

Report to Council
25 June 2013
Report of Executive head of strategy, people and democracy
Subject Scrutiny Review 2012-13

Item

12

Purpose

To report on the work and progress that has been made by the scrutiny committee for the civic year 2012 - 13. At the 6 June meeting of the scrutiny committee the attached report was agreed for submission to the council for adoption.

Article 6.3(d) of the council's constitution (overview & scrutiny committees) requires the scrutiny committee to report annually to the council on its workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.

Recommendations

To receive the Scrutiny Review 2012–2013

Financial Consequences

None

Risk Assessment

The scrutiny committee balances its role with scrutinising corporate issues with the function of scrutiny that is informed more by members' involvement within the communities they serve.

Strategic Priority and Outcomes/Service Priorities

The criteria based work programme of the scrutiny committee considers matters that link with the forward agenda and the corporate plan with the role of the scrutiny committee, as described in the report, having an impact on the city and community by helping the council deliver services and outcomes that take into account and understand local needs.

Executive Member

Alan Waters; Value for money services.

Ward(s): All

Contact Officer

Steve Goddard

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Background Documents

None



Introduction by Claire Stephenson, the chair of the scrutiny committee

As the council continues to face financial challenges and seeks to save £2 million each year, the scrutiny committee is a valuable forum for exploring ways in which services can continue to be delivered in the context of further budget cuts. More than ever, the scrutiny process needs to be able to judge whether the council's work could be carried out more efficiently or in different ways, and to act as a critical friend, making suggestions for improvements where appropriate.

National and local changes have already caused difficulties for the council. A worsening financial climate has made it more difficult for the council to keep up with processing benefits as more citizens have made claims. In the future, the Government's welfare reforms will create further challenges. The scrutiny committee's repeated examinations of the council's benefit service have highlighted areas for improvement and the committee will continue to monitor the progress of this department via its improvement plan. I hope that this work of the scrutiny committee has had a very real impact on the lives of citizens in Norwich.

In June of this civic year, all members of the scrutiny committee will be taking part in a training day that is designed to support a positive teamwork approach. I hope this development opportunity will further enhance individual and collective ability and help make the scrutiny role for members even more enjoyable and worthwhile.

I have been pleased this year that useful scrutiny topics have been suggested by members of the public and individual members of the scrutiny committee. I hope that public engagement in the scrutiny process will continue to grow and that issues discussed by the committee will resonate across the city.

A cross-party approach has led to the positive reception of the findings of the task and finish group set up to examine community space. These findings are due to be considered at a meeting of the cabinet this summer.

The summary of scrutiny outcomes 2012 to 2013 shows conclusions and recommendations of the scrutiny committee which have been acted upon. These include further engagement with sheltered housing tenants, a meeting to deal with the issues of street and gully cleaning on Gladstone Street and the setting up of an accreditation scheme for employers who agree to pay the living wage. When recommendations such as these are taken up, scrutiny benefits residents of the city and we are glad to have made such differences. The committee appreciates feedback and information about the outcomes arising from its recommendations.

This coming year is likely to be dominated by welfare reform. However, scrutiny members have also highlighted the topics of the 'Benefits improvement plan and performance', the city deal and the healthy city programme as projects which will have major impacts on Norwich and its residents. I hope the scrutiny committees work will improve the lives of those who are affected by these programmes.

As Chair of the scrutiny committee I present the 2012/13 annual report.

The membership of the scrutiny committee for 2012 – 2013

Councillors:

Stephenson – Chair

Grenville

Howard

Lubbock

Sands (M)

Stonard

Storie

Manning – Vice chair

Bradford

Brimblecombe

Button

Galvin

Gee

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Why do we have scrutiny and what does it do?

Scrutiny is member led and independent of political party arrangements.

At Norwich city council the scrutiny committee is chaired by a member of the opposition.

Scrutiny is the name given to the process whereby councillors investigate, scrutinise, and gain overview of the work of the council. More specifically the scrutiny committee pays particular attention to; decisions made by the cabinet and delegated officers in relation to council policy and services. The scrutiny process can provide a way of influencing decisions and policy development.

Accountability of decision makers is one of the main drivers to modern and efficient local government. Scrutiny can also assist in aligning council policy and priorities, promoting efficiency and effectiveness and enhancing partnerships. One of the key roles for councillors who are not cabinet members is to undertake a scrutiny role for the council. At Norwich the scrutiny committee is encompassed as part of good governance and decision-making principles that can support the council's effectiveness in the delivery of services. Scrutiny can do this by offering an independent challenge to cabinet/executive decision-making that provides accountability.

Effective challenge via scrutiny

The guiding principle of local government scrutiny is to provide effective challenge to those who exercise executive power, and spend public money; the scrutiny committee can offer critical friend challenge by councillors that are representing the public and those that use the services provided by the council. There is also scope for local authority scrutiny committees to review the work of other agencies that affect the lives, health and wellbeing of their residents. This can provide the basis for continuous and constructive dialogue between public service providers and those who use them. Also, scrutiny is an opportunity for mutual learning and potential benefits.

Scrutiny is a requirement supported by legislation

Under the local government act 2000, scrutiny was introduced as a check to the power of the new council cabinets. Moving forward, subsequent acts of parliament have come in to extend the remit of scrutiny along with its statutory responsibilities. For example, local government scrutiny committees can now look at the work of partner organisations as well.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities to scrutinise other partners, such as the Environment Agency. This, along with other legislation relating to scrutiny powers has now been consolidated in the Localism Act 2011.

Scrutiny work programming

The work programme for the scrutiny committee is informed by a combination of what councillors' feel are important topics, gathered from their ward work and their activities across the whole council or members of the public highlighting issues for debate. Council officers can also request that scrutiny investigate and consider certain issues on their behalf. Once a topic for scrutiny has been agreed, the topic will usually be required to comply with the principles of Picc. **P**ublic interest, **I**mpact, **C**ouncil & performance and **K**eeping in **C**ontext.

The main areas of scrutiny work involve the following activities; Horizon-scanning scrutiny, Pre scrutiny and Post-decision scrutiny along with performance data monitoring.

Horizon-scanning scrutiny searches for any likely developments coming the way of local government. The idea behind this is to assist in planning ahead in order to help the council adapt accordingly.

Pre-decision scrutiny examines issues pre cabinet and considers and comments on proposals, objectives and draft policies. This way the scrutiny committee has the ability to influence or inform development of cabinet work before decision or enactment. This makes it possible for the scrutiny committee to assist the council in achieving its targets.

Post-decision scrutiny considers and comments on the implementation of a policy and the related performance. This way, cabinet can use scrutiny to review the effectiveness of its decisions. Evidence can then be used in assisting the council to revise the policy accordingly, if this is necessary.

Quarterly performance monitoring

The council's programme of meetings is set so that the scrutiny committee sits to coincide with the quarterly performance reporting to cabinet as this allows for pre-scrutiny to take place. This enables the scrutiny committee to bring to the cabinet's attention any issues that may require closer scrutiny. Sometimes the scrutiny committee will programme a slot at one of its meetings to have a closer look at any areas of concern that may arise due to performance issues. The quarterly performance data is considered along side period budget monitoring information.

A copy of member questions and the officer and cabinet portfolio member responses are circulated prior to the meeting. This enables member questions to be answered as fully as possible prior to the meeting, leaving more time to focus on any key areas that may need scrutiny attention at the meeting.

An example of an item resulting from the scrutiny committee's look at the quarterly performance data is the work that has been carried out around the LGSS benefits service.

Work programme setting and scoping areas of work

In setting the work programme the aim is not to load it with too many separate topics that none of them can be satisfactorily dealt with. Coordination with cabinet and corporate leadership team is advisable when programming in order to keep the work of scrutiny relevant to the council's strategic aims. However, a certain amount of flexibility needs to be built into the scrutiny work programme to allow for any unexpected developments, such as the need to scrutinise the council's performance in response to a sudden issue, or for example; repercussions of a severe weather episode etc.

Scrutiny should be programmed to be in sync with the decision-making schedule of the cabinet. This will allow pre-decision scrutiny to conclude well in advance to a relevant cabinet decision being taken. This can allow the cabinet time to factor the scrutiny committee's findings into their decision making process. Post-decision scrutiny should not take place until the policy chosen for scrutiny has had time to take effect and for performance data or patterns to emerge. With regard to horizon-scanning, scrutiny is most productive when sufficient information is available about developments on the horizon so that informed questions can be devised.

Evidence based scrutiny

Scrutiny committees are empowered to acquire the information they need to perform effective scrutiny including publically exempt documents and information.

The evidence gathering by scrutiny committees can take many forms. This can include; policy documents, press cuttings, data and officer or member reports. People are also asked to attend meetings to give oral evidence such as local residents, officers, partners or experts. Another useful method to gain evidence can be site/location visits, such as the visits made by members of the task and finish group – community space through out the last year.

Recommendations and Reporting

Once a scrutiny piece of work has taken place, recommendations are sometimes made and reported to the cabinet for consideration. At Norwich, this is usually done as part of the lead officers' report or paying regard to the minutes of the scrutiny committee in informing the final decision.

Recommendations should strive to be, as much as possible, specific measurable achievable relevant & timed - SMART.

What happens next?

Once agreement to scrutiny recommendations has taken place whether it be something that officers have agreed to, or the cabinet, this should not always be where the scrutiny process ends. It is good practice for the scrutiny committee to set a review date to receive an update from the relevant portfolio

holder on the cabinet or officers, on the progress that has been made towards implementation of the scrutiny committee's recommendations. However, this monitoring can sometimes simply be achieved via overview of the performance management data which is received at committee periodically throughout the year.

Decision call – in

Call – in is the term used in describing the process whereby non – executive members can request the executive to reconsider a decision it has made. As part of this process the scrutiny committee can act as a forum where the validity and quality of a called in decision can be discussed before it is referred back to the cabinet. Once back with the cabinet, those who made the original decision can either change it while taking on board suggestions from scrutiny or they can reject any recommendations and keep the decision as it was. While a decision is called – in, it can not be enacted until the above process has been undertaken. If the scrutiny committee makes no recommendations as a result of a call-in, the original cabinet decision can be enacted without having to go back to the cabinet once the meeting of scrutiny has taken place.

Councillor call for action

The Councillor Call for Action represents a tool in equipping councillors in their local advocate role for their communities and further strengthens their position of being community champions. Although expected to continue to resolve issues informally, where councillors are not satisfied that real action has been taken to resolve the issue that they have raised, resolution may be sought via CCfA. This enables any councillor of the council to ask the scrutiny committee to take a matter further. Councillor call for action is a last resort option only.

The Council's CCfA protocol can be obtained upon request from the scrutiny officer and is also available on e-councillor.

Scrutiny task & finish groups

Task & finish groups are time limited focus groups that report their review findings to the main committee or the cabinet and are supported by relevant officers of the council and or outside contributors.

Most topics on the scrutiny work programme can be dealt with as part of the agenda for a regular meeting. Others may be larger pieces of work that require a separate or special one issue meeting or series of meetings. If a task & finish group is to be set up in place of a full committee review taking place, interested members should volunteer to be involved. It is usual that task & finish groups are not politically balanced unless a strong need exists. This is because the main scrutiny committee which is balanced has to agree the findings, or delegates the task & finish group on behalf of the whole committee to report directly to the cabinet. Actually, it is much more

important to appoint those members with an interest or expertise in the issue, irrespective of political groups.

It should also be decided who will be co-ordinating the group and organising the work streams.

Summary of scrutiny outcomes 2012 – 2013

Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Review of sheltered housing provision Pre scrutiny of cabinet decision; to consider the issues arising from phase II of the sheltered housing review that seeks to ensure the council has a sheltered housing provision that is fit for purpose; which tenants choose to live in; supports independent living and provides community hubs for older people.	To recommend that cabinet: Monitor the impact of the proposals on supply and demand of social housing and amend the policy as necessary; Identify opportunities to buy or build appropriate housing, in any sector, for older people; Encourage social housing providers to provide 'lifetime' homes; and Ensure that the voices of all tenants in sheltered housing are heard through a variety of engagement methods	Careful monitoring of uptake will take place with the completion of the review. The aim is to provide for the needs of tenants in the most appropriate way. As part of the 30 year business plan for the housing service it is an aspiration that we look to build new sheltered housing and this could be a mix of type. Any new build will be done having actively canvassed the views of tenants. The council engages and consults with tenant reps of the Sheltered Housing Tenants Forum and sheltered housing officers attend monthly tenants' meetings in all schemes. Where changes occur within the service, all tenants receive a communication. Regular 'surgeries' are held in the majority of our schemes for tenants to see the support worker. There is also a dedicated telephone number where any tenant living in sheltered housing can ring for help and advice. Lifetime homes provision forms part of planning policy. There was a cabinet decision in January 2013 to enter into partnership for the provision of a housing with care and dementia care scheme/facility subject to conditions being met.

Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Food banks To discuss the reasons why people are using food banks in increasing numbers and to help inform our thinking in the way we allocate resources and commission services	Members felt that it would be important for them to find out if there were particular reasons for why there was a trend for people's periods of crisis to increase in time, and to receive further information from the Food bank, that breaks down the reasons for people presenting for three vouchers or more That the communications team helps promote the work of food banks via print and online media Clarify with food bank staff that the city council has debt advice officers available to provide guidance to food bank users in the future	A Food bank project with the aim of identifying reasons why people were presenting on more than one occasion has yet to take place. This is unable to be progressed at present due to the project not now being undertaken by the foodbank. However, members heard that the reasons given by clients for crisis can be broken down between the following headings; benefits delays, low income, benefit changes, and debt. Appropriate reference will be made to the work of the food bank in relevant material. Food bank staff are now sign posting clients. A training session was held in January 2013 for food bank volunteers based on identifying and involving available agencies around the city.

Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Tennant scrutiny panels To gain an understanding of and to comment on the new social housing regulation for tenant engagement and scrutiny and the proposals for revising the current tenant involvement structure to ensure compliance	The annual report be presented to the scrutiny committee annually by the tenant reps; to be entered onto the work programme for Nov 2013 & The annual review be received by scrutiny; to be entered onto the work programme for Nov 2013	The participation of tenants was welcomed by the scrutiny committee. Members wished that the council be encouraged to promote; common standards between housing associations and the council that promote best practice for involvement of and outcomes for tenants. The council was also encouraged to continuously share learning and comparison with other authorities. And that while working as an independent entity, tenant scrutiny be made aware that they are able to contact and liaise with the council scrutiny committee if necessary The council's scrutiny committee will carry out its role by; performance monitoring, receiving the annual report from the tenant reps and by receiving the annual review

Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Street and gully cleaning on Gladstone Street	The head of city development services was requested to set up a meeting with residents in the area to talk about the issue and invite the county council and Anglia Water to attend along with officers of Norwich city council to address the localised flooding incidences	A successful event was held in January 2013 and a report on the outcome of the meeting summarising the issues raised and actions proposed has been published on the council's website as well as circulated to local councillors and the relevant portfolio holder.
Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Night time economy To look into the night time economy, early morning restriction notices and late night levy. And to gain an understanding of the impact of associated crime, beneficial and detrimental economic considerations and the impact on services in Norwich.	Members be kept informed of the progress made with addressing the responsibilities of bar staff and licensees with regard to drunkenness and cheap unit pricing of alcohol	There may be a future monitoring role for scrutiny or county health scrutiny with the development of a Norwich alcohol strategy. An action plan is currently being developed between partners and is led by the clinical commissioning group
Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Normandie tower lifts Councillor Lubbock requested that the scrutiny committee take up this issue, on behalf of a leaseholder, and that the committee should consider the ongoing issues relating to the lifts at Normandie Tower and the award of the contract for repairs.	Members be kept informed of the work being undertaken to improve the reliability of the new lifts.	The committee will consider a report from the Norfolk property services Norwich liaison board on the issues surrounding the lift repairs at Normandie Tower later in the year.

Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Benefits claims process to gain an overview and to comment on the processes involved in dealing with benefits claims and the claims backlog	As a result of this scrutiny the members requested officers to provide the comparative costs of contractors in clearing backlog versus employed staff if the team was resourced to the numbers that include the number of contracted staff. Also, detailed explanation of the specific issues that caused the backlog. Regular updates from benefits board meetings for members were also requested as was a review of the process that developed the improvement plan and further review of the improvement plan to see if it requires adjustment to sustain continued improvement. The scrutiny committee also asked for monitoring feedback on the effectiveness of the face to face model	Information on costs have been circulated to the committee along with an explanation of some of the issues that led to the back log. A number of factors have been cited such as increased volume of claims as a result of the recession, an increase in the electronic transfers from the Department for Work and Pensions, changes to working practices (multi-skilling staff) as well as staff turnover. A suite of performance related information has been developed by the council and LGSS. This has not yet been finally signed off and agreed but this is expected to be completed by the end of May 2013. This will facilitate regular updates to be circulated to Scrutiny committee members. The improvement plan and effectiveness of the face to face model were reviewed at the Scrutiny committee on 11 April 2013.

Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Deprivation, inequality and welfare issues (food banks follow up) To; carry out further scrutiny work to gain an overview picture of the deprivation, inequality and welfare issues that Norwich residents experience, and to decide on any further scrutiny work and/or recommendations	The council develops a scheme of accreditation with employers in the City who sign up to 'a living wage' as part of the scheme currently being developed by the Council Members also supported the idea that existing and future opportunities for community gardening projects that grow healthy food but can also reduce social isolation and improve health outcomes, be considered It was also requested that the scrutiny committee has an opportunity to input into the development of the social barometer The committee also asked that as part of the scrutiny review of community centres, the council explores the use of centres in the delivery of community based health and wellbeing projects with partners - such as working with the county council in linking in with the early years project. Also to consult with the Clinical Commissioning Group regarding findings of the task & finish group – 'community space'.	While noting the findings of Marmot and the report/presentation; the scrutiny committee was keen to support keeping the issue of inequality and deprivation at the top of the agenda and it was noted that the Healthy City work programme was being developed collaboratively across responsible agencies. Within the Healthy City Programme the council is prioritising working with partners on evidence based solutions to address health inequalities in Norwich; the scrutiny committee will consider whether or not to place the healthy city programme on the work programme. The task & finish group paid broad regard to inequality issues in its approach. It was also noted that community centres should be venues where statutory agencies could provide easy to access services. Future work of the scrutiny committee will in part be informed by the discussions held as part of this topic.

Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Council tax reduction scheme for 2013/14 To consider the results of the consultation and agree the council's approach to its council tax discounts and exemptions and council tax reduction scheme for 2013/14 to be recommended to council.	That the proposed council tax reduction scheme for 2013-14 is recommended to council for approval and that the proposed revised council tax discounts and exemptions are recommended to council for approval. Also that an all group working party be set up at a suitable time to look at the options for the 2014/15 scheme, and in doing so examine other local authorities approaches; and that there be a 'frequently asked questions' section in future consultations.	The proposed council tax reduction scheme for 2013 to 2014 was recommended by the cabinet and then approved by Council on January 13 2013. A working party is to be set up at a suitable time to look at the options for the 2014/15 scheme and in doing so examine other local authorities approaches
Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Assets of community value To give members the opportunity to comment on decision-making and governance proposals prior to recommendations going before cabinet for decision The committee's consideration of the proposed process took account of elements such as; member input, the determination of nominations, appeals and review, the review and approval of relevant compensation payments, external review of appeal decisions and how decisions are reported.	The cabinet was requested to consider amending the proposed scheme so that; all councillors are notified of all nominations or appeals against decisions, and that when, for the review and approval of compensation payments the sum exceeds £20K that the cabinet is consulted. The view was that this legislation was poorly conceived/drafted. It was requested that as part of the planned work in explaining the localism act, care be taken in explaining the scheme so as not to raise unrealistic expectations for relevant community bodies.	The cabinet acknowledged the comments made by the scrutiny committee and accepted the recommendations made. The scheme is now in operation. A localism act guide was published on the council's website including explanation of the assets of community value provisions. Guidance on the process has also been published on the council's website.

Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Overview of the Corporate Plan 2012 – 2015 To gain an overview and refresh knowledge of the Corporate Plan 2012-2015 prior to pre-scrutiny of the proposed policy and budget framework at a later meeting	That the Cabinet consider amending the wording of the corporate plan to state that the council 'seeks to achieve' 20 mph zones across the city; Also that a reference to the healthy city programme is included in the corporate plan. That context be added to the corporate plan on how the wider economic position is impacting on new house building. to ask cabinet to include a recycling waste performance measure based on the reduction of tonnage of residual waste; to include the number of people using community centres as a performance measure under the heading City of character and culture.	The proposed amendments to the corporate plan 2012-15 were accepted by the cabinet and approved by the Council, with the exception of the proposed performance measure for people using community centres and the proposed measure change with regards to the reduction of tonnage of residual waste.

Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Community right to challenge process To review and comment on the proposed process, with a particular focus on the proposed governance arrangements for the scheme and to make any recommendations to Cabinet	The scrutiny committee requested that a Liberal Democrat member be included on any contracts working party convened to consider expressions of interest	Agreed that this to be done at the appropriate time Community right to challenge decisions now form standing items on scrutiny committee and cabinet forward agendas (annually in September if required)
Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Proposed policy and budget framework for 2013/14 To comment on the proposed budget and make suggestions to cabinet regarding the proposed budget's ability to deliver the priorities of the council	The scrutiny committee endorsed the report and was content that the cabinet recommends the budget to Council. That the finance manager circulates a breakdown of the transport costs in the budget to scrutiny members To ask for a report to go to the sustainable development panel looking at income generation surrounding renewable energy.	The proposed policy and budget framework was agreed by the council. A detailed breakdown between car mileage and cycle mileage is currently not possible; However, this is now something the council may consider as part of moving to a new payroll provider. A future meeting of the sustainable development panel will be looking at income generation surrounding renewable energy.
Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Process and procedure - St Stephens and Chapelfield highways scheme	Due to public questions arising, the scrutiny committee reviewed the recent consultation on the proposed traffic changes in the city centre	Having considered the information in this report and presented at the meeting, the committee decided that it is content with the process that has been followed

Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Task and finish group – community space The committee received the final report of the task and finish group	The scrutiny committee recommend the task and finish group findings to the cabinet and relevant lead officers	The next stage of the process will be for the t&fg report to be presented for cabinet consideration
Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Role of the ward councillor To review the role of a ward councillor with in the new operating model and the opportunities provided by the council's neighbourhood model. To make recommendations on the role of a ward councillor.	In recognising that the role of the councillor was evolving, the scrutiny committee wished to look at this item again as part of next year's work programme, once the new neighbourhood operating model had been further evolved. .	Now on the list of items to be considered for inclusion on to the 2013 – 2014 scrutiny committee work programme.

Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
LGSS, and the revenues and benefits service This was to perform a year on look at the performance of LGSS and a progress report on the revenues and benefits service. This was a chance to identify any areas for improvement and to note successes	That members of the scrutiny committee visit the benefits service to see work in progress, and this to inform consideration of, a report on the revenues and benefits service later in the year to review the progress of the improvement plan; the response to welfare reform and universal credit and consider a case study.	A visit will be arranged
Scrutiny topic	Scrutiny request	Outcome
Welfare reform and housing benefit changes To assess the implications of benefit capping and social housing under occupancy rules that come into force in April 2013 and to look at any outcomes available from the universal credit pilots	To agree the scope/areas of the scrutiny of welfare reform at a workshop arranged for the purpose before the work programme setting meeting of the scrutiny committee Ask members to make a note of any “door-step” issues that arise and feed back to the scrutiny officer.	A workshop for scrutiny members has been arranged for 6 June 2013 for members to look at the areas of welfare reform that the scrutiny process may best be able to impact.

Minutes and reports of the scrutiny committee meetings can be found on the council's web-site at

<http://www.norwich.gov.uk/CommitteeMeetings>

Task & finish group –community space

Membership of the task & finish group; Councillors Galvin, Gee, Sands and Storie.

The task and finish group was set up by the scrutiny committee in December 2011 to look at the distribution, social benefit and the council's role in the provision of community space. The task & finish group reported its findings and recommendations to the scrutiny committee in March 2013.

Before presenting its findings to the scrutiny committee, the task & finish group held a briefing for the organising committees of the centres. Attendees broadly supported the findings and enthusiastically took on the idea of closer liaison and the sharing of skills between the centres towards improving resilience, support, training and effectiveness.

It is expected that the findings will be considered by the cabinet in the summer and may be used in the development of future work that the council might undertake in relation to community space provision.

The task and finish group felt as a result of the review the purpose of community centres was;

“Community centres, provide space and facilities for community led services and activities that contribute to the health and well being of communities. Centres along side other community groups and activities, some of which are located in these buildings, are an extremely important resource and can play an important role in the social and economic regeneration of the city and contribution to the corporate priorities of a safe and clean city; a prosperous city and a city of character and culture. These venues are where local residents can meet, organise community activities or events and where statutory agencies can provide easy access to services.”

In conclusion of the review the members of the task & finish group outlined seven broad suggestions and recommendation areas:

- Federation and collaboration
- Accountability and management
- Training and mentoring
- The council's role
- Strategic development
- Environmental audit
- Communication.

The report can be found on the council's website

<http://www.norwich.gov.uk/CommitteeMeetings>

Development and the role of scrutiny looking forward.

Onward the local government picture looks challenging with funding uncertainties that are likely to impact local government service delivery. The scrutiny role will become even more focused on ensuring the continuation of good and efficient public service delivery and methods, in line with the council's aims and objectives.

The other major impact for local government and the residents is the welfare reform that is now underway. In the year ahead, the scrutiny committee work programme is more than likely to reflect this along with the continuation of funding and the implications for services that the council and its partners deliver for the public.

The members of the scrutiny committee will be taking part in a training event in June with the purpose being to assist with the committee's development and to build on earlier training initiatives.

Having taken part in the training the aim is that members will be further enabled to:

- Recognise the complementary strengths of the individuals that make up the scrutiny committee and the benefits of effective team working
- Understand prepared papers and be confident in identifying areas for further probing and investigation
- Use a range of questioning and investigative techniques to enable them to get to the 'heart of the issue' under scrutiny
- Shape effective conclusions and recommendations from scrutiny work
- Think strategically and creatively in assessing the links between areas of review, partners and stakeholders

Public involvement and membership of the scrutiny committee

The scrutiny committee is politically balanced and is made up of councillors from all three of the political parties of the council. Only non – cabinet members can be on the committee and this allows those councillors to have an active role in the council's decision making process.

Meetings of the scrutiny committee are usually as informal as possible and as well as scrutiny members, are attended by cabinet portfolio members, officers, partners and anyone else who can assist with the work and provide evidence for reviews.

Members of the public are also welcome to attend the scrutiny committee meetings and can participate at the discretion of the committee's Chair. If you do wish to participate regarding an agenda item at a scrutiny meeting you are requested to contact the committee officer who will liaise with the Chair of the committee and the scrutiny officer. Any questions for the committee have to be received no later than 10.00 am on the day before the meeting but in order for you to obtain a thorough answer it would be helpful if you could contact us as early as possible.

Members of the scrutiny committee for 2013 - 2014

Councillors; Stephenson – Chair, Bradford, Brimblecombe, Brociek – Coulton, Carlo, Galvin, Grenville, Howard, Lubbock, Manning, Maxwell, Sands (S), Storie.

Getting in touch with scrutiny

If you are a member of the public and wish to find out more about the scrutiny process and the committee or if you have any queries regarding this Annual Review, please feel free to contact the council's scrutiny officer;

stevegoddard@norwich.gov.uk

If you have any topic suggestions for scrutiny please use the form attached over this page and send it to the above email address or hand it in at the council's reception – for the attention of the scrutiny officer.

To contact the committee officer please phone 01603 212416

The Centre for Public Scrutiny promotes the value of scrutiny and accountability in modern and effective government and supports non-executives in their scrutiny role. <http://www.cfps.org.uk/>



If you would like this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact the committee officer by phone 01603 212416 or email lucygreen@norwich.gov.uk

Request form to raise an item for Scrutiny Review

Councillors should be asked to carry out the following scrutiny review:

Please give your reasons (continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Name:

Address:

Daytime Tel No

Email:

Signature

Date

Please return this form to Steve Goddard, Scrutiny Officer, Norwich City Council, City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich NR2 1NH
Email: stevegoddard@norwich.gov.uk