

District Councillors (Second) Report

March 2023

Local Plan:

The “Issues and Options” consultation is the first formal consultation (Reg 18) as part of the update of the Local Plan. The purpose of the consultation is to ensure that the new Local Plan being developed covers all the right issues including housing, jobs, infrastructure, health, economic development, climate change and the built and natural environment. The consultation will run from 10th March until 5pm on 19th May. The document can be seen at

<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/19942/Local-Plan-Full-update> or
<https://brecklandlocalplan.commonplace.is/>

The preferred method of submitting a response is by using the form on the Breckland website and emailing the response to: planning.policyTeam@breckland.gov.uk . Or post to: Local Plan Issues and Options, Breckland District Council, Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke, Dereham, Norfolk, NR19 1EE.

The new Local Plan when adopted will run until 2046 so it is important to have your say on what you think Breckland should look like in the future.

Nutrient Neutrality:

Because of the nutrient neutrality issue, previously reported, that affects those part of Breckland that are within the catchment of the River Wensum nearly 1,000 planning applications have been put on hold. Breckland is working with neighbouring local authorities, Natural England and Anglian Water on a joint venture which will provide a platform for developers to buy credits to mitigate the impacts of nutrient (both phosphates and nitrates) pollution. Any mitigation that releases credits needs to be local to the development, in place before any properties are occupied and be maintained for 80 years. The Environment Agency who put the development ban in place is being slow to approve suitable methods of mitigation against nutrient pollution, so it is not possible to say how long this situation will take to resolve.

If the situation is not resolved quickly it may impact on the districts 5 year housing land supply which may lead to unplanned development in areas of Breckland outside the River Wensum catchment.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Just a reminder that from November this year any most developments (small sites from April 2024) will have to prove, through on site measures or purchased credits, that the biodiversity of the site is measurably better than before the development took place. The government are asking for a 10% uplift in biodiversity on all development with few exceptions. BNG is in addition to, and does not replace existing protection for protected sites, habitats or species. Habitat enhanced or created for BNG purposes must be managed and maintained for 30 years. The Natural England website contains a quick guide to BNG.

Council Tax

As forecast at its February meeting Breckland Council set its budget for 23/24 and the level of Council Tax. A balanced budget that sees no cuts to any council provided services was agreed and an increase of £4.95 in the council tax for a band D property was also agreed which means that a band D property will pay £108.63 per year (£2.08 per week) for the services that Breckland provides. Around 75% of Breckland properties are in bands A-C and will pay less. This is still the lowest district council tax in the country. The full budget can be viewed in the agenda for the February 22nd meeting of the full council.

Cost of Living Support

Breckland is able to support households who are struggling with the rise in the cost of living and rising energy bills. The “Inspiring Communities” page on the Breckland website gives details of all the grants and discretionary discount which are available. Of note are the Warm Homes Fund and the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding. The latter scheme delivers a £200 grant to households where the main form of heating is either oil or solid fuel. This should be delivered automatically though the electricity bill, if the £200 has not been credited to the electricity bill it can be applied for online.

Mark Kiddle-Morris
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Member for Launditch Ward.

7th March, 2023.