

Norwich City Council
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Item 7

REPORT for meeting to be held on 23 June 2011

PICK analysis selection of topics for setting the scrutiny committee work programme

Prioritising topics for scrutiny

Summary: Following the meeting of the scrutiny committee in May, this report suggests a way forward from the topic selection and initial PICK analysis work carried out by members that took place at that meeting which was interrupted and carried over to this month.

The scrutiny committee sits once a month and it is advised that most effective scrutiny takes place when the agenda is not overloaded, as this allows a much more focused discussion

Conclusions: This exercise should enable the scrutiny committee to ensure that the work of the committee is relevant and achievable. Each activity undertaken by the scrutiny committee needs to be carried out in an impartial, evidence based manner, to analyse and assess the activities and processes of the council and other organisations, consider local issues and concerns and identify if, how and where things can be improved. Effective scrutiny outcomes should always be **evidence based**.

Recommendation: To consider this report and the cabinet forward plan, when setting the scrutiny work programme.

There are currently 19 suggested topics. For the work programme to be achievable this number needs to be reduced to no more than 10 scrutiny topics for the year.

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1. Developing a work programme for the scrutiny committee

- 1.1 When the scrutiny committee considers which items to include on its work programme it is important that it is done in the context of what the main focus is for the cabinet over the coming year will be. This means that the scrutiny committee will then be able to consider where and how it can add value to the cabinet's forward agenda, and that the council's resources are being focussed on priority issues.
- 1.2 The biggest challenge for the council over the next 12 months will be how to make savings to the general fund revenue budget. A programme of work is now underway to identify options for making these savings. This will have a significant impact on the priorities of the council in the future, and it is important that the scrutiny committee works closely with the cabinet and corporate leadership team and consider how they can provide a critical friend challenge to this work.

2. Activity – topic selection and setting the scrutiny committee work programme

- 2.1 To illustrate how the Pick analysis is used, three topics from those suggested by members at the last meeting will be put through the PICK analysis process as a group exercise.
- 2.2 **At the next stage there may be a need to clarify some of the rationale behind certain suggestions to assist those who will be putting them through the PICK analysis. A topic heading could mean one thing to some and something different to others. What is it we should look at? Why? How? When? Etc.**
- 2.3 A list of potential topics was agreed by the committee at the last meeting. Members of the scrutiny committee are asked to split into three smaller groups as they did at the last meeting to continue the PICK analysis process of the items on the list which will be divided into three.
- 2.4 To further assist members a short commentary accompanies the suggested topics (please see section 4 of the report).
- 2.5 By considering the topics that have been suggested and putting them through the PICK analysis, any not making it through to the groups' short list will not be included on the future work programme. However, as a final check, each group will need to explain their decisions for inclusion and exclusion to the whole committee. It is suggested that at least three of the PICK criteria need to be achieved for a topic to be selected for scrutiny, but desirable that all four criteria are met.
- 2.6 **PICK analysis:**
 - Public interest - is there sufficient public interest in the topic?

Impact – will the review have a significant impact on community wellbeing?

Council performance – how is the council/organisation performing in this area?

Keeping in context – what else is happening in this area such as recent reviews or inspections?

2.7 The next stage is for the focus groups to outline the objectives and desired outcomes for each of the topics they have selected through the PICK analysis. The topics and the objectives and desired outcomes should then be entered by the groups onto the table on the flip chart provided.

2.8 Once the focus groups have filtered the topics via the PICK analysis the committee will come together and jointly put each topic, having made it through the group selection process, through a final test (see below).

Criteria to reject items

- issue being examined elsewhere - e.g. by the cabinet, working group, officer group, other body
- issue dealt with less than 2 years ago
- new legislation or guidance expected within the next year
- no scope for scrutiny to add value/ make a difference
- the objective cannot be achieved in the specified timescale

2.9 At this stage with the final list of topics agreed, the scrutiny officer will be tasked to draw up the work programme for adoption at the next available meeting of the committee. The scrutiny officer will also need to liaise with the cabinet and the relevant officers or organisations regarding the new scrutiny committee work programme.

2.10 Members are asked to note that for scrutiny to be effective the topics selected should be able to satisfy the PICK analysis criteria and any scrutiny committee work programme should not be too large in number of topics so that it remains achievable within the resources and timescales available to the committee.

3. Statutory and agreed scrutiny duties

- 3.1 The scrutiny committee work programme will already have been populated with those statutory and locally agreed duties the committee has to consider on a cyclical basis:
- a) Annual review of scrutiny
 - b) Quarterly performance data
 - c) Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership performance data
 - d) Budget scrutiny

4. The topics so far and some background

- 4.1 The topics that are on the suggested list are set out below with a brief commentary that should help members further when they are considering them against the PICK analysis and objectives/desired outcomes.
- 4.2 **Review of overall proposals – post consultation;** This could potentially form a large body of work for the committee in that it will be part of the considerations of members when scrutinising and making suggestions to the proposals for the budget. (see 4.16)
- 4.3 **Threescore;** Not sure what else the committee can add here. Scrutiny has already been involved with advising towards the appointment of certain contractors. It is suggested that mechanisms be put in place to keep the ward members informed of developments.
- 4.4 **ICT review;** This in house review is already underway. The scrutiny committee would need to demonstrate where it could add to the process. For example if it were to look at issues such as costs and strategy.
- 4.5 **Rehabilitation of offenders and repeat offending;** Prevention of re-offending is an area of work where the Council does not lead and our role in steering it is through the county community safety partnership. The key players are probation, police, youth offending team, prison service together with a number of providers where services are accessed e.g. housing, substance misuse, mental health services, benefits, employment advice etc.

A briefing to the scrutiny committee or an “all member briefing” could be provided on the integrated offender management scheme and any subsequent scrutiny area of work that may arise would initially be focussing on other agencies and subsequently if and how Council services make a meaningful contribution.

- 4.6 **Community safety;** The committee looks at the new arrangements for community safety later in the autumn. At that stage members will be able to consider how they would like to carry forward their role with regard to the performance of the County wide community safety partnership.
- 4.7 **Procurement strategy;** A decision needs to be taken as to whether this is a topic for the scrutiny work programme or a member briefing. A good question to ask is, is there evidence to suggest that the performance of the procurement strategy should be scrutinised?
- 4.8 **Road conditions, transport, the agency agreement, encouraging less use of cars in Norwich and speeding traffic;** All members will be taking part in a briefing - **traffic & transport café** that is being held on 13 September 2011. A future role for the scrutiny committee could be to have some input regarding any decision over the agency agreement once the current agreement nears the end of its life.
- 4.9 **Quarterly performance reports;** This is already a long standing commitment for the scrutiny committee and also helps to provide an overview of performance to inform budget consideration.
- 4.10 **Channel migration;** There is some member interest here in that some case work has come from public queries. The key question here is how will the council know if it has been successful in achieving what it set out to do? For example – reducing the number of contacts etc; is channel migration working?
- 4.11 **Inspiring young people;** This could be a good link in to the Norfolk County Strategic Partnership Joint Overview and Scrutiny Panel where the scrutiny committee's representatives could raise this as a topic on behalf of the city council's members who have questions regarding **youth services** and **youth advisory boards**.
- 4.12 **Encourage local entrepreneurs, local economic partnerships – regional development agencies;** It is suggested that these related topics be taken together for an overview to be gained. This could then assist members in any future scrutiny work relating to economic development. The economic development officer has indicated that sometime after the summer would be a good time for this to take place, once the government's intentions are clearer in this regard.
- 4.13 **Consultation process;** Extra scrutiny committee meeting being held on 7 July 2011.
- 4.14 **The localism bill;** An all member briefing will be taking place on 22 November 2011.
- 4.15 **Effects of abolition of the default retirement age;** What support is available to help people stay in work longer since the abolition of the

default retirement age? Could this issue be addressed by the Norfolk health scrutiny panel if looking in terms of mental health and prevention?

- 4.16 **Budget scrutiny and policy framework;** The scrutiny committee meeting on 20 October 2011 will be receiving an update report on the council's budget position.

After the first budget scrutiny café that was held last year it is hoped to hold a similar exercise on 24 November 2011 as part of the overall process that the scrutiny committee will be engaged in. The scrutiny committee will be considering the draft budget report on 26 January 2012 before it goes to cabinet on 8 February 2012. The council will decide on the final budget at its meeting in late February.

- 4.18 **Commissioning framework;** The timescales for its development and implementation were held back in order to consult on it at the same time as the corporate consultation - as such the commissioning framework will be annexed to the report which goes to cabinet on 13 July 2011.

Consultation on the framework will commence 21st July and we feel that there is greater value in scrutiny looking at the process once the 12 week consultation is underway. It may be useful for the committee to focus on commissioning outcomes to see if funding is delivering the council's agenda.

- 4.19 **Asset management and disposal;** An all member briefing is taking place on 12 July 2011 and there is a report going to cabinet on 13 July 2011.

- 4.20 **Peoples understanding of local government – general disengagement and positive engagement of young people in the democratic process;** This topic is suggested for a member briefing so that the issues can be highlighted and an overview gained before any decision is taken as to whether any issues relating to this are taken up by the scrutiny committee.

- 4.21 **The health interface;** At this meeting of the scrutiny committee members will be selecting their representatives for the Norfolk health scrutiny committee. This would be a good opportunity to request that those members and the scrutiny officer liaise with the health scrutiny officers at the county council to either put together a paper or briefing to update the committee on the changing picture and how the city council may be engaged – post health reforms.

5. Briefings

- 5.1 Some of the above topics are suggested as being all member briefings. It may be that from the overview gained by these briefings that issues for scrutiny arise. But as with any topic to be on the scrutiny committee work programme it is advised that it appears there based on evidence that suggests a need for a closer look. All topics should where possible be subjected to the PICK analysis.
- 5.2 A new approach will accompany member briefings that will enable questions to be submitted in the week before the briefing so that those issues most important to members can be covered by the officers.