

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16:30 to 18:45

27 November 2014

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

Apologies: Councillor Manning

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Public questions/petitions

The chair reported that two questions had been received from members of the public and that the issues that they had raised would be addressed under item 5 (below) Street scene and road safety overview.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2014.

(The committee agreed to the chair's suggestion to amend the agenda order.)

4. Quarter 2 2014-15 performance report

(Councillor Arthur, leader of the council, attended the meeting for this item. Councillor Waters, deputy leader of the council and cabinet member for resources, had sent apologies and as he was on other council business.)

The leader of the council introduced the report and referred to the headlines set out in paragraph 2. She commented that whilst 79% of residents reported that they felt safe outside in their local area this level of satisfaction might not be maintained if number of police and police community support officers was reduced. The committee was advised that the processing time for new housing benefit and council tax reduction scheme claims was closely monitored on a weekly basis by cabinet members.

During discussion the executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods answered members' questions on the performance report. Avoidable contact was a useful indicator to measure the council's performance at communications and demonstrated where the council's communications had not performed well. A member suggested that involvement in the democratic process would be a good satisfaction measure. The executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods confirmed that there would be a new indicator to monitor the performance of the new corporate plan which would include work around local democracy week to promote involvement in local democracy and refreshing the guide on "How to become a councillor". Councillor Arthur said that the council sought to address the challenge of engagement through its neighbourhood model and by increasing access to the council's services online.

Discussion ensued on the areas where performance was "red" and whether the targets were too high. Members noted that there had been a significant increase in demand for benefits and the council tax reduction scheme and that this coincided with seasonal working coming to an end. Discussions at senior level with LGSS had provided assurance that the service would be back on track. Targets were set high and were expected to be a challenge. The council had won awards because of its consistent approach to transformation and performance monitoring across all areas, including its shared services.

In reply to a members' question, the executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods said that the committee would be considering the draft corporate plan at its next meeting. There would be 38 performance measures. The current number of performance measures was 34.

RESOLVED to note the quarter 2 performance report and the budget monitoring report for the period.

5. Streetscene and road safety overview

(Norfolk County Council officers: Tim Edmunds, chair of the management group of Norfolk's Road Casualty Reduction Partnership and highways network manager; Kevin Allen, project engineer (highway safety), Dave Stephens, team manager network management (analysis and safety) and Iain Temperton, team manager casualty reduction, attended the meeting for this item. Dr Augustine Pereira, consultant in public health medicine, Norfolk County Council and Dr Chris Price, chair of NHS Norwich CCG, attended the meeting for this item. Andy Watt, the head of citywide development was also in attendance.)

(Councillor Stonard, cabinet member for environment, development and transport was also present.)

Tim Edmunds, together with Kevin Allen, gave the presentation on the governance structure for the Road Casualty Reduction Partnership (RCRP) and the functions and terms of reference for the sub-groups. Further details of the partnership's structure, terms of reference and functions were set out in the report to the partnership board, on 11 November 2014 (appendix 2), and the report on Department of Transport's Strategic framework for road safety' (appendix 3). David Stephens presented additional information on casualty statistics and explained

that the definition of “KSI” was killed or seriously injured (ie involving at least an overnight stay in hospital). (A copy of this presentation will be available on the council’s website with the documents for this meeting.)

The chair introduced the discussion and said that a question had been received from a member of the public in which she raised a number of issues about grass verges. The vice chair had also asked a question about verge parking. At its pre-meeting the committee had agreed to refer parking on grass verges to a task and finish group. Discussion ensued on how the committee could include it on its work programme for January 2015. It was suggested that if it was not possible to establish the group before March 2015, members collected information to demonstrate the state of verges in the winter and considered holding an itinerant to identify key problems before the spring. Members were advised that Great Yarmouth Borough Council’s car park steering group had conducted a similar review of “muddy verges.”

Discussion ensued in which highways officers answered members’ questions. This included whether there was a correlation between increases in general car use and the number of accidents. Members were advised that the volume of traffic using the Norfolk network had plateaued in 2008. There were a number of sources of data which included transport to work surveys, census data and evidence provided for the Norwich area transport strategy (NATS). There was not such extensive data on cycle use. Members were also advised on highways policies to reduce road casualties. Implementation of road safety schemes was evidence based with priority being given to interventions which made the most difference to casualty reduction. Schemes could be developed to prevent the occurrence of accidents by creating an environment where all road users used the space as intended. There were other policies to promote cycling and walking.

(Councillor Button left at this point.)

Dr Augustine Pereira presented the report (appendix 1) and outlined the key findings of the research into the efficacy of 20mph speed limits in reducing fatalities and the benefits of 20mph speed limit zones. He also referred to the “softer outcomes” of 20mph zones which included making it safer to walk and for interaction between neighbours. Dr Chis Price added that walking to schools strengthened communities and encouraged exercise as part of life.

In response to members’ questions the committee noted that road casualty statistics did not include injuries received from falls and slips on pavements. There was evidence of increased hospital admissions due to accidents from falls icy weather, and part of the response to this was to ensure that surfaces were cleared as quickly as possible. Prince of Wales Road had received £1m of funding for its redesign to reduce casualties and the current cause of concern about safety in the road was caused by antisocial young men “displaying their cars” rather than drunk drivers. Members were advised of the work of the RCRP subgroup to address the increase in cyclist casualties and target particular groups. This included workplace travel plan workshops aimed at targeting middle-aged males who had got rid of their second car and were cycling to work on the routes that they had previously driven to work rather than taking a more cycle friendly route. Members also sought further information about preventing the use of mobile phones whilst driving and were advised that the

preference was to educate people to change patterns of behaviour. A pilot scheme in Cambridgeshire was using mobile CCTV cameras in large council owned vehicles (fire engines, highways vehicles) to record people using mobile phones.

Discussion ensued on whether the Swedish policy of zero tolerance to KSIs could be achieved and whilst laudable members were advised that it was a costly approach and that casualty reduction could be achieved by targeting road safety schemes on a priority space and 20mph zones in residential areas. The committee was advised that the road network was categorised by “roads” where the primary function was the movement of the vehicle and “streets” where there were vehicle movements and a sense of place. The streets in new housing estates were designed for 20mph speed limits. It was noted that accidents in 20mph zones occurred at junctions. During discussion on whether there should be a gradual reduction of speeds from 60mph to 40mph, it was pointed out that the A11 was the safest road in the county because of its design, use of barriers and safety junctions.

A member referred to the evidence for 20mph zones and asked what the barriers were for the implementation of the council’s objective for implementing 20mph speed limits in all residential areas. The committee was advised of the current financial situation and that funding for local safety schemes provided a better return in terms of reducing KSIs. The Cycle City Ambition funding was being used to extend 20mph areas in the city through the Push the Pedalway schemes. In a reply to a members’ suggestion, the executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods confirmed that the committee could receive regular reports on the progress of 20mph speed limits in residential areas and that information on the current position could be circulated to members. The progress against the delivery of 20mph speed limits in residential zones could be a performance indicator and reported as part of the performance monitoring reports.

The committee also considered that streetscene safety should also be measured as a performance as part of a broader approach to casualties from slips and falls..

RESOLVED to:

- (1) thank Tim Edmunds, Kevin Allen, David Stephens, Iain Temperton, Dr Augustine Pereira, Dr Chris Price, and Andy Watt for the presentations and attending the meeting;
- (2) consider arrangements to establish a task and finish group to review grass verges and road safety;
- (3) ask the scrutiny officer to circulate a report on the current situation relating to progress on 20mph speed limits in residential areas;
- (4) having formed an overview and understanding of road casualty trends in Norwich and the work that is carried out to reduce casualties, the committee wishes to monitor the performance of:
 - (a) progress against the delivery of 20mph speed limit in residential areas;

- (b) street scene safety.

6. Scrutiny committee work programme 2014-2015

The chair said that the work programme had been amended following consultation with Councillor Galvin and the vice chair, to move down pre-scrutiny of housing communal areas to accommodate "Streetscene and road safety". The executive head of strategy, people and neighbourhoods said that cabinet was considering a report on "Communal area management and inspections" at its meeting on 10 December 2014. Comments on the report could be submitted to the scrutiny officer.

RESOLVED to note the scrutiny work programme.

7. Progress update of the task and finish group: Self-esteem and aspiration in communities

Councillor Galvin updated the committee on the progress of the Self-esteem and aspiration in communities task and finish group. The group comprised Councillors Bogelein, Woollard and Galvin. The group had met several times, held a conference call with Rochdale Borough Council members, held a focus group with officers and two with community groups on how the council could develop its social capital ie how the council and the community can relate with each other to get things done. The group was looking to produce a report for March 2015 with a view to producing a draft in February 2015. If any members wished to be involved or comment on the work of the task and finish group they would be very welcome.

RESOLVED to thank the members of the task and finish group and note the report.

CHAIR