

Norwich City Council
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Item 7

REPORT for meeting to be held on 20 March 2014

Annual scrutiny review – Norwich City Council 2013 - 2014

Purpose This annual review reports on the work and progress that has been made by the scrutiny committee for the period 2013 – 2014.

Article 6d of the council's constitution (overview & scrutiny committees); the scrutiny committee will report annually to the council on its workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.

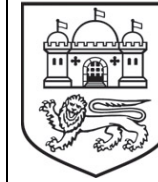
Recommendations That the scrutiny committee:

- a) recommends the annual scrutiny review for approval at the next available meeting of full council
- b) adopts the working style of the scrutiny committee and protocol for those attending scrutiny (page 2 of annual review) and that it be attached to all scrutiny agendas as a guide
- c) adopts the guidance for placing items onto the scrutiny committee work programme (page 25 of annual review).

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Annual review of the scrutiny committee 2013 - 2014

Introduction by **Claire Stephenson**, the chair of the scrutiny committee



NORWICH
City Council

I'd like to thank everyone who has been involved in the scrutiny process this year. As a result of these efforts, progress has been made in a number of areas. Collaboration between community centres across the city is a direct result of the scrutiny task and finish group which explored issues affecting the success of community centres in some detail. Positive collaboration is now taking place between a number of community centres and this will have a beneficial effect on the lives of residents of Norwich.

Another piece of scrutiny work which will impact positively on the lives of the city's residents is the review of the Revenues and Benefits service. The scrutiny committee investigated the council's provision of this service after learning that some claimants had to wait a number of months for benefit payments. We were pleased with the progress that was made as waiting times eventually came down and it is likely that the committee will continue to monitor the performance of this important service.

The scrutiny committee was pleased to be of use recently when the council considered raising rents in council-owned housing. The committee expressed a clear view that any rent rise should be kept low and we were pleased when the council followed this course of action.

Last summer members of the scrutiny committee benefitted from bespoke training, which helped us work together and share the objective of helping the council towards its aims. I am glad that this training will be repeated. Pre-meetings recently established before scrutiny meetings also provide opportunities for the committee to prepare for public meetings together, in order to be more efficient and effective. In addition, a protocol for scrutiny committee meetings has been written recently and it is hoped that this protocol will be of use to councillors and guests when they come to meetings.

As always, councillors and members of the public are urged to complete scrutiny item request forms on any topic they think the scrutiny committee should review. I commend this annual review and hope that members adopt it along with the attached 'working style of the committee and protocol for those attending scrutiny', and the new 'guidance for placing items onto the scrutiny committee work programme'.

Claire Stephenson

Working style of the scrutiny committee and a protocol for those attending scrutiny

- All scrutiny committee meetings will be carried out in a spirit of mutual trust and respect
- Members of the scrutiny committee will not be subject to whipping arrangements by party groups
- Scrutiny committee members will work together and will attempt to achieve evidence based consensus and recommendations
- Members of the committee will take the lead in the selection of topics for scrutiny
- The scrutiny committee operates as a critical friend and offers constructive challenge to decision makers to support improved outcomes
- Invited attendees will be advised of the time, date and location of the meeting to which they are invited to give evidence
- The invited attendee will be made aware of the reasons for the invitation and of any documents and information that the committee wish them to provide
- Reasonable notice will be given to the invited attendee of **all** of the committees requirements so that these can be provided for in full at the earliest opportunity (there should be no nasty surprises at committee)
- Whenever possible it is expected that members of the scrutiny committee will share and plan questioning with the rest of the committee in advance of the meeting
- The invited attendee will be provided with copies of **all relevant** reports, papers and background information
- Practical arrangements, such as facilities for presentations will be in place. The layout of the meeting room will be appropriate
- The chair of the committee will introduce themselves to the invited attendee before evidence is given and; all those attending will be treated with courtesy and respect. The chair of the committee will make sure that all questions put to the witness are made in a clear and orderly manner

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The membership of the scrutiny committee 2013 – 2014

Councillors:

Stephenson - Chair
Maxwell – Vice chair

Bradford
Brociek-Coulton
Brimblecombe
Carlo
Galvin
Grenville
Howard
Lubbock
Manning
Sands(S)
Storie

Other non-executive members also took part as substitute members as and when required

The scrutiny committee is politically balanced and is made up of councillors from the political parties of the council. Only non – cabinet members can be on the committee and this allows those councillors to have an active role in the council's decision making process.

The scrutiny year

Setting the work for the year – work programme

At the May 6 2013 meeting of the scrutiny committee, members agreed the following main items for the work programme that covered the year 2013/2014;

- i) Welfare reform
- ii) City Deal
- iii) Scrutiny of the healthy city programme
- iv) Benefits improvement plan and performance
- v) Switch and save
- vi) Annual housing report and housing review.

It was also agreed to consider performance monitoring reports as an agenda item every six months, with members continuing to receive performance data every quarter for overview purposes.

The agenda papers and minutes of the committee meetings can be found on the council's web-site:

<http://www.norwich.gov.uk/CommitteeMeetings/Pages/CouncilMeetingsFor2012.aspx>

(The scrutiny committee will be setting its new work programme for 2014 – 2015 in June which is shortly after the local elections and annual meeting of the council are held)

The work of the scrutiny committee and outcomes

The scrutiny tracker provides an overview of the work carried out by the scrutiny committee over the last 12 month period. It is apparent that scrutiny investigation can not only produce outcomes in terms of feeding into the decisions that are made but that it can also play a valuable role in informing and developing knowledge for members. The tracker is provided on page 9 of this annual review.

Training

Early in the scrutiny year the scrutiny committee took part in a training event that was designed to assist scrutiny members to build on earlier training and development initiatives with the use of a mixture of group exercises, presentations and discussions.

The feedback received after the training was very positive, and it is hoped that this can now be repeated and evolved in the future. .

By taking part in the event, the councillors were given new ideas and approaches that have enabled an improved team working for the scrutiny committee. Other elements of the training looked at techniques for understanding prepared papers that enabled a confident approach to identifying areas for further probing and investigation; the use of a range of questioning and investigative techniques to enable members to get to the 'heart of an issue' under scrutiny. Also explored were techniques to enable the shaping of effective recommendations from scrutiny work, once adequate evidence had been gathered and understood.

Another major outcome of the training was that the members of the committee were able to look at the value of the different strengths that each member brought to it. In support of the group's desire to work together a working style has been produced that supports effective scrutiny and provides a protocol for all those attending a scrutiny meeting. The members of the scrutiny committee also come together for a pre meeting in advance of the scrutiny committee so that they can plan the committee's approach for the topic being discussed at the committee meeting.

Joint scrutiny bodies

Norfolk county health overview and scrutiny committee; Norwich city council has a scrutiny member representative who sits on the Norfolk county health overview and scrutiny committee plus one substitute member. For the period 2013-2014 the member representative has been Councillor David Bradford with Councillor Patrick Manning being the substitute member.

The role of the Norfolk county health overview and scrutiny committee is to look at the work of the clinical commissioning groups and National Health Service (NHS) trusts and the local area team of NHS England. It acts as a 'critical friend' by suggesting ways that health related services might be improved. It also looks at the way the health service interacts with social care services, the voluntary sector, independent providers and other county council services to jointly provide better health services to meet the diverse needs of Norfolk residents and improve their well-being.

There have been 6 meetings of the health overview and scrutiny committee (HOSC) over the period that this annual review covers. In this time the HOSC has covered a varied array of health related issues; access to NHS dentistry, redesign of mental health services, stroke services in Norfolk, wheelchair provision by the NHS, quality of service at the Queen Elizabeth hospital – Kings Lynn, care quality commission – new approach to hospital inspections, ambulance turnaround times at the Norfolk and Norwich university hospital, system wide review of health services in west Norfolk, report of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Suffolk joint health scrutiny committee on the proposals for liver resection services, changes to mental health services in central Norfolk, mental wellbeing in Norfolk and Waveney – shaping the future, delayed discharge from hospital in Norfolk, and Norfolk health and wellbeing strategy 2014 – 2017.

Please follow the link to the Norfolk County Council website for papers and minutes concerning the above:

<http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/index.htm> and click on council and democracy then committee meeting dates, minutes, agendas and reports.

Norfolk countywide community safety partnership scrutiny sub panel; Norwich City Council has a scrutiny member representative who sits on the Norfolk countywide community safety partnership scrutiny sub panel plus one substitute member. For the period 2013 – 2014 the member representative has been Councillor Jo Storie with Councillor Lucy Galvin being the substitute member.

The role of the Norfolk countywide community safety partnership scrutiny sub panel is to:

- Scrutinise the actions, decisions and priorities of the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Crime and Disorder Partnership in respect of crime and disorder on behalf of the (County) community services overview and scrutiny panel
- Scrutinise the priorities as set out in the annual countywide community safety partnership plan
- Make any reports or recommendations to the countywide community safety partnership and/or where considered appropriate to the community services overview and scrutiny panel

While the scrutiny sub panel has the duty of scrutinising the work of the CCSP, the police and crime panel scrutinises the work of the police and crime commissioner. There is a protocol regarding the relationship of these two panels to encourage and exchange information and to co-operate towards the delivery of their respective responsibilities.

After originally agreeing to meet annually, the Norfolk countywide community safety partnership scrutiny sub panel meets on a half yearly basis at county hall. The last meeting was on 13 November 2013 when the panel looked at report outlining the CCSP plan for 2013 – 2016 and gave details of performance on each priority as set by the 2012 – 2015 plan.

The scrutiny tracker & outcomes

Date	Topic	Responsible officer	Scrutiny request	Progress	Outcome(s)
20 June 2013	Q4 performance; satisfaction measures	Roger Denton	There had previously been, circulated to scrutiny a document showing how each of the performance measures within the corporate plan were calculated. Following the discussion on satisfaction measures scrutiny requested that this document be re circulated.	Completed	C:\\Sfil2\\Shared folders\\Information management\\Research service\\Performance\\Corporate Plan KPIs 2012-13\\CP 2012-13 PIs methods.xls
20 June 2013	Q4 performance; Reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads	Joanne Deverick	That a note be circulated outlining the legislative context regarding the aspiration of 20 mph limits throughout the city	Completed	<p>Legally there are two ways by which the speed on a road can be restricted to 20 mph; either through a 20 mph zone or a 20 mph speed limit.</p> <p>20 mph zones require traffic calming measures (e.g. speed humps or chicanes) or repeater speed limit signing and/or roundel road markings at regular intervals, so that no point within a zone is more than 50 m from such a feature. There must be at least one physical traffic calming measure within the zone. In addition, the beginning and end of a zone is indicated by a terminal sign. Zones usually cover a number of roads and are designed to be self-enforcing.</p>

Date	Topic	Responsible officer	Scrutiny request	Progress	Outcome(s)
	Q4 performance; Reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads				<p>20 mph limits are signed at the beginning and end with terminal signs and within the area there must be a repeater sign every 400 m. They do not require traffic calming. 20 mph limits are normally applied to individual or small numbers of roads but are increasingly being applied to larger areas. 20 mph limits should only be introduced where the average speed of traffic in the street(s) to which it is to be applied to is below 24 mph.</p> <p>20 mph speed limits generally result in a reduction of no more than 1mph in average speeds. This is understood to be the reason for the 24 mph criterion, i.e. that speeds need to be close to the intended 20 mph limit.</p> <p>When introducing a 20 mph speed limit there should be no expectation on the police to increase their enforcement regime in the area.</p> <p>The Department for Transport revised its guidance on setting speeds limits in January 2013. The document is available online at:</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/63975/circular-01-2013.pdf.</p>

Date	Topic	Responsible officer	Scrutiny request	Progress	Outcome(s)
	Q4 performance; Reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads				Paragraphs 79 to 103 are directly relevant to the 20 mph issue. The circular claims to have made it easier and more cost effective for councils to introduce 20 mph zones and limits. However other than accepting repeater signs as a feature that can be used in 20 mph zones, it is not clear where the savings could be made when introducing 20 mph signed only limits.
20 June 2013	Integrated transport budget	Andy Watt	To appraise Members of changes to the Local Transport Plan integrated transport budget available to the County Council and, via the agency agreement, within the city, arising due to changes in Government expenditure since 2010	Completed Briefing note circulated outlining how the integrated transport grant (ITG) is distributed	It is anticipated that non ITG sources of funding will continue to represent the greater part of transport improvement funding for the foreseeable future. In the context of the overall ITG pot in money terms the level of funding for Norfolk has moved from £ 9,375 in 05/06 down to a predicted £ 2,000 for 14/15. However this year the % proportion of the overall available ITG, spent on the city is comparable to pre-2010 levels. Moreover, in 05/06, the spend in Norwich was 13% of the overall ITG available for Norfolk with the prediction for 14/15 being 22%.
20 June 2013	Q4 performance; Recycling rates	Adrian Akester	To ensure minimal contamination with recycling, that it be looked into, to use local estate agents to disseminate information on local recycling practices to	Completed	Previously, local estate agents have not been enthusiastic in promoting the waste and recycling service. However, the council is very active in promoting recycling and private tenants are just as likely as homeowners to come into contact with our communications.

Date	Topic	Responsible officer	Scrutiny request	Progress	Outcome(s)
	Q4 performance; Recycling rates		private tenants		<p>In carrying out a door knocking exercise, over 12,000 properties have now been visited since March 2012, many will be tenanted. Through this exercise many residents have been encouraged to participate in food, glass and blue-bin recycling. If no one is home, information is left for the householder. Each year we carry out a targeted door knocking programme aimed at the city's student population and as part of this we participate in the UEA annual housing fair. This is also useful for getting the messages across to the landlords, many of whom also let properties to non-student tenants. We also run articles in 'Concrete' which is the university's own newspaper and a regular feature in the student pocket guide.</p> <p>Also, recycling information is always included in the tenants handbook and recycling features have been included in many issues of the council's citizen magazine. We also provide a link to the waste and recycling web pages via the front page of the council's website.</p>
18 July 2013	Switch & save	Richard Willson	That the department of energy and climate change 'new definition of fuel poverty' be circulated to members of the scrutiny committee	Completed	<p>New definition of fuel poverty;</p> <p>'The definition of fuel poverty that will be adopted finds a household to be fuel poor if it is below the income poverty threshold (i.e. has an income below 60% of the median once energy costs have been taken account of) and if it has</p>

Date	Topic	Responsible officer	Scrutiny request	Progress	Outcome(s)
	Switch & save				<p>energy costs that are higher than the typical (median) household. This new indicator of fuel poverty also includes a fuel poverty gap, which is the difference between a fuel poor household's energy costs and what they would need to be in order for that household to no longer be fuel poor. This provides a measure of the depth of fuel poverty that a household is experiencing'. (Published 9 July 2013 - Department of Energy and climate change)</p> <p>The department of energy and climate change 'new definition of fuel poverty'</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/davey-determined-to-tackle-scourge-of-fuel-poverty</p>
18 July 2013	Switch & save	Richard Wilson	Investigate ways of capturing rates of take up in different demographic groups and consider appropriate targets to benchmark the success of the third tranche	Completed	<p>As part of the on-line participant sign up you are now asked to respond to questions that identify people's demographic group. This information is treated as confidential and is anonymous.</p> <p>The council is now bench marking its performance against the other Norfolk councils as well as other authorities that are running collective switch over schemes.</p>
18 July 2013	Switch & save	Anton Bull	To circulate the switch & save - original contract tender document to scrutiny members	Completed	This is now available on e-councillor

Date	Topic	Responsible officer	Scrutiny request	Progress	Outcome(s)
18 July 2013	Lgss, benefits performance	Anton Bull	Circulate an update of the progress position on the performance and targets, and that this be circulated to scrutiny members before August	Completed	This is now available on e-councillor
18 July 2013	Work programme – 20 MPH limits	Steve Goddard and Andy Watt	For the scrutiny work programme to include a progress report on the work being undertaken regarding 20 MPH limits and cycle city ambition (Autumn 2013)	Completed	<p>The scrutiny committee received an oral update at its 19 December 2013 meeting.</p> <p>The head of city development services gave members an update on the topic of 20mph speed limit introduction at the 19 December 2013 meeting. He said that Norwich Highways Agency Committee (NHAC) had reviewed Norfolk county council's speed limit policy and said it seemed that there would be more scope in the future to introduce lower speed limits.</p> <p>Once all information had been received the committee would decide if or how to take this issue forward on the work programme.</p>
26 Sept 2013	Revenues and benefits benchmarking	Steve Goddard	That the issue of benchmarking against the council's close comparators be looked at by officers to help inform future target setting for the service run by LGSS	Ongoing	A bench marking exercise has now taken place and the results will be processed before being circulated.

Date	Topic	Responsible officer	Scrutiny request	Progress	Outcome(s)
	Revenues and benefits benchmarking		the scrutiny committee reviews the situation and performance in 6 months time and as part of the benchmarking exercise, targets that are in operation are considered;		This will be picked up by the committee when considering the 2014/15 scrutiny work programme.
24 Oct 2013	Welfare reform	Anton Bull	Consider, based on recent appeal cases nationally, the council's policy regarding the spare room subsidy.	Completed	The Scrutiny resolution has been fulfilled and the council has reconsidered the spare room subsidy being appealable and is issuing appeal rights
24 Oct 2013	Welfare reform	Anton Bull	Look into current policy with regards to students and the spare room subsidy to see if both students living in halls of residence and private rented accommodation are treated equally (52 day temporary absence rule)	To be completed	This has been looked in to and families under occupying because of having a student living in halls or private rented accommodation are treated equally so no change in policy has been necessary. However, updated guidance and training has been provided to benefit assessors to ensure that they continue to be treated equally. The type of accommodation the student is in is irrelevant; the question that has to be answered is whether or not the person has permanently left home. There are a number of factors to be considered and this will determine whether or not the household they have left behind is under occupying.

Date	Topic	Responsible officer	Scrutiny request	Progress	Outcome(s)
	Welfare reform	Tracy John	Investigate with partners to see if any creative solutions with regards to flexible accommodation and ensuring single fathers are able to safely have children to visit.	Completed	The council continues to work with its partners and affected families with a flexible approach to solving issues.
			work to encourage private landlords to take on tenants on housing benefit.	Completed	In addressing this issue the council works with all appropriate landlords.
		Russell O'Keefe	To ask the council to update how it is helping with advertising volunteering opportunities.	Completed	Through its partnership work, the council has a flexible approach to working with and supporting the voluntary sector in Norwich.
24 Oct 2013	Welfare reform	Paul Sutton and Chris Haystead	Request further information for a breakdown of: those affected by the spare room subsidy in Norwich - those affected who are now in arrears as a result of the spare room subsidy	Completed	A spreadsheet is available to members on e-councillor which provides data regarding the effect of the spare room subsidy on the council tenants of Norwich. Further issues arise from availability of appropriate stock types and individual tenant's desires and / or ability to move. In regard the lack of smaller properties, it should

Date	Topic	Responsible officer	Scrutiny request	Progress	Outcome(s)
24 Oct 2013	Welfare reform		<p>Request the current number of the smaller council properties required to address any shortfall due to the spare room subsidy</p> <p>Are there now vacant 3/4/5 bedroom council properties as people have been forced to downsize? If so, would it be possible to use them for young single people?</p>		<p>be noted that the majority of those under-occupying have not applied for a move and are apparently seeking other alternatives such as managing budgets etc.</p> <p>Currently (Oct 2013) we have 2814 applicants eligible to bid for one bed properties, of whom 730 are in a priority band (hostel move-on, medical etc). We have 2705 one bed properties within our stock. Because of bedroom tax, landlords are now reluctant to advertise two bed properties to singles/couples and demand for one bed properties has increased since April. We are not seeing any dramatic increase in availability of larger properties due to bedroom tax.</p> <p>Unrelated to the bedroom tax issue, where we have historically hard to let property types such a 3 bedroom upper floor maisonettes, we are currently looking at the possibility of using some of these, on a small scale, to re-house singles in housing need, through a partner organisation. In the past the council has previously decommissioned some of its cluster units, which were then leased to local housing charities for use as shared accommodation.</p>
24 Oct 2013	Greater Norwich Growth Board	Jerry Massey	To keep the scrutiny committee updated on the progress and finalisation of the GNGB business plan	Complete	The cabinet meeting 18 March 2014 is to consider a report that takes account of the points raised by the scrutiny committee at its 24 October 2013 meeting regarding the constitution for the Greater Norwich Growth Board, the governance of the Local infrastructure fund, and

Date	Topic	Responsible officer	Scrutiny request	Progress	Outcome(s)
					the Greater Norwich Growth Board Investment Fund governance.
28 Nov 2013	Annual housing report	Tracy John	<p>Feedback to tenant representatives on issues reported to the council via inspections</p> <p>An outline of the training that tenants receive is provided to members</p> <p>That a meeting be arranged with officers so that members of the scrutiny committee can consider options for bridging the gap in knowledge between tenant reps and councillors that they identified as existing when considering the annual housing report.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>	<p>This was provided at the February meeting of scrutiny via a presentation and included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taster sessions for tenants who may wish to become involved tenants • Tenant briefing for tenant panel • Tenant academy (ten module training programme which covered operating in meetings, governance and confidence building among other topics) <p>A full copy of the presentation and the minutes of that meeting can be found here: http://www.norwich.gov.uk/CommitteeMeetings/Pages/CouncilMeetingsFor2012.aspx</p> <p>This was the substantive item on the scrutiny committee agenda 27 February 2014 when the following recommendations were made:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) any common MP or councillor enquiry responses, surrounding housing issues, were shared and provided via email to all members to assist them in their ward role, (2) officers are pro-active in extending member invites to attend tenant events

Date	Topic	Responsible officer	Scrutiny request	Progress	Outcome(s)
	Annual housing report				<p>and to advertise dates of events in advance,</p> <p>(3) housing officers email ward councillors to provide fore-warning of potential issues that might arise related to housing in their area,</p> <p>(4) the councillor development group look in detail at the timing and number of more important briefings such as those on housing matters, to ensure the best possible attendance and member coverage; and</p> <p>(5) training be considered for members on issues surrounding non-council owned properties that would assist them in their ward work.</p>
28 Nov 2013	Greater Norwich City Deal	Jerry Massey	That an all member briefing be held with representation from the LEP	Ongoing	
28 Nov 2013	Parking on verges and pavements	Andy Watt	Scrutiny committee to maintain an overview; and if any issues of concern are not improved that this topic be considered as an item on a future scrutiny committee work programme	Ongoing	This matter will be picked up as part of the committee's consideration of topics in forming the scrutiny committee work programme 2014/15

Date	Topic	Responsible officer	Scrutiny request	Progress	Outcome(s)
19 Dec 2013	Q2 performance monitoring; SCC2 % of domestic waste sent for re-use, recycling or composting	Adrian Akester	For the scrutiny committee to receive an update of the Tonnage of domestic waste sent for re-use, recycling or composting as a percentage of the total domestic waste collected.	Complete	Total recycling tonnage for quarter 2 was 3,814 tonnes As a percentage of the waste stream it is 36.5%
19 Dec 2013	Q2 performance monitoring; SCC 6 reducing the KSI number	Steve Goddard & Andy Watt	That the scrutiny officer looks into the trends and reporting for KSI data and how the scrutiny committee may engage with the council's partners in investigating how the associated issues around road safety in Norwich might be explained and addressed.	Ongoing	NOTE: A briefing is planned to provide members with information and background for when the committee sits to consider items for its new work programme.
30 Jan 2014	Pre scrutiny of the proposed policy and budget framework (housing rents and budgets 2014 – 15)	Caroline Ryba	That the chief finance officer provide an exemplification of possible council house rent increases between the published option 1 (5.57%) and option 2 (3.00% flat rate)	Completed	At the annual budget setting council meeting which was held 18 February 2014 the council house rent increase was set at a 1.5%

Community space task and finish group progress

The scrutiny committee established a task and finish group in December 2011 to look at the distribution, social benefit and the council's role in the provision of community space. The task and finish group reported its findings and recommendations to the scrutiny committee in March 2013.

At the outset, the task and finish group recognised that there would be a range of strengths and weaknesses from centre to centre which would highlight where resources and effort could be best applied to optimise the benefits that community centres and other community spaces can offer local communities. The council owns 15 community centres in Norwich and as landlord undertakes a variety of work to maintain the fabric of the buildings. The community engagement officers support the work of the volunteers from the community associations that run the buildings via a license of lease arrangement and the level of support will be influenced by the capacity and needs of the individual community associations.

The successful running of the centres is largely dependent on the dedication and hard work of the many local volunteers and this was a feature found by members of the task and finish group when they visited a number of centres.

The findings of the task and finish group were presented to the volunteers last spring, where as part of this it was hoped that there will be a development and training offer and forums that will encourage community centre committees to learn from each other. Since then, there has been work carried out within the neighbourhoods team. It is recognised that some of the outcomes will not be able to be achieved in the short term while others, especially those that do not have heavy reliance on funding requirements are more easily achieved.

In conclusion of the review, the members of the task & finish group outlined in seven broad suggestion and recommendation areas:

- Federation and collaboration
- Accountability and management
- Training and mentoring
- The council's role
- Strategic development
- Environmental audit
- Communication.

The following milestones/targets were put forward as a result of the task and finish groups work

Develop a community space forum
Closer working and collaboration
Set out a clear purpose for community space
A performance management frame work for council owned centres
Develop the use of the centres
Monitoring and review
Development of a decommissioning process
Development of investment criteria
Development of a learning and shadowing programme
Develop an approach to mapping the distribution and use of community provision across the city
Capture the views of residents around community centres
Develop a cost effective maintenance scheme that includes a full environmental audit of community centres
The council should seek to use and promote the use of the centres to deliver other services
Explore the development and hosting of an on-line 'open data' directory of provision
Promotion of the community centres via the council's communication channels

Progress summary – March 2014

The recommendations have been drawn into four overarching projects each led and project managed by a community engagement officer (CEO). The four projects which have a detailed project plan are; networking and collaboration, accountability and management, training and mentoring and the role of the council.

The community engagement officers have developed and implemented one network event held in December at the Kings Centre. This was planned to start the entire project with an introduction for the volunteers from the community centres, as well as a thank you for all their hard work. Some 55 volunteers attended this event. A second event is being planned for April which will provide an opportunity to listen to the community associations and find out their preferences to be involved and engaged in the work programmes.

Four project plans have been developed and these plans are expected to evolve as time progresses and when new information comes to hand. For example, following engagement with, and involvement of, the community associations.

Project 1; **networking and collaboration** (expected outcomes)

- The centre organising committees are provided with regular opportunities to meet together to increase their skills and capacity and develop strong networks with other committees in Norwich (Next event to be held April 2014).
- The development of an interactive webpage providing access to information as a tool to aid learning and problem solving across centre.
- Committees understand the sustainable business model and performance management targets required of them to meet the council's minimum standards.
- The committees understand and respond to the performance management targets
- All centre organising committees have received centre manuals (2014)
- The introduction of a community space quality rating system.

Project 2; **accountability and management** (outcomes)

- A monitoring and evaluation framework and toolkit has been produced which enables committees and the council to assess the activities and performance against a defined set of criteria and where improvements can be suggested.
- Centre organising committees are aware of what is a good working model and that they have a line of accountability to communities
- Training is delivered to committees so they are able to use the monitoring and evaluation framework and toolkit

- An assessment of how community centres offer value for money against the delivery on the council's priorities now takes place
- A process is adopted outlining what can and will be done to help community centres, particularly when help is needed, as well as to help improvements, maximise community benefits and income generation opportunities

Project 3, **training and mentoring** (expected outcomes)

- To develop and deliver directly or indirectly, learning and shadowing programme for council owned and other community space and if possible incorporate an accreditation scheme.
- To capture learning and development needs of the volunteers who run community space through recommendation for networking and collaboration
- The development of a programme to deliver against these needs across all community space volunteers to ensure the programme is practically and financially sustainable
- Consideration of opportunities to undertake this in collaboration with Voluntary Norfolk, with whom the council has a grant agreement which sets out to support capacity building of the third sector in Norwich.

Project 4; **the role of the council** (expected outcomes)

- A clear definition of community space in Norwich meeting the city's aspirations
- Define what community centres could achieve
- The development of a community centre model or ideal centre

Other related activities include; a complimentary area of work for the community centre review incorporating activities that will promote volunteer involvement during volunteering week and local democracy week.

Guidance for placing items onto the scrutiny committee work programme

As part of continual learning and improvement of scrutiny processes, the chair, vice chair and the scrutiny officer have discussed steps which could be taken in order to assist members and officers when an item is raised via the scrutiny topic request form. As a result, the following guidance for members and officers when giving consideration to an item for the work programme, which has been raised via the request for scrutiny form, has been provided. It is also anticipated that the scrutiny committee will use the new TOPIC analysis when considering suitability of items when setting the scrutiny committee work programme and when issues arising at scrutiny meetings lead to the consideration of extra items for the work programme.

It is hoped that adoption of the guidance will further ensure that the role of the scrutiny committee continues to support the work of the council and help in making a difference to the lives of the city's residents.

In order for the guidance to be most effective, revision of the criteria by which items are selected for the scrutiny work programme is suggested. Until now, the work programme has been populated by items that have been considered against criteria based upon the PICC analysis. PICC stands for; public interest, impact, council performance and context. Against these headings, those placing items on the work programme were asked to consider a list of sub questions that were designed to help assess how suited to scrutiny any given topic was. The down side to this approach has been that for many, the process was too lengthy and in some cases there was sometimes potential for confusion around the interpretation of the criteria.

The new guidance takes the form of a **flow chart** which outlines the process by which members and officers should discuss the merits of producing a report to the committee. Once a request for scrutiny has been received by the scrutiny officer; the process begins with a meeting between the member making the request, the scrutiny officer and the relevant responsible officer to discuss whether a report to the committee is necessary and justified while taking account of the TOPIC **analysis**:

- T is this the right **TIME** to review the issue and is there sufficient officer time and resource available?
- O what would be the **OBJECTIVE** of the scrutiny?
- P can **PERFORMANCE** in this area be improved by scrutiny input?
- I what would be the public **INTEREST** in placing this topic onto the work programme?
- C will any scrutiny activity on this matter contribute to the council's activities as agreed to in the **CORPORATE PLAN**?

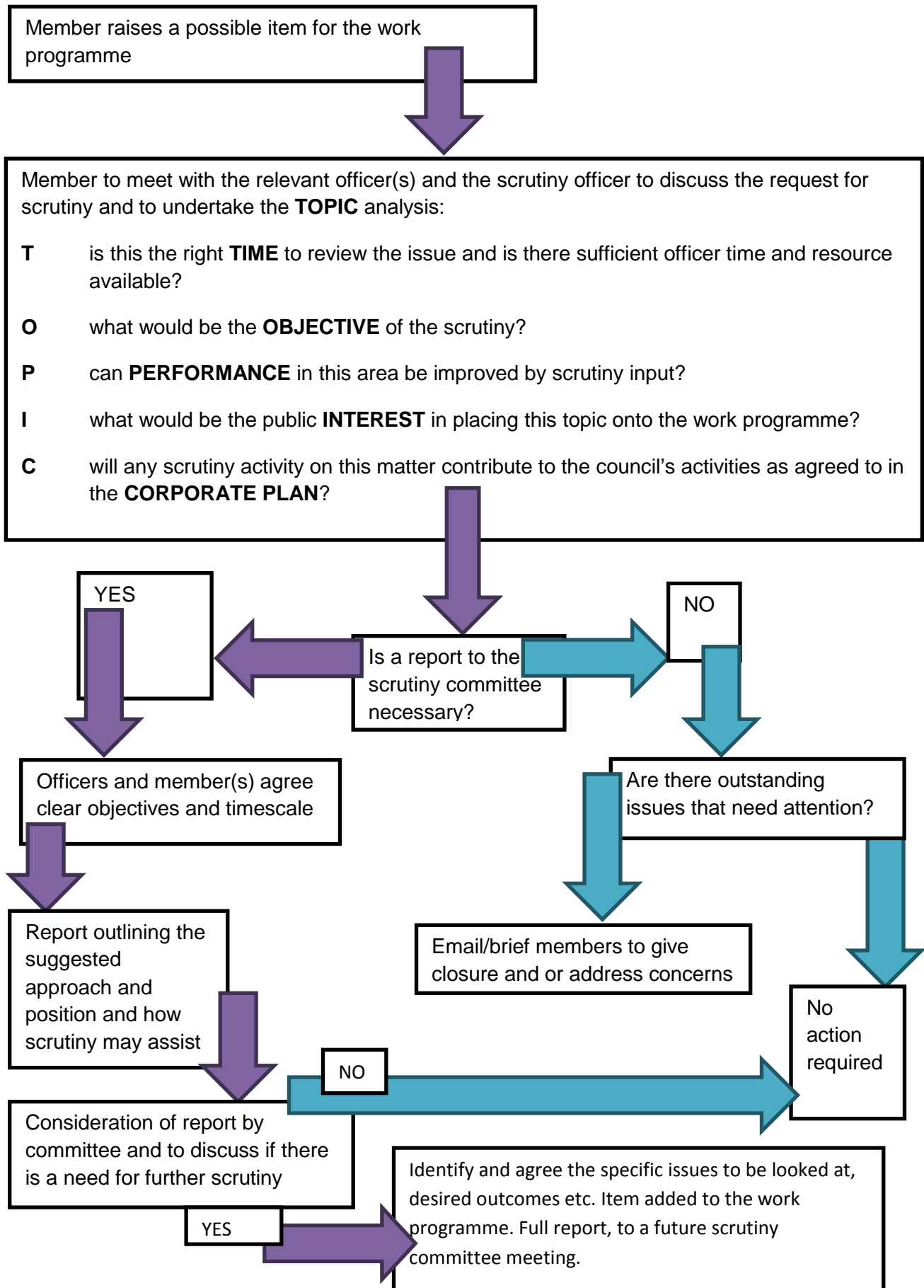
Once the TOPIC analysis has been undertaken, a joint decision should then be reached as to whether a report to the scrutiny committee is required. If it is decided that a report is not required, the issue will not be pursued any further. However, if there are outstanding issues, these could be picked up by agreeing that a briefing email to members be sent, or other appropriate action by the relevant officer.

If it is agreed that the scrutiny request topic should be explored further by the scrutiny committee a short report should be written for a future meeting of the scrutiny committee, to be taken under the standing work programme item, so that members are able to consider if they should place the item on to the work programme. This report should outline a suggested approach if the committee was minded to take on the topic and outline the purpose using the outcome of the consideration of the topic via the TOPIC analysis. Also the report should provide an overview of the current position with regard to the topic under consideration.

By using the flowchart, it is hoped that members and officers will be aided when giving consideration to whether or not the item should be added to the scrutiny committee work programme. This should help to ensure that the scope and purpose will be covered by any future report. The outcome of this should further assist the committee and the officers working with the committee to be able to produce informed outcomes that are credible, influential with SMART recommendations.

Specific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-bound

Guidance flow chart for placing items onto the scrutiny committee work programme



A quick guide to scrutiny

The scrutiny committee is not a place of opposition but rather challenge. Accountability of decision makers is one of the main drivers to modern and efficient local government, and at Norwich the scrutiny committee is encompassed as part of good governance and decision-making principles that support the council's effectiveness in the delivery of services. By carrying out its role the scrutiny committee is able to assist the council in achieving its targets.

Scrutiny is member led and independent of political party arrangements and is the name given to the process whereby councillors investigate, scrutinise, and gain overview of the work of the council. More specifically the scrutiny committee pays particular attention to; decisions made by the cabinet and delegated officers in relation to council policy and services. For the members of the committee and on behalf of the public, the scrutiny process can at times also provide a way of influencing decisions and policy.

Effective challenge via scrutiny

The guiding principle of local government scrutiny is to provide effective challenge to those who exercise executive power and spend public money. The scrutiny committee can offer critical friend challenge by councillors that are representing the public and those that use the services provided by the council. There is also scope for local authority scrutiny committees to review the work of other agencies that affect the lives, health and wellbeing of their residents. This can provide the basis for continuous and constructive dialogue between public service providers and those who use them. Also, scrutiny is an opportunity for mutual learning and potential benefits.

Scrutiny is a requirement supported by legislation

Under the Local Government Act 2000, scrutiny was introduced as a check to the power of the new council cabinets. Moving forward, subsequent acts of parliament have come in to extend the remit of scrutiny along with its statutory responsibilities. For example, local government scrutiny committees can now look at the work of partner organisations as well.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled local authorities to scrutinise other partners. This, along with other legislation relating to scrutiny powers has now been consolidated in the Localism Act 2011.

Scrutiny work programming

To be effective in scrutinising the decisions of the cabinet and performance of the council, the scrutiny committee work programme mainly relates to actions and decisions in the delivery of the corporate plan of the council. The work programme is therefore informed by a combination of what councillors feel are important topics, gathered from their ward work and their activities across the whole council. Occasionally and if appropriate, topics are included when members of the public have highlighted issues for debate. Council officers can also request that scrutiny investigate and consider certain issues on their behalf.

In setting the work programme the aim is not to load it with too many separate topics that none of them can be satisfactorily dealt with. Coordination with cabinet and the corporate leadership team is advisable when programming in order to keep the work of scrutiny relevant to the council's priorities.

Scrutiny should be programmed to be in sync with the decision-making schedule of the cabinet. This will allow pre-decision scrutiny to conclude well in advance to a relevant cabinet decision being taken. This can allow the cabinet time to factor the scrutiny committee's findings into their decision making process.

The main areas of scrutiny work involve the following activities; horizon-scanning scrutiny, pre scrutiny and post-decision scrutiny along with performance data monitoring.

Horizon-scanning scrutiny searches for any likely developments coming the way of local government and/or the council. The idea behind this is to assist in planning ahead in order to help the council adapt accordingly.

Pre-decision scrutiny examines issues pre cabinet and considers and comments on proposals, objectives and draft policies. This way the scrutiny committee has the ability to influence or inform development of cabinet work before decision or enactment. This makes it possible for the scrutiny committee to assist the council in achieving its targets.

Post-decision scrutiny considers and comments on the implementation of a policy and the related performance. This way, cabinet can use scrutiny to review the effectiveness of its decisions. Evidence can then be used in assisting the council to revise the policy accordingly, if this is necessary.

Performance monitoring

By carrying out a periodic overview of performance monitoring data, the scrutiny committee is enabled to bring to the cabinet's attention any issue it considers may require closer attention. Sometimes the scrutiny committee will programme a slot at one of its meetings to have a closer look at any areas of concern that may arise due to performance issues.

A copy of member questions and the officer and cabinet portfolio member responses are circulated prior to the meeting that takes an overview of performance. This enables member questions to be answered as fully as possible prior to the meeting by the most relevant officer, leaving more time to focus on any key areas that may need scrutiny attention at the meeting.

An example of an item resulting from the scrutiny committee's look at the performance data is the work that has been carried out around the LGSS benefits service.

Evidence based scrutiny

Scrutiny committees are empowered to acquire the information they need to perform effective scrutiny including some publically exempt documents and information.

The evidence gathering by scrutiny committees can take many forms. This can include; policy documents, press cuttings, data and officer or member reports. People are also asked to attend meetings to give oral evidence such as local residents, officers, partners or experts. Another useful method to gain evidence can be site/location visits.

Recommendations and Reporting

Once a scrutiny piece of work has taken place, recommendations are sometimes made and reported to the cabinet for consideration. At Norwich, this is usually done as part of the relevant report or paying regard to the minutes of the scrutiny committee in informing the final decision.

Recommendations should strive to be, as much as possible, specific measurable achievable relevant & timed - SMART.

What happens next?

Once agreement to a scrutiny recommendation has taken place, whether it be something that officers have agreed to, or the cabinet, this should not always be where the scrutiny process ends. It is good practice for the scrutiny committee to set a review date to receive an update from the relevant portfolio holder on the cabinet or officers, on the progress that has been made towards implementation of the scrutiny committee's recommendations. However, this monitoring can sometimes simply be achieved via overview of the performance management data which is received at committee periodically throughout the year.

Decision call – in

Call – in is the term used in describing the process whereby, in extreme circumstances, non cabinet members can request the cabinet to reconsider a decision it has made. As part of this process the scrutiny committee can act as a forum where the validity and quality of a called in decision can be discussed before it is referred back to the cabinet. Once back with the cabinet, those who made the original decision can either change it while taking on board suggestions from scrutiny or they can reject any recommendations and keep the decision as it was. While a decision is called – in, it cannot be enacted until the above process has been undertaken. If the scrutiny committee makes no recommendations as a result of a call-in, the original cabinet decision can be enacted without having to go back to the cabinet once the meeting of scrutiny has taken place.

Councillor call for action

The Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) represents a tool in equipping councillors in their local community advocate role and further strengthens their position of being community champions. Although expected to continue to resolve issues informally, where councillors are not satisfied that real action has been taken to resolve the issue that they have raised, resolution may be sought via CCfA. This enables any councillor of the council to ask the scrutiny committee to take a matter further. CCfA is a last resort option only as most matters should be resolved through existing procedures and work carried out by officers and partners through their day to day duties.

The council's CCfA protocol can be obtained upon request from the scrutiny officer and is also available on e-councillor.

Scrutiny task and finish groups

Task and finish groups are time limited focus groups that report their review findings to the main committee or the cabinet and are supported by relevant officers of the council and or outside contributors.

Most topics on the scrutiny work programme can be dealt with as part of the agenda for a regular meeting. Others may be larger pieces of work that require a separate or special one issue meeting or series of meetings.

If a task and finish group is to be set up in place of a full committee review taking place, interested members should volunteer to be involved. It is usual that task and finish groups are not politically balanced unless a strong need exists. This is because the main scrutiny committee which is balanced has to agree the findings, or delegates the task and finish group on behalf of the whole committee to report directly to the cabinet. Actually, it is much more important to appoint those members with an interest or expertise in the issue, irrespective of political groups.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny promotes the value of scrutiny and accountability in modern and effective government and supports non-executives in their scrutiny role. <http://www.cfps.org.uk/>

Public involvement and getting in touch with scrutiny

Meetings of the scrutiny committee are usually as informal as possible and as well as scrutiny members, are attended by cabinet portfolio members, officers, partners and anyone else who can assist with the work and provide evidence for reviews.

Members of the public are also welcome to attend the scrutiny committee meetings and can participate at the discretion of the committee's chair. If you do wish to participate regarding an agenda item at a scrutiny meeting you are requested to contact the committee officer who will liaise with the chair of the committee and the scrutiny officer. Any questions for the committee have to be received no later than 10am on the day before the meeting but in order for you to obtain a thorough answer it would be helpful if you could contact us as early as possible. To contact the committee officer please phone 01603 212416.

Getting in touch with scrutiny

If you are a member of the public and wish to find out more about the scrutiny process and the committee or if you have any queries regarding this annual review, please feel free to contact the council's scrutiny officer; If you have any topic suggestions for scrutiny please use the form attached over this page and send it to the scrutiny officer or hand it in at the council's reception marked for the attention of the scrutiny officer.

Steve Goddard

Scrutiny officer

Policy, performance & partnerships team
Strategy, People and Democracy
Norwich city council

01603 212491

stevegoddard@norwich.gov.uk

Request form to raise an item for Scrutiny Review

Councillors should be asked to carry out the following scrutiny review:

Please give your reasons (continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

Name:

Address:

Daytime Tel No

Email:

Date

Please return this form to Steve Goddard, Scrutiny Officer, Norwich City Council, City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich NR2 1NH

Email: stevegoddard@norwich.gov.uk