



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16:30 – 18:30

16 October 2014

Present: Councillors Wright (chair) Barker, Bogelein, Carlo, Galvin, Herries, Haynes, Howard, Manning, Maxwell, Ryan, Sands (M) (substitute for Packer) and Woollard.

Apologies: Councillor Packer

1. Declaration of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2014

3. Scrutiny committee work programme

A member asked that the committee look at the draft transformation programme included on the October cabinet schedule. The chair suggested that this be included on the work programme in December to coincide with the scrutiny of the corporate plan. The Executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods said that this would be good timing as there would be scope to incorporate recommendations from the scrutiny committee.

The Executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods after discussion with the cabinet members for housing and for environment, development and transport proposed two additional topics to add to the work programme.

The first was to look at the council's alternative giving programme and comment on the reasons behind the approach to the scheme. After discussion, it was suggested that this topic could be widened to include looking at the services provided for rough sleepers and those who are homeless. A member suggested that this could be considered at a special meeting of the committee, potentially being held outside of city hall. The Executive head of people, strategy and neighbourhoods suggested that members could go out with the rough sleeper team and potentially hold the meeting at a walk in hostel.

The second additional topic was for the committee to pre-scrutinise the draft environmental strategy and to make recommendations to cabinet.

RESOLVED to include the following topics on the scrutiny committee work programme:

- 1) Scrutiny of the transformation programme be added on 18 December 2014,
- 2) A review of the issues and provision of services for rough sleepers and those who are homeless, with timescales to be agreed with officers; and
- 3) Pre-scrutiny of the environmental strategy be added on 29 January 2014.

4. Welfare reform

The Head of local neighbourhood services gave a presentation to the committee on the work being undertaken regarding advice provision.

A member commented that debt could be a symptom of other issues and said that it was important to look at preventative advice as well. She said that peer to peer advice from those who have been in similar situations themselves may be useful and would help with budgetary constraints. Working in collaboration with businesses in the private sector and the third sector could also allow the council to act as a hub for advice.

A member suggested that it was necessary to ensure that there was sufficient support and advice for those who need one to one support with a range of problems, to ensure that they were not bounced between several agencies. Outreach work with agencies such as doctor's surgeries and care workers could help to deliver advice services to those who may have difficulties visiting the council. The Head of neighbourhood services said that work had been undertaken around families with complex needs and this could be included in discussions with other partners. The Financial inclusion manager said that outreach work surrounding the use of doctor's surgeries was being undertaken in partnership with the Clinical Commissioning Group.

A member raised concerns that the Norwich Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) was only granted funds by Norwich City Council for debt advice, however, Norwich citizens were able to access general advice as well which was funded by other district councils. The Executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods said that the Norwich CAB covered a wider area than the city boundaries and that grants and the way grant money was used by such an organisation differed from council to council. He also added that the council commissioned on an outcomes basis, in line with the needs identified, which allowed all organisations to apply and potentially received funding based on their proposals, rather than specifically giving grants to certain organisations each year.

RESOLVED to ask the council to consider the following in developing advice and commissioning work:

- 1) Develop one to one pathway assistance including peer to peer advice,

- 2) Develop relationships and links between the third sector and the private sector with the city council acting as a central hub for advice
- 3) Develop signposting with partners by working with communities and through outreach work
- 4) Develop an understanding of the links between general and debt advice and use this to inform priority setting when looking at the needs assessment findings
- 5) Ask officers to provide the scrutiny committee with the final draft of the needs assessment findings

CHAIR