

District Councillors Report

November 2023

Breckland Boundary Review:

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has begun a review of the ward boundaries within Breckland. LGBCE has a statutory duty to carry out a review if the number of electors each council represents varies significantly across a council. This can happen when some wards have developments which increase the number of homes and thus electors. The last review of Breckland's councillor numbers and ward boundaries was completed in 2014 and took effect in the 2015 election.

The first stage is to agree the Council size and a cross-party working group has been set up to help shape the Council's response to any changes to the number of councillors suggested by the LGBCE. The final response will be considered by Council later in the year, prior to formal submission to LGBCE in early January.

The LGBCE will look at ward boundaries (taking into account the proposed number of councillors and voter numbers in various parishes) and make recommendations for any changes. These changes will be subject to consultation in May – July 2024.

Any changes to ward boundaries and the number of councillors will take effect at the next district council election in May 2027.

Nutrient Neutrality:

The amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill which proposed the removal of the requirement to mitigate the effect on nutrients on designated water catchment areas was defeated in the House of Lords. There was an intention, stated by the SoS for Levelling Up Housing and Communities, to introduce urgent legislation to remove the mitigation requirement. However, during campaigning for the recent by-elections, the most discussed subject on the doorstep was emergency foul sewer discharges into rivers seen as a prime cause of nutrient pollution. This has led to a rethink at the top level of government on the wisdom of overriding the Natural England (NE) advice on nutrient discharges. The results of this internal debate will be evident when the King's speech opens the new session of parliament on the 7th November which may, or may not, contain details of a bill to remove nutrient neutrality mitigation measures.

Breckland have "put on hold" over 1,000 planning applications for new dwellings (and householder extensions which involve an increase in overnight accommodation) that discharge foul water and surface runoff into the Wensum catchment since the NE advice was given in March 2022.

Reform of Waste Collection:

The government has indicated that all councils will be mandated to have a weekly food waste collection by 2026. There will also be a standardised list of items that councils must recycle. It will be left to individual councils to decide how often, and in how many containers dry recycling is collected. Wherever you are in the country the

list of recyclables will be the same, thus avoiding any confusion over what can and what cannot be recycled.

It is not clear whether the cost of the weekly food waste collection will be met in full by government. The cost of an extra weekly collection in a rural area such as Breckland is estimated to be between £1m and £1.5m every year ignoring the capital cost of new collection vehicles and the difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff.

Local Plan Update:

Further consultations on proposals for strategic policies and land allocation for the new local plan will take place in the new year. The Issues and Options (Reg 18) consultation will take place in March '24; the preferred Options consultation will take place in December '24. Submission of the new plan for examination will take place in May '25. It is imperative that the plan is submitted for examination before June '25 otherwise the work will have to be restarted under a new set of guidelines which the government has outlined.

There will be a supplementary consultation on matters affecting rural settlements; this will be discussed at the council's cabinet meeting on the 27th November.

Flooding:

With the onset of winter weather a reminder: if there is a problem with foul sewer either backing up or not draining properly, please contact Anglian Water in the first instance on 03475 145145 or via the WhatsApp link on their website. Flash flooding which causes internal flooding to properties should be reported via the NCC Floodline; 0344 8008013.

Contacting Breckland:

Applying for housing and council tax, building control inspections, garden waste collections, voter registration and more: - www.breckland.gov.uk/applyforit

If an issue affects you, your property or your community: - www.breckland.gov.uk/reportit

You can be kept up to date with all things to do with Breckland Council by subscribing to receive information that interests you at www.breckland.gov.uk/email-updates

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31st October 2023.