

**Norwich City Council**  
**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

## **Item 7**

**REPORT for meeting to be held on 26 May 2011**

### **Proposed process for the consultation on the priorities and future shape of the council**

- Summary:** The report sets out the proposed process for the consultation on the future priorities and shape of the council.
- The report, therefore, provides scrutiny with an opportunity to consider the proposed process and make recommendations to Cabinet.
- Conclusions:** The report should enable the scrutiny committee to determine any proposed changes to the proposed consultation process that they may wish to recommend.
- Recommendation:** To consider the proposed consultation process and in particular to identify any changes to the process that they would wish to recommend to Cabinet.
- To agree to consider the final draft of the core consultation document at a special Scrutiny Committee meeting during the week commencing 4 July.
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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 On the 22 February 2011 Council agreed to commence a consultation on the future role and shape of the council in the summer of 2011. This consultation exercise will include the future priorities of the council and options to deliver the significant savings the council needs to make. The results of this consultation will be used to inform the development of a new corporate plan 2012-15 and the development of the council's future budgets. This report sets out the proposed process for that consultation exercise.

## **2. Principles**

- 2.1 In designing this proposed consultation process the council has applied the following principles:

- Proportional – the time and resources put into the consultation exercise should be in line with the purpose and impact. Given that the main purpose of this consultation is to help the council determine how to reshape itself to realise significant savings then it would be inappropriate to commit large amounts of expenditure to the consultation exercise itself.
- Inclusive – the consultation exercise should be fully inclusive and provide different methods of access to ensure those people who want to take part are able to.
- Genuine – the results of the consultation exercise should be statistically valid and used to fully inform the decision making process
- Consistent – given that different methods of consultation will be employed, it will be important to ensure consistency in approach.

## **3. Key elements (communication and consultation)**

- 3.1 To ensure the consultation exercise is successful and that everyone who wishes to take part is able to, in an informed way, there are a number of elements the council will need to communicate as part of the process. These are as follows:

- What services the council is responsible for – it is important to ensure that consultees understand the nature of the council's current service provision and to ensure that this is not confused with the County Council's responsibilities and their previous consultation exercise
- Why are we doing this consultation – this will set why the council needs to make such significant further savings and therefore the need to run a consultation exercise on the future priorities and shape of the council.
- What have we already done to save money - this will explain the process the council has already been through to save £14million over the last three years and how that was achieved as this provides context to the options that will be put forward.
- How can they respond /get involved – this will describe the different methods of consultation available and how they can be accessed.
- How will the information be used – this will explain how the information will be used to inform the decision making process
- What will be the process for taking things forward – this explains the future process and timescales for taking the final options forward.

3.2 To carry out an effective consultation on the future priorities and shape of the council, the exercise has been broken down into five main elements / questions that we would wish to test through the consultation process. These are as follows:

- What should be the council's key priorities over the next 3 years?
- The package of core services the council is definitely going to provide in the future. Are these the right things?
- The options/ functions the council is proposing to provide differently in the future e.g. through the web only etc. What do people think of these?
- The options/ functions the council is proposing to provide to a lower level / or do less of them in the future. What do people think of them?
- The options / functions the council is proposing to stop completely in the future? What do people think of these?

3.3 While the elements set out above will form the core part of the main consultation exercise there may also be a number of ongoing consultations / dialogues on specific issues with certain groups that will continue beyond the overall consultation. Specific processes will be put in place for these.

#### **4. Format and methods**

- 4.1 To ensure that a consistent approach is taken throughout the process a core consultation document is being developed which will act as the basis for all the different consultation methods.
- 4.2 This core consultation document will then be delivered through the following methods:
- Citizens panel - which is broadly representative of the demographic makeup of the local community
  - Public survey – available through the web and in a paper format through council offices
  - Community workshops (in each of the four neighborhood areas)
  - Equalities forum
  - Scrutiny committee review
  - Business reception
  - Third sector conference
  - Staff lunchtime sessions
- 4.3 It is considered that this is an appropriate mix of consultation methods that fully meet the principles of good consultation outlined in section 2 of the report.
- 4.4 The data from the consultation exercise will be collated and analysed with support from a specialist research company. The final results will then be reported into the decision making process as set out in the timescales in section 5 of the report.

## **5. Timescales**

- 5.1 It is proposed that a report will be taken to cabinet on the 13 July and then Council on the 19 July with the consultation formally commencing on the 20 July.
- 5.2 The consultation will then run for 12 weeks and end on the 12 October. Results will then be reported back to Cabinet on the 9 November who will then determine which options they propose to take forward. This will then lead to the drafting of a new corporate plan, service plans and formal staffing consultations on specific proposals.
- 5.3 The outputs of this process will then feed into the overall budget setting process resulting in a new corporate plan (the policy framework) and the 2012/13 budget being proposed to Council on the 22 February 2012.