



SOMERSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

October 2015 – October 2018

Business Plan &
Financial Strategy

Version 1.1

SOMERSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Business Plan & 3 Year Financial Strategy 2015 – 2018

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Introduction

This is Somersham Parish Council's Business Plan, it sets out the vision and priorities of the Parish Council for the next three years.

It is the Council's intention to review the Plan annually to ensure it is current and remains a valuable document.



Somersham Lake

The purpose of the Plan is fourfold:

- To set out the objectives and plans of the Parish Council, acknowledging the important role of community groups
- To help the Parish Council fulfil its increasing role within the community in response to the reduction in services from other public bodies
- To communicate the Parish Council's vision and plans to the residents
- To provide a basis for the community to become involved in shaping the future of their village

Vision

"A sustainable community striving to involve and meet the needs of all our residents"

A 10 point plan for Somersham.

- 1/ Improve information and communication
- 2/ A clean and tidy village
- 3/ Enhance road safety
- 4/ Review public transport opportunities
- 5/ Improve and promote local facilities
- 6/ Encourage community involvement and self sufficiency
- 7/ Encourage opportunities for improved Health and Well-being
- 8/ Help promote the use of local shops and businesses
- 9/ Support limited housing development with appropriate community benefit
- 10/ Encourage energy efficiency and environmental sustainability

Objectives

This Business Plan & 3 year Financial Strategy aims to meet the Parish Council's vision.

We will co-operate and liaise, where appropriate, with outside organisations (such as the Police, Huntingdonshire District Council & Cambridgeshire County Council), residents as well as existing village organisations for the general wellbeing of Somersham.

The Parish Council will endeavour to:

- Enhance its role within the community and improve its public profile
- Improve and develop Parish Council communication with the community through the councils Community Engagement Action Plan & Policy (October 2015)
- Enhance the facilities & services available to the community in Somersham
- Build a stronger community by echoing the ethos of Cambridgeshire County Council's strategy for Resilient Communities (October 2015) throughout the work of the parish council
- Further promote local democracy by encouraging more residents to stand for election to the Parish Council

The Parish Council will conduct its business by means which are transparent, sustainable, environmentally friendly, and that present the best value in achieving the actions laid out in this Plan.

- Evaluate the potential of the Local Nature Reserve & adjoining Pocket Park with a view to optimising the benefits to our community
- Work closely with local schools, the Youth Clubs and any other local youth organisations to ensure that the needs of young people are adequately addressed
- Carry forward and promote the recommendations of the Character Statement 2007, particularly in respect of the village centre, building development, transport strategies and environment
- Create a tree planting strategy
- Develop a local flood plan in order to identify areas at risk of flooding
- Maintain Continuing Professional Development for staff and training Parish Councillors
 - Maintain the appearance of the village ensuring it is clean and tidy
 - To improve the wellbeing of our residents

Summary of Current Activity

The Parish Council office is situated on Parkhall Road by the Norwood Playing Field and the Victory Hall. Although the office is away from the main village shopping centre it is next to the busy playing field and village hall.

The office is open to members of the public:

Monday – Thursday from 9 am – 1 pm

The Parish Council is responsible for the management of their budget and facilities.

The Parish Council is responsible for exercising, as appropriate, 'The General Power of Competence'.

Local Council Award Scheme

Somersham Parish Council first achieved Quality Council Status in Jan 2006 and it was reaccredited in 2010.

The Quality Council scheme went under a national review during 2014 which held up Somersham's re-accreditation for the 3rd time.

The new 3 tier scheme the 'Local Council Award', was launched in January 2015. Somersham successfully applied to NALC (National Association of Local Councils) and transferred to the Foundation Level of the Local Council Award.

The Quality Status and the Local Council Award Scheme is an acknowledgement the business of the parish council is run in a professional and open manner.

Somersham Parish Council intends to embrace the Local Council Award Scheme and plan to continue to improve. The Council will apply for the Gold Award in 2015.

Somersham Parish Council has responsibility for:

Services:

Somersham Time Bank
Junior and Senior Youth Clubs
Grass verge cutting – agency contract for Cambridgeshire Highways to cut the verges at least 3 times a year
Christmas Lights — annual display
Hanging flower baskets — The Cross
Parish owned lights are prefixed with PC and a series of numbers

Assets:

Bridleway 7 — 5 miles from Short Drove to the Crafty Fox, Chatteris
Bus shelter, Chatteris Road
Local Nature Reserve—comprising the lake, Station Land, Sewters Pond and section of adjacent disused railway line.
Fire hooks on the Tithe Barn & Low Barn, High Street
Fire Plate on no 101, High Street
Hattie's Map, Church Street
Norwood Playing Field & children's play areas off Parkhall Road
Norwood Building, squash court & car park at Parkhall Road
Meridian brass strips, in footpath at No 70 & No 96 High Street
Millennium Stone, Church Street
Multi Sports area, Norwood Playing Field
Public Shelter, The Cross
Squash Court, Norwood Building, Parkhall Road
The War Memorial, High Street
The White Post area, St Ives Road/Pidley Road
Village direction sign, The Cross
Village sign, (outside Somersham Town Football Club), St Ives Road

Public seats at:

Chatteris Road
Church Street
Norwood Playing Field
Parkhall Road
Public Shelter, The Cross
St Ives Road, Near to West End
The White Post area

Public bins at:

Local Nature Reserve
Norwood Playing Field
Footpath 4, Bishops Road

CCTV at:

Millennium Sports Facility
Norwood Building & Victory Hall
No 91, High Street
Public Shelter, The Cross

Additional Community Assets Somersham Parish Council is involved with:

Community Library (Library Access point), Church Street
Managed by Friends of Somersham Library (FOSL)
Building leased by Somersham Parish Council from Cambridgeshire County Council.

Local Nature Reserve (comprising the lake, Station Land, Sewters Pond and section of adjacent disused railway line), off Springfields
Owned by Somersham Parish Council and managed by Somersham Nature Reserve Group (SNRG)

Millennium Sports Facility, The Trundle.
Facility owned by Somersham Parish Council and managed by Somersham Sports and Leisure Association.
Land & pavilion leased to the charity committee by Somersham Parish Council

Scout Hut, Parkhall Road (on Norwood Playing Field)
Building owned and managed by 1st Somersham Scout Committee. Land leased to the committee by Somersham Parish Council

Victory Hall, Parkhall Road (on the Norwood Playing Field)
Building owned and managed by the Victory Hall Management Committee.
Land leased to the committee by Somersham Parish Council

Who else has Responsibility for Service Delivery in Somersham?

- **Huntingdonshire District Council** is responsible for environmental services (litter, refuse and recycling, including dog fouling), operating the car park in Church Street, business support and the provision of housing services (along with Housing Associations).

- **Cambridgeshire County Council** is responsible for highways issues, signage, lighting and coordinating public transport (along with service providers). The County Council is also responsible for health and social care, library services and education.

- **Cambridgeshire Police** is responsible for addressing crime and anti-social behaviour in Somersham.

Where services are provided by others, the Parish Council endeavours to ensure that they are dealt with effectively and in accordance with the wishes of the community.

Raising the Profile of the Parish Council

At present the majority of the parish council's self-promotion and advertising is quite passive choosing traditional methods such as noticeboards and the council's website.

Since 2012 the council has experimented with Facebook 'Our Somersham' and latterly Twitter with #SomershamParish

For 2015 the Council must recognise the community/world has moved forward considerably in an electronic age and embrace this with greater enthusiasm.

Promotion of the Council & its services

Community engagement could be improved if Somersham Parish Council became better at promoting itself, what it does and its services.

Branding

The council should be proud of its services and activities and ensure its 'brand' or logo is clearly seen on all communication whether paper or electronic.



Self-promotion

It is essential that Parish Councillors as representatives of the corporate body provide greater support with the parish office's role using social media. Councillors can assist raising the profile of the council if they actively promote the Council through their role as representatives on local organisations. The Parish Council is there to represent the community as a whole and councillors are well placed to promote opportunities for the community to advertise their groups and services through the council's social media, their own organisations media as well as other local public media. There is too much reliance or acceptance on 'village drums'.

The Councils communication streams currently are:

Parish Council notice boards

Minutes on the website www.somersham-pc.gov.uk and hard copy in the Community Library

Somersham4u Newsletter – delivered bi-monthly to every household in the parish plus available to download on line from the council's website

Residents pack – hard copies in the Community Library plus copies available on line from the council's website

Time Bank Newsletter

www.Somersham-pc.gov.uk

www.somersham4u.wordpress.com

www.somershamtimebank.wordpress.com

Facebook 'Our Somersham'

Facebook 'Somersham Time Bank'

Facebook 'Somersham Christmas Lights'

Facebook 'Somersham Nature Reserve'

Twitter #SomershamParish

Twitter #SomershamTime

Page 39 of the Community Plan details many issues parishioners have with the internet and websites for the village. Many have been addressed since the publication of the Plan.

On the same page (p 39) members of the public suggestions to improve the parish council include encouragement for the council to be '*forward thinking and creative*', '*to be proactive*' and '*to hear more from their councillors*'.

Perhaps the solution is permanent digital displays?

Digital Signs

Whilst all of the above play their part, there are many members of the community who do not actively use the internet or email. Noticeboards and newsletters are useful but it can be difficult to keep the information current or timely.

As part of a programme to raise the profile of the parish council, the proposal to install digital signs at 2 key locations could be very effective.

Proposals include:

- The Norwood Building.
Wall mounted outdoor LCD unit including enclosure, screen and media player
- Public Shelter, The Cross.
Floor standing, purpose built outdoor LCD unit including enclosure, screen and media player

These digital signs would allow the parish council to promote itself, its activities, community groups and events.

It could also be a useful tool for local businesses to advertise (at a small charge) plus advertise local jobs.

All/any profits raised from business advertising would be put back into the community.

Costs for the digital signs could be found through parish council funds as part of its community engagement strategy.



Example of digital displays at The Cross, Public Shelter and the Norwood Building office.

Key aim: To put Somersham back at the heart of the community

Change of Somersham Parish Councils name & image?

The Council should give consideration to a change of name for the Council as part of their overall review.

Somersham is a very proactive Council keen to improve services and facilities for their community now and for the future.

At times the word 'parish' has created an unwelcome hindrance or impediment with a presumption from outside bodies (despite the Quality Status award now Local Council Award) the parish council does not have the skill or capability to take on services. This can and has, proved to be an impediment to moving forward.

A solution could be changing the Council's name to remove any disparagement.

The two options would be:

1. Changing 'Parish' to 'Town' Council

Local Government Act 1972 s 245 (6), (9)

'(6) The council of a parish which is not grouped with any other parish may resolve that the parish shall have the status of a town'

2. To request and use the 'Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, CHAPTER 28' section 59 (1)

'A local authority may, by resolution, change the name of any of the authority's electoral areas'

Permitted options include:

'Somersham Community Council'

'Somersham Neighbourhood Council'

'Somersham Village Council'

Any changes to the councils name will impact on the position and name of the Chairman and Parish Clerk.

Also see published guidance from the Electoral Commission on changes of style www.electoralcommission.gov.uk

A Sense of Community

Community resilience is about strong & healthy communities, connected communities.

Community resilience proposes four key characteristics (or dimensions) to becoming more resilient:

- Healthy and engaged people
- An inclusive culture creating a positive sense of place
- A localising economy – towards sustainable food, energy, housing etc.
- Strong links to other places and communities

Using the ethos of Cambridgeshire County Councils document 'Stronger Together, A strategy for Building Resilient Communities, the Parish Council need to ensure Somersham:

- Is a connected community
- Identify areas which could benefit from improvement or additional facilities
- Maintain and fulfil a Community Engagement Action Plan & Policy
- Monitor Somersham Time Bank as part of this process

Community Notice Board



The Community notice board is located on 'The Cross', the noticeboard is freely available to all parishioners to advertise local events. The Cross forms a central part of the village shopping hub and when booked through the parish council and district council, regular charity/local organisation stalls are held to raise vital funds for local groups. The Cross island also accommodates the public shelter as well as the BT telephone kiosk.

The community noticeboard was purchased by the Parish Council together with Somersham Harvey Feoffees Charity Committee in celebration of Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

Somersham Community Library

When the Parish Council learnt the village library would be shut as a cost cutting exercise by Cambridgeshire County Council the community were incensed at the prospect of losing this vital facility. This was the beginning of a joint venture between Somersham Parish Council and a strong band of volunteers.

The Community Library is now a registered charity no 1149100 and managed by a fully constituted group the Friends of Somersham Library (FOSL). FOSL have won a number of awards for volunteering. The most recent award in August 2015 was in recognition of their achievements in volunteering and presented by Captain Victor Lucas, High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire.

The building is leased by Somersham Parish Council from Cambridgeshire County Council and FOSL run the community library under a service level agreement. Somersham Parish Council will continue to support the Community Library.

Health & Well-Being Group

As part of this process the parish council will continue to host the Health & Wellbeing Steering Group with representative members from the local school, doctor's surgeries, health carers, Somersham's Time Bank Co-Ordinator Community Navigators etc.

Meetings discuss specific topics, sharing information, case studies & referrals.

Localism

Somersham Parish Council has embraced aspects of the Localism Act 2011 throughout its services since 2012.

The Parish Council has registered the following Community Assets:

- The Community Library, Church Street
- The Community Room, upstairs in the Victory Hall (village hall), Parkhall Road

Both properties are currently owned by Cambridgeshire County Council.

Community Plan 2012

The Community Plan is a five year plan and replaced the Parish Plan published in 2006.

With the help of Cambridgeshire ACRE and specific funding the parish council were able to greatly improve community engagement techniques to ensure the 2012 Community Plan represented a majority view of Somersham Parishioners both old and young.

The Parish Council will continue to review the Plan and publish updated information on an annual basis.

Democratic representation

The Parish Council hopes that a greater sense of community will develop through this Business Plan, and the actions arising from it.

It is hoped that this will lead to an increased awareness of the Parish Council's activities and, as a consequence, will encourage more residents to stand for the Parish Council or join other voluntary community groups.

We would want to encourage youth participation, and will consider the options for involving the younger community, including a Youth Council.

There is an option to start Parish Councillor monthly surgeries. These surgeries would be created on a rota of two councillors present at each surgery.

Somersham Parish Council already has a close connection with Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council through their contact with the local elected Councillors.

A safe community

The Community Plan identifies four main areas of concern:

- Fear of crime
- Anti-social behaviour
- Speeding cars
- litter

The Parish Council will:

- participate in initiatives that address anti-social behaviour, and continue to work with other authorities (Police, County & District Councils) in reducing crime and the perception of crime
- seek to deal with the problems of litter, dog fouling, graffiti, fly posting, noise pollution etc. by helping to foster a responsible attitude and enhancing a sense of community and good neighbourliness

CCTV

The Parish Council is responsible for CCTV in several key locations around the village. The aim is to help tackle crime as well as help ensure the safety of its residents where possible.

The CCTV cameras are located at the following locations:

- Millennium Sports Facility – to cover the pavilion external and internal
- Norwood Building & Victory Hall – to cover the community buildings internally and the car park
- No 91, High Street – to cover the High Street in both directions at the centre of the village
- Public Shelter, The Cross – to cover 'The Cross area of the High Street, Church Street and Parkhall Road

Twinning

At present Somersham is not twinned with any other community. Twinning would encourage and develop the growth of educational and cultural links between our community and a town or village in a different country.

If the Council wishes to make contact with a foreign authority they must obtain advice and assistance from the European and International Unit of the Local Government Association in the first instance.

Somersham Youth Club

Somersham Parish Council took over the operation of the youth clubs following Cambridgeshire County Councils withdrawal.

The Youth Club has overcome several management and staff changes in the last three years but it continues to flourish.

The youth club offers young people in the parish the opportunity to participate in healthy activities as well as socialising in a safe environment.

Further consideration and action could be given to expanding the youth clubs catchment area to include more local villages.

Somersham Time Bank

Somersham's Time Bank was set up in 2012. The initial funding received to set the Time bank up and employ a co-ordinator came from Skills for Care & Cambridgeshire County Council. The aim was to tackle social isolation.



Today the Time Bank co-ordinator continues to seek funding through the larger grant aid bodies but also holds her own fundraising events. The Time Banks main funding grant at present is through CHS and is to help get people back into work.

For 1 hour of voluntary work/help the volunteer 'banks' 1 hour of time. This allows the volunteer free help in return by 'cashing in' the time banked.

Membership of the Time Bank has increased dramatically since 2012 with around 120 individual members ranging in age from 5 years to 85 years.

The Time Bank also has 15 local organisations signed up. The value of this has been proved over the last 3 years by running joint fundraising events such as coffee mornings, 'Picnic in the Park' (an outdoor musical event held with the Church & Sports Association), Somersham Sprint (a cross country 10k & 5k run), 'Lite Bite' (a Saturday morning coffee & bacon for morning shoppers) and more. Voluntary and charity groups which would not normally have formed an alliance have successfully run events, shared equipment and generally helped each other out through their association with the Time Bank.

The Time Bank is a great community asset and requires continued support.

Christmas Lights Annual Display

Run almost entirely by volunteers with parish councillors also on the working group, the Christmas Lights Annual Display is a popular feature of village life.

The group work throughout the year with a clear action plan servicing equipment, fund raising, training and erecting the lights, this is overseen by the parish council in line with insurance requirements and licencing.

On 1st December every year there is an organised 'Switch on' event and The Cross area of the High Street is closed.

- Refreshments are provided including mulled wine and mince pies for a small donation.
- Somersham Town Band play Christmas Carols
- There is a draw with prizes donated by local businesses
- Santa comes to town! with sweets for the small children

Somersham Carnival

The Carnival is a terrific community event organised by a volunteer committee involving as many people and local organisations as they can.

Carnival week takes place every June and brings the community together with numerous family activities at various locations across the parish. Carnival Saturday is the culmination of the week with a parade through the centre of the village followed by an organised family event on the Parish Councils Norwood Playing Field with stalls, entertainment, competitions and more.

Sporting & Leisure Facilities

Somersham parishioners are lucky to have some good sports facilities available to them.

The Council are keen to link up with organisations and sports associations / clubs to promote sport for all ages and in particular to tackle childhood obesity.

1. Millennium Sports Facility, The Trundle.

This facility is leased by the Parish Council to a Charity, Somersham Sports & Leisure Association.

The Parish Council acknowledge this facility requires financial support for the foreseeable future. In terms of the cost/benefit this is considered acceptable if it means Somersham parishioners have a safe place to participate in outdoor sports for a healthy active lifestyle.

2. The Norwood Playing Field, Parkhall Road

The playing field free to use facilities include:

Children's play equipment

Floodlit multi sports area

Full size football pitch

Squash Court (pay to use at a locally competitive rate)

There are already plans in progress to regenerate the Norwood Playing Field facilities in line with the Norwood Area project plan and maintenance programme. (June 2014)

Some of the new facilities identified in the plan are:

Outdoor gym equipment

Public toilets

Car park extension

Location Plan – this is for visitors to the site to identify the buildings and organisations in them: Norwood Building, Victory Hall, 1st Somersham Scout hut and 1st Step Play group

Creating a Better Environment

The Parish Council has always exercised an interest in retaining good open spaces for residents to enjoy in their leisure time as well as ensuring Somersham's built area is clean, tidy and safe for all.

In the quest for this the following areas are either under review or actively in place:

Flood Risk Strategy

With the increasing service withdrawal from principal authorities, it would be prudent for the council to develop a local flood plan in order to identify areas at risk of flooding.

The plan will include:

- Areas at risk of flooding
- Explain the issues within those areas and develop a prioritised action plan for dealing with the issues identified
- Clarify Riparian ownership and responsibilities

Allotments

The Parish Council must improve its links and integrate more with the allotment associations to promote healthy living.

Definitive Footpaths

Definitive footpaths are the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council.

At present the footpaths are cut 3 times a year.

Currently there is no P3 grant funding available from Cambridgeshire County Council

Somersham has a volunteer Footpath (P3) Officer who oversees the general maintenance of the cross country footpaths in conjunction with the parish council and county council.

It is essential these are kept in good condition and properly signposted.

Conservation Areas

The Conservation Areas are an important part of the character of the village and need to be carefully protected.

The areas include the built environment at the centre of the village as well as the Local Nature Reserve to the east.

Bridleway 7 – Short Drove to the Crafty Fox

The Council owns 5 miles of disused railway line which has been successfully registered as a bridleway.

The bridleway runs from Short Drove at the north of Somersham to the Crafty Fox (Pickle Fen) which is on the boundary with Chatteris in Fenland.

The bridleway has been enhanced over the years and planted with a good number of native trees.

The area provides a good off road route for walkers, runners, cyclists and horse riders.

Somersham Local Nature Reserve

Somersham has a large Local Nature Reserve, the reserve was designated in 2011.

Part of the land is owned by Cambridgeshire County Council with the majority in the ownership of Somersham Parish Council.

Through a regularly updated Management Plan the area is overseen by a fully constituted group - Somersham Local Nature Reserve Group (SNRG) to ensure conservation and bio-diversity.

Open 24/7 the land includes a section of disused railway line, a large lake and a large field called 'Station Land'. Within Station Land is a Community Orchard created by volunteers and organised by SNRG.

Regular events are held on Station Land such as 'Apple Day', Bat walks, Fungi Foray, accompanied community walks and more. The events offer all members of the community a fun activity often with professionals on hand to inform and advise.

Pocket Park

Three years ago an area of old gravel works was sold by Lafarge Aggregates to a private owner. A large part of this land had to be made available to local residents as a Pocket Park.

Work to create the Pocket Park complete with wildlife lakes is still in progress by the new landowners.

The Council are looking forward to the Park eventual opening as it will connect the Local Nature Reserve to Bridleway 7.

Somersham Angling Club

The Council have a lease agreement with Somersham Angling Club which allows them to fish the lake within the Local Nature Reserve.

Fishing membership is only permitted for Somersham residents, day tickets are available for Club members friends provided they are accompanied by the member.

The Angling Club (under the lease agreement) manage and collect the fishing permits, Check NRA licenses, husbandry of the fish and other wildlife in conjunction with SNRG.

All monies collected goes towards the lake, swims and other relevant fishing needs to ensure the survival of this beautiful area.

Trees

The Council is responsible for in excess of 450 trees across its playing fields and open spaces.

A Tree Audit was carried out in 2014 and the council is carrying out the necessary work identified in the report within the time scales recommended.

The Council has always ensured they have an enthusiastic volunteer Tree Warden, this position is elected every year at the May Annual meeting.

The Tree Officer liaises with the district tree officer as well as the County Countryside officer.

The Council will produce a Tree Planting Strategy in conjunction with the Tree Audit to provide a full picture.

White Post Area

The Council own a small area of land known locally as the White Post Area due to the obelisk which sits on the junction. The area is mainly wooded with two small ponds in the centre.

The White Post obelisk is a scheduled ancient Monument

This area has a Management Plan to ensure conservation and bio-diversity.

War Memorials



Somersham's War Memorial for the Second World War is located on the footpath at the centre of the village known as The Cross.

At present the War memorial is not a Listed Building and the Council will consider if they should apply for listing with Historic England and the War Memorial Trust in order to protect it.

A stained glass window memorial for World War 1 is in St John the Baptist Church and already protected as this is a Grade 1 Listed Building).

K6 Telephone Kiosk

Date Listed: 25 February 1992

English Heritage ID: 5267

The Telephone Kiosk is a Type K6 designed in 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott.

The Grade 11 Listed Building is described as a square kiosk with domed roof in cast iron. It has unperforated crowns to top panels and margin glazing to windows and door. The Kiosk forms part of the central Conservation Area of the village.

Presently owned by British Telecom (BT) it is in a state of poor repair.

The phone line has been disconnected by BT some time ago.

BT are keen to allow communities to 'adopt' a kiosk at £1.

This could be a solution provided:

- BT carry out maintenance work in the first instance
- **OR** the parish council is prepared to take on the kiosk and costs for its repair and future upkeep as a Listed Building

Options for its future use are open to discussion, one idea could be to create a WiFi 'hot spot' such as the redundant kiosks in London.



Environmentally Green Policies

Somersham Parish Council has an Environment Action plan & Plastic bag ban policy. The actions in these plans need to be reviewed, updated and monitored more closely.

Additional environment actions which could be included in the revised plans are to:

- Endeavour to maximise water capture on the Councils own land for reuse of water for plant displays & recreation grounds
- Encourage, through the planning process, the use of energy saving, water capture and reuse in all new developments in the parish
- Recycle as many office products as appropriate and possible
- Separate and recycle litter collected as appropriate and possible

Open spaces

Somersham has good open spaces available to encourage healthy activities as well as consider bio-diversity. These open spaces are the:

Local Nature Reserve including the lake

Pocket Park

Norwood Playing Field

White Post area which includes two small ponds

6 Definitive footpaths and a bridleway which all link in some way to neighbouring parishes Pidley, Colne, Bluntisham and Chatteris.

Street planting & street scene

At present the Parish Councils floral display are the hanging baskets at The Cross on the Public Shelter.

Acknowledging the time and cost element for this the Parish Council could:

- Maintain and expand its planting programme to improve the appearance of the village through extensive floral and plant displays
- Continue with a tree planting strategy
- Consider the feasibility of setting up a tree bequeathing scheme
- Undertake an audit to identify unnecessary signs and seek to have them removed or re-sited
- Identify areas where there is a litter problem and work with the community to tidy these black spots

Housing & Development Strategy

At a strategic level the Parish Council plays a full part in the development and sustainability of Huntingdonshire's Local Development Plan (LDP) to 2030.

The LDP will set out the blueprint for the development of Somersham until 2030 in the context of the District as a whole. The Parish Council will play a constructive role in this process whilst ensuring the protection of its legitimate interests.

In addition the Parish Council will investigate the opportunity and funding available to undertake the following:

- Neighbourhood Plan
- Community Land Trust

Transport Strategy

The Parish Council has little direct responsibility for transport and related matters. Therefore, its role is principally one of advocacy in the interest of the village.

Bus services, rail services

The Council will continue to monitor these services and take action when necessary

Traffic control

The Council recognises residents' concerns about speeding and illegal parking
The Council supports the Speedwatch initiative and will seek to reintroduce a volunteer team

Pedestrians & cycling

The Council wishes to see an increase in walking and cycling, and will press for measures to improve the provision of, and environment for, these modes of transport.

Economic Activity & Tourism

Somersham has a wide range of facilities which fulfil most of the daily needs of local residents and surrounding villages.

Wherever possible, the parish Council will source services and supplies from local businesses. This shall, however, will be tempered by the need for best value.

The Parish Council will work towards a general objective of improving the village economy and tourist facilities in the area.

3 Year Financial Strategy **October 2015 – October 2018**

1. Introduction

The objective of the Council's financial strategy is to structure and manage its finances in support of the Council's Business Plan. Good financial management is essential so that the Council may deliver quality services but also effectively manage public monies. The strategy will help the Council make decisions to ensure that its corporate objectives are met.

2. Business Plan Framework

The Council's corporate objectives are:

- To ensure that the Council's assets are properly maintained, refurbished or replaced by setting a programme to achieve this;
- To represent the views and wishes of the citizens of Somersham and to deliver services that meet local needs;
- To consult with and take due regard of all comments from other statutory bodies, voluntary organisations and individuals, to ensure improvement in the standards of service;
- To enable residents to enjoy quality social, recreational and sporting facilities within the parish

3. Three Year Financial Strategy

The financial strategy (3YFS) will provide a framework for the Council's strategic and financial policies and plans to ensure the proactive financial management of the Council. Projecting the financial needs of the Council over the next three years will identify potential problems in advance so that the Council will be able to adapt to any eventuality. Active risk management plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the Council can adapt to circumstances over which it has no control, but still be able to deliver its corporate objectives. The Financial Strategy contains details of the Council's revenue budget, capital programme and treasury management strategy over the term of the next three financial years, identifying areas of risk and how the Council will manage that risk effectively. As the 3YFS requires forward planning over a number of years, the budget projections are provisional and will be reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process.

4. Risk Management

The Council, through its system of internal control, has developed a culture of risk management as part of its overall strategic management. The Council aims to identify, quantify and control all risks and put into place arrangements in order to protect the Council and ultimately its stakeholders from the consequences of the risks identified.

4.1 Financial Risk Management

The annual budget setting report will detail the most significant financial risks that have been identified as part of the budget setting process and may adversely affect the Council's 3YFS. The 3YFS has been based on numerous assumptions:

- Inflation rates;
- Interest rates;
- Inflationary pay awards;
- Income generated from fees and charges;
- Potential legal challenges;
- A continued level of service provision.

In developing its capital and revenue budgets and its investment strategy, the Council has considered the financial risks that it faces and has tried to mitigate that risk. The Council has in developing its 3YFS:

- Adopted a prudent approach in its financial forecasting;
- Will develop a Reserves and Balances Policy to ensure that the Council has adequate contingent balances so that the 3YFS is affordable and deliverable;
- Developed a realistic and deliverable Capital Programme;
- Introduced earmarked reserves to provide a contingency against anticipated future spending requirements.
- Identified possible revenue requirements to continue a proactive approach to help mitigate the effect of inevitable 3rd party service reductions. The County Councils Resilience Strategy will help inform this work.

The Council operates in a sound financial control environment. Member scrutiny is provided through the Finance and Risk Management Working Party which has responsibility for overseeing and reviewing the effectiveness of the Parish Council's governance framework and system of internal control. It approves the internal auditor's interim reports and plays a key role in budget monitoring in receiving quarterly reports containing year-end projected out turns and an analysis of budget variances. This enables the Council to review on a quarterly basis if it has adequately mitigated risks or whether any further action needs to be taken in year in order to ensure that the Council is not adversely affected financially and can deliver its 3YFS.

5. Reserves and Balances

An essential requirement in developing the Council's 3YFS is making an assessment of the adequacy of the Council's reserves and balances over the term of the strategy. Section 50 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires that the Council gives due regard to the level of reserves and balances for the forthcoming years and the RFO is required to set a balanced budget.

5.1. The General Fund Balance

The General Fund Balance, commonly termed the "working balance", is a balance on the Council's revenue account which is not held for any specific purpose other than to cushion the Council's finances against any unexpected short term problems in the Council's cash flow. It is the account where all the Council's day to day income and expenditure in the provision of its statutory and discretionary services is recorded.

The General Fund Balance projections over the next three financial years are detailed below.

Consideration has been given to a financial risk assessment, which will be carried out annually in line with the Reserves and Balances Policy and set out in the annual budget report.

The Councils policy on General Reserves: This is all about managing the risks. The risk of not enough cash to run the Council early in the new financial year; and the risk of holding funds when they are not justified giving rise to increased Fidelity Guarantee Premiums and controls, and the risk of loss due to inappropriate investment.

Minimum reserves are considered to be of the order of 3 months expenditure net of normal "trading" income. This will get the Parish Council through to the arrival of the first half of the precept on 30 April and overcome any unforeseen circumstances that may arise between the time of the budget setting exercise and receipt of the first half of the precept.

For the 3 financial years 2012 – 2015 the council has spent an average £190,380.00 For the 2015/16 financial year a risk assessment has determined that a minimum of £50,000 should be maintained as the general fund balance (3 months reserve) so that the Council may mitigate any financial risks that may materialise within the

year. Generally speaking a prudent level of reserves would be about six to eight months net spend. Anything much above that would require a formal resolution of justification explaining why such a significant level of reserves is necessary.

	Actual 2014/2015 £	Estimate 2015/2016 £	Estimate 2016/2017 £	Estimate 2017/2018 £
General Fund Balance for year	£30,075	£10,000	£10,000	£5,000
General Fund balance Brought Forward	£0.00	£30,075	£40,075	£50,075
General fund balance carried forward	£30,075	£40,075	£50,075	£55,075

5.1.1. Expenditure

In the context of the current adverse economic climate the Council must look to minimise the impact upon the taxpayer whilst responding to increasing local needs and priorities.

Efficiency: Efficiency and value for money are the bedrock of the Council's decision making process. In formulating its budget the Council through its Finance & Risk Management Working Party reviews and challenges whether it is delivering value for money. The Council looks to identify savings and efficiencies that can be made without affecting service delivery;

Procurement: During the term of this strategy the Council will continue to look at accessing greater purchasing power through partnership procurement, as the Council has done with its gas and electricity supplies. The Council will look to achieve efficiency through procuring the same or better service at a lower cost to the Council;

Employee Costs: The Council will review its operational resources on an ongoing basis and look to maintain well controlled employee costs. The Council will also look to optimise the use of its staff throughout the organisation.

5.1.2. Income

The Council does not receive any income other than those charges levied for its service provision, rental income, investment income and the precept.

Fees and Charges: The Council considers its scale of fees and charges on an annual basis. The Council will consult with stakeholders through inviting group user representatives to its Working Party meetings. The Council complies with legal requirements in setting its charges and has due regard to affordability, elasticity of demand for its services and accessibility. The Council will look to achieve the maximum level of income that market forces in operation at the time will allow.

Investment Income: Investment income will be projected in line with an Annual Investment Strategy. The current economic climate is challenging in terms of finding the balance between security and yield. The Council will consult advisers on the most appropriate strategy.

5.1.3. Tax Base & Parish Precepts:

The tax base is a figure that is determined by Huntingdonshire District Council annually and is the baseline for setting council tax charges.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) regulations 1992, Huntingdonshire District Council has given a tax base figure of £1330.00 for the parish of Somersham for 2014/15 (£1341.00 for 2015/16). This figure is based upon the estimated number of chargeable dwellings, expressed as the equivalent number of Band D dwellings, after allowing for reliefs, discounts and non-collection.

During the setting of the revenue and capital budgets due consideration has been given to the current economic climate, together with the request from central government that town and parish councils exercise restraint and ensure that no council taxpayer sees an increase in bills. However, consideration has also been given to the need for the Council to increase its reserves and balances being mindful of future capital, revenue and treasury requirements.

	Approved 2015/2016	Estimated 2016/2017	Estimated 2017/2018	Estimated 2018/2019
Precept	£151,954	£163,000	£171,150	£179,710
Increase in Precept	0.3%	7.2%	5%	5%
Council Tax on a Band 'D' property	£113.31	£121.55	£127.63	£134.01

With the overriding need to maintain an adequate level of reserves and ensure high-standards of service provision, an assumption of a 7.2 % increase in the Precept for the 2016/17 financial year has been made.

6. Earmarked Reserves

In addition to the general fund, the Council also maintains reserves that are earmarked for a particular purpose. The Council has highlighted future capital expenditure requirements and established earmarked reserves in order to finance the expenditure when it is required. Details of the projected balances on the earmarked reserves are given below. The Council will continue to monitor the adequacy and relevance of its earmarked reserves on an annual basis.

Capital projects

Earmarked Reserve	Revised 2014/2015	Estimate 2015/2016	Estimate 2016/2017	Estimate 2017/2018
Norwood Building & playing field equipment	£0.00	£15,000	£0.00	£0.00
Digital advertising display boards	£8000	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Public toilets – Norwood Playing Field	£0.00	£25,000	£0.00	£0.00
Outdoor Gym equipment	£0.00	£10,000	£0.00	£0.00
Skate ramp - replacement	£0.00	£5,000	£5,000	£10,000
Kubota Tractor – 3 year replacement	£0.00	£2,000	£3,500	£3,500
Lake area sea container - replacement	£0.00	£1,000	£0.00	£0.00
Lake aerator	£4137	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Village sign refurbishment	£700	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Parish Street lights lamps upgrade	£6,500	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
TOTAL	£19,337	£58,000	£8,500	£13,500

7.1. Capital Expenditure

The Council's capital programme is attached at Appendix A.

This programme has been developed to include the capital projects that are deemed to be achievable and affordable within the time frame set out. The programme reflects the Council's priorities that have either been highlighted through a risk assessment or are deemed imperative in achieving the strategic objectives as stated in the Council's Business Plan.

The Council has a large property portfolio, comprising of public offices, buildings, large areas of open spaces, including play areas, a car park and sports facilities.

The Council has historically under-invested in its properties and as a result has a large back-log in its maintenance programme requiring a substantial capital investment so that the buildings are fit for purpose.

The Council also has items of equipment in its play areas that have exceeded their useful life and need replacing. Improvement schemes in turn generate additional long-term repairing obligations, such as the requirement to maintain the play area and skate park at the Norwood Playing Field.

On 1st October 2015 the Council's Kubota Tractor was replaced with a new tractor. The Council will continue to maintain and replace on a 3 yearly basis to ensure the tractor is economic to run and efficient.

Within the scope of this strategy the Council looks to ensure that it has adequate financial resources available in order to meet its aspirations as laid out in the capital programme.

Estimated Capital Expenditure

	2014/2015 Revised £000s	2015/2016 Estimate £000s	2016/2017 Estimate £000s	2017/2018 Estimate £000s
Capital Expenditure	£19.5	£58	£8.5	£13.5

The Council may in future wish to invest in the acquisition of fixed assets in the local area that are seen to bring benefits to the community. It is anticipated that such an asset acquisition would have to bring the same or greater income yield as that of any treasury investment, so as not to impact upon the revenue account. No specific schemes have been identified at the present time but they may be considered in the future if preferential circumstances prevail.

7.2. Capital Financing

In order to meet its estimated capital expenditure, the Council has areas from which financing may be met:

7.2.1. Capital Receipts

Capital receipts are derived from the sale of a fixed asset and can only be used to fund capital expenditure. Accordingly capital receipts are usually the first reserve used to finance capital expenditure, as the use of the reserve is limited in its application. However when capital receipts are used to finance capital expenditure there is a direct effect upon the revenue budget, resulting from a reduction in interest earned. In applying any capital receipts consideration has been given to any resulting loss of revenue from the Council's investments.

The Council does not currently have any plans to dispose of any of its land and buildings over the next 3 years.

The Council will assess the availability of surplus assets that may be suitable for disposal in order to meet future capital expenditure. This process will streamline the Council's asset portfolio and ensure that the asset base is fit for purpose.

7.2.2. Revenue Contributions

The Council may use any surplus on the general fund above the required balance to fund capital expenditure, in line with the Reserves and Balances Policy. The Council has also established earmarked reserves so that internal funding will be available in future to meet the anticipated capital expenditure that will not impact upon the Council's investment requirements.

7.2.3. Funding

The Council will look to source external funding for all suitable capital projects, in partnership with other authorities. No funding for the Council's budgeted capital programme has been sourced at the present time.

8. Treasury Management Strategy

The Council defines its treasury management activities as:

"The management of the Council's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks".

The Council's estimated investment capacity is shown in the table below. This figure has been derived from projecting the council's balance sheet forward over the next three financial years. Market conditions, interest rate expectations and credit risk considerations will influence the Council's strategy in determining the borrowing and investment activity against the underlying Balance Sheet position.

Estimated Investment Capacity

	Actual 31 Mar 2015	Estimated 31 Mar 2016	Estimated 31 Mar 2017	Estimated 31 Mar 2018
External Borrowings & Other Long Term Liabilities (at Nominal Value)	-£94,811	-£79,999	-£65,387	-£50,775
Balances & Reserves	£119,432	£140,000	£120,000	£120,000
Investment Capacity	£50k	£55k	£56k	£58k

8.1. Borrowing Strategy

In July 2025 the Council will make its final repayment of its outstanding PWLB loan. It is the Council's policy to remain debt free for the duration of this strategy.

8.2. Investment Strategy

The Council has determined that its investment priorities are:

- Security of the invested capital;
- Liquidity of the invested capital;
- To obtain an optimum yield which is commensurate with security and liquidity.

The Council has placed an upper limit for principal sums invested for over 12 months, by determining that a minimum of £50k should be held in short term investments. This limit is to contain exposure to the possibility of loss that may arise as a result of the Council having to seek early repayment of the sums invested.

APPENDIX 1 CAPITAL PROJECTS & REVENUE BUDGET PLAN

Capital & Revenue Budget 2015 - 2018	TOTAL Required	Current Reserve	Balance Required		Costs will be sourced through:	
Lake Area						
Aerator	7000	4137	3000		Funding	
Replacement sea container	5000	0	5000		Funding/precept	
Norwood Playing Field						
Skate Ramp replacement	30000	0	3000		Funding/precept	
Outdoor gym	10,000	0	10,000		Funding	
Play Area / youth facilities	15,000	0	15,000		Funding/precept	
Public toilet	25,000	0	25,000		Current Reserves through a transfer/precept	
Burial Land Extension						
Boundary wall/fencing	3000	3000	0			
Tractor replacement	24,000	0	24000		Precept & part exchange on a 3 year programme	
Digital advertising displays	8,000	8,000	0		Current Reserves for the Norwood Project	
Village sign refurbishment	700	700	0		Current earmarked Reserves	
Parish Street lamps upgrade	6,500	6,500	0		Current earmarked Reserves	
TOTAL	134200	22337	85000	156537		