



# **NORWICH** City Council

**Committee Name:** Cabinet

**Committee Date:** 17/11/2021

**Report Title:** Scrutiny recommendations to cabinet

**Portfolio:** Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources

**Report from:** Executive director of community services

**Wards:** All Wards

## **OPEN PUBLIC ITEM**

### **Purpose**

To consider the recommendations made by scrutiny committee on 15 July, 9 and 16 September 2021.

### **Recommendation**

To consider whether to adopt all or some of the recommendations from the scrutiny committee.

### **Policy Framework**

The Council has three corporate priorities, which are:

- People living well
- Great neighbourhoods, housing and environment
- Inclusive economy

This report meets the corporate priorities for people living well and great neighbourhoods, housing and the environment.

## Report Details

1. The main topic for the scrutiny committee on 15 July was air pollution from woodburning. A report was prepared by the council's public protection officer which reviewed wood and coal burning from domestic fires and its contribution to pollution from particulate matter. The report looked at current pollution levels in Norwich, regulatory requirements, health implications and public awareness. The committee also heard from Emeritus Professor Claire Reeves from the University of East Anglia who spoke about sources of pollution and the movement of pollution through the atmosphere and illustrated her points using a slideshow. Campaign group Mum's for Lungs submitted written evidence which was circulated to the committee. The committee decided that it would like to continue this discussion at the next meeting to hear from other speakers who had different viewpoints before any recommendations were made.
2. At the meeting held on 9 September the committee continued the discussion on air pollution from woodburning. The meeting was held virtually in order to allow the member of the public who originally submitted the topic to attend and address the committee. A representative from the Stove Industry Alliance (SIA) also attended and spoke to the committee on the work of the SIA in promoting the benefits of woodburning stoves to consumers. The representative said that DEFRA recognised that there were errors in some of the evidence used to gather data for their study into domestic wood burning, and that the SIA had ongoing discussions over 5 years with the government on the evidence of air pollution produced by the new modern eco models. The representative said that he found the attention given by local authorities to this issue to be helpful. The member of the public spoke to the committee and explained that he had been diagnosed with two lung conditions and need to be careful with avoiding air pollution, for instance he said that he could not have his windows open when neighbours were using their wood burners. The member of the public referred to the effects of air pollution on those with health conditions, children and the elderly and suggested that the government should take the issue more seriously in view of its policies on climate change and ban wood burning in urban areas. The committee then made a number of resolutions which were ratified at the in person meeting held on 16 September.
3. At the meeting held on 16 September the following resolutions regarding air pollution from woodburning were ratified to be brought forward to cabinet:

Recommendation	Rationale	Implications / resource requirements
1. Prepare a communications strategy for residents.	The committee heard evidence that the effects of wood burners can be harmful. Wood burners should be certified, clean and use fuel with the 'ready to burn' logo to reduce air pollution from woodburning. Clear communications in accordance with a strategy would help residents and	Officer time for preparing and delivering the strategy Using existing social media communication channels, the website, e-leaflets and eCitizen would keep costs down.

	local businesses understand "the effects of wood burners and how to use them responsibly".	
2. Submit the committee's findings to the Chair of the all party parliamentary group on Air Quality.	That a summary of the committee's findings and resulting actions be sent to the Chair of the all -party parliamentary group on Air Quality to support their work.	Officer time to prepare correspondence.
3. Work with public health partners on health education regarding respiratory problems.	The committee heard that when compared to the effects of smoking, for example, there is very little public health education on the effects of air pollution.	Officer time to engage with public health partners over an extended period of time.
4. Investigate the level of solid fuel burning in City Council owned properties.	The committee heard that there are 68 council owned properties which use solid fuel appliances as the main source of heating. Further investigation could be undertaken with a view to ending solid fuel burning in council properties to reduce air pollution.	Officer time. Potential cost in replacing solid fuel appliances in 68 council properties, subject to investigation.
5. Enforcement against burning of wet leaves on bonfires on Council properties.	As recommendation 7. A member raised the topic of bonfires on domestic properties, primarily from burning garden waste. It was suggested that residents should be reminded to use their brown bins for this waste as bonfires constitute a statutory nuisance for smoke and fume.	Officer time for communication Using existing social media communication channels, the website, e-leaflets and eCitizen would keep costs down.  Officer time and IT resource for building a new process for enforcement action, actual enforcement, and follow-up.
6. Write to Norwich MPs about resources available to support employees working in licensed premises.	The committee heard that fires and wood burners in restaurants and licensed premises will be causes of air pollution (and the resulting health concerns) that employees may not be aware of. If an employee wished to challenge an employer for using non certified fuels there is very little support from Trade	Officer time to prepare correspondence.

	Unions or the Health and Safety Executive. This lack of support could be raised as an area of concern by writing to local MPs.	
7. To discourage the use of bonfires across the whole of the city and encourage people to use their brown bins and composting.	As recommendation 5. A member raised the topic of bonfires on domestic properties, primarily from burning garden waste. It was suggested that residents should be reminded to use their brown bins for this waste as bonfires constitute a statutory nuisance for smoke and fume.	Officer time Using existing social media communication channels, the website, e-leaflets and eCitizen would keep costs down.

4. At its meeting on 16 October, the scrutiny committee reviewed a range of TOPIC suggestions put forwards by members and agreed to allocate the following scrutiny topics to meetings in the current civic year. Members will be asked for questions in advance of the meeting so that they can be passed to the speaker/s to facilitate the committee holding effective debate:
  - October - Review of the environmental strategy following Covid-19.
  - November - The emerging new social inclusion agenda following Covid-19.
  - January - A sustainable, inclusive Norwich economy following Covid-19.
5. It was agreed postpone the additional meeting of scrutiny on 4 November 2021 to scrutinise the business plans of Norwich City Services Ltd and Norwich Regeneration Limited. The meeting will now be held on 2 December to tie in when the NCSL and NRL business plans are reported to Cabinet in December.
6. Following Councillor Oliver's' appointment to Cabinet, two external member committee appointments were made. The council's substitute member on the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel is Councillor Stutely. Cllr Stutely was also appointed as the council's representative on the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny committee.

## Consultation

7. Ward councillors, portfolio holders, the public or other stakeholders have not been consulted (statutorily or otherwise). However the public are encouraged to submit topics for scrutiny via an interactive form on the council's website.

## Implications

### Financial and Resources

8. Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2019-22 and Budget.
9. Any impact on resources resulting from this report will be accommodated within existing budgets or the relevant approvals will be sought if additional budget is required.

### Legal

10. No specific legal advice has been sought or provided.

### Statutory Considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and Diversity	None at this stage
Health, Social and Economic Impact	None at this stage
Crime and Disorder	None at this stage
Children and Adults Safeguarding	None at this stage
Environmental Impact	The recommendations have the potential to reduce sources of pollution in the city by educating residents on the impact of air pollution from woodburning.

### Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Controls Required
None at this stage		

### Other Options Considered

11. There have been no other options considered for this report, as it is a factual report based on the outcome of committee meetings that have already taken place.

### Reasons for the decision/recommendation

12. This report will allow cabinet to make a decision on whether or not to take forward some or all of the recommendations from the scrutiny committee meetings held on 15 July and 9 and 16 September 2021.

**Background papers:** none

**Appendices:** none

**Contact Officer:** scrutiny liaison officer

Name: Emma Webster

Telephone number: 01603 989622

Email address: [emmawebster@norwich.gov.uk](mailto:emmawebster@norwich.gov.uk)