



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.30 p.m. - 7.00 p.m.

9 October 2008

Present: Councillors Stephenson (Chair), Watkins (Vice Chair), Blower, Bradford, Cannell, Driver, Fairbairn, Jeraj, Little (A), Offord and Ramsay

Also present:: Councillor Morpew, Leader of the Council (Items 1 – 3) and Councillor Morrey, Executive Member for Sustainable City Development (Item 4)

Apologies: Councillors Fisher and Gihawi

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 11 September 2008.

2. SERVICE PLANNING PROCESS AND SCRUTINY ROLE IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Deputy Chief Executive Officer gave a presentation on the service planning process and its relationship to the Corporate Plan. This explained how the Council's strategies and plans fitted together. It was important to understand the "golden thread" which linked upwardly from the appraisals to service plans and on to the Council's vision and priorities, the Community Strategy and local area agreement ending with the Regional Strategy.

As part of the Scrutiny Committee's performance management role members were required to look at what had been achieved in the previous year, how this linked to the Council's Corporate Objectives and how success would be measured. The question members needed to ask was "How is the Council meeting its objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan?" Members noted that the new traffic light indicator system made it easier at a glance to see performance levels and there would also be a clear and concise explanation against each indicator to help them in their analysis. It was important that members could easily identify the direction of travel.

The Deputy Chief Executive Officer answered questions about the Council's priorities both in the short and longer term and the 53 core priorities set out in the Corporate Plan. Discussion took place on the arrangements for monitoring progress against

these priorities. The Policy and Performance Manager circulated copies of the public survey being undertaken in conjunction with the County Council. The survey was being carried out by MORI who guaranteed 1,100 returns.

The Deputy Chief Executive Officer then explained the way in which the service plans fitted into the budget process. Service planning and budgeting both took forward the headline objectives for the following year(s). The Council would need to confirm the realigned service plans and the budget as part of the policy framework.

RESOLVED to -

- (1) note that the slides from the presentation would be placed on e-Councillor;
- (2) ask the Deputy Chief Executive to circulate an example of one service plan and one team plan to members of the Committee for information purposes

3. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Officer presented the report and answered questions about the way in which the proposed Task and Finish Groups would operate. Their first task would be to scope their individual reviews taking into account previous discussion at this Committee.

A member referred to the proposed review on the Living Wage. He understood that work was already being undertaken through the City of Norwich Partnership and wondered whether Spring 2009 was too late for this Committee to become involved. The Scrutiny officer said that the South Norfolk Scrutiny Committee was intending to look at credit unions and it might be possible to undertake some joint working in this area. Councillor Morphew referred to work to be done by the Executive in terms of the Corporate Plan and social inclusion. It would be useful to align this work with any scrutiny work if at all possible.

The Committee also discussed the work to be undertaken on Cemetery provision in Norwich. The Chair suggested that this might be a suitable topic for another Task and Finish Group when resources became available.

The Vice Chair said that it was not necessary to wait for government guidance before undertaking further work on Participatory Democracy such as the inclusion of an e-petitions site on the Council's website. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services said he would check what work had already been undertaken on this issue.

RESOLVED to -

- (1) note the report;
- (2) establish the following Task and Finish Groups: -
 - Cycling – Councillors Driver, Jeraj and Stephenson
 - Allotments – Councillors Bearman, Cannell and Offord

- City Centre Toilet Provision – Councillors Blower, Bradford and Watkins

4. PRE SCRUTINY - NORWICH CITY COUNCIL ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY 2008/10

The Environmental Strategy Manager presented the report and referred to the draft Environmental Strategy which was to be considered by the Executive on 15 October. He explained that the draft Strategy had been prepared in consultation with the Climate Change Panel. The Director of Legal and Democratic Services pointed out that approval of the Strategy was an Executive function. This meant that the Strategy would not be referred to Council. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer said however that it would be possible to have a presentation for all Councillors if required.

A member said that he would ideally like to see the Strategy covering a longer period than 2008 - 2010 to facilitate the inclusion of both short term and long term targets. The Environmental Strategy Manager explained why the draft Strategy only covered the period to 2010. The Council was however committed to achieving a 30% reduction in its carbon emissions by 2012 through its participation in the Local Government Carbon Management Programme. He answered questions about the work done to baseline the Council's carbon emissions for 2007 and outlined some of the proposals for achieving savings. He pointed out that achieving a reduction of 6% per year in carbon emissions could easily result in financial savings of around £1 million over the next five years. He said that publicity for proposals for achieving savings would be undertaken through the Communications Team. He would be looking to establish environmental champions to help support schemes. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer said that staff were generally very supportive of the proposals.

Members also discussed the extent to which it was possible to require the Council's contractors to reduce their carbon emissions. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer said that these issues would be considered by the Contracts Working Party in connection with the re-provisioning of the current CityCare contract.

Members suggested a number of amendments to the draft Environmental Strategy as follows:-

- the last paragraph on page 21 under the heading "Climate Change - the potential impact" being re-written to reflect the fact that any positive aspects to climate change will only result from action taken to respond to climate change;
- minor grammatical amendments to the first paragraph on page 21 under the heading "Climate Change - the potential impact" together with the deletion of the words "and in the coming few decades" from the penultimate sentence of that paragraph;
- the table on page 34 under the heading "Who is responsible for this strategy implementation?" being amended to reflect the fact that elected members set annual objectives on environmental sustainability;

- the second bullet point in the output column of the action plan to “Continue to enable the construction of affordable housing to high environmental standards and develop exemplar housing schemes” on page 39 being amended to read "Enable construction of at least one dwelling to Level 6 of the Code for Sustainable Homes";
- the inclusion of reference to sustainability and the implications of reliance on non-sustainable materials such as oil.

Discussion took place on the arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy. The Chair referred to the need for the development of clear targets for areas as well as the reduction in carbon emissions. The Environmental Strategy Manager said that he would submit regular monitoring reports to the Climate Change Panel. The Director of Regeneration and Development pointed out that performance against the 4 environmental PI's would be included in the quarterly performance data submitted to this Committee and the Executive.

RESOLVED to -

- (1) note the report;
- (2) recommend the Executive to adopt the suggested amendments to the draft Environmental Strategy as minuted above

5. NORFOLK HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor Bradford reported that the next meeting of the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be held the following week.

RESOLVED to note the position.

CHAIR