

DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT FOR BRINTON/SHARRINGTON PC – JANUARY 2026

1. LOCAL ELECTIONS CANCELLED YET AGAIN!

Government and the County Council have decided between them to cancel the elections for County Council seats which has caused some anger particularly as they were postponed in May 2025 when the 4 years cycle ended. Still no certainty on whether District Council elections scheduled for 2027 will take place just 12 months before Unitary Councils are due to start in May 2028.

2. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK 2025 (NPPF)

The Government has launched another consultation on a draft NPPF setting out new powers for deciding planning applications last month just before Christmas. It is the second version since the Government came to power in 2024. It proposes to remove the right to decide on small developments from planning committees like ours along with automatic permissions for building close to railway stations and promotes building upwards in towns. Powers for local councils to buy land to connect infrastructure and to speed up building out sites with existing permissions expected to be in the draft, were missing. The consultation closes on 10 March.

3. SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND)

There will be more specialist calm learning spaces in mainstream schools to support our children with such characteristics announced by the Government. Its proposed 10,000 free special places nationally will be made available through new schools or if not, by giving councils funding to create equivalent provision. We will see how this impacts our part of Norfolk when the County Council get to grips with it. Let's hope they do a better job of it than they have with the new school in Holt, not started since it received permission 6 years ago!

4. 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.

5. 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 Carer 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.

6. CORPUSTY SCHOOL

Synergy Trust who run the school have decided to close it and asking parents to choose between Reepham or Gresham Schools 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 we are 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 wasted years and families useful to the school have not arrived in time to help save it. **Consultation has been launched and will close on the 10 February at 4pm.**

7. 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.

8. SHARRINGTON STRAWBERRIES APPEAL

We are still waiting for a decision to be issued by the Planning Inspectorate after they informed the District Council that no decision would be made prior to Christmas.

9. 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.

10. DISTRICT 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.

11. FLOODING IMPACT ON PERMITTED SITES

Following two recent decisions by the District Planning Authority, (one in Brinton by the Development Committee and the other in Sharrington by delegation to an officer) I have submitted a request for details of how drainage schemes will operate in practice and also in compliance with the conditions imposed in these decisions to protect property and the local infrastructure from the effects of flooding risks. This is unusual because we can normally rely on planners and building control at NNDC to safeguard us from such danger but in these instances, I feel it is necessary to receive the details during the construction phases. More to follow as things develop in this regard.

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

26/1/26