DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT FOR MELTON CONSTABLE PC – SEPTEMBER 2024

AWARDS FOR OUR PLANNING DEPARTMENT

National planning professionals have put NNDC in the top 10 in the country for improvement in terms of speed of decisions delivery and success with appeals to the Planning Inspectorate. NNDC have a 98% success rate in defending appeals against refusals. This makes us the second-best district Council in the region and fourth nationally. As the planning cabinet member, I am particularly pleased for this recognition staff in planning have received with this top "platinum award".

SECOND HOMES SURCHARGE

We continue to argue for a fairer share of the millions of receipts, starting next April, from the national doubling of council tax. We have more of these properties than anywhere else in the county but this is being ignored by the County Council. We are arguing to retain at least 50%, but they want us to keep only 20%. We have formed an alliance with other district councils to push back on this to fight for a better settlement here in North Norfolk. We are the second highest area for the number of second homes per head of population in the country.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIPS (LEPS)

LEPS were formed to work with Government to apply for support for things like new roads, employment or community events. The previous Government withdrew all funding last April but NNDC has decided to continue to support them until the proposed County Devolution Deal (see below) has been defined in operational terms.

COUNTY DEVOLUTION DEAL

The County Council were due to vote on the new funding for Norfolk introducing in effect an unelected mayor to oversee it. This was postponed due to the general election and may change as a twining arrangement with Suffolk is being considered. Within the last few days the new Government have decided suddenly to scrap the deal saying £600 million over 30 years without index linking for the effects of inflation is just not ambitious enough for Norfolk.

POTHOLE PROBLEMS

Climbing the ladder of local concern is the state of our roads. National news has revealed that unless its 30cm wide and 4 cm deep then it's not a pothole! And if it's been reported and put on a work schedule then the right to be compensate for personal injury or vehicle repair is severely curtailed.

HOLT HALL

The Development Committee considered the application last month to build a new £25 million Preparatory School at Holt Hall which was closed by the County Council as a field study center. This has caused some controversy due to such extensive modern buildings over-shadowing the Grade II Hall against policy in the Glaven Valley Rural CA. The Committee decided on approval because the benefits of a new school for the community as a material consideration outweighed the harm caused by the policy breaches. You may well ask when is a policy not a policy!

NEW LOCAL PLAN

The response from the Planning Inspector due in May was delayed until late July because of the General Election. We are being challenged on the number of houses planned for the 2025-2040 period. We offered 480 new dwellings per annum, the former Government wanted 557 but since the election of the new Government this has been increased to 973. We are in negotiations!

PUBLIC TOILETS

We have a current deficit of just over £1million and therefore we must rationalize our non-statutory services such as public toilets. We appreciate the importance of providing facilities but we are having to consider selling two or three sites, closing some during the winter months or even some permanent closures to reduce expense. In recent years we have rebuilt a number of sites like Fakenham, Holt (ongoing), Wells and already planned in Cromer but we cannot justify the current expenditure of cleaning and servicing all sites throughout the year unfortunately.

COMMUNITY FIRST RESPONDERS APPEAL

The Council is supporting the appeal to residents across the district to come forward if they are interested in volunteering to be first responders to support our ailing NHS having identified gaps in the service. We are working with Norfolk Ambulance Trust on material and a promotion campaign across all parishes. Thos interested can find more information by entering “eastamb.nhs.uk/join the team/volunteering-and volunteers/community-first responders” online.

Thank you for reading this report.

Cllr Andrew Brown

25/09/2024