lighting or individual planning proposals, so the findings in these areas should be treated as indirect evidence.

Overall, the emerging feedback suggests that residents place value on activities and initiatives that contribute to Blyth’s identity, vibrancy and sense of community. It provides an evidence base for considering the relevance and potential community benefit of the Committee’s services when reviewing budget proposals. Any conclusions

about future investment or changes to provision should remain provisional until the full consultation findings have been considered.

One area where the Council can make an immediate and practical improvement is community engagement through the introduction and trial of a monthly electronic newsletter. This would respond directly to the consultation findings, with 69.7% of respondents (308) calling for better feedback on what residents have said and what action has been taken, and 67.0% (296) wanting clearer updates on local issues and Council decisions. In addition, 42.5% of respondents (188) identified an email newsletter as a preferred way to receive information from the Council. Introducing a regular newsletter would therefore provide a straightforward way to improve communication, keep residents informed about Council activities and decisions, and demonstrate that feedback is being listened to. It would also reflect previous comments from Councillors about the need to strengthen engagement with the community.

A subscription for a digital marking tool that can provide an electronic newsletter would cost £8.25 per month for 500 subscriptions which would increase to £12.75 if we reached 1000 users. On the assumption that subscribers will increase over time a budget of £500 per annum is recommended.

The Interim report has been circulated to members.

Elaine Brown
Deputy Town Clerk
16 November 2026