

District Councillor for Launditch Ward
Report for 2022 -2023

Below I have highlighted some of the initiatives that Breckland Council has put in place to support residents, communities and businesses throughout the district. The focus has been to support people in recovering from the continuing effects of the pandemic and the rising cost of living, exploring new ways of working and reacting positively to climate change.

We have spent some time looking at how we work as a council and how we can be more efficient in delivering the services that residents expect from their district council. Breckland has a strong and well managed commercial property portfolio which produces as much revenue (that pays for the delivery of services) as is collected from council tax. Breckland's precept is still the lowest of a district council in England. The 5 Breckland market towns and 3 local villages have a higher level of council tax.

Breckland planning policy team and members have reviewed the Local Plan (adopted 2019) as required by the National Planning Policy Framework and decided that an update is required. This work is ongoing, new consultations with residents, parish and town councils, landowners and developers will take place in the coming months. The draft Local Plan will be submitted for examination towards the end of 2025 with a view to the plan being adopted in early 2026.

To Support Breckland's Environment we have: -

- Invested £850k in LED replacement streetlights in the 5 market towns.
- Saved energy by installing new LED lighting and pool covers at our leisure centres.
- Supported more businesses by providing them with a cost-effective trade waste solution, generating income which can be ploughed back into other Council services.
- Kept our communities cleaner by taking enforcement action against 100 waste offenders for fly tipping or littering.
- Supported greener transport options by awarding a contract for the installation of EV charging points in Swaffham and Watton town centres.

- Become more sustainable, by planning a collection scheme for batteries and small electrical items.
- Reduced our output of Carbon Dioxide (CO2) emissions by 437 Tonnes since 19/20
- Showcased how we can – with others - become NetZero by 2035, by holding an Environment Awareness Month including a NetZero Conference.

To Help Breckland Businesses Thrive we have: -

- Invested £750K into projects which support our local high streets and enable our 5 Market towns of Dereham, Swaffham, Watton, Thetford and Attleborough and their surrounding areas to thrive.
- Supported economic growth in the district by project managing and funding a new primary substation in Snetterton.
- Helped businesses bounce back from the COVID Pandemic, by allocating £4.2M of government funding.
- Supported over 45 new enterprises and created more than 65 jobs with our successful Start Up Programme
- Started to plan how we'll help people in Breckland access better homes through a new Strategic Housing Plan.
- Secured £1.6m national funding for local projects to boost local skills and training, reduce carbon emissions and support our most vulnerable residents.
- Bid for £1m in national funding to help support rural businesses and communities over the next two years. This funding will be vital in helping us provide new infrastructure and support to help grow our important rural economy.

To Assist and Inspire Residents and Local Communities we have: -

- Helped provide accommodation for our residents by investing over £4.6 million in emergency housing.
- Helped domestic abuse survivors, by supporting the Daisy Programme with £100,000 of funding over 3 years.

- Supported our local communities with the increased cost of living pressures by introducing a local food store and a mobile food bus, providing food at more affordable prices.
- Helped to support community well-being by training over 200 residents to become mental health champions.
- Helped to link residents with support groups by our new Social Prescribers, easing the pressure on the NHS.
- Put plans in place to improve our leisure provisions by increasing our level of investment.
- Helped people to stay living in their homes, avoiding admission to care homes, through a new pilot handyperson scheme.
- Made a difference to resident's lives every day by awarding over £120,000 to local community projects.
- Enabled community groups and voluntary organisations to come together and celebrate the Platinum Jubilee, by allocating over £12,000 in grants.
- Helped the district celebrate the Jubilee, by illuminating the Swaffham Ecocity turbine, making it the tallest beacon in East Anglia lit up in honour of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee.
- Supported local students to achieve their potential by launching a £10,000 educational bursary.
- Welcomed almost 100 Ukrainians to the district, providing them with temporary homes and recruited native-speaking welfare officers to provide the best possible support to refugees.

To deliver cost effective Services to our Residents we have: -

- Made our website more user friendly and accessible for our customers, particularly for those with a disability. This puts us in the top 10 Councils for website accessibility.
- Helped our officer teams see how they can use data to improve services to residents through our 'Great to Greater' sessions.
- Enabled residents to get answers to their queries 24/7 through our new Chatbot, Bobbie. Soon, residents will also be able to get answers to queries through Amazon Alexa
- Upskilled our people, to better serve our residents, by delivering Leadership Development Programmes

- Generated rental income from commercial properties which will exceed our target this year.
- Made £344,000 in efficiencies this financial year.
- Kept residents informed by sharing a press release at least every 3 days.
- Reached out to more of our community through increasing our use of social media channels.
- Helped counter the rising cost of energy bills, by processing over £5 M in £150 Council Tax Rebate payments.
- Given residents more choice in how they pay for Council services through new on-line forms.
- In a recent survey 79% of residents said that they trust Breckland Council.

Your Councillor: -

During the past year as well as attending meetings of the full Council I have attended the Planning Committee as a member this also included a number of fact-finding site visits. Recently I was appointed to serve on the Licencing Committee.

Throughout the year I have been involved, as an Executive Support member, in the current full review of the Local Plan and the partial review requested by the examination inspector in 2019 under policy INF03.

After the resignation of the entire membership of Weasenham parish council in May 2022 I and 2 other Breckland Councillors were appointed to run the parish council. This we have done for a full year.

Mark Kiddle-Morris.

Member for Launditch Ward

May 2023.

