

Agenda

CABINET

Members of the Cabinet

Portfolio

Date

Monday 9 March 2020

Mr J Fuller
(Chairman)

External Affairs and
Policy

Mrs K Mason Billig
(Vice Chairman)

Stronger
Communities and
Governance

Mrs Y Bendle

Health, Housing and
Wellbeing

Mrs A Thomas

Finance and
Resources

Mr K Kiddie

Regulatory and
Environmental
Excellence

Mrs L Neal

Planning and
Economic Growth

Time

9.00 am

Place

Colman and Cavell Rooms
South Norfolk House
Cygnet Court
Long Stratton
Norwich
NR15 2XE

Contact

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This meeting may be filmed, recorded or photographed by the public; however, anyone who wishes to do so must inform the Chairman and ensure it is done in a non-disruptive and public manner. Please review the Council's guidance on filming and recording meetings available in the meeting room.

**If you have any special requirements in order to attend this meeting,
please let us know in advance**

Large print version can be made available

Agenda

- 1. To report apologies for absence**
- 2. Any items of business which the Chairman decides should be considered as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B(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 – page 3)
- 4. To confirm the minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 3 and 17 February 2020** (attached - pages 48 & 58)
- 5. Discretionary Business Rate Relief – Retail Discount, Pubs Discount and Local Newspaper Discount;** (report attached – page 5)
- 6. Public Sector Equality Duty Annual Update;** (report attached – page 30)
- 7. Prioritisation of Welfare Rights and Debt Advice Resources** (report attached page 61)
- 8. Cabinet Core Agenda;** (attached – page 47)

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AT MEETINGS

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

Have you declared the interest in the register of interests as a pecuniary interest? If Yes, you will need to withdraw from the room when it is discussed.

Does the interest directly:

1. affect yours, or your spouse / partner's financial position?
2. relate to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to you or your spouse / partner?
3. Relate to a contract you, or your spouse / partner have with the Council
4. Affect land you or your spouse / partner own
5. Affect a company that you or your partner own, or have a shareholding in

If the answer is "yes" to any of the above, it is likely to be pecuniary.

Please refer to the guidance given on declaring pecuniary interests in the register of interest forms. If you have a pecuniary interest, you will need to inform the meeting and then withdraw from the room when it is discussed. If it has not been previously declared, you will also need to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days.

Does the interest indirectly affect or relate any pecuniary interest you have already declared, or an interest you have identified at 1-5 above?

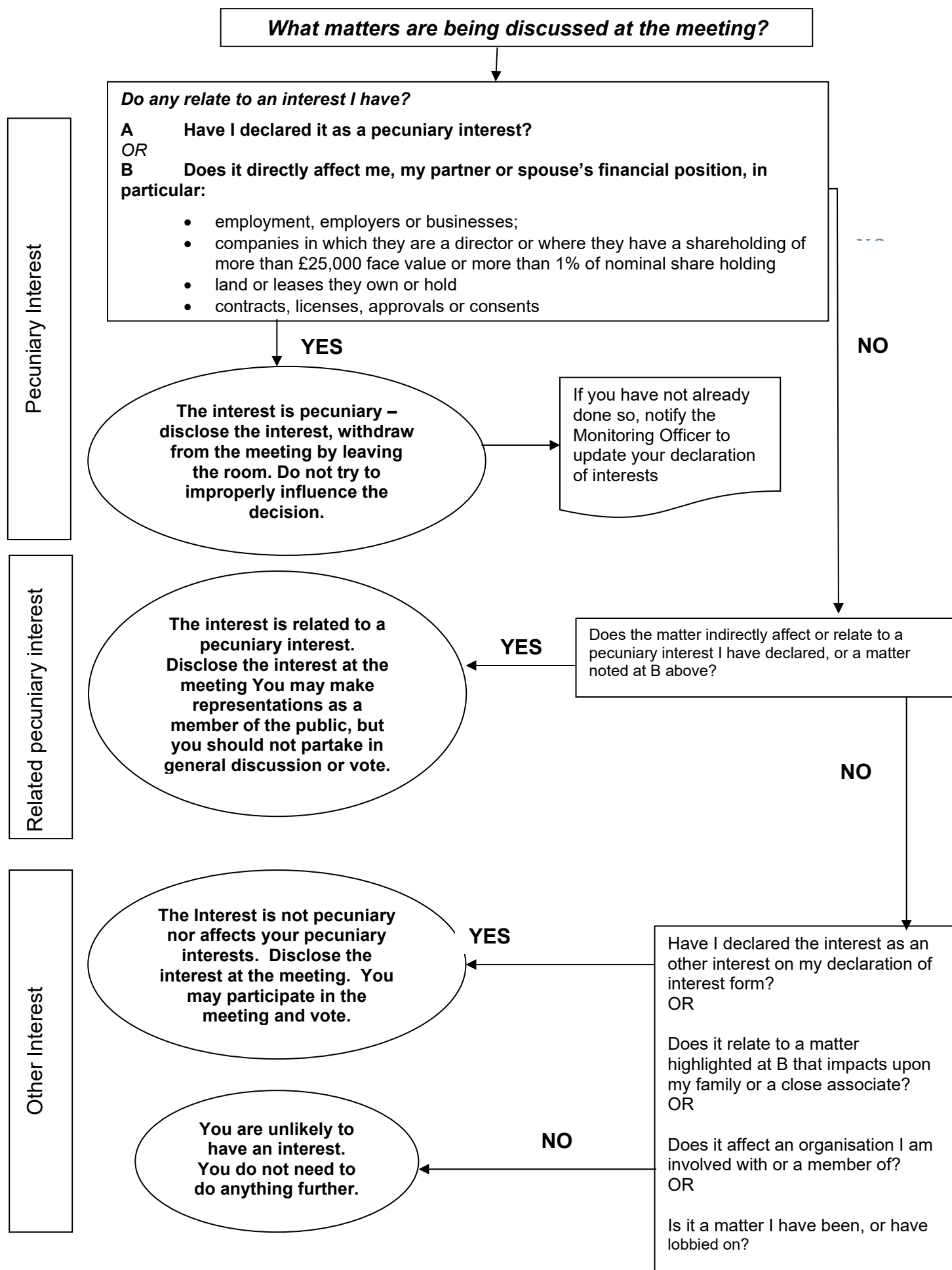
If yes, you need to inform the meeting. When it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but you should not partake in general discussion or vote.

Is the interest not related to any of the above? If so, it is likely to be an other interest. You will need to declare the interest, but may participate in discussion and voting on the item.

Have you made any statements or undertaken any actions that would indicate that you have a closed mind on a matter under discussion? If so, you may be predetermined on the issue; you will need to inform the meeting, and when it is discussed, you will have the right to make representations to the meeting as a member of the public, but must then withdraw from the meeting.

**FOR GUIDANCE REFER TO THE FLOWCHART OVERLEAF.PLEASE REFER ANY
QUERIES TO THE MONITORING OFFICER IN THE FIRST INSTANCE**

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF



DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RATE RELIEF – RETAIL DISCOUNT, PUBS DISCOUNT AND LOCAL NEWSPAPER DISCOUNT

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Portfolio: FINANCE AND RESOURCES

Ward(s) Affected: ALL

Purpose of the Report:

To request approval to implement changes to the Business Rates Retail Discount and re-introduction of Business Rates Pubs Discount. In addition, to approve the extension of the discount for Local Newspapers in respect of office space.

An additional amendment to the policy is sought around authority to implement or amend future schemes which are prescribed by and fully financed by Government.

Recommendations:

1. That Cabinet agree to implement the enhanced Retail Discount and Pubs Discount for local businesses and the Local Newspaper Discount in 2020/21.
2. That Cabinet delegate decisions over the formulation and implementation of Business Rate discount schemes to the Assistant Director for Finance in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, where the criteria and operation of schemes are prescribed by and fully funded by Government.

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Authority is sought to implement changes to the Business Rates Discretionary Retail Discount scheme and the re-introduction of a Discount for Pubs as well as the extension of the Local Newspaper Discount. The Discretionary Rate Relief Policy would need to be updated accordingly.
- 1.2 Cabinet is also requested to amend the Rate Relief policy with respect to rate relief fully funded by Government to permit the Assistant Director for Finance in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder to formulate or amend and implement future Rate Relief schemes which are fully funded by Government.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Billing authorities can award discretionary rate relief under powers contained in Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.
- 2.2 The Council has a policy document outlining our approach to the award of discretionary reliefs, which sets the parameters within which officers assess cases.
- 2.3 The full policy document was last updated and approved by Cabinet late last year when Broadland and South Norfolk District Council's Rate Relief policies were aligned.
- 2.4 The Government has, over recent years, increasingly introduced new ways of supporting businesses, and to do so has asked Councils to implement that support using its discretionary rate relief powers, with revenue foregone being fully reimbursed.
- 2.5 Retail Discount was announced in the Autumn Budget of 2018 for introduction in financial year 2019/20 and for 2020/21 in order to support local businesses. This discount is fully funded by Government. Following the 2019 election, the Government announced that they will fund an enhanced Retail Discount scheme for 2020/21.
- 2.6 Pubs Discount was introduced for financial years 2017/18 and 2018/19 terminating on 31 March 2019. Following the 2019 election, the Government announced that they will fund a Pubs Discount scheme for financial year 2020/21 and, in addition will extend relief for Local Newspapers for a further 5 years.

3. CURRENT POSITION/FINDINGS

- 3.1. Rate relief was traditionally targeted at charities, local sports clubs and non-profit making organisations as well as rural businesses such as post offices and food shops. In recent years wider powers have been utilised to provide support to any type of business. The Government has used these powers to deliver locally on national initiatives for support.
- 3.2. Since Cabinet last approved the updated policy late last year, the Government announced that it would provide funding to enhance the Business Rate Retail Discount for the year 2020/21. The Government requests that to avoid changing legislation, local authorities utilise discretionary rate discount powers in order to deliver on the Government's enhanced funding offer.
- 3.3. At the same time as the enhancement to the Retail Discount was announced, the Government also stated its intention to re-introduce Pubs Discount. In addition, Local Newspaper Discount will be extended for a further 5 years. Billing authorities are also being asked to deliver this relief in 2020/21 under the same discretionary rate relief powers.
- 3.4. The enhanced Retail Discount, Pubs Discount and Local Newspaper Discount is fully funded by Government, and the Council will be fully reimbursed for the loss of retained income. In addition new burdens funding will be provided to cover the cost of administration.
- 3.5. In early December 2018 Government issued detailed guidance on how they wished the Retail Discount to operate, and that detail was incorporated into the Council's policy document. The current Retail Discount scheme takes the form of a one-third discount to be applied to the rates bill to the net balance after the award of all other forms of relief/discount.
- 3.6. The enhanced Retail Discount scheme announced following the election increases support to eligible businesses from one-third discount to 50% reduction on the net balance for 2020/21. Discount is also being extended to include cinemas and live music venues.
- 3.7. For the purposes of Retail Discount, eligible businesses can best be summarised as shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments. It does also include some other properties being used for the sale of goods, or provision of specified services to visiting members of the public. The discount applies to establishments with a rateable value of less than £51,000.
- 3.8. The Government expects local government to apply and grant the enhanced discount to qualifying ratepayers in time for the 2020/21 billing cycle.

- 3.9. We estimate that the enhanced level of Retail discount will deliver approximately £827,000 of rate relief to reduce rates for 246 shops, pubs, restaurants and other eligible businesses. State aid rules will apply as normal for businesses eligible for retail and Pubs Discount.
- 3.10. It is also estimated that 56 Public Houses will benefit from relief to the value of £52,000. There is currently one ratepayer that would qualify for the Local Newspaper Discount.
- 3.11. The Government has introduced numerous discount schemes in recent years designed to target particular business sectors. There have for the most part been prescriptive guidelines for billing authorities to follow when implementing the funded Government schemes.
- 3.12. Given that such schemes benefit local ratepayers and in many cases have to be implemented quickly in order to meet deadlines, it is proposed, that where Government prescribe the criteria for schemes and fully fund them, that the Policy be amended to allow decisions to be taken by the Assistant Director for Finance in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, rather than the decision having to be made at Cabinet.

4. PROPOSED ACTION

- 4.1. It is recommended that implementation of the enhanced Retail Discount, Pubs Discount scheme and Local Newspaper Discount scheme is agreed in order to provide maximum benefit to local ratepayers. Given that the schemes are fully funded by Government there will be no financial impact to the Council. The revised policy including the changes to these discounts is shown at appendix 1 (track changes show the amended wording).
- 4.2. Agree the revised approach to delegated decision making for relief schemes fully funded by Government.

5. OTHER OPTIONS

- 5.1. Not to implement the enhanced Retail Discount, Pubs Discount and Local Newspaper Discount, but this would be detrimental to local ratepayers.
- 5.2. Members could choose to retain control of decision making over Government fully funded discretionary reliefs with prescriptive criteria but this may delay implementation and delivery of relief when timescales are tight.

6. ISSUES AND RISKS

- 6.1. Retail Discount, Pubs Discount and Local Newspaper Discount are fully funded by Government so there are no adverse financial impacts for the Council.

- 6.2. **Resource Implications** – Whilst the reliefs are fully funded, there will be additional work involved in staff implementing the schemes. This should be recompensed with new burdens funding.
- 6.3. **Legal Implications** – None
- 6.4. **Equality Implications** – None
- 6.5. **Environmental Impact** – None
- 6.6. **Crime and Disorder** – None
- 6.7. **Risks** – None

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1. Implementing the enhanced Retail Discount and Pubs Discount scheme will benefit a large number of local businesses. The schemes are fully funded by Government.
- 7.2. Delegating authority to the Assistant Director for Finance and the relevant Portfolio Holder on decisions regarding implementation of Government funded discounts, where Government prescribes the criteria of the schemes, would speed up and simplify the means by which relief can be delivered to ratepayers.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1. That Cabinet agree to implement the enhanced Retail Discount and Pubs Discount for local businesses and the Local Newspaper Discount in 2020/21.
- 8.2. That Cabinet delegate decisions over the formulation and implementation of Business Rate discount schemes to the Assistant Director for Finance in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, where the criteria and operation of schemes are prescribed by and fully funded by Government.

Appendix 1

Non-Domestic Rates - Mandatory and Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

The Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires local authorities to grant "Mandatory rate relief" to the following categories of Non-Domestic ratepayer:

- Registered charities
- Village Post Offices, general stores, specialist food shops, public houses and petrol filling station – where they are in a designated rural settlement
- Registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs)

The Local Government Finance Act 1988 also gives local authorities the power to grant "Discretionary rate relief" as follows:

- To make a further award on top of mandatory relief granted to registered charities
- To village Post Offices, general stores, qualifying food stores, public houses and petrol filling stations – where they are in a designated rural settlement
- To make a further award on top of mandatory relief granted to registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs)
- In respect of sports grounds and clubs
- To other non-profit making organisations

The Local Government Finance Act 1988 also gives local authorities the power to reduce or remit the amount of rates liable to be paid on the grounds of hardship. Where the authority is satisfied that it is in the interests of its Council Tax payers.

The Local Government Act 2003 introduced the small business rate relief scheme.

The Localism Act 2011 (clause 69) introduced a further general power for local authorities to reduce the business rates of any local ratepayer (not just those who could previously be granted discretionary relief), where the authority is satisfied that it is in the interests of its Council Tax payers.

Policy Aim

This policy sets out the Council's intentions for dealing with discretionary rate relief applications from Charities, Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC's), Non-Profit Making Organisations, and other businesses which are situated within the South Norfolk Council area.

Through this policy, the Council is providing a mechanism to reduce or, remove the business rates liability for such charities, non-profit making organisations, certain rural

businesses providing valuable facilities and services to communities within the area, and other businesses.

This policy aims to provide clarity around the process of administration of applications for Discretionary Rate Relief, consistency in the application of the policy and to ensure maximum take-up from potential qualifying organisations, which will in turn contribute to achieving the Council's ambitions for the district.

Part 1 – Mandatory reliefs (government specified)

Mandatory Rate Relief for registered charities.

Mandatory relief applies to registered charities or trustees for a charity where the rated premises are used wholly and mainly for charitable purposes. In the case of charity shops they must sell goods that have been donated to the charity (this condition is also necessary for discretionary relief.)

The relief allowed is 80%.

Mandatory Rate Relief for registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs)

Sports clubs that have registered with the Inland Revenue as Community Amateur Sports Clubs are entitled to 80% relief.

Mandatory Rural Rate Relief for village post offices, general stores, specialist food shops, public houses and petrol filling stations.

The rural business must be in a rural settlement area (detailed in a settlement list) that has a population of 3,000 or less.

- a) Sole post offices and general stores with a rateable value of £8,500 or less are entitled to 50% relief.
- b) Any village shop that wholly or mainly sells food for human consumption but excludes restaurants, tearooms, fast or hot food shops and confectionary shops with a rateable value of £8,500 or less are entitled to 50% relief.
- c) Where there is only one public house in a rural settlement, which has a rateable value not exceeding £12,500, there is an entitlement to 50% relief.
- d) Sole petrol filling stations with a rateable value of £12,500 or less are entitled to 50% relief.

Small Business Rate Relief

An organisation cannot qualify for Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) if eligible for one of the mandatory rate reliefs above.

From April 2017 small business rate relief of 100% applies to eligible premises with a rateable value of not more than £12,000, decreasing on a sliding scale up to a threshold of not more than £15,000

The relief is only available to ratepayers with either one property in England, or one property and additional properties with rateable value totalling not more than £2,899

Where a business takes on an additional property that would normally have meant the loss of small business rate relief, they are allowed to keep the relief on the first property for a period of 12 months.

Part 2 – Discretionary rate reliefs under local control

All Discretionary Relief applications must be accompanied by a Small Business Rate Relief application where applicable.

Throughout this policy document (unless otherwise stated) it shall generally apply that discretionary relief will be awarded only up to a maximum sum of:

- £4,000 per registered charity or Community Amateur Sporting Club (CASC) in any financial year
- £12,000 per non-profit making organisation in any financial year (not charities or CASCs)

Applications for relief to be backdated in to the previous financial year may only be accepted if the decision can be made by 1st October of the financial year in which the application is received.

All qualifying businesses and organisations are required to notify The Council of any change in circumstances that may affect their entitlement to Discretionary Rate Relief.

Discretionary rate relief for premises occupied by youth organisations

Youth Organisations which are registered charities may apply for an additional 20% 'top-up' discretionary relief where 80% mandatory relief has been granted. Such organisations include Scouting groups, Guides and other organisations such as Youth Activity Centres.

Applicants will need to demonstrate that the use of the premises is in furtherance of the objects of the charity, and that the property is wholly or mainly occupied by the charity.

Each application will be looked at on its own merits and it will be at the discretion of the Council whether or not to make an award of discretionary relief.

Properties occupied by Cadet Forces supported and administered by the Ministry of Defence will be entitled to 100% rate relief.

This category excludes any hereditaments occupied for sporting activities, which are dealt with separately.

Discretionary top-up relief for registered charities.

Registered charities may apply for additional 'top-up' discretionary relief where 80% mandatory relief has been granted.

Applicants will need to demonstrate that the use of the premises is in furtherance of the objects of the charity, and that the property is wholly or mainly occupied by the charity.

Each application will be looked at on its own merits and it will be at the discretion of the Council whether or not to make an award of discretionary relief.

Discretionary charitable top-up relief will not usually be granted:

- 1) to charity shops, or
- 2) to Academy or Independent schools
- 3) in respect of village halls or community halls that operate a bar
- 4) in respect of periods where any property is unoccupied (other than in the Enterprise Zone).
- 5) In respect of properties in an Enterprise Zone while other Discretionary Enterprise Zone Rate relief is available.

Discretionary rate relief for registered charities operating daycare nurseries is dealt with elsewhere in this policy.

Discretionary Relief for registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs)

Some sports clubs have registered with HM Revenue and Customs as Community Amateur Sports Clubs. CASCs qualify for 80% mandatory relief as set out in Part 1.

South Norfolk will upon application support CASCs by awarding a further 20% 'top-up' discretionary relief. This 'top-up' relief will be awarded up to a maximum of £4,000 per CASC per financial year.

Discretionary Relief for sports grounds and clubs.

Support will be provided in respect of Business Rates on the sports grounds and associated facilities of local sports clubs (which are not registered CASCs). The clubs may apply for discretionary relief with the amount to be awarded generally being 75% of the rates due, with a few exceptions specified below.

Yachting/Sailing/boating/rowing/water sports clubs – 25%

Golf clubs – nil rate relief

Other premises occupied by sporting organisations

Where there are other premises occupied by sports organisations which are in the nature of:

- Offices from which sports are administered/organised
- Facilities provided for the advancement of sports and recreation which are not the premises of a specified local sports club

Relief will be provided at 75% up to a maximum award of £5,000 per financial year.

Discretionary Rural Rate Relief for village post offices, general stores, qualifying food shops, public houses and petrol filling stations.

The rural business must be in a designated rural settlement area that has a population of 3,000 or less. In each of the following cases South Norfolk Council will exercise its discretion to provide a 50% rate relief. This will be calculated after the award of Small Business Rate Relief (where applicable).

- a) Where there is only one post office or general store which has a rateable value above £8,500 but not exceeding £16,500.
- b) A shop in a rural settlement which sells food for human consumption (excluding restaurants, tearooms, fast or hot food or confectionary shops) with a rateable value above £8,500 but not exceeding £16,500.
- c) The only public house in a rural settlement, which has a rateable value above £12,500 but not exceeding £16,500.
- d) Sole rural petrol filling stations with a rateable value above £12,500 but not exceeding £16,500.

The definition of a general store is a trade or business consisting wholly or mainly of the retail sale of both food for human consumption (excluding confectionary) and general household goods.

Discretionary Rate Relief – Childcare providers (Day Nurseries)

Under the Localism Act (clause 69) the council will consider applications for Business Rate Relief from Day Care Nurseries which provide a benefit to the community by providing childcare facilities, providing their rateable value is below £35,000.

Businesses which are entitled to Small Business Rate Relief or Charitable relief must have pursued that avenue of assistance before applying for Discretionary Rate Relief.

The council will offer support to Day Nurseries as follows:

- a. Daycare Nurseries currently receiving 80% mandatory charitable rate relief to be topped up with 20% Discretionary Rate Relief.
- b. Daycare Nurseries not in receipt of mandatory charitable rate relief with rateable values up to £20,000 to receive 50% Discretionary Rate Relief.
- c. Daycare Nurseries not in receipt of mandatory charitable rate relief with rateable values between £20,001 and £35,000 to receive 25% Discretionary rate relief.

Non-domestic Rates discount

The Localism Act 2011 (clause 69) introduced a general power for local authorities to reduce the business rates of any local ratepayer (not just those who could previously be granted discretionary relief). This is a wide power under which each case will need to be treated on its own merits. The key test is whether the authority is satisfied that it is in the interests of its Council Tax payers to decide to award relief.

The general approach to the use of these discount powers will be to support a business as it looks to locate into the area or grow/invest into new or improved premises locally. The powers may on occasion be used to support a business through a period in its life cycle where it is under particular pressures and the Council wants to ensure the longer-term retention and growth of the business.

In considering whether to award a business rate discount the Council will particularly have regard to:

1. How a business links to the Norfolk & Suffolk Economic Strategy (NSES) of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and any strategies/delivery plans of the Council that are in place to drive economic growth locally. This could include whether the business operates in one of the key sectors in the NSES:
 - a. Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering
 - b. Life Sciences & Biotech
 - c. Financial Services & Insurance
 - d. Advanced Agriculture, Food & Drink
 - e. ICT, Tech & Digital Creative
 - f. Visitor Economy – Tourism, Heritage & Culture
 - g. Energy
 - h. Transport, Freight & Logistics
 - i. Construction & Development
2. Whether the award of a discount would support an increase in employment locally.
3. Whether it would support bringing a property/site back into use which may have been unoccupied for a significant period
4. Whether such a discount would help support a project bringing other benefits or regeneration locally
5. Whether the support would help a business locate onto a strategically important site, at a stage in the development of the site where it will help bring forward further development of the wider site
6. Whether the ratepayer would help to establish a hub to attract other businesses to the area, or to a business cluster

7. Whether by supporting investment in new or significantly expanded premises there will be an increase in rateable value that will generate additional rates income to fund local services in the longer-term
8. Whether the discount would support a new enterprise (<2 years) that has significant growth potential (in key sectors and emerging/growing markets)
9. Whether a ratepayer might offer employment initiatives such as apprenticeships, work placements etc.
10. Whether the ratepayer is already (or has previously been) in receipt of other forms of rate relief, or has previously received a business rate discount

Community Interest Companies (CIC's)

Community Interest Companies are a form of limited company designed specifically for those wishing to operate for the benefit of the community rather than for the benefit of the owners of the company. This means that a CIC cannot be formed or used solely for the personal gain of a particular person, or group of people.

CIC's can be limited by shares, or by guarantee, and have a statutory "Asset Lock" to prevent the assets and profits being distributed, except as permitted by legislation. This ensures the assets and profits are retained within the CIC for community purposes, or transferred to another asset-locked organisation, such as another CIC or charity. A company that is a charity cannot be a CIC, unless it gives up its charitable status.

Under the Localism Act (clause 69) relief will be considered for Community Interest Companies which provide benefits to the local community and satisfy the following criteria:

- Are registered as a community interest company. (the Community Interest Company Register will be checked to confirm entitlement).
- The Articles of Association or Memorandum clearly state that any surplus of income over expenditure will be applied in a manner that ensures no profit is made.
- It is set up with the purpose of providing benefit to the local community or a section of the community.
- Businesses which are entitled to Small Business Rate Relief or Mandatory Charitable relief must have pursued that avenue of assistance before applying for Discretionary Rate Relief.

The council will support such organisations as follows:

- a. CIC's with a rateable value of up to £20,000 - 80% discretionary rate relief

- b. CIC's with a rateable value of between £20,001 and £30,000 - 50% discretionary rate relief.

Where a CIC occupies premises on one or more sites in the district area, that comprise more than one rating assessment, the rateable values of each will be added together when deciding whether relief is available under a or b above. If the combined rateable value is over £30,000 no relief will be available.

Discretionary Relief for other non-profit making organisations.

Village and Community Halls

- a) Where the occupier is a registered charity and there is no bar at the premises an additional 20% discretionary relief may be applied for, on top of the 80% mandatory relief. No additional relief will be given if there is a bar.
- b) Where the occupier is a non-registered charitable group and there is no bar at the premises 100% discretionary relief will be given.
- c) Where the occupier is a non-registered charitable group and there is a bar at the premises 80% discretionary relief will be given.

Voluntary Bodies

Applications from non-registered charitable groups are to be considered on an individual basis.

Discretionary relief to a maximum of 100% is granted.

Conservation and Cultural Organisations

Premises will include:

- Museums
- Rehearsal rooms or storage facilities for bands or dramatic societies
- Premises occupied for preservation projects
- Premises occupied by Norfolk based wildlife groups

In addition to the 'top-up' 20% discretionary relief granted to registered charities, 100% discretionary relief will be granted to non-registered charitable groups.

Discretionary relief will not be given to nationally based groups.

Discretionary Hardship Relief

Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 gives discretion to the billing authority to reduce or remit payments of rates in respect of both occupied and unoccupied premises. This award can be up to 100%. Decisions will not normally be made without receipt of actual financial accounts for previous periods.

The applicant must be liable to pay National Non-Domestic Rates to South Norfolk Council. The council must be satisfied that:

- i. The ratepayer would sustain hardship if the Council does not grant Hardship Relief, and
- ii. It is reasonable to grant Hardship Relief having regard to the interest of South Norfolk council taxpayers.

The test of “hardship” need not be confined strictly to financial hardship and applicants should disclose all relevant factors affecting the ability of the business to meet its rate liability.

The “interest” of South Norfolk Council Tax payers may go wider than direct financial interests for example;

- i. where employment prospects in an area would be worsened by a ratepayer going out of business, or
- ii. the amenities of an area might be detrimentally affected.

Whilst the Council can consider an application for Hardship Relief from any ratepayer who satisfies the qualifying criteria, applications are particularly welcome from ratepayers in respect of the following categories of properties:

- Village Shops and rural businesses
- Organisations that provide employment to people who live in the South Norfolk area.
- Businesses in areas facing a decline in trade
- Businesses that provide a unique service to the area

The above list is for guidance only and is not conclusive. Hardship Relief should not be regarded as automatic under any circumstances. It is unlikely that Hardship Relief would be granted in respect of an empty property or where there is little expectation of economic survival.

Generally, only businesses that operate exclusively in the South Norfolk area will be considered for relief. This will generally exclude all national companies. Relief will only normally be allowed for one business premises in the South Norfolk Council area.

Decisions to award such relief will be made by the Director with responsibility for Finance.

Part 3 – Government funded discretionary rate reliefs

Additional Discretionary Rural Rate relief

The Autumn Statement 2016 confirmed that the Government would double rural rate relief to 100% from 1 April 2017 onwards. The Government intends to amend the relevant primary legislation to require local authorities to grant 100% mandatory rural rate relief.

However, until such time that the legislation allows billing authorities to grant 100% mandatory rural rate relief South Norfolk Council will use local discount powers to grant 50% discretionary rural rate relief in addition to the 50% mandatory rural rate relief to eligible ratepayers from 1 April 2017. Government will fully reimburse billing authorities for such awards.

This discretionary relief will be awarded to those ratepayers qualifying for mandatory relief in the circumstances set out in Part 1.

Enterprise Zone Rate Relief – Norwich Research Park

South Norfolk Council has the discretion to award a business rate discount of up to 100% in respect of properties situated within a designated enterprise zone area.

To qualify for this relief the property concerned must be within the enterprise zone area and a discount on business rates will be awarded for up to five years up to the maximum state aid de minimis threshold, for businesses that are already in the Enterprise Zone area or enter the zone before 31 March 2021, e.g. if a business enters the zone on 31 March 2021, it can receive the discount (subject to de minimis) until 30 March 2026.

Each case will be considered on its own merits and in considering each case the Council may have regard to:

- Whether the ratepayer is new to Norwich Research Park
- Whether the ratepayer will be delivering an increase in employment over the next 5 years
- Whether by moving into the Enterprise Zone and receiving rate relief the ratepayer anticipates being able to make the necessary investment to generate further growth in the business
- The availability of funding from Government to recompense the Council for such awards of relief.

The level of any award of discount, and the period of rates against which any discount will be awarded will be decided on a case by case basis.

Any case (or groups of cases) to be considered under this power will be determined by the Director with responsibility for Finance.

Supporting Small Businesses

At the Spring Budget 2017, the Chancellor announced that a scheme of relief would be made available to those ratepayers facing large increases as a result of the loss of small business or mandatory rural rate relief following the revaluation.

To support these ratepayers, the Supporting Small Businesses relief will ensure that the increase per year in the bills of these ratepayers is limited to the greater of:

- a). a percentage increase p.a. of 5%, 7.5%, 10%, 15% and 15% 2017/18 to 2021/22 all plus inflation (the real terms transitional relief cap for small businesses each year). Unlike the transitional relief scheme, for the first year of the scheme the percentage increase is taken against the bill for 31 March 2017 after small business rate relief or rural rate relief, or
- b). a cash value of £600 per year (£50 per month). This cash minimum increase ensures that those ratepayers paying nothing or very small amounts in 2016/17 after small business rate relief are brought into paying something.

In comparing to the bill for 31 March 2017 any award of discretionary relief shall be disregarded. This shall have the effect of limiting calculation of support to those cases where it is the loss of mandatory rural rate relief that triggers the calculation of the £600 per year cap. Support is not available to those ceasing to be entitled to discretionary rural relief.

The exact calculation of relief shall be carried out in accordance with detailed guidance provided by Government as set out in the following document :

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/42017-spring-budget-update>

Local Revaluation Rate Relief 2020/21

Revaluation relief is a Government funded scheme run over 4 years and is intended to assist ratepayers affected by increases in non-domestic rates following the 2017 revaluation. The scheme was front loaded with the greatest amount of funding provided to assist ratepayers in the first three years after revaluation. 2020/21 will be the last year local revaluation rate relief will be in operation.

In 2020/21 the Government is only providing funding to South Norfolk Council in the total sum of approximately £8,000 .This does mean that awards of revaluation rate relief in 2020/21 will be focussed on a smaller number of businesses in need.

Relief for 2020/21 awards will be considered on a case by case basis. The following conditions will apply:

1. Relief for one year will be awarded for a fixed period ending on 31 March 2021. The only exception is where the business rates liability of a ratepayer ends before this date.
2. The award of relief is limited to the total grant allocation from Government. Once this funding has been expended no further relief will be granted.

3. In order to be eligible for relief the ratepayer must be in occupation of the relevant property and have been so on 31 March 2017 and 1 April 2017.
4. If the Valuation Office splits a property into two or more hereditaments, relief will terminate from the date of the split and be apportioned up to that date.
5. The ratepayer must have had an increase in rates payable on that premises between the 2016/17 financial year and the 2017/18 financial year in order to be eligible.
6. Relief will terminate and be apportioned on a daily basis to the date of vacation. Relief will not be carried forward to a new property.
7. Any overpaid relief will be payable and recoverable through the rates bill.
8. Ratepayers occupying excepted hereditaments will not qualify for relief. An excepted hereditament is defined as a property occupied by the billing authority or a precepting authority.
9. Future changes in rateable value backdated to 1 April 2017 or earlier may lead to a recalculation of relief.

Decisions on eligibility for relief will be considered by the Revenues Manager with power delegated to the Assistant Director with responsibility for Finance to agree the awards.

Retail Discount

Discretionary Retail Discount Policy 2020/21

This policy covers the award of Retail Discount. This relief is awarded under S47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended). The purpose of the policy is to support those businesses who occupy retail premises as defined in the guidance issued by MHCLG.

Conditions of relief

1. This is a two year scheme to cover the 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years only.
2. Relief for 2020/21 will be awarded for a fixed period ending on 31st March 2021. The only exception is where the business rates liability of a ratepayer ends before this date.
3. The award of relief is limited to one third of the bill and must be applied after all mandatory, discretionary and other S31 funded (government funded) reliefs have been applied.
4. In order to be eligible for relief the ratepayer must be in occupation of a property which has a rateable value of less than £51,000 and is wholly or mainly used as shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments.

5. Properties considered to be shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments and eligible for relief are listed in the section below “Guidance on qualifying premises”

6. The relief will be awarded on a test of use rather than occupation. Hereditaments that are occupied but not wholly or mainly used for the qualifying purpose will not qualify for relief.

7. The type of uses which are not considered to be retail for the purpose of the relief are listed in the section below “Guidance on premises that are unlikely to qualify”.

8. The relief will be applied on a daily basis using the formula provided in the guidance from MHCLG. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-retail-discount-guidance>

9. A new hereditament created as a result of a split or merger during the financial year, or where there is a change of use, should be considered afresh for the relief on that day.

10. If the Valuation Office splits a property into two or more hereditaments, relief will terminate from the date of the split and be apportioned up to that date.

11. Relief will terminate and be apportioned on a daily basis to the date of vacation.

12. If there is a change of use for any reason which leads to property being used for purposes not included in the section “Guidance on qualifying premises” the relief will be terminated accordingly.

13. Any overpaid relief will be payable and recoverable through the rates bill.

14. Broadland District Council has the right to use its discretion where any doubt exists over the eligibility of the use of a hereditament.

15. A decision with respect to discretionary relief will be invalid if it is made more than 6 months after the end of the financial year to which it relates.

Guidance on qualifying premises

Properties considered to be shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments, cinemas and live music venues;

i. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of goods to visiting members of the public:

- Shops (such as: florists, bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, jewellers, stationers, off licences, chemists, newsagents, hardware stores, supermarkets, etc)
- Charity shops
- Opticians
- Post offices
- Furnishing shops/ display rooms (such as: carpet shops, double glazing, garage doors)
- Car/ caravan show rooms

- Second hand car lots
- Markets
- Petrol stations
- Garden centres
- Art galleries (where art is for sale/hire)

ii. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

- Hair and beauty services (such as: hair dressers, nail bars, beauty salons, tanning shops, etc)
- Shoe repairs/ key cutting
- Travel agents
- Ticket offices e.g. for theatre
- Dry cleaners
- Launderettes
- PC/ TV/ domestic appliance repair
- Funeral directors
- Photo processing
- Tool hire
- Car hire

iii. Hereditaments that are being used for the sale of food and/ or drink to visiting members of the public:

- Restaurants
- Takeaways
- Sandwich shops
- Coffee shops
- Pubs
- Bars

iv. Hereditaments which are being used as cinemas

v. Hereditaments that are being used as live music venues:

– live music venues are hereditaments wholly or mainly used for the performance of live music for the purpose of entertaining an audience. Hereditaments cannot be considered a live music venue for the purpose of business rates relief where a venue is wholly or mainly used as a nightclub or a theatre, for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).

– Hereditaments can be a live music venue even if used for other activities, but only if those other activities (i) are merely ancillary or incidental to the performance of live music (e.g. the sale/supply of alcohol to audience members) or (ii) do not affect the fact that the primary activity for the premises is the performance of live music (e.g. because those other activities are insufficiently regular or frequent, such as a polling station or a fortnightly community event).

– There may be circumstances in which it is difficult to tell whether an activity is a performance of live music or, instead, the playing of recorded music. Although we would expect this would be clear in most circumstances, Guidance on this may be found in Chapter 16 of the statutory guidance issued in April 2018 under section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003.³

Guidance on premises that are unlikely to qualify

Properties **NOT** considered to be shops, restaurants, cafes and drinking establishments for the purposes of this relief;

i. Hereditaments that are being used for the provision of the following services to visiting members of the public:

- Financial services (e.g. banks, building societies, cash points, bureaux de change, payday lenders, betting shops, pawn brokers)
- Other services (e.g. estate agents, letting agents, employment agencies)
- Medical services (e.g. vets, dentists, doctors, osteopaths, chiropractors)
- Professional services (e.g. solicitors, accountants, insurance agents/ financial advisers, tutors)
- Post office sorting offices

iii. Hereditaments that are not reasonably accessible to visiting members of the public

In addition it is not considered that hereditaments used for other assembly or leisure purposes to be retail use for the purpose of the discount. These are not limited to;

- Theatres
- Museums
- Nightclubs
- ~~– Music venues~~
- Gyms
- Sport & physical recreation buildings

Where there is any doubt of eligibility the Authority has the right to use its discretion.

Ratepayers that occupy more than one property will be entitled to relief for each of their eligible properties, subject to State Aid de minimis limits.

South Norfolk will implement this discount in all respects in accordance with the detailed guidance provided by the Government.

Pubs Discount

This section describes in principle the Pubs Discount 2020/21 scheme. The scheme will be available to eligible occupied properties with a rateable value of less than £100,000. The majority of pubs are independently owned or managed and will not be part of

chains. Where pubs are part of a chain, relief will be available for each eligible property in the chain, subject to meeting State Aid requirements.

The Government's policy intention is that eligible pubs should:

- be open to the general public
- allow free entry other than when occasional entertainment is provided
- allow drinking without requiring food to be consumed
- permit drinks to be purchased at a bar.

For these purposes, it should exclude:

- restaurants
- cafes
- nightclubs
- hotels
- snack bars
- guesthouses
- boarding houses
- sporting venues
- music venues
- festival sites
- theatres
- museums
- exhibition halls
- cinemas
- concert halls
- casinos

The proposed exclusions in the list at paragraph 12 is not intended to be exhaustive and it will be for the council to determine eligibility.

The total amount of government-funded relief available in the year 2020/21 under this scheme is £1,000 per eligible property. There is no relief available under this scheme for properties with a rateable value of £100,000 or more. Eligibility for the relief and the relief itself will be assessed and calculated on a daily basis.

Ratepayers that occupy more than one property will be entitled to relief for each of their eligible properties, subject to State Aid De Minimis limits.

Guidance on operation of the Pubs Discount for 2020/21 is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/business-rates-pubs-discount-2020-to-2021-local-authority-guidance

Local Newspaper Relief

This discount applies to office space occupied by local newspapers and is available for 5 years from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025. There is a maximum of one discount per local newspaper title and per hereditament up to state aid limits.

Eligibility for this relief is set out in the Government guidance at www.gov.uk/government/consultations/the-case-for-a-business-rates-relief-for-local-newspapers

Part 4 – general principles regarding discretionary rate reliefs

Where necessary a written application form will need to be completed.

Supporting information may be required for some reliefs/discounts.

There is no automatic right of appeal against an authority's decision not to award Discretionary Relief or against the amount of relief allowed. However, should an applicant have a grievance they should write to the Director with responsibility for Finance, clearly stating their reasons.

The decision of the Director with responsibility for Finance will be final with respect to any decision not to award, to revoke or to vary the amount of relief allowed.

The Assistant Director for Finance in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder will agree the policy where the criteria and operation of relief schemes are prescribed by and fully funded by Government.

Recalculations of relief/discount award

With all forms of relief/discount the amount of relief/discount awarded will be recalculated in the event of a change in circumstances. This could include, for example, a change to the rateable value of the premises, a change to the period of liability or a change in legislation or a change in the amount due as a result of the application of other reliefs/exemptions.

Relief/discount may also be varied during the year where eligibility criteria are no longer met.

Period of Award (general)

The award period for new and renewal applications will be for a period ending not later than the end of the current financial year (the exception being Enterprise Zone Rate Relief which, once awarded, will generally be for a five- year period).

Review of Relief/Discount Award

The Council will regularly review its approach to the award of relief/discounts and will periodically review the eligibility of qualifying businesses and organisations.

When a review of eligibility is carried out continuation of relief/discount will be subject to satisfactory completion of review forms and provision of requested supporting

information. Where a renewal form is not returned, relief/discount will not be awarded, and the business or organisation will be sent a rate bill for the full charge.

When completed forms are returned, awards will be considered in the light of the version of policy in force at the time.

Prior to the Council's discretionary rate relief policy being revised, organisations will be given at least twelve months' notice that their eligibility to relief may change.

Award of all discretionary reliefs/discounts

Where a ratepayer may qualify for more than one relief a mandatory relief will always be awarded (where applicable) and different reliefs will be awarded in the following sequence:

1. Mandatory charitable relief/Mandatory relief for CASCs/Mandatory Rural Rate Relief
2. Small Business Rate Relief (cannot get if entitled to mandatory relief)
3. Supporting Small Business Relief
4. Discretionary reliefs – charities/CASCs/rural discretionary/non-profit making/sports clubs/rates discount/hardship/Enterprise Zone Relief/Local Newspaper relief
5. Local Revaluation Relief
6. Retail Discount
<u>7. Pubs Discount</u>
<u>8. Locally funded discretionary reliefs – Daycare Nurseries, CIC, Non domestic Rates discount.</u>

Where a rate payer is concerned that they have not been awarded relief/discount in accordance with the policy set out above they can apply in writing to have the case reviewed by the Director with responsibility for Finance.

State Aid

All discretionary rate reliefs are subject to State Aid rules, whether funded by Government or not.

State Aid law is the means by which the European Union regulates state funded support to businesses. Providing discretionary relief to ratepayers will amount to State Aid. However, Relief will be State Aid compliant where it is provided in accordance with the De Minimis Regulations (1407/2013)¹.

The De Minimis Regulations allow an undertaking to receive up to €200,000 of De Minimis aid in a three year period (consisting of the current financial year and the two previous financial years).

To administer De Minimis it is necessary to establish that the award of aid will not result in the undertaking having received more than €200,000 of De Minimis aid. Note that the threshold only relates to aid provided under the De Minimis Regulations (aid under other exemptions or outside the scope of State Aid is not relevant to the De Minimis calculation).

PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY ANNUAL UPDATE

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Portfolio:

Stronger Communities and Governance

Ward(s) Affected:

All

Purpose of the Report:

To summarise progress made by Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council during 2019 in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty, introduced in the Equality Act 2010.

Recommendations:

1. Cabinet to consider and approve the appended report for publication, or
2. Cabinet to consider the appended report, make amendments and approve for publication, or
3. Cabinet to take any other course of action, keeping in mind the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty as detailed in paragraph 1.1.

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to publish an annual report demonstrating how they have complied with the Public Sector Equality Duty. It is proposed to make publicly available the report at Appendix A to fulfil that duty and enable service users, staff, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, regulators and other interested parties to assess the equality performance of Broadland and South Norfolk Councils

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This Duty requires Broadland and South Norfolk Councils in addition to other public sector organisations, to have due regard to the need to:
- i. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - ii. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - iii. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 2.2 This duty covers nine protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership.

3 CURRENT POSITION

- 3.1 This reports marks the first year that Broadland and South Norfolk Councils are reporting on their shared equality objectives:
- i. Ensure we are inclusive employers, identifying any underrepresented groups in the workforce
 - ii. Ensure that Broadland and South Norfolk Councils continue to provide accessible and inclusive services for all our customers.
 - iii. Active engagement with those service users who have one, or more of the protected characteristics
 - iv. Implement increased awareness of equality issues across the councils
- 3.2 The report at Appendix A highlights activities and work undertaken by the councils not just to work towards completing our actions and comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty but also to achieve what we, as councils should do in order to realise our vision for our place.

4 PROPOSED ACTION

- 4.1 It is proposed that Cabinet approves the appended report for publication in order to meet the statutory duties placed on the Council by the Equality Act 2010.

5 OTHER OPTIONS

- 5.1 Cabinet may wish to take another course of action, keeping in mind the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty as detailed in paragraph 1.1.

6 ISSUES AND RISKS

- 6.1 **Resource Implications – Resource implications** – There are no resource implications associated with the publication of this report.
- 6.2 **Legal implications** – If the appended report is not published South Norfolk Council will be in breach of their statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- 6.3 **Equality implications** – The publication of this annual report is a key mechanism through which the Council can fulfil its accountability to the South Norfolk community, demonstrating that equality issues are taken seriously and evidencing the progress that has been made. Should this report not be published, as well as not meeting statutory duties, it could have the effect of undermining the importance of equalities to South Norfolk communities.
- 6.4 **Environmental impact** – There are no environmental impacts associated with the publication of this report.
- 6.5 **Crime and disorder** – There are no impacts to crime and disorder associated with the publication of this report.
- 6.6 **Risks** – If statutory duties are not met, action could be taken against South Norfolk Council by the Equality and Human Rights Commission with legal, financial and reputational risks for the Council.

7 CONCLUSION

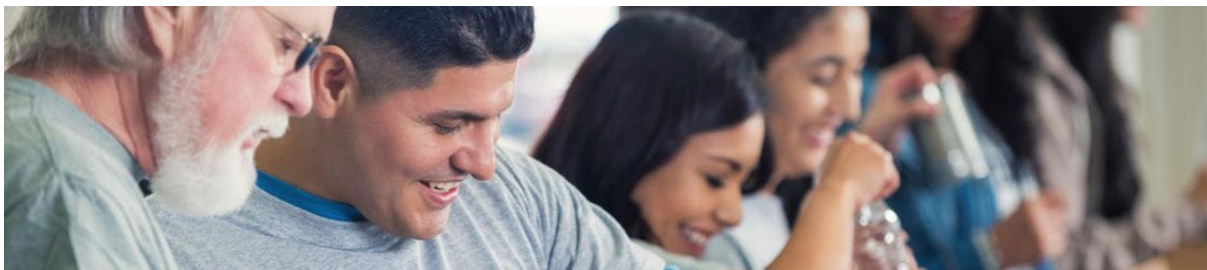
- 7.1 The appended report details the Council's successful work in demonstrating compliance with our Public Sector Equality Duty. Not all of the examples relate to the agreed Equalities actions for 2019 and this demonstrates that Equalities considerations are a constituent of everything we do at Broadland and South Norfolk

- 7.2 Publication of the appended report will not only fulfil our duty but also celebrate the examples of good work undertaken by the councils, either internally or in partnership with others, including:
- i. The adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of Antisemitism.
 - ii. Continuing to support the Pride celebrations in July 2019
 - iii. The launch of First Step to engage with rough sleepers across the two districts

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 To Cabinet to consider and approve the appended report for publication, or
- 8.2 Cabinet to consider the appended report, make amendments and approve for publication, or
- 8.3 Cabinet to take any other course of action, keeping in mind the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty as detailed in paragraph 1.1.

Equalities at Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council



Public Sector Equality Duty Annual Report 2019

1. Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 gave a formal requirement to all Local Authorities to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). That is, in the exercising of our functions, Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

There are nine protected characteristics contained within the Act; Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership.

In order to comply with this we believe as Councils, that we should;

- Treat people fairly, justly and with respect in both employment and service provision
- Find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded
- Promote inclusion and celebrate diversity.

A Single Officer Team

In July 2018, following an in-depth feasibility study, it was agreed that Broadland and South Norfolk Councils would work towards the goal of a single paid service. 2019 saw a period of restructure culminating in two autonomous councils with services being delivered by a shared officer team from January 2020.

In preparation for this, equality focussed joint working took place throughout 2019 with the development and formal adoption of shared Equality Objectives, a joint Equality and Diversity policy and a shared Equalities and Communities Impact Assessment. The latter of these seeks those completing it to not only consider impacts on those with a protected characteristic but also issues relating to Health, Place and Low Income & Poverty.

During 2020, a Joint Corporate Equalities Group will be formed which will act as the main mechanism through which equalities issues and equality related activities and work can be disseminated, discussed and devised. The Joint Corporate Equalities Group will take ownership of the Joint Objectives and Actions. These are listed below as thematic categories through which examples describing our Equalities work and Activities are detailed.

This Equalities report for 2019 marks the first Joint annual Equalities report for Broadland and South Norfolk Councils.

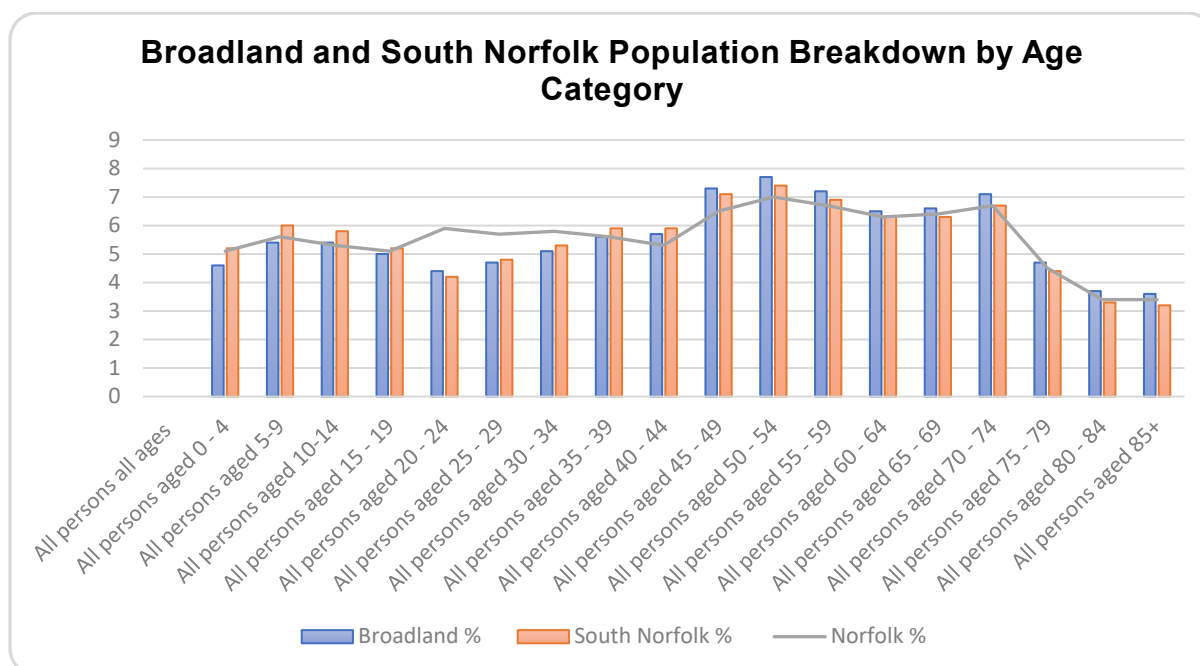
2. The State of Broadland and South Norfolk

The following section provides a snapshot of the Broadland and South Norfolk populations; the data is taken from the 2011 Census unless otherwise indicated.

Figures from Norfolk Insight state that the population figure in 2018 for Broadland is 129,464 and for South Norfolk it is approximately 138,017. It is estimated that 51% of the population across both districts identify as female and 49% identify as male.

Population by age

The chart below demonstrates a breakdown of the population by age category.



(Norfolk Insight 2020)

The age bracket featuring the highest number of residents across both districts is the 50-54 age group, as with last year.

Approximately 54.2% of Broadland's and 53.8% of South Norfolk's population is of working age which is about the same as the Norfolk average of 54.8%. For those aged 0-19, the Norfolk average is 21.1%, Broadland's population at 20.4% is slightly lower, whilst South Norfolk's at 22.2% is slightly higher. For those aged 65+ the Norfolk average is 24.4%, Broadland's 65+ population is slightly higher at 25.7% and South Norfolk's is slightly lower at 23.9%.

In Broadland female life expectancy is 84.5 years with males at 81.1 years a slight increase on the previous year. In South Norfolk female life expectancy is 84.8 with male life expectancy at 81.3 years, also a slight increase on previous year. These figures for both districts are slightly higher than the Norfolk, East of England and England averages. However, it should be noted that in the most deprived areas of Broadland, life expectancy is 3.5 years lower for females and 4.0 years lower for men than in the least deprived areas. In South Norfolk's most deprived areas life expectancy is 3.8 years lower for women and 4.4 years lower for men, than in the least deprived areas.

In terms of living in good health, 2019 statistics show that in Norfolk men can now expect to live to age 64.7 in good health which is an increase on previous years and women to age 64.4 which is a decrease from the previous. There is no district level data available on this indicator.

Ethnicity

Broadland	White	Mixed	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Other Ethnic Group
Figures in %	97.7	0.9	1.0	0.3	0.1
Total no of people	121,795	1064	1,265	331	191

Publish date: March 2020

South Norfolk	White	Mixed	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Other Ethnic Group
Figures in %	97.6	1.0	1.0	0.3	0.1
Total no of people	120,981	1214	1270	378	169

Census 2011 data

95.8% of Broadland and 95% of South Norfolk residents were born in the United Kingdom. 5.6% of Broadland residents and 4.5% of South Norfolk residents were born outside the UK.

Religion and Belief

Religious diversity is more prevalent in Broadland as a wider range of faiths are being observed by the population.

Broadland	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Other religion	No religion	Not stated
Percentage %	63.3	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.4	28	7.4
Total No. of people	78,938	342	252	117	377	72	508	34,845	9,195

South Norfolk	Christian	Buddhist	Hindu	Jewish	Muslim	Sikh	Other religion	No religion	Not stated
Percentage %	62.3	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.3	0	0.4	28.7	N/K
Total No. of people	77,234	364	235	126	403	49	493	35,601	N/K

Census 2011 data

Christianity remains as the majority religion for Broadland and South Norfolk residents and this is a moderately higher Christian population compared to the Norfolk average of 61%. All religions, other than Christianity, are broadly commensurate with the percentage totals for Norfolk with the exception of 'Muslim' being 0.6% compared to South Norfolk and Broadland's 0.3%.

Adoption of the Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism

During November 2019, Councillors across both Broadland and South Norfolk councils agreed to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism. We view this as an enhancement of our Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act.

The working definition is:

"Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

While Broadland and South Norfolk statistically have small Jewish Communities, we believe no one should experience hatred of any form, including for their religion or beliefs. Home Office statistics show that 18% of religiously motivated hatred is targeted at Jewish People.

Publish date: March 2020

In adopting the working definition we are sending a strong signal in support of our Jewish communities and demonstrating that we will not tolerate this, or any, form of hatred.

Marriage and Civil Partnership, Gender Reassignment, Sex and Sexual Orientation

Broadland	Single, (Never married)	Married	Same Sex Civil Partnership	Separated	Divorced	Widowed
Percentage %	24.5	55.7	0.2	2.0	9.5	8.1
Total No. people	25,397	57,687	189	2,088	9,885	8,411

South Norfolk	Single, (Never married)	Married	Same Sex Civil Partnership	Separated	Divorced	Widowed
Percentage %	25.4	55.5	0.3	2.2	9.4	7.3
Total No. people	25,795	56,458	257	2,223	9,528	7,456

Census 2011 data

The 2011 Census shows that of populations in Broadland and South Norfolk who are legally old enough to marry, 55% entered into a heterosexual marriage. In addition to this, 11.5% of the population has been married previously but are no longer and approximately a quarter have never been married.

At the time of the 2011 Census the data informs us that there were 189 people in Broadland and 257 in South Norfolk who had entered into a same sex Civil Partnership, although assumptions cannot be made that this data means that 0.2% of the Broadland population and 0.3% of South Norfolk population are lesbian, gay or bisexual.

We do not currently have up to date statistics on the number of same-sex marriages that have been entered into by Broadland residents. However the Office for National Statistics (ONS) states that in England & Wales in 2016 there were 7,019 marriages between same-sex couples with 56% of those between female couples. This was an 8% increase on the previous year. In addition a further 1,663 same-sex couples converted their civil partnership into a marriage. The low number of conversions in 2016 compared with 2015 may be because couples who wished to convert their existing civil partnership to a marriage chose to do so as soon as possible, with most conversions taking place in 2019.

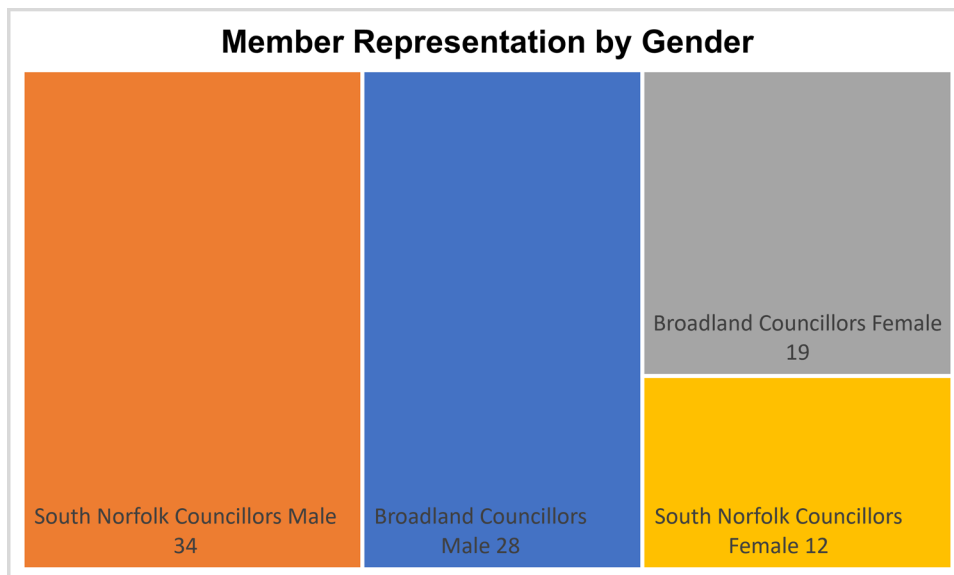
At present we do not have data on the sexualities and genders the populations of Broadland and South Norfolk identify as. Obtaining those statistics has historically been difficult due to under-reporting.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) states the proportion of the UK population identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) has increased from 1.5% in 2012 to 2.0% in 2017, which is unchanged from 2016.

In 2017, there were an estimated 1.1 million people aged 16 years and over identifying as LGB out of a UK population aged 16 years and over of 52.8 million. Regionally, people in London were most likely to identify as LGB (2.6%), with people in the North East and East of England the least likely (both 1.5%). This would equate to approximately 4012 residents across Broadland and South Norfolk.

3. Members

Broadland and South Norfolk have a total of 93 members across the two district areas with an age range of 28-88 for Broadland and 20-80 for South Norfolk. The table below provides information on the gender representation of our member cohort.



In terms of Cabinet representation, in Broadland, 4 out of 7 Portfolio Holders are female, in South Norfolk, this figure is 4 out of 6 Portfolio Holders.

4. Our Equalities Work

The following section illustrates some of the work and activities we have undertaken to have a positive impact on our staff and customers in relation to our agreed shared Equality Objectives.

Objective 1: Ensure we are inclusive employers, identifying any under-represented groups in the workforce

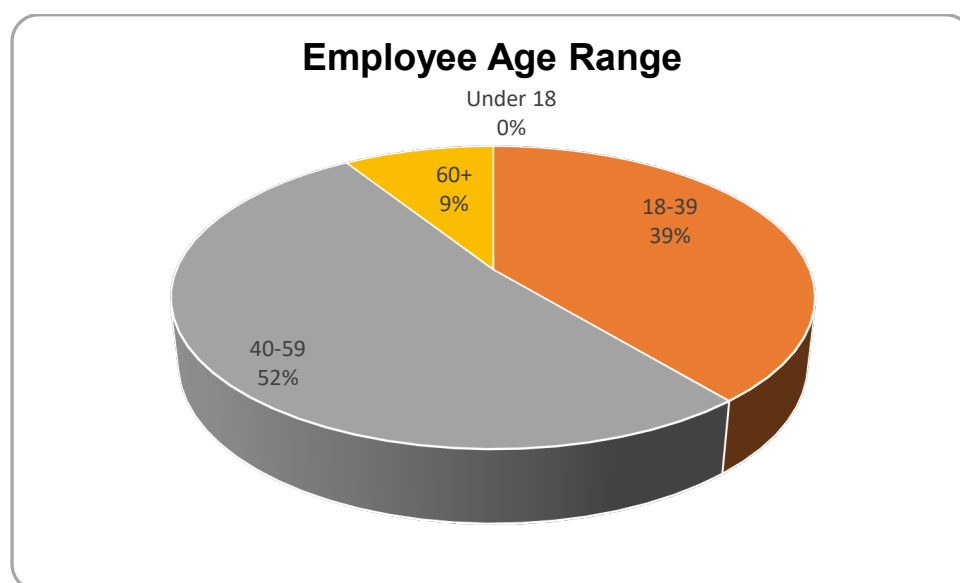
Broadland and South Norfolk now have a combined workforce of 699 employees.

As of 31st December 2019 these comprised as following:

December 2019	Full time	Part time	Total
All employees	447	252	699
Male	267	62	329
Female	180	190	370

These include eight Apprentices and one Graduate Scheme member.

Age Profile



Staff Turnover

Broadland District Council	10.8%
South Norfolk District Council	12.54%

Staff sickness for both councils was recorded as 2.76 days lost per full-time equivalent (FTE) for short term absence only and 5.12 days lost per FTE for all absences.

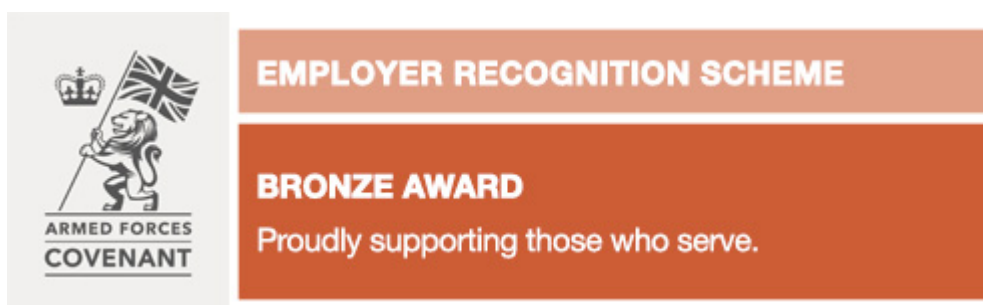
Staff Ethnicity Profile

African	0.1% (7)
Any other mixed or multiple ethnic background	0.3% (21)
Any other White background	1.9% (133)
English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	55.8% (392)
Irish	0.4% (29)
Prefer not to say	1.4% (10)
White & Asian	0.3% (21)
White & Black African	0.1% (7)
Not known/blank	39.7% (278)

Disability Profile

Broadland and South Norfolk employs 14 disabled members of staff (approximately 2% of total employees). Both councils have received the Disability Confident Employer award.

Armed Forces Covenant – Bronze award



Broadland and South Norfolk Councils are signatories of the Norfolk Armed Forces Covenant, which was signed at an official ceremony on 7 March 2012.

An Armed Forces Covenant is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and the local armed forces community.

In December 2019 the councils were awarded the Bronze Award from the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme in national recognition of our commitment to support the armed forces community through our employment practices, this includes promotion of the councils as being armed forces-friendly and that we are open to employing reservists, armed forces veterans, cadet instructors and military spouses/partners

Both Broadland and South Norfolk Councils have created a Covenant Pledge to demonstrate its support, as an employer of choice, to the armed forces community. The pledge can be viewed at: <https://www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/residents/communities/armed-forces-community-covenant>

In 2020 we will be working towards our Silver award.

Objective 2: Ensure that Broadland and South Norfolk Councils continue to provide accessible and inclusive services for all our customers.

FIRST STEP



First Step is a collaborative project between South Norfolk and Broadland District Councils, designed to address the needs of rough sleeping across the two districts.

The service includes two Rough Sleeper Coordinators who are able to provide a rapid response to reports of people sleeping rough. This can include people sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters), people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or "bashes").

Their role is to establish contact, assess the needs of anyone found to be rough sleeping, provide the necessary support to engage with services seek more settled accommodation. They'll check places that people have been known to bed down, to ensure that those who are homeless get the help they need.

Support

In addition to helping customers access accommodation to get off the streets, they provide support for a wide range of issues and tailor the assistance to the needs of each individual customer. This may include help with transport, access to emergency accommodation, help to access benefits and to maximize income, provision of emergency food and clothing

Accommodation

First Step Coordinators have access to accommodation for those verified as rough sleeping, to help anyone rough sleeping to get off the streets immediately.

The service works with a local supported housing provider to operate a Somewhere Safe to Stay (SSStS) hub which has emergency crash beds for customers accessing the FIRST Step service. This is normally available for a maximum of three nights. From the service can be able to support customers into medium-term "Staging Post" accommodation while working with the Housing Solutions team to support customers into long-term, sustainable accommodation.

Access to this accommodation is available through the FIRST Steps project and our Rough Sleeper Coordinators only.

In the six months since the service was implemented, the First Step Service have; undertaken 72 verification visits following reports of rough sleeping; placed 19 individuals into accommodation, either through the Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub (SSStS), Interim accommodation or spot purchased accommodation; supported those individuals with 46 instances of personal budget spend; and have referred 23 individuals into Supported Accommodation or Long term accommodation.

Community Connectors

Community Connectors cover the whole of South Norfolk. If residents have something that is troubling them they can contact a Community Connector who will meet with them and help them to; be part of their community, have positive relationships, gain skills and feel confident, have a warm and safe home, be free from money worries.

Community Connectors can also put residents in touch with activities and groups in their area or help with setting up projects, groups or events.

Community Connectors are working from all GP surgeries across South Norfolk delivering social prescribing. This is a non-medical solution to social, emotional and practical issues that may be causing health problems, or making them worse. Residents can also access the service through South Norfolk Council offices or via the website

Long Stratton Breast Screening Clinic

During August and September 2019, South Norfolk Council supported the NHS Breast Screening Programme by hosting a breast screening unit at Long Stratton Leisure Centre. Breast screening aims to find breast cancers early using an X-ray test called a mammogram that can spot cancers when they are too small to see or feel and women between the ages of 50 and 70 registered with Long Stratton Health Centre were invited to attend a screening. Facilitating the breast screening unit at the Leisure Centre enables those in Long Stratton and the surrounding area to access a vital testing programme locally without having to travel further afield. Each year the NHS Breast Screening Programme prevents around 1,300 deaths, so it's critical those at risk have the opportunity to be checked.

Objective 3: Active engagement with those service users who have one, or more of the protected characteristics

Falls Prevention

The Local Public Health Offer funds have been used to extend the remit of the Community Activities Co-ordinator to enable them to spend one day per week on falls prevention exercises and initiatives during 2019 and into 2020.

Referrals are received from the Handyperson service. An initial appointment is booked and the Exercise Co-ordinator visits the resident in their home. During this initial visit baseline measurements are taken and a range of seated/standing exercises are demonstrated. If participants wish to continue then another four follow up visits approximately 6-8 weeks apart will be arranged. Further assessments will be taken after six and nine months.

Residents taking part are noticing differences, such as finding their confidence has improved and that's it's easier to get around. Some really embrace the help that is available and small changes such as changing their footwear, thinking of ways to make their home safer, accessing support to help with adaptations, have made it easier to remain independent in their home.

The Project currently has 45 residents taking part, it will continue in 2020 and the final outcomes will be evaluated by Public Health.

Help Hubs

Both South Norfolk and Broadland were early adopters of the Help Hub approach, although the two models currently differ slightly, as can be seen in the table below. The ambitions of the hubs are aligned in the desire to work in a highly connected way that ensures individuals get the right help, from the right people, at the right time which maximises all opportunities for them to achieve their potential without the need for long-term support or interventions.

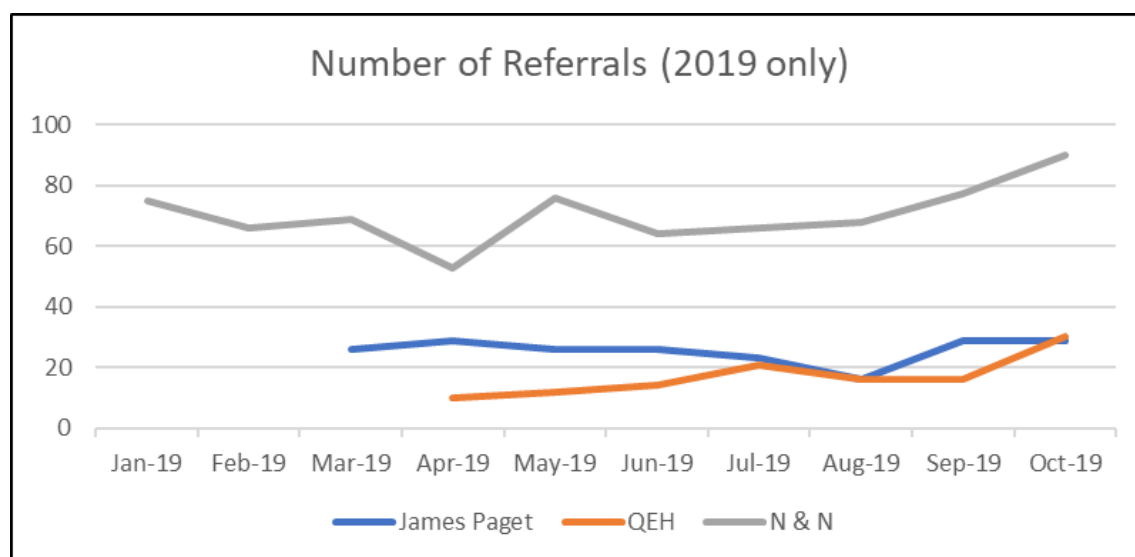
Broadland Help Hub	South Norfolk Help Hub
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative working environment made up of multiple partners • Some based permanently in hub such as children's services, police and 0-19 health services, others are outreach based and also hot-desking • Based in BDC building alongside housing teams and welfare/debt advice. • Weekly meetings attended by over 20 partner services. • Partners bring cases to weekly meetings for discussion and problem solving. Partner retains responsibility for the case, not the hub • Good partnership working in between weekly collaboration meetings. Partners are proactive in seeking advice rather than waiting for meetings and the co-location enables this. • Key issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unintentional self-neglect ○ Mental Health ○ Housing ○ Vulnerability in older people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-agency partnership of approximately 30 organisations. • Some based permanently in hub such as children's services, police and 0-19 health services. • Others outreach based and hot desk. • Other agencies work externally but operate as part of the partnership. • Shared referral system for all agencies and multi-agency case allocations process. • Public facing with referrals from partner agencies, families and self-referrals. • Administered by a support team with officers from NCC and SN&BC • Community connectors based in all GP surgeries providing social prescribing service and direct access into the hub services. • Key issues on RFSs include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Finance ○ Housing ○ Mental health ○ Support with the needs of a child

District Direct

District Direct is a service that helps hospital in-patients with problems that may affect their return home. Housing Officers are based in the Discharge Offices at Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital, Queen Elizabeth Hospital and James Paget Hospital.

They can help with offering support to suitable housing and welfare benefits, co-ordinating actions required to ensure the home environment is suitable and provide key safe installation and adaptations as needed. They can also give advice about access to food banks and community projects and support to access assistive technology such as Lifeline and Careline.

Referrals during 2019 have continued to grow



In South Norfolk approximately 10 residents a month have been helped, and in Broadland this is approximately 9 residents per month. In both districts, most help offered is for 'access and adaptations', reflecting the older demographics and that a greater proportion of referrals come from owner occupiers.

The impact of the service has shown an average daily saving of 5 bed days and reduced length of stay by 36% saving £1,250 per day. 83% of referrals would not have known how to access the help they received without the District Direct Service.

60% did not visit A&E again in the 3 months since the assistance provided by District Direct and 75% felt confident about their continuing independence as a result of the District Direct service.

Future Booster

During 2019 Broadland District Council offered a service to support wellbeing, self-esteem and raise confidence in young people aged 11-18 to schools within Broadland.

Future Booster was a package of 3 workshops to help groups of young people aged 11-18 to identify and manage barriers to success. Target topics were improving self-esteem, dealing with bullying, creating healthy relationships, self-image and acceptance and creating resilience. This was delivered by Lola Stafford Consulting Ltd, a Norfolk Social Enterprise, with extensive experience of working with young people focusing on positive outcomes and wellbeing.

Workshops for 6-8 pupils at a time were delivered in Hellesdon High School, Reepham High School and Reepham College, with a plenary session for teachers and support workers being delivered at the end of each workshop package.

Feedback from workshops has included:

'It has been amazing to just be able to sit and talk things through without judgement.'

'This has been hugely beneficial to them and we would love you to work with another group.' (staff member)

'I feel I could be braver now'

'I wish you could come every week' (staff member)

Objective 4: Implement increased awareness of equality issues across the councils

Safeguarding

As part of the collaboration between Broadland and South Norfolk Councils, Designated Safeguarding Officers from across the two districts met towards the end of 2018 to share safeguarding activities and procedures.

Although these differed due to different approaches to Safeguarding in some service areas, for example, provision of Leisure Centres in South Norfolk, there was a common underlying approach to a thorough and easy to access safeguarding offer at Broadland and South Norfolk.

During 2019 staff from both local authorities worked together on a shared Safeguarding reporting process which is now on-line and can be accessed via the intranet on both sites. Broadland and South Norfolk also have a shared Designated Safeguarding Officer group and Safeguarding referrals will be reported to the Senior Management Board on a quarterly basis.

Pride 2019

In 2019, and in partnership with The Ancient House Museum in Thetford and Norfolk Museum Service a touring exhibition was launched to engage with residents across South Norfolk and Broadland. The display, which was launched at South Norfolk on Show during the summer of 2019 then went on tour for 6 months, aiming to raise awareness of LGBTQ+ rights, and included an explanation of queer terminology, and a timeline charting the changes in the legal framework of the country around LGBTQ+ issues. The exhibition has also served to promote the Norfolk LGBT project and we have distributed posters for display in public areas directing people to the contact helpline.

The exhibition was toured to the following locations: South Norfolk Council Offices , Broadland District Council Offices, Poringland Library, Long Stratton Library, Post Mill Medical Centre Wymondham, Harleston Library, Aylsham Library, Long Stratton Medical centre and is currently on display in Kings Lynn. However the tour will be resumed across both districts in the summer 2020.

Additionally, South Norfolk council hoisted the Pride Flag for the first time in July 2019, joining with Broadland Council in showing our support of LGBTQ+. It has been agreed to continue to fly the flag in conjunction with the annual LGBT Pride Celebration every year, during the month of July, and at South Norfolk on Show on July 5th 2020.



5. Looking forward

This report details some of the activities undertaken by Broadland and South Norfolk Councils that during 2019 as we have worked towards developing a single management and officer team structure and which demonstrate compliance with our Public Sector Equality Duty

The report for 2020 will feature results of equalities work as the joint officer team is embedded, including the roll out of a programme of staff Equality and Diversity training, the Corporate Equalities Group is established and service redesign is progressed giving an excellent opportunity for Equalities to be written through everything we do at Broadland and South Norfolk.

Date	Key or Operational	Title of Report	Responsible Officer	Portfolio Holder	Exempt?
9 Mar	O	Discretionary Business Rate Relief – Retail, Public House and Local Newspaper Discounts	Simon Quilter	K Mason Billig	N
	O	Prioritisation of Welfare Rights and Debt Advice Resources	Mike Pursehouse	Y Bendle	Y
	O	Equalities Annual Report	Emma Hodds	K Mason Billig	N
20 April	O	Environmental Strategy	Debra Baillie-Murden/Alison Old	K Kiddie	N
	O	Insurance Procurement	Debbie Lorimer	K Mason Billig	Y
	O	Poringland Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2039 – Consideration of the Examiner's report	Simon Marjoram	L Neal	N
	O	Armed Forces Covenant	Mike Pursehouse	K Mason Billig	N
Council AGM 18 May 2020					
June	O	ASB and Crime	Mike Pursehouse	K Kiddie	N
	O	Housing Allocation Policy	Richard Dunsire	Y Bendle	N
	O	Community Leisure Offer	Dan Goodwin	Y Bendle	N
	O	Q4 Performance, Risk and Finance (Strategic)	Emma Pepper/ Julie Brown/ Emma Goddard	K Mason Billig	N
July		Community Grants	Kerrie Gallagher	K Mason Billig	N
Oct	O	Early Help Approach	Kerrie Gallagher	Y Bendle	N
Dec	O	Community Transport	Kerrie Gallagher	K Mason Billig	N

Key decisions are those which result in income, expenditure or savings with a gross full year effect of £100,000 or 10% of the Council's net portfolio budget whichever is the greater which has not been included in the relevant portfolio budget, or are significant (e.g. in environmental, physical, social or economic) in terms of its effect on the communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.



CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 3 February 2020 at 9.00am.

Members Present:

Cabinet: Councillors: J Fuller (Chairman), Y Bendle, K Kiddie, K Mason Billig and L Neal

Apologies: Councillor: A Thomas

Non-Appointed Councillors: D Bills, C Brown, V Clifford-Jackson, T Laidlaw and V Thomson

Officers in Attendance: The Managing Director (T Holden), the Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby), the Director of Place (P Courtier), the Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Assistant Director Community Services (S Phelan), the Assistant Director Finance (R Fincham), the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (E Hodds), the Chief of Staff (H Ralph), the Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager (R Dunsire), the Finance Manager (J Brown), the Housing and Benefits Manager (L Sayer), the Transformation, Innovation and Internal Consultancy Manager (E Pepper), the Strategy and Programmes Manager (S Carey), the Capital Accountant (H Craske), the Principal Infrastructure and Planning Policy Officer (S Marjoram), the Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard) and the Transformation and Innovation Lead Officer (S Crook)

2770 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised members that former Councillor and Honorary Alderman, Sue Thomson, was currently recovering from an operation, following a cancer diagnosis. On behalf of members, he wished Mrs Thomson a full and speedy recovery.

Cllr K Kiddie referred members to recent reports in the local press regarding feral chickens roosting in a housing estate in Diss. He explained that although some residents were happy for the chickens to stay, the numbers of chickens had reached unacceptable levels, and volunteers were being called in to re-home the chickens.

2771 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2772 PERFORMANCE, RISK, REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET POSITION FOR QUARTER 3 2019/20

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director of Finance, the Business Improvement Lead, and the Senior Governance Officer, which detailed the Council's performance against strategic measures, risk position and financial position for the third quarter of 2019/20.

The Transformation and Innovation Lead introduced the report and explained that the position regarding performance, management of risks and financials, was positive at the end of Quarter 3 for 2019/20. He drew attention to a number of key areas of performance.

During discussion, members cited many examples of good performance, with reference being made to external funding, Big Sky developments, Planning, the Help Hub, Community Grants and short-term staff sickness.

Members discussed HE1901, the target to achieve cost neutrality at the Leisure Centres, and although this had not met stretched target, members applauded the performance which had been a 21% improvement on last year. The set target had been very ambitious, and the Chairman reminded members that the Council's focus was not just on profit, but on getting people fit and healthy; members noted that there had been a 27.4% increase in attendance at the leisure centres in Quarter 3.

Referring to HE 1603, the % of households in temporary accommodation for 8 weeks or less, members noted that although it had missed stretched target, it was moving in the right direction. The Transformation and Innovation Lead explained that this was a measure of a snapshot in time and that performance was traditionally low at the current time of year. The portfolio holder, Cllr Y Bendle, explained that officers were working very hard on prevention and were currently looking to develop new ways of dealing with temporary accommodation across both South Norfolk and Broadland.

The Assistant Director summarised the position with regard to revenue and capital budgets and members noted that as of Quarter 3, there was a positive variance on the revenue budget of £2.3m, and that capital spend was £5.3m against a budget of £21.5m. He drew attention to the recommended additions to the capital programme, outlined at paragraph 5.4 of the report.

The Chairman referred to Appendix 2 of the report, the Analysis of Major Variances on Service Areas, and questioned whether the positive variance of £1.4m was sustainable with regard to Business Rates. The Assistant Director explained that officers were mindful of the risks and members agreed that there was no room for complacency.

The Senior Governance Officer advised that the corporate risk capacity at the Council remained positive. She referred members to the management of risks and explained that due to the termination of the Visitor Economy Initiative, it had been removed from the register, however, stressed that numbers would continue to be monitored and tourism support across the two councils would be reconsidered in light of the one team collaboration.

Referring to Operational Risk (O1) (major illness / accident/ risk to health at a Leisure Centre), the Senior Governance Officer explained that this had been updated to incorporate risk to health to take account of the recent legionella bacteria found in the Long Stratton Leisure Centre water system. Officers stressed that this had been managed in detail by the leisure team locally, but it had been felt prudent for it to also be reflected in the corporate risk register.

The Chairman suggested that Strategic Risk S7 “That the Council is unable to respond to an unforeseen impact as a consequence of Brexit”, required expanding to include other aspects of the political environment, such as devolution.

It was

RESOLVED

1. To:
 - a) Note the 2019/20 performance for the quarter and the combined efforts across the Directorates to deliver the vision of the Council (detail contained in Appendix 1).
 - b) Note the current position with respect to risks and accepts the actions to support risk mitigation (detailed in Section 6 of this report).
 - c) Note the capital and revenue position and the reason for the variances on the General Fund (detail contained in Appendix 2).
2. **TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** the additions to the 2019-20 capital programme as detailed at paragraph 5.4.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that processes are in place to improve performance, the management of risks is sound, and that budgets are managed effectively.

Other Options Considered

None.

2773 BROADLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL AND SOUTH NORFOLK COUNCIL – STRATEGIC PLAN AND DELIVERY PLAN

Members considered the report of the Strategy and Programmes Manager which sought approval and adoption of the new Strategic Plan 2020-2024 and interim Delivery Plan 2020/21 for Broadland and South Norfolk Councils.

The Strategy and Programmes Manager presented her report to Cabinet, and members were reminded that a key element of the Feasibility Study, agreed by members in 2018, had been the ambition to develop joint strategic priorities and delivery plans to enable a common focus for the new one joint officer team.

Cabinet concurred with the recommendations from the Joint Lead Members Group, that some amendments were required, to place greater emphasis on the environment and the delivery of the Environmental Strategy.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL approves the Strategic Plan 2020-2024 and the Interim one-year Delivery Plan for 2020/21, to include proposed changes regarding the environment and Environmental Strategy.

The Reason for the Decision

To allow the delivery of the ambitions of both Broadland and South Norfolk Councils, through one officer team.

Other Options Considered

None.

2774 CAPITAL STRATEGY AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2020/21 TO 2024/25

Members considered the report of the Capital Accountant, which presented Cabinet with the Capital Strategy and the Capital Programme for 2020/21-2024/25.

The Finance Manager drew members' attention to the key issues from her report.

Members noted that an additional budget had been included in the capital programme, for the investment in IT Infrastructure and software upgrades that would be required to support the collaboration with Broadland District Council. The Assistant Director – Governance and Business Support explained that this investment was necessary to provide a common shared ICT platform to enable and facilitate services transformation across the organisation.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- (a) Approval of the Capital Strategy (Appendix A of the report) and the Capital Programme for 2020/21-2024/25 (Appendix B of the report).
- (b) Approval of the programme of work for 2019/20 to align key elements of ICT infrastructure and corporate systems in use across Broadland District Council and South Norfolk Council as set out within Appendix D of the report.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the Strategy represents a prudent and affordable approach to investment in the Council's assets, to support service delivery, the District and its residents.

To ensure that the Capital Programme is affordable and complies with Council policies

Other Options Considered

None.

2775 REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2020/21

Members considered the report of the Assistant Director, Finance, which provided information affecting the Council's revenue budget for 2020/21 in order for the Cabinet to make recommendations to Council on 17 February regarding the Council's budget and council tax for 2020/21.

The Chairman introduced the report, referring members to the projected positive variance on the revenue budget of £1.7m. He explained that despite this healthy position, there was still a need to propose an increase in Council Tax (of £5.00 for a Band D property), due to the future uncertainty relating to business rates and New Homes Bonus.

The Assistant Director outlined the key issues arising from his report. Members' attention was drawn to his view as s151 officer; that the budget had been construed on a prudent basis and was robust, and that reserves were adequate.

The Chairman referred to Appendix D of the report, detailing the Council's reserves. Referring to the Localisation of Business Rates Reserve, he suggested that this be repurposed as the Business Rates Reset Transition Fund, to be used to mitigate any loss of Business Rates income, due to changes to the Business Rates Retention Scheme, and this was supported by Cabinet.

RESOLVED 1. TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- (a) Approval of the base budget; subject to confirmation of the finalised Local Government Finance Settlement figures which may necessitate an adjustment through the General Revenue Reserve to maintain a balanced budget. Authority to make any such change to be delegated to the Assistant Director of Finance.
- (b) That the "Localisation of Business Rates Reserve is repurposed as the "Business Rates Reset Transition Fund" and is used to mitigate any loss of business rates income due to changes to the Business Rates

- Retention Scheme, and the use of the other revenue reserves as set out in Appendix D.
- (c) That the Council's demand on the Collection Fund for 2020/21 for General Expenditure shall be £7,744,730 and for Special Expenditure shall be £11,102.
 - (d) That the Band D level of Council Tax be £155.00 for General Expenditure and £0.22 for Special Expenditure.
2. To agree to the proposed fees and charges as set out in section 5 of the report;
3. To note:
- (a) The advice of the Section 151 Officer with regard to section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, contained in section 10 of this report;

The future budget pressures contained in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

The Reason for the Decision

To provide a budget which meets the Council's priorities and to set a council tax affordable to residents.

Other Options Considered

None.

2776 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2020/21

Members considered the report of the Finance Manager. which outlined the authority's approach to management of its borrowing, investments, cash flows, banking, money market and capital market transactions; and the effective control of the associated risks and performance.

The Finance Manager outlined the salient points of her report, reminding members that the security of cash remained a primary consideration.

During discussion, attention was drawn to a key prudential indicator, representing a control on the maximum level of borrowing. In response to queries, the Finance Manager confirmed that the level of borrowing proposed was prudent and affordable, and she referred to paragraph 10.9 of the report, which highlighted potential sources of funding.

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

- (a) The Treasury Management Strategy Statement;
- (b) The Treasury Management Policy Statement 2020/21 (Appendix 1 of the report).
- (c) The Annual Investment Strategy 2020/21 (Appendix 2 of the report)
- (d) The Treasury Management Practice (TMP1) Credit and Counterparty Risk Management (Appendix 3 of the report).
- (e) The Treasury Management Scheme of Delegation (Appendix 4 of the report)).
- (f) The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement (Section 8) that sets out the Council's policy on MRP;
- (g) The Prudential Indicators and Limits for the next 5 years contained within the report.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the Council's Investment Strategy remains prudent and complies with statutory requirements.

Other Options Considered

None.

2777 COUNCIL TAX ASSISTANCE 2020/21

Members considered the report of the Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager, which informed the Council of the proposed revised Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme effective from April 2020.

The Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager introduced his report, explaining that the proposals would introduce a tolerance level for claimants in receipt of Council Tax Assistance, and Universal Credit. This would reduce confusion for claimants with frequent changes of circumstances and also reduce the administration required to manage claims. Members note that the proposals had attracted a favourable response during a consultation process.

The portfolio holder, Cllr Y Bendle expressed her support for the proposals, and it was

RESOLVED

1. **TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL** approves the amendments outlined in Appendix 2 of the report, and that the Scheme for 2020/21 is updated accordingly
2. To note the work officers will continue to undertake across the two Councils on processes to mitigate the wider impact of Universal Credit on Council Tax billing and collection.

The Reason for the Decision

To introduce a simplified scheme that would reduce the impact of Universal Credit on Council Tax Assistance claimants.

Other Options Considered

None.

2778 GREATER NORWICH JOINT FIVE-YEAR INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT PLAN AND ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN (2020 – 2025)

Members considered the report of the Principal Infrastructure and Planning Policy Officer, which sought approval for the Greater Norwich Five-Year Investment Plan (IIP) for 2020 to 2025, and the allocation of pooled Community Infrastructure Levy within the first year of the IIP as the Annual Growth Programme (AGP) for 2020/21.

The Principal Infrastructure and Planning Policy Officer outlined the key issues of his report to members. Members noted that the approach to estimating CIL had been refined and the revised projects were outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

It was

RESOLVED TO RECOMMEND THAT COUNCIL:

1. Agrees the Greater Norwich Joint Five-Year Infrastructure Investment Plan 2020-2025, included in Appendix 1; and,
2. Approves the allocation of CIL to twelve specified projects, these projects will form the 2020/21 Annual Growth Programme; the allocation of £2M to support the Education Capital Programme within Greater Norwich; payment of the previously committed CIL funding of £561,760 to the Hempnall Crossroad project within 2020/21; and, the full reinstatement of the £2M IIF cash reserve

The Reason for the Decision

To support the provision of infrastructure in the District

Other Options Considered

None.

2779 CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members noted the latest version of the Cabinet Core Agenda.

2780 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: To exclude the public and press from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended)

2781 LEISURE PRICING

Members considered the *exempt* report of the Assistant Director, Community Services, which presented Cabinet with the annual review and proposed pricing, for the Council's leisure services.

Members discussed the proposals and suggested that officers gave the proposals further consideration, to ensure a pricing scheme that was fair, and simpler for users to understand.

Members agreed that any new proposals should be presented in a further report, at the next meeting of the Cabinet

RESOLVED: That the Leisure pricing structure is redrafted and presented at a future meeting of the Cabinet.

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure a simplified pricing structure, that is easy for the public to understand.

Other Options Considered

As set out in the report.

2782 REVIEW OF LEGAL SERVICES PROVISION

Members noted that this was deferred to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

2783 EXEMPT MINUTE

The exempt minute regarding the Hethersett North Land Option considered at the Cabinet meeting held 13 January 2020, was confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(The meeting concluded at 10.59 am)

Chairman

SPECIAL CABINET

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on Monday 17 February 2020 at 5.00 pm.

Members Present:

Cabinet: Councillors: J Fuller (Chairman), Y Bendle, K Kiddie, K Mason Billig, L Neal and A Thomas

Non-Appointed Councillors: B Bernard, D Bills, S Blundell, R Elliott, F Ellis, T Laidlaw, G Minshull, S Nuri and V Thomson

Officers in Attendance: The Director of People and Communities (J Sutterby), the Director of Resources (D Lorimer), the Assistant Director Community Services (S Phelan), the Assistant Director Governance and Business Support (E Hodds) and the General Manager of Diss and Long Stratton Leisure Centres (D Infanti).

2784 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr K Mason Billig declared an 'other' interest as the Council's representative on the Nplaw Board.

Cllr A Thomas declared an 'other' interest as a member of the Long Stratton Leisure Centre.

2785 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was

RESOLVED: To exclude the public and press from the meeting under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended)

2786 REVIEW OF LEGAL SERVICES PROVISION

Members considered the *exempt* report of the Assistant Director of Governance and Business Support, which considered the future provision of legal services at the Council.

The Assistant Director explained the background to the report and outlined the future options available to the Council.

Members considered each of the options in turn, and after some discussion, concluded that they did not have enough information to make a considered decision. They requested that officers provide further information with regard to a number of issues, particularly with reference to Option 6.

It was

RESOLVED That officers report back with more information, particularly with reference to Option 6, before a final decision is made

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure an appropriate, cost effective and efficient legal provision for the Council.

Other Options Considered

As outlined in the report.

2787 LEISURE PRICING

Members considered the *exempt* report of the Assistant Director of Community Services, which presented Cabinet with the annual review and proposed pricing, for the Council's leisure services.

Members agreed that the proposals simplified the existing pricing structure, and welcomed a full review, to include marketing and incentives, in the Autumn.

It was

RESOLVED

1. To agree from 1 April 2020:
 - (a) the introduction of an all-inclusive leisure card membership option for all new members;
 - (b) new core pricing tariffs as set out in Appendix 1 and 2 of the report.

2. That a full review of the existing pricing structure and customer offer, including marketing and incentives is undertaken with a report back to Cabinet in the Autumn 2020.
3. To agree to the continued delegation to the Director of People and Communities for non-core pricing increases

The Reason for the Decision

To ensure that the service remains relevant, competitive and commercially viable

Other Options Considered

As outlined in the report.

(The meeting concluded at 5.56 pm)

Chairman

Prioritisation of Welfare Rights and Debt Advice Resources

Report Author(s): Mike Pursehouse
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Portfolio: Health, Housing and Wellbeing

Ward(s) Affected: All wards

Purpose of the Report:

The purpose of this report is to consider the debt and welfare rights advice provided by the Council across the District through direct delivery and commissioned support, to ensure that residents receive the right support, as early as possible to prevent issues escalating and that the Council receives value for money.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is asked to consider the following recommendations:

- 1.1.1 Removal of core funding for external debt and welfare services in favour of continued investment in our Help Hub approach.
- 1.1.2 End outside body member representation for Citizens Advice Services

2 CONTEXT

- 2.1 South Norfolk Council and its partners provide a range of internal and outsourced debt and welfare advice delivered across the District. This is to ensure that residents receive the right support, as early as possible to prevent issues escalating.
- 2.2 A recent scrutiny committee meeting commended the work of internal and external advice and guidance provision and highlighted the value of partnerships with Citizens Advice. Scrutiny Committee recognised the need for services to be more closely aligned and achieve best value for money and to work in line with procurement rules going forward.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 South Norfolk Council delivers a range of functions to support customers with welfare rights or debt issues. These are made up of internal staffing resources including debt and welfare officers, flexible crisis funding and externally delivered services.
- 3.2 External welfare rights and debt advice as well as wider generalist advice provision is delivered by three separate Citizens Advice organisations. A wider network of community-based advice and support provision is accessible to customers via the Help Hub.
- 3.3 Internal services work with people from an early stage of need, providing access to wider services and support through our help hub approach. Formal advice provision is available for those with higher need. Our internal resources are currently limited with regard to debt prevention resources and self-help tools.
- 3.4 As part of the review of Help Hub services through our “Two Councils, One Team” collaboration with Broadland District Council, improved web resources and self-help tools for welfare and debt advice are planned.
- 3.5 Citizens Advice provide a range of resources from information and self-help on their website, to webchat and face to face formal advice for those with a higher level of need. In theory, if effectively resourced and delivered, this provision spans the whole spectrum of money advice need.
- 3.6 The Help Hub provides the access point to services for customers with a range of needs. One of the most common reasons for contact is money related problems including issues with benefits, debts and funding of support provision. We have a comprehensive in-house offer which is outlined in fig1*:

Fig 1

Service/resource	Remit of work in relation to money advice	Cost to SNC
Welfare Rights and Debt Advice Service	Complex disability benefit claims and appeals Intensive debt advice and support Pension support and advice	c£40,000 including staffing on-costs
Flexible fund	Help Hub fund used for financial crisis response. Often be used for emergency provision of electric, gas or food for particularly vulnerable customers. Any payments made under this provision are made subject to the customer engaging with help services to address wider needs	Net cost of c£5,000 per year after charitable contributions
FIRST Officers	Independent living skills and debt prevention for customers in council temporary accommodation. Support for those resettling within the community to develop independent living and money management skills.	Nil. Costs offset by Temporary Accommodation income
Community Connectors	Social prescribing can provide immediate information on a range of issues and a first point of contact for customers. Will also support with non-specialist aspects of welfare and debt provision: help completing benefit claims and paperwork, accessing funding, supporting customers to make contact with services and debtors, budgeting.	Nil. Fully funded externally.

*a much wider range of services will help customers with financial issues address the underlying causes of problems.

Demand for internal Welfare Rights and Debt services

- 3.7 The Help Hub, and its associated services such as Housing and Benefits and the Community Connectors, provide a main point of entry into services in South Norfolk. Last year the Help Hub dealt with over 2230 cases. Figures show 286 people approached the Help Hub with financial issues as their primary need in the previous 4 months of 2019/20. This figure does not represent a true reflection as this is based on the presenting need listed on the Request for Support, financial issues may be linked to many other presenting needs. Estimates, based on previous dip sampling, suggest that over a third of cases accessing the hub have some level of financial need. This would equate to around 1,000 cases needed some form of money advice per year on the current projected annual figures.
- 3.8 These figures do not allow us to ascertain type of money advice needs customers have or the level of severity. However, anecdotal information would suggest there

is an increase in the complexity of need, especially in relation to welfare rights advice.

- 3.9 Our current Welfare Rights and Debt Advice service can see around 800 people per year so cannot fully meet this growing need alone.

External provision: Citizens Advice

- 3.10 Three Citizens Advice services operate in South Norfolk: Norfolk Citizens Advice; Diss, Thetford and District Citizens Advice and North East Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureaux.

- 3.11 South Norfolk Council, like Norfolk County Council currently fund these Citizens Advice organisations with core grant funding. Core funding means the council provides ongoing funding to an organisation to deliver its day to day activity. As opposed to funding a specific and time limited piece of work.

- 3.12 Between 2015 and 2018, the Council ended all other core funding arrangements, in favour of funding for specific activity or pursuing partnerships that sought joint external funding. This included:

- Domestic Abuse Outreach – mitigated through funding and sourcing match funding for Early Help Domestic Abuse Project
- Free Independent legal advice – mitigated through improved partnership working
- Rough sleeper and direct access hostel funding – mitigated through changes to service delivery in Housing and Benefits Team and access external funding for new projects.

- 3.13 As part of this process Citizens Advice were the only partners to retain core funding. This was revised to at their current figures:

- North East Suffolk Citizens Advice Bureaux: £4,000
- Norfolk Citizens Advice: £22,583.50
- Diss, Thetford and District Citizens Advice: £15,348

- 3.14 These are now the only organisations funded regardless of specific activity or targets and are funded to deliver the core services that the organisations provide, rather than a set project.

- 3.15 For a number of years, Citizens Advice has been on the outside bodies list, which members sit on to represent the Council. Currently we have the following members as representatives for each CA:

- Cllr J Wilby - Diss, Thetford and District Citizens Advice
- Cllr Neal - Norfolk Citizens Advice
- Cllr Clifford-Jackson- North East Suffolk Citizens Advice

- 3.16 Since the inception of new funding conditions considerable internal and external investment has been made into a wider reaching offer of social welfare provision supported by multi-agency partnerships. This includes:
- Early Help Hub – access to services for any SNC resident regardless of identifying need. A comprehensive referral system for a range of services
 - Social Prescribing – a front door to services in people’s communities providing initial advice, information and support as well as a link to the most appropriate services
- 3.17 As funding becomes more restrictive there is a need to reconsider what we pay external partners to deliver and how we target any funding at areas of need, both in terms of geography and issue. Indefinite core funding for external services present a challenge to our procurement rules, which requires the Council to pursue best value from contracts.

3.18 Citizens Advice Service Level Agreements

- 3.19 The current SLAs with Citizens Advice enable them to provide an entry point to advice and guidance on behalf of South Norfolk Council to the residents of the district.
- 3.20 Although not detailed in the current SLA, historically we have funded Citizens Advice to deliver frontline preventative advice in relation to housing and homelessness, welfare rights and debt, in order to help the Council meet its statutory and social obligations to residents in these areas. However, we also now employ internal colleagues to deliver advice in each of these areas.
- 3.21 The Citizens Advice have provided a recognised and accessible entry point to advice and guidance through locations in Diss, Wymondham, Norwich, Beccles and Bungay. The latter three locations are all out of the district but provide recognised access points to residents in South Norfolk’s border areas.
- 3.22 Six months’ notice has been provided on existing Citizens Advice SLAs, as it stands current funding arrangements will expire on 31st March 2020 and so there are no administrative issues with ending the core funding.

3.23 Analysis from Citizens Advice services

- 3.24 Citizens Advice produced a presentation for the Scrutiny Committee of 27 November 2019 which detail some of the outcomes achieved in South Norfolk and the value this type of service brings to resident. They also produce quarterly data and annual data which is provided to SNC as part of the funding arrangements. The returns show that Citizens Advice provide a valuable part of the advice system. The report can be found at www.south-norfolk.gov.uk/about-us/councillors-and-committees/committee-details-agendas-and-minutes/scrutiny-committee

2018/19 outcomes

- 3.25 Citizens Advice are funded to advise residents and over the period 2018/19 supported:
- Diss and Thetford: 1210 South Norfolk residents accessed the service with 3,181 issues
 - NES CAB: 324 South Norfolk residents access the service with 1,064 issues
 - Norfolk CA: 1,440 residents accessed the service with 6,509 issues
- 3.26 Customers are engaged with through a number of channels including email, webchat and phone but 53-55% are seen face to face across all Citizens Advice partners. Due to the way data is recorded and reported by Citizen Advice and SNC it is impossible to track whether these customers did not subsequently access SNC services following a Citizens Advice intervention. As such the true impact of Citizens Advice services on SNC statutory and non-statutory services is impossible to determine.
- 3.27 Due to the volume of funding streams and services they deliver it is difficult for Citizens Advice to identify exactly what SNCs contribution is paying for in terms of outcomes.

Gaps in SNCs relationship with Citizens Advice

- 3.28 Whilst officers at both operational and strategic levels have good working relationships there are some challenges within day to day working. Citizens Advice are not present in the Help Hub and are rarely able to attend the Help Hub monthly partnership meetings or thrice weekly case meetings. This leads to a potential duplication of work with both Citizens Advice and SNC, or other partner agencies, working with the same customers on the same issues. If customers receive contradictory advice from different partners, it can delay or even jeopardise a positive outcome.
- 3.29 Universal Credit Help to Claim funding was originally provided to local authorities, including South Norfolk, to support residents with the initial stages of a universal credit claim and adapting to a monthly, rather than weekly, budget. From April 2019 this funding went to Citizens Advice nationally. Despite this SNC Benefits Officers, Community Connectors and Welfare Rights Adviser still receive many enquiries from UC customers needing help with their claims and budgets but do not have the resources to deal with this. Appropriate pathways need to be put in place to ensure that UC customers accessing our services can access the Help To Claim provision in a timely way. This could include this provision having a direct link into the Help Hub.

Changing service landscape

- 3.30 SNC has led the way in early help, investing time and resources in developing its trail blazing Help Hub. This model has been rolled out across the County and we continue to stay ahead of the curve with developments in Social Prescribing. The

Hub Model continues to expand as we develop a larger, more consistent and cost-effective model across South Norfolk and Broadland.

- 3.31 Whilst traditional locations, such as Citizens Advice are still accessed by significant numbers of people, advice and guidance is often accessed in different ways to how it was in 2015 when the current funding was set. An increased use of online information nationally means more people use self-help solutions and the role out of Social Prescribing locally means that Community Connectors provide a new entry point via the Help Hub into the services of over 30 organisations from 18 GP surgeries and 6 community locations across the district.
- 3.32 Our current service level agreements were put in place before these developments took hold. At this point the main community access points to advice and guidance were the Citizens Advice offices in:
- Diss – Diss and Thetford CA
 - Wymondham and Norwich – Norfolk CA
 - Beccles and Bungay – North East Suffolk CA
- 3.33 With new entry points to services located throughout the district, the existing Citizens Advice SLAs do not properly reflect the new ways in which services are accessed or delivered.

4 PROPOSED ACTION

Future funding considerations

- 4.1 The Council has the opportunity to review the way our finances are used in the future to achieve the best outcomes for our residents. Our development of our help hub, community connectors and collaboration with Broadland District Council means we are in much stronger position to support residents with debt and welfare advice. The department of Works and Pensions are funding Citizens Advice to support Universal Credit claimants.
- 4.2 A systematic reduction in offering long term core funding has been the approach of the council for several years as they are inefficient as it is difficult to assess performance based on this generic activity.
- 4.3 Regardless of the decision made officers would continue to work closely with Citizens Advice partners as we build a refreshed collaboration model. There are two clear options for taking this work forward:

Option 1: Removal of core funding for external debt and welfare services

- 4.4 Removal of this remaining core funding would create a saving of £126,000 over the next three years. This saving from the Individuals and Families sub directorate budget will help safeguard the future of in-house non-statutory services, such as the Help Hub. This saving has already been identified and therefore we would

need to find savings from other services if we continued with Citizens Advice core funding.

- 4.5 If core funding is ended, the Council can continue to provide support to Citizens Advice and nurture the close working relationships that have been developed, with support with joint bids for project funding, as well as providing space for Citizens Advice to work in the Help Hub. We also currently provide free spaces in our car park in Diss where Diss and Thetford Citizens Advice is based.
- 4.6 Examples from other funding areas has shown that where services are supported in other ways and where officers continue to nurture close working relationships then service delivery has not been significantly affected by the removal of core funding.
- 4.7 Retaining member representation with Citizens Advice could help support this continued relationship, although members can continue to support Citizens Advice without sitting on Boards. Equally Citizens Advice may no longer feel the need for member representation if there was not a direct funding relationship with the Council. Consideration would need to be given to this issue by members if core funding was removed.

Option 2 Continue to fund external debt and welfare advice.

- 4.8 If the Council chooses to continue funding external advice provision then procurement rules would need to be considered and be subject to processes that would be open the funding to a wider pool of service providers.
- 4.9 Any future arrangements with service providers should be based on clearly identifiable targets and should enhance our Help Hub and social prescribing arrangements, rather than competing for the same customers.
- 4.10 The current service level agreements were terminated for Citizens Advice in October to enable a conversation to take place around any new arrangements coming into effect in April.
- 4.11 The continued spend of £126,000 over the next three years will need to be off-set by savings from other services in this area.

5 ISSUES AND RISKS

Risks –

- 5.1 Removing funding from a nationally recognised and established service provider could present a risk to the Council's reputation and any changes would need to be managed effectively. However, Broadland District Council and other Councils have already ended core funding arrangements with Citizens Advice.
- 5.2 Press coverage of the recent Scrutiny Committee meeting highlighted Members praise of the service Citizens Advice provide. Whilst the purpose of the Scrutiny discussion was not to decide on continued funding, a keenness to continue the funding by some members of the committee was highlighted. Removing the

funding may be misconstrued as the Council going back on its word or ignoring the will of the committee. No decision was made on future funding in that meeting and a discussion of the need to prioritise future departmental spending or make savings on existing budgets did not form part of the Scrutiny Committee meeting.

- 5.3 Removing funding or support from any service, internal or external, could result in a disruption to the delivery of these services. This could lead to residents needs not being met and could result in significant hardship. The core funding we offer is relatively minor, Norfolk County Council fund Citizens Advice £750,000 per annum for example.
- 5.4 If future service provision remains unchanged or if it is re-procured ineffectively there would be a continued risk of duplication of services. Providing in house services, reduces risk in terms of having direct control of the service.
- 5.5 Citizens Advice provide a recognised and well-regarded access point to services in a range of locations. Changes to funding could lead to a loss of accessible services in these locations, this would be more likely if further core funding is removed by other parties in future.
- 5.6 Considerable savings to non-statutory support services delivered or procured by the council need to be achieved over the next three years. Continuing current Citizens Advice funding arrangements will result in these savings being made from other services.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Our efforts to create access points to services into communities has resulted in more customers making contact with our services. The current provision of internal and external services must be considered to allow it to continue to meet increased and changing demand but at the same time remaining affordable to the Council. Budgetary considerations require us to prioritise the most effective and best value for money social welfare services, be these internal or external. Increased shared working, colocation and joint bids for external resources will help mitigate any changes to funding.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 In light of the changing way Cabinet is asked to consider the following recommendations:
 - 7.1.1 Removal of core funding for external debt and welfare services in favour of continued investment in our Help Hub approach.
 - 7.1.2 End outside body member representation for Citizens Advice Services