

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL**Environment Committee****17 September 2026****Enclosed Dog Park****Recommendation****The Committee RESOLVE**

- note the consultation report
- consider any future actions inline with the development of strategic objectives.
- request officers to assess existing and planned private provision and identify whether a genuine unmet need remains; and
- only if an unmet need is identified, progress indicative costing and requirements (to be agreed by Council), potential locations and external funding opportunities for a Council-supported facility.

Ward

All

Risk Management

No existing budget; potential capital and ongoing revenue costs

Objective

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

Crime Prevention

This gives due consideration to the risk of statutory noise nuisance.

Public Sector Equality Duty

No significant adverse impacts have been identified at this feasibility stage.

Report

At the Annual Meeting of the Council 14 May 2026, it was agreed to pursue the feasibility of creating an enclosed dog park in Blyth.

It was delegated to Officers to open a public consultation to measure demand, need, and possible suitable locations, the consultation report is attached as Appendix 1.

Consultation Summary

263 responses were received during the consultation, which ran from 26 June to 16 August 2026, through the residents newsletter and social media.

80.6% supported the creation of an enclosed dog park, compared with 14.8% against, however the support came with conditions e.g. bookable facility, security, cleanliness, parking, lighting.

70% said they would be likely to use an enclosed dog park.

63.5% felt there is currently insufficient safe off-lead space locally.

54% had experienced problems when exercising their dogs, with concerns including dog behaviour, safety, antisocial behaviour, fouling and interactions with other dogs.

44.9% said they would be willing to pay for exclusive use of an enclosed facility.

The most frequently suggested locations were:

- South Beach fields – 31 mentions
- Ridley Park – 19
- Meggie's Burn – 15
- Blyth Beach/near the beach – 12
- Broadway field – 8

Written comments showed that residents particularly value security, safety, cleanliness, accessibility, parking, maintenance and private/bookable sessions.

There is already a secure, bookable dog park at Briardale House, offering one-hour sole-use sessions for a small charge.

A local farmer is also developing a further bookable dog exercise facility, providing potential additional private provision.

A minority of responses raised concerns on the potential cost of providing a facility and the value for money.

Assessing the feedback

The consultation demonstrates a clear level of community interest in, and support for, enclosed dog exercise facilities. However, the consultation does not in itself establish a need for a new Council-owned facility. There is already a secure, bookable facility at Briardale House, and further private provision is planned. It is therefore appropriate to assess the capacity, accessibility, cost and availability of existing and planned private facilities before the Council considers committing funding to its own facility.

This approach would allow the Council to determine whether there is a genuine unmet need and whether Council investment would provide additional value or simply duplicate and compete with existing or planned provision.

The next step as agreed at 14 May was to liaise with landowners regarding location, cost a scheme and look at potential external funding.

The indicative cost of a basic facility that is self-regulatory (such as that in Cramlington) was £25k. Responses identified a number of features and requirements that residents would expect from an enclosed facility, including security, cleanliness, lighting, parking and bookable/exclusive sessions and a daily staffing requirements. The cost implications of incorporating these features have not yet been assessed but is likely to be significant. There is no budget provision for this.

The consultation demonstrates clear community interest in enclosed dog exercise facilities. However, consultation responses alone do not establish that a Council-owned facility is required or represent value for money. Existing provision at Briardale House and planned private provision should therefore be assessed before the Council commits resources to developing its own facility. If a genuine unmet need is identified, officers can then investigate suitable locations, indicative costs, potential operating models and external funding opportunities for consideration by the Committee.

Elaine Brown
Deputy Town Clerk

10 September 2026

Blyth Enclosed Dog Park Consultation

Consultation Findings and Analysis

1. Introduction

The Council undertook a public consultation to establish the views of residents and the wider community regarding the potential provision of an **enclosed dog park in Blyth**.

The consultation ran from **26 June 2026 to 16 August 2026**.

It was promoted through the **residents' newsletter, which was delivered to every household in Blyth**, and was also shared through the **Council's social media platforms**.

A total of **263 responses** were received.

The consultation sought views on:

- whether respondents supported the creation of an enclosed dog park;
- whether they would be likely to use such a facility;
- whether there is currently sufficient safe off-lead space locally;
- problems experienced when exercising dogs;
- the distance respondents currently travel to exercise their dogs;
- potential locations for a dog park;
- factors that should be considered when selecting a location;
- willingness to pay for exclusive use; and
- any additional comments or suggestions.

The consultation findings are set out below.

2. Existing and Emerging Provision

The consultation findings need to be considered in the context of existing and planned provision within the local area.

There is currently a **secure dog park at Briardale House**. The facility is bookable for a small charge and provides **sole use for one hour**. This provides an existing example of the type of enclosed and controlled dog exercise facility considered in the consultation.

During the consultation period, the Council was also contacted by a **local farmer who advised that they are in the process of developing a further bookable dog exercise facility on their land**.

The existence of these facilities is important when interpreting the consultation results. In particular, the results indicate significant demand for **secure, enclosed and bookable dog exercise**, but this does not necessarily mean that all of this demand requires a new Council-owned facility.

The consultation therefore provides evidence of community interest and potential demand, while further work is required to establish the extent to which existing and emerging private provision can meet that demand.

3. Number of Responses

The consultation received **263 responses**.

As the consultation was publicised through the residents' newsletter and Council social media, it provided an opportunity for residents to express their views on the proposal.

The number of responses provides a useful indication of community opinion, although, as with any voluntary public consultation, the results represent the views of those who chose to respond and should not be interpreted as a statistically representative survey of every resident in Blyth.

4. Support for an Enclosed Dog Park

Respondents were asked:

Are you supportive of creating an enclosed dog park in the area?

The results were:

Response	Number	Percentage
In favour	212	80.6%
Against	39	14.8%
Conditional / unsure	10	3.8%
No response / unclear	2	0.8%
Total	263	100%

The results demonstrate a **clear majority in favour of the proposal**.

More than four out of every five respondents (**80.6%**) expressed support for an enclosed dog park.

The proportion opposed to the proposal was significantly smaller, at **14.8%**.

The relatively small number of conditional or unsure responses also suggests that the principal issue for most respondents was not whether an enclosed dog park was a desirable concept, but rather whether one should be provided and, for some respondents, how it should be designed, located and operated.

5. Likelihood of Use

Respondents were asked:

Would you be likely to use an enclosed dog park?

The results were:

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	184	70.0%
No	43	16.3%
Conditional / unsure	27	10.3%
No response / unclear	9	3.4%
Total	263	100%

The results indicate a potentially significant level of use.

70% of all respondents said that they would be likely to use an enclosed dog park.

This is important when considered alongside the existing facility at Briardale House and the planned private facility. It suggests that there may be a viable market for secure and bookable dog exercise facilities in the area.

However, the consultation does not establish how frequently respondents would use such a facility, how far they would travel, or what price they would be prepared to pay. These matters would need to be explored further if a business case for additional provision were to be developed.

6. Existing Safe Off-Lead Space

Respondents were asked:

Do you feel there is currently enough safe off-lead space locally?

The results were:

Response	Number	Percentage
No	167	63.5%

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	43	16.3%
Unsure / unclear	45	17.1%
No response	8	3.0%
Total	263	100%

The results indicate a strong perception that there is a shortage of safe off-lead space.

Almost **two-thirds of respondents (63.5%) stated that there is not enough safe off-lead space locally.**

This finding provides an important rationale for the level of support for an enclosed facility.

However, the question relates to **safe off-lead space generally** and does not specifically ask respondents whether existing bookable facilities are sufficient.

Consequently, it should not be assumed that the 63.5% figure represents unmet demand that could only be addressed through the creation of a new Council facility.

Further consideration should be given to whether existing and planned private facilities can address some of the identified need.

7. Problems Experienced When Exercising Dogs

Respondents were asked whether they had experienced any issues when exercising their dogs locally.

Response	Number	Percentage
Issue reported	142	54.0%
No	101	38.4%
No / limited	1	0.4%
No response	19	7.2%
Total	263	100%

More than half of respondents (**54%**) reported experiencing problems.

The written responses provide useful information about the nature of those problems.

Recurring issues included:

- encounters with other dogs;
- nervous or reactive dogs;
- dogs with poor recall;
- irresponsible behaviour by some dog owners;
- concerns about dogs being off lead in uncontrolled environments;
- motorbikes and antisocial behaviour;
- dog fouling;
- safety concerns;
- lack of suitable enclosed areas; and
- difficulties finding appropriate places to exercise dogs.

These findings help explain the strong support for a secure, enclosed facility.

They also suggest that a successful facility would need to provide more than simply a fenced area. **Security, controlled access, appropriate management and cleanliness are important elements of the service residents appear to be seeking.**

8. Potential Travel Requirements

Respondents were asked about the distance they currently travel to exercise their dogs.

Among responses where a mileage figure could be identified, **52 respondents provided a stated mileage.**

The stated distances had a wide range, from approximately **1 mile to 50 miles**, with a median of approximately **5 miles**.

The results should be treated with some caution because respondents expressed distances in different ways and some comments referred to journeys rather than a simple one-way distance.

Nevertheless, the responses indicate that some dog owners are already travelling significant distances in order to find suitable places to exercise their dogs.

This provides further context for the demand for local enclosed facilities.

9. Potential Locations

Respondents were asked:

Which locations do you think may be suitable?

There were **202 responses** to this question.

The location responses were coded according to the locations mentioned. Respondents could identify **more than one location**, meaning that the figures below represent the number of respondents mentioning each location rather than votes in a single-choice question.

Suggested location	Respondents mentioning location	% of Q14 respondents
South Beach fields	31	15.3%
Ridley Park / Ridley Park fields	19	9.4%
Meggie's Burn	15	7.4%
Blyth Beach / near the beach	12	5.9%
Broadway field	8	4.0%
Tennis courts / bowling green	3	1.5%
Croft Pit / Crofton Grange	2	1.0%
Field opposite Blyth Academy	2	1.0%
Quay / waterfront	2	1.0%
Other locations	Various	Various

The most frequently suggested location was **South Beach fields**, followed by **Ridley Park / Ridley Park fields** and **Meggie's Burn**.

These figures should not be added together because respondents were able to suggest multiple locations.

The results represent **community preferences only** and do not constitute a professional assessment of site suitability.

10. Issues Associated With Potential Locations

The responses to the questions about suitable and unsuitable locations demonstrated that residents were considering a number of practical issues.

These included:

Accessibility and parking

Parking and convenient access were frequently raised.

A successful facility would need to be accessible to residents, including those who may need to travel by car, while avoiding creating unacceptable additional parking pressure.

Road safety

Respondents identified concerns about sites close to busy roads.

A secure dog park would need safe access and appropriate separation from traffic.

Existing recreational uses

Some locations suggested by respondents are already used for football, sports, children's activities or other recreation.

Any potential site would therefore need to be assessed against existing use and the potential impact of reallocating or sharing recreational space.

Residential impact

The location of an enclosed dog park could create potential issues around noise, barking, lighting, parking and increased vehicle movements.

These matters would need to be considered before any site was selected.

Land ownership and availability

A number of suggested locations may have existing land ownership or operational constraints.

A site assessment would therefore need to establish whether land is available and whether its use for a dog park is feasible.

11. Willingness to Pay

Respondents were asked:

Would you be willing to pay for exclusive use of an enclosed dog park?

The results were:

Response	Number	Percentage
Yes	118	44.9%
No	84	31.9%
Unsure / conditional	37	14.1%

Response	Number	Percentage
Unclear	12	4.6%
No response	12	4.6%
Total	263	100%

Almost **45% of respondents indicated that they would be willing to pay for exclusive use.**

This is particularly relevant because the existing Briardale House facility already operates using a **small-charge, bookable sole-use model.**

The consultation therefore provides some evidence of acceptance of this type of operating model.

However, the results do not establish what respondents would be willing to pay. The willingness-to-pay result should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that a particular charging level would generate sufficient income to cover the costs of establishing or operating a facility.

If the Council were to consider providing a facility, further work would be required to assess:

- likely usage;
- acceptable charging levels;
- booking frequency;
- peak and off-peak demand;
- operating costs;
- maintenance costs;
- staffing requirements; and
- potential income.

12. Written Comments and Themes

Respondents were given an opportunity to provide additional comments.

Of the 263 respondents, **183 did not provide an additional comment.**

The comments that were received were coded according to their overall stance.

Comment stance	Number	Percentage of all respondents
In favour	17	6.5%
Against	16	6.1%
Conditional / mixed	4	1.5%
Neutral / suggestion	43	16.3%
No additional comment	183	69.6%

Comment stance	Number	Percentage of all respondents
Total	263	100%

These figures should **not** be used as the primary measure of support for the proposal.

The direct consultation question provides the more meaningful measure, with **80.6% supporting the creation of an enclosed dog park.**

The written comments are particularly valuable because they explain the **conditions and expectations attached to that support.**

13. Key Themes From Written Responses

Safety

Safety was a recurring concern.

Respondents wanted a location where dogs could be exercised away from busy roads and where owners could have greater confidence that dogs would not escape or encounter unsuitable dogs.

Reactive and nervous dogs

A number of respondents referred to dogs that are nervous, reactive or unsuitable for unrestricted interaction with other dogs.

This suggests potential value in considering **separate exercise areas or bookable sessions.**

Exclusive use

The ability to use the facility without other dogs being present was an important theme.

This aligns with the existing Briardale House model and the interest shown in the consultation in paying for exclusive use.

Cleanliness

Dog fouling and general cleanliness were concerns.

Any facility would therefore require clear arrangements for waste disposal, cleaning and maintenance.

Antisocial behaviour

Some respondents referred to motorbikes, antisocial behaviour and concerns about other users of existing open spaces.

This suggests that security and management would be important factors in the design and operation of any facility.

Parking and accessibility

The ability to reach the facility easily and park nearby was repeatedly identified as important.

Water, shade and amenities

Respondents also highlighted practical features such as water and shade, demonstrating an expectation that an enclosed dog park should provide a reasonable standard of amenity.

14. What the Consultation Tells Us

Taken together, the consultation responses indicate several clear messages.

Strong support

There is a clear majority in favour of the concept, with **80.6% of respondents supporting an enclosed dog park.**

Significant potential use

70% said they would be likely to use one.

Perceived shortage of safe provision

63.5% believe there is currently insufficient safe off-lead space locally.

Existing problems

54% have experienced problems when exercising their dogs locally.

Interest in paid exclusive use

44.9% would be willing to pay for exclusive use.

Strongest suggested locations

South Beach fields, Ridley Park and Meggie's Burn were the most frequently suggested locations.

Demand appears to favour controlled use

The comments suggest that residents particularly value **security, control, privacy and safety**, rather than simply additional open space.

15. Existing Private Provision – Implications

The existing Briardale House facility and the proposed private facility are significant when considering the consultation outcome.

The consultation has established that there is strong interest in the **type of facility** that these private providers are offering or proposing to offer.

In particular, the following features appear to correspond closely with residents' preferences:

- secure fencing;
- controlled access;
- exclusive use;
- advance booking;
- a charge for use; and
- a dedicated space for exercising dogs.

This raises the possibility that some of the demand identified through the consultation could be met by **existing and emerging private provision** rather than requiring the Council to establish its own facility.

There may also be benefits in allowing the private sector to respond to the demonstrated demand, particularly where facilities can be developed without requiring Council capital investment.

However, the consultation also suggests that **geographical accessibility may be important**. If existing or planned facilities are not accessible to residents across Blyth, there may still be a case for considering whether gaps in provision exist in particular parts of the town.

Further analysis would therefore be required before drawing conclusions about whether private provision is sufficient.

16. Potential Council Role

The consultation does not necessarily point to a single course of action.

The results support the following potential approaches for consideration.

Option 1 – Council-provided facility

The Council could investigate the feasibility of developing and operating an enclosed dog park.

This would provide direct Council control over the facility but would involve capital expenditure, ongoing maintenance and operational responsibilities.

Option 2 – Support private provision

The Council could recognise the demand identified through the consultation and allow existing and emerging private operators to develop facilities to meet that demand.

This approach could potentially meet demand without direct Council capital investment.

Option 3 – Partnership approach

The Council could explore whether there are opportunities to work with existing or emerging providers, potentially through promotion, access to appropriate land or other partnership arrangements.

Option 4 – Identify a specific gap in provision

Before determining whether Council intervention is required, the Council could assess whether there are particular areas or groups of residents that are not adequately served by existing or planned facilities.

This would allow any future Council investment to be targeted towards a demonstrable gap rather than duplicating existing provision.

17. Financial Considerations

The consultation provides some indication of potential willingness to pay, with **44.9% of respondents stating that they would pay for exclusive use.**

However, this should not be interpreted as confirmation of financial viability.

Any Council facility would need to consider:

- capital construction costs;
- fencing and gates;
- ground preparation;
- surfacing;

- drainage;
- water supply;
- lighting, where appropriate;
- bins and waste collection;
- insurance;
- repairs and maintenance;
- staffing and administration;
- booking system costs;
- security; and
- ongoing site management.

Potential income would depend upon the number of bookings, the price charged and the proportion of available hours that could realistically be sold.

The existing Briardale House facility provides a local example of a **paid, bookable, sole-use model**, while the proposed private facility may provide a further indication of market demand once operational.

18. Conclusions

The consultation provides clear evidence of **strong community support for enclosed dog exercise provision in Blyth**.

Of the 263 respondents, **80.6% supported the creation of an enclosed dog park**, while **70% indicated that they would be likely to use one**.

There is also a strong perception that existing safe off-lead provision is insufficient, with **63.5% of respondents stating that there is not enough safe off-lead space locally**.

The written responses provide further evidence of the issues residents experience when exercising their dogs, particularly around safety, dog behaviour, interactions with other owners, antisocial behaviour, cleanliness and the lack of controlled environments.

The consultation also indicates that there is interest in a **bookable, exclusive-use model**, with 44.9% of respondents saying they would be willing to pay for exclusive use.

However, the Council should take account of the **existing secure dog park at Briardale House**, which already provides bookable sole use for an hourly charge, and the **new private facility being developed by a local farmer**.

These facilities demonstrate that the private sector is already responding, or intends to respond, to the demand identified through the consultation.

The consultation therefore establishes a strong **community demand for the concept**, but does not in itself demonstrate that a new Council-owned facility is required.

The key issue for the Council is consequently to establish whether there remains a **gap in provision that is not being met by existing or planned private facilities**, and, if so, whether there is a role for the Council in addressing that gap.

19. Recommended Next Steps

It is recommended that the Council:

1. **Notes the outcome of the consultation**, including the strong level of support for enclosed dog exercise provision.
2. Recognises that **80.6% of respondents supported the creation of an enclosed dog park** and that 70% indicated that they would be likely to use one.
3. **Reviews existing and emerging private provision**, including the Briardale House facility and the proposed facility being developed by the local farmer.
4. Obtains further information on the **capacity, location, accessibility, pricing and operating arrangements** of existing and planned private facilities.
5. Considers whether there are **geographical or service gaps** that are not likely to be addressed by existing or emerging private provision.
6. Retains the locations identified through the consultation as evidence of **community preferences**, with South Beach fields, Ridley Park and Meggie's Burn being the most frequently suggested areas.
7. Does not treat the consultation's suggested locations as confirmation of site suitability. Any future site would require detailed assessment of **land ownership, planning, accessibility, parking, existing use, environmental considerations, residential impact, cost and operational requirements**.
8. If a gap in provision is identified, considers undertaking a **detailed feasibility and business-case assessment** for Council involvement.
9. Any future facility should reflect the consultation findings regarding **security, safety, cleanliness, accessibility, parking, maintenance, water, shade and bookable/exclusive use**.
10. Consider whether there is scope for the Council to **support, facilitate or work in partnership with private providers**, rather than necessarily providing and operating a facility directly.

20. Overall Assessment

The consultation has been successful in establishing a clear picture of the community's views.

There is **strong support for enclosed dog exercise provision**, significant stated potential use and a clear perception that existing safe off-lead opportunities are insufficient.

At the same time, the emergence of private provision is an important factor in determining the appropriate Council response.

The consultation therefore provides a strong basis for **further consideration and assessment**, but the evidence does not necessarily support immediate Council investment in a new dog park.

A proportionate next step would be to establish the **current and anticipated level of private provision and whether it is sufficient to meet the demand identified**, before deciding whether there is a case for direct Council provision.

This approach would ensure that the consultation findings are acted upon while also taking account of **value for money, existing market provision and the Council's wider responsibilities and financial position**.