

Breckland Councillor annual report 2024/25.

Gordon Bambridge -Upper Wensum Ward

As your elected district councillor my job is to represent you to Breckland Council and to represent Breckland Council to you. This covers all of the services Breckland provide, and to do this I try to stay in contact with your parish councils by attending the meetings as often as possible - and to meet with you personally when you have matters of concern.

Within this ward the most often raised issues are with planning, either residents who want to apply for planning permission, or to object to a planning proposal. Sometimes I am approached from both sides at the same time. Whilst planning is an emotive subject, it has clearly defined objectives and procedures so we can often reach satisfactory conclusions and mostly residents can see this. Other Breckland matters include Housing, Dustbins, Fly Tipping, some benefits, some grants, Elections, Community Support, Licensing, I think the list is about 130 subjects long with statutory and non-statutory elements. I do also get involved all the time with County and Parliamentary matters so never be afraid to ask.

Many councillors link Breckland to other bodies working in and for the community, for me this is the Internal Drainage Board so I also regularly attend meetings concerning flooding, or prevention of such in both our urban and to us more local rural settings both in Norfolk and across the country.

This has become particularly relevant in recent years and of course more so in some parts of the ward.

During this year we have been challenged with the prospect of change in government systems for Norfolk, this will eventually mean that both Norfolk CC and Breckland DC will disappear and be replaced by some form of unitary council and an elected mayor for Norfolk and Suffolk jointly. This is entirely a central government proposal which I am doubtful will work well, but as a councillor I can only seek to carry out the policy in a way which provides the greatest benefit for the people of Breckland. Up to now we have still not been fully advised on what will replace these two democratic institutions but I am always happy to update your parish councils as we meet regularly, or of course attend any groups in your communities which have an interest. I am well aware that some parish councils and groups of councils have ambitions.

What we have been told is that County Council elections this May were cancelled. Breckland is likely to end in May 2027. A mayor is likely to be elected in 2026 and a Unitary (either a single or a two or three section alternative for Norfolk with a single for Suffolk) elected by you in 2027. Whilst facts are still scarce, at the moment I believe a three section unitary would be best for Breckland protecting what we most hold dear across all party lines for our communities. It is also likely to be the least costly for our council tax payers overall, although all will involve an increase in our tax burden.

Breckland are pressing ahead with the local plan, we have paused any plan to charge for car parks with some options for future councils. We are still providing grants to parish councils and other bodies within your area. Both the council as a whole and me personally are committed to giving you the best service we can over the coming two years or for as long as this re-ordering takes.

I have deliberately kept this report short, but am happy to answer any questions. I can be contacted through the Council directly or indirectly via your parish clerk.

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