Members Present: Councillors, Wheatley (Chairman), Duffin (Vice-Chairman), Bendle, Bernard, Bills, Dale, Dewsbury, Easton, Edney, Ellis, Foulger, Fulcher, Fuller, Goldson, Gould, Gray, L Hornby, Hudson, C Kemp, Kiddie, Larner, Legg, Lewis, Mason Billig, Minshull, Mooney, Neal, Overton, Palmer, Pond, Riches, J Savage, Stone, Thomas, Thomson and Worsley

Apologies: Councillors Amis, Bell, Blundell, Broome, Hardy, J Hornby, R Savage, W Kemp, J Wilby and M Wilby

Officers in Attendance: The Chief Executive (S Dinneen), the Director of Business Development (D Lorimer), the Director of Growth and Localism (T Horspole), the Monitoring Officer (L Mickleborough) and the Section 151 Officer (P Catchpole)

3368 MINUTES

Regarding the list of those in attendance, it was noted that the Director of Community Services (P Boyce), had been listed in error.

Subject to this change, the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 12 December 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3369 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman explained that in addition to those engagements listed on page 5 of the agenda, he had also visited the Royal Mail Delivery Office in Wymondham in December, and Quidenham Hospice on Tuesday 24 January, in the presence of HRH The Duchess of Cambridge.
3370 NOTICE OF MOTIONS

Cllr D Bills

Cllr D Bills moved the following motion:

“The Chairmen of West Lindsey District Council has contacted all rural authorities to ask for their support in lobbying the Secretary of State for Health to introduce a scheme of ‘rural weighting’ for GP’s who accept positions in rural areas. Similar to the accepted practice of ‘London weighting’, such a scheme would act to attract the needed physicians and in turn would facilitate the better provision of health services. This is in response to the inability to attract GP’s to serve in rural areas which is causing patients to have to wait several weeks before they can have an appointment to see their doctor.

In South Norfolk we are experiencing similar issues with long waiting times and GP vacancies and therefore propose that South Norfolk Council supports West Lindsey District Council and ask our MPs, to lobby the Secretary of State for Health to introduce a scheme of “rural weighting” for GP’s who accept positions in rural areas.”

Cllr Bills explained that he was aware of long waiting times for GP appointments, and constant GP vacancies throughout the District, and he urged members to support West Lindsey District Council in lobbying for a “rural weighting” scheme.

In seconding the motion, Cllr Y Bendle explained that she was happy to support a scheme that would help recruit and retain GPs in the District. She knew that several local GPs were due to retire shortly, which would only make the problem more acute, however, she stressed that this was a national problem, not one that was exclusive to the local area.

Cllr M Gray was supportive of the motion, but felt that there were more fundamental issues to be addressed. He referred to a lack of forward planning, suggesting that the Government needed to do more to encourage trained doctors to go in to General Practice.

Cllr T Lewis concurred with Cllr Gray’s views, but was happy to support the motion. He suggested a few minor textual and grammatical corrections, which were duly accepted by Council.

Cllr J Savage also expressed his support for the motion, and referred to the strains on GP services, which were exasperated by the lack of newly qualified GPs and existing ones retiring early.

Cllr A Palmer agreed, stressing the importance of attracting and retaining GPs to the area.
Summing up, Cllr Bills accepted that there were some fundamental issues that had contributed to the current lack of GP resource, but felt that a rural weighting scheme would go some way in attempting to address the current issues.

It was unanimously

**RESOLVED:** "The Chairman of West Lindsey District Council has contacted all rural authorities to ask for their support in lobbying the Secretary of State for Health to introduce a scheme of ‘rural weighting’ for GPs who accept positions in rural areas. Similar to the accepted practice of ‘London weighting’, such a scheme would act to attract the needed physicians and in turn would facilitate the better provision of health services. This is in response to the inability to attract GPs to serve in rural areas which is causing patients to have to wait several weeks before they can have an appointment to see their doctor.

In South Norfolk we are experiencing similar issues with long waiting times and GP vacancies. Therefore, South Norfolk Council supports West Lindsey District Council and asks our MPs to lobby the Secretary of State for Health to introduce a scheme of “rural weighting” for GPs who accept positions in rural areas."

### 3371 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET

#### (i) REVENUE BUDGET, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND COUNCIL TAX 2017/18

The Chairman proposed and the Council agreed that, in accordance with Standing Order D4.5, Group Leaders, the portfolio holder and the shadow portfolio holder for resources, be permitted to speak for 10 minutes each on the budget. It was agreed that the Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax 2017/18, and the Treasury Management Strategy 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2020, should be debated together.

Cllr J Fuller began by explaining that it was ten years since the Conservative Party had assumed responsibility for South Norfolk Council. In that ten years, the Conservatives had ridden the recession, rebuilt the reserves, led the way in looking after those who needed help the most, and invested in every community. The economy had grown, and the District was now building over 1% of the entire national affordable house build. Council Tax had been frozen for seven years, and the District was recycling more than ever. Cllr Fuller was proud of these achievements and he wished to thank staff for their vital contribution over the last ten years, in making South Norfolk one of the best places to live in the country.

Cllr Fuller was also proud of the external recognition received over the past year, referring to the Peer Review and the Council of the Year Awards. The Council was a lead in the creation and operation of housing companies, multi-agency working through the
Early Help Hub, and the prevention of homelessness, and he had been proud to have co-authored the Minister’s CIL Review. The Council was strong and well regarded, leading the sector, and admired by peers.

Cllr Fuller acknowledged that it would not be easy to maintain such performance, as financial restraints were getting harder. He referred to the draft settlement, which would see a 14% reduction in spending power for the Council, and changes to the New Homes Bonus, which, as a high performing Council, saw South Norfolk hit harder than most. He referred to additional cost pressures, and uncertainties relating to CIL, business rates and housing benefit subsidy.

He thanked staff for their prudence and rising to the 10% challenge.

Despite the financial restraints, he stressed the need to put residents first, referring to the market towns, broadband, the upgrades to the leisure centres, the Enterprise Zone and the Long Stratton by-pass. The Council had listened to its residents, and would ensure that those who benefited from discretionary services paid a greater share. The Council would continue to innovate through Big Sky and Build Insight and would focus on its priorities of building the economy, generating income from commercial activity and reducing demand with a human approach to prevention.

Turning to Council Tax, he explained that it was regrettable that increases could not be kept lower, but a £5.00 increase on a Band D property was necessary to move with the times, and the economies that needed to be made. He commended the budget to members, promising them continued high performance, and a business-like approach that would manage finances wisely.

Cllr M Edney, portfolio holder for resources, then highlighted how the Council was planning for the future, through income generation, future proofing reserves and the 10% challenge.

He referred to the building developments in Poringland and Long Stratton, explaining that the Council would continue to explore other development opportunities. He was pleased to report that the take up at Grafton House in Poringland had been excellent, with six new start-up businesses, employing 45 employees.

He advised members that Build Insight had doubled its income during 2016/17 and was set to make a profit in 2017/18 and that its sister company Build Insight Consultancy was also looking to make a small profit in the coming year.

Referring to the capital programme, he reminded members that the Council’s focus would turn to Long Stratton Leisure Centre in 2017/18, as the Council looked to future proof the infrastructure for the growth that was expected in the Long Stratton area.

The Council continued to be prudent in planning ahead and ensuring adequate reserves were in place, and he referred to a number of reserves that had been established, including a non-commercial asset replacement reserve, a car park upgrade reserve and a 3G Pitch renewal reserve. These reserves, he explained, demonstrated a forward thinking Council, that was protecting its own assets.
Finally, Cllr Edney turned to the 10% challenge, where staff had demonstrated a “can do and business like” approach. He outlined a number of examples where savings/income had been found across all areas of the Council. At the business centres, savings and income totalling £111,000 had arisen from utilities, rates, maintenance and cleaning, and he advised that the transfer of the Diss Tourist Information service to the Town Council was an additional saving of £12,000. Children’s Services was renting out space in the office, providing additional income of £24,000, and further savings of £20,000 had been made by the elections team by using email to contact residents and saving on postage. He also gave mention to the growing income at the Kids Camp, savings to supplies and equipment at the leisure centres, and growth of leisure centre memberships.

Cllr L Neal, as Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, advised that the Scrutiny Committee had, overall been happy to endorse the budget and the recommendations of the Cabinet.

Cllr T Lewis, referring in particular to the Council’s in-house controlled leisure and refuse collection services, and the investment programme for income generation, congratulated members on what he felt to be a “Liberal Democrat budget”. He explained that his Group did not wish to play “political games” and supported much of what was proposed in the budget. He was grateful that all members had been given the opportunity to participate in the budget setting process, and he appreciated the openness of all the sessions held. Whilst admiring the ambitions of some investments, he did however suggest that the Council needed to question whether some risks were acceptable. Could a local authority really compete with the commercial awareness of the private sector? Could the Council cope with unforeseeable market crashes? He felt the Council had been most fortunate in the quality of all of its officers, and his Group had been most appreciative of all their efforts, during what were very difficult times.

Each of the Cabinet members then outlined the Council’s achievements, under their own portfolio. Members were reminded of a number of initiatives that had had a positive impact over the year, and attention was also drawn to areas where savings had been made. A number of other members expressed their support for the budget, referring to particular successes in their own wards, and the commendable performance of staff was noted by all.

Summing up, Cllr J Fuller referred to Cllr Lewis’ comments with regard to risk, and whilst he understood Cllr Lewis’ point, he felt the consequence of not taking the risks to be far worse. He then commended the budget to members.

The vote was then conducted as a roll call vote as follows:


No members voted against and there were no abstentions.
It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To
(a) Approve the base budget; as shown in para 7.1, subject to confirmation of the finalised Local Government finance settlement figures which may, if significant, necessitate an adjustment through the General Revenue Reserve to maintain a balanced budget;
(b) Approve the use of the revenue reserves as set out in section 15;
(c) Agree that the Council’s demand on the Collection Fund for 2017/18 for General Expenditure shall be £6,596,800 and for Special Expenditure be £76,806;
(d) Agree that the Band D level of Council Tax be £140.00 for General Expenditure and £1.63 for Special Expenditure.
(e) Agree that the assumptions on which the funding of the capital programme is based are prudent.
(f) Approve the capital programme for 2017/18 to 2020/21.

(ii) TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 1 APRIL 2017 TO 31 MARCH 2020

It was unanimously

RESOLVED: To Approve:
(b) The Prudential Indicators and Limits for the next 3 years contained within Appendix A of the report, including the Authorised Limit Prudential Indicator.
(c) The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement (section 8) setting out the Council’s policy on MRP.
(d) The Annual Investment Strategy 2017/18 (section 5 of the report) contained in the Treasury Management Strategy, including the delegation of certain tasks to the Section 151 Officer.
3372 COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION

Cllr T Lewis, whilst supporting the resolution, wished to remind members that this was a visible tax and members should be mindful of impact on residents.

The vote was conducted as a roll call vote as follows:


No members voted against and there were no abstentions.

It was unanimously RESOLVED:

1) To approve the recommendations of the Cabinet meeting 6 February 2017 relating to the Council Tax Base for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relates as in the attached Appendix B be approved.

2) To approve the recommendations of the Cabinet meeting 6 February 2017 relating to the Revenue and Capital Estimates 2017/18 be approved.

3) That the Council Tax requirement for the Council’s own purposes for 2017/18 (excluding Parish precepts and special expenses) be calculated as £6,596,800.00.

4) That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2017/18 in accordance with Sections 30 to 36 of the Act.

a) £65,688,478.00 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils and any additional special expenses.

b) £55,761,629.99 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
c) £9,926,848.01 being the amount by which the aggregate at 5(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 5(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the 1992 Act).

d) £210.67 being the amount at 5(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts and special expenses).

e) £3,330,048.01 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts and special expenses) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (as per attached Appendix B).

f) £140.00 being the amount at 5(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 5(e) above by Item T (1 above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the 1992 Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept or special expense relates.

5) To note that Norfolk County Council and the Norfolk Police and Crime Commissioner have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Act for each category of dwellings in the Council’s area as indicated in the table below.

6) That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Act, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables below as the amounts of Council Tax for 2017/18 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.
7) The Council has determined that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2017/18, which reflects an increase of £5.00, is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB of the Act.

As the billing authority, the Council has not been notified by a major precepting authority that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2017/18 is excessive and that the billing authority is not required to hold a referendum in accordance with Section 52ZK of the Act.

3373 MONITORING OFFICER REPORT

Members considered the report of the Monitoring Officer, which sought to make minor amendments to the scheme of delegation and to officer appointments.

Cllr J Fuller briefly outlined the proposals of the report to members.
Turning to the departure of Mrs Mickleborough, the Council’s Monitoring Officer, Cllr Fuller wished to place on record how grateful he was for her service to the Council. The Chairman also expressed his thanks for Mrs Mickleborough’s valuable contribution during her role as Deputy Audit Manager, and in particular, the part she played in supporting members of the Audit Committee.

**RESOLVED:** To:

1. Agree the amendments to the scheme of delegation at paragraphs 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 of the report;
2. Appoint Tim Horspole, Director of Growth and Localism, as the Council’s Monitoring Officer.

**PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2017/18**

Cllr M Edney presented the Council’s Pay Policy Statement 2017/18, explaining that the publication of the Statement was a requirement of Section 38 of the Localism Act.

Cllr M Gray suggested that it would be useful to view the changes to the policy, and officers agreed to forward Cllr Gray a version of the document with tracked changes, after the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** To approve the content of South Norfolk Council’s 2017/18 Pay Policy Statement

**QUESTIONS TO CHAIRMEN AND PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

**a) Cabinet**

Cllr J Savage referred to the recent anti-Semitic graffiti sprayed at the Long Stratton shopping centre. Cllr J Fuller explained the incident to be intolerable and most regrettable, and he paid tribute to the police who had traced the culprits quickly. Cllr A Thomas also thanked the local community for acting promptly and cleaning away the graffiti, before the Council was able to do so. It was suggested that the Chief Executive could send a letter of thanks for the prompt action of residents.

Cllr C Gould raised the current lack of executive leadership at the Saffron Housing Trust, and queried whether there was a need for the Council to investigate further. Cllr Fuller acknowledged that Saffron had faced recent challenges, but he wished to
reassure members that he, along with Cllr Y Bendle and the Chief Executive, had recently met the newly appointed Saffron Management Team, and that now only one member of the team was “acting up” until a permanent replacement was found. He was satisfied that the social responsibility of its tenants, continued to be a priority for Saffron.

Referring to the Community Governance Review, Cllr Lewis asked what the view was with regard to the number of electors needed to make a parish sustainable, and also referred to the Boundary Commission for England’s wish for strong visible features to define boundaries. In response, Cllr Fuller referred back to the 2015 parish elections, where only 19 parishes had seats contested, triggering an election, and questioned whether that was really sustainable. Looking ahead, he suggested that 1000 electors was a sensible size and that smaller parishes may have to consider joining other parishes. Referring to the housing developments in Bixley and Poringland, he suggested that these were examples of where a physical feature could form a boundary. He stressed that there was an opportunity for all parishes to engage in the review.

Cllr B Bernard referred to the revaluation of the Business Rates and asked how this would impact on South Norfolk businesses. Cllr Fuller explained that there was a mixed picture across the District, with modest changes to most, but with a few exceptions.

Cllr J Larner referred to a recent fly tipping incident in his ward and asked what progress was being made in deterring fly tipping generally. Cllr K Mason Billig explained that despite it being notoriously difficult to catch the culprits, there had been a number of successful enforcements and the Council continued to send out a strong message that offenders could be fined and prosecuted.

b) Scrutiny Committee

Cllr T Lewis asked whether a date had been set for officers of Broadland District Council, to attend a meeting of South Norfolk Council’s Scrutiny Committee, to discuss proposals for a Food Hub at Easton. Cllr L Neal, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, explained that she would be discussing the matter with the Scrutiny Officer shortly.

c) Licensing Appeals and Complaints Committee / Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee

Cllr D Goldson, the Chairman of the Licensing Committee, reminded members that it was as requirement to keep accreditation up to date, should members wish to sit on panels and hearings. He explained that member training had been planned for 22 May and 6 June.

d) Development Management Committee

Members had no questions relating to the Development Management Committee.
e) Electoral Arrangements Review Committee

Referring to the previous discussion regarding the appropriate size of parishes, and their boundaries, Cllr C Kemp, the Chairman of the Electoral Arrangements Review Committee, stressed that all proposals would be treated on their own merits, and that the sustainable size of a parish was not set in stone.

3376 OUTSIDE BODIES – FEEDBACK FROM REPRESENTATIVES

Members referred to the report regarding the Police and Crime Panel for Norfolk, received from Cllr C J Kemp.

It was noted that as yet, there had been no discussions at Norfolk County Council with regard to the Police and Crime Commissioner taking over the functions of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

(The meeting concluded at 9.17 p.m.)