

# FOR & AGAINST

Day 2: We look at both sides of the incinerator argument – pages 8-9

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BRITAIN'S REGIONAL NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Figures show councils' spending on redundancies in last three years

# £11.5m COST OF JOB LOSSES

Picture: BILL SMITH



**ACTION:** Council staff, disabled people and members of the Norfolk Coalition Against the Cuts protesting outside County Hall yesterday.

By **DAN GRIMMER**  
and **JOE DYKE**

Councils in the region have spent almost £11.5m making more than 1,000 workers redundant in the past three years, new figures have revealed.

As Norfolk County Council agreed to set aside £20m to cover payments in the next wave of job cuts, figures obtained through the Freedom of Information Act showed the number of workers already made redundant in the past three years.

Between 2008 and the start of December last year, 737 people were made redundant at county, district and city councils in Norfolk.

A further 421 were made redundant over the border at Waveney District Council, Suffolk County Council and Cambridgeshire County Council.

Norfolk County Council has been the council which has made the most redundancies, with 643 jobs lost over the past three years – at a cost of just under £6m.

The figures emerged as members of Norfolk County Council's ruling

cabinet recommended a budget package which will see the council shed 1,300 posts in the coming three years as it grapples to save £155m over that period.

A spokesman said the council, which has set aside £10m in each of the next two years to cover

redundancy costs, had a "good track record" of responding to change.

He said the council tried to avoid compulsory redundancies, but, with up to 1,000 posts set to disappear in the year ahead as

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## NORFOLK

# Assurance over cuts in services for children

Vulnerable children in need of protection will not be put at risk by controversial plans to cut nearly £60m from county council services and axe the equivalent of 750 full-time jobs, it was claimed yesterday.

Norfolk County Council's ruling cabinet recommended the budget plans which include a series of cuts across all departments and job losses.

The children's services department of the council is one of those taking the biggest hit with 470 posts earmarked for the axe including frontline social workers, social care managers, as well as the closure of the Unthank Family Centre in Norwich and the break up of a specialist family conferencing team to help problem families stay together.

Yesterday dozens of council staff were joined by members of the Norfolk Coalition Against the Cuts, and members of the Norfolk Coalition for Disabled People for a protest outside County Hall, urging the

**By SHAUN LOWTHORPE**  
Public affairs correspondent

administration to rethink the cuts and job loss plans, particularly those for children's services.

Jonathan Dunning, secretary of Norfolk Unison, said: "We are still struggling with the logic to effectively disinvest from prevention. They are cutting all the services which are all about working with families to help them bring up the child and maintain them as a family unit. The people who are going to suffer from that are first of all the children, the staff who will lose their jobs, and the wider public if they are to pick up the cost of expensive out-of-county placements.

Alison Thomas, cabinet member for children's services, said she had a lot of sympathy with the plight of staff at risk, but the administration had put together proposals which would help those most in need and also redesign the service.

"There's no doubt this has been a



**PLEA:** A protest at County Hall as councillors met yesterday to consider cost-saving cutbacks in services.

difficult challenge, and there have been no easy answers, certainly within children's services there have been some very difficult decisions," Mrs Thomas said. "These are very difficult times. All members will be aware there are large numbers of job losses proposed within the children's services department. I take no personal pleasure in making recommendations that affect people's jobs and livelihoods.

"I have personal experience with my family - that's why we moved to Norfolk because my husband lost his job. I am fully aware and supportive of the situations, they will find themselves in.

"What we must do is support all our staff, those who are at risk of losing their jobs, and those who will continue. This is the very first part of the big picture. Services aren't going to happen overnight, they are extremely complex, and we have got a

very professional team dealing with this as we speak."

Labour's Bert Bremner also questioned whether the Unthank Centre decision was driven by a desire to make money by selling off the city centre site, while Green councillor Stephen Little questioned what the impact of the changes would be, and what would happen to joint work currently carried out with nearby schools and medical practices.

Mrs Thomas said the decision was about prioritising the service and the Unthank Centre's location had no bearing on the proposals.

"We aren't actually stopping the service. There has been a confusion. The activities provided in the Unthank Centre are in Norwich. Some young people have to travel considerable distances from far-reaching parts of the county, such as Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn.

There will be specialist advisers within locality teams that will hopefully provide their thinking at a much earlier stage, getting involved at the very beginning, rather than waiting for problems to escalate.

"It's almost impossible for anybody to accurately predict what possible repercussions there might be in the changes to the service. We have equality impact assessments, which have informed our decisions, at this moment in time we are looking to redesign the services, with the budget we have available.

"Our response has been to make sure service we have is the best we can provide. Child protection is something that's very high on my agenda. I would certainly take no decisions that I felt would risk child protection."

The budget proposals will be considered at a full council meeting on February 14.

## Cost of redundancies is revealed by councils

### ■ FROM PAGE ONE

services change, some would be unavoidable.

He added the "vast majority" of redundancies over the past three years were at schools, where headteachers and governing bodies, not the county council, made those decisions.

He said a "significant number" of managers' posts were already in the process of disappearing after a review of the highest paid staff last year and confirmed the amounts paid to redundant staff had been reduced "to reflect the new financial climate".

Derrick Murphy, leader of Norfolk County Council, said: "I acknowledge the pain this will cause for staff and their families.

"We will do our utmost to manage these reductions with as few compulsory redundancies as possible. However, compulsory redundancies will be necessary to achieve the speed of transformation we seek and balance the council's books."

However, Jonathan Dunning, branch secretary for Unison Norfolk, which has been campaigning against the looming job cuts and was involved in lobbying outside yesterday's council meeting, said it was a false economy to make people redundant.

He said: "Making people redundant costs the employer money and it costs the economy money as you take spending power out of the economy. "And it costs the taxpayer money as

### Where the axe has fallen so far

Council	Redundancies				Payments (£s)			
	2008/9	2009/10	2010	Total	2008/9	2009/10	2010	Total
Breckland	7	1	0	8	75,690	N/A	N/A	75,690
Broadland	2	1	1	4	29,804	13,850	45,209	88,863
Great Yarmouth	0	0	1	1	0	0	13,594	13,594
W Norfolk and King's Lynn	5	5	15	25	107,692	136,548	293,255	537,495
North Norfolk	1	1	13	15	31,113	18,083	101,585	150,781
Norwich	6	8	25	39	230,994	150,727	489,947	871,668
South Norfolk	2	0	0	2	3,194	0	0	3,194
Waveney	38	31	12	81	597,919	316,288	107,767	1,021,974
Norfolk	193	176	274	643	1,563,678	1,462,245	2,902,143	5,928,066
Suffolk	35	37	163	235	291,039	219,291	1,006,596	1,516,926
Cambs.	31	32	42	105	347,029	382,662	487,033	1,216,724
<b>Total</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>546</b>	<b>1158</b>	<b>3,278,152</b>	<b>2,699,694</b>	<b>5,447,129</b>	<b>11,424,975</b>

people who are made redundant have to claim benefits. It would be better not to make people redundant and incur the subsequent expense."

At Norwich City Council, 39 people have been made redundant in the past three years at a cost of £871,668. The council has yet to reveal what impact the cuts will have on staff numbers in the years ahead.

A spokesman for Norwich City Council said: "Every year the city council looks for ways in which to

identify savings and efficiencies. Although we have worked hard to avoid compulsory redundancies over the last few years, there have inevitably been some.

"The nature and scale of the financial challenges that lie ahead will be immense but we always try to make sure we protect services as much as possible and continue to provide the important services that our residents rely on us to deliver."

At the Borough Council of King's

Lynn and West Norfolk, 25 people have been made redundant since 2008, at a cost of more than £500,000.

Nick Daubney, council leader, said: "The council has been proactive in undertaking early reviews of all services in order to address the projected budget deficit and the actions taken over the past two years are helping to achieve this."

Breckland Council, which is sharing services with South Holland District Council, has made eight redundancies

since 2008, and between the two authorities another 18 management posts are to be axed.

South Norfolk Council, where two workers have been made redundant in the past three years and Broadland District Council, where four staff were made redundant in that time, are hoping to avoid redundancies. Stephen Fennell, head of information and human resources, said: "We make every effort to ensure redundancy is a rare event.

"Where there is any question over the long-term need for a post we prefer to recruit on fixed-term or temporary contracts so people know where they stand.

"If staff numbers have to be reduced over the next two years, we hope it would be achieved through natural wastage and redeployment."

Great Yarmouth Borough Council has made the fewest redundancies of any council in the region - none in 2008 or 2009 and just one last year.

A council spokesman said it had been working hard to reduce its spending, including a recruitment freeze for all but the most essential jobs and increased shared services.

The workforce has been cut by 20 posts through early retirements and voluntary departures, but there is likely to be a "modest reduction" in posts in the budget for 2011/12, although the council hopes to avoid compulsory redundancy "in the majority of cases".