Council

Mr B McClenning
Chairman of the Council

Mr C Gould
Vice-Chairman of the Council

The Chairman would like to invite all members to join him for drinks in the Ancillary Area from 7.00pm

Agenda

Date
Monday 10 December 2012

Time
7.30 pm

Place
Council Chamber
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

Group Meetings

Conservatives:
Cavell & Colman Rooms  6.00 pm

Liberal Democrats:
Blomefield Room      6.30 pm

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

10 December 2012
The Council's Prayer

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for absence;

2. Urgent Items
   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 6)

4. To confirm the minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 24 September 2012;
   (attached – page 8)

5. Chairman’s Announcements;
   (engagements attached – page 17)

6. To consider any petitions received under Section I of the “Rights of the Public at Meetings”;

7. Notice of Motions;
   (a) Cllrs J Fuller, C Kemp and M Wilby
   This Council resolves that it will not support any arrangement for the future transmission of bulk electrical power through the District other than by means of underground cables unless it is first demonstrated to its satisfaction that any alternative solution is both environmentally sound and sustainable. The Council instructs its officers to work with their counterparts in the Broads Authority and other local councils towards the implementation of this policy.

   (b) Cllr M Gray
(a) That the Chief Executive writes to National Grid plc to make clear South Norfolk Council's view (without prejudice to any actual planning application), that any connection that passes through the Southern Broads or Waveney Valley to connect the East Anglia One windfarm to the Grid will be opposed by the Council unless the line is undergrounded.

(b) That South Norfolk Council works in collaboration with the Broads Authority on this issue.

8. Recommendations from the Cabinet;

PLEASE BRING YOUR CABINET PAPERS FOR THE MEETINGS HELD ON 29 OCTOBER AND 24 NOVEMBER 2012

(a) Cabinet 29 October 2012

(i) Conservation Area Character Appraisal: Wymondham;

(Page 112 of the Cabinet agenda 29 October)

RESOLVED: To RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL the amendments proposed and updated appraisal, as outlined in Appendices C and D.

(ii) Capital and Treasury Review Quarter 2 2012/13;

(Page 221 of the Cabinet agenda 29 October)

RESOLVED: TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL

a) Notes the progress of the capital programme for the half year and the projected year end position.

b) Approves the on going expenditure for Equity Home Loans and the corresponding capital receipts from Great Yarmouth Borough Council for this financial year.

c) Approves the long term investments made for £2 million at 1.75% with Lloyds plc for 140 days, which was agreed by the Leader and Portfolio Holder.

d) Notes the treasury activity in quarter two and that it complies with the agreed strategy.

e) Approves the quarter two 2012/13 prudential indicators.

b) Cabinet 26 November 2012
(i) **Review of Rules of Financial Governance and Contract Standing Orders**

(Page 78 of the Cabinet agenda 26 November)

**RESOLVED:** TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL:

(a) Agrees the revised Rules of Financial Governance, as set out in Appendix A of the report;
(b) Agrees the revised Contract Standing Orders as set out in Appendix B of the report

9. **Monitoring Officer Report;** (report attached – page 19)

10. **Council Tax Reforms;** (report attached – page 19)

11. **Council Tax Support Scheme;** (report attached – page 19)

12. **Chairmen’s Reports;**

   To receive/hear reports and to take questions from Councillors and the public.

   **Note:** [Time allocated to be at the discretion of the Chairman. No notice is required of questions, however it may be necessary for written answers to be provided where an immediate response cannot be supplied]. If members choose to submit questions in writing in advance, they will be circulated before the meeting.

   a. **Cabinet – Report of the Leader** (report attached – page 22)

      Questions to the Leader and other Cabinet members as follows:

      | Name            | Role                                      |
      |-----------------|-------------------------------------------|
      | Martin Wilby    | Deputy Leader, Communities and Localism   |
      | Yvonne Bendle   | Housing and Public Health                 |
      | David Bills     | Innovation and Efficiency                 |
      | Keith Kiddie    | Environment and Regulation                |
      | Garry Wheatley  | Finance and Resources                     |

   b. **Scrutiny Committee - Report of the Chairman –**

      report and questions to the Chairman

      (report attached – page 22)

c. **Licensing, Appeals and Complaints Committee/ Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee – Report of the Chairman** - questions to the Chairman
Since last Council, the Licensing Committee has not met.

Robert Savage
Chairman of the Licensing Committee

d. Development Management Committee – report of the Chairman - report and questions to the Chairman (report attached – page 23)

13. Representatives on Strategic Outside Bodies;

To receive feedback from representatives as set out below:
(reports regarding the Broad Authority and the Norfolk Police and Crime Panel attached – pages X and X)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cllr Gould</th>
<th>Broads Authority</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cllr Fuller</td>
<td>LGA General Assembly</td>
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<td>Cllr J Savage</td>
<td>LGA Rural Commission</td>
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<td>Cllr Legg</td>
<td>Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</td>
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<td>Cllr C Kemp</td>
<td>Norfolk Police and Crime Panel</td>
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<td>Cllr Kiddie</td>
<td>Norfolk Waste Partnership</td>
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<td>Cllr Wilby</td>
<td>South Norfolk Alliance</td>
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<td>Cllr Palmer and Overton</td>
<td>Saffron Housing Trust</td>
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14. To consider any correspondence;
### CIVIC ENGAGEMENTS
25th September – 10th December

**CHAIRMAN – Cllr BOB MCCLENNING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>27th September</td>
<td><strong>Business Reception</strong>&lt;br&gt;South Norfolk Council&lt;br&gt;South Norfolk Council</td>
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<td>29th September</td>
<td><strong>Opening of Tasburgh Allotments</strong>&lt;br&gt;Tasburgh&lt;br&gt;Tasburgh Parish Council</td>
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<td>7th October</td>
<td><strong>Justice Service</strong>&lt;br&gt;Norwich&lt;br&gt;High Sheriff of Norfolk</td>
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<td>9th – 12th October</td>
<td><strong>Local Democracy Week</strong>&lt;br&gt;South Norfolk Council&lt;br&gt;South Norfolk Council</td>
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<td>13th October</td>
<td><strong>31st Annual Joan Mann Special Sports Day</strong>&lt;br&gt;RAF Mildenhall&lt;br&gt;Colonel Christopher Kulas – RAF Mildenhall</td>
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<td>14th October</td>
<td><strong>Suffolk Harvest Festival</strong>&lt;br&gt;Bury St Edmunds&lt;br&gt;Mayor of St Edmundsbury</td>
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<td>17th October</td>
<td><strong>St Johns Annual Awards Ceremony</strong>&lt;br&gt;Stowmarket&lt;br&gt;Chairman of St Johns Council</td>
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<td>19th October</td>
<td><strong>Trafalgar Day</strong>&lt;br&gt;Costessey&lt;br&gt;Victory Academy</td>
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<td>19th October</td>
<td><strong>South Norfolk Council Queens Diamond Jubilee Community Awards 2012</strong>&lt;br&gt;Colney&lt;br&gt;South Norfolk Council</td>
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<td>21st October</td>
<td><strong>Regional Tree Warden Forum</strong>&lt;br&gt;Langley School&lt;br&gt;South Norfolk Council</td>
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<td>21st October</td>
<td><strong>Trafalgar Day</strong>&lt;br&gt;Great Yarmouth&lt;br&gt;Mayor of Great Yarmouth</td>
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<td>23rd October</td>
<td><strong>Celebration – 29th Birthday Concert</strong>&lt;br&gt;Norwich&lt;br&gt;Britten Sinfonia</td>
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<td>3rd November</td>
<td><strong>Wymondham Lemon Day</strong>&lt;br&gt;Wymondham&lt;br&gt;Lemon Day Committee</td>
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<td>7th November</td>
<td><strong>Royal Anglian Regiment Freedom of Diss</strong>&lt;br&gt;Diss&lt;br&gt;Diss Town Mayor</td>
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<td>Active Norfolk &amp; Radio Norfolk Sports Awards 2012</td>
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<td>Remembrance Sunday Service</td>
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<td>Lord Mayor of Norwich</td>
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<td>Production of ‘Oliver’</td>
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<td>Long Stratton High School</td>
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<td>16th November</td>
<td>Design Awards</td>
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<td>South Norfolk Council</td>
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<td>18th November</td>
<td>Autumn Concert</td>
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<td>Wymondham College</td>
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<td>21st November</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Service</td>
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<td>RAF Lakenheath &amp; Mildenhall</td>
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<td>30th November</td>
<td>Charity Christmas Concert</td>
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<td>SNC Sports &amp; Social Club</td>
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<td>2nd December</td>
<td>Service of Celebration &amp; Thanksgiving for the Queens Diamond Jubilee Year</td>
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<td>St Andrews Parish Church</td>
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<td>6th December</td>
<td>Wymondham Lion’s Christmas Fayre</td>
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<td>Wymondham Lions</td>
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<td>7th December</td>
<td>The County Town Initiative Dinner</td>
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<td>The County Town Initiative</td>
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<td>9th December</td>
<td>Service of Nine Lessons and Carols</td>
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**VICE CHAIRMAN – CLLR COLIN GOULD**

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<th>Date</th>
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<td>11th November</td>
<td>Remembrance Sunday Service</td>
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<td>6th December</td>
<td>Home Reception</td>
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<td>Mayor of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk</td>
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<td>7th December</td>
<td>Yuletide Reception</td>
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<td>19th September</td>
<td>Wymondham College Founders Day 2012</td>
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Monitoring Officer Report

Compliance and Risk Manager

This report provides detail to members on various changes required to the Constitution in order to implement changes agreed by Cabinet on 26 October 2012 in relation to Neighbourhood Boards, proposes amendments to the Committee Structure following the initial meetings of the Cabinet Policy Committees, and requests modifications to the terms of reference to the Joint Consultative Committee to ensure compliance with the Localism Act.

Cabinet member(s): John Fuller
Ward(s) affected: All
Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail: Leah Mickleborough 01508 533954 lmickleborough@s-norfolk.gov.uk

1. Neighbourhood Boards

1.1. On 26 October 2012, Cabinet agreed to make changes to the operation of the Neighbourhood Boards, following recommendations received from Scrutiny Committee (via the Neighbourhood Board Task and Finish Group) and the Localism Committee. As a result of these proposals, various changes are required to the Terms of Reference for the Neighbourhood Boards, and to Article 10 of the Constitution (Neighbourhood Boards).

1.2. The revised Article 10, and the Terms of Reference for Neighbourhood Boards, are attached at Appendix 1.

2. Cabinet Policy Committees

2.1. At the Council meeting of 21 May 2012, a new Committee structure was approved, incorporating Cabinet Policy Committees. These provided members with the opportunity to have much greater involvement in the initial development of policies and strategies within the Cabinet work programme, and the opportunity for members and officers to have a constructive dialogue on matters that should be considered.

2.2. Experiences of the initial operation of the Committees have varied. One particular challenge is that at the time of formation, various policy areas were already in development and therefore Policy Committees have been requested to
provide input mid-way through the process or shortly before Cabinet approval. However, more recent meetings have begun to focus on areas of new development and allowed members to think creatively about the purpose and direction of the policy areas, and it is hoped that the committees will continue to evolve over forthcoming months.

2.3. At the time of formation, the remit of the Localism Policy Committee was left relatively undefined. This was a conscious decision, as it would then enable the Committee to develop both Your Neighbourhood Your Choice and the broader Localism agenda, which it is beginning to do.

2.4. Planning Policy development was placed in the Environment, Growth and Regulation Policy Committee although in reality much of that work comes via the Local Planning Steering Group. This Group is still undertaking a range of work, although the majority should end within the current municipal year and therefore a clear plan for future Planning Policy work requires development.

2.5. At an officer level, there has recently been integration of planning policy and localism under the Head of Localism and Growth, to maximise the synergies between these services. At the point where the Local Planning Steering Group ends, it is recommended that we create a full alignment between officers and Policy Committees through allocating planning policy and localism to a broader Localism and Growth Policy Committee.

2.6. It is therefore proposed, following the end of the current phase of consultation (i.e. the end of the current calendar year), to incorporate the areas of planning policy, into an expanded Localism and Growth Policy Committee. As with the current Localism Committee, it is expected this will continue to be chaired by the Deputy Leader. Work currently within the remit of the LPSG (in respect of planning policy) would be transferred to the Localism and Growth Policy Committee. In essence, it provides one Policy Committee for the responsibilities of the Leader and Deputy Leader Portfolios.

2.7. It is important that we do not lose the member knowledge on any change. For that reason, it is suggested that we use members from both the existing Localism Policy Committee and the Local Planning Steering Group to form a new Committee. The membership could be drawn from both, with a total membership of 9 on the Committee (on a 7:2 basis)

2.8. Suggested terms of reference for the revised Localism and Policy Committee are attached at Appendix 2 to this report.

3. General Matters

3.1. Now that there has been opportunity to digest the practical implications of the Standards elements of the Localism Act, we are beginning to receive a range of advice in relation to specific points raised by other authorities across the Country.

3.2. In the majority of cases, the South Norfolk interpretation of the Act is in line with the guidance issued. However, there is one issue, relating to co-opted members, that the Council will need to consider.
3.3. A co-opted member is a person who is not a member of the authority but is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority who is entitled to vote on any question that is decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee. A co-opted member would be expected to complete register of interest forms, and be bound by the disclosable pecuniary interest rules.

3.4. The guidance indicates that the scope of co-opted members may be wider than first indicated. Looking at South Norfolk Council, this would include the Union representatives on the Joint Consultative Committee, and community representatives on Neighbourhood Boards.

3.5. If amendment to the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) terms of reference are not made, then all Union members would be required to complete register of interest forms which are available for public inspection. An extra complication is that if the Union members are entitled to have a formal vote, they would inevitably have a pecuniary interest in all matters before the Committee and require a dispensation in order to participate. The proposal before Council is that the JCC terms of reference are revised to place greater emphasis that the role of the Committee is to reach a consensual view on matters and, where this cannot be achieved, the matters are referred to Cabinet (as per present practice), rather than voting. Revised Terms of Reference for JCC are attached at Appendix 3.

3.6. Regarding Neighbourhood Boards, such an approach is not feasible. Community representatives do have a key role in identifying priorities for Council expenditure, and they may have a significant interest in particular areas of expenditure. It is therefore appropriate, to ensure the Council can remain open and transparent to its communities, to ensure the community representatives take appropriate action where they do have an interest in a matter under consideration. However, there are current proposals for the Council to undertake a process to recruit community representatives for a 2 year process. This provides an ideal opportunity to introduce a process whereby community representatives will enter into their role in the knowledge they will be expected to complete register of interest forms which are available for public inspection, and act accordingly at Neighbourhood Board meetings.

3.7. Following a request from Councillors C J Kemp and T Blowfield, officers have reviewed the practice at this Council of only identifying officers in minutes and other records by post title, rather than name. This practice is not consistent with how elected members are recorded, nor how officers are identified by post title and name in authoring committee reports. It has therefore been agreed that with immediate effect, all minutes and other records will now also identify officer names who hold that post. It is proposed to do this by showing officer names and their post titles in the first section of minutes; but then referring to post titles only in the remainder of the minutes (in line with current practice).

3.8. The Leader of the Council has informed officers that he intends to make some changes to the Conservative membership of the Scrutiny Committee (details to be announced at the meeting). In accordance with Standing Order C4.8, Council is invited to endorse these changes.
4. **Recommendations**

4.1. Council is recommended to:

4.1.1. Approve the revised terms of reference for Neighbourhood Boards and Article 10 to the Constitution as set out in 1.2 above;

4.1.2. Approve the changes to the Localism Committee and Local Planning Steering Group, with the formation of the Localism and Growth Committee, with the revised terms of reference as set out in section 2 above;

4.1.3. Approve the changes to the terms of reference for the Joint Consultative Committee, included at Appendix 3;

4.1.4 Note the proposed change to include officer names in addition to post titles in records and minutes;

4.1.5 Approve the proposed changes to the membership of the Scrutiny Committee;

4.1.6 Authorise the Monitoring Officer to undertake any further Constitutional modifications required arising from this report.
Article 10 Neighbourhood Boards

10.1 Form, composition and function

10.1.1 South Norfolk Council has appointed 5 “Neighbourhood Boards”. Each Neighbourhood Board represents an area within the District, and includes representatives from local ward members, the community, and the County Council. Appointments will be made following the process established within the Neighbourhood Board Terms of Reference, within Part 4 of this Constitution.

10.1.2 All members of Neighbourhood Boards are expected to participate in proportionate training and development in order to fulfil their role as expected.

10.1.3 The Cabinet or the Leader of the Council may delegate some functions to the Neighbourhood Boards, as set out in Part 3 of this Constitution.

10.1.4 Ordinarily, decisions of the Neighbourhood Boards will be subject to approval by Cabinet. Where expenditure is required as a matter of urgency (less than 28 days before the next Cabinet meeting) then the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and the relevant Neighbourhood Board Chairman, may make the decision on behalf of Cabinet. Where this is required, the Chief Executive will be required to publish an Executive Decision notice in accordance with the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

10.1.5 Together, the Neighbourhood Boards report to the Council’s Localism Committee

10.2 Conflicts of interest – membership of neighbourhood boards and the scrutiny committees

10.2.1 If the scrutiny committee is scrutinising specific proposals in relation to the business of the neighbourhood board of which the councillor concerned is a member, then the councillor may not take part in discussion or vote at the scrutiny committee meeting unless a dispensation to do so is given by the Standards Committee.

10.2.2 Where the scrutiny committee is reviewing the operation or policy of the neighbourhood boards generally, the member must declare his/her interest before the relevant agenda item is reached, but need not withdraw.

10.3 Neighbourhood Boards – access to information

10.3.1 At least 3 formal, public meetings will be held each year. When meeting in public, neighbourhood boards will comply with the Access to Information Rules in Part 4 of this Constitution. This will include the publication of a formal agenda and minutes in accordance with the 2012 regulations.
10.3.2 Informal meetings may be held when necessary, where it is expected that a free and frank exchange of views or provision of advice may be given.

10.4 Cabinet members on neighbourhood boards

10.4.1 A member of the executive may serve on a neighbourhood board if otherwise eligible to do so as a councillor. A nominated member of Cabinet and the Opposition will hold observer status at all Board meetings, other than the Board they are appointed to.
The Neighbourhood Boards are groups of selected individuals, meeting in public at Neighbourhood Board Meetings

18 NEIGHBOURHOOD BOARD MEETINGS

18.1 Terms of Reference

18.1.1 To develop and engage communities in neighbourhoods to deliver the Big Society through “Your Neighbourhood, Your Choice”

18.1.2 To act as a champion of community engagement, encouraging organisations and residents to participate and engage with the Neighbourhood Board

18.1.2 To consider concerns about any aspects of life in its neighbourhood, raised by residents of the Neighbourhood or organisations serving the Neighbourhood.

18.1.3 To build an understanding of community profiles and neighbourhood issues and set priorities for the Board and its funding against this evidence

18.1.4 Develop responses to consultations on Your Neighbourhood, Your Choice by identifying priority initiatives for action

18.1.5 Make recommendations for the allocation of resources and deployment of funds to support priorities identified through consultations and engagement, including nominating social action projects for the area

18.1.6 Monitor performance in delivering priority initiatives, ensuring allocated resources are delivering against their aims and objectives

18.1.7 Communicate to the Council’s Localism Committee on priorities and concerns in the Neighbourhood Board area, including delivery of Your Neighbourhood, Your Choice

18.2 Membership

18.2.1 Each Neighbourhood Board will have 12 members – 5 District Councillors, 1 County Councillor, and 6 community representatives.

18.2.2 Substitutes are allowed but only within the 4 categories listed at 18.2.1.

18.2.3 The Leader of the Council shall appoint the Chairman. The Vice-Chairman will be appointed by the Chairman.

18.2.4 The County Council representative will be nominated by the County Council

18.2.5 One community representative will be filled from the town and parish councils in the neighbourhood, and will be elected through the Norfolk Association of Local Councils.

18.2.6 The remaining community representatives will be nominated from within their community and elected to their position by the District Council Board members. They will hold a 2 year term of office. Any vacancies that arise within the 2
year period will be the subject of a separate election. The appointment of community representatives should reflect a broad range of experiences, expertise and relevant agencies within the Neighbourhood Board area. All community representatives are entitled to claim expenses from South Norfolk Council.

18.2.5 District Council members will be nominated by the Leader or Leader of the Opposition and reviewed on an annual basis.

18.3. Quorum

18.3.1 The minimum number of panel members present to transact any business shall be 5 members, to include at least 3 District Councillors and 2 Community Representatives.

18.4 Procedures, Protocols and Public Speaking

18.4.1 With the exception of special circumstances, which shall be determined by the Chairman, each meeting of a Neighbourhood Board will be held within its Neighbourhood area. Ordinarily, at least 3 formal, public meetings will be held within the municipal year.

18.4.2 The Chairman shall be responsible for maintaining order and effective conduct of business at meetings.

18.4.3 The Nolan Principles of Public Life shall apply to all Neighbourhood Board meetings.

18.4.4 All members of the Board are expected to declare pecuniary or other interests in order to preserve and promote the transparency of the meeting. Where a member has a pecuniary interest in a matter, they are expected to leave the room and do not have public speaking rights.

18.4.5 All members of the Board shall be entitled to vote on advisory and non-financial matters. In the event of an equality of votes, the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote.

18.4.6 The Neighbourhood Boards will operate in line with Ground Rules, which are approved by Cabinet periodically. The Ground Rules require compliance with the Council’s Rules of Financial Governance and Contract Standing Orders, and establish Roles for Neighbourhood Chairmen and Board members.

18.4.7 There will be various opportunities (at the discretion of the Chairman) when the public and representatives from parish and town councils can raise issues of interest or concern.

18.4.8 No participant shall speak for more than five minutes.

18.4.9 The Neighbourhood Boards may meet, as required, informally. At such meetings, a free and frank exchange of views and opinions may be discussed and as such members of the public may not necessarily be invited to attend.
LOCALISM AND GROWTH POLICY COMMITTEE

7.1 Terms of Reference

7.1.1 To deliver appropriate work as discharged by Cabinet, in relation to the communities and localism portfolio of responsibility.

7.1.2 To review areas of the Council’s budget and performance highlighted by Cabinet in respect of communities and localism portfolio of responsibility, utilising this review to inform future work for the Committee.

7.1.3 To direct and support officers undertaking work in connection with the production and implementation of a spatial planning framework that maximises the receipts from Community Infrastructure Levy and new homes bonus, promoting good design, seeking consensus, making appropriate recommendations to Cabinet.

7.1.4 To oversee the work of the Neighbourhood Boards.

7.1.5 Undertake any other work as directed by Cabinet.

7.2 Membership

7.2.1 The Committee will consist of 9 Members of the Council, as appointed by the Leader of the Council. This will usually include the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Localism, the Neighbourhood Board Chairmen, and two members of the opposition group (the latter to be appointed by the Leader of the Opposition Group).

7.2.2 No more than 2 members of the Committee can also sit on the Scrutiny Committee.

7.2.3 Named substitutes may attend and vote on the Committee, in accordance with the Council’s standing order C7. Named substitutes may not be members of the Council’s Scrutiny Committee, and, where substituting for Neighbourhood Board Chairmen, must also be members appointed to the relevant Neighbourhood Board.

7.2.4 The Chairman of the Committee will be the portfolio holder for communities and localism. The vice-chairman will be appointed by the Leader of the Council.

7.3 Quorum
7.3.1 A minimum of three members of the Council (either members of the Committee or named substitutes) must be present to transact any business of the Committee.

7.4 Procedures, protocol and public speaking

7.4.1 The Committee shall meet on at least 3 occasions per year.

7.4.2 The Chairman of the Committee shall be responsible for maintaining order and the effective conduct of business at meetings of the Committee.

7.4.3 Public speaking will be allowed in accordance with Section G of Part 4.5 of the Constitution – Standing Orders and Rights of the Public at Council Meetings.

7.4.4 At the discretion of the Chairman, any person attending the Committee may speak or may put questions to any other participant.

7.4.5 Any member of the Council may attend and speak at meetings of the Committee.

7.5 Voting

7.5.1 Voting shall be by a simple majority by show of hands

7.5.2 Voting members may request that their votes are recorded

7.5.3 In the event of an equality of votes the Chairman shall have a second or casting vote.
16 JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

16.1 Terms of Reference

16.1.1 To consider and advise the Cabinet, (through the Finance, Resources, Audit and Governance Committee where appropriate), on the local application of terms, conditions of service and employment related matters; in particular the application of legislation and equality issues.

16.1.2 To consider any relevant matters referred to it by the Council, Cabinet or a Committee/Working Group of the Council or recognised Trade Union with membership in the employment of the Council.

16.1.3 Where, in the effective conduct of business, it is more efficient to do so, the Committee may report directly to Cabinet.

16.2 Membership

16.2.1 The Leader of the Council will appoint 6 members of the Council, appointed from the political parties in proportion to the number of council members in each political group. The Trade Unions shall appoint an equal number of representatives in proportion to their membership at the Council.

16.2.2 Union representation shall be made up of 5 Unison members and 1 GMB member. If the GMB member is absent at a meeting, a Unison member may take that seat and vote, for the duration of the meeting.

16.2.3 Substitutes will be allowed.

16.2.4 The Chairman will be from the Council side and the Trade Union side in alternate years, the Vice-Chairman being drawn from the other side.

16.3 Quorum

16.3.1 A minimum of 3 members of the Council and 3 Trades Union Representatives must be present to transact any business.

16.4 Procedures, protocol and public speaking

16.4.1 The Chairman of the Committee shall be responsible for maintaining order and the effective conduct of business at meetings of the committee.
16.4.2 Members of the public may only attend and speak at meetings of the committee at the discretion of the Chairman.

16.5 **Consensus**

16.5.2 The Committee’s role is to reach a consensual view on employment matters referred to it. Where there is a general majority consensus on matters before the Committee, then it is ordinarily expected that the relevant policy will be approved using the delegated authority of the relevant officer. If the Committee cannot reach a general consensus, then the matter will ordinarily be referred to the relevant Committee / Working Group of the Council for further judgement.
Council Tax Reforms

Revenues & Benefits Manager

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval to go forward with Council Tax Reforms with effect from 01 April 2013

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

Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail:
Amanda Adams 01508 533773 aadams@s-norfolk.gov.uk

1. Background

1.1. The Local Government Act 2003 amended the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to give local authorities the discretion to vary the level of discount for second homes and to vary or remove the discount entirely for long-term empty properties.

1.2. For the purposes of Council Tax a second home is a property that is no-one’s main residence but is not substantially unfurnished, and a long-term empty property is one which is no-one’s main residence, is substantially unfurnished and has been such for six months or more.

1.3. There are some situations where the legislation requires that a 50% discount must be given.

1.4. South Norfolk Council has previously resolved to apply a 10% discount (minimum currently permitted by law) for second homes, and a 10% discount for long-term empty properties. Cabinet last reviewed this approach on 23 February 2009 and decided to continue with the discount levels that had been in force since 2004.

1.5. The Government has, through the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and subsequent regulations, recently introduced new legislation to take effect from April 2013 to give local authorities greater freedom to apply discounted charges where certain exemptions currently apply, and to vary charges on long-term empty properties (once empty for more than 2 years) and second homes.
2. **Current Position and Issues**

2.1. Section 11 of The Local Government Finance Act 2012 makes the provision for a billing authority to have power to determine further discounts for certain dwellings in prescribed classes. Those new prescribed classes have been set out in the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 which are to be read in conjunction with the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) regulations 2003.

2.2. Under The Council Tax (Exempt Dwellings) (England) (Amendment) Order 2012 the government removes exempt dwelling classes A and C so that they are no longer exempt from Council Tax.

2.3. The class A exemption currently covers those properties which are requiring or undergoing major repair works to render them habitable, for up to a year while such a property is no-one’s main residence, and is substantially unfurnished (these are now covered by prescribed discount class D).

2.4. The class C exemption currently covers those properties that are substantially unfurnished and no-one’s main residence, for the first six months that the property is vacant (these are now covered by prescribed discount class C, which also covers long-term empty properties).

2.5. Section 11 of The Local Government Finance Act 2012 also gives the billing authority the power to increase the Council Tax payable for long-term empty properties that have been empty for more than two years by up to an additional 50%.

2.6. The Government has also legislated for exceptions so that the additional 50% charge (premium) will not apply in respect of a property left empty by a member of the armed forces who is absent as a result of such service (prescribed discount class E), or in respect of annexes deemed unoccupied because they are being treated by the occupier of the main dwelling, as part of the main dwelling (prescribed discount class F). The Government has also stated that it will issue guidance to help authorities reflect the state of the local housing market in their decision making process for administering the premium.

2.7. The Local Government Act 2003 already amended the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to give the power to remove the discount entirely for long-term empty properties under prescribed class C, and to reduce the discount for second homes (under prescribed classes A & B) to any level between 50% and 10%. South Norfolk Council in common with all other Norfolk authorities currently applies a 10% discount to second homes.

2.8. Officers of South Norfolk Council have been working with colleagues in all other Norfolk authorities to see whether we can agree a common approach to those discounts where we have discretion over the level to be applied. There is broad agreement in most charging levels.
3. Proposal and Reasons

3.1. Empty homes are often a blight on the local community, harming the local amenity of neighbouring properties. They are wasted assets, so encouraging empty homes to be brought back into productive use more quickly would increase housing supply.

3.2. Second Homes (prescribed discount classes A and B) – The proposal is that we increase the amount payable by second home owners from 90% to 95% and that the additional income generated is utilised in accordance with the existing second homes council tax agreement. A 5% discount will be retained, rather than removing the discount entirely, to give the council tax payer an incentive to register a dwelling as a second home (which is critical to our knowledge of housing stock within the district).

3.3. Vacant dwellings (currently exemption class C – now prescribed discount class C) – The proposal is that a 100% discount is given for the first three months after which the discount is reduced to zero. The majority of vacant homes are occupied within 6 months and a significant number within 1 month. It is felt that it is reasonable to give a 100% discount for the first three months that a property is vacant to allow for turnover in occupiers. Local letting agents have confirmed that most properties are re-let within no more than 8 to 12 weeks of becoming empty. For those properties that do remain unoccupied for 6 months, this does still equate to a 50% discount when averaged over the first 6 months.

3.4. The Council are committed to reducing the number of long-term empty properties in the district. This is measured as those that have been vacant for 6 months or more. Having an approach that fully discounts those properties that are vacant for only a short time supports this aim. These measures will also encourage developers to dispose of properties deemed completed faster to help meet housing needs.

3.5. Long Term Empty Properties (vacant between 6 and 24 months under prescribed class C) – The proposal is that all districts align their current policies to charge 100% on this category and allow no discount. By reducing the discount from the current 10% level to nil it further supports the aim of bringing long-term empty properties back into use.

3.6. Empty Homes Premium – the proposal is that after a property (now falling under description of prescribed class C) has been empty for 2 years an empty homes premium of an additional 50% is to be levied by all District Councils. Such a charging regime supports the Council’s approach to it’s statutory duties to deal with empty homes. Properties that have been empty for this length of time are fewer in number and have reduced the available housing stock for longer, and it is hoped that a higher charge will act as a further incentive to bring the property back into use.

3.7. Empty dwellings undergoing major repairs (currently exemption class A will be covered by prescribed discount class D) – It is reasonable that Council taxpayers should get some relief in respect of vacant dwellings, that are, for a time, uninhabitable as they require or are undergoing major repair works. The proposal
is that a 50% discount is allowed for up to 12 months for empty dwellings undergoing major repairs. Over the course of a year this would result in a lower charge than if the property was simply left empty, so recognising the works required.

3.8. A formal notice needs to be published in the press detailing the discretionary discounts applying to the prescribed classes of dwelling. Officers will write to those property owners that we know will be immediately affected by any variations in discounts giving them notice of the charges to apply from April 2013.

4. Relevant Corporate Priorities

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

5. Implications and Risks

5.1. Financial - District councils are required to complete annual returns on the council tax base which is then used by the government in the calculation of Formula Grant and in particular Revenue Support Grant. The government has stated that local authorities will be able to keep all of the additional funding raised by the new charging powers. This will generate additional income for all local authorities, in proportion to the size of precepts.

5.2. Legal - Section 11 of The Local Government Finance Act 2012 makes the provision for a billing authority to have power to determine further discounts for certain dwellings in prescribed classes.

6. Conclusion

6.1. The Local Government Act 2003 amended the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to give local authorities the discretion to vary the level of discount for second homes and to vary or remove the discount entirely for long-term empty properties. The Local Government Finance Act 2012 and the new regulations referred to in 2.1 and 2.2 have extended this power further.

6.2. Norfolk District Authorities have worked together with County Council to agree a common approach to the changes in order to have a consistency within tax collection.

7. Recommendations or Action Required

7.1. Council is requested to agree the proposals as set out in Section 3.
1. **Background**

1.1. As part of the Government’s programme of Welfare Reform the current Council Tax Benefit scheme will be replaced by a new scheme called Council Tax Support. Council Tax Benefit is being withdrawn by the Government on 31 March 2013. In line with the Government’s approach to localism and passing greater control and financial risk to local authorities, from 1 April 2013 the Government requires each local Council to set up a local Council Tax Support scheme.

1.2. Earlier this year, Officers and Members developed a scheme which supports this council’s priorities, supports families, incentivises work, continues to protect pensioners and is efficient to manage. This scheme was recommended and agreed by Council 24 September 2012.

2. **Current Position and Issues**

2.1. In October 2012, The Department for Communities and Local Government published details of additional funding to support local authorities where schemes met certain criteria. In evaluating against our agreed scheme, the most significant of these criteria is that any scheme must ensure that those of working age who would be entitled to 100% support under the current council tax benefit arrangements pay no more than 8.5% of their net council tax liability under a new scheme.
2.2. The government announcement (and its very clear expectation that district councils will take up the transitional grant funding) has required further work to assess the implications on district councils’ proposed council tax support schemes. Although the county council, the police authority and town and parish councils are financially impacted by the district councils’ decisions, it is solely the district council’s responsibility to design and approve their local scheme having consulted the major precepting authorities. Potentially district councils are also likely to be impacted by increased collection costs/recovery costs.

2.3. Government have now confirmed the position as to how taxbase is to be calculated for town and parish councils to reflect Council Tax Support. Any new scheme will have an impact on an authority’s taxbase, due to the new council tax support scheme being treated as a discount. South Norfolk Council will receive government grant to partly offset the costs falling on SNC. SNC have been in discussions with County Council and town and parish councils on how any change in taxbase can be best managed. Whilst the Government have confirmed they will provide grant funding to the County Council, Police and districts, and additional grant to the districts for parish councils it will be for SNC to decide how to distribute that to parishes.

2.4. Following the announcement of transitional grant, there has been discussion within the Working Group at SNC, the Norfolk Chief Executives Group and the Norfolk Leaders who have considered the options and made recommendations as outlined in Section 8 for a scheme that is broadly comparable across the county.

3. Proposal and Reasons

3.1. The additional funding offered is in the form of a one-off transitional grant for the first year payable in March 2013. It is proposed that we defer our agreed scheme for a year and adapt it in order to meet criteria for the funding.

3.2. In order to meet the criteria, a one year transitional scheme is proposed which follows these principles;

- Protect pensioners so that we calculate their support in the same way as we have under council tax benefit
- Protect lone parents with children under 5 years so that we calculate their support in the same way as we have under council tax benefit
- Ensure those who would be entitled to 100% support under council tax benefit arrangements pay no more than 8.5% of their net council tax liability
- All other working age cases to be subject to 8.5% reduction in level of support
- Ensure scheme is as simple as possible and help is restricted to those most in need by removing Second Adult Rebate
A transitional scheme administered using these criteria would mean that those benefit claimants who previously have not been used to paying anything would be introduced to paying something towards their council tax bills. In this transitional year claimants would not be as adversely affected as they would with the deferred scheme so reducing potential hardship in the first year of wider Welfare Reform.

The extra cost of this transitional scheme (in comparison with the agreed scheme) would be financed from the £0.5m reserve which was set aside during 2011/12 for Council Tax Support (as a contingency for volatility in demand).

Central government funds will cover 90% of the cost of such a scheme. After accounting for the transitional grant, the costs to the major precepting authorities would be:

- Cost to SNC £78k
- Cost to County Council £342k
- Cost to Police £59k

3.3 If SNC agrees to adopt either of the schemes that attract government grant, this has the dual benefit of phasing reductions in support to help our residents, and at the same time attracts Government grant to offset some of the additional cost. The County Council has recognised the financial benefits of adopting the above proposed transitional scheme over retaining support at current levels. Should SNC agree to the proposed transitional scheme, officers are confident the County will help meet some of the shortfall above and/or additional administrative costs.

3.4 With regard to the town and parish councils, SNC will be receiving a base funding grant and a transitional grant, which are intended to be passed on to town and parish councils. The level of base funding grant will not be announced until later in December, and whilst the County and SNC have sufficient resources to manage any volatility, this is not the case for all of our town and parish councils. Therefore discussions with the County Council have included how we can support town and parish councils through this difficult period of financial planning. It is proposed that sufficient is allocated to town and parish councils so there is no impact on the finances of town and parish councils as a direct result of anticipated awards of Council Tax support in 2013/14.

3.5 It is estimated that the costs of supporting town and parish councils will be approximately £30k. Any one-off cost falling on SNC will be funded from the reserve. This estimated cost is based on current levels of precept for all precepting bodies. The grant to be distributed to parishes will be based on 2012/13 precept levels.

3.6 In deferring the agreed scheme for a year we are of the view that the consultation exercise carried out during July and August 2012 remains valid and secondary consultation is not necessary as the transitional scheme ensures those receiving support are not adversely affected.
4. **Other Options**

4.1. Use the Default Scheme whereby all those supported are protected at the levels as under current council tax benefit arrangements. This would enable us to qualify for the transitional grant, claimants would be no worse off than under current council tax benefit arrangements and there would be very little increase in workload.

Central government funds will cover 90% of the cost of such a scheme. After accounting for the transitional grant, the costs to the major precepting authorities would be:

- Cost to SNC £86k
- Cost to County Council £451k
- Cost to Police £78k

4.2. Adopt a scheme to meet the criteria without protecting lone parents with children under 5 years and everyone of working age would be subject to 8.5% reduction in support. This would enable us to qualify for the transitional grant but there would be an increase in workload.

Central government funds will cover 90% of the cost of such a scheme. After accounting for the transitional grant, the costs to the major precepting authorities would be:

- Cost to SNC £78k
- Cost to County Council £318k
- Cost to Police £55k

4.3. Continue with the agreed scheme that has been through the consultation process which would make the savings required so is affordable to SNC, the County Council and the Police. However, the claimants would be adversely affected at a time when wider Welfare Reform would be having a further impact. The offer of transitional funding for the first year makes this option difficult to defend.

5. **Relevant Corporate Priorities**

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

6. **Implications and Risks**

6.1. **Financial**

6.1.1. The funding of variations to the cost of the scheme will be shared between the County Council, Police Authority and South Norfolk Council. It is critical that changes to the scheme are affordable to these authorities and that any volatility in costs can be absorbed by them.
6.1.2. There is a financial risk if there is a rise in claimant numbers as any increase in the cost of the scheme would fall on SNC. We will need to monitor the scheme carefully to ensure it continues to meet priorities and is affordable.

6.1.3. 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 assessment for those requiring advice and support.

6.1.4. The Government is funding the software changes necessary for the implementation of the Council Tax Scheme and there will be the need for staff training, software testing and significant communication with our residents affected. We need to be operationally ready for the council tax annual billing exercise in January 2013.

6.2. Legal – there is a legal requirement to make a scheme under the Local Government Finance Act (Section 8 and Schedule 4). We have complied with our duty to consult major precepting authorities and are satisfied that we have undertaken this thoroughly. As we have already undertaken extensive consultation with residents on the agreed scheme which more adversely affects residents we take the view that the transitional scheme would not require further consultation as it is more generous.

6.3. Equalities - We have assessed our agreed scheme against an equality impact assessment in consultation with the Equalities Officer at Norfolk County Council. Due to the reduction in funding for that scheme there was likely to be a significant impact on residents, however, the transitional scheme has much less of an impact.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Local Authorities are required to design a Council Tax Support Scheme. Officers and Members developed a scheme which supports this council’s priorities, supports families, incentivises work and is efficient to manage. However, in October, the government proposed transitional funding if schemes were changed to fit specific criteria. It is proposed that we defer the agreed scheme and adapt in order to meet the criteria for the funding.

A transitional scheme would mean that those benefit claimants who previously have not been used to paying anything would be introduced to paying something towards their council tax bills. In this transitional year those on low incomes and eligible for support would be better off than under the previously agreed scheme, so reducing potential hardship in the first year of wider Welfare Reform.
The extra cost of this transitional scheme (in comparison with the agreed scheme) would be financed from the £0.5m reserve which was set aside during 2011/12 for Council Tax Support (as a contingency for volatility in demand).

Should SNC support town and parish councils there will be no direct financial impact on them for 2013/14 only.

8. **Recommendations**

8.1. Council is requested to agree the Transitional Council Tax Support Scheme as shown at Appendix 1, and to agree the level of support for town and parish councils.
South Norfolk Council

Transitional Council Tax Support Scheme

1 Background

Council Tax Support is a new scheme to replace the current Council Tax Benefit scheme. Council Tax Benefit is being withdrawn by the Government on 31 March 2013. Council Tax Benefit is currently fully funded by the Government. In South Norfolk we expect to receive nearly £8m for 2012/13 to pay for this.

From 1 April 2013 the Government requires each local Council to set up a local Council Tax Support scheme. Councils will receive only 90% of current funding to run the new scheme. The effect of this is that the overall level of support will have to be reduced, unless Councils decide to find the money from elsewhere in their budgets, or from Council Tax charged to other residents.

Local Councils will also need to budget for any increased amount of Council Tax Support it may have to pay out during the year if more people claim, and for any other knock-on effects.

Localisation of Council Tax Support is part of a wider set of reforms of the welfare system which the Government sees as:

- improving the incentives to work, and
- ensuring resources are used more effectively,
- so reducing worklessness, and
- ending a culture of benefit dependency.

This document has been prepared by South Norfolk Council to explain how our local Council Tax Support scheme for South Norfolk will work.

2 Our approach at South Norfolk

A working group of elected Members was set up to create a scheme that reduces council tax bills for those on low income, without placing an unreasonable burden on our other Council Tax payers. A scheme was designed which went out to consultation from 19 July – 01 September 2012.

The Group believes that our scheme should:

- Be means-tested, with most income taken into account and most outgoings not taken into account
- Provide support for those who work so that they are better off than if they had relied on public funds
- Protect those of pension age and other residents who we consider could not be expected to work

The Group was also keen that our local scheme should:

- Be seen to be a fair and reasonable use of public funds
- Be operationally efficient
Evaluation of the consultation results showed a positive response to the design in general. Where there was concern or confusion the scheme was amended in response to the consultation.

3 Legal requirements

The Government has set rules which affect how certain groups of people are to be treated under any local authority’s Council Tax Support scheme. These will result in there being no reduction in the level of Support received by many people. Those whose support level is protected in this way represent a high proportion of all those currently in receipt of Council Tax Benefit within South Norfolk.

Pensioners

In order to protect pensioners on low incomes, the scheme at South Norfolk Council is required to replicate as far as possible the existing provisions under which pensioner eligibility for council tax benefit is assessed. South Norfolk Council will go further than this legal requirement by continuing to disregard the full amount of any income from War Disablement Pension or War Widow’s pension.

Under the existing council tax benefit system a person becomes eligible for pensioner-related council tax benefit at the age at which they can qualify for state pension credit (the pensionable age for a woman). Initially South Norfolk Council will follow this rule and adapt accordingly where there are further welfare reform changes.

Other vulnerable people

While making it clear that, in developing Council Tax Support schemes, vulnerable groups should be protected the Government has decided not to prescribe the protection for other vulnerable groups. However, Councils must have regard to the responsibilities defined under:

- The Equality Act 2010 which introduced the Equality Duty. Protected characteristics covered by the Equality Duty are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- The Child Poverty Act 2010 – in particular the duty to reduce and mitigate the effect of child poverty in the local area.
- The Housing Act 1996 – in particular the duty to prevent homelessness.
- The Armed Forces covenant

People from abroad

The scheme at South Norfolk Council will apply the same restrictions as exist under the current benefit rules, to exclude foreign nationals with limited immigration status from receiving Council Tax Support.
Refugees

The scheme at South Norfolk Council will apply the same restrictions as exist under the Council Tax Benefit system to restrict access to Council Tax Support for foreign nationals with limited immigration status (see above). However, South Norfolk Council will continue the practice already established of allowing those who have recognised refugee status, humanitarian protection, discretionary leave or exceptional leave to remain granted outside the immigration rules to be entitled to apply for Council Tax Support as long as their status has not been revoked.

4 The Council Tax Support scheme at South Norfolk Council

The council has responded to the consultation and amended the scheme as a result. This helped shape the scheme considered by Council on 24 September 2012.

Subsequently, in October 2012, the Department for Communities and Local Government published details of additional funding to support local authorities where schemes met certain criteria. In evaluating against our agreed scheme, the most significant of these criteria is that any scheme must ensure that those who would be entitled to 100% support under the current council tax benefit arrangements pay no more than 8.5% of their net council tax liability under a new scheme.

A transitional arrangement has been proposed, the following is the transitional scheme;

4.1 Making a claim for support

A claim must be made in respect of a person who is resident in the dwelling concerned, and liable for payment of Council Tax. A valid claim can be made by the resident or by their appointed representative.

Residents will be able to express an interest in claiming via telephone, email, the Council website, in writing or in person at South Norfolk Council offices, or to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). A valid claim must then be submitted to South Norfolk Council on an approved form, and be accompanied by the necessary supporting evidence.

If supporting evidence is not available at the time of the claim, it must be supplied within 30 days - otherwise Council Tax support cannot be paid.

At the outset of South Norfolk Council’s local Council Tax Support scheme we do not envisage current Council Tax Benefit recipients needing to make a claim for Council Tax Support. The Government will be putting in place rules for how those cases will transfer into a claim for Council Tax Support. However, as the rules on calculating support will be different under the Council Tax Support scheme a claimant who transfers may then find that they have less help with their Council Tax bill under the new scheme.
4.2 **Date of claim**

Council Tax Support will normally be paid in respect of all days from the Monday after contact confirming intention to claim to South Norfolk Council or DWP, or from the start date of liability if the resident contacts us during the week that they become liable.

4.3 **Claimant’s household**

All residents with their sole or main residence in the dwelling will need to be declared, and information relating to them may be taken into account for the purposes of calculating Council Tax Support.

Council Tax Support can continue to be paid in certain circumstances if:
- The claimant/partner is temporarily absent (but still intends to return),
- The claimant/partner is fleeing violence

4.4 **Calculating the claim for support**

South Norfolk Council’s Council Tax Support scheme will be a means-tested scheme similar to the current rules for calculating Council Tax Benefit. The key part of this is an assessment of the income and savings compared with the needs of the household.

4.4.1 **Protect lone parents with children under the age of 5 years**

In order to protect lone parents who have children under the age of 5 years, the Council Tax Support scheme at South Norfolk Council will replicate as far as possible the existing provisions under which their eligibility for Council Tax Benefit is assessed.

This means that, in calculating Council Tax Support for claimants with children under 5 years, a more generous scheme will operate to give them greater financial protection. This will ensure that those persons receive the same level of help with their Council Tax bill under the Council Tax Support scheme, as they would have done under Council Tax Benefit. The scheme will be more generous in how it treats parents with children under 5 years compared with most other residents (other than pensioners).

The following sections deal with how the South Norfolk Support scheme will vary from those Council Tax Benefit rules:

4.4.2 **Restrict entitlement to support**

For the purposes of the calculation of Council Tax Support, the entitlement will be based on Council Tax Benefit rules but will be subject to an adjustment reducing the level of support by 8.5% for all except for protected groups.

4.4.3 **Remove ‘Second Adult Rebate’/Alternative Council Tax Benefit**

Currently, Council Tax Benefit rules allow benefit to be awarded to the liable person where a second adult shares their household and this person is on a
low income. This second person must not be a partner, joint tenant or a lodger.

The Council Tax Support scheme for South Norfolk for all working age cases will reflect the income of the claimant(s), and will not in any individual case be based solely on the income of any another adult.

4.4.4 Disregarding War Disablement Pension or War Widow’s pension.

In assessing income as part of the calculation of entitlement (based on Council Tax Benefit rules), South Norfolk Council will additionally continue to disregard the full amount of any income from War Disablement Pension or War Widow’s pension.

4.5 Decisions, Notifying and payment of support

South Norfolk Council will make a decision on a claim within a reasonable timescale of receiving all required information.

We will send the claimant a decision letter containing a detailed breakdown of the calculation. The decision letter will include further information including appeal rights and details of how to apply for further discretionary help.

The claimant can elect to receive their decision letter (and bill) by post or by email.

All Council Tax Support will be ‘paid’ for the remainder of the financial year by crediting the amount of entitlement against the claimant’s Council Tax liability to reduce the bill. If as a result a claimant’s Council Tax is in credit, a refund will be made or the credit will be used to reduce future bills.

4.6 Discretionary Payments

South Norfolk Council’s Council Tax Support scheme will include the provision for any claimant experiencing significant hardship to apply for a discretionary payment. The award of such a payment is purely discretionary; a claimant does not have a statutory right to a payment. Awards of discretionary payment will be made from a budget which will be limited. Once this budget has been spent for the financial year no further awards will be available.

Each case will be treated strictly on its merits and all customers will be treated equally and fairly when the scheme is administered. South Norfolk Council considers that a discretionary payment should be seen as a short-term emergency payment. It is not and should not be considered as a way around any current or future entitlement restrictions and will not be a long term support mechanism.

South Norfolk Council will treat all applications on their individual merits and will seek through the operation of this policy to:

- alleviate poverty
- support vulnerable young people in the transition to adult life
- encourage South Norfolk residents to obtain and sustain employment
- safeguard South Norfolk residents in their homes
Appendix 1

- help those who are trying to help themselves
- keep families together
- support the vulnerable in the local community
- help claimants through personal crises and difficult events

A person will be eligible to apply if they have a Council Tax liability which they are unable to pay.

A claim for a discretionary payment must be made in writing and signed by the applicant. The applicant will be required to return the form to the Council within one month of its issue and will be encouraged to include any relevant supporting evidence. In all cases the South Norfolk Council will decide the length of time for which a discretionary payment will be awarded on the basis of the evidence supplied and the facts known.

In deciding whether to award a discretionary payment South Norfolk Council will take into account:
- the medical circumstances (i.e. ill health or disabilities*) of the applicant, their partner and any dependants and any other occupants of the applicant’s home;
- the income and expenditure of the applicant, their partner and any dependants or other occupants of the applicant’s home;
- any savings or capital that might be held by the applicant or their family;
- the level of indebtedness of the applicant and their family;
- the exceptional nature of the applicant and their family’s circumstances;
- whether a positive outcome for the applicant can be attained by discretionary help
- the amount available in the discretionary payment budget at the time of the application;
- the possible impact on the Council of not making such an award, e.g. the pressure on priority homeless accommodation;
- any other special circumstances brought to the attention of the Council.

* the definition of disability is that as defined in the Equality Act 2012 Schedule 1

An award of a discretionary payment does not guarantee that a further award will be made at a later date, even if the applicant’s circumstances have not changed.

Where the evidence provided indicates that the applicant is not claiming another state benefit they may be entitled to, South Norfolk Council will advise them to make such a claim and provide details of other agencies in the District who may be able to help with such a claim.

4.7 Changes to entitlement

The applicant must notify South Norfolk Council of any change to their household circumstances, income or capital that may affect the amount of Council Tax Support they are entitled to. Any change of circumstances must be reported within one calendar month of the change happening.
Any change may be reported to South Norfolk Council by telephone, email, fax, via website or in writing. Supporting information will be required.

Each change will result in a recalculation of entitlement, an updated decision letter, and a revised bill if appropriate.

If a claimant household moves home, South Norfolk Council will require a new application for Council Tax Support to be completed. We require this as household composition often changes at the point of moving home.

4.8 Overpaid Council Tax support

Where circumstances change which mean that more Council Tax Support has initially been awarded than should now be the case, the resulting overpayment will result in an adjusted Council Tax charge. The exception to this would be where it would be unreasonable for the claimant to be aware that they had been overpaid.

A revised Council Tax bill will be issued, and if any sums payable are not paid the overpayment will in all cases be recoverable simply as unpaid Council Tax.

4.9 Appeals

A claimant will have a right initially to request that the decision is reconsidered, by an officer not involved in the original decision.

If the claimant is still aggrieved with the decision of the Council they will have the right to submit an appeal in writing to an independent tribunal.

Any appeal against a decision regarding Council Tax Support will not mean that payments of Council Tax may be withheld – payments must be made as they fall due and if an appeal is successful any overpayment will be refunded as appropriate.

4.10 Fraud

The Council will investigate any case where it has reason to believe that an amount of Council Tax Support has been awarded as a result of a claim which is fraudulent in any respect.

This will include any incidence of a claimant not notifying the Council of any change in household circumstances, income or capital that results in an overpayment.
Appendix 2

Council Tax Benefit (CTB) Rules – A Summary

What does CTB pay for?
CTB is only payable to a person who has a liability to pay council tax at the property they live in.

There are sometimes joint and several liabilities where more than one occupier is treated as liable, for example friends who share a house but are not a couple. These claims would be based upon a percentage of the charge (eg 50%, 33.3% etc).

Paying CTB
CTB is paid directly to the council tax account and a reduced bill produced.

Second Adult Rebate (2AR)
This is an alternative type of CTB claimed by the liable person, where there is another person living in the property who is on a low income. If this person were not there, the customer would be entitled to a 25% single person discount (SPD) on the council tax bill.

As this ‘second adult’ is on a low income, they may have difficulty in paying the 25% difference, so the council tax payer can claim 2AR on their behalf. The council tax payer’s income and capital are not taken into account.

Calculating CTB
Several elements are taken into account when working out benefit entitlement. This includes:

- Personal and family circumstances
- Income and capital of the claimant and his household
- Eligible council tax
- Anyone else living in the property
- The applicable amount (how much the Government says that the household needs to live on each week).

Eligible Council Tax

Main Scheme Council Tax
The maximum eligible council tax is 100% of the council tax liability.
To calculate entitlement, the annual charge is converted to a weekly figure. There are various discounts and disregards that will reduce the annual council tax charge. These are not benefits but are reductions in the charge and are either 25% or 50%. Entitlement to CTB will be based upon the net eligible council tax figure.

Second Adult Rebate (2AR)
(Also known as Alternative Council Tax Benefit)

The maximum 2AR payable is 25% of the charge, again converted to a weekly figure. The rates are as follows:

- 25% - second adult on Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based) or Pension Credit.
- 15% - second adult’s income is up to £179.00
- 7.5% - second adult's income is between £180.00 and £234.99
This is paid directly to the council tax account.

**Non Dependents**
A non dependant is anyone aged over 18 living in the customer’s household as part of their family – this can be a relative or a friend. Non dependant couples are linked and count as one. Any non dependent on JSA(IB), IS or in some ESA(IR) cases has no deduction. If the customer or partner receives AA or DLA (care) there is no deduction.

**Capital**
Capital means any monies held in any accounts (current and savings), stocks and shares, bonds, cash etc. It also includes any other property or timeshare owned by the customer/partner, apart from the dwelling that they live in.

If the total capital is above £16000, there is no entitlement to CTB unless they are in receipt of Pension Credit (Guarantee) when all capital and income is ignored.

The value of stocks/shares and other property is calculated net of any mortgage and after deducting 10% selling costs. Evidence will always be needed of any encumbrances before a decision is made.

A weekly ‘tariff income’ is applied to the total amount of capital held by a customer/partner. This income is then added to their other income figure when calculating benefit entitlement.

The first £6000 is ignored in all cases for tariff income purposes.

For customers aged under 60, £1 income is assumed for every £250 (or part thereof) above £6000. For example if a customer has £8500, the weekly tariff income is £10 (£8500 minus £6000 divided by £250 equals £10.00).

For customers aged 60 or over, £1 of income is assumed for every £500 (or part thereof) above £6000. For example if a customer has £8500, the weekly tariff income is £5 (£8500 minus £6000 divided by £500 equals £5.00).

**Income**
Income means any money that the customer and partner have coming into the household, whether in the form of earned income, unearned income, benefits or tariff income via capital.

If a customer or partner is in receipt of any of the following, all other income is disregarded and maximum HB/CTB is payable, less any ndep deductions:

- Pension Credit (Guarantee)
- Income Support
- Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based)

Any claims made where no ‘passported’ benefits are in payment (as above) are known as ‘standard’ claims because the calculation is the responsibility of the LA. There are complex rules regarding the calculation of income.

Some income is disregarded totally:
DLA; AA; War Pensions; Maintenance for Children

Some income is partly disregarded:
- Earnings (depending upon the household and the number of hours worked).
- Income from rent, eg boarders and sub-tenants.

All other income is taken into account in full.

**Applicable Amount**

This is made up of Personal Allowances and Premiums. The applicable amount is also known as 'needs allowance' and is a figure based on the amount of money that Government says an individual or family will need to live on.

**The basic calculation is:**

\[
\text{Income minus Applicable Amount equals Excess Income.}
\]

\[
\text{Eligible Council Tax minus 20\% of Excess Income Figure equals CTB}
\]

**Changes of Circumstance**

A change in circumstances means that benefit entitlement will change.

The customer has a duty to inform the LA immediately in writing of any change that they think might affect their benefit claim.

If the customer delays reporting a change that may increase their benefit, they will lose benefit if there is no good cause to backdate that change. The general time limit is 1 month.

If the change however reduces benefit and causes an overpayment, the claim will be amended as far back as necessary.

Pensioners who receive PC (either component) must report any changes in income, capital or their household to the Pension Service who will re-assess PC entitlement and inform us once that change has been made.

Different changes affect claims from different dates. For example, if a customer moves to an address within the LA area, the change takes effect from the date of vacation. If the customer moves outside the LA area CTB ends on the day of vacation.

Death of a customer – CTB ends on the day before the date of death, to match council tax liability.

**Extended Payments**

These are administered by the LA and consist of 4 weeks extra benefit at the current rate when a customer starts work **and**
- they have been in receipt of IS, JSA, incapacity benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA) continuously for at least 26 weeks **and**
- the job is expected to last for at least 5 weeks **and**
- the job is for at least 16 hours per week.

Extended payments are made even if there is no entitlement once starting work.
Evidence
Customers are required to provide evidence in support of their claim. The evidence must be what is ‘reasonably required’ to assess entitlement. The onus is on the customer to provide this evidence within the time limit required.

Verification Framework (VF)
This is the standard to which all evidence must conform and all Councils comply with this framework. It sets out the level of evidence required and also the number of checks that must be made throughout the life of a claim.

The identity of every new customer and partner must be checked for authenticity; a holistic approach is taken.

The LA must carry out reviews of its caseload to make sure that the customer is still entitled to CTB.

A list is sent to the LA every month from the DWP so that checks can be made to find mismatches in data held.

The LA must visit a selection of customers in their homes to ensure residency and that there is still entitlement to CTB.

Section 19 – Verification of NINO and Identity
Section 19 of the Social Security Administration (Fraud) Act 1997 requires LAs to verify NINOs of the claimant and partner and to prove that they ‘own’ that NINO; this only applies to new claims.

Identity
Two forms of identity are required for both the customer and partner.

Other Evidence
Supporting evidence is needed for all income and capital, residency and membership of the household.
Council 10 December 2012

Agenda Item No. 12(a)

Report of the Leader of the Council

This report covers the items discussed at the 17 September, 29 October and 26 November 2012 Cabinet meetings.

Cabinet member(s): Cllr John Fuller
Ward(s) affected: All

Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail: Sandra Dinneen 01508 533603 sdinneen@s-norfolk.gov.uk

1. Council Tax Support Scheme

1.1. As part of the Government’s programme of Welfare Reform, the current Council Tax Benefit is being replaced by localised Council Tax Support Schemes. A member working group has been looking at the issues and we considered and agreed the proposed new scheme which we believe is the fairest way to support the residents of South Norfolk. Since that Cabinet meeting, further work has been undertaken to reflect on the Government’s proposal on potential support in liaison with the County Council, district and town/parish councils. A report proposing a transitional scheme is elsewhere on the agenda.

2. Technical Consultation on Business Rates Retention

2.1. The intention of the Business Rates Retention Scheme is to provide an incentive for local authorities to promote growth and replace the currently highly centralised funding system with a simple, transparent scheme from April 2013. We considered the responses to the Government’s consultation on business rates and agreed the draft responses.
3. **Response to Norwich City Council Regulation 19 (pre-submission stage)**  
Consultation on Site Allocations and Development Management Development Plan Documents

3.1. We considered the report which looks at the consultation documents and assesses the extent to which our previous concerns have been addressed. We agreed the response set out in Appendix 1 of the report is submitted as South Norfolk Council’s formal response to the consultation on Norwich City Council’s consultation documents for its site allocations and development management development plan documents.


4.1. The Area Action Plan is an opportunity to plan for housing, jobs, services, infrastructure and community benefits in Wymondham in a co-ordinated way whilst retaining and enhancing the special qualities of the town.

4.2. Following the agreement of an overarching vision and objectives in June and ‘preferred sites’ for housing and employment in July, we approved the preferred options consultation document and accompanying interim SA report, subject to minor amendment, and asked officers to proceed with a public consultation in late 2012/early 2013.

5. **Conservation Area Character Appraisal - Wymondham**

5.1. The report summarising the comments received from the public consultation on the Conservation Area Character was considered and elsewhere on this agenda is the recommendation for Council to agree the proposed amendments and updated appraisal.

6. **Long Stratton 2026 – Developing the Vision and Objectives for the Area Action Plan**

6.1. As part of the emerging Local Plan the Council is preparing an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Long Stratton to bring forward the development identified in the Joint Core Strategy. The Council has already consulted on the first stage of preparing the AAP, gathering people’s views in order to inform the Vision and Objective which we approved and we also asked officers to proceed with production of a more detailed draft for public consultation in early 2013.
7. Community Empowerment – Neighbourhood Working Delivering Localism

7.1. A review of Your Neighbourhood, Your Choice has now been undertaken and we agreed a number of recommendations as follows:

7.1.1. To agree that the scheme Your Neighbourhood, Your Choice should continue for a second year.

7.1.2 To incorporate the funding of the scheme into the FY 2013/14 revenue budget.

7.1.3 To agree the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee, and subsequent amendments to these recommendations from the Localism Committee, with the exception of the quorum of Board members, which will increase to five.

7.1.4 To give authority to the Neighbourhood Boards to commence a further Participatory Budgeting exercise, actively involving existing community groups.

7.1.5 To agree that a review of the Grants Panel be undertaken with the assistance of the Funding Manager (once in post) with a Task and Finish Group of members.

7.1.6 That the review includes the possibility of Neighbourhood Boards having responsibility for local funding applications, and to a specific allocation being made from each Board for that purpose.

7.1.7 To hold a Parish and Town Council Conference to be run by the Neighbourhood Boards to improve the involvement of councils.

7.1.8 To approve the revised Ground Rules for Community Empowerment, together with the role descriptions for Board Chairmen and Board members.

7.1.9 To request officers to provide detailed proposals for the process outlined in section 4 above to a future meeting of Cabinet.

8. Financial, Performance and Risk Review

8.1. We considered the Council’s revenue budget alongside the performance information and welcomed the delivery against priorities. We noted that all budgets needed to be reviewed and reduced as the Medium Term Plan reveals the need for significant savings to be found over the next three years.

9. Capital and Treasury Review Quarter 2 2012/13

9.1. We approved the ongoing expenditure for Equity Home Loans and the corresponding capital receipts from Great Yarmouth Borough Council, as well as
the long-term investments made for £2 million at 1.75% with Lloyds plc for 140 days.

10. Proposed Purchase of Commercial Investment Property in Norwich

10.1. In line with the Council’s strategy of purchasing assets to support the revenue budget, we agreed the purchase of the units in Norwich on the terms outlined in the report.

11. Acquisition of Land at Ketteringham

11.1. We approved the submission proposal as described in paragraphs 3 of the report, subject to a number of conditions, including investigation of opportunities for working with other organisations or companies on a joint proposal. Prior to any binding legal agreement, we instructed that the matter be referred back to Cabinet.

12. National Non-Domestic Rates – Mandatory and Discretionary Rate Reliefs

12.1. The current policy of rate relief was due for a review and we approved the recommendations of the working group of members on the Non-Domestic Rates Mandatory and Discretionary Rate Relief Guidelines.

13. Review of the Empty Homes Work Programme

13.1. We agreed the revised approach to long term empty properties, increasing the number of empty homes contacted each year and to use the full range of advice and regulatory provisions to support this work programme. As a last resort, we also agreed to delegate to the Director of Development and Environment in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Public Health, the authority to commence Compulsory Purchase and Enforced Sale action where it has been determined the best course of action to resolve a long term empty home.


14.1. The Development Management polices will form part of the development plan; the starting point for all planning decisions for the development of land and buildings. The policies have been prepared in accordance with statutory regulations; with a separate Sustainability Appraisal process, several rounds of public consultation and a public examination process. Subject to minor amendments, the policies were agreed.
15. **A Possible City Deal for Greater Norwich**

15.1. A City Deal has the potential to give the Council a stronger range of tools for economic development. These tools can include devolving greater powers to the local area; the access and control over current Government funding and the retention of additional funds locally to be retained and reinvested in the area. We agreed to delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to work up a bid in partnership with others to the submission stage and to report back to Cabinet when further details are available.

15.2. A draft Expression of Interest was submitted on 30 November 2012 with a focus on skills, enterprise and infrastructure, and Norwich Research Park as the catalyst for the proposal. Officers are now receiving feedback from government departments to enable a final Expression of Interest to be submitted by 15 January 2013.

16. **Destination Management Organisation – Partnership with Visit Norwich Ltd**

16.1. We authorised officers to negotiate a partnership arrangement for participation in an enlarged Visit Norwich Destination Management Organisation with Visit Norwich for an initial period of three years with an annual review.

17. **Delivering Affordable Housing through Enabling Activity**

17.1. We agreed the details of a proposed scheme to enable financial support to be given to assist in the delivery of viable affordable housing projects that will help meet local need.

18. **Capital Strategy**

18.1. We approved the Capital Strategy which sets out the Council’s approach to the use of our assets and resources and how this links with the Council’s priorities and corporate planning process. The focus of the capital strategy will be around the use of capital resources to deliver either on-going revenue savings or additional revenue income.


19.1. It is good practice to review the Rules of Financial Governance and Contract Standing Orders to ensure they remain valid, in line with legislation and reflect changes to the working practices of the Council. Elsewhere on this agenda is a recommendation that this Council approves the revised Rules of Financial Governance and Contract Standing Orders.

20. **Unit 13, Wymondham Business Park Proposed Lease**

20.1. We approved the lease of the unit as detailed in paragraph 3 of the report.
21. **Update on CNC**

21.1 We considered the report which provides an update on progress in the evolution of the joint CNC Building Control function. The first stage of this is a revised arrangement for joint service delivery under the Local Government Act 1972, with the new service based at SNC. We agreed to delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder, the authority to negotiate the terms of the joint venture company with the three districts and Norse Group Ltd.

22. **Procurement of Waste Collection Vehicles**

22.1 We approved the letting of a contract to supply refuse vehicles following completion of an EU procurement law compliant procurement to purchase vehicles as part of a rolling programme of replacement.

**John Fuller**

**Leader**
Report of the Scrutiny Committee Chairman

This report is to update members on the work of the Scrutiny since the last Council meeting on 24 September 2012.

Cabinet member(s): All
Ward(s) affected: All
Contact Officer, telephone number, and e-mail: Emma Nangle 01508 533747 enangle@s-norfolk.gov.uk

1. Scrutiny Committee

1.1. Scrutiny Committee met on 2 October 2012 to consider the final report of the Neighbourhood Boards Review Scrutiny Task and Finish Group, an update on the Local Community Safety Partnership Plan, and a report on the Directorate Planning process.

1.2. The Scrutiny Committee considered the final report of the Scrutiny Task Group, which had reviewed the membership of the Neighbourhood Boards, the conduct and effectiveness of the meetings, suggested improvements to marketing and promotion, and suggested improvements for further development of the Boards to ensure their fitness for the future.

1.3. Members discussed the recommendations that had been made by the Group and were largely in agreement that the majority of recommendations should be put forward to Cabinet to consider. However, members did discuss at great length the recommendation relating to increasing the membership of the Boards so that every member in the Board’s area was a member of that Board. After much debate, the Committee agreed to make this recommendation to Cabinet, along with the majority of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Task Group.

1.4. Cabinet considered the Task Group recommendations at its meeting on 29 October 2012 and after much discussion concluded to agree the majority of the recommendations made by Scrutiny Committee, however did not agree to increase the membership of the Boards as it considered that this would lead to the Boards becoming top-heavy.

1.5. The Committee also considered an update on the Local Community Safety Partnership Plan. South Norfolk had decided to produce a local plan after the seven district community safety plans had been merged, which reinforces the Council’s commitment to localism. Members discussed issues such as domestic violence and heating oil theft and concluded by commending the Plan.
1.6. Finally, members discussed how to scrutinise the 2013/14 Directorate Plans. Scrutiny Committee discussed the options and decided to hold a workshop open to all members to enable all Councillors the chance to comment on both plans.

1.7. The Members’ Directorate Planning Workshop was held on 21 November 2012 and was well attended. Members made a number of suggestions and comments, which have been taken away by officers and will be incorporated into the final plans which will be brought before Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 30 January 2013.

2. **Recommendation**

2.1. That Members note the work of Scrutiny as detailed in this report.
Development Management Committee – Chairman’s Report

Since my previous report to Council the DMC Committee has dealt with 4 major applications and these are outlined below.

- 120 dwellings at Tharston (12 Sept)
- 115 dwellings at Queens Hills Costessy (5 Dec)
- 180 dwellings at Mulbarton (5 Dec)
- Wymondham Supermarkets

The Council also successfully defended the Dickleburgh Wind Turbine appeal.

A training session for Members took place on Tuesday 27 November. The session which was repeated on Thursday 29 November covered topics such as access to the web site, enforcement, pre application advice and future trends in the planning world were brought to Member’s attention.

Interviews for the re-advertised post of Head of Development Management will take place on Monday 3 Dec

The new Idox Uniform IT system now operating in Development Management continues to be developed and the new features are starting to come on line, for example the on-line measuring tool.

Cllr Joe Mooney, Chairman DMC
POLICE AND CRIME PANEL FOR NORFOLK

“We will introduce measures to make the police more accountable through oversight by a directly elected individual, who will be subject to strict checks and balances by locally elected representatives.”


1. On 22\textsuperscript{nd} November 2012 the recently elected Police and Crime Commissioner for Norfolk, Mr S W Bett, entered into office and on the same day the Police and Crime Panel for Norfolk, on which I represent the District, also took up its duties. In addition to its specific statutory functions, the Home Office’s Policing Protocol requires the Panel to hold the Commissioner to account (as he, in turn, holds the Chief Constable to account) and to be a check and a balance on the Commissioner.

2. In anticipation of this rôle the members of the Panel have undertaken an extensive programme of training. At its meeting on 19\textsuperscript{th} October 2012 I was elected Vice-Chairman of the Panel; County Cllr Alec Byrne continues as Chairman.

3. I attended a briefing on the input of District Councils into the work of these panels organised by the District Council Network of the Local Government Association held at Stafford on 2\textsuperscript{nd} November 2012. I found this very useful and learned much from the experiences of the other councillors and officers involved in this process in that part of the country. I was the only member not from an authority in the immediate area to attend and I was pleased to find that South Norfolk’s justified reputation as an exemplar of best practice in local government was already well recognised in the North-West.

4. The Panel will be holding its first meeting with the Commissioner on 30\textsuperscript{th} November 2012. There is expected to be a confirmation hearing on the Commissioner’s proposed candidate for Deputy Commissioner on 14\textsuperscript{th} December 2012 and in the New Year there will be a series of Panel meetings to the review of the Commissioner’s draft Police and Crime Plan and to consider his proposed precept.

C J Kemp,
29/xi/2012