DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT FOR MELTON CONSTABLE PC – MARCH 2026

1. BUDGET FOR COUNCIL TAX RATES

The Council decided the rates for 2026-27 at the 19 February full council meeting. Proposed changes will come into effect on 1 April 2026 subject to final budget approval. NNDC proposes to increase its share by £5.19 (approx. 3%) for an average Band D property. This will raise the tax from £173,52 to £178.71 per year. Amounts for other banded properties will be confirmed shortly. This equates to just 10p per week. New demands will be issued this month by post.

The County Council are likely to increase their council tax element by 5% (the maximum permitted without requiring a referendum) and the Police & Crime Commissioner and Parish or Town councils will also confirm revised precept figures by the end of February.

2. PLANNING DESIGN GUIDES AND CODES

We are in the process of updating our Design Codes which is a statutory requirement in order to deliver safe and healthy places with a high-quality standard of design. The 2008 NNDC Design Guide shapes a number of policies introduced in our new 2024-2040 Local Plan. It will give updated guidance on renewable technologies e.g. air source heat pumps, solar panels etc. And will help promote green infrastructure in developments.

3. COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR CARERS

NNDC are reviewing online advice to carers who live at home whilst looking after an adult child or a young person looking after a parent or brothers and sisters looking after a sibling. They can be entitled to a live-in Council Tax discount of either 25% or 50% typically worth £500-£1000 per year. To qualify for the live-in career discount they need to provide at least 35 hours of free care per week to someone at home who isn't a spouse, partner or child under 18 and the person being cared for is in receipt of qualifying state benefits (e.g. various attendance allowances, armed forces independence payments, PIP, DLA and disablement pension being the main ones). If you think you (or anyone you know in these situations) may qualify then please contact the Council to see if these exemptions apply to your circumstances. You may be pleasantly surprised.

4. CORPUSTY SCHOOL CLOSURE CONSULTATION

Synergy MA Trust who run the school, have decided to close it and asked parents to choose between either Reepham or Gresham Schools to relocate children miles away. Devastating for parents, children and staff. The village Neighborhood Plan identified the school as being essential for the lifeblood of the village but the village is set to lose it. The delay caused by the last Government not getting on with cleaning up our streams

and rivers sooner meant the planned new houses in the village have been delayed for 4 avoidable years and families useful to the school have not arrived in time to help save it. Consultation with parents and interested parties has been launched on13 January and closed on the 10 February. We await the outcome.

Sheringham High ‘s sixth form provision will also close at the end of this school year as Synergy manage financial pressure before the new auditing rules governing the performance of Multi Academy Trusts introduced a year ago begin to reveal some skeletons in their management performance across their catchment areas.

5. **NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY**

Introduced in 2021 to identify opportunities for nature restoration in a Local Nature Recovery Strategy the Council is working in partnership to create space for nature to thrive across the country. The local habitat map identifies where the valuable nature areas so vitally important for supporting biodiversity are located.

6. **MOBILE PHONE CONNECTIVITY**

Last month we invited the Mobile Network Federation to advise us on how they intend to meet the challenges poor mobile signalling has on local communities especially centered around emergency calls and defibrillator codes access. The 2G network will be phased out by 2033 at the latest to create extra capacity to expand 4G and 5G networks. It will save energy and reduce outdated technology infrastructure becoming difficult to repair as parts grow scarcer over time. Designed just for voice calls rather than smart data, 2G dependent devices like personal alarms or security systems will no longer work unless upgraded or replaced with 4G or 5G compatible devices. Anyone unsure should contact their mobile network operator or local store for advice.

By 2027 the old copper telephone network will be switched off and replaced by digital phone lines on the broadband network. The landline will stay and BT’s new digital landline service is called Digital Voice. If you don’t have broadband available to you, BT will provide back-up during power cuts so you can still make and receive calls during outages. Its free as well to those who need it most.

BT customers can call 0330 1234 150 or register (via the webform) on the Connected Together website for extra support in making the switch to Digital Voice. For more guidance for a family member who could benefit from early support, go to bt.com/connected-together.

7. **BUSINESS RATES RELIEFS**

The Non-Domestic (Business Rates) Policy 2026/7 has been changed to reflect the new and extended schemes announced by the Government. We collect then from business properties; 50% is kept locally split between NNDC 40% and N County Council 10% and some of ot is paid back to councils via the Formula Grant System. However, there are

some reliefs available for empty properties in the first 3 months; small business relief for a one property occupier. From last November if a business takes on a second property they now receive a relief for 3 years (up from 12 months previously). We also have ability to grant other reliefs via Discretionary Rate Relief measures to charitable and non-profit making organisations, charity shops and sports clubs, retail and hospitality sectors, electric vehicle charging forecourts and flood affected relief from all or part of business rates and new businesses funded by central government. Our policies have been updated to reflect changes introduced by government.

8. COASTAL PROTECTION TEAM

The Council Coastwise Team have been successful in securing a further £3 million to extend the coastal work to continue the protection of our coastline until 2029. The Council has also contracted engineers to tender for work to begin the Overstrand Coastal Protection Scheme where part of the promenade has collapsed. A recent sink-hole underneath part of the eastern promenade in Sheringham is being investigated. A £86k contract has also been authorized for further maintenance repairs to Cromer Pier. Coastwise grants are available for individuals and community groups to address immediate practical needs related to coastal change.

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

2/3/26