

Norwich City Council

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REPORT for meeting to be held on 11 September 2008

SETTING A SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME & TOPICS

Summary:

In setting the Work Programme for the Scrutiny Committee members are requested to consider the various options set out in the report. Those topics that are included within this report are taken from the Committee's last work programme and suggestions made at the Scrutiny Development sessions. There may well be other items that the Committee feels should be considered.

Conclusions:

Resulting from member input at the scrutiny development sessions held over the summer, a Scrutiny Committee Work Programme Template as been produced. Selection of topics for scrutiny can be problematic because of its wide remit and the number of possible sources. It is useful to have a mixture on your work programme of performance review and monitoring, and Scrutiny reviews both internal and external. It is suggested that you should attempt to be realistic about what, especially with Scrutiny Reviews, you can do in terms of available time and the capacity of Members and Officers. It is hoped that members will find the headings on the Template useful when deciding on a topics suitability, methods to be used etc.

Recommendation:

- a) The Scrutiny Committee Work Programme Template (appended) be adopted for use by the Scrutiny Committee.
- b) Members agree on items and topics for the Work Programme using this report as guidance with regard to scoping
- c) The Work Programme be updated each month as a standing item on the Scrutiny Committee Agenda papers.

Contact Officer:

Scrutiny Officer – 01603 212491

stevegoddard@norwich.gov.uk

1. Carefully Identifying the Topics and Issues to be Examined

- 1.1 Members will need to set a realistic work programme by carefully identifying the topics and issues to be examined. Selecting the right topics is crucial to ensure that Scrutiny at Norwich City Council is effective and that it benefits the Council, its customers and the community.
- 1.2 Topics for inclusion can come from a number of different sources including individual Councillors, members of the public, Council Officers, Executive referrals, pre - scrutiny and corporate priorities.
- 1.3 It is important to ensure that the Scrutiny Committee avoids repetition with other bodies and that it carefully monitors the outcomes of its work.
- 1.4 A useful tool for members when considering topics for Scrutiny as an initial filter prior to applying them to the work programme template is to use a pick analysis for prioritising topics towards the avoidance of unmanageable and unrealistic work programmes.

Public interest – Impact - Council performance - Keeping in context

- P** Is there sufficient public interest in the topic?
- I** Will the review have a significant impact on community well being?
- C** How is the council/organisation performing in this area?
- K** What else is happening in this area such as recent reviews or inspections?

2. Methods and Scoping

- 2.1 In scoping items and deciding on topics for the scrutiny work programme it maybe useful to find ways to engage with local residents, organisations and businesses to obtain their views on what needs to change, and ideas of where and how such improvement might be achieved.
- 2.2 Towards achieving worthwhile outcomes it is good practice for members to ensure that topics for Scrutiny are scoped out in some detail to assist officers or the organisations that are preparing reports or attending scrutiny meetings. This not only benefits them but helps members to clearly understand the issues. The preparation of questions in advance of meetings/reviews, and where possible making them available to those assisting the committee in its work can help towards the production of more complete responses and answers.
- 2.3 It may also be helpful to develop a system to track items that have been to scrutiny and to monitor outcomes, effectiveness and impact.

3. Other Issues to Consider for the Work Programme

- 3.1 Use of the **Forward Agenda** and **pre – Scrutiny**, can provide more opportunities for involvement in the decision making process. If pre-scrutiny is well planned and used appropriately it should lead to successes and enhance the democratic process, while dealing with any barriers at an earlier stage than for example a call – in could achieve. When managed effectively, pre-scrutiny can strengthen Officer's reports and if Council policies are to be robust, inclusive and ultimately, have Member buy-in, then pre-scrutiny can play its part.
- 3.2 **Call-in** - This is the term used when a decision made by the Executive, but not yet implemented, is referred to the Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The Committee can then look at the issue in more detail and question the decision-maker. Once the decision has been considered it will either be referred back to the Executive for reconsideration in the light of new evidence or confirmed for implementation.
- 3.3 **Budget Scrutiny** – This is largely done by the members of the Audit Committee and by Full Council at Norwich City Council.
- 3.4 **Service Plans & Performance Management** – for the Scrutiny Committee to be effective in this role it is important to be aware of how the Council's Strategies, the Corporate Plan and Service Plans fit together. The preparation of Service Plans is linked to the budget setting process. Service Planning and budgeting both take forward the headline objectives for the following year.
 - 3.4.1 It is important for there to be a mechanism for members to be able to monitor performance indicator direction of travel on those issues that the committee feel are most important. When looking at Service Plans members need to be able to focus in on the key drivers and objectives of a plan.
- 3.5 Scrutiny has a role in challenging performance data, in investigating areas of low performance and in celebrating areas of high performance. Members should become confident about selecting areas of performance to review and in asking challenging questions.

4. Further Guidance for Setting a Scrutiny Work Programme

- 4.1 For you to set an effective, achievable and relevant Scrutiny Work Programme you will need to:
 - a) demonstrate the value any investigation would offer the Council's role in Community Leadership.

- b) consider the relationship any future topic may have with the work of the Forward Agenda and the Corporate Plan.
- c) be mindful of the priorities and needs of the City's Residents and Businesses.
- d) provide reasons, aims and objectives whenever possible so that Officers, Executive members and other Scrutiny Invitees can assist the Scrutiny Committee reach an outcome.
- e) give consideration to what outcomes maybe achieved through scrutiny.
- f) balance the need for adding new topics with any Scrutiny work that may already exist.
- g) consider how a particular Scrutiny Investigation or Review may best be carried out.
- h) provide sufficient notice, where possible, in order that the Executive member with responsibility for the subject, officers and outside invitees and attendees can fully assist the process.

5. Items from the Old Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

- 5.1 Below are those topics that have been taken from the Committee's old work programme. Also some of the suggestions made at the Scrutiny Development sessions. Many of the topics from the old work programme had not been allocated a date or scoped. There may well be other items that the Committee feels should be considered, therefore those outlined here in the report are by no means exhaustive.
- 5.2 Remember that the work programme needs to be effective, achievable and relevant and you will need to prioritise by measuring each topic against the Pick Analysis and the headings on the Work Programme Template.
- 5.3 Items from the Old Scrutiny Committee Work Programme:
 - a) Access to Public Toilets in the City
 - b) A Living Wage for Norwich
 - c) Local Strategic Partnership
 - d) Local Area Agreement
 - e) Heartsease Academy (follow up)
 - f) Post Offices (follow up) And P/O's & Delivery of Council Services
 - g) Educational Attainment in Norwich
 - h) Steria Ltd
 - i) City Care
 - j) Impact of Choice Based Lettings on Voids Performance

- k) Consider the work undertaken to Improve the Collection of Rents
- l) Equalities Standard Level 2 (update)
- m) Disabled Parking – Reserved Space Policy
- n) Allotments
- o) Community Engagement Strategy
- p) Engaging Young People
- q) E – Petitions
- r) Participatory Democracy Working Party
- s) Norwich Airport

5.4 Topic Suggestions made at the Scrutiny Development Sessions.

- a) City Wide permit Parking
- b) Housing Area Offices
- c) Health Inequalities in Norwich
- d) Facilities for Young People
- e) Cycle Provision
- f) Cemetery Capacity
- g) Affordable Housing
- h) Ethnic Minorities & Integration

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2008/2009 – NORWICH CITY COUNCIL

Pick Analysis for Prioritising Topics

Public interest – Impact - Council performance - Keeping in context

- P** Is there sufficient public interest in the topic?
I Will the review have a significant impact on community wellbeing?
C How is the council/organisation performing in this area?
K What else is happening in this area such as recent reviews or inspections?

* **Headline Priorities of the Corporate Plan** – Strong & Prosperous City, Safe & Healthy Neighbourhoods and Opportunities for all.

Date of Meeting	Topic	Organisation/ Officer/ Responsible Portfolio Holder/Member	Impact on The City & Community	*Links with the Forward Agenda & the Corporate Plan	Objectives and Desired Outcomes	Methods and venue	Timescale
11/09/08	Norfolk County Strategic Partnership Joint Scrutiny Panel	Scrutiny Officer & Partnerships Manager Cllr Morphew Cllr Stephenson	Sustainable Community	All 3 Headline Priorities	Appointment of a Norwich City Council Scrutiny Committee Member to the Panel	At Committee	Before October 08
11/09/08	Scrutiny Committee Work Programme	Cllr Stephenson & Scrutiny Officer	Helping the City Reach Its Full Potential & Improving Services	All 3 Headline Priorities	Agree this template as a working format & set a programme of topics for Scrutiny	At Committee	on going
09/10/08	Overview of Service Plan Process & Scrutiny Role in Performance Management	Cllr Morphew & Cllr Waters The Deputy Chief Executive Policy and Performance Manager	Helping the City Reach Its Full Potential & Improving Services	All 3 Headline Priorities – Forward Agenda	For the Cttee to gain an understanding of the Service Planning Process & Key Perf Mgt issues to enable an effective monitoring role for Scrutiny	Presentation and Q&A's at Committee	One meeting leading onto quarterly Perf Mont updates

Date of Meeting	Topic	Organisation/ Officer/ Responsible Portfolio Holder	Impact on City & Community	Links with the Executive's Forward Agenda & the Corporate Plan	Objectives and Desired Outcomes	Methods and venue	Timescale
09/10/08	Equality Strategy	Policy and Performance Manager Cllr Waters	To help ensure equality of opportunity for all	Opportunities for all	Pre scrutiny of progress made towards achieving Level 2 Equality Standard	At Committee	
13/11/08	Quarterly Performance Data	CMT Cllrs Morphew and Waters	Helping the City Reach Its Full Potential & Improving Services	All 3 Headline Priorities	Identification of any causes for concern and note successes	At Committee	Quarterly review
13/11/08	Collection of Rents (Deferred pending improvement programme being developed following the mock audit inspection of landlord services)	Head of Landlord Services Cllrs Arthur and Waters			To note work undertaken to improve the collection of rents and identify any remaining causes for concern	At committee	Ongoing
13/11/08	Impact of Choice Based Lettings on Voids (Deferred pending improvement programme being developed following the mock audit inspection of landlord services)	Head of Landlord Services Cllr Arthur			To inform the Committee on the impact of choice based lettings on voids performance	At committee	Ongoing

12/02/09	Quarterly Performance Data	CMT Cllrs Morphew and Waters	Helping the City Reach Its Full Potential & Improving Services	All 3 Headline Priorities	Identification of any causes for concern and note successes	At Committee	Quarterly review
12 03/09	Quarterly Performance Data	CMT Cllrs Morphew and Waters	Helping the City Reach Its Full Potential & Improving Services	All 3 Headline Priorities	Identification of any causes for concern and note successes	At Committee	Quarterly review
21/05/09	Quarterly Performance Data	CMT Cllrs Morphew and Waters	Helping the City Reach Its Full Potential & Improving Services	All 3 Headline Priorities	Identification of any causes for concern and note successes	At Committee	Quarterly review

[illegible]

Date of Meeting	Topic	Organisation/ Officer/ Responsible Portfolio Holder	Impact on City & Community	Links with the Executive's Forward Agenda & the Corporate Plan	Objectives and Desired Outcomes	Methods and venue	Timescale