

Roger Atterwill - District Councillor Report for the Lincoln Ward – May 2026

Dear Resident,

It is my great privilege to serve as your Breckland District Councillor here in the Lincoln Ward. Here is a brief summary of my work and that of the council:-

Budget & Council Tax

For the financial year 2026-2027, Breckland Council has increased its share of your council tax bill to £123.48 for a Band D property. This is an increase of £4.95 above last year. The Council continues to face financial headwinds, and it has had to utilise some of its financial reserves and implement a programme of efficiency savings.

Land Transfers

Breckland Council owns several parcels of land throughout the district which are now deemed surplus to requirements. The Council has taken the decision to offer many of these to local communities at nil, or relatively low cost, depending on the size and value of each one. I am happy to assist any community which expresses an interest in taking on these pieces of land, some of which I am sure can be better utilised by residents and community groups.

Local Development Plan Review

Having restarted its local plan review in early 2025, the Council carried out another call for sites, made changes to its draft proposals and completed the Regulation 18 requirements, having consulted widely with stakeholders including local communities. Work is now underway to finalise the draft plan and carry out a Regulation 19 consultation this summer. Once completed the plan will be submitted to HM Planning Inspectorate for examination.

The Future of Robertson Barracks

In the past twelve months I have attended two meetings with Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO). These meetings were held in Swanton Morley and attended by DIO's project team and representatives from Breckland Council, Hoe & Worthing Parish and Swanton Morley Parish Council. The meetings were useful but it is fair to say that they were very light on detail. Breckland Council in my view is taking a very pragmatic approach to this site. It recognises that a lot of detailed work around transport links, utilities, green infrastructure and good quality design will need to be produced before a realistic assessment of potential housing and employment growth can be determined. At the present time DIO have not provided any such information. I will continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders including DIO to try and get the best possible outcome for the current local community and future generations. It must be remembered that any development of this site will likely take many years to plan and many more after that to carry out the construction work. Robertson Barracks is still earmarked for closure in 2031 however, we live in a volatile world at the moment and the proposed use of the base might yet change again.

Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

The Government recently announced that it favoured the proposal promoted by Breckland Council for three unitary councils in Norfolk. These are East Norfolk, Greater Norwich and West Norfolk. We here in Breckland will form part of the West Norfolk Unitary Council which will be made up of Breckland, Kings Lynn & West Norfolk and a small number of villages currently in South Norfolk. Work has now begun on designing the leadership and management of this new organisation including a review of new ward boundaries. Elections for this new council will take place in May 2027. Breckland Council will remain in existence until April 2028 and current Breckland Councillors are expected to stay in post during 2027-28 for what will be a transition year before the new council takes over the running of services and Breckland Council ceases to exist. I am generally supportive of these changes, the first in local government for over fifty years. Yes, there is likely to be bumps in the road to get these new

authorities up and running but I believe that in the long run, these new structures will be more efficient, save money and provide better services for Norfolk residents.

It has also been announced that the proposed elections for a combined Mayoral authority for Norfolk & Suffolk, scheduled for May 2026, has been postponed until May 2028 giving the new Unitary Councils a chance to get up and running first.

Supporting our Military Families

I was troubled to find out in 2024 that some of our service personnel and their families based at Robertson Barracks were living in substandard accommodation on the base. Some of these homes were very poorly insulated, suffer from damp and mould and have very expensive and inefficient electric heating. This makes the cost of energy very expensive and impacts on other aspects of their household budgets such as everyday shopping. I subsequently met with representatives from the 1st Queens Dragoon Guards welfare team, senior officers, local housing officials and the Director of Accommodation – Defence Infrastructure Organisation. We inspected some of the housing and afterwards met some of the affected families to hear firsthand of their experiences living on the base. Approximately sixty homes were identified as requiring refurbishment to improve insulation, install solar panels and improved heating. I was pleased to note the Government recently bought back MOD Housing from the previous private sector housing provider and that they will be investing heavily in bringing the MOD housing stock up to a good standard. To this end, they informed me last Autumn that work had begun to improve the worst of the houses at Robertson Barracks. This should result in warmer homes and cheaper bills for our service families. It has been reported to me that those families living in houses recently upgraded are now experiencing a sizeable reduction in their electricity bills which is good news.

Breckland Council Staff

I want to take this opportunity to thank the staff at Breckland Council for all of their help and assistance to me and the many residents they help throughout the year. Sadly, they often receive abuse and harsh criticism from social media and the press which is unwarranted. I have found them to be courteous and professional in all of my dealings with them. Theirs is not an easy job, but they carry out a very important role in our community.

Casework

As part of my casework, I am always willing to try and help struggling local families and individuals receive additional support as well as putting them in touch with other professional bodies and charities where they can receive additional help and guidance. I can, and often do help with concerns relating to planning, antisocial behaviour, housing, street cleaning, environmental health matters, business support and backing community grant funding applications.

Your Councillor

As well as my day to day duties as your councillor, I am also the leader of the Independent & Green Group at Breckland Council. I am now starting my eighth year as a member of the Planning Committee, and I am also a substitute member of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission.

Yours Sincerely

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