

Norwich City Council
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
ITEM 7

REPORT for meeting to be held on 21 March 2019

Annual review of the scrutiny committee 2018 - 19

- Summary:** This annual review reports on the work and progress that has been made by the scrutiny committee for the period 2018–2019
- Article 6d of the council’s constitution (overview and scrutiny committees) states that the scrutiny committee will report annually to the council on its workings and make recommendations for future work programmers and amended working methods if appropriate.
- Conclusions:** This snapshot view of outcomes as a result of scrutiny activity helps to reinforce that successful scrutiny is collaboration between the scrutiny committee, the cabinet, residents, partners and the officers of the council.
- Scrutiny not only produces outcomes in terms of feeding into the decisions that are made but it can also play a valuable role to inform and develop knowledge for members.
- Recommendation:** That the scrutiny committee recommends the annual scrutiny review for approval at the next available meeting of full council.
- Contact Officer:** Emma Webster, scrutiny liaison officer
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emmawebster@norwich.gov.uk

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1. Annual review of the scrutiny committee 2018/19

1.1 Chairs section - text to follow

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2. 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

3. Membership of the scrutiny committee

3.1 Councillors;

Wright (chair)

Fullman (vice chair)

Carlo

Coleshill

Hampton

Manning

Raby

Sands (M)

Fulton-McAlister (M)

Sands S

Smith

Stewart

Thomas (Va)

Thomas (Vi)

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.

4. What is scrutiny?

The Local Government Act 2000 introduced a structure within Local Government for decision-making and accountability and created a separation between the cabinet role and the non-executive member role.

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 and agencies. This, along with other legislation relating to scrutiny powers has now been consolidated in the Localism Act 2011.

The cabinet proposes and implements policies and the non-executive members review policies and scrutinise decisions or pre scrutinise proposed decisions of the cabinet.

The committee sets its own work programme via suggestions from councillors, the cabinet and council, or from other issues of public interest. Any scrutiny topic that is undertaken needs to add value, and in considering suggestions for scrutiny the committee will ascertain the reasons why the matter would benefit from scrutiny, and what outcomes might be generated from inclusion to the work programme or other scrutiny activity.

The scrutiny committee assists non-executive and cabinet members in accordance with the Act by:

- Acting as a critical friend by challenging performance and helping improve services
- Ensuring policies are working as intended and, where there are gaps help develop policy
- Bringing a wide perspective, from the city's residents and stakeholders and examining broader issues affecting local communities
- Acting as a consultative body

In carrying out its role, the scrutiny committee can request written information and ask questions of those who make decisions. The committee is also enabled to comment and make recommendations to decision makers. These decision makers include cabinet, partners and other statutory organisations. Successful scrutiny is collaboration between the scrutiny committee, the cabinet, residents, partners and the officers of the council.

5. Principles of effective scrutiny

The Centre for Public Scrutiny (www.cfps.org.uk) has produced a guide to effective public scrutiny, which provides four Principles of Effective Scrutiny:

1. Critical friendship to decision-makers
2. Engaging the public and enabling the voice of the public and communities to be heard in the process
3. Owning the process and work programme with non-cabinet members driving the scrutiny process
4. Making an impact through continuously looking for improvements in public service delivery

For this to happen the scrutiny committee and the processes that support it must be independent, robust and challenging. This is because scrutiny works best when it is part of a positive culture that supports and promotes the scrutiny process. The way in which the scrutiny process has the ability to engage with and involve the council's residents and service users can be a way to ensure that reviews take on the views of local communities.

The effectiveness of scrutiny is balanced on the need to ensure that any purpose and benefits it can provide are clearly understood. The following questions for reviewing the effectiveness of a scrutiny function could ask:

- Is it effectively holding decision-makers to account?
- Is it helping to improve services?
- Is it building links between the council, its partners and the community?
- Is it helping to improve the quality of life for local people?
- Is it adding value?

In addition to the above questions; there should be a continued recognition from both officers and members of the value of effective challenge in helping towards continuous improvement. As Norwich City Council has continuously strived to achieve, the friendly challenge of the scrutiny committee to decision makers needs to not only be informed by ward members but also evidenced by the experiences encountered of service users and residents.

6. Setting the work programme for the year

At the May 2018 meeting of the scrutiny committee members discussed and agreed the work programme; the outcomes of which are detailed in this report.

Standing items each meeting include:

- Public questions/petitions
- Declarations of interest
- Approval of minutes from previous meeting
- Scrutiny work programme (giving members the opportunity to add or remove items from the work programme if they wish).

Standard items annually include:

- Draft corporate plan
- Pre-scrutiny of the proposed budget
- Annual review of the scrutiny committee

Also, verbal updates from the committee's Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee representation are brought to meetings as and when.

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

https://cmis.city.norwich.gov.uk/cmislive/Committees/tabid/62/ctl/ViewCMIS_CommitteeDetails/mid/381/id/4/Default.aspx

(At the time of this review's publication, work has already begun by the scrutiny liaison officer and the committee members around the work programme for 2018 – 2019 and this will be officially agreed by the scrutiny committee in May at the first meeting of the new civic year.)

7. Training

The committee took part in a training session delivered by the Local Government Association on 16 July 2018.

The aim of this session was to assist existing scrutiny members in gaining knowledge and building upon experience from previous training, and for the newly appointed members to be introduced to their scrutiny role.

The training provided an overview of scrutiny functions, challenges, effective work programming and effective questioning skills.

The members of the scrutiny committee also continue to 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.

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8. Overview of the year

There was a total of 11 scrutiny meetings held last year, including two call-ins. This section of the report lists the substantive items discussed at each meeting.

24 May 2018

Setting of the scrutiny committee work programme for 2018/19

28 June 2018

The growth of short term letting of homes in Norwich
Response to the Communities and Local Government report on effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees

19 July 2018

The impact of universal credit on vulnerable groups

1 August

Approval to place a bid on a potential asset investment

20 September

Norwich City Council response to county lines activity

11 October

Recommendations – The impact of operation gravity and organised crime in Norwich since 2016
Norfolk County Council consultation on early childhood and family service – Transforming our children's services

22 November

Council and partner responses to domestic abuse
Call-in Community Infrastructure Levy Exceptional Circumstances Relief Policy

13 December

Draft corporate plan 2019-22
Equality information report

3 January

Call-in Commercial property investment strategy

7 February

Pre-scrutiny of the budget

14 February

Insecure jobs and low pay in Norwich - employment practise research

21 March

Termination by Norfolk County Council of the Norwich Highways Agency Committee agreement.
Annual review of scrutiny

Highlight of the year - Norwich City Council response to Operation Gravity and County Lines activity.

Paul Sandford, assistant chief constable and Chris Small, Norfolk youth offending team attended the meeting.

The committee heard that;

- Norfolk Community Safety Partnership had adopted county lines as a priority to tackle the supply of class A drugs such as heroin and cocaine (and weapons) into more rural areas using vulnerable people to move them.
- County Lines refers to the telephone lines used to co-ordinate the selling of drugs operated by large organised crime groups. Operation Gravity is the name given to tackling this issue by the Police.
- Cuckooing is an issue in Norwich. This is the practise of taking over a vulnerable person's accommodation to use as a base for dealing drugs, usually in return for money or drugs. As a housing provider Norwich City Council has a responsibility for safeguarding vulnerable tenants.
- Social media is generating a huge amount of useful intelligence, and reporting of all intelligence was encouraged.

There followed a discussion on the exploitation of vulnerable children, including those excluded from school, and the importance of information sharing amongst partners.

Scrutiny members agreed to formulate their recommendations on how the city council could impact the reduction of county lines through its services and influence, facilitated by the director of neighbourhood services. At the meeting of scrutiny on 11 October it was resolved to recommend to cabinet that it considers addressing the issues of County Lines through the city council's services and influence, as follows:

- (1) liaise with contractors to provide front line staff with training on safeguarding and awareness of County Lines and that there is a process for reporting incidents to contribute to intelligence gathering;
- (2) following consultation with the police, that the council removes tags which demarcate the territories of drug gangs;
- (3) review the licensing policy and procedures to ensure that County Lines' activity is captured particularly in relation to the fit and proper test in relation to licences for private hire drivers and hackney carriage drivers;
- (4) review tenancy agreements and procedures for rapid response to County Lines' activities and treatment of vulnerable tenants "cuckooed" by criminals.

9. 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 (NHOSC) plus one substitute member. For the period 2018 – 2019 the member representative has been Councillor David Fullman with Councillor Fulton-McAllister (M) being the substitute member.

The role of NHOSC 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.

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 2018 – 2019 the member representative has been Councillor Stewart with Councillor Thomas (Va) being the substitute member.

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

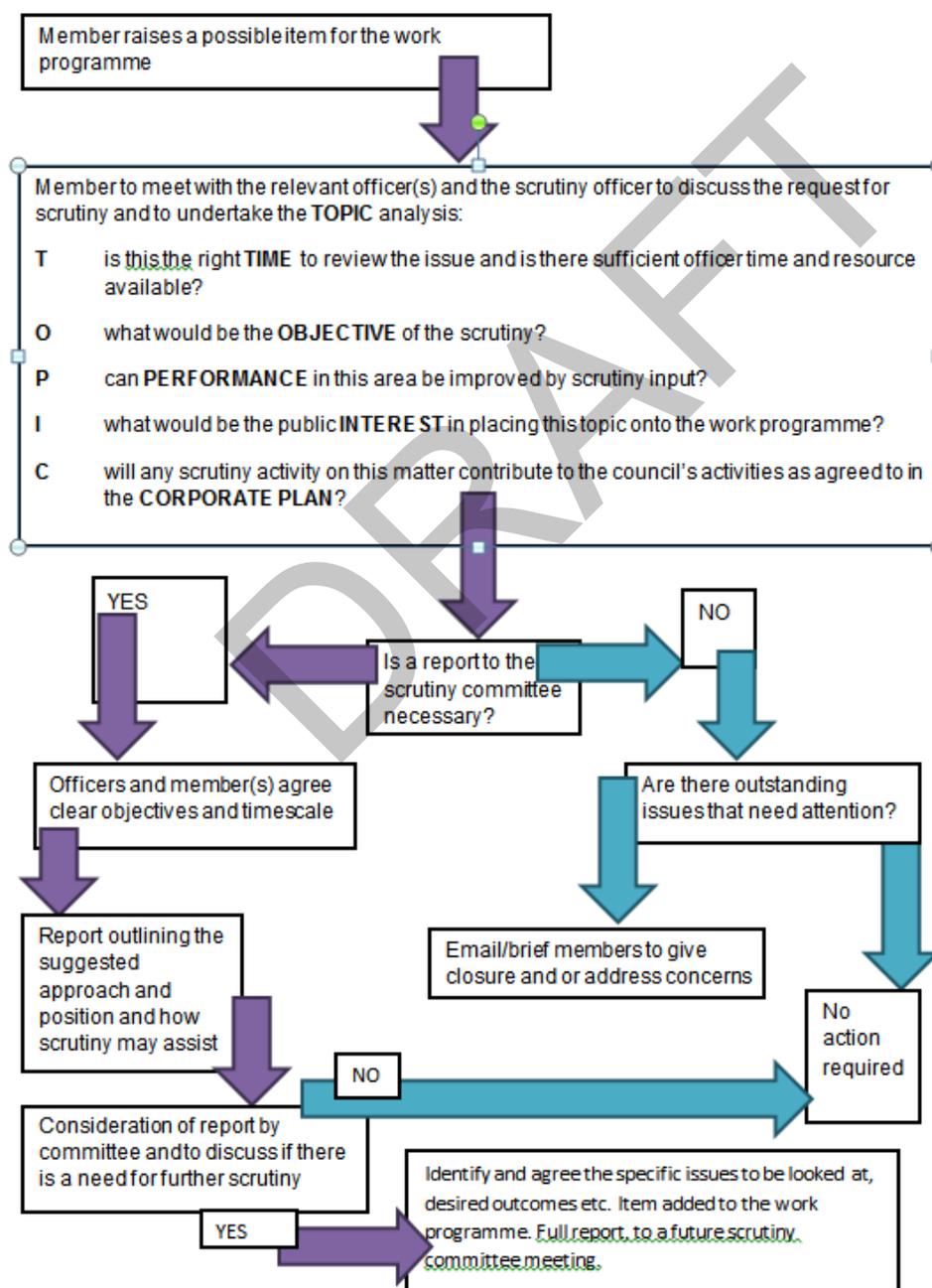
- Scrutinise the actions, decisions and priorities of the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Crime and Disorder Partnership in respect of crime and disorder on behalf of the (County) community services overview and scrutiny panel
- Scrutinise the priorities as set out in the annual countywide community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

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. The community safety partnership meets on a half yearly basis at county hall.

10. Guidance for placing items onto the scrutiny committee work programme

The guidance takes the form of a **flow chart** which outlines the process by which members and officers can 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**.

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



11. 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 scrutiny liaison officer who will liaise with the chair of the committee. Any questions for the committee have to be received no later than 10.00 am three days 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 scrutiny liaison officer please e-mail emmawebster@norwich.gov.uk

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 liaison officer.

The way in which members of the public can contact us to put forward a topic for scrutiny has been updated in the last civic year. Previously people would have to print off the form from the Council's website, fill it in and post it to us. We thought that that may be a barrier to people getting in touch.

Now we have a new online form, you can see it. It just needs to be completed, hit send and it comes straight into the scrutiny liaison officer's inbox. The sender receives the following message automatically;

Thank you for your request to scrutiny.

Your suggestion has been received by the scrutiny liaison officer and will be considered for inclusion in the work programme. We will let you know the outcome by e-mail.

If your suggestion is included in the work programme we will let you know which date the scrutiny committee will consider the topic so that you have the opportunity to attend the meeting.

Please do feel free to tell people how easy it is to suggest a topic to scrutiny, and encourage them to use the new on-line form.