**DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT FOR MELTON CONSTABLE PC – JANUARY 2026**

**** I wish everyone a healthy and prosperous New Year ****

## 1. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM UPDATE (LGR)

Such is the disdain by Government for the sanctity of local democracy, there is still no certainty that County Council elections will happen for the second-year running. Because the County Council decided in 2024 to proceed with the new unitary councils, the planned elections for county council seats were postponed in May last year. There are those cynical enough to suggest that Government is running scared of the results predicted by the opinion polls but I couldn't possibly comment!

Just when we were beginning to think the new mayoral elections would definitely be happening this May, the Government surprised all of us by announcing recently that those elections will not happen for another two years.

## 2. LOCAL PLAN 2024-40 ADOPTED

The Council voted to adopt its new Local Plan after the Government Planning Inspectorate approved the content after 18 months or so. As the Cabinet member responsible for seeing it through a ten-year process, I am delighted we now have a new plan for development across the district. It will enable the Council to limit the extent of new housing over the next 14 years and help us to avoid speculative building.

## 3. HUNWORTH HUNNY BELL

After 18 months of this being submitted to planners, we are making some real progress towards a decision soon. A revised scheme sees the number of dwellings reduced from 10 to 6 and arrangements to link proceeds from new house sales for re-furbishing the pub amended to include 4 rooms for overnight accommodation. It is expected to be decided at the Development Committee next month.

## 4. RENTERS RIGHTS REFORM

Faced with the new legislation and financial impacts for providing a service, we are evaluating what the new legislation will mean for advising tenants about the new rights to secure their tenancies. We anticipate our housing team will receive more enquiries about the changes and effects on future housing delivery types. We intend to publish information on the Council's website for frequently asked questions.

## 5. NATIONAL PLANNING REFORMS

A big shake-up for planning authorities became law on 18 December. The Planning and Infrastructure Act (PIA) will allow a so-called national scheme of delegation to reduce the number of cases being decided by planning committees thus increasing decisions

taken by officers. It's part of the drive by government to build 1.5 million homes by speeding up the planning process. If an applicant satisfies the Council's new Local Plan policies, then it is unlikely to go before a committee for scrutiny and most objections will be dismissed from public, parish and town councils as well as consultees (unless there is good grounds for referring to them). A new dawn of sorts for our award-winning planning services.

**6.NEW BIN COLLECTION REGIME**

There is real concern, quite justifiably, about new proposals for revised bin collections in the village. Changes due to stricter health and safety measures affecting our waste subcontractor Serco meant some 87 residents on the north side of Briston Rd have received letters from NNDC informing of the proposed changes. Residents on Gordon Kitchener and Burgh Beck roads (including properties on Briston Rd in between) are being asked to place their bins inside gateways at the front instead of round the back. It's intended to reduce the time taken to get bins to the wagon and cut out the bins being dragged over uneven surfaces which is time consuming and challenging for the men.

I arranged a meeting with Cllr Stephen Unsworth, a Serco contractor and NNDC council officer last Friday 9 January to express concerns about the various problems this will cause. I will be reporting further at the meeting on 13 January,

**7. LOCAL GOVT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2026-7**

Recently published by MHCLG (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government) is the annual provisional settlement consultation and under the proposals the (now legendary) funding gap between rural and urban areas, estimated to be some 40%, is set to widen in 2026-7 and unfortunately will continue to widen over the next 3 years. This will mean that pressure to maximise council tax increases will persist for some time. This represents a further u-turn by Government on the proposal set out in December 2024. Urban councils will receive 41% more per head in Government Funded Spending power than most rural councils like ours in 2026-27. The clear need for the addition of explicit rural weighing into the core formula to reflect the higher costs of service delivery in rural areas has been ignored yet again. More people live in rural England than in Greater London.

Please get in touch regarding anything in this report or any other queries about NNDC services and I will do my best to help you.

Thank you for taking time to read this report.

**Cllr Andrew Brown**

**12/1/26**