

NEW WARDS FOR DISTRICT COUNCIL



The independent Boundary Commission for England has reviewed South Norfolk's wards. To ensure that each councillor represents approximately the same number of people they have produced a new set of ward boundaries. Only two of the current wards are unchanged. The new structure is set out on the map.

As part of these changes, the number of councillors has been reduced from 47 to 46. The current situation on the council is Liberal Democrats: 27 seats, Conservatives: 16, Labour: 2, Independent: 2.

Maintenance programme scrapped



Council houses like these at Woodton will be affected by the government's cash squeeze

The debate over what happens to social housing in South Norfolk continues. In the summer, council tenants will decide how the housing service will be run in future.

All members of South Norfolk Council want to see good social housing for rent provided in the district. The challenge is how to do this, given the limits put on by Westminster. Year by year this cash squeeze increases. It's becoming impossible for the Council to balance its housing books without savage cuts.

Carrying on with the current service under the Council's direct control will mean a worse service for current tenants – less money for repairs and improvements and cuts in support services. Already, cuts in the coming year will

total over £600,000. Even worse, right-to-buy sales will mean there are fewer properties available.

The alternative will be to transfer to a new Housing Association run on a non-profit-making basis by a board made up of tenants, councillors and local independent people. This will be able to modernize the homes and provide a quality service. Rents will be exactly the same as under the Council's ownership but, unlike the Council, the new Association will be allowed to build new houses.

Next summer the Council's tenants will vote in a ballot to decide which route to follow. It is up to them.

Recycling roll-out

After a successful trial, the roll-out of the two-bin waste collection system is under way. Over the next year the scheme will be expanded to more than a third of the district.

Mulbarton and Bracon Ash were the first to try out the system. Residents of these villages have responded with enthusiasm. They are achieving recycling rates easily exceeding those forecast before the scheme started. The system does not yet handle glass but local bottle banks have been doing record business.

The collection of recycled material one week and general waste the next is working very well, with few reports of any problems. All households are supplied with a green bin for paper, cans and plastic and a grey one for other waste. When new sorting facilities are in place, we plan to extend the scheme to include glass.

The council is currently extending the new system to the Swardeston, Cringleford and Easton areas. Over the next year, it is planned to bring in Hethersett followed by Long Stratton, Costessey and Wymondham. Other areas will follow when the required resources, particularly money, can be made available.

Environment portfolio holder, John Peterson, commented, "We're determined to achieve the stiff targets that government's set us. The roll-out will keep us on course." Two other Norfolk councils, Broadland and Breckland are using exactly the same system.