

## PRESS RELEASE

### NEW FORUM BIDS FOR MONEY FOR PARISHES

At a meeting on Friday with local MP Norman Lamb the recently formed North Norfolk Town and Parishes Forum has put the case for money raised by the County Council from Second Homes Council Tax to be paid directly to those towns and parishes affected by the loss of amenities occasioned by the number of second homes. At present, according to a report produced by the forum of the over £4 million raised, just under half a million is retained by the District Council of which a mere £160,000 was allocated last year through its Big Society Fund to parishes. The officer-led fund, in the view of the forum, duplicates decision-making which could be undertaken by local parishes whose members know best the needs of their communities in meeting the increasing burdens imposed on them by both district and county and making better provision for local people. Moneys could be spent on local amenities, from play equipment to community shops, transport, the care of greens, and the support of neighbourhood organisations. The forum's Press officer, Tim Adams, who is mayor of Cromer, drew Mr. Lamb's attention to the huge surpluses in the hands of North Norfolk District Council, money which derives in good part from the Second Homes money. Concerns were also expressed that the County share, believed to be used for large infrastructure projects, had been increasing and now represented 75% of the money received.

The forum, chaired by Wells councillor Roger Arguile, was formed after a meeting in February attended by representatives of over twenty towns and parishes including Cromer, North Walsham, Sheringham, Holt, Mundesley and Wells. Since then support has grown so that there are now over thirty communities affiliated to the forum. Apart from the issue of Second Homes Council Tax, the forum proposes to take up other pressing issues, such as the provision of Affordable Homes, their allocation and the right to buy, Car Parking and the issue of Neighbourhood Plans

Mr. Lamb expressed his support for the aims of the Forum and said he would be writing to the chief officers of the District and County and to the Secretary of State to ask for greater government direction of tax revenues in the light of the forum's requests.

(Enquiries should be addressed to the Chairman, Revd. Roger Arguile at 07505338189 or Press Officer Tim Adams 07789625033)