



**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**16:30 to 18:30**

**30 June 2016**

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Maguire (vice chair), Bradford, Davis, Fullman, Grahame, Malik, Manning, Packer and Peek.

Also present: Councillors Button (substitute for Coleshill), Carlo (substitute for Bogelein) and Raby (substitute for Hyanes)

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from councillors Bogelein, Coleshill and Haynes. Substitutes detailed above.

**2. Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest

**3. Public questions / petitions**

There were no questions or petitions from members of the public

**4. Minutes**

**RESOLVED** to agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2016

**5. Scrutiny committee work programme 2016 - 2017**

The chair said that additional fleshing out was needed regarding the academies item. It was agreed that counsellor Manning would continue this work.

The chair explained that the devolution item planned for July 14 was no longer required due to recent developments around that particular issue. As such, it was agreed that 14 July would be a potentially good date for a tour of areas of the city with a view to examining access issues. Ideally, this would take place with the head of city development services and the strategy manager, however a date would be finalised once the availability of suitable council officers and access groups (an invite would be extended to RNIB and the Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind) could be confirmed.

With regard to the communications and consultation issue also planned for July 14, the strategy manager said that he would circulate an email he had received from the executive head of service for communications, customers and culture. If members then felt they required this as an item on the work program, he said the issue could be re-tabled. He said that for now it would be pencilled in for the October meeting.

During discussion all members agreed that the item regarding academies should not slip off the agenda. The chair said that since lots of discussion had taken place in Westminster regarding the academies issue, he was keen to keep this item on the agenda for September.

Discussion ensued regarding the issue of food poverty and community supermarkets. It was felt that this should be addressed as a specifically Norwich-based issue and that two meetings ought to be devoted to it to make any work meaningful. The following suggestions were then made:

- Session one could examine the problem and session two could develop solutions.
- Session one should include a definition of the works, including an example of the breadth and depth of causes. The issues should be examined structurally and at a personal, lived level.
- Session two should include in-depth consideration of approaches and strategies about how to address the issues raised in session one.
- It was agreed that it would be very useful to hear from those people living with the situation of food poverty.
- When examining the structural level of food poverty, it was considered vital to invite an academic to attend to provide context.
- It was also agreed that the committee required expert witnesses to understand the problems and to develop a Norwich-specific approach to a Norwich problem.
- Structurally, it was agreed that two formal meetings should take place alongside informal sessions during which members could gather testimony.
- Valuable work could be achieved by following up the sessions with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Health and well-being board.
- A suggestion was given that a conference could be held at Saint Andrews Hall to share any expertise gathered in a larger-scale way.
- It was also suggested that the investigative work could lead to a workshop with the emphasis on solution and action (to include schools, children's health etc.)
- It was agreed that councillor Maguire would develop and draft out this area of work and bring it back in the autumn.

Following discussion, it was agreed that a list of previous scrutiny topics and outcomes would allow new members to view the bigger picture of the work of the committee. The strategy manager agreed and suggested that the previous scrutiny work programme could be collated by subject. He said that he would draw this together and circulate to all members.

**RESOLVED:**

1. To note the work programme;
2. To use two future meetings of the scrutiny committee to examine the problem of food poverty within Norwich and to develop potential solutions; and,
3. That the strategy manager would collate the previous scrutiny work programme by subject and circulate to all members.

**6. Quarterly performance report**

The strategy manager presented the report. With reference to measure PVC4 (number of new business start-ups) members requested further information, in particular what would happen if a new business were to close. Whilst acknowledging the interest amongst members in this area, he explained that members needed to consider what the scrutiny committee would be able to do with this information since there were many factors beyond the control of its membership.

**RESOLVED** to note the quarterly performance figures contained in the report.

**7. Update on the Norwich market consultation**

The public protection manager presented the report. In response to members' questions, the following points were made:

- The toilets within the marketplace would be upgraded once the funding was available.
- Members wished to examine the possibility for a bus route to take in the market place via Saint Peters Street. It was agreed that this could be followed up with the bus companies. It was also suggested that sign posting could be improved from existing bus stops (particularly on Castle Meadow)
- Seasonal rents were discussed and it was explained that this was already within the strategy and that it was being worked through with the market traders.
- The balance of goods policy had been reinstated, particularly in light of what food was available within the market. It was stressed that the aim was to make the offer on the market as flexible and varied as possible.

**RESOLVED** to:

Examine the possibility:

1. for a bus route to take in the market place via Saint Peters Street; and,
2. to improve sign posting from existing bus stops to the market (particularly on Castle Meadow)

**8. Review of the grounds maintenance contract 2013-2022**

The head of citywide services presented the report, highlighting the development of the joint-venture over the years. He explained that efficiencies have been achieved through carefully managing teams as time has gone on.

Discussion ensued during which the following points were made:

- The review process for the contract was assessment-based and complaints were reviewed through the Norse liaison board.
- It was agreed that working closely with 'Friends of' groups was incredibly important where any changes were to be made to contracts. In particular, play areas often involve work with landscape project teams.

It was suggested that in the interests of biodiversity money saved from grass cutting budgets could be redirected into the street tree budgets. The head of citywide services explained that although the type of grass-cutting had changed, this did not necessarily lead to monetary savings as a great deal of work still had to be done to maintain conservation.

In response to a member's question, the head of citywide services said that the maintenance of alleyways was about striking a balance with residents – many liked them a little overgrown to deter people wandering into them, whilst others preferred them well-kept. He said that the housing team were often involved and that any specific concerns should be directed to him.

**RESOLVED** to note the review of the grounds maintenance contract.

CHAIR