



**Report to**

**Watton Annual Town Meeting 16<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

**Presented by**

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## Overview of Breckland Council

Breckland Council is composed of 49 councillors elected every four years. Councillors are democratically accountable to the residents of their ward.

Currently the political makeup of the council is;

- 38 Conservative Councillors
- 3 UKIP Councillors
- 3 Labour Councillors
- 1 Unionist Councillor
- 3 Independent Councillors
- 1 Vacancy

Therefore Breckland Council is led by Conservative Councillors, with a Conservative Leader of the Council and Conservative Cabinet Members, each of the committees is led by a Conservative Chairman

All councillors meet together as the Council. Meetings of the Council are normally open to the public. Here councillors decide the Council's overall policies and set the budget each year. The Council holds to account the Executive and committees.

At the Annual Meeting of the Council in May a new Chairman of the Council is elected.

Breckland Council is a District Council.

Districts tend to have responsibility for a number of areas, including:

- Tax collection (Council Tax & Non-Domestic Rates)
- Leisure Services
- Refuse collection
- Housing
- Planning
- Arts & Entertainment
- Environmental Health

### Decision Making (Council)

The Executive is the part of the Council which is responsible for most day-to-day decisions. The Executive is made up of the Leader and a Cabinet of councillors whom he/she appoints. When decisions are to be discussed or made, these are published in the Key Decision Plan in so far as they can be anticipated. If these decisions are to be discussed with council officers at a meeting of the Executive, this will generally be open for the public to attend except where personal or confidential matters are being discussed. The Executive has to make decisions which are in line with the Council's overall policies and budget. If it wishes to make a decision which is outside the budget or policy framework, this must be referred to the Council as a whole to decide.

## Key Decision Plan

The Key Decision Plan is a record of all key decisions the Council and Executive expects to make in the next twelve months and is updated and published monthly.

The purpose of the Key Decision Plan is to give advance notice of the key decisions that the Council is likely to make in the future.

The Government introduced the requirement for councils to produce Plans, with the aim of making local decision making more open and transparent for the public, and making the decision makers more accountable to the public.

The information that is recorded about each decision includes a brief description of the

- Matter on which the decision will be made
- Decision that will be taken by the Council
- Date or period in which the decision is likely to be made
- Consultation with groups of people and/or other organisations that will be carried out before the decision will be taken
- Background documents available to the person or Committee making the decision (this will also show if these background papers are confidential)
- Person or Committee making the decision, i.e. the Cabinet, an Executive Member alone or an officer under Delegated Powers

## What are key decisions?

A key decision is a decision that

1. Approves or recommends to full Council any matters relating to a Policy or Strategic Plan;
2. Is made in connection with setting the Council Tax;
3. Involves expenditure or savings that exceed 25% of the budget sum approved for a service or function (this level has been set at the Council's discretion);  
And/Or
4. A decision which significantly affects the community in two or more wards (or electoral divisions).

# Breckland Council achievements 2018/2019

## Serving communities

### COMMUNITY RESERVE

**£1.4 million committed to help support our residents, via:**

- Development of Breckland Innovation Den to support entrepreneurs
- Leisure feasibility studies for Swaffham and Attleborough
- Developing support services for young people struggling in employment and housing
- Supporting a start-up scheme for businesses and entrepreneurs on the high street businesses

Enable councillors to invest £1.4m in 2019/20 into projects which directly support communities across the district.

This follows £1.7m in 2018/19 for similar initiatives.

### MARKET TOWN INITIATIVE

- The market towns initiative makes funding available for projects that focus on: "Supporting market towns in the district to be attractive to new businesses and visitors to the area whilst meeting the needs of rural communities and businesses".
- £250k allocated in 2018/19
- Benefits villages as villages use towns as hubs, so strong towns mean more employment and leisure opportunities locally.

#### **Funded projects include:**

- Improvements to Swaffham Buttercross, Batten Island and murals in Thetford
- Purchase of the Glutton to improve street cleanliness
- On the Green activities in Thetford Riverside
- New Market stalls in Watton and Swaffham
- Helped establish a new ParkRun in Watton and Swaffham
- ShopAppy and 12 Elves of Christmas Campaign – promote local traders and enable people to choose to shop local / see what's available on our high streets
- BreckWorld App – driving visits to our attractions and towns via films and treasure hunt in an app

Two of our biggest MTI initiatives are our Shopappy scheme and Breckworld app. Shopappy – launched in mid-April. 90 shops now signed up across our 5 towns.

Filmed with shops as part of marketing campaign on facebook, youtube etc. 12 elves of Christmas trail saw elves hidden in shop windows to attract visitors to shops/towns

Breckworld – 70+ locations across Breckland, treasure hunt, Stephen Fry support  
Around 2,000 downloads since launch in February

#### **How do I make a bid for Market Towns Initiative funding?**

Check your project aligns with the funding priorities for MTI, then submit an expression of interest form. The MTI Co-ordinator will then contact you with feedback about your project and discuss the necessary info required for submitting a final proposal. All details on Breckland website.

### **INNOVATION DEN**

After receiving applications earlier this year, the Breckland Innovation Den invited 10 potentially promising businesses and new start-ups to pitch for a share of £100,000 business development funding.

The applicants had to demonstrate how the funding would help them to deliver products or services within the district, drive employment, and explain how the grant would help them make their business sustainable for future growth.

### **BRECKLAND LOTTERY**

Breckland Lottery continues to grow and provide a way for communities to support important local good causes. We now have over 60 good causes signed up, selling over 1,200 tickets per week and are projected to raise £40,000 for good causes in the first year.

### **BRECKLAND LANDLORD FORUM LAUNCHED**

Engaging with local landlords to support them and further improve local housing options

### **CO-LOCATION OF DEPARTMENT OF WORK AND PENSIONS**

Following the successful co-location of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) into our offices at Elizabeth House in Dereham we have moved DWP into our Breckland House office in Thetford. This has created greater efficiency for our residents who use both services.

### **NATIONAL AWARDS SHORTLIST**

- **Best Local Authority Arts Initiative** in the Heart For The Arts 2019 awards – Silver Social project. An arts programme to engage rural, socially isolated people to engage in the arts and make new friends
- **Innovation Award** at the Local Government Chronicle Award 2019 – finalist for commercialisation of Breckland Training Services and unique service offer across the country

## **SUPPORTING BUSINESSES TO THRIVE**

### **REGENERATION TEAM**

- We have established a new Regeneration team in the Place directorate with a focus on business engagement and support, skills development and regeneration of the District. They were fundamental in supporting Banham Poultry through their recent challenges.
- Two new Skills Engagement Officers

### **TRIPSTART**

Tripstart, a new project to help people overcome barriers to get back into employment launched on January 25th. The scheme is being funded by Breckland Council, the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Department for Work & Pensions (DWP). It is being delivered across the district by Dereham-based Kickstart and is expected to support and engage with 138 individuals.

### **FOOTWAY LIGHTING**

The replacement of Breckland owned footway lighting continues at pace with most of the lights listed as needing replacement on the lighting survey now being replaced and commissioned by local lighting firm Westcotec of Dereham, progress has been good and the contract is on time and within budget.

### **LOCAL PLAN**

The Local Plan is out for consultation on main modifications... a major step on the journey towards to adoption of a local plan for Breckland

### **THETFORD SUE PHASE 1**

Work has begun at Kingsfleet in Thetford, which will see the delivery of the first 300 homes on the site

### **ATTLEBOROUGH SUE**

Outline planning permission given for up to 4,000 homes plus infrastructure.

### **BRECKLAND BRIDGE**

Planning permission was granted for a 16 unit scheme at Litcham in late 2018. 21 further units at Colkirk are going to Planning Committee in April; both will be delivered by Breckland Bridge.

Good progress is also being made at Chapel Road, Attleborough where Norfolk County Council have confirmed that the necessary statutory approval is in place for the release of land from education use, thus Breckland Bridge will be pursuing the delivery of 10 new houses here this year.

### **GRANT FUNDED SCHEMES**

We cleared the final stage of due diligence in advance of the formal £7.95m grant offer being issued by Homes England – the Thetford Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid to support delivery of 5,000 new homes and associated development. Key detailed work is now underway on the detailed delivery plan, working closely with Pigeon.

The Council has successfully reserved 11MVA of power from UKPN for delivery of the Thetford Northern SUE with scope to utilise some of this to enable development of the TEP site and continue to work very closely with the land promoter Pigeon for both sites.

£110k of Business Rates Pool funding recently secured - £75k for TEP Infrastructure feasibility work and £35k for demands and needs study around skills and innovation. Including Snetterton power, over £900k of BRP funding has been secured in the past 12 months and more bids are in the pipeline.

### **SNETTERTON (EMPLOYMENT SITE) POWER PROJECT**

UKPN appointed and scheduled to complete the detailed design by the end of March, a key milestone. £3.4m scheme totally funded from grant (LEP and BRP)

### **INVESTMENT STRATEGY**

- A new Investment Strategy has been drafted and investment prospectus created to focus activity on opportunities to achieve growth, i.e. NNDR, jobs, innovation, etc. The 'Invest in Breckland' prospectus will be officially launched during the summer with an initial emphasis of targeting businesses to relocate to Snetterton Heath and other major employment areas.
- Total portfolio value is £45.2 million. This includes all the commercial properties (including Riverside, Warburtons & Barnham Broom) and the Thetford & Dereham Business Centres.
- Income included in the budget for 19-20 is £3.53 million

