

**Committee Name:** Scrutiny

**Committee Date:** 17/11/2022

**Report Title:** Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2022-23

**Portfolio:** Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources

**Report from:** Executive director of community services

**Wards:** All Wards

**OPEN PUBLIC ITEM**

**Purpose**

To assist scrutiny committee members to review the scrutiny committee work programme 2022-23.

**Recommendation:**

It is recommended that members consider and approve changes to the scrutiny committee work programme 2022-23

**Policy Framework**

The Council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

This report meets the Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city corporate priority

## **Report Details**

### **Developing a work programme for the scrutiny committee**

1. Members had an informal work programme setting workshop on 26 May 2022, the work programme was then reviewed and ratified at the committee meeting on 9 June 2022. The work programme was further updated at the committee meeting on 14 July 2022.
2. At the committee meeting held on 13 October 2022 members were asked to consider proposed changes to the work programme. The proposed work programme is attached at appendix A and members are asked to approve the proposed changes.
3. Members were asked to send suggestions for a scope for the “Welcoming Refugees into Norwich and overcoming obstacles to their smooth integration” topic to democratic services. One full scope was received from Councillor Galvin which has been circulated to scrutiny committee members and is included as appendix B. Further information relating to the scope of this meeting has been received from Councillor Carlo and is also included as appendix B. Members are asked to discuss and agree this scope so that initial work can commence.
4. A topic form has been received from Councillor Lubbock proposing that the committee consider Scrutiny of the Customer Contact Centre and its responsiveness to residents’ telephone calls. This is included as appendix C. Members are asked to consider if they would like to schedule the topic for a meeting of the committee.
5. At the meeting of committee on 13 October 2022, members suggested considering the council’s Community Safety Strategy which is in the process of being developed. Members are asked to decide if they would like to schedule an extraordinary meeting of the Committee to be scheduled at a date that is mutually agreeable for members and officers.

### **Recurring items**

6. There are certain items that occur throughout the civic year that are programmed in. These are the scrutiny committee work programme (each meeting), Equality Information Report (December), pre-scrutiny of the proposed budget (February) and the annual review of the scrutiny committee (March).
7. Updates are received from the council’s representative on the Norfolk Health and Overview Scrutiny Committee (NHOSC) and the council’s representative on the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel (NCCSPSSP).

### **Scope for scheduling items onto the work programme**

8. It has been previously agreed that committee should agree as few as possible substantive topics per meeting. The main reason for this is to ensure that there is enough time for the committee to effectively consider the issues and make

fair and evidence based recommendations. Ideally one substantive item per meeting would be the aim.

9. Members are able to revise the work programme on a month basis if and when required due to changing events. This is done through the work programme standing item at each meeting. Members therefore may wish to consider keeping some space on the work programme to facilitate this.

### **Consultation**

10. Members of the scrutiny committee were consulted on the proposed attached work programme at the meeting on 13 October 2022. Members of the public are encouraged to submit topics for scrutiny via a form on the council's website. The portfolio holder will be briefed as part of the regular portfolio holder briefings.

### **Implications**

#### **Financial and Resources**

Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan and Budget.

11. Any impact on resources resulting from this report will be accommodated within existing budgets or the relevant approvals will be sought if additional budget is required.

### **Legal**

12. No specific legal implications of this report.

### **Statutory Considerations**

<b>Consideration</b>	<b>Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:</b>
Equality and Diversity	None
Health, Social and Economic Impact	None
Crime and Disorder	None
Children and Adults Safeguarding	None
Environmental Impact	None

### **Risk Management**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Controls Required</b>
None		

### **Other Options Considered**

13. There have been no other options considered for this report.

## **Reasons for the decision/recommendation**

14. This is a standing item on the scrutiny committee agenda to allow members to review the scrutiny committee work programme.

**Background papers:** None

## **Appendices:**

Appendix A – Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Appendix B – Scope of the refugee item and additional information received.

Appendix C – Scope received in relation to Scrutiny of the Customer Contact Centre and its responsiveness to residents' telephone calls

## **Contact Officer:**

**Name:** Alex Hand

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## Appendix A

<b>Date</b>	<b>Report</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Portfolio Holder + Senior Officer + Report author</b>
17/11/2022	Debt advice and support and debt recovery	To examine the extent to which debt advice and support services provided by the council and its partners are helping to prevent people from falling into debt and becoming subject to debt recovery	Cllr Waters Annabel Scholes Tanya Bandekar Nicki Bristow
17/11/2022	Work programme	To review the scrutiny committee work programme	Cllr Kendrick Lou Rawsthorne Lucy Palmer
17/11/2022	Updates from NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	To receive a report from council's representative on NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	Cllr Kendrick Lou Rawsthorne Lucy Palmer
08/12/2022	NRL Business Plan	To consider the NRL Business Plan	Cllr Waters Graham Nelson Dave Shaw
08/12/2022	NCSL Business Plan	To consider the NCSL Business Plan	Cllr Waters Lou Rawsthorne / Graham Nelson Hannah Leys
08/12/2022	Equality information report	To consider the annual equality information report	Cllr Waters Lou Rawsthorne Ramona Herdman
08/12/2022	Work programme	To review the scrutiny committee work programme	Cllr Kendrick Lou Rawsthorne Lucy Palmer
08/12/2022	Updates from NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	To receive a report from council's representative on NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	Cllr Kendrick Lou Rawsthorne Lucy Palmer
19/01/2023	Financing for renewable energy/energy efficiency	To consider a report on "financing for renewable energy/energy efficiency"	Cllr Kendrick Annabel Scholes Neville Murton
19/01/2023	Corporate Plan refresh	To consider the Corporate Plan	Lou Rawsthorne Helen Chamberlin
19/01/2023	Work programme	To review the scrutiny committee work programme	Cllr Kendrick Lou Rawsthorne Lucy Palmer
19/01/2023	Updates from	To receive a report from	Cllr Kendrick

## Appendix A

<b>Date</b>	<b>Report</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Portfolio Holder + Senior Officer + Report author</b>
	NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	council's representative on NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	Lou Rawsthorne Lucy Palmer
02/02/2023	Pre-scrutiny of the budget	To pre-scrutinise the budget	Cllr Kendrick Annabel Scholes Neville Murton
02/02/2023	Work programme	To review the scrutiny committee work programme	Cllr Kendrick Lou Rawsthorne Lucy Palmer
02/02/2023	Updates from NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	To receive a report from council's representative on NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	Cllr Kendrick Lou Rawsthorne Lucy Palmer
16/03/2023	Annual Review of scrutiny committee	To consider the annual scrutiny committee report	Cllr Kendrick Lou Rawsthorne Lucy Palmer
16/03/2023	Welcoming refugees into Norwich and overcoming obstacles to their smooth integration	To consider a report on "welcoming refugees into Norwich and overcoming obstacles to their smooth integration"	Cllr Waters Lou Rawsthorne
16/03/2023	Updates from NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	To receive a report from council's representative on NHOSC and NCCSPSSP	Cllr Kendrick Lou Rawsthorne Lucy Palmer
TBC June 2023	Levelling Up Agenda	To consider a report on the "Levelling Up agenda"	Cllr Waters Graham Nelson Ellen Tilney

# Scrutiny TOPIC form



Good governance and scrutiny helps reduce risk, increases resilience, improves decision making and delivers value for money. The information you give on this form will help shape the scrutiny work programme for the civic year 2022-23.

Please tell us what item you would like considered on the work programme and a brief scope.

**YOUR ITEM: Welcoming refugees into Norwich and overcoming obstacles to their smooth integration including that of the impact of the governments stated 'hostile environment' agenda and removal of support to agencies tasked to assist them.**

**BRIEF SCOPE: Norwich is proud to be a welcoming city which has provided refuge to people fleeing persecution for hundreds of years. In recent years the city council has provided, working with partners, sanctuary to people from Syria, Afghanistan and recently Ukraine with public interest and support for this. However, efforts to undertake this have existed alongside the governments stated hostile environment agenda and criminalisation of refugees. This scrutiny review will examine the work on the city council in this area and help to make any recommendations for how it be improved.**

Your item will be considered for inclusion on the work programme on the following criteria and reviewed by senior officers for the availability of officer and financial resources. Please give as much information as possible for each criteria below:

TOPIC	Rationale	Implications/resource requirements to Norwich City Council
<b>TIME</b> Is this the right time to review the issue?	There has been significant focus and media attention on the situation in Ukraine and mass exodus of civilians to neighbouring countries. Continued conflict in Europe, and in other parts of the world, make it likely that Britain and our city will receive refugees fleeing persecution.	
<b>OBJECTIVE</b> What would be the	Investigate how the city council works with partners to support those re-settling in the city and the impact of	

objective of scrutiny? How do you feel scrutiny could make a difference?	wider government policy changes together with funding reductions have made this harder. It can provide important recommendations to both the council and the city's Members of Parliament.	
<b>PERFORMANCE</b> Can performance in this area be improved by scrutiny input?	Helping to create welcoming, tolerant and sustainable communities remains a key objective for the city council and is measured against different indicators. Refugees represent potentially some of the most vulnerable people in our community and helping to ensure they are successfully integrated into our city will be a priority.	
<b>PUBLIC INTEREST</b> what would be the public interest in placing this topic onto the work programme?	Communities in the city have expressed support for refugees, most recently those from Ukraine, and there will interest and benefit to improving the understanding around what role the city council can take to assist in this.	
<b>CONTRIBUTION</b> How would a scrutiny review contribute to achieving our corporate aims?	It is a corporate priority to create strong and sustainable communities which are inclusive of all.	

### Practical Considerations:

<b>Undertaking the review</b>  Have you got any thoughts about how the scrutiny committee could undertake their review?	Take evidence from appropriate partners including groups which work closely with refugees in Norwich and the testimony of refugees themselves living in the city. This could lead to recommendations to
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	government and other agencies.
Would there be specific individuals, such as outside organisations, who could provide evidence or would need to be engaged in the review?	Appropriate officers, partners and voluntary and statutory services.
Do you believe consultation with particular groups would be helpful to support the review?	Partners in the voluntary volunteer together with the People from Abroad Team which offers a specialist social work service.
If the scope of your review is potentially quite broad, do you believe there are ways to narrow it down or areas that you would like particular focus on?	
Have you discussed the potential scope of this review with lead officers or the portfolio holder? Did they have any thoughts on the review, its scope, timing etc?	This issue is routinely raised with appropriate officers.

Please return your form to Alex Hand, senior committee officer; alexhand@norwich.gov.uk

Thank you.

Further suggestions on scope for the Refugees scrutiny item was received from Cllr Carlo as below:

1. Food and food poverty and how city agencies can ensure that the specific needs of the many different ethnic and religious groups are catered for? For example, the Food Bank has received requests from Ukraine refugees for fresh beetroots and potatoes but it did not have these items in stock at the time. Requests for particular foods will also apply in other instances, Halal foods for example.
2. Access to Broadband and IT – individual refugees and asylum seekers need broadband access for contacting their lawyers, friends and family in their home country and accessing any services but paying for broadband from their modest support payments is difficult. Norwich City Council gave funding to New Routes for Broadband support from the first round of the Household Support Fund (HSF) for distributing to individuals, but the second round of the HSF does not provide for this type of funding. The City Council says that the Norfolk Assistance Scheme considers Broadband as an essential bill and so individual families can apply through this route. Nonetheless a quicker route for individuals and people living in multiple occupancy dwellings is via New Routes. Access to IT equipment such as Smartphones is also an issue.



# Scrutiny TOPIC form

Good governance and scrutiny helps reduce risk, increases resilience, improves decision making and delivers value for money. The information you give on this form will help shape the scrutiny work programme for the civic year 2022-23.

Please tell us what item you would like considered on the work programme and a brief scope.

**YOUR ITEM:** Scrutiny of the Customer Contact Centre and its responsiveness to residents' telephone calls.

**BRIEF SCOPE:** Identify through our telephony system the extent of the problem of calls going unanswered, explore the service areas which are causing the high demand and deal with the findings to improve the experience of those who cannot contact the council any other way than by using the telephone.

Your item will be considered for inclusion on the work programme on the following criteria and reviewed by senior officers for the availability of officer and financial resources. Please give as much information as possible for each criteria below:

TOPIC	Rationale	Implications/resource requirements to Norwich City Council
<b>TIME</b> Is this the right time to review the issue?	First question to the Portfolio Holder was asked in June and a second in October. Both answers were the same – high demand, vacancies, training of staff etc. Residents need answers to their problems at this very difficult time and problems get worse if not dealt with quickly. Increase in casework for councillors as a result of not being able to contact the council.	Identifying which are the service areas in demand and questioning why. Recruiting more staff and retaining them, or temporary staff. Acknowledging that not everyone can use online services and that no one now can come into city hall for help.

<b>OBJECTIVE</b> What would be the objective of scrutiny? How do you feel scrutiny could make a difference?	Explore the underlying causes of high demand from callers and understand the issues around a unresponsive Customer Contact Centre and the problems this causes for residents ie late payments	New ways of dealing with those who cannot use the online services. Triage system? Staffing Recourses
<b>PERFORMANCE</b> Can performance in this area be improved by scrutiny input?	There has been over 6 months of residents experiencing problems. Despite it being raised as an issue by councillors there has been no improvements. In dept understanding of the problem may bring improvements.	
<b>PUBLIC INTEREST</b> what would be the public interest in placing this topic onto the work programme?	To show the public that the Council care about their experiences when contacting the council and that they are looking to improve that contact.	
<b>CONTRIBUTION</b> How would a scrutiny review contribute to achieving our corporate aims?	The Council's vision 'where residents are at the heart of everything we do'. Aim 4 'The City has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish'. The council is discriminating against those who do not have access to the internet to deal with their council problems. This is often the elderly and those on low incomes.	

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**Practical Considerations:**

<b>Undertaking the review</b>  Have you got any thoughts about how the scrutiny committee could undertake their review?	Taking evidence from the officers in charge of the Customer Contact Centre and the Director under which this service falls.
Would there be specific individuals, such as outside organisations, who could provide evidence or would need to be engaged in the review?	Councillors could provide examples of their residents' frustration and consequences of not getting through to the council on the phone.
Do you believe consultation with particular groups would be helpful to support the review?	As above
If the scope of your review is potentially quite broad, do you believe there are ways to narrow it down or areas that you would like particular focus on?	Outcomes that would help residents – new ways of dealing with those who rely on phones.
Have you discussed the potential scope of this review with lead officers or the portfolio holder? Did they have any thoughts on the review, its scope, timing etc?	No

Please return your form to Alex Hand, senior committee officer. [alexhand@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:alexhand@norwich.gov.uk)

Thank you.