

Norwich City Council

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REPORT for meeting to be held on 11 September 2008

APPOINTMENT OF A REPRESENTATIVE TO THE NORFOLK COUNTY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP – JOINT SCRUTINY PANEL

Summary:

Due to powers being handed to Overview & Scrutiny Committees under regulations out of the Local Government Public Involvement in Health Act and provisions in the Police and Justice Act - relating to partner scrutiny and more specifically Local Area Agreement scrutiny, the County Council is the accountable body for the delivery of the LAA. However, due to the wish of most Councils to scrutinise the progress of the LAA to ensure delivery tangible to service improvements (locally as well as countywide) and to minimise duplication of effort by Councils there is a move towards a Joint Scrutiny Process. NOTE: any joint arrangement would not impede us at a local level being able to scrutinise our local strategic partnership, and much in the mode of the Norfolk Overview and Health Committee relationship with the District Councils, working in liaison on LAA issues - e.g. a target locally may be poorly performing which affects the overall county outcome.

Conclusions:

It is felt that in terms of efficient use of resources and avoidance of duplication a joint process would be of benefit and also address the democratic deficit that concerns members.

Recommendation:

That the Scrutiny Committee appoints for the municipal year 08/09;

- a) a member to the Norfolk County Strategic Partnership – Joint Scrutiny Panel.
- b) a substitute member to the Norfolk County Strategic Partnership – Joint Scrutiny Panel.

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1. Why Establish a Joint Scrutiny Panel?

- 1.1 **The Norfolk County Strategic Partnership Joint Scrutiny Panel** has been established to review and scrutinise the performance of the Norfolk County Strategic Partnership, as the responsible body for the delivery of Norfolk Ambition and the Local Area Agreement against the agreed performance outcomes and targets. NB: Norfolk Ambition is the Sustainable Community Strategy for the County.
- 1.2 With the enhancement of the scrutiny role through new legislation there are new duties on partners to cooperate. The task of scrutinising partners has been a difficult role for many Overview & Scrutiny bodies but we can learn from the experiences of Health Scrutiny where partners are committed to positively contributing to the Scrutiny process. Because the scrutiny of partnerships has not always been an easy issue this joint approach for the scrutiny of the County Strategic Partnership offers **an opportunity for us to ensure democratic accountability**.

2. How will it work?

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Norfolk County Strategic Partnership Management Group on 15 July it was agreed that each local authority has one voting representative on the joint scrutiny body. There will also be provision for independent representation on the panel as already occurs in the Suffolk model. But at this stage it looks as if this measure will be phased in later. The Suffolk model has been held up as an example of best practice and has national recognition for this.
- 2.2 The County Council's Monitoring Officer will provide procedural advice and support to the panel, and Norfolk County Council will provide administrative support with regard to convening and minuting the meetings of the Panel.
- 2.3 The Panel will include items on its agenda based on criteria; weak or poor performance, public importance, legislation, issues raised by audit inspections and an opportunity to identify and promote good practice.
- 2.4 An annual Forward Plan will be maintained by the Panel and much like the City Council's Work Programme, topics will be added or removed as priorities change. To avoid duplication the Panel will have regard to the work programmes of the scrutiny committee's of the participating Councils. This will also ensure as coordinated an approach as possible.
- 2.5 Similarly when a local authority overview and scrutiny committee is considering a proposal to scrutinise an aspect of the Norfolk County

Strategic Partnership, they are expected to request the Joint Scrutiny panel to include the item on its Forward Plan.

3. Membership of the Joint Scrutiny Panel

- 3.1 The Joint Scrutiny panel will be made up of 8 members; one representative of each of the participating Councils, **to be a member of a Scrutiny Committee.**
- 3.2 The 8 participating Councils are; Breckland District Council, Broadland District Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council, Norfolk County Council, North Norfolk District Council, Norwich City Council and South Norfolk District Council.