



## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**4.30pm to 7.30pm**

**28 November 2013**

**Present:** Councillors Stephenson (chair), Boswell (substitute for Howard) Bradford, Brimblecombe, Carlo, Galvin, Grenville, Harris (substitute for Sands) Lubbock, Manning, Maxwell, and Storie.

**Apologies:** Councillors Brociek-Coulton, Howard and Sands

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **2. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2013 with the amendment that Councillor Lubbock was present for the meeting.

### **3. ANNUAL HOUSING REPORT AND HOUSING REVIEW**

The Cabinet member for housing, Tenant involvement manager and the Head of housing attended this part of the meeting along with some of the tenant representatives.

The Cabinet member for housing introduced the report.

In response to a member's question, the Tenant involvement manager explained that the tenant scrutiny panel receives the same information about housing performance as members and officers. The panel looked at areas where performance levels were not as high as expected and spoke to officers about how to improve these areas. Charmain Woollard told the committee that being part of the scrutiny panel had enabled her to make a difference on behalf of other tenants. She said that the training sessions that the panel had participated in had been very useful and allowed the representatives to pass their knowledge onto other tenants. She said there was a wide range of ages on the panel so they felt that they represented all tenants. Representatives visited other councils to share ideas and attended conferences, such as the ARCH (Association of Retained Council Housing) conference recently in

Great Yarmouth where the tenant representatives won a national award in 2011 and were shortlisted again this year.

Vic Clapham, tenant representative, reported that he had undertaken around 9 inspections of void properties so far and his role was to record any comments about the property which would be sent back to the appropriate team at City Hall. He said that he had been very impressed with the kitchen and bathroom replacements. He also said that it would be nice to have some feedback from the housing team when negative comments were fed back or once works had been completed. In response to a question from a member, Vic Clapham said that a mass planting would be happening soon in his area with donated plants and compost.

(Tracy John, Head of housing joined the meeting)

The Head of housing reported to the committee that a tenant involvement framework had been put into place. The idea was to broaden tenant engagement so that tenants could get involved at different levels. She said that a summit was arranged in September to allow tenants to share ideas and as this was well received, further summits would be arranged. Ward councillors were invited to patch panels when dealing with specific issues and these were not formal meetings. She said that lessons learnt had been captured in the report.

The deputy chief executive (operations) said that there was also engagement with members on housing issues as part of the neighbourhood model, the Norwich Norse Board and with regular reports to the cabinet and scrutiny committee with regards to the performance data. Members had also been invited to some tenant training sessions.

Alyson Lowe, tenant representative, said that she felt that the training received was very useful and liked that it was split into separate units. It was valuable as it gave new information but also reinforced previous training.

Eunice Hoyles, tenant representative, reported that the agendas for the meetings were very full and that she would like more feedback from other tenant panels.

In concluding the discussion, it was acknowledged that in this first year of the new arrangements there had been a lot of positive outcomes in achieving tenant empowerment, however, lessons were continually being learnt and the process would continue to evolve over time.

The chair along with the members of the scrutiny committee thanked the tenant representatives for their hard work.

(The Head of housing, Tenant involvement manager and the tenant representatives left the meeting at this point.)

**RESOLVED** that:

- (1) Feedback is given to tenant representatives on issues they had reported back to Norwich City Council,
- (2) Members look on the Norwich City Council website at the housing policies and inform officers if they felt any policies were missing,

- (3) An outline of the training given to tenants is sent to members; and
- (4) A meeting be arranged with officers so that members of the scrutiny committee can consider options for 'bridging the gap' in knowledge between tenant reps and councillors that they identified as existing when considering the annual housing report.

#### **4. GREATER NORWICH CITY DEAL**

The Leader of the council attended the meeting for this item. She introduced the report. She said that the aim of the city deal was to kick start development and the economy and to encourage graduates to use their skills in Norwich.

In response to a member's question, the deputy chief executive explained that the business plan which would be devised by the constituent local authorities would be delivered by the growth board. There would be a significant amount of resources at the LEP ( Local Enterprise Partnership) level so a framework was needed to help manage this funding relationship.

Some members raised concerns over a perceived democratic deficit and that a small group would be managing a significant amount of resources and that they had little information on the process and how they could be involved.

The leader of the council said that the process to negotiate a city deal had been a long one and had involved many discussions with officials and ministers. A report had been to cabinet and had been discussed at shadow portfolio holder meetings. She said that she was happy to speak to any members about the process if they wished.

The deputy chief executive reminded members that the Greater Norwich Growth Board was not the accountable body and accountability would remain with the constituent local authorities for their particular area(s) of responsibility. The Executive head of strategy, people and democracy added that the constituent local authorities would be held accountable by mechanisms already in place within each authority and that there was no suggestion that power would be delegated away from the local authorities.

(Councillor Lubbock and Councillor Bradford left the meeting at this point)

#### **RESOLVED to:**

- 1) Note the current position of the city deal,
- 2) Invite the LEP to take part in an all member briefing session; and
- 3) Record that the scrutiny committee regards that there is lack of transparency surrounding the LEP and regrets that monies negotiated previously between government and local authorities is now directly assigned to the LEP

## **5. WORK PROGRAMME**

### **RESOLVED :**

- 1) To note the work programme; and
- 2) To place points onto the tracker on parking on verges and pavements, for the scrutiny committee to maintain an overview and that any issues of concern are not improved that this topic be considered as an item on a future scrutiny committee work programme.

**CHAIR**