

BLYTH TOWN COUNCIL – POLICIES & PROCEDURES

	POLICY	REVIEWED	NEXT REVIEW DATE
1	Retention Policy (pages 2-7)	2024	2025
2	Risk Management Policy (pages 8-39)	2024	2025
3	Public Question Time Procedure (page 40)	2024	2025

1. Retention Policy

Proposed amendments	Reason
The inclusion of arrangements for deposits and storage.	Not previously covered
Information relating to personal details in line with Data Protection.	Not previously covered
Information on the processes for safe disposal of documents.	Not previously covered

2. Risk Management Policy

Proposed amendments	Reason
The inclusion of a line regarding Charities to ensure the Council meets its responsibilities as a Trustee	Safeguarding both the Charity and the Council. Complying to External Audit requirements.

3. Public Question Time Procedure

Proposed amendments	Reason
A line to emphasis that there is no provision for public questions during meetings.	For clarity.

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RETENTION POLICY

1. Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to provide a corporate policy framework to ensure that documents (or sets of documents) are dealt with in the correct manner; being retained and/or disposed of in the correct method and timescale.
2. This policy gives the Council a system for the management of paper and electronic records. The Town Clerk is responsible for ensuring all Council documents are managed accordingly.
3. This policy is based on the National Association of Local Council's Legal Topic Note on Local Council's Documents and Records (legal topic note 40) therefore legal requirements and recommended practice within the sector has been followed.
4. Where the policy refers to 'documents' this includes both paper and electronic copies.

2. Retention of Documents

1. Certain important documents must be retained for clear reasons such as audit purposes, staff management, **insurances**, tax liabilities and the eventuality of legal disputes and legal proceedings.
Guidance is provided on document retention in Appendix 1. If in doubt, documents should be retained until legal advice has been received.

3. Retention of documents for legal purposes

1. Most legal proceedings are governed by the Limitation Act 1980 (as amended). The 1980 Act provides that legal claims may not be commenced after a specified period. The specified period varies depending on the type of claim in question. The table below sets out the limitation periods for the different categories of claim. The reference to topics within the category section in the table refers to claims which have been brought.

Category	Limitation Period
Negligence (and other 'Torts')	6 years
Defamation	1 year
Contract	6 years

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Leases	12 years
Sums recoverable by statute	6 years
Personal Injury	3 years
To Recover Land	12 years
Rent	6 years
Breach of Trust	None

2 Where the limitation periods above are longer than the other periods specified, the documents should be kept for the longer period specified.

4. Arrangements for the deposit, storage, and management of documents

In accordance with section 227 of Local Government Act 1972, the principal authority must provide proper depositories for all specified papers (defined as public books, writings, council papers and all documents directed by law to be kept). Northumberland County Council provide such facilities at Woodhorn Archives.

5. Data Protection Act 2018 - Obligation to Dispose of Certain Data

5.1 The Data Protection Act 2018 requires that personal information must not be retained longer than is necessary for the purpose for which it was originally obtained. Section 1 of the Data Protection Act defines personal information as:

Data that relates to a living individual who can be identified:

- a) from the data, or
- b) from those data and other information, which is in the possession of, or is likely to come into the possession of the data controller.

It includes any expression of opinion about the individual and any indication of the intentions of the Council or other person in respect of the individual.

5.2 The Data Protection Act provides an exemption for information about identifiable living individuals that is held for research, statistical or historical purposes to be held indefinitely provided that the specific requirements are met.

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5.3 Councils are responsible for ensuring that they comply with the principles of the under the General Data Protection Regulations namely:

- Personal data is processed fairly and lawfully and shall not be processed unless specific conditions are met.
- Personal data shall only be obtained for specific purposes and processed in a compatible manner.
- Personal data shall be adequate, relevant, but not excessive.
- Personal data shall be accurate and up to date.
- Personal data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary.
- Personal data shall be processed in accordance with the rights of the data subject.
- Personal data shall be kept secure.

5.4 External storage providers or archivists that are holding Council documents must also comply with the above principles of the General Data Protection Regulations.

6 Document Disposal

6.1 When documents are scheduled for disposal the method of disposal should be appropriate to the nature and sensitivity of the documents concerned. A record of the disposal will be kept complying with the General Data Protection Regulations.

6.2 Documents can be disposed of by any of the following methods:

- Non-confidential records: place in wastepaper bin for disposal.
- Confidential records or records giving personal information: shred documents.
- Deletion of computer records.
- Transmission of records to an external body such as the County Records Office.

6.3 The following principles should be followed when disposing of records:

- All records containing personal or confidential information should be destroyed at the end of the retention period. Failure to do so could lead to the Council being prosecuted under the General Data Protection Regulations.

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- the Freedom of Information Act or cause reputational damage.
- Where computer records are deleted, steps should be taken to ensure that data is

'virtually impossible to retrieve' as advised by the Information Commissioner.

- Where documents are of historical interest it may be appropriate that they are transmitted to the County Records office.
- Back-up copies of documents should also be destroyed (including electronic or photographed documents unless specific provisions exist for their disposal).

6.4 Records should be maintained of appropriate disposals where appropriate. These records should contain the following information:

- The name of the document destroyed.
- The date the document was destroyed.
- The method of disposal.

Appendix 1

Guidance of document retention.

The full list of the councils' documents and procedures for retention or disposal can be found in Appendix 1. This is regularly updated in accordance with any changes to legal requirement.

DOCUMENT	MINIMUM RETENTION PERIOD	REASON
Accident books/reports	3 years from the last entry (if it is a child/young adult, then until that person reaches 21)	The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR) (SI 1995/3163) as amended, and Limitation Act 1980.
Allotments: Register/ Plans	Indefinite	Audit
Allotment payments	6 years	Audit/VAT
Audio/Video Recordings	1 year	Management

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Bank statements, including deposit/savings accounts	Last completed audit year	Audit
Bank paying-in books	Last completed audit year	Audit
CCTV Data	28 days approximately (depending on technical specification)	System capacity
Certificate for Insurance against liability for employees	Indefinitely.	The Employers' Liability (compulsory insurance) Regulations 1988 (SI.2753), Management. Future Claims
Cheque book stubs	Last completed audit year.	Audit
Fees and Charges	6 years	Management
Formal Complaints under the Council's Complaints Procedure	Indefinite	Archive
DOCUMENT	MINIMUM RETENTION PERIOD	REASON
Freedom of Information Requests received.	Indefinite	Archive
Insurance Policies	Indefinite List of insurers and policy number from 2010 BTC re all insured risks	Management and Legal
Investments	Indefinite	Audit/ Management
Members allowances register	6 years	Tax, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Minutes of Council Committees/Sub Committees	Indefinite	Archive
Paid Invoices	6 years	VAT

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Paid Cheques	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Personal data of employees	6 years	Audit/Management
Petty cash, postage, and telephone books	6 years	Tax, VAT, Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Planning Applications	Indefinite	Archive
Press releases/publications.	Indefinite	Archive
Quotations and tenders	6 years	Limitation Act 1980 (as amended)
Receipt and payment accounts	Indefinite	Archive
Receipt books (all)	6 years	VAT
Recruitment Paperwork	Last completed audit year	Audit
Salaries book/wages record	12 years	Pension Calculations
DOCUMENT	MINIMUM RETENTION PERIOD	REASON
Time sheets	Last completed audit year 3 years	Audit (requirement) Personal Injury (best practice)
Title deeds, leases, agreements, contracts	Indefinite	Audit Management
VAT Records	6 years generally but 20 years for VAT on rents	VAT

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RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Town Clerk shall prepare for approval by the Council, a risk management policy and assessment in respect of all activities of the Council. Risk policy statements and consequential risk managements shall be reviewed by the Council at least annually.

When considering any new activity or in consideration of changes to existing arrangements, the Town Clerk shall consider risk assessment, including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the Council/Committee.

All Decision Reports will cover this aspect along with any associated impact.

Major Threat

The greatest risk facing the Council is either not being able to deliver the activity or services expected by residents/within a legal/financial/operational framework or delivery in such a way that it has a detrimental impact.

Risk assessment is a systematic general examination of various elements which contribute towards an activity that enable to Council to identify any and all potential risks inherent in the place or practices.

Based on a recorded assessment the Council should then take all practical and necessary steps to reduce or eliminate the risks, insofar as is practically possible, making sure that all employees are made aware of the results of the risk assessment.

This document has been produced to help enable the Council to assess the risks that it faces and satisfy itself that it has taken adequate steps to minimise them. In conducting this exercise, the following main points have been followed and documented accordingly. This has been considered alongside the Council's Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and the NALC Joint Panel on Accountability and Guidance Manual:

- Identify the areas to be reviewed.
- Identify what the risk may be.
- Evaluate the management and control of the risk and record all findings.
- Review assess and revise if required

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- The points and areas identified below cover the Council as a whole and where individual considerations are made a number of these will be taken into account.

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FINANCE & GENERAL MANAGEMENT				
Topic	Risk	H/M/L	Management/Control of Risk	Review/Assess/Revise
Business Continuity	Risk of Council not being able to continue its business due to an unexpected or tragic circumstance.	<p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p>	<p>Business Continuity Plan agreed, and a suitable staffing structure is in place.</p> <p>All documents are backed up both on/off site.</p> <p>Where instances require working outside of the office a separate Google drive has been set up to allow access to documents on our main server. All staff have access to laptops, additional mobile phones purchased, and</p>	Ongoing review.

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			video conferencing facilities are in place.	
Precept Determination	Fit for purpose	L	Councillors receive updates at each planned committee meeting showing actual against budget. This provides effective analysis and monitoring. When budgets are formed (October - January) the Town Clerk works with each Committee to determine the budget for the next year. In January, the precept calculations are received and budget finalised.	Process used has been established for some time and operates effectively.
Precept Income	Income not received from NCC or reduced from January's projected amounts.	L	Reserves value is based on good practice and is based on 25% of the precept as a minimum. An unlikely scenario.	Procedure set to mitigate this risk.

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Financial Records	Not complete or inaccurate and associated risks	L	The Council has Financial Regulations, which govern the conduct for financial management by Officers. Regular information sent to the Chair of governance. Regular internal audit visits.	Ongoing review.
Cash	Loss through theft or dishonesty	L	Council requirements are set out in the Financial Regulations. Cash received is banked as soon as practicably possible in line with insurance requirements. Insurance cover in place. Safety of staff paramount and 2 staff must travel to the bank, although this is greatly reduced by card payments now available.	Existing procedures are adequate and financial regulations are reviewed annually.

Ordering of Services	No budget resource/approval	L	Other than very minor/routine purchases done without the knowledge of TC/DTC. Compliance with F R's.	Adequate
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Reporting and Auditing	Information not communicated	L	Financial management statement produced for each Governance Committee and a copy of the accounts and bank reconciliation is forwarded to the Chair of Governance, along with TC and DTC, on a weekly basis. Xcel cash book reconciled with VAT system	Existing communication procedures adequate.
	Auditing and Governance	M	<p>Council undertakes internal and external independent audits. All reports are sent to the Governance Committee.</p> <p>Council appoints an independent Auditor annually and all reports are submitted to the Governance Committee.</p>	Committee Review

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<p>Payment Approval</p>	<p>Payments authorised by Officer receiving the goods/services.</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>All payment transactions made are following the Financial Regulations process. Cash book updated immediately and just prior to payment. The Free Agent, VAT system, updated. Any new asset marked as such for specific part of cash book. Insurance question reviewed.</p> <p>Financial regulations checked independently at each internal audit visit.</p> <p>Authorisations for on-line banking are carried out independent of Officer creating payment. Where cheques used these require 2 signatories. Officers accessing the bank have their own key fobs and separation of duties exist.</p>	<p>Procedures proved to be satisfactory over many years.</p>
<p>Grants Received</p>	<p>Grants are applied for against specific projects.</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>Grant applications are prepared by the Town Clerk and approved by the Council. The Town Clerk checks progress and reports back when the application result is determined. Grants normally have</p>	<p>The application process determines the procedure to be followed if at variance from the financial regulations.</p>

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			conditions of use attached, these being checked and monitored by the Clerk.	
		L	Rents and discounts are agreed by Council. There are situations that the Council has agreed whereby the Town Clerk can apply discretion in certain cases.	Existing procedures work well and part of management/internal audit review process.
Achieving Best Value	Multiple quotes for larger projects.	L	The finance regulations dictate when multiple quotes/tenders etc. are required. All projects over £25,000 have to be advertised on a national Contracts portal. For significant spend projects contracts awarded through sealed bid tenders. Professional contractors used to project manage the contractor. Project specification produced for significant tenders as part of the tender process.	Existing procedures reviewed annually as a minimum in addition to work carried out at each internal audit visit.

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	Project overspend	M	<p>Each significant project carries a risk of overspend or other eventualities and variation. The governance arrangements in place allow delegation to the Town Clerk in certain cases.</p> <p>The Council is kept up to date as required as the project develops.</p>	Review procedures after each project is carried out.
Resources	Adequacy to deliver	M	Discuss fully the level of resources required and if they are available.	Ongoing monitoring
Reserves	Inadequate reserves and safeguarding reserves for intended purpose	L	A General Reserve Fund and Earmarked Reserve Fund, only where applicable, have been established. Capital Projects that are being saved for are to be identified as such in the earmarked reserves and with an unrestricted contingency fund.	This should, where appropriate, include an agreed allocation of funding each budget year when the budget is set.

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		<p>L</p>	<p>Funds are transferred to support capital works and any additions to the fund are approved at the start of the financial year.</p>	<p>Develop an Asset Management Plan to include life-span analysis and renewal & improvement of Town Council assets. Ensure an allocation of reserves in an earmarked budget for this purpose or include an amount within the budget to resource this.</p>
		<p>L</p>	<p>Proposal for the use of any fund is subject to a resolution by the Full Council as per the Standing Orders.</p>	

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Election costs	Risk of unexpected election.	L	<p>Council budgets now allow for planned elections. County Council Elections office advice sought annually on potential election costs.</p> <p>Level of reserves are adequate to meet such costs.</p>	Current practice is to budget for a full set of elections every 4 years. Reserves would be used to meet other election costs if necessary.
VAT	Reclaiming/recharging	L	Requirements set out in the financial regulations. VAT claims are made on a quarterly basis.	Existing procedures checked at each internal audit as well as annually by external audit. The cash book is reconciled to a second system used to claim VAT using the Tax Digital portal.
Investments	Failure to have a policy and its implementation.	H	Strategy in place along with regular monitoring.	Annual review of policy or earlier if required.

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Borrowing	Not approved within guidelines.	L	Full council approval would be required. No borrowing arrangements in place but covered within Financial Regulations, Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government guidelines in addition to NALC guidelines.	Annual review of policy or earlier if required.
Insurance	Failure to meet needs and requirements.	L L	Reviewed annually prior to policy renewal. All associated liability covered. Policy updated as new assets added. Employee cover adequate and current. Assets reviewed on an annual basis along insurance considerations. Not all assets are insured after committee consideration. Specialist brokers used to assist the council with their needs.	Insurance brokers used to assist the Council in meeting their responsibilities. Assets are part of the AGAR process.

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		M	Separate dedicated and specific policy for Town Events.	Reviewed annually by insurance broker and TC/DTC along with Events Co-ordinator.
Annual Return	Non-Completion and not submitted within time limits.	L	Annual Return is completed and submitted to the Internal Auditor for checking. Approved by the Governance Committee then Council where signed before sending to the External Auditor within time limit.	Existing procedures adequate.
Council Records – paper	Loss through fire of theft. Computer Failure	L M	Electronic records held on computer. Regular back-ups taken, stored on/off site.	Adequacy of back-ups monitored independently by the council’s IT support.

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STAFFING				
Salaries	Salaries incorrect, wrong hourly rate or hours worked.	L	<p>Contracts of employment are in place and outline each officer’s salary. The budget is prepared and checked by another officer for correctness. The salary for each officer is checked by Northumberland County Council who process the payments. Salary budgets are prepared for the Governance Committee which allows further monitoring to take place.</p> <p>Additional salary/expenses forms need to be signed by the Town/Deputy Clerk.</p>	Existing procedures checked monthly as well as at internal audit visits.
		L	<p>The Council prepare salary budgets for the County Council which are monitored. The County Council are</p>	

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	Wrong deductions of NI or Tax, Unpaid Tax and NI contributions to Inland Revenue.		responsible for forwarding on deductions made.	
Expense Claims	Fraud or incorrect claims.	L	Expenses must be approved. Mileage claims paid on completion of claim form and receipts provided where appropriate. Mileage claim rates match those recommended by NALC.	Ongoing review. All forms checked by the TC/DTC.
Workplace Pension Scheme	Scheme not administered correctly	L	The Council agreed to use the NEST scheme. NEST is a public corporation accountable to Parliament through the DWP.	Employee pension deductions are made through the County Council and NEST are aware of the monthly payments to be made by the Council. Internal

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				monitoring as well as regular internal audit checks take place.
General	Loss of key staff or long-term illness, resignation, or misconduct. Health and Safety training requirements.	M L L	Staff structure in place to allow business continuity in the short/medium term and after these external resources, e.g. NCC, would need to be brought in. Various options available – additional hours for existing staff, NALC or short-term recruitment. Training resources and budget available. Any new risks identified considered immediately. Safety guide issued. Carried out as and when identified.	Ongoing review Ongoing review

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	<p>Task specific training needed.</p> <p>Compliance with employment law.</p> <p>Working out of the office.</p>	<p>L</p> <p>L</p>	<p>Guidance offered by NALC, County Council and ACAS.</p> <p>The office board must be marked up re whereabouts and estimated time of return. Staff have mobile phones. Guidelines in place in addition to difficult situations.</p>	<p>Ongoing via appraisal</p> <p>Office staff monitor</p>
ASSET AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT				
Assets	Loss or damage	L	Annual review of assets undertaken. Current programme is identified on a weekly monitoring chart which shows all assets are covered in a balanced/necessary	Inspections undertaken as well as adequacy of such

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	Risk of damage or injury to third parties.		<p>frequency. Third party organisations are used on a weekly/annual basis.</p> <p>There is a feature on the web site for problems to be identified. Signs are added to assets to show the provider of the asset.</p>	at regular project meetings.
Asset Management	Premises or other assets being closed or unavailable for use by the Council or community due to poor or dangerous condition.	L	<p>An asset plan has been produced and reserves in place such that assets can be replaced at the end of their natural life. Play areas are refurbished on an approx. 20-year basis.</p> <p>Repairs to assets are more or less immediately.</p> <p>Council offices rented and in a building shared with the landlord.</p> <p>CCTV in various locations throughout the town to help</p>	Asset management inventory and plan.

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			ensure safeguarding of assets and for public safety etc.	
Recreation Areas				
Management of Allotment Sites	Services provided by the Associations not in accordance with the agreement	L	Regular monitoring takes place. Detailed and specific checklists are maintained for each site.	Officers programme review work.
	MUGA Play Areas x 17	L	Council staff as well as County Council staff along with an external company to carry out an independent assessment of play areas on an annual basis. Individual/specific assessment sheets are used for each.	Officers carrying out inspections are adequately qualified and their certificates are updated in accordance with statutory review period.
Notice Boards	Risk of damage or injury to third parties. Location suitability.	L	Notice board located at Market Place and 2 at Newsham. All covered by insurance policy.	Adequate inspections undertaken by both Officers and Councillors.

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<p>Trees</p>	<p>Trees or branches posing a safety problem to the public where unrestrictive right of access available.</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>Currently the Council only have trees on their land i.e. certain allotment sites, or bordering land they maintain. Generally any trees within the Town, on highways or public space, are the responsibility of the County Council. Previously a quarterly inspection of trees. Trained Officers from the County Council involved regarding expertise as required for problem areas.</p> <p>Should the Council receive communication on this matter then this would be forwarded to NCC to discuss/receive guidance next steps.</p>	<p>Ongoing review.</p>
<p>GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL MATTERS</p>				

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<p>Member Conduct</p>	<p>Members fail to behave in accordance with Code of Conduct</p>	<p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p> <p>L</p>	<p>The Code of Conduct is adopted by the Council at the Annual Meeting each year, all members are provided with a copy.</p> <p>Council members can attend training on Code of Conduct and Behaviour in Public Office.</p> <p>All Council members sign a declaration of office which includes the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Council members and members of the public are advised that Code of Conduct complaints should be made to the Monitoring Officer (Northumberland County Council). As a result, sanctions for any failure to comply with the Code of Conduct are independently determined.</p>	<p>Councillors reminded of their responsibility both on the agenda and at the start of each meeting.</p> <p>Any good practice guides or policies received from NALC are immediately circulated to members and where appropriate these documents are put up to Council for adoption.</p>
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Members Interests	Conflict of Interests and Register of Interests.	L	<p>Standing Orders require declaration of interests at each Council meeting by members.</p> <p>Register of Members Interest in the public domain and should be reviewed regularly by Councillors.</p> <p>Clerk responsible for ensuring new Councillors register their interests.</p>	Existing procedures are adequate. Members reminded to review their entry.
Agendas, minutes and significant reports	Accuracy and legal	L	<p>Officer reports have a minimum of 1 other officer in the vetting process after the author.</p> <p>Minutes and agenda are produced by the Clerk to defined standards and adhere to legal requirements. Minutes are drafted as soon as possible after each meeting by the Committee Clerk. These are checked by the Town and/or Deputy Clerk before being sent to the Chair responsible for that committee/Council. Once approved these would be forwarded to all members and approved and signed</p>	Annual review of adequacy.

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			<p>at the next Council/Committee meeting.</p> <p>Minutes and agenda are displayed according to the legal requirements as a minimum. Council meetings managed by a Chair.</p> <p>Council decisions are disseminated for officers and report back as to progress at the next meeting.</p>	
Council Meetings	Council Meetings not quorate or minuted properly	L	<p>All Meetings and Minutes properly advertised on Council website as required.</p> <p>Attendance recorded as part of minutes to evidence quorum.</p>	Independently reviewed within the office prior to sending to the Chair and after signing off the agenda and minutes process.
Meeting Location	Adequate provision and H&S checked	L	Full Council, Committee and Sub Committee meetings held mainly in the Council Chamber within the	Regular reviews undertaken. If another venue had

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Safety of staff, councillors and visitors	Unsafe building and surroundings	L	The staff mainly work in offices on the first floor of a 3-floor building. External access as well as to the offices is by a key fob. CCTV is in place and a fire exit is at the rear of the general office. A signing in procedure is in place. A policy is in place to ensure a minimum of 2 staff are in the office, there can be lone working subject to adherence to the lone working policy.	Health and safety policy reviewed annually as a minimum.
Poor reputation of the Council	The work of the Council is not understood leading to negative feedback from parishioners and dissatisfaction with the way services are carried out.	L L	Regular use of communication channels including website and newsletters to explain the Council’s activities. Use of social media. All documents used for this purpose are independently checked prior to issue. Public and press welcome to attend Council meetings. All decisions taken in public domain and reported transparently without	Ongoing review and feedback. Expected practice.

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		<p>L</p>	<p>bias. Except for items of a private and confidential nature.</p> <p>Adoption of a social media and Email policy.</p>	<p>Council members encouraged to share official Town Council posts rather than individual posts or comments regarding Council decisions.</p> <p>Where individual posts are made/intended to be made and where there is doubt about the content advice should be taken from officers. In addition, where a</p>
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			Seek to foster good working relationships with local reporters.	
Poor stakeholder relationships	Perceived or real breakdown in communications between tiers of Local Government or between the Council and other public providers.	L	Council to understand the services provided by others and to discuss areas of joint interest periodically. The Council to respond to consultations to put its point of view across adequately.	Ongoing review and feedback.
Partnership Agreement with Northumberland County Council	Failure to deliver the requirements of the agreement.	L	Weekly/monthly monitoring in place by both Councils at office/member level.	Regular review process. Partnership Working Group and Partnership Board are in place and meet on a regular basis. Any outputs are reported to all members through the Environment Committee and Council.

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Lack of vision	An over-emphasis on the management and operation of Council services may lead to a poor performance with regard to forward planning which may prevent partnerships being formed with other public and private supplier or even the loss of grants.	M	The Council to review its Plan and stance on planning proposals and to proactively develop a Neighbourhood type Plan so that a vision of the future is always available. Involvement in appropriate groups to both promote and improve the Town in line with the Council's objectives e.g. the Town Forum. Plan reviewed regularly and community engagement for feedback.	Review regularly and underway.
Lack of training or time to undertake the role of the Council	Inadequate knowledge or specialist ability may lead to poor decisions.	L	Adequate training budget available. Encourage training for Councillors and staff.	Maintain a training record and review annually. Staff appraisal.
Data Protection	General Data Protection Data protection rules not followed.	L	Town Clerk registered for data protection and reviewed annually. Governance Committee receive update reports as and when necessary.	General Data Protection Regulations followed and updated as required. Updates notified through NALC and ICO.

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Freedom of Information	Policy availability	L	FoI Policy available in the public domain. Policy reviewed annually.	Information reports produced prior to the Governance committee.
Charity Trustee	The Council meets is responsibilities as a Trustee	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm that all charities of which the council is a Trustee are up to date with Charity Commission filing requirements • that the council is the sole trustee on the Charity Commission register • that the council is acting in accordance with the Trust deed • that the Charity meetings and accounts recorded separately from those of thee council, and separate independent Internal Audits. • review the level and activity of the charity and where a 	Review annually and confirm compliance on both the Annual Governance Statement and Accounting statements.

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			risk based approach suggests such, review the Independent Examiners report	
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PUBLIC QUESTION TIME PROCEDURE

Public Question Time is scheduled to take place prior to the meeting of the Full Council [REDACTED] at 6.00 pm for 20 minutes. Questions will be answered by the Mayor, the Town Clerk or any Councillor who can contribute to the reply. Where no questions have been received Full Council will start as soon as this has been acknowledged.

Please note that in order to give a full and detailed response to questions raised at the meeting, it may be necessary to defer a response in order to gather further information.

To allow the maximum public participation, at any one meeting, no person may ask more than **two questions**. Written questions are preferred, however, verbal questions will be accepted at Council. The Mayor does have the discretion to allow more if the allotted time has not been exceeded and no other member of the public wishes to put any questions.

Once a question has been answered, **no discussion or debate will take place on the question**.

A question may be rejected if:

- It is not about a matter for which the Council has a responsibility.
- It is defamatory, frivolous or offensive.
- It requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.
- It relates to staffing or industrial relation matters.
- It relates to planning or any other regulatory issues.
- The same question has been put at a meeting in the past six months.

Questions and responses will be anonymised to ensure security and any GDPR implications there may be. Any personal details will be taken by officers after the meeting if a follow up is necessary. All questions and responses will be publicised on the Blyth Town Council website.

On the occasion of the Full Council being in progress, and if within the period up to 6.20 pm a member of the public arrives with a questions to ask, then the Mayor will conclude the particular agenda item and then allow the Public Question to be raised.

There is no provision for public questions to be asked during the meetings of the Council or its committees.