



NORWICH
City Council

MINUTES

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16:30 to 18:40

21 February 2013

Present: Councillors Stephenson (chair), Manning (vice chair), Bradford, Brimblecombe, Button, Galvin, Gee, Grenville, Lubbock, Manning, Sands (M), Stonard, Storie, Howard

Apologies: None

1. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

3. MINUTES

Members voted on the accuracy of resolution (a) on item 4. The vote was carried with 6 members voting for the accuracy, 5 against and 3 abstentions.

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 7 February 2013

4. PROCESS AND PROCEDURE- ST STEPHENS AND CHAPELFIELD HIGHWAYS SCHEME

(John Barnard, City Agency (NATS) Manager, from Norfolk County Council attended the meeting for this item.)

Members were reminded that in accordance with scrutiny procedure rule, this item had been placed on the agenda by the chair so that the committee could deal with questions that had been raised by the public in relation to the council's process and procedures for the recent consultation on proposed traffic changes in the city centre. The chair reminded the committee that the purpose of the item was to review the process involved in the consultation and not to comment on the proposals.

The deputy chief executive presented the report. Members were also given a timeline showing the consultation process and the tasks carried out. He reminded the committee that Norfolk County Council were responsible for highways but had delegated certain functions within this to Norwich City Council. Reports on vibrations were commissioned following resident's concerns and were available during the consultation period. A further report on air quality was also commissioned following further concerns raised. These were considered at the Norwich Highways Agency committee (NHAC) meeting held on the 24 January 2013 and as is standard practice, all objections were also reported to the committee. It was a public meeting with minutes published on the Norwich City Council website. The portfolio holder had also agreed to meet with residents who had concerns about the scheme to ensure that as many views were captured as possible.

In response to a question from a member, the principal planner (transport) explained that there were an additional seven days added onto the statutory consultation period for a number of reasons. There was an exhibition held in the Forum which was transferred to City Hall. At the end of the consultation, time was built in for a report to NHAC to be produced. The decision was to be made at the NHAC meeting and the meeting was publicised in the usual ways and also as part of the exhibition.

A member questioned the need for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the reasons for not making the Bethel Street data available. The principal planner (transport) explained that the traffic model used grouped Bethel Street and St Giles Street into one data stream and it was not feasible to separate the two. He explained that EIAs were necessary for large scale projects only but that after residents had suggested an EIA was needed, a screening opinion had been undertaken. This concluded that there was no requirement to conduct an EIA.

All residents and businesses in the area were contacted in writing to inform them of the consultation and this included the emergency services. There were also articles in the newspaper and radio items about the consultation. The committee were reminded that the affected area is mainly a commercial area.

A member raised a question regarding the process for receiving alternative proposals to the scheme. The deputy chief executive explained that the decision had been deferred by NHAC. This was to fully evaluate the alternative proposals that have been submitted by residents.

The members voted with ten for and three abstentions on the resolution below:

RESOLVED having considered the information in this report and presented at the meeting, the committee is content with the process that has been followed.

5. Q3 PERFORMANCE AND BUDGET MONITORING

The chair stated that questions and answers on the quarter 3 performance report had been circulated prior to the meeting and asked members if they had any further questions.

A member asked a question on SCC4 and the executive head of strategy, people and democracy explained that this quarterly survey process using the customer contact team was considered the most cost effective way of gathering this type of data. He added that he would ask the policy and performance manager to look into the weighting of the data.

In response to a question on PRC6, the executive head of business relationship management explained that his service was working closely with LGSS to continue to improve the claims processing system. He confirmed that the deadline for getting the claims up to date was still the year end and reminded members that all aspects of the claims process were being looked at, not just new claims. The deputy leader of the council added that they were in talks with LGSS about the improvements needed in this area, keeping in mind that there were upcoming changes to the way benefits were paid. The executive head of strategy, people and democracy suggested that information be included on these changes as part of the item on LGSS and the revenues and benefits service to be taken at a future meeting.

A further question was asked on assisting claimants in the interim period whilst their claim was being processed. The executive head of strategy, people and democracy said that there was a range of advice for claimants and the council had a housing options service which worked to help people remain in their homes. The executive head of business and relationship management added that the only benefits payable by the council were council tax benefit and housing benefits. Any other payments are not the responsibility of the city council. Following a question from a member he agreed to look into a way of automating confirmation that a claim had been received and was being processed.

Members asked for clarification on information given as part of SCC2 on the estimated increase in tonnage from the new waste contract. The deputy chief executive explained that they were in the middle of the process of awarding the new contract so he couldn't be specific about the details. He said he was reasonably confident that the recycling rates would increase due to better technology being used but further detailed information could be provided once a new contractor had been appointed. A request was also made for more detail with regard to any removed recycling bank facilities and the effect on tonnage of material.

RESOLVED to:-

- 1) ask the policy and performance manager to looking into the possibility of weighting of the data in SCC4 and;
- 2) to ask for further information to be circulated to members on the effect to tonnage of waste from removed recycling banks

6. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED to:-

- 1) take the items on the task and finish group – community space and the role of the ward councillor at the 7 March meeting; and
- 2) to take the items on LGSS and the revenues and benefit service and the welfare reform and housing benefit changes at the 11 April meeting

7. ROLE OF THE WARD COUNCILLOR

(This item had been considered as part of the item above.)

CHAIR