



Scrutiny Committee

16:30 to 18:40

31 March 2022

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Carlo, Champion (substitute for Councillor Galvin), Driver, Giles, Osborn, Stutely, Thomas (Va) and Thomas (Vi).

Apologies: Councillors Fulton-McAlister (M) (vice chair), Everett, Galvin, Huntley and Manning.

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

RESOLVED, with a majority of members present voting in favour, to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 12 November 2021, 18 November 2021, 16 December 2021, 10 January 2022, 20 January 2022, 3 February 2022 and 28 February 2022.

3. A sustainable, inclusive Norwich economy following COVID-19

The chair invited Catherine Waddams, chair of the Norwich Good Economy Commission (NGEC), to address the committee.

Catherine Waddams gave a presentation aided by slides (which are attached at appendix A to these minutes). She highlighted that the NGEC began in June 2020 and was a partnership between several organisations. Covid-19 had coalesced the groups that were a target for support but also highlighted further inequalities within the city. The NGEC had focused its work through a number of different workstreams. The digital inclusion workstream had looked at how to improve digital access for the residents of Norwich. A workstream on community skills had been delivered through four community projects in Mile Cross. The good jobs workstream had been completed through conversations with employees in Norwich and had established some criteria and values that employees felt boosted their enjoyment of a job. Other workstreams were social enterprises, anchor institutions and community grants for research projects.

A member asked whether having the commission would have prevented a number of businesses leaving Norwich. In response Catherine Waddams said that there were many changes and challenges to come and that the loss of businesses and organisations could allow different organisations to be attracted to Norwich. She highlighted that what employees valued about an organisation was changing, and organisations that wanted to attract employees would need to demonstrate that they value fairness and individuality. The work of the NGECC and pledges that organisations may be able to sign up to, could be a way for organisations to demonstrate those values.

In response to a member's question Catherine Waddams said that universities were measured on the number of students who graduated from the university that went into graduate level jobs. Students who had graduated from one of the universities in Norwich often wanted to remain even if there were no graduate level jobs available. She added that students needed to be educated on the fact that there were also highly skilled jobs in the financial sector within Norwich and not just in London.

A member commented that the paradox of funding could mean that if too many people were attracted to Norwich, then this could take away from local residents. In response, Catherine Waddams said that there should not be too many barriers for people coming to Norwich as it was not clear whether people coming into the city would prevent support for local residents. Instead, barriers for local residents could be removed. Anchor institutions would need to look at how procurement was undertaken as traditionally tenders would be a large tender from a large supplier, rather it could be looked at how to repackage tenders so smaller, local companies could offer some of the services.

Catherine Waddams commented that the NGECC was exploring links with the Climate Commission, for example thinking about ensuring that climate change adaptations are done fairly due to the brunt of the impacts of climate change being felt by the most disadvantaged.

In response to a member's question Catherine Waddams said that looking at whether there was leadership and specific funding for retrofitting in Norwich was not a part of the remit of the NGECC, but that she personally was in the process of applying for a grant to research the distribution issues of retrofitting, such as access to finance, rather than the skills required.

A member asked whether there had been investigation of how the Levelling Up fund was being distributed within the region, specifically with Norwich. Catherine Waddams said that there was no data on how the Levelling Up funding was being delivered but investigating this would be a good opportunity to see whether it was delivering for Norwich. She added that often the Levelling Up funding would have specific uses that must be adhered to, but that organisations such as the city council and community groups could help to influence how the funding is used.

Catherine Waddams said, in response to a member's question, that the NGECC did not specifically look at the labour market, but it was possible that with the changes to the way industries worked that the model of employment could shift from traditionally large employers to smaller enterprises and organisations.

A member commented that a move towards remote working had meant that there had been a shift for the people of Norwich regarding highly skilled jobs, as there may be residents of Norwich who are not working in Norwich. In response Catherine Waddams said that there were some industries within Norwich that would always be rooted in place in Norwich, but those residents who worked remotely would bring money into the city by living there. She added that the shift to remote working and how this affected local areas would need to be assessed.

A member asked whether there was content available from the Green Jobs seminar that the NGEC held. The NGEC had published a report on their [website](#) from the seminar.

In response to a member's question Catherine Waddams said that the community skills report had only recently been received by the NGEC, but the high-level information showed that there was not a lack of support offered to the community in Mile Cross but there was a lack of communication. Therefore, lots of individuals were unaware about the support available to them. Additionally, the work done in Mile Cross had shown there were some lessons to be learned about how support was offered to communities, especially around coordinating support offerings, governance of support and community groups and how to get local residents involved in shaping the governance. She cautioned that assessment was needed to understand what of the learning from Mile Cross would be applicable to all of Norwich and what was specific to the Mile Cross area.

The strategy manager commented that the council would be further analysing reports from the community skills workstream. She highlighted that the NGEC had looked at more than just skills for employees but had looked at how people could engage with the economy and wider community in Norwich. One area that the skills workstream had looked at was the governance of community centres, and the council had been able to secure funding to employ someone as a community connector in Mile Cross in order to share offline information on skills. The strategy manager highlighted that this role would also help links with the digital inclusion workstream as it could be a model on how to engage with people who did not have access to the internet. She also commented that the diverse voices workstream had allowed members of the public to express that they felt they were unable to engage with employers or the economy as they did not fit into a certain group. These members of the public also expressed that they wanted employers and the wider community to understand them in a broader sense. The various workstreams would be analysed to produce the final NGEC report that would be published in June 2022, with the council publishing its response in January 2023.

The leader of the council highlighted that the green jobs seminar had looked at more than the creation of new green jobs but had also looked at transforming existing jobs into green jobs. He highlighted his experience of being a commissioner for the NGEC and working with Catherine Waddams and that the achievements of the NGEC should be celebrated.

Although the NGEC was ending in June 2022 the work that had been completed by the NGEC could be taken forward, as it had added value to a range of topics. with an important area of focus being social investment and helping improve people's capacity. A framework needed to be put in place to ensure that opportunities allowed for everyone to take part in the economy.

A member asked whether there needed to be investment into tourism for Norwich and Norfolk. Catherine Waddams said that the NGEC had not looked into investment into tourism, but that it was an important part of the county's economy. She said that the city of Norwich had ways and opportunities to publicise itself.

A member asked how Mile Cross was chosen for the community skills workstreams, and whether any other areas of the city had been considered. Catherine Waddams said that the NGEC had initially looked at three areas of Norwich that had the highest deprivation scores. Analysis was then undertaken to see where help and support had been offered before, and the goal of this analysis was to find a ward where the commission's work could be effective in delivering outcomes. The learning gained from the project in Mile Cross could be used across the city. The NGEC was ending in June 2022 so the commission would speak to other organisations to ensure the learning could be taken forward.

The strategy manager said that the concentration during the last few months of the commission would shift to capturing the key learning from all the workstreams and sharing it in an accessible way, so organisations and individuals would be able to apply it to their own work .

A member commented that it was a shame that the NGEC was ending and asked whether if funding was made available could the work continue. In response Catherine Waddams said that the commission was always supposed to be temporary as the purpose of the commission was to explore issues in a focussed way and then for communities and organisations to complete the work.

In response to a member's question Catherine Waddams said that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) could be encouraged to make changes within their business to improve their sustainability. She said that often SMEs struggled to find the information on these topics, and therefore a network of information would be key in improving the sustainability of SMEs.

Norwich Business Improvement District (BID) was also investigating this by looking at the barriers that SMEs faced in achieving Net Zero.

A member commented that it would be helpful for SMEs to see other organisations celebrating their success with achieving Net Zero. Catherine Waddams said that the Climate Commission may be able to celebrate and share those successes.

In response to a member's question Catherine Waddams said that some of the early findings in the report on the gendered economy were that the key sectors that were identified as priorities by the Local Enterprise Partnership were industries that did not have high levels of women represented, such as the construction industry. She added that women were more severely impacted by Covid-19 both in terms of health and economic status. Further work would need to be undertaken to understand why this was the case, although she cautioned that the solution could not be just employing more women in an industry.

A member queried whether in the diverse voices workstream had included individuals who were neurodiverse. In response the strategy manager said that she would ask the workstream for more information and refer that information back to the members.

In response to a member's question Catherine Waddams said that there were more incentives than there used to be to improve energy efficiency. She highlighted that the cost of getting to Net Zero would be high, but this would be a burden for the most vulnerable and support must be given. She added that the issues had changed and big 'shocks', such as Covid-19, had required a new way of working and thinking around issues.

A member asked whether the work of the NGECE had changed as a result of the cost of living crisis, and what learning could be taken forward if the commission was re-established. Catherine Waddams replied that there would always be things that could have been done differently with hindsight. She said that the cost of living crisis had not been a particular focus of the commission's work but the information gathered was now more relevant and urgent due to the crisis.

In response to a member's query Catherine Waddams said that sectors working together was closely aligned with the ideals of the NGECE. She added that while health was not a direct focus of the NGECE, a good economy should look at more than whether people are able to work but also at their physical and mental health.

A member asked whether the move away from employees working in offices could mean the loss of jobs for the maintenance, administrative and cleaning staff that maintain those buildings. In response Catherine Waddams said that as more Norwich residents worked remotely for companies based in London this could have a greater impact in London than in Norwich.

The executive director for development and city services said that the City Vision Board would be looking at taking the work of the NGECE forward and mainstreaming the ideas and recommendations to ensure that no learning would be lost. He added that some of the learning and direction of the NGECE could be influential in the bids for funding that the council would be making. He highlighted that the Economic Development Strategy would be used to create an action plan and the work of the NGECE would be incorporated into this. He added that the growth of the economy was not just dependent on the GDP but included a number of different variables.

RESOLVED to:-

- 1) thank Catherine Waddams and the Norwich Good Economy for its work: and
- 2) to consider the final report of the Norwich Good Economy at a future scrutiny committee meeting to make recommendations that could form part of the council's response.

4. Report from the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The council's representative gave a verbal update to the committee. He said that NHOSC had met to discuss the following topics: access to local NHS primary care for British Sign Language users, access to GP primary care in Norfolk and Waveney and access to dentistry in Norfolk and Waveney. He highlighted that there were major difficulties in each of these areas.

A member asked whether the issue with access to dentistry was due to a shortage of dentists or whether it was due to other factors. The representative said that the shortage of dentists was a major contributing factor but there were a combination of

reasons for this, including dentists leaving the profession or country, not enough newly qualified dentists coming through and that dentists were less inclined to take NHS patients. He said that NHOSC had discussed access to emergency care, and anecdotal evidence suggested that the access was not as wide reaching as hoped.

The issue of an increasing number of residents of Norfolk and Waveney using private dental insurance had not been discussed.

Another member asked whether there was a baseline to compare Norfolk and Waveney to the rest of the country. The representative said that although exact figures were not shown it was his understanding that the situation in Norfolk and Waveney was particularly bad.

Members discussed the fact that good dental health had an impact on people's general health.

RESOLVED to note the update of the council's representative on the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

5. Report of the Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel

The representative had circulated a paper in advance of the meeting.

A member asked whether the issue of community safety due to highways was discussed at the meeting and in response the representative said that highways issues were not within the remit of the sub panel.

RESOLVED to note the update of the council's representative on the Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel

6. Scrutiny committee work programme

The chair introduced the item. He said that scrutiny committee members would be able to submit TOPIC forms to the scrutiny liaison officer by 17 May 2022, with members being encouraged to look at the Corporate Plan for areas that scrutiny could add value to. The committee would then have an informal workshop on 26 May 2022 to discuss the work programme for 2022-23. The work programme would be set at a committee meeting on 9 June 2022. This meeting would also allow the select committee to present its report on fly tipping and communal bins. Members expressed that they were eager to consider the recommendations of the select committee.

A member asked whether there were any items that had been added to the work programme for the civic year 2021-22 that had not been discussed yet. The chair said that the committee for 2022-23 would not be bound by the previous committee's decision.

The monitoring officer added that the committee could also consider how scrutiny of topics could be undertaken, such as the use of select committees.

RESOLVED to note the process detailed above to set the work programme for the civic year 2022-23.

7. Exclusion of the public

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of item *8 (below) on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

***8. Exempt minutes**

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the exempt minutes for the meetings held on 12 November 2021, 10 January 2022 and 3 February 2022.

(Councillor Driver proposed a vote of thanks to Councillor Manning on his work as a member of the scrutiny committee, as he was standing down as a councillor. The chair thanked Councillor Manning for his time on the committee and his forensic analysis of the topics discussed at committee.)

CHAIR