Cabinet

Members of the Cabinet

Mr J Fuller
Chairman
Leader, External Affairs

Mr M Wilby
Vice-Chairman
Deputy Leader, Communities and Localism

Portfolio Holders

Mrs Y Bendle
Housing and Public Health

Mr D Bills
Innovation and Efficiency

Mr K Kiddie
Environment and Regulation

Mr G Wheatley
Finance and Resources

Date
Monday 8 December 2014

Time
9.00 am

Place
Cavell and Colman Rooms
South Norfolk House
Swan Lane
Long Stratton Norwich
NR15 2XE

Contact
Claire White  tel (01508) 533669
South Norfolk District Council
Swan Lane
Long Stratton Norwich
NR15 2XE
Email: democracy@s-norfolk.gov.uk
Website: www.south-norfolk.gov.uk

If you have any special requirements in order to attend this meeting, please let us know in advance
Large print version can be made available
AGENDA -

1. - To report apologies for absence;

2. - Any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as matters of urgency pursuant to Section 100 B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act, 1972; [Urgent business may only be taken if, "by reason of special circumstances" (which will be recorded in the minutes), the Chairman of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered as a matter of urgency]

3. - To receive Declarations of Interest from Members;
   (Please see guidance form and flow chart attached - page 4)

4. - Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 27 October 2014;  
   (attached – page 6)

5. - Development Management Charging for Pre-Applications;  
   (report attached – page 15)

   This report considers charging for pre-application advice and recommends a Schedule of Charges for Commercial and housing applications.

   It is recommended that this charging schedule is implemented from the 1 January 2015 with a review in 6 months.

6. - Old Costessey Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan;  
   (report attached – pg 26)

   The report explains the context for the revision of the above appraisal. It summarises the comments received from the public consultations and sets out the officer responses and the proposed amendments.

   The Committee is asked to agree the proposed amendments and the revised conservation area boundaries so that the documents can be put to Council on the 15th December.

7. Market Towns Initiative; -  
   (report attached – page 49)

   This report reviews the progress of the Council’s Market Towns Initiative (covering Diss, Harleston, Loddon and Wymondham) and recommends how it is proposed to develop the next phase of the initiative.
8. Council Tax Support Scheme 2015/16;  
(report attached – page 60)

The purpose of this report is to obtain Cabinet approval to go forward to Council with a Council Tax Support scheme for 2015/16. The report outlines the legal requirements and features of the scheme and proposes amendments to the previous scheme approved in December 2013. This is after reflecting on both the impact of Welfare Reform changes which have taken place since April 2013 and responding to feedback from recent consultation.

9. Cabinet Core Agenda  
(attached – page 66)
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AT MEETINGS

When declaring an interest at a meeting Members are asked to indicate whether their interest in the matter is pecuniary, or if the matter relates to, or affects a pecuniary interest they have, or if it is another type of interest. Members are required to identify the nature of the interest and the agenda item to which it relates. In the case of other interests, the member may speak and vote. If it is a pecuniary interest, the member must withdraw from the meeting when it is discussed. If it affects or relates to a pecuniary interest the member has, they have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public but must then withdraw from the meeting. Members are also requested when appropriate to make any declarations under the Code of Practice on Planning and Judicial matters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you declared the interest in the register of interests as a pecuniary interest? If Yes, you will need to withdraw from the room when it is discussed.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the interest directly:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. affect yours, or your spouse / partner's financial position?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or your spouse / partner?</td>
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<td>3. Relate to a contract you, or your spouse / partner have with the Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Affect land you or your spouse / partner own</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Affect a company that you or your partner own, or have a shareholding in</td>
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<tr>
<td>If the answer is “yes” to any of the above, it is likely to be pecuniary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Please refer to the guidance given on declaring pecuniary interests in the register of interest forms. If you have a pecuniary interest, you will need to inform the meeting and then withdraw from the room when it is discussed. If it has not been previously declared, you will also need to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the interest indirectly affect or relate any pecuniary interest you have already declared, or an interest you have identified at 1-5 above?</td>
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<tr>
<td>If yes, you need to inform the meeting. When it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but must then withdraw from the meeting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the interest not related to any of the above? If so, it is likely to be an other interest. You will need to declare the interest, but may participate in discussion and voting on the item.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you made any statements or undertaken any actions that would indicate that you have a closed mind on a matter under discussion? If so, you may be predetermined on the issue; you will need to inform the meeting, and when it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but must then withdraw from the meeting.</td>
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FOR GUIDANCE REFER TO THE FLOWCHART OVERLEAF. PLEASE REFER ANY QUERIES TO THE MONITORING OFFICER IN THE FIRST INSTANCE
DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

What matters are being discussed at the meeting?

Do any relate to an interest I have?

A  Have I declared it as a pecuniary interest?
OR
B  Does it directly affect me, my partner or spouse’s financial position, in particular:
   - employment, employers or businesses;
   - companies in which they are a director or where they have a shareholding of more than £25,000 face value or more than 1% of nominal share holding
   - land or leases they own or hold
   - contracts, licenses, approvals or consents

Pecuniary Interest

The interest is pecuniary – disclose the interest, withdraw from the meeting by leaving the room. Do not try to improperly influence the decision

If you have not already done so, notify the Monitoring Officer to update your declaration of interests

Related pecuniary interest

The interest is related to a pecuniary interest. Disclose the interest at the meeting. You may make representations as a member of the public, but then withdraw from the room

YES

Does the matter indirectly affects or relates to a pecuniary interest I have declared, or a matter noted at B above?

NO

OTHER INTEREST

The Interest is not pecuniary nor affects your pecuniary interests. Disclose the interest at the meeting. You may participate in the meeting and vote

Have I declared the interest as an other interest on my declaration of interest form? OR

Does it relate to a matter highlighted at B that impacts upon my family or a close associate? OR

Does it affect an organisation I am involved with or a member of? OR

Is it a matter I have been, or have lobbied on?

NO

You are unlikely to have an interest. You do not need to do anything further.
CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 27 October 2014 at 9.00 am.

Members Present:

Cabinet: Councillors J Fuller (Chairman) -
Y Bendle, D Bills, K Kiddie, G Wheatley, M Wilby -

Non-Appointed: Councillors Dale, Dewsbury, Edney, Ellis, Goldson, Gray, Legg, Lewis, McClennaing, Mooney, Neal, R Savage, B Spratt, and Weeks

Officers in Attendance: - The Director of Environment and Housing (A Jarvis), the Director of Growth of Localism (T Horspole), the Acting Director of Business Improvement (D Lorimer), the Business Improvement Manager (W Salmons), the Compliance and Risk Manager (L Mickleborough), the Funding Manager (Nina Cunningham), and the Scrutiny and Information Rights Officer (E Goddard)

2327 HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

Members noted that an item on Radio Norfolk had recently highlighted the increase in homelessness across the county. Cllr Y Bendle informed members that there had been 106 cases of homelessness presented to South Norfolk Council during the last 6 months, and 103 of these cases had been successfully prevented. The 3 remaining cases had been resolved through temporary accommodation, before moving on to a more permanent solution. Members noted that the number of homelessness cases had increased during the last 6 months, but the preventative and early intervention work being undertaken was proving successful.

2328 MINUTES

Referring to minute 2325, the Diss Heritage Triangle, it was suggested that the second sentence of the second paragraph, should refer to the Diss Heritage “Partnership” (not “Triangle” as had been indicated in the minutes).

Subject to this change, the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
The subject of the decision

Cllr G Wheatley introduced the report, which detailed the Council's risks and the revenue budget position for quarter two of the financial year 2014/15, and the performance of the Council from April to September.

The Business Improvement Manager was pleased to report a positive scene across the whole range of strategic indicators and drew attention to the fact that no strategic performance indicators had appeared red over the last 18 months. There were two measures which had triggered an amber status during the quarter, LI 262, the Cost of Waste Collection per household and LI263, the number of missed bins for all waste per 100,000 collections, however, it was stressed that this should not be met with any concern at this time. The number of missed bins had only been very slightly off the stretched target set and fell comfortably within accepted tolerance levels. Members also noted that the move towards offering a commercial trade waste service to customers would create additional income streams and help to drive further efficiencies and a more resilient service.

Members referred to a number of areas of good performance, in particular affordable housing which was on line to exceed targets set by the end of the year. It was noted that a new 3 year target had been set to deliver 600 new affordable homes across the District. The reduction in the number of empty homes was also commended; this was the lowest figure in the District for 5 years and mention was also given to high performance relating to household and major planning applications, levels of satisfaction with children's activities and the Elections and Food Hygiene teams. Members wished to thank all staff who had worked in these areas and contributed positively to the high levels of performance.

Cllr M Wilby gave mention to the success of the Community Action Fund (CAF) and the Member Ward Budgets (MWB), where large amounts had been committed or allocated in addition to the 43% already spent. Cllr M Edney, Chairman of the Tiffey Valley Neighbourhood Area referred to a project in the Tiffey Valley area where CAF and MWB funding had helped to attract additional funding of approximately £45,000.

Turning to the revenue budget position, members noted that the table detailed at paragraph 5.6 of the report did not contain information relating to quarter 2. A replacement table with up to date figures was tabled at the meeting.

Cllr Wheatley referred to the positive variance of £678,567 for April to September 2014 and the forecast of a revenue surplus of £1.5 million for 2014/15. Whilst this was a comfortable position for the Council to find itself in half way through the financial year, he warned of the need for a cautious approach over the remaining months of the year.

The Acting Director of Business Improvement explained in detail the position with regard to pay and non-pay areas. In response to a query from the Chairman, she agreed that there was a risk in relation to rating appeals, and she referred to the reduction in the valuation of the Police Head Quarters in Wymondham. Members noted
that this appeal had been backdated to April 2010 and would attract a refund of approximately £400,000.

**The Decision**

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<th>RESOLVED:</th>
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<tr>
<td>To:</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) Note the performance for quarter 2, 2014/15 and the combined efforts across the Directorates to deliver the vision of the Council.</td>
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<td>b) Note the current position, particularly the organisational capacity, with regard to opportunities and risks and accepts the actions to support risk mitigation and opportunity development.</td>
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<td>c) Note the revenue position and the reason for the variances on the General Fund and the forecast outturn.</td>
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**The Reasons for the Decision**

To ensure processes are in place to improve performance and that the management of risks are sound, and to ensure that reserves and revenue budgets are in place to meet the Council’s corporate objectives

**Other Options Considered**

- None

**2330 CAPITAL AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 2 2014/15**

**The Subject of the Decision**

Members considered the report of the Accountancy Manager, which monitored capital expenditure for April to September 2014 against the amended capital programme as approved by Cabinet on 28 July 2014. The report also reviewed the treasury management activity during the first half of the financial year and reported on the prudential indicators as required by CIPFA’s Treasury Management Code of Practice.

Cllr G Wheatley presented the report, and explained that the reprogramming of the Ketteringham Depot and Leisure scheme was recommended, with funding being brought forward for more urgent schemes such as Cygnet House.

The Acting Director of Business Improvement summarised the position with regard to the Council’s significant capital schemes, drawing attention in particular to Cygnet House, IT Projects and Build Insight Ltd. She also highlighted the proposals for property procurement and the plans to retain 10 houses at Rosebery Park, Poringland, for private sector rental.

Some members questioned the proposals to retain houses for private rent, referring to the rates received through the Council’s current investment properties and the need to borrow capital in future. The Acting Director for Business Improvement acknowledged that the rate of return on residential rents would not be as high as commercial rent returns, but would compare favourably against cash investments, and she reminded members of the growing demand for good quality housing for rent, at market rates. The
Chairman added that this was an opportunity for the Council to diversify its investment portfolio, and explained that the properties would be designed in such a way to minimise future maintenance costs. With regard to Cygnet House, she advised that its demolition would commence in the fourth quarter of the financial year, and that the necessary steps would be taken to ensure that the site was secure and did not look unattractive.

In response to a query regarding Appendix C of the report, a summary of the return on investment properties, the Acting Director for Business Improvement reminded members that 9 Park Road, Diss, was to be sold as part of the Diss Heritage Triangle package, and has thus been removed from the investment list as there was no intention to let. She explained that this property was still shown as part of the Council’s stock, but not as part of the investment plan.

Referring to the plans to expand the Ketteringham Depot, the Director of Environment and Housing explained that negotiations with the Environment Agency were moving slowly, and the officers were beginning to consider alternative options in relation to the depot’s expansion. In response to a query concerning Green Deal Funding, he acknowledged that there had been various trials to launch the initiative. He welcomed the new investment and explained that the Council was contributing to the project through staff time, but was not providing additional funding.

The Decision

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>To note progress on the Capital Programme during the first half of 2014/15.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>To note that officers will utilise the property development procurement route which best delivers the outcomes required on an individual project basis without further reference to Cabinet, on the condition that contract award is in accordance with contract standing orders.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>To authorise the Director of Environment and Housing to enter into a memorandum of understanding on the operation of the green deal funding.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>To agree to:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>a) Re-programme the capital schemes at Ketteringham and Leisure Provision into 2015/16 and bring forward £100,000 of funding from 2016/17 for Cygnet House.</td>
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<td>b) Bring forward £138,000 to fund work on the IT servers</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL:</td>
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<td>a) Approves the 2014/15 prudential indicators for the quarter.</td>
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<td>b) Notes the treasury activity in the quarter and that it complies with the agreed strategy.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c) Agrees to loan £200,000 to Build Insight Limited for working capital at a commercial rate of interest for a period of two years.</td>
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d) Agrees to retain the 10 houses identified in the report at Rosebery Park, Poringland for Private Rented Sector rental.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure that the capital programme is aligned to the Council’s priorities and is fully funded.

Other Options Considered

None

2331 A11 GROWTH CORRIDOR PROJECT PROPOSAL

The subject of the decision

Members considered the report of the Funding Manager, which sought agreement from Cabinet for a project proposal to build upon the area’s sector strengths of engineering and advanced manufacturing, to develop a world class cluster along a 25 mile stretch of the A11.

The Director of Growth and Localism outlined the proposals, explaining that the project aimed to create thousands of high skilled jobs by bringing forward employment land, delivering a branded campaign to attract new businesses and investment to the area, and to provide business support to grow existing businesses. Working in partnership with Breckland District Council, would help to secure external funding and the necessary resource from other stakeholders to deliver the project. He drew members’ attention to the proposed feasibility study and the Memorandum of Understanding required to enable the joint working arrangements.

Cllr M Gray expressed his support for the proposals but was concerned at plans to simplify the planning system using Local Development Orders (LDOs), and the impact this would have on managing environmental implications. The Chairman assured members that LDO Orders could include detailed requirements, such as those referring to environmental implications.

Referring to paragraph 1.5, Cllr K Weeks expressed concerns relating to the adoption of alternative governance arrangements whereby businesses operating within the area could be given greater powers to influence decision making. The Director of Growth and Localism reminded members that the majority of Board members on the LEP were from the private sector and he referred to the current governance arrangements of the Greater Norwich Growth Board.

Cllr Weeks also referred to the impact of the project on current Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) arrangements. The Director of Growth and Localism acknowledged that there would be an impact, however reminded members that the Council would benefit from development in the Breckland area. He reminded members that CIL monies was only one source of funding to deliver infrastructure.
Cllr M Edney referred to the quality of Broadband connection in some areas, suggesting that this area of development needed to be given some priority.

The Decision

RESOLVED:

1. To approve the A11 Growth Corridor Phase One project proposal including the delivery approach and timelines, recognising that Phases Two and Three will be specified in the light of the Phase One findings.

2. To authorise the Director of Growth and Localism to sign the Memorandum of Understanding between South Norfolk Council and Breckland Council to enable the necessary joint working arrangements to be put in place to deliver this project.

The Reasons for the Decision
To support the Council’s commitment to delivering economic growth for the benefit of South Norfolk residents and businesses.

Other Options Considered

- To continue with a market led approach
- South Norfolk Council to work on its own or in partnership with other Local Authorities.

2332 COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEMES

The subject of the decision

Cllr M Wilby introduced the report which updated Cabinet on the current progress on the Community Grant Schemes, incorporating recommendations from the Growth and Localism Committee on how the scheme might be further developed. He outlined the proposals to terminate the Neighbourhood Fund and to reallocate all the remaining funding within the Community Action Fund (CAF), ensuring members that the process would be managed in such a way as to ensure a smooth transition. He drew particular attention to plans to modify the Ground Rules for the CAF, to allow for funding less than £2,000 to be allocated.

Members referred to a number of projects that had received funding through the CAF, and it was concluded that the fund had been very successful, resulting in quick benefits to local communities.

During discussion, Cllr B McClenning asked whether consideration had been given to increasing the level of Member Ward Budgets. In response, Cllr Wilby explained that this had been discussed at the recent meeting of the Growth and Localism Committee, but it was felt that this should not be increased at this time. He stressed that all members could benefit from the increase in the CAF.

Cllr M Gray expressed concern that the information supplied in some CAF applications was not adequate and that he had not always been made aware of applications for the CAF that affected his ward. Cllr Wilby explained that successful applicants needed to
adhere to clear criteria. Cllr Edney, as Chairman of the Tiffey Valley Neighbourhood Area, suggested that all Chairman needed to give adequate scrutiny to all applications and that he always ensured that members with wards in the area were able to comment on applications, if they wished. The Chairman stressed that the Chairmen of the Neighbourhood areas and local members, must accept accountability when considering and taking decisions on applications.

**The Decision**

| RESOLVED: | To agree to close the Neighbourhood Fund, subject to the transitional approach outlined in paragraph 3.1 of the report. |

**The Reasons for the Decision**
To ensure the community grant schemes are simple to apply for and to administer, whilst delivering positive benefits to communities in the District.

**Other Options Considered**
- To retain the Neighbourhood Fund

**2333 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**The subject of the decision**

Members considered the report of the Scrutiny Officer, which detailed recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee, regarding the South Norfolk Market Towns’ Initiative.

Cllr M Wilby explained that the Scrutiny Committee had considered a report on the South Norfolk Market Towns’ Initiative at its meeting on 1 October 2014. The Committee had welcomed the progress that had been made, and he made reference to the toilets in Loddon and Harleston, the signage in Wymondham and the positive feedback received from shop keepers in the towns. The Scrutiny Committee had been particularly pleased at the decision to appoint a Market Town’s Co-ordinator.

Cllr M Dewsbury, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, agreed that there had been positive news to report, however, some areas for improvement had also been identified. Some members of the Town Teams had been present at the meeting and it was evident that although progress was very positive in Harleston, other teams had been struggling in some areas. The Committee had felt that much could be gained from regular meetings between all Town Teams and Council officers and had suggested that a conference be arranged to allow teams to share experiences.

The Director confirmed that the Market Towns Co-ordinator was to be appointed that week, and members wished to record their thanks to Sophie Scott, the Marketing and Engagement Manager for her work on the project.
The Decision

**RESOLVED:** To endorse the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Reasons for the Decision

To ensure that each of the Town Teams can learn from the positive experiences of others.

Other Options Considered

- None

2334 CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.

2335 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was proposed, seconded and

**RESOLVED:** that under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended).

2336 INTERNAL AUDIT CONTRACT AWARD

The subject of the decision

Members considered the exempt report of the Internal Audit Consortium Manager, regarding the award of the Internal Audit Contract.

The Acting Director of Business Improvement outlined the salient points of the report to members. Members were pleased that members of the consortium had chosen to remain with the current delivery model for Interface Services and felt this was recognition of the skill and organisation of staff at South Norfolk Council.

The Decision

**RESOLVED:** To approve the award of the Internal Audit Service Contract, as outlined in paragraph 9 of the report.

The Reasons for the Decision
To ensure an efficient and quality audit service.

**Other Options Considered**

- To purchase the service through the ESPO framework.

(The meeting concluded at 10.50 am)

____________________________
Chairman
Development Management Charging for Pre-applications

This report considers charging for pre-application advice and recommends a Schedule of Charges for Commercial and housing applications. It is recommended that this charging schedule is implemented from the 1 January 2015 with a review in 6 months.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cabinet member(s):</th>
<th>Ward(s) affected:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keith Kiddie</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail: Helen Mellors 01508 533789hmellors@s-norfolk.gov.uk

1.0 Background

1.1. The development management function is a key statutory role for South Norfolk Council as the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for its area. Planning fees are generated for most planning applications and for the discharge of conditions.

1.2. This reports sets out how commercial applicants will benefit from the availability of a paid-for pre-application advice service that will meet their need for early engagement in the planning process. It details how high quality pre-planning advice can help applicants avoid delay and cost that can result from poorly prepared planning applications.

1.3. Government has long advocated the benefits of a pre-application service, in terms of improving the quality of applications (and development), enabling early local engagement and speeding up the process of determination by identifying and resolving contentious issues.

1.4. In South Norfolk we know applicants value having a quality pre-application service as it results in better outcomes for them by speeding up the planning application process. It also helps to ensure the correct information is submitted and gives applicants an opportunity to address officer concerns before the application is submitted, thus avoiding the need for them to submit revisions as part of the application process.

1.5. The fees for planning applications are set nationally by Government at a level designed to enable councils to recover a proportion of the costs of processing those applications.
1.6. Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003 introduced a discretionary provision enabling local planning authorities to charge for pre-application advice. Much like the position with Building Control, these charges must seek only to recover the costs incurred in providing the service and should be assessed on a rolling break-even calculation over a 3-5 year period. This advice is reiterated in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) published in March 2014 which runs alongside the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1.7. With this in mind and with the increasing pressure on resources the time has come to offer an enhanced pre-application service with reasonable costs attached. We have talked to local agents and Councils elsewhere to look how these fees should be set. It has also enabled us to evaluate the level of service that commercial applicants expect and the value they attach to receiving this in a timely and professional advice. Attached as appendix 1 is a list of charges other local planning authorities have introduced.

1.8. We understand our customers, particularly local agents, feel that pre-application advice plays a significant part in avoiding unnecessary delay and cost at planning applications stage. Furthermore, a review of other Councils shows that charging is widely applied and accepted.

2.0 Current Position and Issues

2.1 All those who submit planning applications (commercial and householder customers) expect these to be processed, and responded to, in a timely manner.

2.2 The Council currently offers pre-application advice to both domestic and commercial customers on a free-of-charge basis. This report proposes that, at this stage, charging is introduced for commercial applicants only. Domestic applicants will continue to receive the service free of charge.

2.3 The provision of high quality, timely, pre-application advice will assist commercial applicants to ensure that the quality of planning applications they subsequently make is improved.

2.4 Customers will also benefit from the impact of a lower number of speculative applications which will result in a more efficient and effective use of resources within the planning team.

2.5 Recent improvements in South Norfolk Council’s Development Management service has raised the bar in relation to planning applications. These improvements have been achieved as the result of creating two multi-disciplinary development management teams (Place-shaping Majors team and Planning Decisions and Enforcement team) and has resulted in a development team approach in the Majors team. This has ensured all internal consultee comments (design, conservation, ecology, planning policy and environmental services) are received in a timely manner and all the issues being considered at the same time. This enables the planning officer to make key judgements on the application at an early stage in the process. We also invite representatives from Norfolk County Council Highways to an initial meeting to seek their views early on in the process.

2.6 For the customer this means that planning applications have been dealt with in an efficient way. If an application is required to be amended then only one request is made to address all the issues. In the past developers sometimes
dealt directly with other agencies and amended the application without consulting with the case officer. This does not always result in appropriate amendments (as one request for an amendment could have a direct impact on another potential issue/impact on the site). Co-ordinating these responses by using the development team approach helps ensure the developer only has to amend the application once and saves them time and money. It also allows changes to consider all the issues in an holistic manner. This is not only of benefit for the applicant, but results in a more focussed and meaningful consultation with residents and ultimately in a better form of development. There is also an advantage for the applicant in having a single point of contact for their proposals.

2.7 It is proposed to use this development team approach in dealing with pre-applications and is already being tested to ensure we have the appropriate resources to manage this enhanced service.

2.8 This will result in the focus being on providing an advice service that meets the expectations of customers in terms of quality of both output and timely delivery.

2.9 As mentioned above, this will be achieved by improving the customer experience through a combination of better resource management and process improvements.

2.10 For commercial customers which for the purpose of this report includes those applicants submitting applications for new dwellings, the benefits of pre-application advice will be reiterated to ensure that the value of this service is recognised. Commercial developers will want to understand that a robust approach to pre-application enquiries will have an impact on increasing completions and driving up development rates. The key benefit will be speeding up the planning application process for the customer and should reduce the need to ask for amendments as part of the application process. It should also speed up the validation process with the correct information being submitted to register the application on day one.

3.0 Proposal and Reasons

3.1 The proposal is for the introduction of charging for the pre-application advice service for commercial customers only (as defined above).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enquiry Type</th>
<th>Charges</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Written Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Development</td>
<td>£200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Development</td>
<td>£1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Development</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3.2 The charges set out above, require an expected level of information to be submitted as detailed in full in appendix 2. The response will also be enhanced and the information provided back to the applicant will include, for each category, the following information:
3.3 **Minor Development**
- Relevant policies identified
- Relevant Planning History
- Constraints identified
- Residential development - Acceptability of mix of units; affordable housing.
- Transport and highways issues identified
- Amenity issues identified
- Design and use of materials identified
- Financial contributions – CIL explained
- Application requirements to validate an application
- Consultation - identifying the level of consultation which may be required and links to external bodies.

With a conclusion on the likely outcome of any application if it is submitted and to outline amendments that may be required. Please note, as is current practice, officers will also need to put a caveat on all advice to say that the advice given is without prejudice to the submission of a formal planning application.

3.4 **Medium Development**
As above plus:
- Sustainability and efficiency standards identified
- Building for Life Assessment on initial plans

3.5 **Major Development**
As above plus Environmental Impact Assessment identified is needed.

3.6 The applicant will also know they will be getting this response for Minor Development from a Planning Officer/Senior Planning Officer and for all other schemes from a Senior Planning Officer.

3.7 With respect to these costs, it is anticipated the Council’s cost will include all internal consultees and the Highway Authority. If other consultees responses are required at the request of the applicant, then this may incur an additional cost. At present most statutory consultees (Environment Agency, Natural England, English Heritage) give standing advice. Links to their web site will be provided in our response.

3.8 The introduction of a scheme to charge for pre-applications advice presents an opportunity to recover some of our costs and potentially will generate additional revenue of £292,894, phased over four years as follows:
- Year 1: £50,800
- Year 2: £63,500
- Year 3: £79,375
- Year 4: £99,219
3.9 These projections are based on the current level of enquiries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commercial: Minor</th>
<th>611</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial: Medium</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial: Major</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.10 However, to reflect a prudent approach to projecting the level of new revenue from this source, the first year volume has been assumed to be only 20% of the current level (61, 10 and 7 enquiries respectively). Subsequent years are projected using a 25% year-on-year growth in enquiry volumes.

3.11 The introduction of a paid-for pre-application advice service will be used as a catalyst for improvements in service delivery to ensure that appropriate levels of customer service are achieved and will undoubtedly result in good outcomes for the customer.

3.12 The revenue generating performance and the customer impact of this partial introduction of a paid-for pre-application advice service will be reviewed after six months in order to evaluate the potential to extend the service to cover all types of development. It is also proposed as part of this review to look at linking this service with early stage design with CNC.

4.0 Other Options

4.1 The only alternative option available to the Council is to do nothing. If this option were pursued, the Council would continue to incur a net annual cost for providing this service in the region of £991,761.

5.0 Relevant Corporate Priorities

Enhancing our quality of life and the environment we live in.

5.1 The proposal will provide members and staff with more focus on strategic developments that drive growth and result in better quality of development.

Promoting a thriving local economy.

5.2 A professional and timely pre-application service will ensure we devote resources to commercial and housing applications, which in turn supports the local economy. Applicants for this type of application will be given priority and will have quality responses with more information to guide them on a successful application. It will speed up the process of dealing with their subsequent application.

Driving services through being businesslike, efficient and customer aware.

5.3 Enable the Development management service and members to focus their time and resources on major and strategic growth applications. Development is more about creating and shaping communities and the place we live in and good pre-application service will help enhance and improve the quality of these residential applications.
6.0 **Implications and Risks**

6.1 Service standards may not rise to the level expected for a paid-for service. Recent changes in the way major developments are processed indicate that step-change can be achieved. However it should be acknowledged that agents/developers may chose not to use this paid for service and the risks associated with this will hopefully be mitigated with regular develop/agents forum meetings to encourage the use of this service, outlining the benefits of doing so, as already detailed in this report. If an agent/developer submits a scheme without the appropriate fee, it will not be dealt with as this will be a compulsory fee.

7.0 **Conclusion**

7.1 The focus of introducing charging will be on the benefits this will deliver for customers as detailed in this report with the key benefits being a guaranteed response time, given by a senior planning officer in a development team approach. The level of detail in the response is also being expanded on, resulting in an enhanced level of service.

7.2 As long as customers perceive there to be additional benefits attached to the service, it is unlikely that there will be any sustained opposition to this change. It is proposed to hold a developer/agent forum in December to promote this enhanced service.

7.3 Change management around this development will continue to be introduced and will focus on providing a more responsive, streamlined and efficient service that enables customers to get demonstrably better outcomes from the whole planning process.

7.4 For the Council and customers, the development of the service will:

- Provide benefits to the customer as detailed in this report
- Leverage the provision of high quality and timely pre-application advice to encourage better quality planning applications that will be easier to process.
- Meet customer need and provide a better and more cost-effective planning service.
- Speed up the planning process with an effective pre-application service on major applications.
- Create efficient and effective service delivery, partly facilitated by a reduced volume of enquires.
- Use online guidance to improve quality of submissions which will enable a faster response.
- Reduce and offset the current and future costs of providing the service.
- Result in a modest reduction in demand for the service enabling current resources to be used more efficiently and effectively.

7.5 In addition, the introduction of charging is likely to have a wide-ranging impact for South Norfolk Council – from a potential increase in completions and
development rates, to the resultant increase in new homes bonus, business rates, CIL etc. The review in June 2015 will also seek to enhance this service with early engagement with the design of schemes with CNC.

8.0 Recommendations
That Cabinet agrees to:

8.1 The introduction of charging for pre-applications for commercial development as outlined in the proposed Schedule, attached as Appendix 1, from the 1 January 2015.

8.2 To review after 6 months, from the date of implementation, and consider charging for all applications types.
Appendix 1
Summary of research findings
The charging schedule for a range of authorities was reviewed to establish the range of fees being charged and the differing approaches to the charging schedule. Most authorities charge flat rate fees for householder enquiries but have a sliding scale for other enquiry types. Some of these relate to the fee schedule for the subsequent planning application (i.e. Kings Lynn), however it was considered that in many cases precise details of property numbers or floor space proposed would not be known and it could therefore result in confusion for enquirers and delay initial registration and hence response rates.

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<tr>
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<th>Meeting (On Site)</th>
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<td>King’s Lynn</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Information from SNC</td>
<td>SNC Resources</td>
<td>Service Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Letter or email</td>
<td>Relevant policies</td>
<td>Planning Officer/Senior Planning Officer level</td>
<td>Initial contact - 5 days</td>
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<td>Between 1 and 9 No. Dwellings or &lt; 0.5Ha</td>
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<td>Relevant Planning History</td>
<td>Informal discussions with other officers/statutory consultees may be required.</td>
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<td>Non-residential development of less than 1000 sq metres or less than 1 hectare</td>
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<td>Constraints</td>
<td>Final response - 20 days</td>
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<td>Residential development - Acceptability of mix of units; affordable housing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transport and highways</td>
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<td>Amenity</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Design and Materials</td>
<td></td>
<td>Financial contributions – CIL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td>Consultation - identifying the level of consultation which may be required.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| **Medium Development**                          | Letter or email | Senior Planning Officer Level response. | Discussions with other officers and statutory consultees may be required. | Initial contact - 5 days | £1500           | £250             | £300           | POA        |
| Between 10 and 199 No. dwellings or 0.5 to 4 hectares |                | As above plus: Sustainability |                                    | Final response - 25 days | Meeting within 20 days | Meeting within 20 days |                |            |
| Non-residential development of between 1,000 and 9,999 sq metres or between 1 and 2 hectares; |                | Building for Life | May require formal responses from Consultees |                          |                  |                  |                |            |
| Changes of Use of between 1,000 and 9,999 sq metres or between 1 and 2 hectares |                |                          |                                    |                          |                  |                  |                |            |

| **Major Development**                           | Letter or email | As above plus Environmental Impact Assessment | Discussion with other officers and statutory consultees may be required. | Initial contact - 5 days | £2,500          | £500             | £600           | POA        |
| 200 dwelling or more;                           |                | Environmental Impact |                                    | Final response - 25 days | Meeting within 20 days | Meeting within 20 days |                |            |
| Any development exceeding the above thresholds |                | May require formal response from consultees |                                    |                          |                  |                  |                |            |
| Proposals requiring Environmental Impact        |                |                          |                                    |                          |                  |                  |                |            |
Old Costessey Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan

The report explains the context for the revision of the above appraisal. It summarises the comments received from the public consultations and sets out the officer responses and the proposed amendments.

The Committee is asked to agree the proposed amendments and the revised conservation area boundaries so that the documents can be put to Council on the 15th December.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cabinet member(s): Keith Kiddie</th>
<th>Ward(s) affected: Old Costessey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail:</td>
<td>Steve Beckett 01508 533812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:sbeckett@s-norfolk.gov.uk">sbeckett@s-norfolk.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. - Background

1.1. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 makes it a duty of Local Planning Authorities to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of conservation areas and submit them for public consultation.

1.2. Guidance produced by English Heritage in 2005 advises how that duty might be carried out and this has been followed by the Council in its preparation of the conservation area appraisals carried out so far. In 2010, the Council’s Planning Housing and Built Environment Overview Sub-committee agreed a priority list for the preparation of the appraisals; Old Costessey being the 7th completed since that date.

2. - Current Position and Issues

2.1. The initial consultation on the draft appraisal was carried out in autumn 2013. It proposed some amendments to the area, partly to deal with minor changes in property boundaries since the original designation in the 1980s, but primarily to link the area at The Mill with The Street. This served to include the grade 1 listed parish church of St Edmund and no objections were raised to these changes.
2.2. Comments were received in support of further additions to the area to include the rear gardens of properties on the west side of The Street up to the river, a short section of West End and an area around Costessey Hall which is now part of the golf course. It was felt that, due to the significance of these suggestions, they needed to be subject to a further consultation. This consultation period finished at the end of October this year.

2.3. In regard to the suggestion to include an area around Costessey Hall, it was decided, following discussions with the local members, not to pursue that proposal. The main buildings are already listed and there is no obvious boundary that could be supported. It was agreed to include further details on the contribution made by the hall to the character of the parish.

2.4. Objections have been received from two residents in respect of the proposed additional areas along West End and from two others to the west of the Street.

3. - Proposal and Reasons

3.1. A summary of the consultation process and comments received are attached as Appendix A. A map of the existing conservation area and the proposed changes is attached as Appendix B. A copy of the draft appraisal is in Appendix C.

3.2. The comments in relation to the West End are felt to be reasonable. The inclusion of the modern bungalows, which make little contribution to the character of the area, was put forward to make sense of the suggestion to include the former Falcon Inn. As this is a listed building its omission would not affect the control the Council would have over any future changes. It is recommended that the alterations to West End be not confirmed.

3.3. With the Street, concern has been made by the objectors about the impact of designation with additional restrictions in terms of tree works and permitted development. The land suggested is also private and not readily visible from public areas. While there are additional restrictions, these need not prevent changes that would have a positive impact on the area. The land is private but does make a contribution to the wider setting of the area and can be seen from the areas west of the river. It would also link with a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which covers the section of the river and bank on the Costessey side and it is hoped that the respective regulations could be used in a positive manner.

3.4. There is presently an issue with the line of the boundaries which cuts off the houses on this side of the Street from their gardens and runs arbitrarily behind the line of houses. A revision of the boundaries would ease this problem and “re-connect” the buildings and their grounds. It is felt that this extension should be supported.

3.5. This report, and its appendices, were considered at the meeting of the Environment, Regulation and Planning Committee (held on 24 November). Comments from the Committee will be reported orally to Cabinet. In order for this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan to have the greatest weight in planning decisions, it will need to be adopted at the next Full Council meeting. If adopted, there would be a formal process of advertising the revised boundary to conclude the designation of the boundary and the revised appraisal document.
3.6. The guidance produced by English Heritage advises that the appraisal cannot be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Although they would have a lower status than an SPD, they would still sit within the wider policy framework as a material consideration for development proposals.

4. - Other Options

4.1. If the appraisal is not adopted, it would not have the weight described above, and would not support the authorities and the local community focus action to promote improvements in the areas.

5. - Relevant Corporate Priorities

Enhancing our quality of life and the environment we live in.

5.1. The appraisal identifies the special character of the conservation area and how this can be improved and managed by those involved.

Supporting communities to realise their potential.

5.2. The management proposals will only be successful with the cooperation and support of local landowners and groups.

6. - Implications and Risks

Financial

6.1. There is a small cost to process the designation and the administration to notify owners of the amendments. There could be additional work for the Council in dealing with applications for tree works and developments on the newly designated areas, that otherwise would not have needed consent, but this is expected to be met with existing resources.

Legal

6.2. The Council would be acting contrary to the section 71 of the 1990 Act if the appraisal programme was not continued. The appraisal does give a sound basis and analysis of the area to assist with development proposals, and would help with any subsequent appeals.

7. - Conclusion

7.1. That the appraisal and management plan be put forward to the Council for adoption subject to the comments above.

8. - Recommendations

8.1. That Cabinet recommends to Full Council Old Costessey Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan as set out in Appendix A of this report, be adopted.
Appendix A:
Old Costessey Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan
Report on comments received from the consultation.

Consultation process

The consultation period extended to 8 weeks in September and October 2013. All the residents in the conservation area were informed by letter together with English Heritage, the Parish Council, local members, Norfolk County Council, the Costessey Historical Society. An exhibition was held at the Costessey Centre on the 15th October with a public meeting that evening.

Details of the appraisal and the consultation were available on the Council’s web site and people were invited to respond on any aspect of the appraisal by e-mail, letter or telephone. The officer also attended a meeting of the Parish Council prior to the consultation on the 6th August.

Following various comments, in particular with regard to further changes to the boundaries of the area, it was decided that these could not be considered without a re-consultation. This was carried out in September and October this year with those residents affected informed by letter. The Parish Council, local members and Broadland Council were also consulted.

Comments received from the first consultation

English Heritage supports the inclusion of the parish church; suggested further reference be made to notable features in the area: chimneys, walls, and acknowledge that some buildings or views can have a negative as well as positive impact. Make clearer references to further guidance and advice.

The Parish Council supported the appraisal and suggested extending the area to include a section of the West End to the former Falcon PH, and the area around the former Costessey Hall. The local members supported this proposal.

Many residents were concerned about the impacts of heavy traffic along the Street particularly drivers using the street as a link to Taverham, despite improvements made by the county highways. There were suggestions that the Street be made a “Home Zone” with a 10 mph limit. The prospect of the NDR promises no real benefit to Costessey.
Another resident recommended the area be enlarged to include the gardens on the west side of the Street down to the river to connect them to the houses on this side which are currently bisected by the present boundary.

County Highways advised they would not consider a “Home Zone” or any closure of the road to Drayton. They did add that a scheme previously put forward in the West End is awaiting funding.
Comments received from the re-consultation

Prior to the re-consultation, discussions were held with the local members in respect of the proposal to include an area around the remains of Costessey Hall. It was put to them that the principle buildings on this site are already listed, which brings a level of protection to them and their settings, and there was a real problem of where a boundary could be drawn given that the former grounds to the hall are now part of the golf course and there were no clear defining landmarks to help. The local members agreed this suggestion would not be carried forward in the re-consultation.

In terms of the extension to West End, two of the 4 owners have objected to the inclusion of their modern bungalows. This land was included mainly to provide a sensible boundary if the former Falcon Inn was to be incorporated. The former Falcon Inn is a building of historic interest in the parish, but is a listed building which affords sufficient protection.

In respect of the alterations along The Street, Broadland Council has no objections. Two owners have objected to the extension. One lives in a modern house with land that is hardly visible to the public and as such can see no valid reason to include it in the conservation area. The other also lives in a modern house but is concerned at the additional controls a conservation area would impose over tree management and permitted development rights.
Old Costessey

Draft Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan
August 2013

Introduction

Under the terms of Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the Local Planning Authority is required to identify areas of special architectural or historic interest whose character or appearance it is desirable to preserve or enhance, and to designate them as Conservation Areas.

The 1990 Act also requires local authorities to prepare policy statements for Conservation Areas. These statements are to be more explicit and detailed than would be possible as part of a Local Plan, and seek to identify the components that give the Conservation Area its special character. This analysis will provide the context within which the particular problems of the area can be considered. The policies of the Council, and others, are noted and it is hoped that the assessment will help guide any future changes.

The influence of Costessey Hall and its successive owners on the shape and appearance of the village has been significant.

Old Costessey Conservation Areas were designated in 1980 and 1986, and an appraisal was adopted by the Council in 1999. This latest review is being carried out in response to guidance issued by English Heritage in 2006, which advises how the appraisals should be prepared and that they should also include management proposals.

Value of the Appraisal

The appraisal aims to improve the understanding of the value of the built heritage, and provide property owners and potential developers within the conservation area with clearer guidance on planning matters and the types of development likely to be encouraged. It will enable South Norfolk Council to improve its strategies, policies and the attitude towards the conservation and development opportunities and priorities within the designated area. It will also support the effective determination of planning and listed building applications, and inform relevant evidence in planning particularly relating to the demolition of unlisted buildings.
While the Council has prepared this appraisal, it cannot successfully deal with all the issues without the support of a number of individuals, groups and local and national organisations. This appraisal will help influence the changes in Costessey, and with the co-operation of all concerned, it could have a positive effect on its future.

**Historical Development**

There is a wealth of information on the history of Costessey, due primarily to the admirable efforts of Mr Ernest Gage whose books on “Costessey A look into the past”, and “Costessey Hall “, give a fascinating insight into the heritage of the parish. Much of the following account has been based on his research.

Costessey is recorded in the Domesday Book as “Costeseia”, while other sources have the name as “Costessie”, “Cossie” and “Cosseese”. The origins are unclear but it could derive from Scandinavia as “Cost’s island”.

The original manor of Costessey was one of the largest in Norfolk, including the adjoining villages of Bowthorpe and Bawburgh, and stretching as far as Hingham. It was awarded to Alan, Earl of Richmond after the Battle of Hastings, and passed through several families until Queen Mary granted it to Sir Henry Jernegan in 1555, who proceeded to build a “New Hall” to the south of The Old Manor House,( which is thought to be Park House, now much altered and later “relegated” to a dower house.). The new house was “E” shape in plan with projecting wings as can be seen on surviving photographs.

Successors to the estate carried out various alterations to the Hall which prompted the expansion of Costessey brickworks to cope with the demand. Sir William repaired the church and built a number of buildings and lodges in the late 18th century, most of which survive. The most spectacular expansion at the Hall came in between 1827 and 1855 when Sir George Jerningham, who became the 8th Baron of Stafford, was persuaded by his wife to commission J C Buckler to build a prodigious hall. This was to be built around the Tudor hall and to be adorned with battlemented walls, towers and ornate pseudo Tudor windows. It was a major project which began in 1827 but was still not finished 30 years later, but the progress can be seen on the photograph above. Further improvements were carried out in 1866 prior to a royal visit by the Prince and Princess of Wales. Apparently their royal visitors noted the dilapidated condition of the original Tudor Hall and persuaded the Jerninghams to restore it.

From these halcyon days however, there followed a series of events which unfortunately led to the demise of the Hall, and its abandonment in 1913. Lord Stafford in 1884 was declared a lunatic and while his successor was very generous and well liked, he had odd habits one of which was an obsession about leaving the confines of the park. His death in 1913 led to the severance of the Jerningham family from Costessey after 400 years. The new owners, whose priority was for their estates in Staffordshire, saw Costessey Hall as a “white elephant” and decided to dispose of it.
The hall was occupied during the First World War, but thereafter the internal fittings and furnishings were sold and the estate was broken up. It proved difficult to sell the shell of the Hall itself, but finally it was sold to a firm of demolition contractors for £5000 in 1920.

All that remains of the Hall is the ruins of the Belfry Tower, clad in ivy and part of the golf course which opened in 1986.

But the legacy and heritage of the Costessey estate has survived throughout the parish. There are numerous buildings which were connected with the estate, or are built with the distinctive Costessey bricks. The Jerninghams gave the Catholic school and church to the village, while the division of the estate prompted the expansion of what is now New Costessey in the 1920s and 30s. The golf course has helped secure part of the landscape of the Hall, which was set out by the Rev. Norton Nicholls in the 18th century and acknowledged by Humphrey Repton, the great landscape designer in the early 1800s.

There are other noteworthy features. The church is dedicated to St Edmund and is one of several churches in the parish. It dates from the 14th century, but with a number of alterations and works in the 19th century.

For some time there were two mills in the parish. One an impressive 5 storey brick and tiled structure, built in 1858, and was one of the largest mills in the county. It was sadly destroyed in a fire in 1924. Some remains survive. A post mill existed in Windmill Lane until 1902.

Although there have been some developments in Old Costessey, most of the growth in the parish in the 20th century occurred in New Costessey, especially after the Second World War, leading to the doubling of the population between 1931 and 1951 to nearly 5000. The latest figure places the population at over 10,000, making Costessey the second most populated parish in South Norfolk.

The location of the parish close to Norwich has made it an obvious choice for growth. A significant allocation was made possible after the cessation of the sand and gravel workings at Longwater leading to its subsequent redevelopment as Queen’s Hills and the retail and business park. Dealing with growth in one large area has been in contrast to the incremental additions to the existing settlement which has historically been the pattern within the parish. There is no reason why future growth should not better reflect the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Areas which is outlined in this appraisal.

**Character Assessment**

**Costessey and its Setting**

The pattern of the parish is influenced by two rivers: the Wensum in the north and the Tud which forms a natural “boundary” between what is now Old and New Costessey. The earlier settlement follows the primary roads of West End and The Street as it mirrors the
meandering route of the Wensum, before spreading up onto the higher wooded grounds to the south and east. New Costessey occupies the rising ground south of the Tud, up to the A47 which is, at least visually, the parish boundary. The wooded landscape south of the Tud survives in the western parts of New Costessey where Old and New meet in the grounds of the former Hall.

**Conservation Area Boundary**

The current Conservation Areas cover three sections of Old Costessey:

**The Mill**

The boundary at the mill centres on the former mill house and cottages to the north and Old Costessey House and gardens to the east. The road passes between them before it turns sharply westwards and then back on itself as it crosses the river and parish boundary.

**The Street**

The boundary extends from numbers 113-119 at the north end to the Bush Public house and number 52 at the south. It widens at the junction with The Croft to include the wooded area of the former lime workings.

**West End**

The Area includes only the nucleus of the street between numbers 48 and 74.

It is suggested that the boundary of the conservation area should be amended. Aside from minor changes to take account of new buildings and property boundaries, it is felt the Mill and The Street areas should be linked and the boundary on the west side of The Street, from the mill to the Bush PH, extended as far as the river. This would have the effect of including the Church of St Edmund and its churchyard, and also reconnecting the various dwellings with their rear gardens. These green spaces contribute to the setting of the area. These changes are shown on the maps in appendix 2.

**Form and Character**

This is a summary of the character of the conservation areas. A more detailed analysis is given in Appendix 1.

**The Mill**

The landscape dominates here with the wide river meadows to the north and west, and the hedges and trees which contribute significantly to this attractive end of the village. It is physically separated from the rest of the village yet historically is very much part of it.
The Street

This section is a traditional historic street shaped by buildings and walls tight against the footpath, but softened and enhanced by trees and hedges especially at The Croft, and the rear gardens leading to the river. The subtle bends in the road creates an ever changing picture where buildings, walls and trees interplay to close or frame the views. The absence of footpaths adds to the appreciation of the buildings and spaces. The character has been affected by modern buildings which have either replaced older buildings or have been inserted in the gaps. Many have not responded to the historic pattern or architectural treatment.

West End

This section contains a variety of buildings mostly set behind short front gardens largely show casing the quality of Costessey bricks with some impressive architectural detailing.

Buildings

The buildings within all three parts of the conservation area are generally in domestic use, but with a great variety of scale and “status”. Appendix 6 includes 31 buildings in the area that are listed and 53 of “townscape value”, and these are shown on the maps in Appendix 2.

Building Materials

Roofs tend to be either red or black clay pantiles, steeply pitched, but there is slate to the church and on some of the Victorian buildings. Thatch survives on buildings but these are outside the area. The presence and variety of chimneys makes a significant contribution to the character of the area and the quality of the roofscape. Walls are brick and flint with the distinctive gault “Costessey whites” mostly along West End, a few are colour washed. Timber framing survives in a few of the older buildings invariably rendered and painted. There are several good brick and flint boundary walls with traditional coping bricks. Flint and stone adorn the church with weatherboarding to Church Barn. Particular mention should be made to the ornate brickwork on the houses on West End. Gable ends are a special feature of The Street with houses displaying an impressive variety and quality of craftsmanship. Metal railings are a characteristic of the area with examples of good iron gates and gate piers.

Ground Surface Materials

These primarily tarmac, coloured in one section to denote the footpath, with concrete kerbs where they edge the footpaths. Modern street lights.

Street Furniture
There is little in the way of street furniture but there are some good examples of enclosing brick walls (St. Mary’s House, Meadow View) and lengths of railings, especially in the West End where original Victorian iron railings survive. Modern infill buildings have not employed such sensitive and attractive materials.

A superb pair of iron gates and piers (listed) survives in The Street at the entrance to ‘Glen View’.

Ground surface materials are primarily tarmac, coloured in one section to denote the footpath, with concrete kerbs where they edge the footpaths. Modern street lights.

Open Spaces, Trees, Hedges and Views

The presence of trees and indigenous hedges is a vital element in contributing to the overall character of the conservation area. Their location is marked on the Natural Character map in Appendix 2.

The character of the area is particularly enhanced by hedges and trees which shape the streets and enclose the spaces. The trees on the higher ground to the east provide an attractive backdrop. The Croft, a former lime works, makes a great contribution with the changes in level, the trees and the space itself, although it has been “domesticated” and a variety of buildings have been added in the space. The trees and open spaces create an attractive natural backdrop to the dwellings on the west side of The Street. Views from the river and meadows are shaped by the trees which mark the edge of the settlement and contribute to the setting of the area. The mill is dominated by trees and hedges where the interplay with the water and views of the meadows adds an extra dimension. The views back to the higher ground of the village from this area are largely obscured by the planting, but there are good views both to the east and west past Church farm.

Developments

The expansion of New Costessey has, to a large extent, reduced the impact of development on Old Costessey, so that the qualities of the conservation area can still be appreciated.

Nevertheless, a preamble through Ernest Gage’s excellent book (see references) and illustrations, shows how much has changed. (see photographs on page 5)

Some of the sites where older buildings had been demolished, and many of the previously vacant plots along The Street and near the West End have now been developed. Unfortunately the design and layout of new buildings rarely reflect the original character of the village and in particular, fail to carry through the tightly knit form of The Street. Many new houses are set well back and have relatively open frontages with a poor degree of enclosure. Regrettably, most of the new houses do not make a positive contribution to the character of the area. The new house
at the rear of number 109 The Street is an interesting departure from this trend.

In addition to modern developments there has been a degree of unsympathetic repair, restoration, improvement or conversion of the historic buildings in the area. Most noticeable is the use of inappropriate windows and doors, features which can have a very detrimental effect on historic buildings.

There is a real danger that the character of the area may gradually be eroded through the increasing use of standard modern details, whether by private owners, statutory bodies or local authorities. The use of dwarf concrete walls or fences has affected the close knit character of The Street in several places. Along West End some of the treatments to front boundaries are not in character with the particular style of the houses they serve. The traffic calming measures: widening and kerbing of part of The Street and creating pinch points, with associated signage, has an unfortunate visual impact, albeit a necessary one.

The opportunities for further new building within the conservation area, are limited. Future development is therefore likely to focus upon extension, conversion and enhancement of the existing buildings, but any opportunities that arise should take much greater account of the form and character as outlined in this appraisal.

**Problems and Opportunities**

The policies referred in Appendix 4 are limited to those areas where the Council can have a influence, either by its own actions, or by using its legislative powers to guide the actions of others. However, while acknowledging these limitations, this appraisal also identifies other issues outside its control, in the hope that those responsible, either individuals or organisations, might be encouraged to act in a positive way.

The frequency of relatively heavy traffic through the conservation area has always been a major problem and detracts considerably from the quality of the townscape and architecture. The need for residents to commute to Norwich, or the habit of others using Costessey as a short cut either to the business park or to and from the A47, has increased the level and impact of through traffic.

The Street, in particular, can be dangerous for the pedestrian as it is scarcely wide enough in places for larger vehicles to pass. Various measures have been carried out, with some success, which should control the speed of the traffic but is apparently not entirely successful. These do not seem to reduce the flow of traffic through the area. The absence of alternative parking for owners of historic houses has led to their converting their front gardens.

**Changes to the Character of the Conservation Area**
The special character of conservation areas can easily be eroded by seemingly minor, well-intentioned home improvements such as the insertion of replacement windows and doors with ones of an inappropriate design or material, (for example hinged opening lights in lieu of sash windows and wood effect UPVC instead of painted timber). This is a particular issue with unlisted buildings. In line with current legislation, all complete window replacements are required to achieve minimum insulation values, but recognising the affect that inappropriate replacements can have, local authorities are empowered to relax that requirement when considering the restoration or conversion of listed buildings. Advice should be sought from the local planning department at an early stage.

**Recommendations for Management Proposals**

**National Policies**

The Council will follow the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework, which outlines the Government’s policies for Heritage Assets.

**Local Plan**

The Strategic Principles and Policies in the Joint Core Strategy and the South Norfolk Local Plan have implications for the historic fabric of the conservation area and provide the local framework for the future of Costessey.

Policies relating to the management of conservation areas and listed building have been included in the emerging Local Plan (Development Management Policies DPD). This gives appropriate advice to owners and developers and assists the effective determination of planning application.

**Monitor the Conservation Area**

The Local Authority has a duty, from time to time, to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are conservation areas (Planning (listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990).

**Guidance and Advice**

Monitor and update the information on South Norfolk Council’s website (www.south-norfolk.gov.uk) regarding advice for owners/residents on:

- The implications of conservation area designation
- Article 4 and Article 4(2) directions
Item 5 Appendix C

• On appropriate maintenance, repairs and alterations to buildings to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.

• On sustainable development and construction (in line with the Council’s policies) taking into account the need to maintain the distinct character and appearance of the area, and include on the council’s website. Information is available in the South Norfolk Council’s Place-making Guide. http://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/planning/5287.asp

• Publish Supplementary Planning Document: Development in the Historic Environment.

Specific Enhancement Proposals

Traffic

The management of through and local traffic, and the effect of existing measures should be assessed, and further discussions held with the highway authority as appropriate.

Wirescape and Street Lights

The presence of overhead wires and cables is visually intrusive in parts of The Street and West End. Opportunities should be taken as and when they arise to improve this situation. Encouragement should be given to the replacement of the modern street lights with more sympathetic versions.

Landscape

• There are various ways in which the existing landscape of all three parts of the conservation area can be enhanced. Thoughtful hedge and tree planting almost always has a positive outcome.

• The area of land west of mill house is at present rather untidy and could also be improved. Provision could be made for car parking, perhaps suitable street furniture, a more durable flooring material, and possibly provision for disabled users.

• Encouragement should be given to owners to re-establish front boundaries using walls, railings or hedges.

• Although the character of the conservation area is influenced by the river, there is little public access to it. Any opportunities to improve this relationship should be pursued.

Condition of Buildings/sites

The condition of Church Barn is a cause for concern and may be at risk, and further
investigations should be undertaken as to the problems and scope for reuse. Some of the agricultural buildings at Mill Cottages also appear to be in a poor state of repair. The remains of the Mill appear to need attention. The former walls and railings north of By the Mill have decayed.

**Proposed Conservation Area Boundary**

It is proposed to extend the conservation area to the south of The Mill to include the church and to link it to the conservation area at The Street. This extended area would follow the line of the river as its western boundary as far as the Bush PH.

The previous appraisal promoted the assessment of a further conservation area centred on the remains of the Hall and Park House.

While the importance of Costessey hall to the parish is undeniable, it is felt that there would be no benefit to designating an area here. The significant buildings are listed while the remains of the landscape are “protected” to some degree by contributing to the golf course.

**Appendix 1**  
**Townscape and Buildings**

**The Mill**

The loss of the Mill in 1924 significantly altered the nature of this area. While it was active the Mill was the focus and reason for the working community which established here and most of the buildings that remain today were in some way associated with the Mill. While the activities have changed, the approach to the area from the street has survived. The road is still framed by the low brick or flint walls and railings, although those on the west side are in poor condition, with hedges and trees growing above and over the road creating a very pleasant leafy rural atmosphere. The dominance of the trees and hedges is a key factor here. They make a positive contribution in their own right, with the buildings nestling among them.

Old Costessey House, with its Costessey White bricks, emerges from the trees from its elevated position. The Mill House is partially hidden behind the road side wall of the former Mill, while the cottages and farm buildings to the north are seen in the backdrop along a private road. None of these buildings are listed but they are all of “townscape value”.

At the turn of the road, the character change as the open river meadow of the Wensum valley comes into view and spreads to the north and west. The meandering of the road here adds to the interest and “sense of place”. More should be made of this setting if possible to make it more welcoming to the visitor.
In the previous conservation area appraisal, it was suggested that the area could be extended to include the church and down to the river. This is recommended and a revised boundary is suggested on the map in Appendix 2.

The Street

The Street climbs gradually south to north to the Church of St Edmund with some subtle curves along its length. In the area, many of the older buildings and walls are set hard against the edge of the street, some facing it, others at right angles enjoying the southern aspect. In some stretches the street narrows with the buildings set very close on both sides. Elsewhere, the houses offer their attractive brick and flint gables to public view.

The variety of houses is an attraction: from the impressive St. Marys and Meadow View opposite, to modest single storey houses and outbuildings. It is unfortunate that none of the modern houses, which have been built in several sites along The Street, make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

The rising land on the east side has a marked effect on the outlook from the street. Around the Croft, the space is adorned with trees which add a natural back cloth to the street, although in parts this has been eroded by the houses on Folgate Close. In other sections, the growth has been more considered with layers of buildings combining to create a lively townscape. Although the river is a major feature in this part of Costessey, it is kept as a private view and is not seen from the street which is a pity as the contrast would have been a positive delight. Nevertheless, the presence of trees and other green spaces in the rear gardens leading to the river, do improve the setting of the Street: a more modest example to the impact of The Backs in Cambridge.

Where buildings are set back, walls or hedges were used to continue the street line. It is only where modern houses have been added, that this close knit character has not been maintained.

The church is an exceptional building, with a tree lined avenue adorning the main access, a good boundary wall, and prominent churchyard and memorials extending up to the road. To the north is Church barn, once part of a larger complex of farm buildings, and a significant building in the street with its two gables facing the church. It is listed grade 2, but looks sadly neglected. The farmhouse is a 20th century replacement to the north in a similar position to its predecessor. Beyond the house good views can be enjoyed of the surrounding landscape to the east and west. Opposite the church are a collection of modern buildings of no great importance, but also an historic group 140 to 144, which is set further back.

The junction with the Croft is particularly well defined with Roes Corner a very dominant element with number 79 closing the view down from the Croft. Opposite the trees of West Hill try to hide an impressive house set on the higher ground.

The Street has a variety of good quality brick and flint walls, some quite high, with railings and a pair of elaborate cast-iron gates to number 113. The use of railings on low brick walls is a
common boundary treatment in all three conservation areas.

**West End**

This part of the conservation area comprises a tightly knit group of historic buildings on both sides of the street. While the former Red Lion dates from the 17th century, most of the other buildings in the area were built in the latter half of the 19th century, when even the Red Lion and the former Falcon to the west were refaced to match. Prior to this time, there would only have been a scattering of buildings along the street, so the construction of these houses close together in the space of some 20 years, would have had a noticeable impact. Expansion since has drawn them into the continuous built form that is now West End.

The land to the south rises towards the Costessey Golf Course with groups of trees and hedges forming an important feature on the roadside.

The quality and detail of these houses attracts the attention. The ornate chimneys; the crisp parapet gables and brick dentil courses under the gutters; the traditional doors and windows, often with decorative mouldings above and the carefully carved date stones and other panels. All these reflect the heyday of the Costessey brickworks and the skill of the brick makers, and create a very distinctive environment. It is a testament to the succession of owners that these details have survived.

Old photographs show their front gardens had railings on low brick walls to the road, and while some have been retained, others have been replaced with less satisfactory alternatives, usually to make space for cars.

The retention of number 51 and the building adjacent, has kept the tight definition of the street.

**Appendix 2 Conservation Area map**

**Appendix 3 Conservation Areas**

The majority of conservation areas are historic settlements and often include a number of buildings which are designated as ‘Listed Buildings’, in recognition of their individual architectural or historic value. However, the character of conservation areas depends on much more than the quality of individual buildings. They take into account features such as building layout, open spaces, boundaries, thoroughfares, the mix of uses, use of materials and street furniture.

Within the conservation area;

- Buildings and other structures are protected from substantial demolition
• Works to trees are controlled by giving the local authority six weeks to consider whether a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) should be made

• Some minor developments (such as stone cladding, the positioning of satellite dishes and dormer windows), which do not require consent outside conservation areas may require consent within the designated area

• Special attention must be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the special character of the conservation area throughout the planning process

• Enhancement schemes are the subject of public debate

• Reviews take place from time to time.

Appendix 4
Policy Background

In recent years, the approach to conservation area designation has changed considerably. It is now recognised that development plan policies, development control decisions, proposals for the preservation or enhancement and the ‘management’ of conservation areas can be best achieved when there is a sound understanding of the special interest of the conservation area.

1. Department for Communities and Local Government
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012

The new NPPF replaces all the previous Planning Policy Statements. Section 12, paragraphs 126 to 141 cover: “Conserving and enhancing the historic environment”.

2. Joint Core Strategy - Policy 2: Promoting good design

3. Saved Policies of the South Norfolk Local Plan

| IMP2 | Landscaping |
| IMP3 | Protection of Important Spaces |
| IMP4 | Important frontages |
| IMP5 | Streetscape |
| IMP6 | Visual impact of parked cars |
| IMP11 | Demolition of Listed Buildings |
| IMP12 | Redevelopment following demolition of Listed Buildings |
| IMP13 | Alteration of Listed Buildings |
| IMP14 | Buildings at Risk |
| IMP15 | Setting of Listed Buildings |
| IMP16 | Demolition in Conservation areas |
| IMP17 | Alterations and extensions in Conservation areas |
4. South Norfolk Local Plan

South Norfolk Council is currently reviewing and revising local policies, in the development policies DPD which will be part of the new Local Plan (LP). In the meantime the more specific local policies included in the Saved Policies of the South Norfolk Local Plan (1998) are still relevant.

Appendix 5
Archaeology

The Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service compile records of all areas of known archaeological activity, sites, funds, crop marks, earthworks, industrial remains, defensive structures and historic buildings in the county. These records are known as the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER).

The NHER for the conservation area in Costessey has 307 entries. Some of these entries are buildings or other structures above ground, which are statutorily listed, although some of the NHER entries contain more detailed information about the buildings. Many are ‘find spots’ where a record is kept of anything of interest that is found during building works or other excavations.

Appendix 6(i)
Listed Buildings
In Old Costessey Conservation Area

The Street : 63 (Riverside House), 93 (St. Marys) including garden wall, gate and gate piers, Gate piers to 113, 115, 117 and 119, Church of St Edmund, (grade 1), Tombstone 10 yards south of tower, Church farm barn, 80, 88, 100, 104, 120 (Trinity Cottage), 138, 140 and 142.

West End : 50 (and Ash Cottage), 52, 54, 56 and 58, 64 (Red Lion Cottage), 70, 72 and 74.

Appendix 6(ii) -
Unlisted Buildings of “Townscape significance” -
The Mill

Mill House, boundary wall to Mill House, flank walls to bridge, Mill Cottages, Coach house and adjoining stables, adjacent barn and associated outbuildings. Old Costessey House.

The Street

Farm building attached to Church barn, walls to St. Edmunds churchyard, 144, boundary walls to north and south of 119, 112 and railing, 110, 106, 102 and front wall, 95-99, 94-98, 92 (West Hill), 84 and 86, 79 and 79a, 75. Merry meeting and barn cottage and boundary wall, Ivy cottage and The cottage in the Croft.
Nos. 74-78, 70 and 72, 67 and boundary wall, 64 and 66, 56-62, Bush PH, and 51 and 53 (Little Something), no. 50 and front railings.

West End

Nos 37, 39, 45 & 47, 51 and 53, 60/62 and building to the north, and 68.

Appendix 7
Sources and References

Costessey “A look into the Past “ Ernest G Gage
1992 ISBN 0 9542113 0 8
Costessey Hall
I am grateful to Mr Brian Gage for permission to use the photographs on page 5.

South Norfolk Council Place Making Guide
English Heritage Guidance on Conservation Area appraisals 2006
And Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas 2006

Norwich City Council for mapping services
Norfolk Mills and their permission to use the photograph of Costessey Mill on page 4.

Appendix 8
Contacts

SNDC Conservation Officer – 01508 533812/533948
South Norfolk Council, Swan Lane, Long Stratton, Norfolk, NR15 2XE
www.south-norfolk.gov.uk. Email council@s-norfolk.gov.uk
Tel: 01508 533633
Cabinet
8 December 2014

Agenda Item No____7____

Market Towns Initiative

Director of Growth and Localism

This report reviews the progress of the Council's Market Towns Initiative (covering Diss, Harleston, Loddon and Wymondham) and recommends how it is proposed to develop the next phase of the initiative.

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<th>Cabinet member(s):</th>
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<td>John Fuller, Martin Wilby</td>
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Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail:

Tim Horspole 01508 533806
thorspole@s-norfolk.gov.uk

1. Background

1.1. Since its launch in December 2013 the Council’s Market Towns Initiative has seen several achievements, including:

- The establishment of strong town teams that have shaped the programme of events and interventions,
- The creation of a strong “brand” for each of the market towns, based on the unique offer they present,
- A series of events in the town centres that have drawn in large numbers of visitors,
- The improvement of the street scene, including signage and increased street cleaning,
- Capital investment programme including improved public toilets,
- The increase in capacity of high street shops using the skills academy,
- Strategic co-ordination of the individual local initiatives

The initiative also has established an evidence base that we hold for each of the market towns, which has led to the development of a bespoke performance measurement framework.

(See appendix for more detail of the work of the initiative.)

2. Current Position and Issues

2.1. Since the launch of the initiative several issues have arisen that suggest we need to review and refresh the current approach, making changes that will see the initiative develop. These drivers for change include:

- The need to deliver growth in our Market Towns in a manner that integrates the new housing areas into the existing town community.
Cabinet
8 December 2014

- Need for a greater emphasis on drawing visitors to the towns, and increasing tourism.
- There is a need to widen the scope of the MTI, to include all sectors of economic growth and not solely focus on retail.
- Need for town teams to be sustainable in the long term, with a higher degree of autonomy
- The need to start “future proofing” our market towns to ensure they evolve to maximise their contribution to economic growth
- Changes to the Council’s approach to Community Development

2.2. This report makes recommendations that reinforce, reorganise and refresh the MTI and develop a distinct phase two of the programme. The refreshed MTI will capitalise on existing arrangements and will be developed in consultation with the local town teams. This project will run until March 2016

3. Proposal and Reasons

3.1. Taking account of the factors listed above it is proposed to amend the objectives of the Market Towns, the proposed objectives are:

- **To ensure our market towns have economic vibrancy and vitality.** We want to encourage and promote the economic and commercial vitality of the towns, which will not only serve residents but also benefit the rural areas surrounding the towns.
- **To develop projects that can maximise the investment from external funding opportunities.** We want to use our investment of the New Homes Bonus to draw in additional funding into the district and to use growth to support our communities.
- **To protect and improve the high-quality environment the towns.** We want to facilitate growth in our market towns to meet the needs of current and new residents, in a way that protects and enhances the distinct character of each of the towns.
- **To make our towns attractive and popular destinations for visitors and tourists.** We want to promote the market towns individually and collectively to visitors, increasing the footfall and spending in the town centres.
- **To create a socially inclusive and caring communities in our market towns.** We want to ensure our towns have strong communities, which are self-supporting, embrace existing and new residents and take on the responsibility for developing their well-being.

3.2. The revised objectives retain the themes of the initial phase of the initiative of physical improvements and co-ordinated events.

Governance and Structure

3.3. The refreshed strategy and second phase of the programme will be developed with town team partners. It is important to ensure that we take this opportunity to get the local management and co-ordination right. Initial work with partners will stress the importance of evidence based local & strategic action plans and the importance of monitoring and celebrating success. The main purpose of these governance and structural arrangements is to establish formal but flexible
structures to ensure effective programme development and delivery with all parties understanding their role and their partners.

3.4. The initial phase will include:

- Simple Terms of Reference

3.5. These Terms of Reference will spell out that South Norfolk Council can provide support to the management of complex initiatives initially but will skill up town teams to become self-sustaining in the future.

3.6. The terms of reference will be clear about the balance between funding local action plans and investment in larger scale initiatives by South Norfolk Council to make sure it meets its objectives.

3.7. They will define a role for town teams in identifying local and district wide opportunities for external funding sources (including through the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership) which will be needed to sustain town teams beyond the lifespan/budget of New Homes Bonus.

3.8. These terms of reference will reflect the different approaches that may be favoured by each of the town but will be clear that the aim is to create local teams that are sustainable in the long-term with South Norfolk Council as a partner, but as more limited funder.

- Engagement with businesses in each Town

3.9. South Norfolk Council will work with local Business Forums and the Town Teams to determine how local businesses, beyond the high street, can be flexibly engaged in the work of the Town Team without being tied to formal meetings and structures. This will necessitate effective ongoing communication channels with Business Forums.

- SNC Internal Organisation

3.10. A review of the Growth and Localism Directorate has strengthened the Economic Development function through the appointment of the Head of Growth and Economic Development. This post is best placed to take the strategic lead for the MTI work and will also be responsible for ensuring inter-departmental coordination and co-operation. In addition, the “Head of” role the MTI needs “on the ground” support to deal with the day-to-day actions. We have, therefore appointed a new Market Towns Co-ordinator; the Market Towns Co-ordinator will be the lead officer for the Market Towns Initiative, and would serve as the point of contact between the Council and the Town teams. One of the first activities the Market Towns Co-ordinator will be engaged with is organising a South Norfolk Market Towns Conference. Such a conference was recommended to Cabinet by
the Scrutiny Committee. It will give the town teams and other relevant stakeholders the opportunity to share good practice and discuss their town action plans. It is likely that this will be held in late February.

- New Homes Bonus Investment

3.11. It is recommended that South Norfolk Council’s investment be split in two ways:
  - Local Action Plans

3.12. The first is a top slice of the New Homes Bonus budget to fund South Norfolk Council’s contribution to local Action Plans developed by the Town Teams with appropriate involvement from Council representatives. These local action plans would include relatively small, locally responsive initiatives (based on locally identified need) and the current “Harleston’s Future Action Plan” provides a precedent for such local planning. It is recommended that the investment be £20,000 per town.
  - South Norfolk Council’s Investment Priorities

3.13. In addition to making funds available to provide a contribution to locally developed action plans, South Norfolk Council will also have its own programme of investment across the Market Towns. This programme would constitute around an additional £272,500 of the New Homes Bonus funding and while initiatives may be developed at a local level, and differ from town to town, the broad approach will be consistent across the towns and will in accordance with the Council’s priorities. In essence the money will fund physical improvements and events. It is recommended that the £272,500 is split with £192,500 being allocated for physical improvements and £80,000 for events.

3.14. In total, with the individual town team budgets, the cost of the Market Towns Coordinator and the investment in events and physical improvements, the investment through the initiative for 2015/16 is around £400,000.

One of the key characteristics of this investment is sustainability. At this time there has been no decision on New Homes Bonus investment 2016/17 and all initiatives development in the meantime need to avoid ongoing commitment and foster sustainability for the future.

- South Norfolk Council Priorities for Investment.

3.15. South Norfolk Council remains committed to investing a proportion of its New Homes Bonus money to the market towns of South Norfolk to achieve the objectives identified above. The focus will continue to be on the four towns of Diss, Harleston, Loddon and Wymondham. However it is also recognised that it may be appropriate to fund initiatives in other towns, such as Hingham and Long Stratton (or even Poringland and Costessey) either as part of a wider district initiative or because a particularly innovative or presssing scheme has emerged from one of these communities.

3.16. It is proposed that the key focus of the Council’s investment remains as physical improvements to the environment of our market towns and events (including promotion) of the towns. The intended outcomes will include:
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- New campaigns to maintain and enhance economic, cultural and social vibrancy within the towns
- Increased community capacity in the towns, with an increase in the numbers of volunteers engaged on improving the fabric of the town and supporting vulnerable residents (such as the young and elderly).
- Physical projects to broaden economic opportunities which will sustain into the future, for example, improved broadband services.
- Establishing effective links with New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and other strategic partners to identify and secure external sources of funding for MTI initiatives; and
- Self-sustainable towns, not reliant on continuing SNC funding.

- New Campaigns

3.17. A campaign of events will continue to be an essential element of the initiative. All of the towns have capacity for organising quality events and the Council’s role will increasingly be one of facilitation.

- Physical Projects

3.18. The action plans might seek to include achievable physical projects examples of which might include:

- Undertaking targeted soft market testing with prospective inward investment and brokering relationships between investors and existing landowners / tenants
- Addressing prominent vacant or derelict properties and developing individual strategies for their redevelopment / reuse
- Undertaking works to improve gateways to towns, employment estates and town centres – including Highways signage
- Establishing regeneration or restoration programmes for key spaces and historic buildings and preparing applications for funding from relevant agencies such as HLF
- Undertaking de-cluttering and minor public realm works such as the introduction of lighting and landscaping.
- Invest in cycling facilities – racks, shelters etc. – and ensure the promotion and up keep of cycle trails.

- Links to New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and other strategic partners

3.19. The next stage of the initiative should include strong links with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and other strategic partners to ensure that economic growth opportunities are maximised and funding opportunities exploited. The role identified for the Head of Growth and Economic Development should facilitate this along with support from colleagues, the Funding Manager and South Norfolk Council’s prominent position on the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership Board.

- Establishing self-sustainability – focusing more widely than retail/high street;

3.20. A key recommendation is that the Council invests in building capacity within communities. The focus of this component is investment in skilling up the Town
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Teams/Town Councils and other community leaders to become self-sustaining. Proposals include:

- using some of the Retail Skills Academy programmes including social media training for Town Councils/Town Teams/community leaders including:
  - Following up each RSA programme every two months to see what businesses are doing with the learning.
  - Using “graduating” businesses in an ambassadorial role – mentoring
  - Coaching in how to use LinkedIn
  - Fostering independent mystery shopping programmes.
  - Holding Retailer Awards – on the back of RSA training.
  - Promoting and monitoring take up of the Enterprise Norfolk offer
  - Creating “toolkits” for Market Towns – PR, Marketing etc.
- Facilitating Crowd Funding;
- Helping new start-ups – help them to “pop up” then move on to leasing premises;
- Establishing a Town Team marketing group in each Town.
- Developing “Concierge – style” services – other services egg business services too.
- Seeking charitable status for Town Teams to facilitate greater fundraising potential.

3.21. Building economic capacity and self-sustainability sits alongside the need for wider community capacity to be built. The Early Help agenda will be highly pertinent to the Market Towns and it is proposed that investment be made in capacity building and particularly in the establishment of Early Help hubs in other market towns following the implementation of the Hub in Diss.

3.22. These proposals have been formed through the Growth and Localism Committee and from the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee.

4. Other Options

4.1. The Council could decide not to refresh the objectives of the MTI or even decide not to continue with the initiative. Following either of these alternatives would mean the Council would be unlikely to deliver the benefits sought as set out in section 2 of this report. The Council has also given a strong message that new homes bonus should be invested our local communities, demonstrating positive outcomes for the growth planned for within the district.

5. Relevant Corporate Priorities (delete the following as appropriate)

5.1. Enhancing our quality of life and the environment we live in. – one of the objectives of the MTI is to improve the physical environment of the market towns, making them more attractive to residents and visitors.

5.2. Promoting a thriving local economy – market towns are significant to the district’s economy, promoting economic activity is one of the main strand the initiative

5.3. Supporting communities to realise their potential – the MTI aims to build community capacity, helping communities be more self-contained and self-sufficient.
6. **Implications and Risks (delete the following as appropriate)**

6.1. Financial – the budget for the MTI comes from the Council’s New Home Bonus allocation, for 2015/16 it is proposed that £400,000 is invested in the market towns through this initiative.

6.2. Environmental - the MTI includes actions for improving the environment of our market towns, and where appropriate, proposal for improving the towns will be assessed for their environmental impact.

6.3. Equalities – events and improvements commissioned through the MTI will ensure the Council’s obligation towards promoting equalities is met.

6.4. Crime Reduction – there is evidence that creating cleaner and well-kept town environments has a positive effect in reducing crime and disorder.

6.5. Risks – one of the main risks for the Council is the towns becoming dependent and reliant on high levels of dedicated support and funding. In mitigation, the Market Towns Co-ordinator post is a temporary position, and one of the main aims of the role is to develop the town teams to a point where they become largely self-sufficient.

7. **Conclusion**

7.1. The initial phase of the Council’s Market Towns Initiative has resulted in many positive outcomes, with footfall being increased through a programme of events, retailers being supported through access to training and a series of physical improvements to the town centres. Moving forward, it is recommended that the scope of the initiative be expanded to:

- Develop strong and self-sustaining town teams
- Expanded emphasis on economic development whilst retaining the current focus on retail activity
- “Future proof” are market towns, addressing the challenges from changing patterns of retail activity, and maintaining vibrant and economically active settlements

7.2. To deliver these ambitions, the Council has appointed a Market Towns Co-ordinator, who will develop the town teams, help establish town action plans and commission events and physical improvements for the towns that help deliver the objectives of the initiative.

8. **Recommendations**

8.1. Cabinet is recommended to endorse the approach to developing the Market Towns Initiative as set out in section 3 of this report.
Appendix
Market Towns Initiative

Delivered to date:

Benchmarking

In May we commissioned Towns Alive (formerly Action for Market Towns) to conduct a benchmarking survey for Loddon, Wymondham and Harleston to give us baseline data by which to measure the success of the Market Towns Initiative. Diss commissioned their survey separately with funds achieved through the Portas Pilots in 2013.

The resulting reports provide valuable insight into the current performance in each town and have been shared with key groups. The reports measure performance against 12 KPIs – including footfall – and progress will be monitored year on year.

Support for businesses

Since December we have offered a programme of specially targeted training to support retail businesses in our towns delivered by the Retail Skills Academy – part of City College, Norwich.

In total we have delivered courses on four themes, each over a variety of dates and times to best suit retail businesses. Courses have been delivered on

- Window dressing
- Social media for retail
- Advanced Visual Merchandising
- Selling

Over 100 participants from 43 different retailers across the four market towns have attended and participated.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive and many retailers have participated in multiple courses.

- “An amazing opportunity from the council.”
- “Looking forward to attending more courses in the future, excellent.”
- “A good opportunity from the council – we would like to continue.”
- “Worth our time and the South Norfolk District Councils money.”
- “Very valuable course to a new business like myself.”
Support for organisations

Event Management Workshop

At the end of January, we held an Event Management Workshop for community groups and organisations based in our Market Towns to provide support and guidance on promoting events, licensing, risk assessments and programming creative content.

57 participants from community organisations across South Norfolk attended the workshop.

Events to drive footfall

Since January we have delivered more than 25 individual events in our Market Towns to drive footfall and to attract new visitors. In addition we have worked with organisations such as the Norfolk & Norwich Festival to bring six Festival events, including a free family fun day in Diss attracting more than 300 people, and four schools workshops to the towns. We also worked with local agency The Lively Crew who engaged students in Diss and Wymondham to encourage visitors to celebrate what they ‘love’ the most about their town.

We have focussed our efforts in supporting key retail trading periods – eg Christmas, Easter, School holidays – driving footfall in to the towns to support businesses. We have worked in partnership with a range of retailers in each town to promote trails around the town centres, helping visitors to discover new shops and raising awareness of what each town has to offer. During the two-week Easter period more than 1300 participants took part in trails around Wymondham, Lodden and Diss – each town trail included 10 individual businesses.

- “A lot of people that never come up to this end of town have visited - albeit briefly but they have been surprised at how much there is to see in St Nicholas Street.” Rags, Bows & Curios, Diss
- “Brings customers into the shop including new customers who haven't been in before.” Yum Yums, Wymondham
- “Good footfall down this end of town.” The Lemon Tree, Wymondham
- “Brought a lot of people in.” Lodden Garden & Seed Centre

Over the summer holidays we worked on a smaller trail across the 4 towns and saw over 300 families participating.

- ”It was lovely to see families in the shop, many for the first time. We would be keen to take part in other initiatives.” Jewellery Workshop, Diss.
- “The trail was busy but because it was spread out over a longer period of time it was more manageable than the Easter trail, which was sometimes too busy to cope with as we had a lot of customers over this busy period.” Claire’s Sugarcraft, Diss
• “Definitely helped business-wise. Bringing children and parents into the shop. Sales have been boosted due to the campaign.” Roy Minshull

In May we engaged with the national focus on markets by participating in ‘Love Your Local Market’ fortnight. We helped to create additional interest and focus on our markets with the help of a cookery theatre and music, and by working with schools to create dishes from produce sold on the markets.

“appreciate you (SNC) trying to do something to support us.” Mark Gilbert, Market trader

“Street activities hold people in the town.” Robert Hollingworth, Market Trader.

Further events

• Festive Fusion
• Indoor Theatre – February Half Term
• National Science & Engineering Week
• South Norfolk on Show
• Summer Outdoor theatre

Individual town identities

We have supported each town to each create a strong and effective new identity which is meaningful to residents, visitors and businesses. We engaged the professional support of Norwich based marketing and branding agency, Balloon Dog, to build upon the initial findings from our town walkarounds and meetings last summer, and to work with groupings in each town to identify the things that are truly unique and special about it.

Through this process we were also able to develop an identity for the Market Towns Initiative itself – South Norfolk Market Towns of Character - which will help to raise the profile of our work.

Town Identities

• Wymondham – A Market Town Apart
• Loddon – Perfectly Placed
• Harleston – Time for everyone
• Diss – A Market Town at Heart

We will now support each town to ensure that the maximum benefit is obtained from this.
VisitNorwich.co.uk

We continue to work with VisitNorwich to ensure that the website is an effective portal to information about South Norfolk.

In August there were 41,567 visits to the site by 34,698 individual users. 75% of these visits were by new visitors. Market Towns was the 10\textsuperscript{th} most visited page across the site in this month with 1178 views. The Diss page attracted 366 views, Wymondham 228 views, Harleston 210 views and Loddon 249 views.

The site provides the content for the TIPs in Wymondham and Diss.
Cabinet
08 December 2014

Agenda Item No 8

Council Tax Support Scheme 2015/16

Corporate Customer Services Manager

The purpose of this report is to obtain Cabinet approval to go forward to Council with a Council Tax Support scheme for 2015/16. The report outlines the legal requirements and features of the scheme and proposes amendments to the previous scheme approved in December 2013. This is after reflecting on both the impact of Welfare Reform changes which have taken place since April 2013 and responding to feedback from recent consultation.

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<th>Cabinet member(s):</th>
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<td>Yvonne Bendle</td>
<td>All</td>
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Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail: Amanda Adams 01508 533773 aadams@s-norfolk.gov.uk

1. - Background

1.1. As part of the Welfare Reform Act 2011, Council Tax Benefit was withdrawn by the Government on 31 March 2013. From 1 April 2013 the Government required each local Council to set up a local Council Tax Support scheme.

1.2. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 inserted into Section 13A(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the requirement that – “Each billing authority in England must make a scheme specifying the reductions which are to apply to amounts of council tax payable, in respect of dwellings situated in its area, by persons whom the authority considers to be in financial need, or persons in classes consisting of persons whom the authority considers to be, in general, in financial need.”.

1.3. Schedule 4, Part 1 (5) of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 states that for each financial year, a billing authority must consider whether to revise or replace its scheme with another and that this must take place by the preceding 31 January.

1.4. Statutory requirements are in place to protect people of pension age at the same levels of support as applied under the Council Tax Benefit scheme.

1.5. Under the legislation local authorities are required to consult each year on their proposed Council Tax Support Scheme, even if they retain the current scheme they have in place, or agree a scheme under which no-one is worse off.
1.6. In 2012 a working group of elected members worked with officers to develop our approach to the design of our local Council Tax Support scheme. The challenge was to design a scheme within a limited budget (after 10% funding cut imposed by Government) while protecting pensioners at previous levels of support. This meant that in South Norfolk, working age customers would be adversely affected within the new scheme, because of the high percentage of pensioner claims within our caseload (currently at 53%).

1.7. The working group established a number of guiding principles to set our scheme. These were that our local scheme is:

- as fair as possible within the budget constraints
- aligned with rules for other state benefits wherever practical in order for it to be more easily understood (e.g. Universal Credits)
- protects as far as possible those working and those with young families
- operationally efficient to manage

1.8. In the summer of 2012 we consulted on a draft scheme which was approved by Cabinet September 2012. In October 2012 the government offered transitional funding to councils if they limited the effect of the cut on the working age so they paid no more than 8.5% of their current net Council Tax liability under the new scheme. Although there was a cost to the council, South Norfolk Council applied for the funding and minimised the effect on residents.

1.9. Results of our consultation in 2012 showed that more than 50% of those who responded agreed with the characteristics of the draft scheme design. Where there was not a significant majority in agreement, the draft scheme design was reviewed. We took notice of the areas where people were unsure of the proposals and responded by amending the scheme. The number of responses gave us the confidence that we could defer implementation of this draft scheme to 2014/15 when transitional funding would no longer be available.

1.10. We revisited this draft scheme through a further consultation exercise with the public, Registered Social Landlords and support agencies during October and November 2013. The results of that consultation showed that in principle more than 60% of those who responded agreed with all characteristics of the scheme design apart from one. We took notice of the areas where people had greatest concerns by lessening the effect of the two features that received the least support.

1.11. In 2013/14 South Norfolk Council ensured that the costs of funding Council Tax Support would not impact on Parish and Town Councils as we passed on the transitional funding we had from the government in addition to a ‘top-up’. For 2014/15 the Council passed on all funding available from Government to compensate for these reductions, but the Council was not in a position financially to provide a top-up so there was some effect on the funding of Parish and Town Councils. Funding for 2015/16 will be available to Parish and Town Councils on a similar basis to in 2014/15.
2. - Current Position and Issues

2.1. We have monitored carefully the effects of all the reforms over the last eighteen months and our response is reflected in our proposals for going forward in 2015/16 with a revised Council Tax Support Scheme.

2.2. The Welfare Reform agenda has taken effect over the past two years and a number of benefit changes have been implemented which have affected our residents. Our response has been to adopt a framework approach with our partners so that we can work in a ‘joined up’ way. Working together with an emphasis on early prevention measures we have helped to pre-empt some of the adverse effects of Welfare Reform. We now have a member of our staff based full-time in Diss Job Centre Plus to further advance our joint working for the benefit of residents.

2.3. Local authorities received the same amount of Government funding for Council Tax support in 2014/15 as was received in 2013/14, but for 2015/16 and future years the funding provided may not be separately identified within other Government funding (it has now been rolled up into the Revenues Support Grant and Baseline Business Rates funding each local authority will receive). The Government consulted on the 2015/16 settlement during the summer and said that the Council Tax Support funding has been frozen at the 2013/14 level and will not be reduced in the 2015/16 settlement, which will be released provisionally in December. The Council needs to look to set a scheme which is affordable within the Council’s overall financial position to help those in financial need without putting a financial burden on Council Tax payers or resulting in service cutbacks. However, we continue to have the issue of protecting those of pension age which means there is pressure on the funding available for support of working age.

2.4. The draft Council Tax Support scheme for 2015/16 has been out to public consultation for six weeks from 16/10/2014 to 26/11/2014, and as required we have consulted Norfolk County Council and the Police who are in agreement with the broad principles of the scheme.

2.5. The public consultation focussed on areas where it was felt that the local scheme should be amended to reflect areas where there had been a higher demand for discretionary assistance by awarding support within the main framework of the scheme. We also felt it was important to recheck that residents still agreed with the ways in which we shaped our scheme for 2014/15 (which we intend to carry forward into the scheme for 2015/16).

2.6. Demands for discretionary help and the views of our residents have helped us to develop the following set of proposals.

3. - Proposal and Reasons

3.1. The proposal is that Cabinet considers the amendments set out below, which if approved, will form part of the proposed scheme which we ask Cabinet to recommend to Council for approval. In summary the draft 2015/16 scheme on which we have consulted retains all the features of the 2014/15 local scheme agreed by Council in December 2013, while integrating two amendments which will give greater support. No proposals are to be included to reduce support further from 2014/15 levels.
3.2. The first proposed amendment, seeks to provide a greater level of support for those working age people with disabilities and who are out of work. This is being proposed to recognise that those with disabilities find it much harder to secure employment, and may be unable to work. In our scheme for 2014/15 we said that we would consider discretionary help for such people affected by our scheme, for 2015/16 we wish to be more transparent by giving greater protection in the scheme for the year from the outset. We have reflected on the experiences of those with disabilities and how they were affected by our scheme for 2014/15 and (within our overall aim of incentivising work, while protecting those who cannot work) we propose to treat those out of work with disabilities as if they were in work, which will increase the support they receive by 15%. Those to receive this enhanced support will be those in receipt of a Disability Living Allowance or a Personal Independence Payment.

3.3. In our public consultation over 84% (of those who expressed a view) agreed with us giving greater support to those out of work with disabilities, and over 72% agreed this should be achieved in the way suggested.

3.4. The second proposed amendment is to give officers the discretion to backdate the start date for the award of Council Tax Support where it is felt that the circumstances of the case merit such action. This will allow the Council to be more responsive to the particular circumstances of each case, while we are still administering Housing Benefit where backdating provisions do exist.

3.5. In the public consultation over 75% (of those who expressed a view) agreed to the proposal to introduce greater flexibility to backdate awards of Council Tax Support.

4. Other Options

4.1. Further support for those out of work and with disabilities has been identified by officers as the top priority for 2015/16, this could have been financed by reducing support elsewhere in the operation of the scheme, but it is felt residents need to continue to be supported at current levels as the economic recovery continues through 2015/16.

4.2. Since South Norfolk Council approved the local scheme for 2014/15 the Government has issued further guidance on key local authority duties regarding treatment of vulnerable people in local Council Tax Support schemes. In this document it is suggested that “Authorities may wish to use their council tax reduction schemes to help encourage separated parents to make child maintenance arrangements and maximise the money reaching children. They could do this by fully disregarding child maintenance when assessing eligibility for their schemes.”

4.3. The Government’s paper states that “Child maintenance is money that the parent without the main day-to-day care of a child pays to the other parent. It helps with a child’s everyday living costs, such as food and clothes as well as helping to provide a home for the child. The payment of child maintenance therefore helps to improve children’s life chances. This includes making a contribution to lifting children out of poverty or preventing children from slipping into poverty by raising income levels in poor households.”
4.4. Under South Norfolk’s local Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15 we do treat child maintenance as income. However, we do continue to disregard Child Benefit as income, but also go much further than that by ‘protecting’ lone parents with children under five years of age at previous Council Tax benefit levels – meaning that for all of those lone parents child maintenance continues to be disregarded from the income assessment. Through our discretionary support scheme we also consider applications for support where Council Tax is unaffordable.

4.5. Members may wish to consider whether we should reintroduce a child maintenance disregard. It is estimated that to do so would add approximately £50k to the total cost of support being funded by local taxpayers. In arriving at a decision members may wish to have regard to the fact that the recent consultation exercise showed that over 84% (of those that expressed a view) supported retaining the features we introduced into the scheme for 2014/15.

5. - Consultation

5.1. In accordance with the legislation we have consulted the major precepting bodies on our draft scheme for 2015/16 and carried out a public consultation exercise inviting local residents to take part by completing an online survey.

5.2. The major precepting bodies are in agreement with the broad principles and have expressed support for the scheme on the basis that it remains affordable.

5.3. We have received 225 responses to our online survey. We have proposed few changes to the scheme as we move forward into 2015/16 and the consultation has shown overwhelming support for the two proposed changes.

5.4. We also took the opportunity in the consultation to recheck that residents still supported the features we introduced into the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2014/15 (lone parent protection, enhanced temporary protection when first out of work, band D level cap, maximum support at 85% of liability reduced by a further 50% for those on passported benefits, treatment of maintenance as income and treating self-employed as earning at least minimum wage). 84% (of those that expressed a view) supported retaining those features.

6. - Relevant Corporate Priorities

6.1. Driving services through being businesslike, efficient and customer aware.

7. - Implications and Risks

7.1. Financial

7.1.1. Council Tax Support for 2013/14 was funded at 90% of the previous Council Tax Benefit level by central government, plus a one year transitional grant. Funding was similarly provided in 2014/15 but without the one-off transitional grant. For 2015/16 funding provided may not be separately identified from other Government funding. We should always have regard to whether any future scheme is affordable within the Council’s overall financial position. The funding for the Council Tax Support Scheme has now been rolled up into the Revenues Support Grant and Baseline Business Rates funding each local authority will receive from the Government.
7.1.2. After eight months of 2014/15 the total amount of Council Tax Support awarded is nearly £420k lower than the total provided for in the Council’s budget for the 2014/15 local scheme.

7.1.3. The amendments proposed for 2015/16 would increase the overall cost of the scheme by about £85k, which is affordable within the falling cost of the scheme overall.

7.1.4. The funding of variations to the cost of the scheme in the future will be shared between the County Council, Police Authority, South Norfolk Council and parishes. It is critical that a new scheme is affordable to these authorities and that any volatility in costs can be absorbed by them.

7.1.5. There is a financial risk as demand for support can rise and any increase in the cost of the scheme would fall partly on SNC. We will need to review the scheme annually to ensure it continues to meet priorities, is affordable and because the law requires us to do so.

7.1.6. It is intended that we will have a discretionary fund available for help for those individuals and families for whom the scheme has unintended consequences. The policy on use will outline how it will be used as short term help for those in financial crisis rather than long term support. Adverse effects on residents will be monitored carefully and home visits will continue to give holistic and individual assistance for those requiring advice and support.

7.2. Legal - there will be a legal requirement to make a scheme under the Local Government Finance Act (Section 8 and Schedule 4)

7.3. Equalities – In moving from the 2014/15 scheme to the proposed 2015/16 scheme some groups are better off and none are adversely affected. The previous Equality Impact Assessment for the 2014/15 scheme which members considered in December 2013 remains applicable.

8. - Conclusion

8.1. Local Authorities are required to design a Council Tax Support Scheme. Officers and Members have developed a scheme previously which supports this council’s priorities, supports families, incentivises work and is efficient to manage. Officers are now seeking approval to make minor amendments to that scheme currently operating, which would result in a scheme under which no-one is worse off than under the scheme currently operating, greater support is provided to some more vulnerable residents, and the treatment of child maintenance as income is reviewed.

9. - Recommendations

9.1. To Recommend to Council that the features of the 2014/15 scheme are retained other than the changes outlined in section 3 to further support the disabled.
### CABINET CORE AGENDA 2014/15

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<td>K</td>
<td>Long Stratton Area Action Plan</td>
<td>A Nicholls</td>
<td>J Fuller</td>
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<td>Response to Breckland’s Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation</td>
<td>A Nicholls</td>
<td>J Fuller</td>
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<td><strong>16 Feb</strong></td>
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<td>Performance Risk and Revenue Budget Q3</td>
<td>E Goddard/W Salmons/M Fernandez-Graham</td>
<td>G Wheatley</td>
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<td>Capital &amp; Treasury Report Q 3</td>
<td>M Fernandez-Graham</td>
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<td>Corporate Enforcement Policy</td>
<td>B Wade</td>
<td>K Kiddie/Y Bendle</td>
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Key decisions are those which result in income, expenditure or savings with a gross full year effect of £100,000 or 10% of the Council’s net portfolio budget whichever is the greater which has not been included in the relevant portfolio budget, or are significant (e.g. in environmental, physical, social or economic) in terms of its effect on the communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.