



**MINUTES**

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**4.30 p.m. – 6.05 p.m.**

**22 July 2010**

Present: Councillors Jeraj (Chair), Wiltshire (Vice Chair), Bradford, Fairbairn, Lubbock and Ramsay

Apologies: Councillors Blower and Little (S)

**1. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2010 subject to an amendment to the second paragraph of item 2 – Work Programme to state ‘during discussion, Councillor Ramsay suggested that the Committee should consider the effect of changes to the Council’s procurement strategy and how these had been implemented.’

**Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Officer reported that it had not been possible to make preparations for the Committee to hold an additional meeting on 29 July 2010 to consider the implementation of the ‘blue collar’ contracts awarded to Connaught. He proposed that this subject be considered at the September meeting and requested that members provide details of questions in advance in order that adequate responses could be prepared in time for that meeting.

**RESOLVED** to ask members of the Committee to provide the Scrutiny Officer with details of any questions concerning the implementation of the Connaught contract by 14 August 2010.

**Future Burial Provision in Norwich**

The Scrutiny Officer reported that the Public Protection Manager had not yet received further information concerning the proposed additional burial space to be provided on a portion of land to the north of Norwich but that he would report back on this issue at the September meeting.

**RESOLVED** to note the position.

## **2. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

Members considered the current work programme which had been circulated.

Councillor Fairbairn asked whether it was still intended to hold a meeting of the Committee in August. The Scrutiny Officer said that the August meeting had been scheduled on a provisional basis but, as the City Council elections had been called for 9 September 2010, it would not be appropriate to hold a meeting on that date.

In response to a question, the Scrutiny Officer said that he had not yet received a steer on the unallocated items listed on the work programme.

The Director of Regeneration and Development added that the Committee would be required to consider the next round of financial savings which would be presented at a meeting later in the year. In response to a question, he said that the results of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership review had not yet been made available to the Council.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Scrutiny Committee work programme as set out in the report subject to –

- (1) an additional item concerning the implementation of the new 'blue collar' contracts awarded to Connaught to be considered at the September meeting;
- (2) a report on the Council's budget savings and restructuring proposals to be considered at a meeting later in the year.

## **3. CYCLING TASK AND FINISH GROUP**

Councillor Jeraj (Chair) presented the final report of the Task and Finish Group. The Head of Transportation circulated copies of the draft action plan and said that he would welcome any comments by members of the Committee on its contents.

During discussion, Councillor Lubbock referred to the health benefits of cycling and asked whether reference to these had been made within the action plan. The Head of Transportation said that reference would be made to health benefits and, also to social cohesion and independence of young people within the report. Councillor Lubbock suggested that more could be done to promote cycling facilities including the provision of a cycle hire scheme within the City. Councillor Bradford suggested that any facilities needed to provide interchange with bus and train services. The Head of Transportation referred to the difficulties of providing interchange facilities for cycle routes. He said that it was difficult to create networks of routes that fulfilled all of the desired requirements. Problems were encountered on city centre routes because of the number of one way streets within the network. It was intended that there would be a review of cycle routes in the forthcoming year, and discussions would be held with the rail authorities concerning improvements to cycle parking facilities at Norwich station. In response to a question, the Head of Transportation said that there were no national standards to provide cycle facilities on trains and it was difficult to provide adequate accommodation for cycles within the new types of rolling stock.

During further discussion, Councillor Ramsay referred to the need to improve the Council's own cycle storage facilities and also to the need to improve the standard of cycle stands within the City generally in order to provide sufficient space for secure parking. The Head of Transportation commented that the Council operated to specific standards set by Sustrans and the Department of Transport when considering the provision of cycle stand facilities.

Members referred to the need to consult the Norwich Cycling Campaign on the recommendations within the report. The Head of Transportation said that the Cycling Campaign would be consulted on the draft action plan in the autumn. The Chair said that he would be meeting representatives of the Cycling Campaign to discuss the report in due course.

**RESOLVED to –**

- (1) recommend the Executive to consider implementation of a cycle to work scheme, pool bikes, training and cycle shed improvements as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report;
- (2) ask the Head of Transportation to contact the Norwich Cycling Campaign to request that a member representative sits on that body in order to help build the future development of cycling and report back to members via the e-councillor network;
- (3) note that a Cycling Action Plan is being developed by officers of the city and county councils with an initial draft in circulation, with the intention to incorporate the plan into the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy (NATS) implementation plan and LTP3 once ratified by the councils concerned;
- (4) note that a cycle hire scheme would be considered as part of the cycling action plan.

**4. PROGRESS REPORT – HOUSING IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The Tenancy Support Manager presented the report and added that the responsibility for implementation of the Housing Improvement Plan would be transferred to the Tenancy Services Manager's post in due course. He also added that the Housing Improvement Team had won the ROARS award for Team of the Year.

During discussion, the Vice Chair welcomed the progress made by the Housing service and congratulated the Housing Improvement Team on their ROARS award.

Councillor Lubbock asked whether the problems encountered with the implementation of the Connaught contracts had affected progress with the Housing Improvement Plan. The Director of Regeneration and Development said that officers had spent a considerable amount of time working with the new contractor to improve the performance. Connaught had appointed a board member to be located in Norwich to concentrate on performance improvement. The Director of Regeneration and Development said that it had been disappointing that it had taken a considerable

period of time to secure these improvements but said that the contractor had recognised errors in resourcing and supply which were being addressed. It would also take some time to achieve the required change in staff culture.

Councillor Lubbock said that the contractor would need to make significant efforts to rebuild goodwill with the Council's tenants. The Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods) said that staff were working hard to improve communication with tenants particularly regarding upgrades and repairs.

The Tenancy Support Manager said that the Tenant's Talkback Panel would provide an opportunity to express their comments concerning problems which had been encountered with services provided by the new contractor. A meeting of the panel would take place in September/ October and a further report would be presented to the Scrutiny Committee. The Chair added that the contractor's progress during the first quarter would be reviewed at the September meeting of this Committee.

In response to further questions, the Tenancy Support Manager said that the Continuous Service Improvement Plan would be monitored and managed in the same way as the Housing Improvement Plan with specific objectives allocated to individual staff and teams. It was hoped that the Audit Commission would inspect those areas previously inspected to demonstrate improvements to the service in March 2011.

**RESOLVED** to –

- (1) note the report on progress made with the Housing Improvement Plan in year 2 as detailed in the report;
- (2) ask the Tenancy Services Manager to liaise with the contractor to prepare communications protocol for members to report problems concerning services provided by the new contractor.

**5. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of Item 6 below on the grounds that it would disclose information relating to the business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

**\*6. NORWICH AND HCA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP – PROGRESS REPORT AND DRAFT INTERIM REVISED BUSINESS PLAN**

The City Growth and Development Manager presented the report and added that the Implementation Board had won a ROARS award for cross council working.

The City Growth and Development Manager then answered a number of questions concerning the proposed development of new homes, the impact of the comprehensive spending review on the objectives of the Partnership and the timetable for the completion of the projects.

During discussion, members commented on suggestions on principles to be applied to the Business Plan for the Partnership including standards of design, environmental quality, ownership models and community engagement.

**RESOLVED** to –

- (1) note the progress made with the Norwich and HCA Strategic Partnership as detailed in the report;
- (2) ask members of the Committee to provide suggestions to the City Growth and Development Manager for input into the Business Plan.

CHAIR