

Report to Cabinet
14 March 2018
Report of Strategy manager
Subject Scrutiny committee recommendations

Item

10

Purpose

To respond to the recommendations reported to the January meeting of cabinet and to consider the recommendations from the scrutiny committee held on 22 February 2018.

Recommendation

To:

- (1) consider the individual recommendations made by the scrutiny committee in February as outlined in the report, particularly those addressed to cabinet;
- (2) note the portfolio holder and officer responses as listed in the report to the recommendations from the January scrutiny committee; and
- (3) ask officers to consider the viability of including a link on council communications to 'Better Off Norwich'.

Corporate and service priorities

The report helps to meet all the corporate priorities.

Financial implications

None

Ward/s: All wards

Cabinet member: Councillor Kendrick - resources

Contact officers

Adam Clark, strategy manager

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Background documents

None

Report

Background

1. The council's scrutiny committee is constituted of councillors who do not sit on cabinet. They are expected to review/scrutinise and oversee decisions made by cabinet. They can 'call in', for reconsideration, decisions made by cabinet or an officer which have not yet been implemented. The main functions of scrutiny are to hold cabinet to account by examining their proposals; evaluating policies, performance and progress; ensuring consultations, where necessary, have been carried out; and highlighting areas for improvement.

The committee makes recommendations for cabinet, the wider council and other stakeholders based on evidence on the issues scrutinised at their meetings.

The following is a summary of the topics the committee has considered over recent meetings with the recommendations that were made accordingly.

2. 7 February 2018

Call in meeting

A call in request was received by the director of business services following publication of a notice of key decision regarding the purchase of an asset. The reason given for the call in was that no supporting exempt information was included; making the notice largely meaningless.

The director of business services reported that an improved process had been put in place, with an exempt pack of information being circulated to members along with the decision notice for these types of purchase.

It was RESOLVED to ask:

- (1) the director of business services to send an exempt pack of information relating to assets purchased to all members once a notice of key decision had been published,
- (2) the chief finance officer to simplify the information around the payback period within the exempt pack of information sent to all members; and
- (3) the democratic and elections manager to include an all members briefing on the treasury management strategy in the councillor development programme for the next civic year.

3. 22 February 2018

Housing conditions in the private rented sector

The private sector housing manager presented to the committee along with Andy Fretwell (Eastern Landlords Association) and Michael Deakin (Shelter).

Members discussed the suspension of the property registration scheme, the rights of tenants and landlords, properties with category one hazards and the resources available for enforcement action against these and rogue landlords.

It was RESOLVED to ask cabinet to consider:-

- (1) Resourcing, far earlier, the introduction of additional houses in multiple occupation (HMO) licensing in conjunction with a relaunched property registration scheme,
- (2) writing to the two Norwich MPs to ask them to investigate when the mandatory licensing scheme would be commencing
- (3) funding for more environmental health officers to inspect properties and try to identify rogue landlords; and
- (4) working with other organisations to facilitate private sector tenants forums.

4. Response to the recommendations of scrutiny committee on 25 January 2018

These recommendations were brought to the meeting of cabinet on the 7 February. Cabinet resolved to consider and respond to these recommendations at its March meeting.

The scrutiny committee on 25 January 2018 discussed the Environmental Strategy and made the following recommendations:

It was RESOLVED to ask cabinet to consider:-

- (1) working with partners to such as the BID and the UEA to facilitate the delivery of electric vehicle charging points,
- (2) working with producers of air quality sensors and researchers to ensure that good quality field data around air quality is produced; and
- (3) investigating the possibility of a social value and environmental framework to purchase assets

These points were considered by the relevant portfolio holder in conjunction with officers and the following was determined:-

Working with partners such as the BID and the UEA to facilitate the delivery of electric vehicle charging points

Officers at Norfolk County Council and Norwich City Council are already working together to identify electric vehicle (EV) provision for the city now and into the future. Presently they are pulling together research to identify new and emerging technology and how each council can assist in rolling out any new EV chargers. In

addition we are working with Highways England to upgrade the UEA's existing EV provision to rapid chargers.

Working with producers of air quality sensors and researchers to ensure that good quality field data around air quality is produced

The council already provides high quality data on air quality via our ongoing monitoring sites. This enables researchers to calibrate their field data against a reliable source so they can produce better field data.

The council regularly updates its webpages with data for researchers to use:

www.norwich.gov.uk/downloads/download/1917/air_quality_monitoring_reports_and_assessments

In addition the city council in collaboration with Norfolk County Council has already worked with the UEA piloting research which was commissioned by Transport for Norwich (TfN). TfN will be supporting the UEA communications team on a media release about their recent **engine switch-off project**. Although the team was unable to confirm its impact on local air quality, data collected showed a significant increase in people turning off their engines in queuing traffic when the signs were used. Transport for Norwich are also looking into funding opportunities to take this research further.

Investigating the possibility of a social value and environmental framework to purchase assets

The council has recently adopted social value in the procurement framework. The council is investing in income generating assets in order to help fund General Fund services to the public as agreed by cabinet 12 April 2016. Delegated authority was given to the director of regeneration and development, in consultation with the chief finance officer and a quorum of cabinet members, including the cabinet member for resources, to invest in income generating assets. This approach ensures a democratic oversight and identification of issues and linkages relating to the 'social value' aspect of procurement

Access to justice recommendations

The scrutiny committee on 25 January 2018 made the following recommendations in relation to access to justice:

RESOLVED to ask cabinet to:-

- (1) Consider committing to a longer term for the council's funding for social welfare advice services in the city
- (2) Consider how to reduce burden on funded organisations by standardising application and monitoring process, and to explore this with other funders
- (3) Include a link to the Better Off Norwich platform in all relevant communications sent to customers and within their online council accounts to ensure they are accessing their entitlements

- (1) Work with digital hubs around Norwich to train volunteers on Universal Credit and the Better off Norwich platform

These points were considered by the relevant portfolio holder in conjunction with officers and the following determined.

Consider committing to a longer term for the council's funding for social welfare advice services in the city

Ideally we would commit to all voluntary community social enterprise (VCSE) funding over 3 years. However, with the current uncertainty around local government finance and ongoing challenge about how we respond to that through the council's transformation programme, all of our budgets for external funding need to be kept under review annually. We will continue to work with existing funding recipients so that they are aware of the terms and restrictions of any funding, and can plan accordingly.

Consider how to reduce burden on funded organisations by standardising application and monitoring process, and to explore this with other funders

We are working with Norfolk Community Advice Network, (NCAN) and the current social welfare providers to identify ways of standardising reporting without adding additional burdens, but providing consistent reporting that supports their ability to demonstrate the impact of their services. We are initiating conversations with other funders of these services locally to explore this further.

Include a link to the Better Off Norwich platform in all relevant communications sent to customers and within their online council accounts to ensure they are accessing their entitlements

This is not currently in place; cabinet could consider asking officers to consider the viability of this.

Work with digital hubs around Norwich to train volunteers on Universal Credit and the Better off Norwich platform

The city council regularly provide training to Voluntary Norfolk trained volunteers (based at Digital Hubs). This has included Switch and Save, smart meters, avoiding scams and working with people with disabilities. We ran a session for volunteers on Universal Credit, (UC) when the scheme first came to the city. It is in the digital inclusion action plan for Year 4 (2018/19) to redeliver this for the fully live service at an appropriate time. Voluntary Norfolk volunteers have supported people to make UC applications, and the UC team leader came to the external partners steering group in January to give an update to the group too. Regarding 'Better Off' Norwich information has been sent to all the volunteers on the digital inclusion programme and details are available on their web-resource site.

Conclusion

This report illustrates that the recommendations brought from scrutiny have been considered and are already being actioned. Apart from the recommendation on including a link on council communications to Better Off Norwich which would require further investigation to consider the viability of this.

Recommendation:

To:

- (1) note the recommendations from scrutiny and the responses as listed in the report; and
- (2) ask officers to consider the viability of including a link on council communications to Better Off Norwich.

Integrated impact assessment



NORWICH
City Council

Report author to complete

Committee:	Cabinet
Committee date:	7 February 2018
Director / Head of service	Adam Clark
Report subject:	Scrutiny committee recommendations
Date assessed:	29 January 2018
Description:	A summary of scrutiny committee discussions and recommendations from February and cabinet responses to January's recommendations.

	Impact			
Economic (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Finance (value for money)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other departments and services e.g. office facilities, customer contact	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ICT services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Economic development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial inclusion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Access to justice item considers impact of council's funding for financial inclusion and social welfare services
Social (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Safeguarding children and adults	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<u>S17 crime and disorder act 1998</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Human Rights Act 1998	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Health and well being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual item on health inequalities considers council role in improving health and wellbeing of residents

	Impact			
Equality and diversity (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Relations between groups (cohesion)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Eliminating discrimination & harassment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Advancing equality of opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Access to justice item considers impact of council's funding for social welfare services
Environmental (please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Environmental strategy item considers increase to electric vehicle charging points
Natural and built environment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Waste minimisation & resource use	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pollution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Environmental strategy item considers improvements to recording air quality data
Sustainable procurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Energy and climate change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

	Impact			
(Please add an 'x' as appropriate)	Neutral	Positive	Negative	Comments
Risk management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Recommendations from impact assessment
Positive
Cabinet to give due consideration to recommendations made by the committee.
Negative
Neutral
Issues