

**Leisure, Culture and Countryside Strategy
2006-2016**

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Foreword by Councillor Jane Walker – Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Culture and Learning

“As Cabinet Member with responsibility for Culture and Learning, I am pleased to present the 2006 South Norfolk District Council Leisure, Culture and Countryside Strategy, which sets out how the Council intends to deliver these services over the next ten years.

The Strategy has evolved from an extensive consultation process where we have sought and valued the views of our key partners, stakeholders and the wider community within South Norfolk. It is therefore uniquely tailored to fit the needs of the District and represents a collective and cohesive vision.

Our theme – “At the Heart of the Community” – illustrates where we believe our services should be, both now and in the future. Community ownership and engagement are important elements of the Strategy and we are keen to continue to build on this.

The provision of leisure services has moved up the Government agenda in recent years, in terms of its value and benefit and I am particularly pleased that our Strategy demonstrates a clear link from a local, to regional, to national level and so places our services in context.

The 2012 Olympics, the world’s biggest sporting and cultural festival, will provide a unique opportunity to drive the health and sporting achievement message. We intend to maximise the benefits locally and celebrate the cultural identity of South Norfolk. We aim to improve the long-term health and aspirations of our young people.

The Strategy set within existing resources will be a living document so continued input is welcome and will be encouraged within the annual review of our Action Plans.

I commend the 2006-2016 South Norfolk Leisure, Culture and Countryside Strategy to you.”

Jane Walker
May 2006

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the strategic plan for the provision, enabling and encouragement of Leisure, Culture and Countryside Services within South Norfolk, for the period 2006 to 2016.

This strategy provides a unique opportunity to illustrate the significance and importance of South Norfolk, the role that Leisure, Culture and Countryside Services has at present and our emerging role in relation to the health and cultural enhancement of the area.

Our contribution to this unique area is focussed towards the achievement and improvement of health, well-being, creating a sense of place and community and steering the enhancement of our cultural identity.

The theme of our strategy “**At the Heart of the Community**” reflects our engagement within South Norfolk and our total commitment to our individual roles and responsibilities.

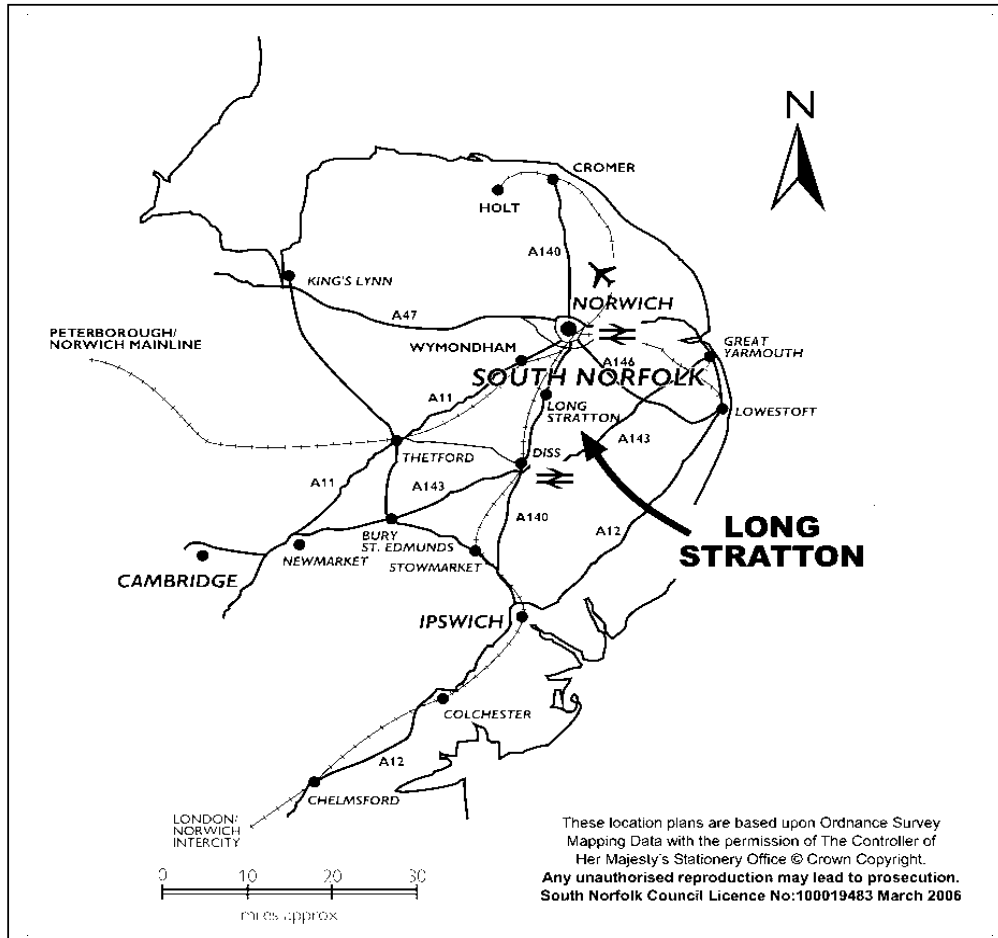
We have great pride in South Norfolk and will work tirelessly to provide and enable high quality services for the benefit of all.

Our service themes reflect our current perspective and future direction of our key services:

Leisure	“at the heart of health”
Culture	“at the heart of regeneration”
Countryside	“at the heart of South Norfolk”

1. A BRIEF PROFILE OF SOUTH NORFOLK

South Norfolk district has a population of 114,300 people, of whom 44% live in rural locations and the remainder live in market towns or the fringe of Norwich. Between 1991 and 2001 there have been significant population changes, with a 48% increase in the 50-54 age group and a 30.6% reduction in the number of 20-24 year olds.



The population of south Norfolk will further change as a result of more countries joining the European Union and workers coming from a variety of European Union countries to work in the United Kingdom. As a result, all our services and facilities in South Norfolk will need to respond flexibly to our changing population, which is forecast to increase to 116,800 by 2007.

The South Norfolk unemployment rate of 1.3% is low when compared with the national average of 4.5%. However, average adult earnings are only 85% of the national average and a third of the workforce has no qualifications. The majority of employers in the district are small, with only 5% employing more than 25 people.

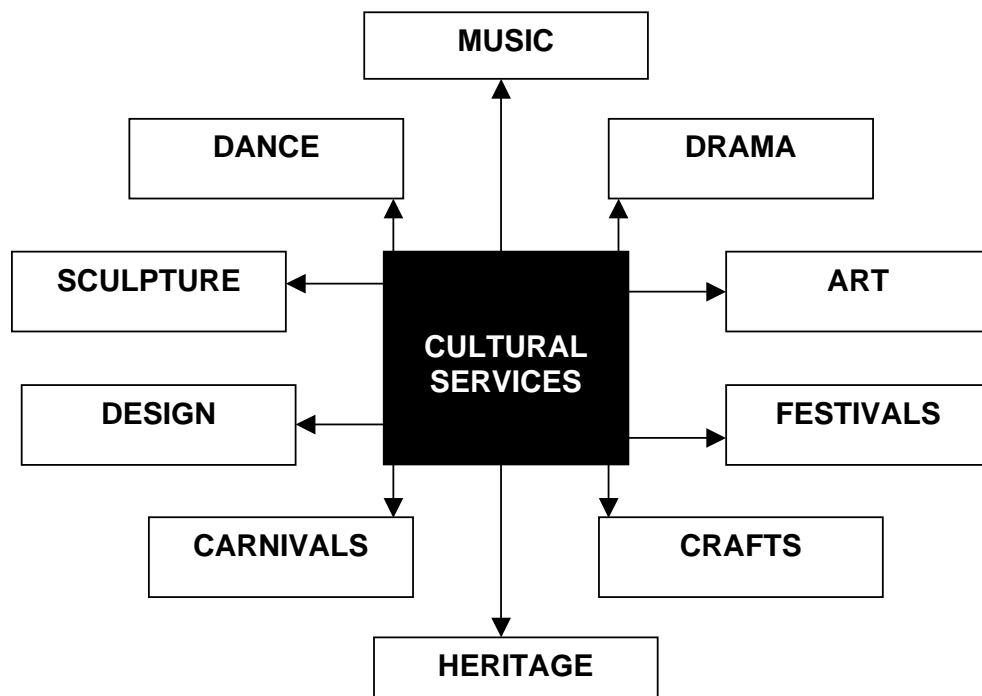
2. DEFINING CULTURE

Whilst our leisure and countryside services are relatively easy to interpret and identify [swimming pools, leisure centres, countryside sites etc.] we recognise that “culture” will of course mean different things to different people – and so it should. South Norfolk has a vibrant culture.

Although we are unlikely to prevent continued debate regarding the numerous definitions of culture and indeed would not wish to, we would like to offer our interpretation of culture:

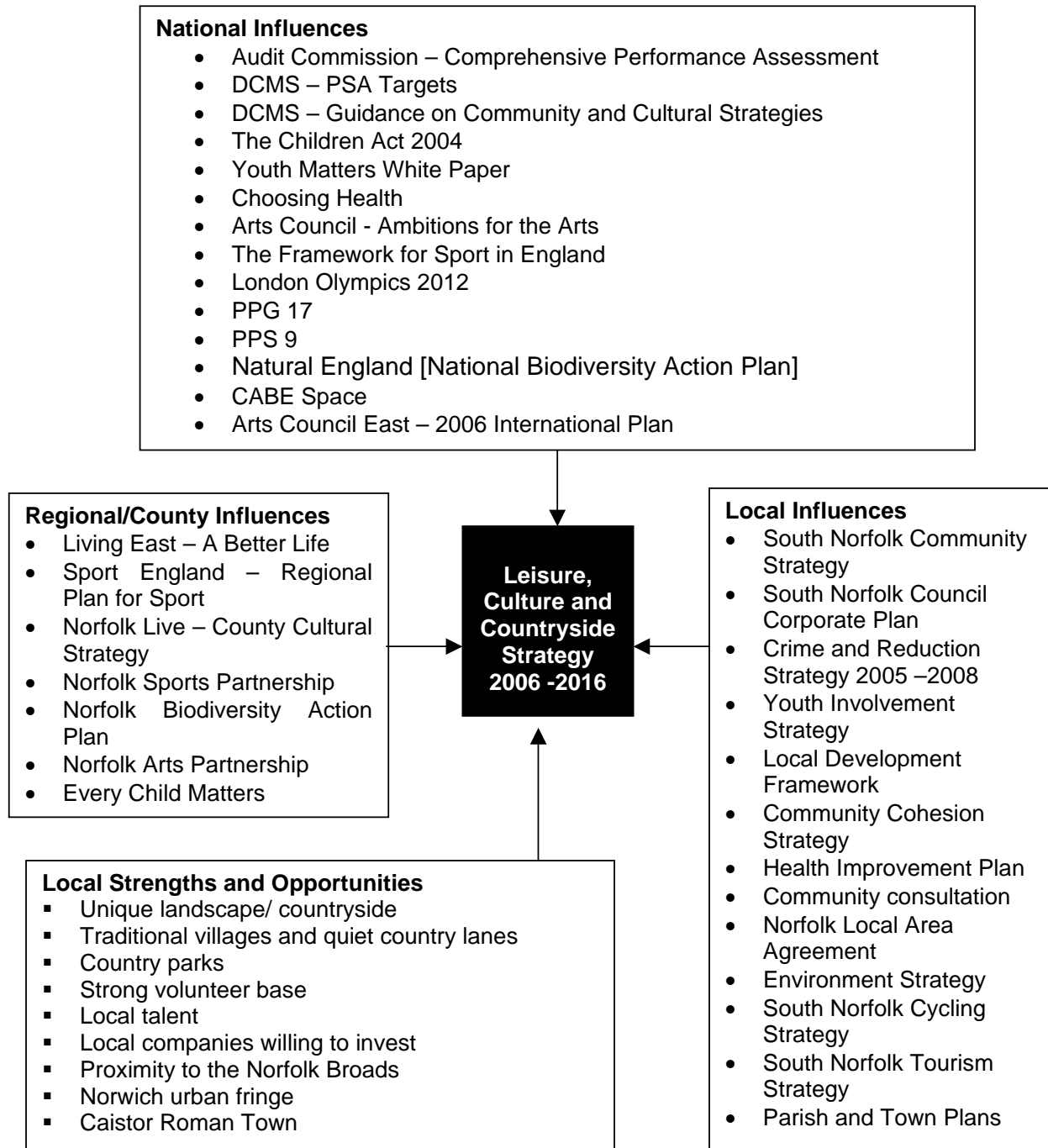
- **Culture can reflect the historic make-up of an area and its people. It has the ability to provide a sense of place, a sense of pride, a sense of well-being and a sense of community.**
- **Our culture defines who we are and what we stand for. In this sense culture is part of our identity.**
- **Culture is accessible to all in that it surrounds us and plays a meaningful part in our every day lives - whether or not this is conscious or sub-conscious, it does exist.**
- **The every day things we do and the everyday things that we say reflect our culture in one way or another. Our language, our dress, our landscape and our actions are our cultural “identifiers”.**

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, IN A SERVICE CONTEXT, INCLUDE:



3. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The diagram below shows the influences that have helped to shape this Leisure, Culture and Countryside Strategy and its priorities for action.



- Leisure, culture and countryside services have moved up the Government agenda in recent years, as there is more credible evidence of the benefits of such services in relation to quality of life, health, economic vitality and sustainable communities. These benefits are widely recognised by public health and education bodies.
- 2006 will see the introduction of a range of specific measures for cultural services, through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment [CPA]¹ process and this will provide the first available opportunity to evidence and measure the full range of benefits.
- We intend to grasp this opportunity for the benefit of South Norfolk and are determined that Leisure, Culture and Countryside Services will be key contributors to the quest for “**excellence**” in 2007.
- In order to demonstrate that our strategy reflects the national and regional priorities [CPA requirement] the Leisure Team has undertaken extensive research that clearly demonstrates the local, regional and national pathways.

We recognise that the vision and leadership responsibility for the Strategy rests with South Norfolk Council, through its Leisure, Culture and Countryside Service and this document clearly sets out our vision. However, one of our key strategic aims reflects our commitment to encouraging the inclusion of our community in building the shape of the service and thus, the final strategy and action/ delivery plan.

¹ CPA – Comprehensive Performance Assessment – a Government initiative that evaluates and ranks the performance of local councils across a wide range of measurements.

4. CONSULTATION

Throughout the development of the Leisure, Culture and Countryside Strategy, we have sought to engage the views of national, regional and local organisations and members of local communities, on our proposed priorities and have ensured that the feedback we have received has helped to shape our strategic approach.

To enable our local communities to influence our approach, we have undertaken extensive consultation throughout South Norfolk.

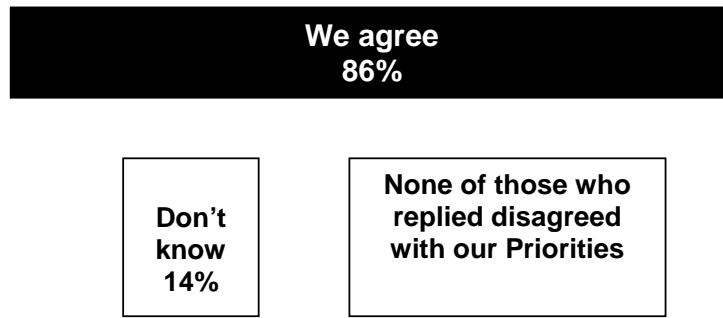
Between October 2005 and March 2006 we have:

- ☑ **Solicited the opinions of Parish and Town Councils and a wide range of local groups concerned with the delivery of leisure, cultural or countryside activities**
- ☑ **Publicised our consultation through regional press and broadcast media**
- ☑ **Organised “drop-in” road-shows at Diss, Costessey, Wymondham, Poringland, Long Stratton, Loddon and Harleston**
- ☑ **Organised targeted activities to encourage children and young people to express their views**
- ☑ **Provided static displays at Diss, Wymondham, Long Stratton and Framingham Earl sports facilities, to encourage public feedback**
- ☑ **Publicised the consultation and encouraged public feedback through the South Norfolk Council website**
- ☑ **Sought the views of the Council’s Senior Management Team and Heads of all Council Services**
- ☑ **Involved South Norfolk Council’s Policy Development Panels**
- ☑ **Consulted with a range of our partner non-Governmental bodies**

Consultation Response

We asked you “Do you agree that these are the most appropriate Strategic Priorities for the Council to be addressing during the Strategy period?”

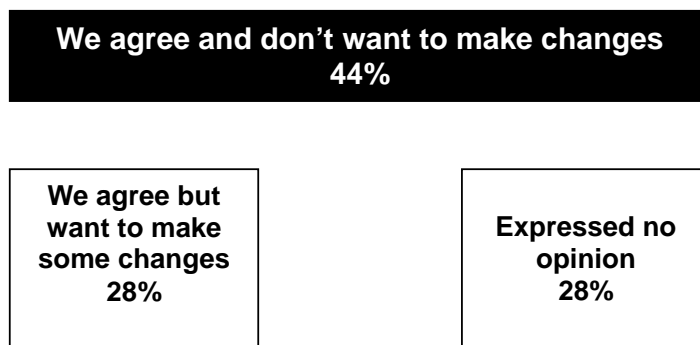
Those who returned our questionnaire told us:



We asked you “Do you agree that the objectives listed for each of the Priorities are the right ones?”

We also asked you to tell us about any changes that you thought we should make to the objectives.

Those who returned our questionnaire told us:



- ☒ The 28% who suggested changes wanted to see older people included as one of our priority groups. We agree that, although we intend to include a focus on older people within our services, the consultation document has not made that clear.
- ☒ We have clarified our intent within Priority 5.

Equity Of Leisure Centre Provision

One of the key issues arising from the consultation is the widely held view that current leisure facility provision within South Norfolk does not meet perceived demand and appears to suggest an imbalance.

Within the Strategy we have explained our approach to assessing whether, or not, there is a sustainable case for additional facility provision.

However there are key issues that should be recognised:

- South Norfolk Council does not, at this stage, have access to capital funding for expansion of the existing leisure centres and/ or new provision.
- The level of provision within South Norfolk will be influenced by the Sport England Regional Plan and by other Council priorities.
- The first and most important priority is to ensure the existing provision within South Norfolk is used to its maximum potential. This will be achieved from 2008, within the Council-owned leisure facilities, where significant progress has been made in the past 12 months with an extensive business review of the existing management arrangements, resulting in Council approval to operate the facilities as an in-house unit from April 2007.
- South Norfolk Council made a contribution of £365,000 to the provision of the Framingham Earl Community Sports Centre.
- South Norfolk Council will make a capital contribution to the provision of an all-weather pitch at the Hobart High School, Loddon.
- South Norfolk Council has committed a sum of £200,000, over three years from April 2007, to ensure the continued serviceability of the existing leisure centres.

5. THE LEISURE, CULTURE AND COUNTRYSIDE STRATEGY FOR SOUTH NORFOLK

Our aim –

is to provide a clearly defined and focussed plan for our leisure, culture and countryside services over the next ten years.

The following facilities and services provided by South Norfolk Council are covered in this strategy:

- **Cultural events and activities.**
- **Community and public art.**
- **Art and education.**
- **Play schemes and holiday activity programmes.**
- **Sports Development.**
- **Sporting & Leisure Facilities within Diss, Long Stratton and Wymondham.**
- **Countryside and Wildlife Sites with educational activities for children and young people.**
- **Play Sites Management, Adoption and Technical Advice.**
- **Management of Open Space, Commons and Amenity Ground.**
- **Promotion of the heritage of South Norfolk.**
- **Leisure, Cultural and Countryside Partnership Projects.**

South Norfolk's Leisure, Culture and Countryside Services make a significant contribution to improving people's quality of life in their own right. We will demonstrate throughout this strategy that they can have a major impact in helping to deliver the Council's wider community and corporate priorities.

Our strategy –

Provides a unique opportunity to demonstrate the role that these services have in improving the quality of life for our residents.

In particular the focus is on improving health and well-being and creating a sense of place and community.

The strategy will -

- ☒ **Show our focus on improving provision for older people, children and young people**
- ☒ **Create links with National, Regional and Local Priorities**
- ☒ **Involve our partners in its development and review**

- ☒ **Promote a balance between demand and capacity - be realistic and honest about what we can and can't achieve**
- ☒ **Promote the key marketing features of South Norfolk and look to exploit our close proximity to the city, coast and Norfolk Broads**
- ☒ **Provide a commercial and business focus within relevant elements of our service, whilst maintaining affordability and accountability**
- ☒ **Provide a practical working document adaptable to internal and external change**
- ☒ **Demonstrate the importance of cultural services to the local community**
- ☒ **Encourage the community to actively engage in shaping the service direction, where practicable, to meet their needs**

6. BUILDING ON OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

In developing our Strategy we wish to recognise and build on our recent achievements, which include:

- ☑ *Establishing a countryside education outreach programme*
- ☑ *Development of volunteer groups working within conservation and warden roles*
- ☑ *Upgrading of five play sites to the Disability Discrimination Act [DDA 2004] standard*
- ☑ *The introduction of three additional short cycle routes and a South Norfolk tour route*
- ☑ *A Rangers in Schools programme and Junior Rangers after school clubs*
- ☑ *Partner in the successful Leader+ funded project to create the Wherryman's Way – a 35-mile linear route with interactive interpretation*
- ☑ *Provision of locations for offenders to work to improve the environment*
- ☑ *Development and delivery of the Public Arts Strategy*
- ☑ *Achieving £39,000 of Arts Council lottery funding for the Access to Musical Excellence two-year project in the Upper Waveney Valley*
- ☑ *Delivery of the Southern Broads Cultural Initiative*
- ☑ *Provision of 340 sessions for children's play schemes in 2004/05*
- ☑ *25% increase in leisure-card holders in 2004/05*
- ☑ *Upgrading of the three Council owned leisure facilities to Disability Discrimination Act [DDA 2004] standard*
- ☑ *Delivering, in partnership, the Framingham Earl Community Sports Complex to provide more local facilities*

DID YOU KNOW.....

- The South Norfolk Festivals Network is a partnership of South Norfolk Council, Creative Arts East and local festival organisers. The network supports the development of festivals by providing training, initiating shared artistic projects and promoting them collectively.
- Over 4000 children attend the holiday activities programme of sports and arts-based activity, which runs during the school holidays in Long Stratton, Chedgrave, Harleston and Diss.
- 2006 will see the introduction of customer forum groups within our leisure centres, including youth representatives.
- As a part of our commitment to involve young people, we invited four members from Loddon youth group to interview and select artists to work on the youth democracy project “pARTicipate”. We intend to build on this by starting a children and young people’s steering group to help shape the future of the holiday activities programme.
- Decorative Village Signs are a unique symbol of Parishes identities, often displaying special features of the Villages’ built or natural environment. We are currently working with Parishes throughout South Norfolk to create a record of their village signs, which will include a digital image of the sign, and a description of what is depicted on it. This project will also identify those parishes without signs, presenting the opportunity to create projects with those Parishes to fill these gaps.
- Our Countryside Team directly manages over a dozen sites, registered commons and country parks. Our principles of management are to balance the aesthetic and amenity value of these sites with the value they represent for wildlife.
- Our Rangers in Schools programme and Junior Rangers Clubs reach over 75% of the Junior and Middle Schools of South Norfolk.
- We advise landowners, parishes and managers across the district on the management of their land and availability of grants and schemes in order that they enhance its biodiversity value.
- For the last three years Countryside budgets have been concentrated on establishing strong management regimes to ensure our sites are safe to visit and beneficial as both amenity resources and biodiversity-rich habitats.
- As well as maintaining the improvements that have already been achieved, we can now look to enhance the aesthetic quality of these wonderful open spaces. With a programme of improvements to car parks, signage and access, it is hoped that these sites will become far more inviting so that more people will want to visit them and experience the special qualities of each one. We strive to make all our cultural events accessible, ensuring ramps, disabled toilets and hearing loops are available.
- We will integrate British Sign Language into two of the children’s outdoor theatre performances in Summer 2006.
- We will actively promote our free events to minority groups and to carers of looked after children to help ensure every child has an opportunity to enjoy and be creative.

7. THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE

Our services will need to plan and adapt for the inevitable growth in population, ageing population, levels of obesity and an increased expectation for the provision of services to accommodate such change.

This will require a two-pronged approach:

- Increased usage and diversification of existing product and services
- Plan for additional services, facilities and functions.

UP2U2² and the Parish and Town plans already undertaken reflect local expectation for the provision of additional “centres” within the area and this has been borne out through our own consultation.

We recognise that capital funding [either internal or external] for either additional facility provision or upgrading existing facilities, will require the support of a robust business case and that such funding will have to compete with other Council priorities.

Our role is to place all such demand in perspective, objectively assess the need, viability and above all, the sustainability.

We will be open and honest.

If there is no justifiable case we will illustrate why and offer an alternative way forward. If there is a justifiable case we will support the progression of that case.

Given the particular challenges associated with the rural nature of the District and rural isolation, we will develop initiatives and services that can be accessed by those in rural areas who are not easily able to reach centrally based services. Sustainability is absolutely key.

A key priority for 2006/07, to enable objective assessment of any future case for additional facilities, is the need to identify the following information:

- Local Education Authority capital plan for school based leisure provision
- The extent of private provision and community accessibility of such
- Exploration of the potential for Primary Care Trust [PCT] facility partnerships.

² UP2U2 – The Council’s comprehensive survey of community opinions, 2004.

8. QUALITY AND EQUITY

In contributing to the quality of life for local people we will:

- ☒ Show the contribution that cultural services make to improving the quality of life, in particular for the young, older people and hard to reach communities
- ☒ Work closely with the Primary Care Trust to encourage greater involvement by GPs in the referral scheme and expansion into off-site exercise
- ☒ Deliver initiatives to improve the natural, built and cultural heritage of the district, encouraging people to use and value their surroundings
- ☒ Help create a sense of living in a healthy, safe, well-maintained environment, encouraging a reduction in vandalism
- ☒ Deliver initiatives to improve the built environment, working closely with the Conservation team. We are developing initiatives that have already increased our knowledge and will enable us to promote our unique and extensive built heritage
- ☒ Develop and encourage volunteer activities
- ☒ Link with public, private and voluntary partnerships to support independent living
- ☒ Develop a clear understanding of the needs of vulnerable people and link to care and health services
- ☒ Ensure playgrounds and play schemes are well promoted and used to near capacity and increasingly are suitable for disabled access

9. VALUE FOR MONEY

We will, in the delivery of our strategy, constantly strive to ensure and demonstrate value for money by:

- ☒ Undertaking cost comparison with other Councils, through our membership of the National Benchmarking Service
- ☒ Ensuring that our budgets reflect policy decisions
- ☒ Ensuring that our costs are commensurate with service outcomes
- ☒ Ensuring that our budgets are effectively utilised to make strategic decisions
- ☒ Analysing our existing budgets to identify all business unit costs
- ☒ Capital planning and project management that efficiently considers all fiscal and operational implications
- ☒ The effective procurement of all products and services
- ☒ Focussing on the cost benefits to our customers
- ☒ Ensuring the viability of all partnering arrangements by undertaking a cost benefit analysis
- ☒ Continuous monitoring and performance review.

10. THE KEY STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The key service areas in which we will focus our energy and resources are:

- **Leisure and Sports Facilities**
- **Countryside and Heritage**
- **Cultural Development**

We have set five priorities and objectives for South Norfolk Leisure, Culture and Countryside Services, taking into account the current relevant national, regional and local issues and priorities that have been identified.

PRIORITY ONE
Creating Stronger, Safer and Healthier Communities

PRIORITY TWO
Increasing Economic Vitality

PRIORITY THREE
**Enabling High Quality, Value for Money Services
and facilities**

PRIORITY FOUR
Increasing Participation and Customer Satisfaction

PRIORITY FIVE
**Increasing Opportunities for Older People, Children
and Young People**

11. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Priority One: Creating Stronger, Safer and Healthier Communities

Our main objectives are to:

- Deliver the Public Art Strategy 10 year action plan. This aims to enable all residents to participate in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts
- Develop and encourage volunteer activities across all service areas. We already have an active conservation volunteer group, as well as our volunteer wildlife wardens
- Create a more dynamic cultural product within South Norfolk by working with partners to incorporate greater diversity and encourage the contribution of minority groups
- Highlight the role that cultural services can play in reducing crime and anti social behaviour and improving community cohesion
- Encourage people to use and value their surroundings, contributing to a reduction in vandalism and a sense of living in a healthy, safe, well-maintained environment
- Work with the Crime and Disorder Partnership to provide a joined up programme of diversionary activities
- Provide safe and inclusive access to facilities and to play and open spaces
- Expand the GP Exercise Referral Scheme and the Norwich Fringe Health Walks Programme in partnership with the PCT
- Develop a range of heritage walks across the district

Priority Two: Increasing Economic Vitality

Our main objectives are to:

- Encourage tourism by developing cultural tourism businesses and environmental improvement schemes
- Provide a focus and stimulus for tourism, promoting our festival portfolio to keep South Norfolk “on the map”
- Promote South Norfolk as a good place to live and work
- Enhance the visitor experience of Caistor Roman Town
- Increase the impact of the creative industries by encouraging the creation of rural employment space, through the review of the Local Development Framework and linking to the existing hub of creative industries in Norwich
- Market the areas cultural assets, environment and leisure facilities
- Demonstrate how Leisure, Culture and Countryside services can positively impact on employment, improving basic skills and attracting visitors
- Build upon our links with the Broads Authority to develop leisure, culture and countryside opportunities in the wider Broads area

Priority Three: Enabling High Quality, Value for Money Services and Facilities

Our main objectives are to:

- Undertake regular cost comparisons with similar facilities to ensure we offer value for money
- Map all leisure and open space provision within South Norfolk across all sectors
- Maintain our assets to a high standard
- Identify the most efficient and effective methods of providing and managing our services now and in the future
- Reduce the levels of subsidy within the capacity of each facility in line with Facilities Management Business Plan
- Focus on exploiting external funding and commercial investment opportunities
- Seek quality assurance/ facility validation and play site quality scheme accreditation
- Ensure the outdoor environment is well maintained
- Protect and enhance the extent and quality of wildlife and geological resources
- Ensure communities have easy access to local green space
- Promote our playgrounds and play schemes and ensure they are suitable for disabled access
- Produce and implement a Sport Development Strategy with a clearly defined local to national framework
- Develop online access to Leisure, Culture and Countryside services
- Increase the number of Passport to Leisure card holders in key target groups

Priority Four: Increasing Participation and Customer Satisfaction
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Our main objectives are to:

- Encourage participation and make Leisure, Culture and Countryside activities accessible and enjoyable for all, and specifically, to increase participation in sport by 1% per year
- Develop and implement a marketing strategy and action plan, in order to target our marketing, rather than advertising our product
- Have greater communication with our customer base/community, engaging their involvement in shaping the service
- Ensure that potential Olympic talent is provided with development support
- Encourage existing sports clubs to expand and encourage the establishment of informal clubs
- Actively identify and encourage the uptake and participation of minority sports
- Develop a clear understanding of the reasons for non-users and clear action plans to encourage them to use Leisure, Culture and Countryside services
- Work in partnership with others to meet the needs of minority groups and individuals within the district
- Improve on current levels of customer satisfaction

Priority Five: Increasing Opportunities for Older People, Children and Young People
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Our main objectives are to:

- Develop a South Norfolk Play Strategy, placing emphasis on creating opportunities for children up to 12 years and realizing the potential of play in terms of educational, social and community benefits
- Positively engage with young people to help them access cultural opportunities
- Strengthen relationships with schools and further education establishments in the district, helping them to realise their creative vision and raise the aspiration of young people
- Work with partners to expand the holiday activity schemes for children and young people
- Manage the direction of our arts-based partnerships to enhance provision for the benefit of children and their carers
- Maximise the use of our Rangers education outreach programme within available resources
- Develop a heritage education outreach programme, taking local trades, traditions, tales and artefacts into schools
- Enable increased participation and opportunities within our full range of Leisure, Culture and Countryside services for the 50+ age range
- Actively engage with the 50+ sector, as individuals and groups, to identify their leisure, sporting, cultural and recreational needs and focus on meeting demand.

12. FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE – What it will cost

The total cost of providing the services detailed in the Strategy and Action Plans is contained within the following budget:

Total Revenue Budget for 2005/06	£855,170
Leisure and Sport	£239,230
Cultural Development	£48,480
Key Service Organisation grants and Outstanding Achiever awards	£65,000
Countryside and Heritage	£91,520
Leisure Team	£411,110

Costs of the main elements for 2006/07 are:

Total Revenue Budget for 2006/07	£869,804
Leisure and Sport	£258,480
Cultural Development	£36,901
Key Service Organisation grants and Outstanding Achiever awards	£65,000
Countryside and Heritage	£83,742
Leisure Team	£425,681

Capital Plan for 2006 and beyond	£256,000
Rolling replacement capital programme	£96,000
Leisure Centre Asset Protection Plan 2006 onwards	£200,000

Within the Strategy there is no revenue or capital provision for actual service growth. We expect that movement from our existing service level to that detailed within the Action Plans will be delivered by maximising the potential of existing budgets and resources.