



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16:30 to 18:07

26 February 2015

Present: Councillors Wright (chair) Maxwell (vice chair), Barker, Bogelein, Carlo, Galvin, Haynes, Herries, Howard, Manning, Packer and Ryan

Apologies: Councillor Woollard

1. Public questions / petitions

A public question was asked by Mr MacMaster:

"In relation to paragraph 29 (A boards), the report does not look at issues of obstruction and visual intrusion. Will the council in its future consultation put into practice the recommendation of English heritage ("Streets for all: East of England") and of its own streetscape design manual (2006) for an integrated and coordinated approach by establishing a streetscape working group as promised in 2006?"

The highways manager gave the answer "The city and county councils are in the process of investing considerable sums in the city over the coming years. A more formal liaison approach is considered appropriate and is being reviewed."

Mr MacMaster then ask a supplementary question "Will there be opportunity for the public discussion, as the proposals being drafted seem to oppose a ban on A boards?"

The head of city development services responded "The proposals being drafted will go to consultation so that any ideas can be explored fully with the public"

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to:-

- 1) take the minutes of the 15 January 2015 meeting of the scrutiny committee at the next meeting on 19 March 2015; and
- 2) agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2015.

4. Scrutiny committee work programme

Members discussed the forward agenda and asked that the member representative who had attended the Norfolk county health overview and scrutiny committee on 26 February update this committee at the March meeting and that 5 minutes be set aside for this on the agenda. It was also agreed that this become a regular item on scrutiny committee agendas proceeding future meetings of the Norfolk county health overview and scrutiny committee.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the work programme,
- 2) Ask that the representative on the Norfolk county health overview and scrutiny committee who had attended the meeting on 26 February update at the next scrutiny committee meeting and that this become a regular item on scrutiny committee agendas proceeding future meetings of the Norfolk county health overview and scrutiny committee; and
- 3) ask that the scrutiny committee has the opportunity to pre scrutinise and comment on any report on the future key decision – ‘Establishing a local housing company prior to it going to cabinet.

5. Street scene safety – trips and falls

The head of city development services provided a brief overview of the subject and introduced Jon Barnard, Norwich Area Transportation Strategy and Norwich Northern Distributor Road manager (NATS / NDR manager), Norfolk County Council.

In response to a question received prior to the meeting, the highways manager provided a brief summary regarding the different highways functions between the county and city councils. The head of city development services agreed to circulate information to scrutiny members detailing the way in which the highways relationship between county and city council operated. He also clarified that ‘A boards’ would be examined in more detail later in the year and that a report would be taken to the Norwich highways agency committee (NHAC).

Discussion ensued regarding snow and ice and the head of city development services explained that the number of grit bins across the city had increased to the

current limit of budgets available. However, the location of bins reflected the areas of greatest need meeting certain criteria.

In response to a members question, the NATS / NDR manager, Norfolk County Council explained that when it came to communities purchasing their own grit bins, the provision of grit by the county council would be assessed on a case by case basis. This assessment would take place against various criteria, not least of which would be the appropriateness of the location of the suggested grit bin.

Responding to a member's question, the head of city development services agreed that the city council should promote ways in which residents can carry out actions to help themselves and their community by using grit bins, clearing snow around their properties and clearing leaves. He added that although such messages had been given out previously, it would be very helpful to reinforce them via refreshed communication using citizen magazine etc.

The highways manager explained that the footway network survey was carried out by a contractor for the county council. The survey measured the length of footway in need of improving or replacing as it approached the end of its life. He added that those areas of damage considered to pose an immediate danger were dealt with straight away. A report regarding the issues raised by the footway network survey would be taken to NHAC later in the year.

In response to a members question regarding data gathering related to trips and falls, the head of city development services said that the city council could talk to the hospital, the clinical commission group and the county council. He emphasised the need to be sure that the information gathered would be useful, adding that he is not convinced that all data is captured - particularly regarding minor slips - but this could certainly be explored.

The highways manager explained that whilst snow and ice sometimes caused a danger and resulted in injury, no such evidence existed to suggest that 'A boards' posed a similar problem.

The executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods suggested that if members wished, issues surrounding 'A boards' could be added to the scrutiny work programme. The chair agreed, explaining that he felt the scrutiny committee could be used as a valuable part of any future consultation process around 'A boards'.

Further to issues raised by members on cycling and walking strategies, the NATS / NDR manager, Norfolk County Council explained that the county council was guided by the Department for transport guidance and strategies on cycling and walking. Considerable investment had taken place in cycling and walking infrastructure and schemes across the county. Members noted that it was the county council's intention to draw these projects together into a county-wide strategy for cycling and walking with Norwich at the heart of this work. It was further noted that the walking and cycling strategy was at an early stage, but that a report was being put together. Officers explained that consultation would take place via the joint highways committee and would identify the smartest ways in which limited funds could be put to best use.

Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for environment, development and transport explained that the Walk Norwich programme had given significant investment within the city, working closely with Living Streets. The scrutiny committee noted that various potential funding options had been examined. Walk Norwich was looking at carrying out street audits in addition to other work streams (dependent on funding). Such work would take a multi-agency approach, in particular encouraging the NHS to invest, given the knock-on effect of walking on the general health of citizens.

Discussion ensued around the subject of shared space, with the head of city development services explaining that work was carried out with the streetscape design manual being at the heart of work the city development department carried out. Within this work was an aim to reduce street furniture and continue to place pedestrians at the heart of the strategy.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) ensure that the highways team continues to work with all other relevant areas of the council on enforcement and implementation of policy and ensure that other areas of the council are consulted at the earliest possible opportunity;
- 2) ask the city council to collect further data around the pedestrian experience and work further with pedestrians in order to continue to pedestrians first when developing the street scene, striving to remain a city of best practice;
- 3) ask the city council to work with the Norfolk and Norwich hospital, the clinical commissioning group, public health and healthy Norwich to share and assess data on falls and slips (including when and where particular hotspots occur);
- 4) ask the communications team to promote actions that the public can take themselves to improve street safety through a range of communication methods; and
- 5) ask the highways team to explore ideas and gather more information on any ideas surrounding 'A boards', working with pedestrian and business interest groups to develop an 'A board' strategy and ensuring that this work is adequately resourced.