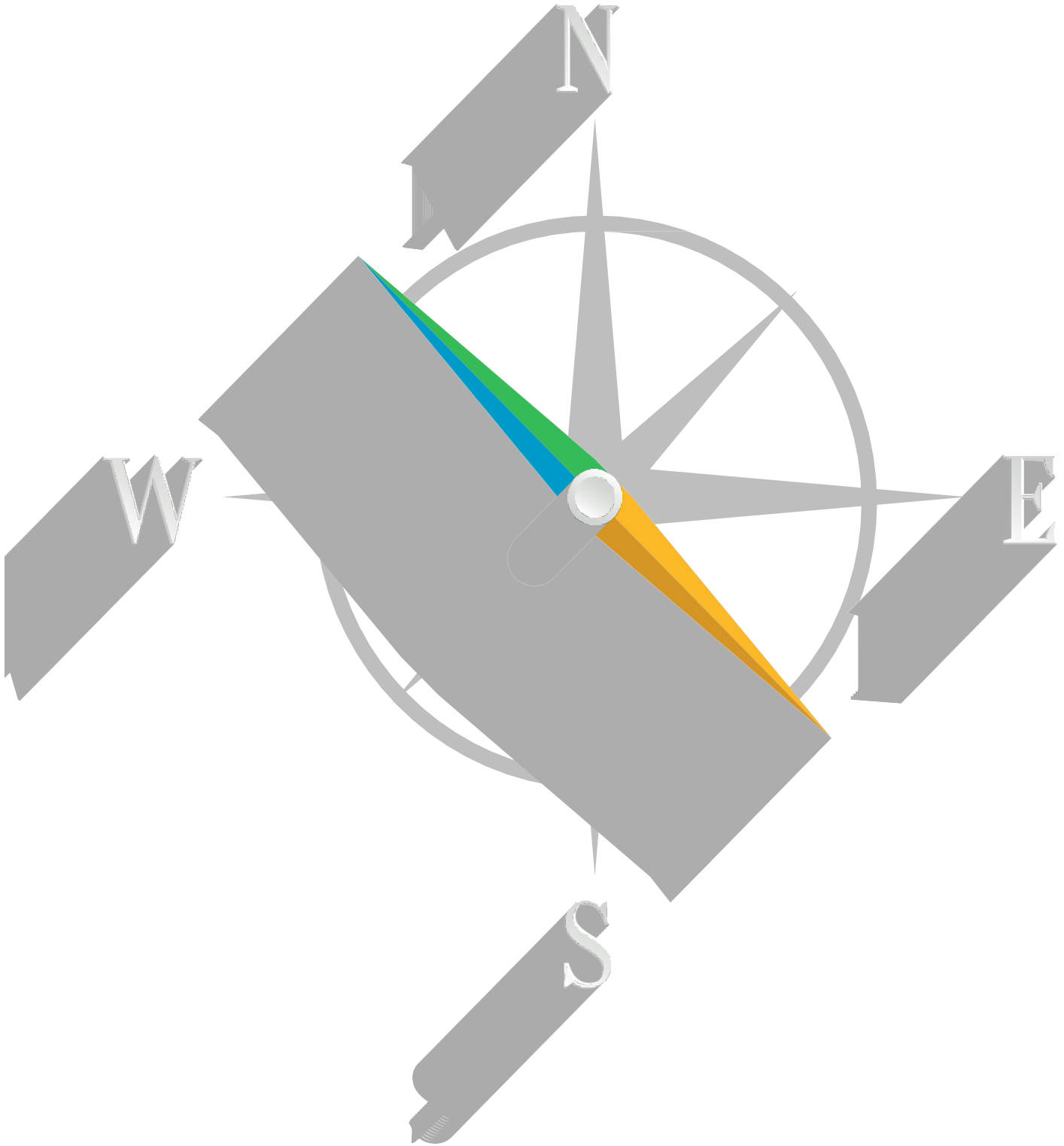


A BRIEF GUIDE TO BRECKLAND COUNCIL



CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

National policies are set by central Government, but local councils have a wide range of powers and duties, with responsibility for local matters and delivering day-to-day services. The main link between local authorities and central Government in England is the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, which is responsible for developing national policy on how local government operates and is funded. Other government departments deal with national policy on local services e.g. the Department for Education and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

Across England, local governmental bodies are arranged into a mixture of one and two-tier systems, with two levels in most of the country but only one level in some areas which is responsible for the provision of all local services; these are known as unitary authorities. Norfolk is administered by Norfolk County Council which is the top tier local government authority, based at County Hall in Norwich.

Below Norfolk County Council, the county is divided into seven second tier district councils: Breckland District, Broadland District, Great Yarmouth Borough, King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough, North Norfolk District, Norwich City and South Norfolk District.

Below the second tier councils the majority of the County is divided into Parish and Town Councils the lowest tier of local government (the only exceptions being parts of Norwich and Kings Lynn urban areas).

In London, each borough is a unitary authority, but the Greater London Authority (i.e. the Mayor and Assembly) is responsible for certain services like police and transport.

Town and Parish Councils

In some parts of England, there are also town and parish councils, which are sometimes described as the third tier of local government. Parish councils are currently responsible for a limited number of services such as bus shelters, footpaths, recreation facilities, public toilets, drainage, etc. Parish councillors are elected for a period of four years.

Funding for parish councils comes partially from residents and is taken from the area's Council Tax in the form of an annual precept. An amount based on the income and expenditure forecast for the next financial year is added to the local Council Tax and then returned to parishes.

Save for some councillor conduct and elections issues, town and parish councils are sovereign bodies and are not accountable to

the district or county councils. Further information about town and parish councils may be found at the websites of the National Association of Local Councils (www.nalc.gov.uk).

FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES

Local authorities work within powers laid down under various acts of Parliament.

In the Local Government Act 1972, the Government delegated specific duties to local government, together with the necessary powers to raise some of the money needed to pay for them. These duties are called **statutory** duties. In addition, there are **regulatory** services – such as planning applications, alcohol, gambling and taxi licensing – that councils must provide. Councils also carry out some other duties which are discretionary and therefore **non-statutory**.

HOW THIS COUNCIL WAS CREATED

The Local Government Act 1972 reformed the structure of local government in England and Wales, dividing England into county and district councils. A total of 47 county and 333 district councils were created, as well as 36 metropolitan districts and 32 London boroughs.

In 2010, Breckland Council and South Holland District Council in Spalding joined services to reduce its management costs by sharing a Chief Executive and an integrated senior management structure. The two councils do not have a common boundary being located either side of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk DC but with modern communications this has not been a barrier to achieving the benefits.

Both Councils are successful, well run organisations and sharing senior management enables them to continue to drive down costs and prepare for the anticipated reduction in government funding without cutting services.

The Local Government Act 2000 reformed local government in England and Wales, principally providing for:

- local authorities to promote economic, social and environmental well-being within their areas;
- local authorities to move away from a committee-based system of decision-making to an executive model;
- backbench councillors to fulfil an overview and scrutiny role;
- the introduction of a revised ethical framework for local authorities, including the adoption of codes of conduct for elected members and the establishment of standards committees.

The present structure of local government in England is:

- Greater London Authority (created May 2000)
- 32 London Boroughs and the City of London Corporation
- 36 Metropolitan District Councils in urban towns/cities
- 55 Unitary Authorities
- 27 County Councils
- 201 District Councils
- 9,000 (approx) town and parish councils

ELECTIONS

In England and Wales, over 19,000 people represent their communities by serving as councillors on a local authority. Councillors are elected to represent an individual geographical unit of the council known as a Ward (District) or Division (County).

In Breckland District, all councillors are elected once every 4 years. Elections are held on the first Thursday in May, with the next elections due on 2 May 2019.

If a councillor resigns or dies whilst in office, a by-election is held to elect another person to represent that Ward. Councillors elected at a by-election serve the remaining period of the 4-year term. However, where a vacancy occurs within 6 months of the date of the next ordinary election, the seat is left vacant until the next election.

Currently, there are 49 councillors serving on Breckland Council from the following political parties:

Conservative	38
UKIP	4
Labour	3
Independent	3
Unionist	1

Of these, 10 are female and 39 are male.

Link to Breckland Council Ward Map:

https://www.breckland.gov.uk/media/991/Map-of-the-Ward-Boundaries-for-the-District-and-Parish-Elections-in-May-2015/pdf/Map_Breckland_Wards_2015.pdf

The present ward structure in the District is:

Ward Name	Seats
Attleborough Burgh & Haverscroft	2
Attleborough Queens & Besthorpe	3
Dereham Neatherd	3
Dereham Toftwood	2
Dereham Withburga	2
Hermitage	1
Launditch	1
Lincoln	2
Mattishall	2
Necton	1
Saham Toney	2
Shipdham with Scarning	2
Upper Wensum	2
Watton	3
All Saints & Wayland	2
Ashill	1
The Buckenhams & Banham	1
Bedingfield	1
Forest	2
Guiltcross	1
Harling & Heathlands	1
Nar Valley	1
Swaffham	3
Thetford Boudica	2
Thetford Burrell	2
Thetford Castle	2
Thetford Priory	2

THE COUNCIL'S SERVICES

Breckland Council is responsible for delivering a wide range of services. Norfolk County Council is responsible for delivering strategic and, generally speaking, more costly services. The following information gives a flavour of the division of services between the two councils:

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

- **Waste Collection** (including Recycling) (collection of domestic and commercial waste (delivered by Serco)
- **Leisure Services** (provision and maintenance of our Leisure Centres (delivered by Parkwood)
- **Housing (homelessness support etc)**
- **Elections** (administration of European, Parliamentary and Local elections)
- **Planning** (dealing with applications for construction, alteration, demolition, conservation, developing a Local Plan etc) (delivered by Capita)
- **Licensing** (administration of licensing regime for sale of alcohol, taxis, animal boarding establishments etc)
- **Environmental Health** (enforcement of health hygiene and safety standards, pollution problems etc)
- **Car Parks**
- **Tax collection** (Council Tax & Non-Domestic Rates (delivered by the Anglia Revenues & Benefits

Not all services are delivered directly by the Council. The Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) for example, is a group of seven councils, who are working together to provide high-quality, shared revenue services to their residents. By working together through this partnership, the councils are reducing costs and providing a more efficient, effective service. The councils involved in the partnership are:

- Breckland Council
- East Cambridgeshire District Council
- Fenland District Council
- Forest Heath District Council
- St Edmundsbury Borough Council
- Suffolk Coastal District Council
- Waveney District Council

The aim of the partnership is to run an efficient Council Tax and Housing Benefits service, while reducing administration costs to each partner council. By working together, and pooling our staff and resources, each council has achieved significant savings. The Anglia Revenues Partnership is now the largest revenues partnership in England. The Partnership continues to look for innovative ways of reducing costs whilst improving services, with its focus on excellent customer service. Visit the website to find out more: <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/yourcounciltax>

NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

- **Waste Disposal**
- **Social Services**
- **Education**
- **Highways**
- **Traffic**
- **Fire Service**
- **Libraries**
- **Youth Services**

A full list of the services offered by both councils may be found under the A-Z of services at <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/> and on the home page of <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/>

WHO WORKS FOR THE COUNCIL

Councillors:

- Elected every 4 years by the electorate of the District aged 18 or over (and eligible to vote)
- Not salaried employees of the Council but do receive an allowance and expenses to cover cost of public duties
- Represent political parties or can be Independent
- Each councillor represents a part of the District known as a ward
- Some wards are represented by more than one councillor
- Help residents with queries or problems which usually relate to Council services
- Develop links with local community groups and organisations
- Campaign on local issues
- Take decisions as part of full Council by serving on the Cabinet or by sitting on Council committees
- Councillors come from all walks of life, age groups and backgrounds

Officers

- Salaried employees of the Council – appointed not elected
- Non-political
- Role is to implement Council decisions, provide advice and manage delivery of services

As of 2018, the Council's Executive Management Team comprises:

- Chief Executive
- Shared Executive Director of Strategy & Governance (Returning Officer BDC & Monitoring Officer)
- Shared Executive Director of Commercialisation (S151 Officer)
- Shared Executive Director Place (Returning Officer SHDC)

Please click on the link below to see the remaining current Management structure:

<https://www.breckland.gov.uk/statutoryofficerpositions>

DECISION-MAKING

Councillors are elected by local people to run the Council. In practice, the delivery of services and day-to-day management of the Council is carried out by officers of the Council. Councillors will initiate and develop policies, but officers are responsible for providing advice and implementation.

Traditionally, the decision-making structure of the Council has been divided into several tiers. Beneath the full Council, there used to be several committees organised by service or subject. Beneath these were sub-committees and working groups established to deal with specific issues. All councillors, sitting as full Council, would receive recommendations from the various committees which it would accept, reject or amend.

Following the Local Government Act 2000, Breckland Council adopted a new decision-making structure in the form of a Leader and Cabinet system. This was revised in 2011 and became the Strong Leader and Executive (or Cabinet) Model. Cabinet is the part of the Council that is responsible for making most day-to-day decisions. However, although not responsible for day-to-day decision-making, full Council is where all councillors meet to debate, and take decisions on, constitutional issues, the budget, the Council's policies and the appointment of senior officers, amongst other things.

Cabinet does not have responsibility for quasi-judicial and regulatory functions such as planning and licensing, and these are delegated by the Council to separate decision-making committees. There is also an Overview and Scrutiny Commission which provide for councillors who are not on the Cabinet to scrutinise Cabinet decisions and influence Council policies in development.

In 2018, the decision-making structure of the Council looks like this:

- **Council** - all 49 Members
- **Cabinet (group in control only)** - 8 Members
- **Governance & Audit Committee** - 6 Members
- **Licensing Committee(s)** - 15 Members
- **Planning Committee** - 12 Members
- **Overview Scrutiny Commission** – 12 Members
- **Joint Appointments & Disciplinary** - 6 Members (3 BDC & 3 SHDC)
- **Joint Appointments & Disciplinary Appeals** – 8 Members (4 BDC & 4 SHDC)

The **Cabinet** comprises:

- The Leader of the Council
- The Deputy Leader of the Council

and **Portfolio Holders** for:

- Finance and Delivery
- Corporate Strategy & Investment
- People and Information
- Assets
- Growth
- Governance
- Place (Health Lead)

Further information about the role of Cabinet and its Members may be found in the separate briefing note entitled "How Decisions are Made at Breckland Council" at <https://www.breckland.gov.uk/councilinformation>

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

Breckland Council obtains the money it spends on services from a number of sources:

Council Tax

The money collected through Council Tax is divided between the organisations and authorities that provide local services such as education, policing and rubbish collection – this includes:

- your county council
- your district/ borough council
- your police and crime commissioner
- your fire authority (if applicable)
- your parish or town council

Breckland Council has the lowest District Council Tax in the County.

Government Grants

The Government gives grants to local authorities to subsidise the cost of local services. Allocations to individual councils are intended to allow similar levels of service to be provided throughout the country. The levels of funding have reduced over recent years and a new funding regime is due to be implemented from 2020/21.

Fees and Charges

These are the charges made to customers using council services such as licensing (taxis, tattoo premises, etc.); planning (for permission to build new, and change current, properties etc.); environmental health (inspecting restaurants etc.) etc.

National Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates)

The Council collects business rates from businesses in Breckland District. The rate is set nationally and Breckland Council has no influence over how much is charged. An element of this funding is retained by Breckland directly and the remainder is passed to Central Government and Norfolk County Council.

Commercial Property

A further area of income is in relation to commercial property. Breckland Council became the Commercial Property Specialist and winner of the 2017 MJ Awards for Commercialism in the Property Estate. The income from our commercial property helps to keep the cost of the Council Tax down.

AND WHERE THE MONEY GOES

Council spending is divided between **capital** and **revenue**.

Capital spending is for one-off payments to buy things like buildings and to finance significant projects, such as regeneration projects and new equipment.

Revenue spending is the way the Council pays for the services it delivers. Some examples of services provided are:

- Refuse and recycling collection from the District's households (contracted to Serco);
- Cleaning the streets and public areas of the District (contracted to Serco);
- Asset and facilities management, including parks and open spaces and other corporate assets;
- Community engagement;
- Housing services, including housing allocation, homelessness support and private sector housing;
- Planning and regeneration delivery;
- Tourism;
- Regulatory services, including licensing, environmental health (e.g. dog fouling, littering);
- Housing benefits provision and Council Tax support scheme;
- Car parks (maintenance and repair);
- Community safety and CCTV;
- Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates (NNDR).

The Council budget is set in February of each year.

More detailed information on Council finance is available on the Council's website: www.breckland.gov.uk

*This guide has been devised and produced by officers
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