



Scrutiny Committee

16:40 to 18:20

29 June 2023

Present: Councillors Ackroyd (chair), Thomas (Va) (vice chair following appointment) Carrington, Champion (substitute for Haynes) Driver, Fox, Francis, Galvin, Maguire (substitute for Fulton-McAlister), Osborn, Padda, Prinsley, Sands (M) (substitute for Stutely) and Thomas (Vi)

Apologies: Councillors Fulton-McAlister, Haynes and Stutely

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Appointment of vice chair

Following a vote it was:-

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Vaughan Thomas as vice chair for the ensuing civic year.

3. Appointment of the member and substitute member of the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (NHOSC)

Following a vote it was:-

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Prinsley as the representative and Councillor Galvin as the substitute to NHSOC for the ensuing civic year.

4. Appointment of the member and substitute member of the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership Sub Panel (NCCSPSP)

Following a vote it was:-

RESOLVED to appoint Councillor Stutely as the representative and Councillor Osborn as the substitute to NCCSPSP for the ensuing civic year.

5. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 16 March 2023.

6. Scrutiny committee work programme 2022-23

The chair introduced the report and said that members had taken part in a useful work programme setting workshop in May with training also held for committee members. She referred to the proposed work programme at appendix B to the report and proposed to confirm the items for each month in turn.

The chair referred to the extraordinary meeting which would be held on 25 July and would consider the item on welcoming refugees and asylum seekers. A member asked what the format of the meeting would be. The head of legal and procurement (monitoring officer) replied that officers would be bringing a report to members which would include feedback from the Zainab project and also responses to points specifically made by Councillor Galvin. Officers were looking to facilitate a meeting with the county council's abroad team as well as inviting representatives from the Zainab café, the Red Cross and Bridge plus. Serco had also been invited to attend the meeting but had not confirmed whether they would be present.

Members discussed the meeting to be held on 20 July. There was consensus that the Elections Act was a timely and important topic to consider with members being particularly interested in the following points:

- What the council had the power to do with regards to mitigating any impact of the introduction of voter ID
- What the impact of voter ID was at the last election
- What did the council put in place this year in the lead up to the local elections i.e. communication plans
- Feedback from groups such as Election Agents
- What the council would be doing for the next set of elections, especially with the prospect of a general election
- What the introduction of similar measures for postal voting would mean in terms of impact on residents.

The committee considered the topic of communicating with the council / consultations. It was suggested that the topic could be split across two meetings, with one meeting focussing on communications and the other looking at how the council conducted consultations.

A member suggested that due to the topic being very broad, a task and finish group could be the best way to look at the issues. The committee had recently agreed a model terms of reference for items to be added to the work programme and the head of legal and procurement said that she would be happy to work these through for the topic and bring a draft to the next meeting on 20 July.

Some members of the committee felt that this was an important topic as difficulties communicating with the council was an issue that their residents had raised a number of times.

A member commented that if the topic was split over two meetings, this would take time away from consideration of the Elections Act which was an important topic and directly affected all Norwich residents.

Another member said that they understood that work was already underway around how residents communicated with the council which meant that it was not necessary for the committee to also consider this.

A motion was moved and seconded that the item on communicating with the council and consultations be removed from the committee's work programme.

A member said that she was disappointed that the committee wanted to remove the item as it was an issue of extreme importance to residents. Another member added that the topics had already been agreed in principle at a work programming workshop and one of the functions of the committee was to consider areas in which the council may need improvement.

The motion was put to a vote and with eight voting in favour of removal and six against, the item was removed from the work programme.

Members discussed the meeting on 21 September and asked whether the Corporate Plan update was confirmed. The head of legal and procurement (monitoring officer) said that the timetable for the update was being defined and an update could be provided at the meeting on 20 July. A member asked whether the item on communicating with the council and consultations could be taken to the September meeting if the Corporate Plan update was not ready. The head of legal and procurement (monitoring officer) replied that this could be considered at the next meeting.

Members agreed that the review of how the council addresses anti-social behaviour should come to the October meeting.

The Parks and Open Spaces Strategy had been identified for consideration at the November meeting of the committee, along with a review of the Environmental programme.

A member suggested that the Parks and open Spaces Strategy could be moved to the March meeting of the committee as it was a non-statutory document. The head of legal and procurement said that she would speak to the officers developing the strategy about timelines for the document. Members discussed the need to fit scrutiny of certain documents around the work of officers to ensure that resources were being used appropriately. It was also more useful for members to pre-scrutinise documents to add value.

It was agreed that a review of the Environmental programme should be held by the Climate and Environment Emergency Executive Panel (CEEPP) rather than the scrutiny committee.

The Equality Information report and the business plans of the council's wholly owned companies were agreed for the December meeting.

Members discussed the items proposed for the January meeting. The chair said that there had been a suggestion from members that the topic of retrofitting be taken forward using a task and finish group. This would allow evidence to be considered from other councils and meetings to be held with officers, before bringing all the information thorough into a report to the committee. A member commented that although it would be useful to understand what approach other councils had taken to retrofitting, the information would need to be presented in the context of the council's financial position.

Members agreed that the Love Norwich review was an important piece of work and should remain as the substantive item for the January meeting.

RESOLVED to

1) add the following items to the scrutiny committee work programme:

- a) 20 July 2023 – The Elections Act
- b) 25 July 2023 (extraordinary meeting) – Welcoming refugees and asylum seekers
- c) 21 September – Corporate Plan update (subject to confirmation on timelines)
- d) 12 October – How the council addresses anti-social behaviour
- e) 23 November 2023 – Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (subject to confirmation on timelines)
- f) 7 December 2023 – Equality Information report and NCS and Lion Homes business plans
- g) 25 January 2024 – Love Norwich review
- h) 1 February 2024 – 2024-25 budget setting
- i) 21 March 2024 – Biodiversity Strategy outcomes

2) Ask officers to:

- a) Confirm the timelines of the Corporate Plan and Parks and Open Spaces Strategy; and
- b) Bring draft Terms of Reference for a task and finish group on retrofitting to a future committee meeting.

CHAIR