



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16:35 to 19:20

16 January 2020

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Ryan (vice chair), Carlo, Fulton-McAlister (M), Giles, Grahame, Manning, McCartney-Gray, Oliver, Osborn, Sands (S), Sarmezey and Thomas (Vi)

1. Public questions/petitions

There were no public questions or petitions.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 17 October 2019 and the exempt minutes of 17 December 2019.

4. Chair's update

The chair gave a verbal update on his attendance at the Centre for Public Scrutiny annual scrutiny conference. Lord Kerslake was the keynote speaker and he spoke about new models of scrutiny with regard to changes to local government and especially the formations of 'arm's length' companies and associated contracts. It was questioned whether cabinet members and councillors were best placed to serve on these boards and whether specialists should be used and would be held to account through the council's role as a shareholder.

Different models of scrutiny were discussed. At Devon county council, the scrutiny committee undertook 'spotlight' reviews. These were a task and finish group held in one day and officers would appear before the group throughout the day to give evidence and answer questions with recommendations formed at the end of the day. This council also looked at 'big ticket' items around a year before they would be presented to cabinet to develop them before they were added to the forward plan. Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole council used a scheme known as a 'rappointer' which was a single member task and finish group which culminated in an evidence based report back to the main committee. Members agreed that all of these different methods were interesting and could form discussions early in the new civic year when the scrutiny work programme was being developed.

The committee discussed the opportunity for the Centre for Public Scrutiny to undertake a scrutiny health check at Norwich City Council and agreed this would be beneficial.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the chair's update; and
- (2) ask the scrutiny liaison officer to contact the Centre for Public Scrutiny to organise a scrutiny health check to review ways of working based on best practice.

5. Scrutiny committee work programme 2019-2020

The chair presented the report. He said that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had been due to attend the January meeting of the scrutiny committee but had to rearrange. The scrutiny liaison officer would circulate alternative dates to members of the committee and an extraordinary meeting of scrutiny committee would be held to allow scrutiny members to question the PCC. Members were asked to email the scrutiny liaison officer with broad lines of questioning for the PCC.

Members discussed the timing of the LEP item as key officers and members were unable to make the date of 19 March 2020. It was proposed that another date be found in March to hold the scrutiny committee meeting for the LEP item and the young people and wellbeing item, postponed due to the General Election, could be added to the work programme early in the new civic year.

Members had received a briefing on Universal Basic income and agreed that this item would be taken off of the scrutiny committee work programme for the current civic year.

RESOLVED to

- (1) note the scrutiny committee work programme 2019-20; and
- (2) ask the scrutiny liaison officer to:
 - a) identify which date would be best for the LEP item and the young people and wellbeing item in consultation with key officers and chair and vice chair, potentially changing the date of the March scrutiny meeting if necessary; and
 - b) remove the Universal Basic Income item from the work programme

6. Corporate Plan 2020-21

The strategy manager presented the report. He explained that the Corporate Plan was a translation of political will into the day to day work of the council. The Corporate Plan spanned several years and the council was in the second year of the current

Corporate Plan which would be considered at full council alongside the budget papers in February. The performance framework was a series of high level objectives and measures which steered how resources were aligned. The performance framework was ambitious and it unpicked each of the corporate priorities. These cascaded to outcomes and then output measures which showed how well the council was performing.

The strategy manager suggested that overall, the Corporate Plan should stay the same as despite a changing landscape for local authorities, the outcomes and outputs were relevant measures. He suggested that it would be useful for the scrutiny committee to review these performance measures in September 2020 once a year's worth of data had been collected and recommendations had been received from internal audit.

The chair asked whether any changes would need to be made to the outcome measures with the removal of the highways function. The strategy manager said that the outcome measures should remain the same as the outcomes were still relevant to residents and members. Some elements that related to the city council's role in highways may be moved to the outcomes.

A member commented that it was difficult to see the trajectory of the performance measures on the report and suggested that a marker be added to the report to show the measures that the council had direct control over. The strategy manager said that the council was moving towards a more automated system which would show trends over time.

A member asked whether an indicator of trees removed and trees planted could be added to track trends as there was no other green infrastructure indicator.

In response to a member's question on whether the indicator measuring pay levels of those with protected characteristics could measure those at the lower end of the income scale to track data on disproportionately low wages, the strategy manager said that he was unsure if this could be reported on and would undertake some further research.

Members discussed affordable housing and the creation of neighbourhoods. A member questioned the definition of affordable housing and the strategy manager said that the government definition was used in the performance measures but members could consider using the percentage of income spent on housing as a measure of affordability. In addition to this, a member commented that he would like to see a measure on the number of affordable homes being built as a percentage to assess how close the council was to the 33% affordable homes target.

A member asked whether the footfall in the Business Improvement District (BID) could include Ber Street and Magdalen Street as residents in these areas felt that the free BID activities concentrated on the city centre. The director of strategy and culture said that the same points around the city needed to be used to for measurements and that indication was for measuring footfall in the city centre. Events were being planned for areas outside of the city centre such as the upcoming Love Light festival.

Members discussed antisocial behaviour and the measure showing residents satisfaction with antisocial behaviour services. The strategy manager said that a community safety co-ordinator had recently been appointed and that other vacancies in the team were being managed.

A member asked whether an indicator relating to the energy efficiency of private homes and not just council homes could be included. The strategy manager said that although there was data on these, it would be too difficult to translate it into a performance indicator. The fuel poverty metric was comprised of the efficiency of a home and the income of the residents.

(Councillor Vivien Thomas left the meeting at this point).

Discussion ensued on the performance measures and members discussed housing security, safeguarding and the percentage of tenants feeling safe, benefit appeals and insulation. The strategy manager reminded members that there would be an opportunity to submit further recommendations by email to him for cabinet to consider at its next meeting. The deadline for these submissions would be Friday 24 January.

(Councillors Carlo and Oliver left the meeting at this point).

Members discussed whether there was a need to review the narrative of the Corporate Plan to reflect work undertaken since it was agreed in 2019. It was suggested that these changes could be reflected in a preface or appendix to the Corporate Plan. The strategy manager said that annual statement included commentary on performance of the council which was reviewed each year by the council's audit committee.

RESOLVED to

- 1) Ask cabinet to consider including indicators to show:
 - a) which measures NCC has direct control over
 - b) trees removed and trees planted to identify trends
 - c) the percentage of affordable houses being built
 - d) the percentage of income being spent on housing
- 2) ask cabinet to consider undertaking a review of the narrative of the Corporate Plan at the mid-point to give an update on the work undertaken since the Corporate Plan was approved in 2019.
- 3) ask the strategy manager to investigate whether:
 - a) the measure showing the pay levels of those with protected characteristics could be measured using those at the lower end of wages
 - b) the number of safeguarding referrals from staff and members could be included

- 4) consider adding affordability of housing as a topic for the next civic years scrutiny committee work programme; and
- 5) ask members to email the strategy manager with any further recommendations on the performance measures to be taken forward to cabinet by Friday 24 January 2020

CHAIR