

District Councillor's report May 2025

Devolution and LGR

Devolution

Proposals are in train for the joint Norfolk and Suffolk mayoral elections to take place in May 2026 that would then see the formation of a combined Norfolk and Suffolk strategic authority

Local Government reorganisation

The outline proposal for a three unitary model prepared by Breckland, Kings Lynn, North Norfolk, Broadland and Great Yarmouth councils and Norwich City Council was submitted to government who have responded and requested, as anticipated, additional information to be presented with the finalised proposal in September. This model would see a west Norfolk unitary, a city unitary and an east Norfolk unitary formed with populations of between 300 and 400,000 and a geographical area for each that makes for ease of communication and service delivery. It would also provide a more representative democratic model with elected councillors being more closely aligned with the residents and businesses in the authority.

Planning and Housing

The planning and infrastructure bill is still in the committee stage at Westminster and is not expected to land until the autumn but the key aspects that have been trailed are most concerning for residents here in Breckland:

- A mandatory housing delivery of 903 year on year representing an uplift of circa 40%
- Powers to debate applications at a local level being restricted and/or curtailed
- National infrastructure projects (solar and wind farms) being removed from local decision making

Breckland is lobbying to restrict the number of solar farms that are a threat to our landscape, reduce food security and puts more reliance on imported food.

Waste collection services

In addition to the current waste collection services, we now collect commercial food waste. This service commenced on March 31st and we have 49 businesses signed up for the service collecting about one ton of food waste each week. We are also preparing for the introduction of residential food waste collection services commencing in April 2026 and have placed orders for a fleet of vehicles to enable us to undertake the service.

Homelessness

The team continues to focus on preventing homelessness and managing those that we have in temporary accommodation (TA). Since the last update the number of households in TA has further reduced to 115. There has been good success in finding

solutions for some of the families that have been 'stuck' for a considerable amount of time through intensive work with them and other agencies.

The team have also reduced the numbers in nightly paid accommodation from 54 to 50 since the previous update.

We are currently recruiting in order to expand the team, in line with the increased demand on the service. Temporary posts have also been made permanent, in order to improve retention and recruitment and in return improving the service and service outcomes.

Community support

Household Support Fund

134 HSF referrals were processed. Of these, 133 were successful, whilst 1 was unsuccessful. A total of £36,780 in funding was issued, ensuring vital financial assistance reached those in need.

VE/VJ Day Grants

Breckland awarded grants totalling £12,000 to 48 community groups in the district, marking the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day and Victory over Japan (VJ) Day this year.

Early Intervention Fund

The discretionary grant scheme launched in March 2022 to award payments of up to £300 to families or individuals who are experiencing exceptional circumstances of hardship. Over the last year we have provided 27 residents with support, totalling £3960.

The Shelf Pop Up Pantry

The Shelf Pop-Up Pantry currently operates in Old Buckenham, Swanton Morley, Weeting, and The Lophams.

Shipdham Pantry site is launching on 30th April. Necton and Narborough will be the next sites launched.

146 residents are using the service across the sites.

Councillors Philip Cowen and Sarah Suggitt

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