

Breckland Council Report to Swaffham Town Council for December 2021

From **Councillor Ian Sherwood** Swaffham Ward Member, Executive Member for Customer Engagement and Lead Member for Climate Strategy.

Other Members representing Swaffham Ward are Cllr Ed Colman and Cllr David Wickerson

Contacting me.

Firstly, as always do contact me if you have any questions in relation to local Swaffham issues or Breckland Council matters. You all have my contact information which is: -

Email: ian.sherwood@breckland.gov.uk Mobile: **07795 236878**

Twitter: @CllrIanSherwood

Many of you do contact me between the monthly meetings and I'm always happy to meet with you (currently via zoom) if you wish to have a decision on local Swaffham or broader Breckland issues.

Monthly Update December 2021

Ward Issues

£500.00 funding towards Christmas Market

Firstly, I was delighted Cllr Ed Colman and I were able to secure funding of **£500.00** towards the Swaffham Town Council Christmas market weekend, I asked the council Leader Cllr Sam Chapman -Allen to come over and visits on Saturday and we visited local businesses and some market trader. The event seemed to be very well received by most businesses and trader and local residents and visitors enjoyed the event – well done to all involved.

Breckland Reindeer Trail supporting local businesses

You will have seen the publicity regarding the reindeer trail - Father Christmas' reindeer are lost across Breckland and he needs everyone's help to find them by Christmas Eve! Follow the Breckland Reindeer Trail around the district's five market towns and find the reindeer hidden in local high street shops. As a thank you for helping Father Christmas get ready for the big day, shoppers could be in the running to win a big prize.

The Breckland Reindeer Trail launches on 27 November and will see Father Christmas' reindeer hiding in high street shops in Attleborough, Dereham, **Swaffham**, Thetford and Watton.

Historic England to deliver the Swaffham High Street Heritage Action Zone

You will have seen the ongoing news regarding the HSHAZ - Breckland working in partnership with Historic England to deliver the Swaffham High Street Heritage Action Zone, which will see a range of projects rolled out to protect the historic high street and look at how it could be further enhanced for residents and visitors in the future.

The programme was originally announced in 2019 after Historic England agreed to invest **£380k** in the town, with a further **£200k** ring-fenced by Breckland.

The HSHAZ is a key delivery element to plans in **Swaffham** and is designed to enhance and compliment the planning environment. Having now moved to full-delivery, the project is progressing well with key highlights including:

- The cultural consortium is up and running as part of the cultural programme organising and preparing for Carter 22 which involves loads of events to engage the community.
- Building improvements – we have the first project within this starting with a survey and minor repairs of the Assembly Rooms scheduled for beginning of January.
- Conservation area – on track. We are due to receive the first draft of the conservation area appraisal before Christmas for internal review and comment.
- Masterplan – the architects' stage 1 report was issued internally for review and comment which detailed the history of Swaffham and started to outline opportunities. The consultants Urban Symbiotics are also meeting local businesses in town currently for engagement sessions, and discussions on the town before holding a stall at the Christmas market.

£98k of Green Community Grants announced

Breckland has announced that 30 projects will share in over £98k of funding from our Green Community Grants fund.

The fund was set up to support communities in Breckland to take action for themselves. The aim is to promote environmental sustainability, create positive behavioural change in response to climate change, and encourage communities to take positive action. The fund can also support school projects which encourage pupils to take action for the environment.

It was great news that Heratwood CE VC Primary and Nursery School, Swaffham received **£3,000.00** towards their project

Local Plan

New Local Plan Update & Single Policy Review

I was disappointed to see misleading information being circulated regarding the Breckland Council Local Plan, I would encourage you to watch the YouTube of the Cabinet meeting of 15th November.

At its meeting of the Cabinet on 15 November 2021 Breckland Council resolved to commence an update of its Local Plan, as well as a partial review of Policy INF03. This means:

- A substantial update of the whole local plan will be concluded by Q4 2027, which is required because of updates requested by the inspector at the last review, and to ensure we continue to have effective and robust tools in place to guide development up to 2041

Simultaneously a technical exercise (a single policy review of policy IN03) will have been concluded by Q1 2023 to help ensure the weight of current policies whilst the substantial update is being concluded

A timeline was agreed by Cabinet which included a call for sites in Q1 2022; more details will be shared with Swaffham Town Council as they are developed – particularly around opportunities to shape and engage and respond to the stages of consultation

As part of its commitment to undertake a far-reaching and robust process, Breckland Council has agreed to meet the additional resource requirements for this new exercise

This approach strikes a reasonable compromise between pace and deliverability and is set to see the plan reviewed in a timely manner, without needing to curtail public engagement and scrutiny. Consideration was also given to the impact on the public purse as attempting to deliver a comprehensive review of a Local Plan in under six years would require additional resources, significant extra financing at the expense of other services, and would still not likely be achievable.

Whilst there have been some queries and concerns about whether this process will make development harder to manage in the intervening period it is important to note that a Local Plan does not automatically become out-of-date after five years and whether individual policies in a plan are out-of-date (subject to several exceptions) is a matter of planning judgment.

Planning Performance & Activity

For the year up to date (6th December 2021) the Planning Service has received the following number of planning applications:

- Major applications – 65
- Minor applications – 602
- Prior approval etc – 233
- Discharge of Conditions – 306
- Others – 835

This was a total of 2,041 applications received to date in 2021.

In terms of decision making we determined the following applications within the same timeframe:

- Major applications – 55
- Minors – 565
- Others – 603
- Discharge of Conditions – 287
- Householder applications – 619

This gives a total determined of 2,129 applications within this calendar year to date.

From January 2021 the service received a total of 26 appeals of which 7 were allowed.

Future Breckland: Thriving People & Places

The Future Breckland programme will be feeding into the Local Plan review, as a significant undertaking in gathering intelligence and insight. It will also a key role in helping ensure there are viable, and strategically valuable, projects being in and **Swaffham** to meet future needs and opportunities.

The consultant team are currently concluding their review of evidence and feedback and preparing their recommended draft report which will be available for consultation and feedback over the New Year. A meeting is being scheduled in January to allow **Swaffham Town Councillors** to feedback their views on the consultants work as part of this.

It is intended that all the Town Plans, alongside a District-wide set of interventions, will have been developed and consulted upon for agreement and adoption by April 2022. However, as soon as we have agreed priorities in **Swaffham** there will be nothing to curtail work commencing where shared priorities and resources exist, immediately.

Report It

Local Residents and Swaffham Town Councillors often contact me regarding local ward issues, from dog fouling to street light bulbs failing, I'm happy to take these matters up but remember Breckland has a Report It page on the website where matters such as this can be reported it helps identify any underlying local issues here's a link if you need it: -

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

As always, I'm happy to take questions on my report at your meeting this evening or via email.

Kind regards,

Councillor Ian Sherwood