



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16:30 to 17:40

17 September 2015

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Maxwell (vice chair), Bogelein, Coleshill, Grahame, Haynes, Manning, Packer, Peek, Raby, Ryan, and Schmierer

Also present: Phil Shreeve, Policy, performance and partnerships manager

Apologies: Councillor Sands (S)

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

Contrary to the minutes of the previous meeting, it was made clear that Councillor Packer was in attendance.

RESOLVED to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2015.

3. Scrutiny committee work programme 2015 -2016

The chair updated the committee on the work programme.

Councillor Ryan suggested the topic of academies and said that it would be worthwhile to invite Dame Rachel de Souza from the inspiration trust to discuss the subject further.

It was felt appropriate to invite a representative from a cooperative academy (via the cooperative schools society) to give members a chance to understand the differences between the two types of academy.

Discussion ensued, during which the following points were made:

- A full meeting should be reserved for this topic;
- A representative from a teaching union should be invited;
- It would be useful to invite someone from a non-academy background;

The chair suggested that this may run the risk of duplicating the work of the county council. He said that developing a meeting around the subject of academies would sit with the policy, performance and partnerships manager who would flesh out the idea prior to the next meeting of the scrutiny committee. He would then present his suggestions at that meeting.

RESOLVED to note the work programme.

4. Update of the representative for the Norfolk health overview and scrutiny committee

Councillor Bogelein – Norwich City Council representative for the Norfolk health overview and scrutiny committee – summarised the discussion of the most recent meeting of the health and overview scrutiny committee, adding that work around children's mental health would be going ahead on 15 October.

RESOLVED to:-

- a) note the update from the representative for the Norfolk health overview and scrutiny committee; and,
- b) remind members to liaise with Councillor Bogelein if they wish to raise any issues.

5. Review of cooperative innovations and solutions and suggestions for how Norwich might benefit.

The policy, performance and partnerships manager introduced the report.

Councillor Herries explained that she had been asked to be a representative for the city council on the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN), adding that she was also the cooperative champion within the city council. She said that she would like to see further development of collective business opportunities with the inclusion of cooperative assistance bodies.

She said that the council would need to look at how it enables cooperative businesses to grow and flourish and to include school and college leavers within this work.

She added that there was a lot of scope for such a project moving forward, explaining that she had been invited onto the values and principles committee of the CCIN which would provide great opportunities for discussion and ideas sharing.

Discussion ensued, during which the following suggestions were made:

- The cooperative business model could be used to further the development of community assets (such as pubs). This could be a great opportunity to develop cooperative businesses within local communities;
- The possibility of establishing a community energy company could be explored;
- The council should ensure that cooperative working is assisting younger people to find employment.

Councillor Herries explained that all those who work within a cooperative are members and own a part of the business. The movement is all about pooling talent and cooperative development assistance bodies can provide advice regarding governance and structure etc. She said that irrespective of the value of individual investments, one member of the cooperative has one vote. The ideals of democracy and equality were key to the success of the cooperative model. She added that any profit is divided on a pro-rata basis structured around the time individuals are able to give to the business.

In response to a member's question, Councillor Herries said that the council had already supported the co-operatives fortnight through a motion taken to a full council meeting. She added that it would be incredibly useful to ensure that council staff time and expertise is available and that an understanding is reached on how cooperatives work in different places. She suggested that it would be useful if the council could provide ongoing assistance in any way which can oil the wheels of discussion and facilitate liaison with experts in the field of cooperatives. She suggested it would be useful to make contact with Sally Kelly, chair and secretary of the guild of Co-operatives East who is a cooperatives expert.

Discussion ensued during which the following points were made:

- It could be worth investigating whether or not the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) could support the setting up of cooperatives within Norwich;
- Community centres may well lend themselves to being developed as community hubs within the cooperative model;
- The idea of community shops should be examined, providing reasonable prices and potentially educational opportunities such as cookery lessons or chances for people to gain skills to assist them into employment;
- A session could be run within City Hall to allow people to understand more widely the world of cooperatives and what they have to offer;

- Residents should be asked where and how they would like to see developments such as community shops take place;
- A suggestion was made to use neighbourhood agreements as a testing ground for introducing co-operatives to the wider community.
- It was mentioned that the UEA has start-up grants available for students and that thought could be given to ways to encourage students to develop cooperatives using this funding;
- A suggestion was made that any work supporting co-operatives should avoid a shifting of trade away from established small local businesses. This could be achieved through the introduction of conditions for employment and conditions of use for a cooperative shop - although this would need to be carefully balanced to ensure that a community shop does not become a glorified food bank. The focus must be about enabling people to work, live, cook etc;
- Possible links with Norwich market should be encouraged to develop cooperative approaches to businesses within that space;
- It was suggested that an empty market stall had the potential to be used for promoting the idea of co-operatives.

A committee member said that generating enthusiasm for cooperatives may prove difficult within the city centre. It had often been rural communities where development of local business was more important to the local economy where co-operatives had thrived.

The policy, performance and partnerships manager said that there was a need to closely examine resource available within the council to properly understand the level of work that could be undertaken by council employees to support the development of co-operatives in this way.

Councillors were advised to send any additional suggestions regarding developing the cooperative work to the policy, performance and partnerships manager. Members agreed to also copy in Councillor Herries to any such emails, enabling her to maintain an overview of any such suggestions.

RESOLVED to:-

recommend to cabinet:

1. That representation be made and consideration given to asking that both the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Greater Norwich Growth Board (GNGB) to include co-operative business representation;
2. That the LEP be approached to support use of development funds to support co-operative within the Norwich economy;

3. That when considering the broader transformation process and meeting the required savings targets consideration be given to how to actively support co-operative service or asset provision with particular examples around pubs and energy supply;
4. To consider how the existing grants and commissioning process could support co-operatives and community interest company models as well as the current voluntary sector grant models;

report to scrutiny via the tracker:

1. The current offer (both supported by and being offered independent of the council) for new co-operative business start-up and support; and,
2. Officers to consider supporting an event to facilitate flow of information of advice to support new and existing co-operative business models
3. To make members aware of national or regional evidence on the impact of co-operative models on supporting local economies.

CHAIR