

Broadland District Councillors Report for Brundall Parish Council Meeting – 24 February 2025

The government is consulting on proposals to strengthen the standards and conduct regime for local authorities in England. The link to respond is here <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-the-standards-and-conduct-framework-for-local-authorities-in-england> and the final date for submissions is 26 February 2025.

Norfolk and Suffolk have been included on a government priority list for cancellation of the May County Council elections. This is a precursor to the establishment of a Mayoral Strategic Authority and the merger of existing district, city, and borough councils with the county council to form unitary councils. Councils have been asked to submit an interim plan for the proposed new unitary councils by the 21 March and a final plan by 26 September 2025.

At the same time, the government has announced a consultation on Devolution which seeks views on a proposal to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority for the local government areas of Norfolk County Council and Suffolk County Council. The merging of district and county councils into unitary councils is a separate process and is not covered by this consultation. To take part in the consultation see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution/norfolk-and-suffolk-devolution-consultation>

BDC was due for an Electoral Review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to consider the electoral arrangements for the district with the final report due to be published in June 2026. This is now on hold due to planned local government reorganisation.

The next BDC Town and Parish Council Forum will be held online on 4 March at 1.00 pm. An in-person Town and Parish Council summit will be scheduled for April 2025.

A key priority of BDC is to address homelessness which has placed more pressure on the council. The aim is to increase the council's stock of temporary accommodation using government grant funding. On 6 January 2025 there were 97 BDC households accommodated in temporary accommodation compared with 53 households a year ago and 43 households 2 years ago.

The BDC Delivery Plan 2024-2026 has been reviewed and updated and is on track to deliver the council's strategic aims.

BDC is the lead authority for delivering Warm Home Grants and is expected to deliver £3m of home improvements across Norfolk in each of the next 3 years

A Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) bid has been submitted to the government for the purchase of a further 18 temporary accommodation properties and 6 resettlement properties. The outcome of the bid is not yet known.

A social prescribing service is available for residents throughout the district. This is an NHS funded project which works in partnership with district councils. It is delivered via Community Connectors at hubs in GP surgeries and provides help and advice for a whole range of issues. For more information contact:

<https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/communities/help-hub/community-connectors>

The BDC Communities Team is available to provide help and advice for local communities and groups in the district. This might involve looking for grant funding or guidance on how the group is structure and how it operates. For information contact Communities@southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk

The Norfolk Net Zero Communities project is continuing. The link for more information and to sign up to the newsletters is here

<https://www.norfolkclimatechange.co.uk/norfolk-netzero-communities/>

The project is running a survey on home improvements that can make your place warmer and greener, plus there's a chance to win a £50 Love2Shop voucher. To complete the survey which only takes approximately 5 minutes click on the link: <https://form.jotform.com/250153358953359> .

BDC is again promoting tree planting projects in the district. For more information and potential grant scheme funding opportunities click on this link:

<https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/climate-change-environment/trees-biodiversity/trees>

At BDC Main Council on 20 February 2025 it was agreed to:

Agree the Revenue Budget for 2025/26. There will be no rise in Council Tax and Broadland is one of the very few councils who are not raising tax in the coming financial year.

The Band D level of Council Tax is to remain at the same level as 2024/25 which is £134.91 for General Expenditure and £1.25 for Special Expenditure.

Approve the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme for 2025/26 to 2029/30. The total cost of the 5-year capital programme comes to £23,643m, and will be continually reviewed to ensure the council obtains value for money.

Approve The Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025/26.

Adopt the Rechargeable Repairs Policy for BDC housing, to ensure that residents understand what they are responsible for, and to ensure that BDC properties are decent places to live, with any repairs or maintenance required being carried out and charged for accordingly.

Adopt changes to the Council Tax Assistance Scheme for 2025/26. This scheme (to be named the Council Tax Reduction scheme in future) reduces Council Tax bills to a more affordable level for low-income households.

Approve the Greater Norwich 5-year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2025-2030 and the Annual Growth Programme 2025/26.

The projects funded by the pooled Community Infrastructure Levy in Broadland are:

Broadland Country Park Café & Visitor Centre (£871,210) To deliver a new visitor centre at Broadland Country Park in Horsford. with a café, toilets, and indoor seating areas, as well as enhanced parking facilities with EV charging, a highway crossing and an interconnecting Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Compliant footpath.

Buckenham Ancient Woodland (£104,095.24) To deliver a range of improvements at Buckenham Wood in Strumpshaw, with the ambition of restoring, enhancing, and conserving the integrity of the ancient woodland. Works will include rationalising, restoring, and monitoring the footpath network; installing fencing and gates where appropriate to access and manage newly acquired land; woodland management and enhancement; and installation of cycle stands, benches and interpretation boards.

Aylsham Library Improvements (£110,000) – To deliver an accessible public toilet with baby changing and new staff facilities at Aylsham Library through the reconfiguration of the internal library space. Aylsham Library will provide users with updated facilities that meet UK building regulations accessibility requirements, as set out in the Equality Act. The project is strategically located in a high growth area, and therefore supports the growth ambitions of Greater Norwich.

Area Library Improvements - Earlham, St Williams Way, Sprowston (£90,000) - To deliver accessible public toilets with baby changing facilities at Sprowston, Earlham, and St Williams Way Libraries, through internal remodelling of the existing buildings. The three libraries will provide users with updated facilities that meet UK building regulations accessibility requirements, as set out in the Equality Act

Approve amendments to the Broadland Local Development Scheme (LDS), together with a timetable to review the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP). The LDS is a project plan for the documents that make up the local plan. The Government has requested that all councils in England update their LDS by 6 March 2025, and the new methodology to be used increases the housing need figure for Greater Norwich by 28% (from 1929 homes per year to 2590 homes per year). Councils are required to update local plans to allocate the land required for the extra home building.

A draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Custom and Self-Build Housing has been drawn up and is now out for public consultation. BDC is required to make provision for custom and self-build housing in the district and the SPD provides further guidance and information.

The link to the consultation is [here](https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/news/consultation-opens-on-draft-custom-and-self-build-housing-guidance-for-broadland-and-south-norfolk) and the final date to respond is Friday 21 March. Once the consultation closes, responses will be considered and any amendments made, with the final SPD adopted in Summer 2025.

<https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/news/consultation-opens-on-draft-custom-and-self-build-housing-guidance-for-broadland-and-south-norfolk>

(Submitted by Cllr Jan Davis and Cllr Eleanor Laming on 22/2/25)