

# South Norfolk Council

# Our Strategic Plan

## 2024 - 2028











## Foreword by Leader of the Council, Lord Fuller OBE

South Norfolk is proud to be an entrepreneurial Council that is run in a business-like manner and reflects a vibrant and dynamic local economy.

Over the next four years, we are committed to ensuring our district remains one of the best places to live and work in the country. Our continued collaboration with Broadland District Council will allow us to gain the benefits of working over a much bigger scale and respond to challenges at pace for the benefit of our residents.

We will continue to invest in the infrastructure that supports our economy to prosper and protects local quality of life, while striking the right balance between the need for growth and delivering the services that our residents value the most.

In South Norfolk, we have an enviable record of attracting Government funding to innovate and an ambitious vision to do more things for more people. We will embrace new technology and data to respond to local need, whilst modernising our working practices to do even more for less.

We will continue to invest in our world-leading science base at the Norwich Research Park to provide new employment premises and create job opportunities for businesses to expand in Wymondham, Long Stratton, the Waveney Valley and along the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor.

As a Council, we are committed to supporting our local business economy and attracting more visitors to our local towns and high streets, whilst ensuring we protect and preserve the special character of our market towns and villages.

Our approach to supporting our residents and building strong communities stretches far beyond the collection of Council Tax and emptying the bins. We are there to serve our residents and play a vital role in supporting the most vulnerable in our communities. We know that the elderly and vulnerable prefer to stay independent in their own homes and that young families need a roof over their heads, so we will ensure that people with a local connection, including returning servicemen and women, are given priority.

There are limits to what National Government can do by itself, so there is a role for the local Council to look forward and build a sustainable future for our residents and our economy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Fuller'.

A shared journey towards a brighter future -

# Our Plan for South Norfolk

We are proud of everything we do and strive to be the most efficient, highest performing and technologically advanced Council in Norfolk. Despite the challenging financial climate, we continue to have high ambitions for the area and its significant opportunities and potential. Our top priority is working with you, and our partners, to deliver services right first time.

Our vision for South Norfolk is one that aims to allow our residents to access the opportunity to succeed and thrive. One where families and individuals are provided with practical help and support to overcome problems and challenges. One where the place we call home has the crucial investment needed in social and environmental infrastructure, ensuring we have the right homes for the right people. One where we co-build a greener economy we can all be proud of. All supported by a Council who continues to do more with less.

Our Plan influences and guides everything we do as a Council. It outlines our 'golden thread' from our vision for the district, all the way through to how we will deliver our priorities and objectives which are the heart of all our Council activities.

We have a bold and ambitious agenda for change to shape the future of our District. Our two-yearly Delivery Plans outline the programmes of work we will prioritise in order to achieve our priorities and can be found in the Appendix.



**Our vision  
puts people  
at the heart  
of everything  
we do**

# A profile of our district



5 large towns and  
5 Market Towns



**142,000**  
residents



**78%**  
of working age  
residents in  
employment, 2%  
better than national  
average

**5.5%**

more physically  
fit adults than the  
national average of  
67.3%



**66,694**  
households



Life expectancy in  
South Norfolk is  
higher than average

Over

**500**

business startups  
each year



5 Council run  
leisure facilities,  
170+ classes,  
multiple outdoor  
courts,  
2 3G pitches,  
2 swimming pools  
and a soft play



53 play areas  
6 commons,  
4 countryside sites,  
2 large open spaces  
and a Country  
wildlife site



2.7% lower crime rate  
per 1,000 population  
than the national rate



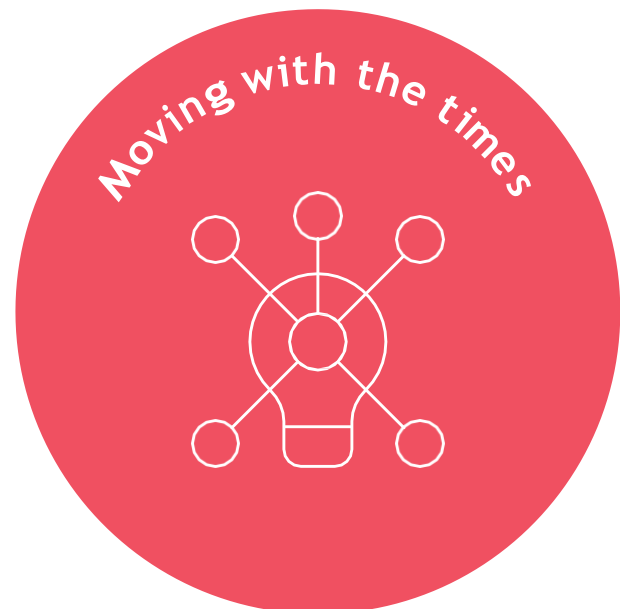
**5,855**  
businesses



113 parishes,  
with 100 town and  
parish councils

# Our vision and priorities for the next 4 years

Build a future where our community thrives, individuals are inspired, and the quality of life is continuously enhanced.



# Opportunities and Challenges for the District

**We face a range of complex and evolving challenges in the future as we continue to serve and support our communities.**

## Challenges

- **Rising costs and housing affordability** - Affordability of housing and costs of general living remains a persistent challenge. We will need to work on initiatives to increase affordable housing options, protect tenants' rights, and address homelessness. We are witnessing an increasing number of families struggling to secure stable and affordable housing and a growing burden of utility costs and rising prices for essential goods and services including food and energy. We are committed to addressing these challenges and continue to work collaboratively with local, regional, and national partners to find sustainable solutions.
- **Ageing populations and health** - We have a growing and ageing population. General health in South Norfolk is better than the Norfolk average, however, there remains challenges we need to face around health inequalities, mental health and access to services. With the challenges the NHS is facing, there is huge pressure and opportunity for us to play a unique role in public health and social care.

## Opportunities

- **Vibrant Economy** - We have a vibrant and dynamic local economy, being home to world-leading research institutes and innovative businesses marking the district as a key component for the economic growth of Greater Norwich. We have a great opportunity to focus our work on our key high performing and growth business clusters to drive a prosperous economy.
- **The Natural Environment** - We have a key role to play in being environmental leaders across the County. Climate change, including increased flooding incidents, and the effects on people and communities at both a local and national level is one of the biggest challenges of our times. South Norfolk has some of the best opportunities in the UK to transform our economy, allowing us to live better lives whilst treading more lightly on our environment. This is more than just a commitment to Net Zero, important though it is, this is about using our location, unique natural spaces, local engineering and innovative skills to redefine the post-carbon economy.
- **Resources** - Trends over the last decade or so have shown significant cuts in funding for district councils from central government. Our council has not been immune to these challenges. Reduced funding means we need to be creative with how we deliver our services. Not just statutory services, but those discretionary services we choose to deliver for our residents, because it's just the right thing to do.

# Our Achievements

We are proud of everything we do and we continue to strive to be the most efficient and high performing council in Norfolk – always punching above our weight and making a difference to individuals day to day. We have delivered some significant successes over the past few years and will continue to build on these successes in the future:



Introduced a **Co-Investment Grant Fund** to support delivery of large infrastructure projects. Nearly **£2m** awarded so far



Supported over **17,000 vulnerable residents** through our discretionary support services since 2020

We have saved Council Taxpayers money by moving office space, **reducing our carbon footprint by 84%**



Over **500 people** supported to live independently in their own homes since 2020



Successfully campaigned to bring forward the **long-awaited Long Stratton Bypass**

Over **34,000 tonnes of Garden Waste Recycled** since 2020



Brought in over **£44m of external funding** to support growth since 2020 - delivering a range of projects from new employment land to a new country park



**Benefitted from £7.5m** in the last 3 years, via pooled GN CIL, for **high school improvements** (Wymondham, Hethersett and Ormiston Victory at Costessey)



**Prioritised Town Centre Improvement Projects**, working with partners to complete a **£1m investment to improve Harleston Town Centre**

Supported delivery of over **1,300 new affordable homes** since 2020



Invested **£2.75m in the Ella May Barnes Building** on the Norwich Research Park - unlocking opportunities at the Enterprise Zone site, supporting creation of new jobs



Supported a range of local community initiatives through **investing over £315,000 into our Community Action Fund**





# Priority 1 - Enhancing our environment



**Strategic objective: provide environmental leadership to build a cleaner and more sustainable future which conserves our environment for generations to come.**

We commit to conserving and enhancing our natural and built environment. Our vision includes clean and green spaces, smart planning, and renewable energy initiatives that reduce our carbon footprint and improve air and water quality.

## **Current challenges we need to address:**

- We have large rural areas with 10% of households having no access to a vehicle, creating challenges accessing key services.
- Rurality causes reliance on cars and properties using heating oil and solid fuel.
- Energy prices continue to increase.
- Approximately 30% of Great British gas flows on from the Norfolk Coastline, at Bacton, however much of Norfolk experiences limited gas connectivity.
- Existing grid capacity is constrained in many areas and is, therefore, unable to meet the demands of existing planned and future growth.

## **We will:**

- Provide regional and national leadership on energy transition and decarbonisation, campaigning for better connectivity to move us from fossil fuels to clean sources of power.
- Put sustainability at the heart of delivery and, as a council, achieve a net zero carbon emission position by 2030.
- Protect and enhance the natural environment, landscape character, water environment and biodiversity by investing into the green economy.
- Make the most of our own community asset land to increase biodiversity and ensure they contribute to an attractive natural environment.
- Manage the street scene to deliver high quality public areas and highways.
- Work with our residents and businesses to encourage them to act and live in a more sustainable way.
- Increase the electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the district.
- Provide new and enhanced open spaces which are more accessible to the widest possible range of people.
- Maintain grants to local environmental and voluntary groups.

With our partners Broadland District Council, we were successful in receiving over £2m in funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme which will support us in achieving our sustainability objectives.

# Priority 2 - Growing a prosperous economy



**Strategic objective: give businesses across South Norfolk the confidence to invest and grow, creating opportunities for our residents and improving their quality of life in an already outstanding environment.**

We envision a dynamic local economy that attracts investment, fosters innovation, and creates jobs. We support and nurture businesses, from small startups to established enterprises, ensuring long-term prosperity for our community.

## **Current challenges we need to address:**

- Smaller town centres and high streets are struggling - and the retail sector is under pressure.
- Businesses required to meet net zero 2050 carbon emission targets.
- 19% of our residents are economically inactive.
- Ensuring the workforce have the right mix of skills to match business need.
- The transport network requires improvement in many areas within the district and access to public transport is limited in more rural and remote areas.

## **We will:**

- Secure public and private invest for new facilities and infrastructure, continuing to pool our Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding to support delivery of cross border projects.
- Work with partners to address key infrastructure constraints in relation to energy, transport, housing, flood risk and digital connectivity.
- Attract and retain talent in the area, including apprentices and graduates, and encourage targeted skills development so that residents are equipped for local jobs.
- Make it easier for rural businesses by helping enterprises that are in more secluded areas.
- Help Town and Parish Councils to co-invest on new community facilities.
- Promote the visitor economy across the district.
- Plan to ensure homes and employment sites are delivered, supporting the development of Neighbourhood Plans.
- Promote ourselves with our partners, on the national stage, focussing on our role in Norfolk as a future energy hub in hydrogen and opportunities such as the Cambridge Norwich Tech Corridor, Food Enterprise Park and Norwich Research Park.

We led on forming a unique partnership with 3 other District Councils in Norfolk to address the potentially catastrophic impediment to growth caused by **Nutrient Neutrality** restrictions. The first deal, worth over £1.5bn, has **enabled a potential 3,000 new homes to be delivered**, prioritising smaller builders.



# Priority 3 - Enriching our Communities



**Strategic objective: build strong communities who have the resources they need to be inclusive, healthy, feel safe and thrive.**

We are committed to promoting physical and mental health, providing access to healthcare services, and creating a community that values and supports the well-being of all residents.

## **Current challenges we need to address:**

- Demographics are changing, including population growth and an ageing populations which impact on demand and need.
- 10.5% children live in low-income families.
- Fuel poverty is a rising problem, with 13% of households being affected.
- Public health issues - for example, an average of 60% of adults are classed as overweight or obese.
- Ensuring we have the right mix of homes within the district, particularly with the growing demand for housing and rising living costs.

## **We will:**

- Keep Council Tax low and provide practical help with the impacts from cost of living increases.
- Deliver improvements to services across the district, focusing on health inequalities and where need is greatest.
- Enable young people to flourish through supporting safe and positive environments within their local communities.
- Focus and expand upon our early intervention solutions, one family at a time.
- Work with the NHS to improve doctor surgery provision across the district.
- Work to prevent homelessness and support people into secure housing.
- Support the delivery of more affordable homes within the district (169 new affordable homes needed each year).
- Collaborate with community groups and grass roots organisations to support people.
- Collaborate with Town and Parish Councils to deliver community assets and further explore co-investment opportunities.
- Further invest into sports and leisure facilities across the district.

We voted in favour of becoming a **Registered Provider for Social Housing** in October 2023. This has opened up options and opportunities for us to address the much-needed housing challenges in our district.

# Priority 4 - Moving with the times



**Strategic objective: deliver services that residents, businesses and communities say are innovative, efficient, and easy to use.**

We aspire to be an open and transparent Council that listens to its people. We will adapt to changing needs and promote a culture of accountability, always seeking ways to improve our services and communication.

## **Current challenges we need to address:**

- Increasing demand on our core services, alongside the profile changing demand.
- Government funding falling in real terms (i.e. failing to keep up with inflationary pressures)
- Customer expectations changing and ensuring we adapt and flex our services to meet these expectations.

## **We will:**

- Design and deliver outstanding, responsive and proactive customer experiences, enabled by data and technology.
- Prioritise investments in modern infrastructure, enhancing service delivery, improving efficiency, and facilitating data-driven decision making.
- Collaborate with neighbouring councils, regional organisations, and private sector partners to leverage resources, share best practices, and collectively address challenges.
- Embed a positive culture of ambition, transparency, and improvement.
- Keep updated with best practice to ensure we provide residents the best and most efficient services.
- Continue to roll out member and employee development, maintaining our Council as a great place to work and represent.
- Ensure modern, varied and frequent Marketing and Communications output, keeping our residents informed and involved.
- Encourage active community involvement in decision-making processes.
- Maintain prudent fiscal management practices, including budget transparency and efficiency.

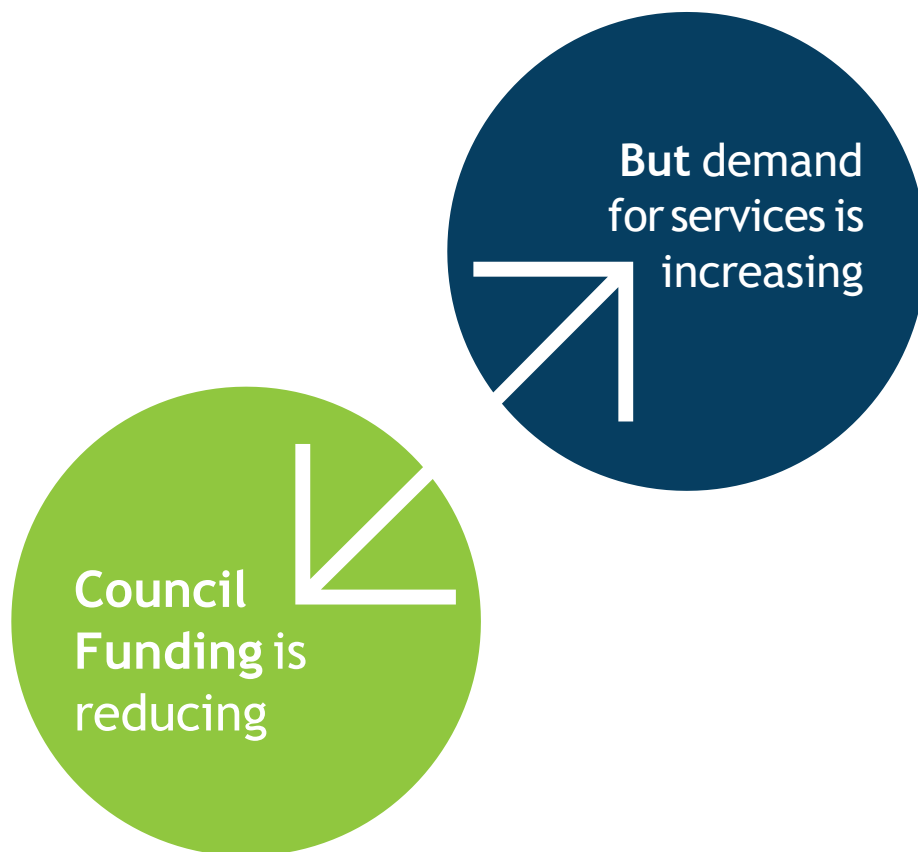
We are focussing on **improving our customer experience** with our services and recently agreed to implement a new programme of improvement works to how people can contact us in the future.



# Funding delivery of our plan

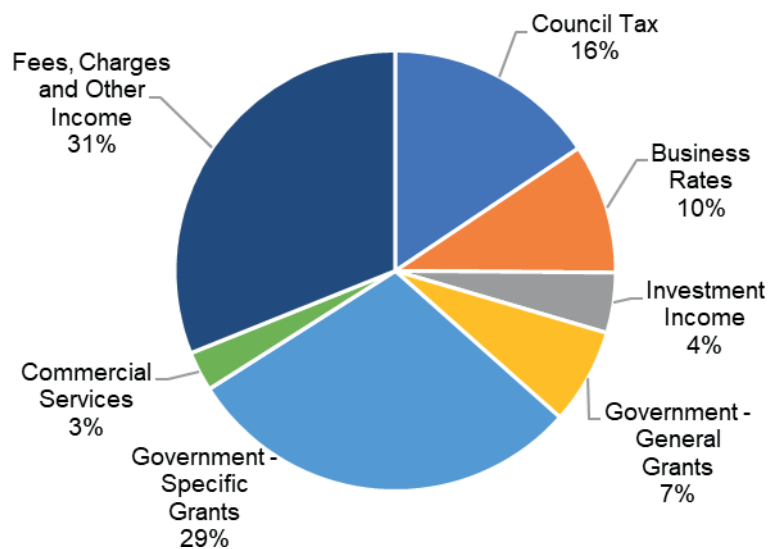
**We need to work differently if we are to deliver our priorities in a way that is financially sustainable. We have big ambitions for South Norfolk, but every year we have less money available to deliver them with.**

Our Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) sets the framework within which we plan and manage our finances, ensuring we are able to achieve our vision and priorities. South Norfolk Council has spending power of £38.9m to support the 142,000 number of residents who live here and the thousands of visitors who come to our area every year.

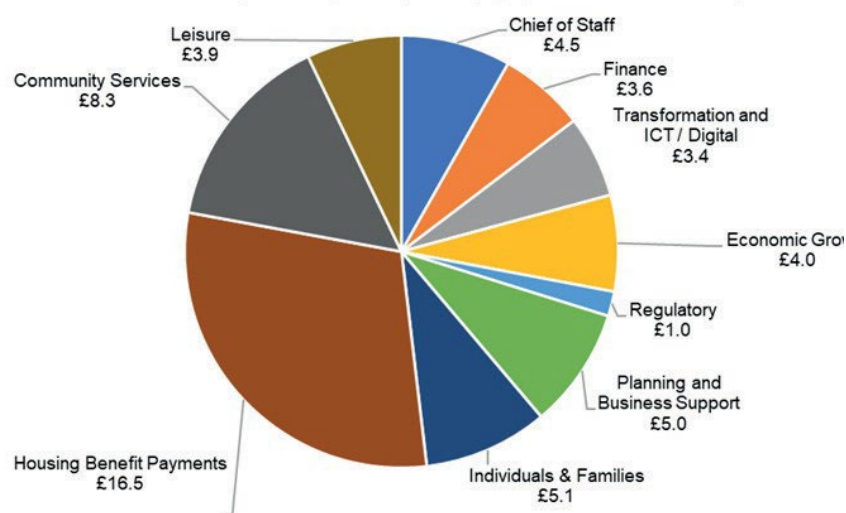


# A guide to where our funding comes from

Where the funding comes from



How our budget is spent (24/25) (Spend in millions)









## South Norfolk Council



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