



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.30pm – 6.35pm

20 January 2011

Present: Councillors Stephenson (Chair), Bradford, Driver, Fairbairn, Gee, Jeraj, Little, Ramsay, Storie, Thomas and Wiltshire

Apologies: Councillor Blower

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2010, subject to resolution 2 of minute 5 budget strategy – general fund 2011 – 2012 being amended to state ‘proposals for significant budget priorities for future years should be debated at full council prior to consultation’ and resolution 2(e) of minute 6 Response to the consultation on Norfolk County Council’s budget reductions being amended to state ‘that the county council maximises all opportunities to find income from renewable energy’.

2. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the committee’s work programme and the cabinet forward agenda which had been circulated.

The chair suggested that the committee should consider the issues arising from the abolition of the default retirement age and the capacity for people to work in certain occupations which may be no longer appropriate to their age. She suggested that evidence could be taken from the county council and other organisations to assist with scrutiny of this subject. The scrutiny officer suggested that this council could look at the issue independently from the county council, taking evidence from appropriate witnesses or that the appropriate scrutiny panel at the county council should look at this as a topic in view of the chair’s specific reference to the teaching profession.

Councillor Little questioned whether it would be appropriate for the committee to consider issues concerning the Localism bill. The scrutiny officer said that the implications of the bill for this council were not clear at this stage. The position should be clearer by the spring and this was to be included as part of the forward looking element of the scrutiny committee’s annual review to be considered for adoption in March 2011 before being submitted to full council.

Councillor Jeraj asked whether the budget papers would be provided to members a week in advance of the meeting on 10 February. The head of finance said that, at this stage, the timescales would be adhered to.

In response to a question, the senior committee officer said that the letter to the lead members of the Greater Norwich Development Partnership would be signed by the chair following clarification of certain issues by the director of regeneration and development.

RESOLVED to –

- (1) add consideration of the implications for people working in certain occupations beyond the default retirement age to the work programme;
- (2) note that the meeting on 10 February would scrutinise the council's budget, with questions to be provided to the cabinet member for resources performance and shared services as soon as possible;
- (3) note that the meeting on 24 February would consider the due diligence exercise conducted in respect of the Connaught contracts, with questions to be provided to the scrutiny officer by 10 February.

3. NEW COMMUNITY SAFETY ARRANGEMENTS

The head of local neighbourhood services presented the report and circulated up to date information showing the incidences of crime and statistical trends within Norwich.

Discussion ensued during which Councillor Little expressed concern about the county council's budget reductions for youth outreach work and the likelihood that other agencies would need to absorb a considerable volume of this work. The head of local neighbourhood services said there was a need for detailed discussions with partners concerning the impact of budget reductions on community safety issues. Cllr Jeraj questioned how the issues logged by contractors which resulted from incidences of anti-social behaviour were to be logged. The head of local neighbourhood services said that the council's neighbourhood model provided mechanisms for all sectors of the community to be able to report incidences of anti-social behaviour. Cllr Jeraj also asked a question concerning the funding mechanisms for the new countywide community safety partnership. The head of local neighbourhood services said that it was not yet clear what funding would be available for community safety initiatives in the Norwich area. Councillor Bradford commented that there was a need to ensure that the city obtained a fair allocation of the county's budget for youth outreach works. The head of local neighbourhood services said that the incidences of crime and anti-social behaviour in the city provided strong evidence for an appropriate funding base.

The head of local neighbourhood services then referred to the future scrutiny of the new community safety partnership arrangements. The chair suggested that it was difficult for members to absorb the details provided within the statistical information and suggested that a drop-in session could be held where members could discuss issues in more detail. The scrutiny officer said that it was not possible to provide more specific data for the committee's consideration but suggested that the committee could consider specific community safety issues on a periodic basis. Members also suggested that the impact on the city of the new community safety partnership arrangements could be scrutinised.

RESOLVED to ask the head of local neighbourhood services to devise information to enable the committee to scrutinise the new countywide community safety partnership arrangements at a meeting in autumn 2011.

4. DUE DILIGENCE

The head of finance gave a presentation on the theory of due diligence to assist the scoping of members questions for the meeting on 24 February 2011.

RESOLVED to record the committee's appreciation for the informative presentation.

5. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the item 6 below because it would disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as in para 3 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

***6. THREE SCORE, BOWTHORPE – EXEMPLAR FIRST PHASE – PROCUREMENT PROCESS AND ISSUES FOR SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The city growth and development manager presented the report and answered questions about the environmental impact considerations within the procurement process.

RESOLVED to –

- (1) note the report;
- (2) delegate authority to a task and finish group to scrutinise the procurement process issues connected with the Three Score, Bowthorpe exemplar first phase;
- (3) appoint Councillors Stephenson, Storie, Fairbairn and Wiltshire to the task and finish group;
- (4) ask the city growth and development manager to convene a meeting of the task and finish group prior to the conclusion of the tendering process.

CHAIR