District Councillor Andrew Brown

REPORT to Brinton Parish Council - February 2022

1. SECOND HOMES TAX LOOPHOLES

After a prolonged period of lobbying the Government, new measures are being introduced to ensure second homeowners who abuse a tax loophole by claiming their often-empty properties are holiday lets will be in future forced to pay council tax. Currently second homeowners avoid paying council tax and claim business rates relief instead by declaring an intention to let their property to holidaymakers. Frequently this is used as a device to obtain relief as there is no intention to offer holiday letting from day one. This has been a weakness in the system we have been determined to rectify since 2019. Under the new proposed rules holiday lets must be rented out for a minimum of 70 days a year to qualify for business rates relief. Business rates avoidance is estimated to cost £250 million per year in lost revenue. Closing this loophole is a stated aim of the current administration and an objective of the Council's Corporate Plan.

1. VISIT NORTH NORFOLK

The Council have offered a year's free membership for the Visit North Norfolk scheme to hospitality, leisure and accommodation businesses worth £150. The Government Covid Additional Restrictions Grant will fund the initiative. The scheme provides businesses with access to promotional opportunities, all year marketing opportunities, networking events, national press coverage and an interactive booking website. The move will give businesses an opportunity to increase their profile and access markets they would not reach individually.

1. ENVIRONMENTAL UPDATE

Once again the Environment Agency are set to announce that North Norfolk has high bathing water quality including the 6 Blue Flag beaches at Cromer Sheringham East Runton Mundesley Sea Palling and West Runton. We are determined to increase our Blue Flag beaches and are working towards a seventh by next year.

We will be planting 3 "Miyawaki Forests" pioneered first in Japan in Fakenham North Walsham and Sheringham. Funded by DEFRA and acting in partnership with the County Council Natural England and the Tree Council they grow 10 times faster (a metre or so each year) absorb more carbon and support much more wildlife. They have been called a secret weapon against climate change. Anyone wishing to develop a micro forest should contact the NNDC tree planting scheme on <treeplantingproject@north-norfolk.gov.uk>.

1. CAR PARKING CHARGES

The Council have reviewed charges for the first time since 2016 and have decided to increase fees by reference to the Consumer Prices Index or CPI. We have made an exception for season ticket holders who will not have to pay more than they currently pay to acknowledge we have to support local working families at this time. Standard car parks will go from £1.00 to £1.20 for first 2 hrs then from 70p to 80p per hour; Resort car parks from £1.30 to £1.50 for 1 hour then £1.20 (up from £1.00) per hour and Coastal car parks will go up to £1.80 from £1.50 per hour. Increases will be effective from July.

1. CROMER PIER

The Council owns the pier and the Pavilion Theatre and has contracted Openwide, an entertainments company, to operate the theatre, restaurant and gift shop whilst retaining responsibility for the pier and buildings' maintenance and repair. It is a revenue raising asset attracting some 60 to 70,000 visitors annually. As part of its ongoing maintenance programme and to enable hygiene legislation compliance the Council is to consider investing £45,000 to upgrade the bar and food service area within the Pavilion Theatre. Maintenance work is planned in addition and will cost some £1.4 million which has been provided for in the budget forecast.

1. COUNCIL TAX BUDGET 2022-23

A meeting of all councillors on 23 February to set the council tax for the 2022-23 civic year has been arranged. We are confident that there will be no cuts to services and that we will deliver a balanced budget. Protocol precludes me from announcing what the new rates will be ahead of the meeting, but rest assured we will be working to keep them as cost effective as possible. We are very aware of the pressure on family finances at this difficult time. It is worth recapping that there are 4 components to the Council Tax bill:  County Council charges, District Council charges, Police/ Crime Commissioner and Parish Council precepts. Last year I am proud to say that NNDC were the only body who did not impose an increase. Although NNDC receive full payments they retain only about 9p in every pound to fund services with the bulk of 75p in the pound going to the County Council. We remain in the category of 50 local authorities with the lowest council tax rates in the country. I am confident that once the new charges are announced on the 23rd that this Council will continue to deliver outstanding value for money until 2023.

(N.B. Please note that the new council tax charges will be set by the Council on Wednesday 23 February and I will give details of these once announced at the meeting)

1. CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS

The Conservation and Design team are analysing hundreds of submissions and will be collating them in a report to the Planning Policy and Built Heritage Working Party in either March or April. There is an opportunity to register to ask questions in person or in writing at the meeting which under current guidelines is allowed only on zoom. You must give notice at least 24 hours **before** the date of the meeting (to be confirmed on either 21 March or 25 April) and please contact Democratic Services 01263 516047 or email: matthew.strembrowicz@north-norfolk.gov.uk to register your interest.

The District Local Plan consultation is also ongoing and closes on February 28th. The full plan and the interactive response online website can be viewed on <www.north-norfolk .gov.uk/local plan> or you can telephone 01263 516318 or email: <planning policy@north-norfolk.gov.uk>

1. HELP AND ADVICE WITH COST OF LIVING

The Council's benefits team have put together a help and advice page in response to the latest announcement by Government regarding Energy Levy and Council Tax rebate. Here is the link:

Advice and Support web page has now been updated and can be found here [Home | Advice and support (north-norfolk.gov.uk)](https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/projects/advice-and-support/)

Revenues have added an update to the council web site regarding the Council Tax Rebate which can be found here [Home | Energy bills rebate (north-norfolk.gov.uk)](https://www.north-norfolk.gov.uk/tasks/council-tax/energy-bills-rebate/)

1. TOWN & PARISH COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT FORUM

The Council will debate new rules for quarterly meetings with Town and Parish Councils across the District to continue engagement with our community representatives and to debate matters of mutual benefit. Chairs and/or Clerks or other nominated persons will be invited to attend Zoom meetings. The District Council will manage and provide minutes. Senior council officers will attend to assist with specific items. Agenda items will be agreed in consultation with town and parish councils and both councils and NALC will have standing agenda items to update on their work. Items for which other channels of communication or refer to an individual body will not be accepted but items which affect several councils or represent a collective view of several councils will be encouraged.

1. NEW COUNCIL LEADER APPOINTED

Cllr Tim Adams (Cromer Ward) was confirmed as the new leader at a full council meeting on 9 February and I am pleased to say received unanimous support of the controlling group. The change was enforced following the resignation of Cllr Sarah Butikofer for personal reasons. She will continue to represent residents in her ward. We are indebted to Sarah for her dedicated service throughout the last 3 years and particularly during the challenges of the pandemic period.

Thank you for reading and I look forward to seeing you.

Kind regards

**Cllr Andrew Brown**

***Liberal Democrat***

***North Norfolk District Council - Stody Ward***

***07970 298695***

***Chair of Planning Policy and Built Heritage Working Party***

***Member of Overview & Scrutiny, Standards and Development Committees***

***Corpusty and Saxthorpe Parish Councillor***

***Serving the parishes of Briningham, Brinton with Sharrington, Corpusty with Saxthorpe, Edgefield, Melton Constable, Stody with Hunworth and Thornage with Little Thornage.***

***Data Protection Statement***

***I will only use any personal information provided to me to assist with your enquiry and/or complaint.***

***I will only share your personal information with the council and other relevant councillors on a need to know basis.***

***As a councillor I am subject to the data protection policy of my council and of my political party. I also control data where I deal with my constituents.***

***Your details will be deleted after 1 year after your case is closed unless there is a basis in law or you consent to keeping it. You can withdraw your consent at any time.***

***If you require me to delete your personal information please let me know along with a reason for requesting this.***