



Environment



Economy



Communities



Customer
Focused

BUSINESS PLAN 2011 / 14

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Foreword

The Council is here to deliver the services you need now and to plan for the future, protecting and enhancing the special qualities of South Norfolk that make it one of the best places to live and work in the country.

Remaining focussed on customers, and agreeing with you the level of service that matters, will ensure we continue to deliver value for money and change with the times.

In the last two years, we have streamlined the Council and made efficiency savings of £ 2.75 million without cutting frontline services. Living within our means, and challenging ourselves at every step, will ensure we continue to provide what matters locally to you.

Our strategy is to focus on 4 key priorities, improve efficiency and share services, where appropriate, to continue to deliver what matters to you.



John Fuller
Leader



Sandra Dinneen
Chief Executive

Our Vision

Our Vision is

“to retain and improve the quality of life in South Norfolk, for now and future generations, to make it one of the best places to live and work in the country.”

This vision is based on our priorities below and, further on, you will see what we plan to do and how much we have achieved already.



Enhancing our quality of life and the environment we live in

We will develop South Norfolk's potential in a way that protects its quality of life but ensures its future prosperity. We will publish soon our plan for housing and employment growth up to 2026.



Meeting 1,000 residents on our road shows last autumn, and receiving 6,020 representations since, will help shape final decisions about where jobs and homes will go. Keeping the balance between the need for growth and safekeeping our environment will sustain and improve the attractiveness of South Norfolk for now and future generations.

Promoting a thriving local economy

For future prosperity, it's important we create the right conditions to foster economic success. We will stimulate existing businesses to develop and grow, and attract new jobs through inward investment and business start-ups.

Developing the economy means having a good supply of land and premises, a skilled workforce and improved employment opportunities. We will do this by leading the coordination of major development and investment opportunities in key sectors such as Health and Life Sciences at Norwich Research Park and advanced engineering, particularly the development and expansion of Hethel Engineering Centre.

Our plans strike a balance between the larger growth we need to accommodate nearer Norwich and the action plans we are developing with you for our market towns, to ensure they remain the backbone of our local economy and rural areas.



Supporting communities to realise their potential

We want communities to shape the places where they live and how they lead their lives. We know real money at a very local level can make all the difference and local people know where best to spend it.

Since 2007, we have funded 270 projects through our Neighbourhood Grants scheme, channelling £ 427,188 into issues that local people have determined and resolved. This is our “Big Society” in action.

We have funded scouts and guides, toddler groups, youth clubs and parish councils for a vast range of projects from start up costs and sports kit to youth shelters and village halls.



Our Priorities

Driving services through being businesslike, efficient and customer aware.

The Council is in a strong financial position because what drives us above all else is our need to deliver services customers need at a price they can afford.

Challenging ourselves at every step, and without cutting frontline services, we have made efficiency savings of £ 2.75 million over the last two years.



We are now in positive talks exploring a shared services arrangement that could help bridge the budget gap of more than £2 million in 2013/14.

With further reductions in government grant, we face even more challenges but we believe the changes we have already made and our plans for the future place us in a strong position.

Enhancing our quality of life and the environment we live in



We will strike the right balance between the need for future growth and safekeeping our environment to sustain and improve the attractiveness of South Norfolk as a place to live and work.

We will balance the need for growth with the need to protect our environment

To do this, we will:

- Have the right local policies in place to support growth and protect the environment;
- Have a blueprint for designing communities well through our Place Making Guide;
- Have a business-friendly planning service responsive to local needs;
- Seek external resources to deliver the strategic infrastructure we need.

We will continue to improve the range and quality of housing

To do this, we will:

- Improve the range of housing available to meet local need;
- Build on our expertise in delivering more affordable housing across the District;
- Ensure communities grow through our Local Needs Affordable Housing Scheme;
- Support older people to retain their independence as long as possible;
- Tackle fuel poverty, making homes more efficient and cheaper to heat;
- Continue to be one of the best councils in the country for preventing homelessness.

We will continue to improve where you live

To do this, we will:

- Keep the streets clean because cleaner streets are safer streets;
- Encourage residents to recycle more through increased opportunities;
- Fight environmental crime and prosecute perpetrators whenever we can;
- Maintain one of the lowest crime rates in the country;
- Respond to anti-social behaviour swiftly through our new combined police and council operational team;
- Work more with local communities to safeguard our green and open spaces.

We will promote local health and well being

To do this, we will:

- Ensure our public health role fits the National Health Service reforms in South Norfolk;
- Encourage people to get fitter through our leisure centre activities;
- Tackle noise pollution and other environmental anti-social behaviour;
- Maintain the high standard of food premises through our inspection programme.

We will measure our success by:

- Affordable and low-cost housing delivered that meets local requirements;
- Monitoring the cleanliness of the district;
- The proportion and range of waste materials that are recycled;
- Low crime rates;
- Improved local biodiversity;
- Leisure Centres Use;
- Homelessness prevented



Promoting a thriving local economy

We will create the right conditions in South Norfolk to foster economic success. We will create the right environment by stimulating existing businesses to develop and grow, attracting new jobs through inward investment and business start-ups.

Support and enable existing and new businesses to develop and grow.

To do this, we will:

- Provide support and advice to existing and new businesses;
- Develop the supply of well located employment land and premises;
- Ensure essential infrastructure to support business development and growth is in place;
- Support new business start-ups to generate employment locally;
- Be business friendly and cut 'red tape' wherever we can.

Encourage development in key sectors, and on strategic locations.

To do this, we will:

- Work with partners to develop the world class science, research and business park at the Norwich Research Park;
- Further develop Hethel with our partners as a key location for advanced engineering and manufacturing companies;
- Improve business opportunities within key sectors by supporting the development of local supply chains.



Help improve the skill levels and aspirations of local people, particularly young people.

To do this, we will:

- Work with local businesses to understand their needs and to develop training opportunities;
- Work in partnership to improve skills gaps and local employability;
- Improve accessibility to jobs and training through improved local transport.

Help revitalise market towns and the rural economy.

To do this, we will:

- Revitalise and encourage our rural-based economy through sustainable development;
- Develop with local communities their market towns as effective service hubs and increase their attractiveness through appropriate retail, cultural and heritage development;
- Promote South Norfolk as a tourist destination and support the businesses in this sector;
- Seek inward investment opportunities.



We will measure our success by:

- Growth in the number of jobs in South Norfolk;
- Take up of actively developed employment land;
- Increases in new business registrations;
- Increased skills levels of young people and older people;
- Increased visitor numbers and tourist related expenditure.

Supporting communities to realise their potential

We want communities in South Norfolk to shape the places where they live and how they lead their lives in them. We want our services to be flexible, reflecting local needs, and enable others to take on more if this is the best option.

We will shape local services around local needs

To do this, we will:

- Galvanise communities into action through our neighbourhood working;
- Fulfil our community leadership role through Members championing their areas;
- Create the right opportunities to engage with local people and understand their needs;
- Adapt our service delivery to the differences we find across the district;
- Profile our customers to target services more effectively.

We will give local communities an even greater say about their future

To do this, we will:

- Support local communities to fulfil their proposed new planning roles;
- Encourage participation in the forward planning of all local development;
- Encourage parish planning as a community blueprint;
- Support communities to engage with and deliver their market town action plans and management of conservation areas.
- Use web services even more effectively to understand people's views.



We will help communities to grow and flourish

To do this, we will:

- Promote community “ownership” of services;
- Get community projects off the ground through our Neighbourhood Fund;
- Support communities to secure external funding;
- Further promote our Community Pub of the Year scheme to support the sector;
- Run our “Greenest Community” competition to share best practice;
- Support initiatives that turn community assets into vibrant hubs of local life;
- Invest in community transport schemes that make a difference locally.



We will support initiatives that encourage others to get involved

To do this, we will:

- Help signpost South Norfolk’s many volunteers into local projects;
- Encourage active lifestyles and community spirit through programmes such as Village Games;
- Support communities to deliver their own cultural events;
- Foster sporting talent through our Community Sports Achiever Award;
- Use technology to support community collaboration.

We will measure our success by:

- The value and distribution of community projects funded through Neighbourhood Grants;
- Number of residents engaged with our neighbourhood teams;
- Local community involvement in the new planning process;
- The amount of external funding secured;
- Number of participants in active life programmes.

Driving services through being businesslike, efficient and customer aware

South Norfolk Council will deliver flexible, efficient services focussed on customers and shaped by residents' needs.

We will focus on customers and shape services according to their needs.



To do this, we will:

- Maintain and improve the supply of suitably located employment land and premises;
- Encourage more sustainable jobs by increasing new business start-ups;
- Ensure we are a business friendly organisation and reduce 'red tape', support and advise existing and new businesses to help them develop and grow.

We will become more businesslike in the way we deliver services

To do this, we will:

- Review all services to drive out waste;
- Partner with others in shared services if this delivers better value for money;
- Enable others to deliver more if it's better for our customers;
- Be open and transparent about our spending.



We will become more efficient and deliver increased value for money.

To do this, we will:

- Provide more choice about how and when customers contact us;
- Extend the number of services which can be booked, accessed or paid for on line;
- Develop a competent and flexible workforce intent on driving down costs;
- Keep continuous improvement as a constant goal;
- Improve procurement to use local suppliers where cost effective;
- Use technology to drive cost savings.

We will measure our success by:

- Delivery against new customer service standards;
- Resident satisfaction with South Norfolk as a place to live and work;
- Value for money council tax;
- Changes in service delivery responding to local needs.



Be businesslike and efficient providing services people value the most

- We have saved £2,748,000 by re-organising and changing that way we do things, becoming more efficient and delivering services South Norfolk residents want from us.
- We have published on our website all our spending over £ 500 to be more open and transparent.
- We are using energy smarter and reducing costs through our Carbon Management reduction plan. Reducing electricity consumption by 7.7% at South Norfolk House has saved £ 2,000 in six months.
- We have reduced fuel use in council vehicles by 4.6% in a year, saving £ 10,500 at today's fuel prices and reduced staff business mileage by 26% or 38,500 miles.
- With interest rates low, we have invested in a business centre and an industrial starter unit at Wymondham as a better return for our money.
- The Fraud Team detected £143,826 of recoverable overpaid benefits and sanctioned 19 people for fraudulently claiming benefits including 6 successful prosecutions.
- Following a recent review by the Department of Work and Pensions, our revenues and benefits service was described as "the best we have ever come across." We are processing new claims in an average of 3.9 days. The team won both the prestigious national IRRV Team of the Year Award and Customer Service Excellence Award in one year.
- Our residents are benefiting from the way in which they can access services on-line. Booking for Swim School has saved over 2,500 parents hours of queuing and attracted record numbers to life saving classes; 2,000 residents this year chose to confirm their electoral registration by text and our council tax competition produced one lucky winner and an additional 400 residents paying by direct debit, reducing costs for everyone.

Become among the best in the country for recycling

- We are currently maintaining recycling rates at 39.7% despite the difficult economic conditions that result in less packaging, and reduced volumes of glass and paper.
- We have increased the amount of Mini Recycling Centres across the district to 116 increasing the range of materials residents can recycle. Bras, bulbs and batteries can now be brought alongside books, bottles, toys, paper and textiles.
- Despite the atrocious weather in December 2010, that brought parts of England to a standstill, South Norfolk Council's bin crews never missed a day's collection.
- We will have reached our target of 13,000 brown bin customers by March 2011 so that more residents can compost garden waste.
- Our support for the Love Food, Hate Waste campaign has seen us campaigning from Norwich City Football Club to Ladies Guilds to raise awareness of the food we send to landfill.
- Now that we recycle street sweepings, we have diverted over 320 tonnes from landfill since April 2010.
- Our first Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) event diverted over a tonne of waste to recycling preventing potential fly tipping.



Get to grips with anti-social behaviour and other environmental crime

- We have a new combined police/council Operational Partnership Team operating from South Norfolk Council to respond more swiftly to reports of anti-social behaviour.
- South Norfolk Council remains an area with one of the lowest crime rates in the country.



- Following our training, Police Community Support Officers have been able to issue fixed penalty notices for littering and dog-fouling.
- Community Speedwatch Schemes are running effectively in 13 parishes following specialist training.
- We have carried out random inspections of commercial properties to ensure they dispose of waste legally.
- We are removing 100% of abandoned vehicles within 24 hours.
- Recognising our good practice, when we investigate and prosecute for food safety matters, we have been asked to assist nationally in the development of a consistent approach.

Preserve the special character of our market towns and villages

- Agreeing the Joint Core Strategy development plan means we have more control over where new homes and job opportunities will be located.
- Our first Sustainable Communities Day in October launched the “South Norfolk Greenest Communities Award.” An investment of £50,000 by the Council and £15,000 by the South Norfolk Alliance will provide pivotal financial support to make great ideas for environmental projects a reality.
- We celebrated ten years of the Tree Wardens Scheme this year by involving 26 parishes , planting 382 trees and 1.4 km of hedging. Since the year 2000 over 5,000 trees and 15.8 km of hedging have been planted by volunteers. Tree Wardens now cover 95 of the district’s 119 parishes.
- We developed our Community Pub of the Year to support this sector of the local economy and it proved even more popular in its second year. 106 pubs participated with 3892 residents voting. This produced five finalists from each of the Council’s neighbourhood areas and an overall winner, The Bell at Wortwell.



Our Achievements



- We have also supported our local pubs by developing a scheme that will enable landlords to better advertise the locations of their pubs on main and other roads through distinctive signage in keeping with the countryside.

- We secured £ 300,000 of funding to ensure that eight communities will have new or improved play space areas.
- We have worked with residents on assessing the character of Wymondham, Stoke Holy Cross and Trowse and revised proposals for their preservation and enhancement.
- We celebrated ten years of the Council's annual Design Award Scheme. 50 projects have received an award or commendation for their design excellence including this year the innovative Costessey Centre and the beautifully renovated Pennoyers Centre in Pulham St Mary.
- Infrastructure is critical to new development and we brokered an agreement with the new developers at Queens Hills Costessey to ensure our residents get a new community centre, play areas, a country park and road improvements
- A capital investment of £ 250,000 has been invested in projects such as Diss Corn Hall, the Pennoyers Centre, Pulham St Mary and Central Hall Wymondham to ensure these, alongside the Costessey Community Centre remain vital hubs for our communities.
- This capital investment includes £ 100,000 for an all-weather pitch at Easton College and £ 20,000 for the development of facilities at Diss Rugby Club to ensure residents can benefit from an active lifestyle.

Make South Norfolk a culturally richer place to live

- Lottery funding of £ 200,000 has enabled us to improve play provision throughout the district ranging from a low wire course at Whitlingham to facilitating play sessions for 8,500 children, leaving a heritage of mobile play equipment for use in communities.
- Our first Family Fun Day “Discover South Norfolk” attracted more than 1,000 residents to enjoy more than 80 activities, celebrate what makes South Norfolk special and “have their say” on local issues.
- Working with the Norfolk Rural Community Council 10 sites in South Norfolk have had a ‘Big Book of Games’ installed.
- Our ambitious Festival of the Arts in 2009 attracted more than 4,600 residents to our free outdoor events.
- Supporting “Village Screen” events across the district will give local access to cinema for 2,000 residents this year.
- Celebrating South Norfolk’s architectural heritage, we expanded our participation in the national Heritage Open Days scheme by six to include 18 buildings in total.
- Our summer Arts Events and Activities for Young People ensures there is a wide range of activity for all families to enjoy including National Play Day, Kids Camps, Festivals and sports tasters such as archery and gymnastics.
- Our well established Outdoor Childrens’ Theatre on Fridays over the summer holidays continues to attract record turnouts with the total number exceeding 1,700 in 2010.



Make South Norfolk an economically richer place to live

- Agreed an Economic strategy that will:
 1. create an economic climate that supports and enables business to develop and grow;
 2. encourage development in key sectors, and on strategic locations;
 3. raise the skill levels and aspirations of local people, particularly young people;
 4. revitalise market towns and the rural economy.
- Through our membership on the Board of Norwich Research Park (NRP), we are helping to steer its development to attract more highly skilled jobs into what is one of Europe's largest concentrations of research in Health, Food and Environmental Sciences.
- We have also invested financially in the Genome Analysis Centre there. The Innovation centre at the NRP has opened for business following a £5m investment by East of England Development Agency and the Greater Norwich Development Partnership in new laboratory and office facilities for expanding science and innovation businesses.
- A £2.1m expansion at Hethel Engineering Centre (with investment from Norfolk County Council, South Norfolk Council and EEDA) opened in September 2010 enabling companies that began life at the centre to expand and remain in South Norfolk.
- We are exploring the potential for further development at the Hethel Engineering Centre (HEC) with plans for an advanced manufacturing centre.
- Group Lotus has submitted a planning application for the improvement and expansion of their production facility, and discussions continue with the company about the scope for a Technology Park.
- Through the Waveney Valley Project, external funding totalling £ 372,193 has been secured for ten projects ranging from farm diversification to a collaborative partnership of businesses along the Boudicca Way.



Innovate and deliver low cost housing for local people

- We delivered 650 affordable homes between April 2008 and December 2010 and will reach our target of 701 by May 2011.

- Several Local Needs Affordable Housing Schemes are currently under construction across the District, and will deliver a further 48 homes in total by 31st May 2011.



- An additional £337k Housing and Communities Agency funding for a Low Cost Housing Partnership scheme at Carleton Rode has been secured.

- We have made a bid for approximately £ 6 million funding to deliver more rural local needs affordable housing and if successful this would deliver 145 new homes.

- We are working with Norfolk County Council, to identify disused pieces of highway land suitable for transit sites for Gypsy and Travellers which can be used to reduce the number of unauthorised encampments in the district.

- We were the first council in the country to complete an application for a mortgage rescue scheme and our prevention work has protected 400 people from losing their homes.

- We have continued to support independent living through our Handyperson Scheme that helps an average 80 households with improvements each quarter.

Improve the health and wellbeing of everyone who lives or works in South Norfolk

- Enabling our Leisure Centre Managers to be more commercial has increased the centres' occupancy rates, delivered financial savings and better customer-focused activities.
- Corporate membership of our leisure centres has increased by 170% in a year to 1,015 members.
- Our investment at Diss and Wymondham Leisure Centres will mean electrical equipment uses less energy, runs more efficiently and will save £ 12,000 a year.
- Working with the NHS and Active Norfolk, our TLC ("The Lifestyle Choice") project is reducing health inequalities by promoting fitness courses and establishing an adult gym in Costessey.
- £5,000 of external funding provided by Sports Unlimited, meant 8-week fitness memberships for young people to benefit from sports such as basketball.
- We are geared up for the first South Norfolk Village Games in July 2011 with 10 villages confirmed and a further 16 expressing an interest.





- Following the success of our disability sports club “Deaftastics”, we provided financial support for the Disability Youth Games at the UEA Sportspark.
- We continue to promote the London 2012 Games and their legacy through a programme promoting active lifestyles including Village Games, Gold Challenge 2012, delivering a wide range of Get Back Into programmes across the district and the Sport Relief Mile in March 2012.
- Our over 60s leisure package ensured that more than 2,000 residents benefited from 22,382 free swims.
- We completed 93 schemes this year to help people with disabilities stay in their own homes.

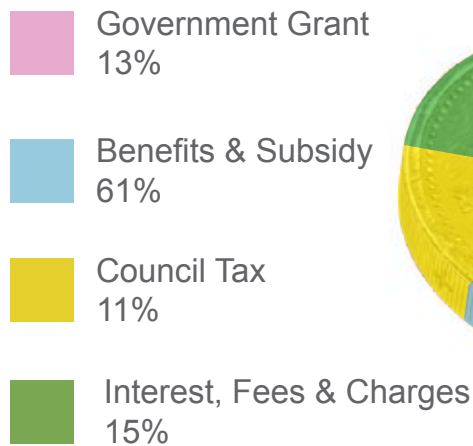
Medium Term Financial Plan

On these pages we have summarised our financial position

Our Income

We plan our income to be £54.9 million in 2011/12, including £5.9 million raised through council tax. The rest comes from Government grants and income earned from services.

Breakdown of Income for 2011/12



Reductions in Income

Over the next four years we are predicting a reduction in our Government grant funding of £ 1.783 million:

Predicted level of Government Grant



Medium Term Financial Plan

Our Expenditure

Our expenditure is projected to decrease slightly from 2010/11; however the Council still expects increases in the cost of utilities, fuel and certain services such as processing housing benefit applications due to increased demand. We have to finance these increases with less income.

All councils have to live within their means. This gives us the option of using reserves (which are savings made in previous years) or reduce our costs. The Council has decided to do both. We are planning on using £1.433 million from reserves over the next three years, whilst reducing costs as well.

Our strategy is to deliver the quality of service that residents need by continuing to find further efficiencies, challenging all services to eliminate waste and sharing services, where appropriate, to reduce costs.

The net service expenditure of £17.2 million includes the £4.2 million cost of financing our assets.



Net Services Expenditure (£'s Thousands)

£4,996	Planning, Housing & the Built Environment Including Planning, Property & Housing
£4,094	Environment, Health & Recycling Including refuse collection, environmental health & regulation

£4,088	Communities Including Democracy, Revenues & Benefits, Customer Focus and Leisure
£1,758	Change Management Including IT & Human Resources
£1,369	Corporate Resources Including Support Services
£1,122	Chief Executive & Leader Including Chief Executives, Economic Development & Communications

Council Tax

Residents in South Norfolk pay less for council tax than the national average.

We have frozen council tax in 3 out of the last 4 years, by working more efficiently without reducing the level of service we provide.