



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.30pm – 6.45pm

21 July 2011

Present: Councillors Stephenson (Chair), Bradford, Driver, Galvin, Gayton, Gee, Grahame, Jeraj, Grenville, Lubbock, Sands (M) and Storie

Apologies: Councillors Fisher, Arthur and Waters

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jeraj declared a non prejudicial interest in item 6 (Commissioning framework) on the agenda as he was employed by a third sector organisation.

2. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of Item 8 (Minutes of meeting held on 7 July 2011) on the agenda on the grounds it contained in paragraph 4 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED to:

- (1) approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2011; and
- (2) approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2011.

4. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED that

- (1) the scrutiny committee members receive the quarterly performance data, a clear two weeks before the meeting of scrutiny at which the report would be considered. Any member questions should be submitted to the Policy & performance manager five clear working days before the meeting. Any follow up questions can be taken at the meeting; and

- (2) an emphasis on more qualitative data be taken with the report for scrutiny members and that year on year comparisons should be provided wherever possible.

5. COMMISSIONING FRAMEWORK

The partnerships manager outlined her report and explained that the commissioning framework was currently being developed prior to being submitted for cabinet consideration.

Members were informed that the development of the commissioning framework was being undertaken within the context of the council's approach to developing the priorities and future shape of the authority and that it was being proposed that the draft commissioning framework be consulted on as part of the wider 12 week public consultation. Other factors that determined the framework were the developing Localism Bill and the Open Public Services white paper. The scrutiny committee were looking at the draft commissioning framework to gain an overview so that later on in the committee's work programme members would be able to carry out work towards assessing its effectiveness in achieving outcomes in line with the council's priorities.

The committee were then taken through a presentation that explained the scope of the commissioning framework; what was meant by the term 'commissioning'; the principles that led to successful commissioning outcomes; the commissioning cycle and how the framework had been developed.

Some members were concerned that due to the general drive nationally to cut public expenditure, the commissioning framework was driven by the need to save money, instead of seeking the best value which should not merely be measured in funding terms. In response, the head of strategy and programme management explained that the council's lean blue print set out in overview, the type of organisation the council would like to become. The commissioning framework was part of the council's overall armoury that would enable the organisation to achieve its goals by using appropriate options for service design.

In achieving the aims of the organisation and in operation of the commissioning framework the committee was keen to ensure that when ever possible and where commissioning and procurement laws and rules allowed, that local businesses should be used for carrying out any work that was outsourced by the council. Members learned that the mixed economy that the council operated in procuring services equated to 35% of services being provided by other organisations. A variety of factors, such as capacity, expertise and cost, came into play when deciding if delivery should be carried out in-house or by another provider.

It was suggested by some members that as ward councillors, they should have a role to play in terms of providing knowledge as the local link when commissioning was taking place that impacted on specific areas of the city. Members requested that they be provided with a view of the officer tool-kit for commissioning and that one be developed for member use to assist them. It was also felt that voluntary organisations and the third sector in general may have an increasingly important role to play in partnership with the council towards achieving the aims of the authority.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) the scrutiny committee members be sent a link to the officer guidance tool kit for commissioning;
- (2) a similar tool kit be developed for members;
- (3) a link to the Norfolk voluntary service Norfolk compact be emailed to the scrutiny committee members;
- (4) the scrutiny committee be provided with a link to the service delivery options matrix and the lean blue print;
- (5) consideration be given to the use of a hierarchy of options for commissioning, that included consideration of internal provision, local sector provision and co-operatives;
- (6) a member briefing on procurement be organised;
- (7) the council considers the appropriateness of setting local multipliers for the purposes of commissioning and or procurement when appropriate; and
- (8) the use of ward members be considered for the process of area based commissioning exercises.

CHAIR