

District Councillor's Report – February 2026

A brief update of Breckland issues for February:

- 1) LGR – still ongoing. Government have delayed decision until mid-late March. Still unclear as to whether 1, 2 or 3 Unitary Councils. NCC elections delayed for a further year. Cllr Ed Connolly has resigned from NCC – Cllr Phillip Duigan is covering Shipdham until the May by-election.
- 2) Devolution: Mayoral elections postponed until 2027 – apparently Norfolk was not ready. Given that many candidates already in place, suspect we were,

Taking 1 and 2 together means BDC's continued existence is still unclear, but we should definitely still be abolished in April 2028. Maybe.

- 3) Decisions made at BDC Cabinet today:
 - a) Small sites policy approved: Ambition – BDC-owned land, where possible, will be transferred to villages/community groups for free as long as <£10k and demonstrable community benefit. MySpace maps on BDC website identifies what land is owned by BDC close to you. SPC have identified a couple within the village that will be suitable for transfer, and attended a couple of workshops held in District over the past few weeks.
 - b) Car Park transfers for towns extended to Swaffham and Attleborough. Will talk through what happens next!
 - c) Despite 1 and 2 above, BDC Cabinet approved 2026-27 budget and medium-term financial plan (as we have to). Central Govt's new 3 year settlement announced in December was revised last week, so now uncertainties exist. Whilst subject to confirmation next week or so from central gov, BDC's settlement is £3.5m less than last year's (£3m shortfall for food waste, £0.5m short for costs of LGR (aside – Yorkshire's LGR bill now topped £17m – not the cost savings planned)). But with income from commercial property, etc, BDC's share of CT will only increase by £4.95 from May for a Band D property (that £4.95 is built into the settlement). BDC will still be the lowest District Council tax band in England, though CT bills will increase whatever the final version of LGR due to the "averaging" principles in 2028.
 - d) Approval for £1.5m 3g football pitch for Attleborough funded by Football Foundation (£1m) and other funding sources. Exciting stuff.
 - e) Spark Fund community grants available for small community groups up to £500 – worth applying for. Shipdham community has received more than £53k from BDC sourced grants over last 5 years.
- 4) OSPF: part of Breckland Bridge asset. This has been "stuck" between Bridge and TBT/village/planning challenges for a few years. Roadway been in for a while. Challenge is 100% affordable housing. There may be some progress here – need to watch this space. Headstones from Chapel site at entrance to OSPF being returned to village having been kept safe for a few years. Bridge can no longer operate as a result of LGR above: It has created value for Breckland taxpayers by more than £3.6m but LGR will force it to stop and wind

down its pipeline as cannot commit to long term contracts. Write off of £0.5m in EDP mentioned but not the reason why or how many of the benefits generated by BB now lost.

- 5) Mid Norfolk Health and Wellbeing day – 17 Feb, Dereham Football Club, 10 – 3,00pm: Multi-agency healthcare services support day. See info elsewhere..

As always, please don't hesitate to contact either Lynda or Paul if you have any questions on District matters.