



Scrutiny Committee

16:30 to 18:40

17 December 2020

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Carlo, Fulton-McAlister (M), Manning, McCartney-Gray, Oliver, Osborn, Sarmezey, Stutely (substitute for Councillor Ryan) and Thomas (Vi)

Apologies: Councillors Giles, Ryan and Sands (S)

1. Public questions/petitions

There were no public questions or petitions

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes

RESOLVED, subject to noting that the following paragraph was omitted from the opportunities to achieve zero rough sleeping post Covid-19 item:

“Members discussed the placement of temporary accommodation in their ward and took a vote on a recommendation to inform ward councillors about new hostel accommodation in their ward of 60 beds and over. With a majority of members voting against this recommendation, it was lost.”

to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2020.

4. Draft equalities information report 2021

(The chair took this item first.)

The strategy manager presented the report which covered social inclusion as well as equalities information.

As part of its public sector equalities duties, the council was obliged to publish data about people living in Norwich and the council's employees. This was to ensure that those with protected characteristics could be promoted equality of opportunity. The report also included further information on non-statutory aspects of inequality such as socio-economic issues, rough sleeping figures and looked after children

information, all of which helped to provide context to the report. The draft report would be formally published at the end of January 2021.

There had been significant changes in the economy around inequality such as a widening of the gender pay gap. The cabinet member for social inclusion said that the number of residents who were economically inactive had doubled over the last twelve months which was due to the impact of Covid-19. Norwich still had a lower hourly rate than other parts of the country and a widening gender pay gap when the national trend was to see this shrinking.

Data on hate crime was awaited from Norfolk Constabulary and it was hoped that this would be received in time to be included in the publication of the report in January. A member questioned the reasons for the delay in getting the information and the strategy manager said that it was simply a resource issue. This data was not a statutory part of the report but it provided an important insight. Once the information was received, it would be circulated to members.

A member highlighted the information on the payment of the living wage and said that Norwich was good compared to the rest of the east of England. She asked what the figures were as a percentage of all employers to show that where the council provided leadership, it made a positive difference to the figures. The strategy manager said that the living wage figures were the number of employers that had chosen to be accredited but more would be paying the living wage in practice. The accreditation showed a commitment throughout an organisation and its supply chain to paying the living wage. The cabinet member for social inclusion said that in 2019, the council offered to pay for the first year of accreditation for businesses but the Covid-19 pandemic had had a big effect on this. Small businesses found it difficult to go through the process to get accreditation.

A member asked if there was any data around unwaged people such as those who did not claim any benefits but were unemployed. The cabinet member for social inclusion said that it would be very difficult to collect that kind of data. The strategy manager added that only assumptions would be able to be made around this.

In response to a member's question on rough sleeper figures. The cabinet member for social inclusion said that there had been a lot of work happening around accommodation for those who were sleeping rough and additional hotel rooms had been purchased for the winter.

(Councillor Davis, cabinet member for social inclusion left the meeting at this point.)

A member referred to page 46 of the report which gave figures of the average hours worked. As a lot of unpaid work was undertaken, such as unpaid caring, she commented that it would be clearer if the report was updated to say that these figures were average paid hours of work. The strategy manager said that the figures had been taken from another source but an explanatory note could be added to the report to explain that those figures related to salaried hours only.

A member highlighted page 59 of the report and asked why there was a higher proportion of quality Act disabilities in Norwich. The strategy manager said that there were high levels of social housing stock in Norwich which would have adaptations to

allow people with disabilities to stay in them. Disabilities correlated with low income and Norwich was a relatively low income city. The figures related to those with disabilities who were also within the working age range and Norwich was a city with a younger demographic.

The strategy manager continued his presentation of the report. The government had published a report on the impacts of Covid-19 and the unequal impacts flowed along the lines of protected characteristics. The report did not analyse the causation of the correlation.

A separate report on health equality in England had been published by Sir Michael Marmot. This report showed that the more deprived an area a person lived in, the more likely there were to die at a younger age. This work had been revisited in 2020 in light of the Covid-19 pandemic which showed the impact of Covid-19 on inequalities and highlighted that life expectancy had stalled since 2010. Only around twenty percent of health outcomes were related to access to healthcare with the rest related to social determinants of health such as income, family and housing. In Norwich, there was a ten year difference in men's life expectancy between those living in the most and least deprived wards.

There had already been an unequal society before the Covid-19 pandemic and this had found weaknesses in society. Pre-existing health conditions, regional inequalities, housing, unemployment and over representation of minorities in overly exposed employment all lead to unequal outcomes. The Marmot Report looked at how these could be addressed. A whole life course approach from early years through to education and employment leading to a good standard of living would prevent ill health rather than reacting to it. This had always been true but Covid-19 had put this approach at the forefront of ways to relieve pressure on the NHS.

In terms of a role for Norwich City Council, paying the living wage would be key. Local government had a series of 'levers' available to it such as housing, benefits and parks which could all be part of the response. The work had to be centred against a background of ten years of cuts to local government funding which would hamper efforts to support recovery after the pandemic.

A member asked how access to greenspaces during the pandemic factored into health outcomes and what work could be undertaken with partners around this. The strategy manager said that the use of parks and open spaces had increased during 2020 and the parks and open spaces manager was passionate about these being accessible. A Parks and Open Spaces Strategy was being developed in partnership with Norfolk County Council and Active Norfolk and would support communities which had less access to open spaces. The Institute of Health Aging had been set up at the UEA and was exploring green social prescribing with supporting access to green spaces. The member added that it was not just about being active in green spaces but being able to see green spaces and that was particularly pertinent to those who were self-isolating.

The chair added that the running app Strava had made its data on walking and cycling free for local authorities to use and suggested that this could be used to help inform the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy. The strategy manager said that he

would pick that up with the parks and open spaces manager but Active Norfolk may already have been aware of this.

A member asked for some more information around digital inclusion. The strategy manager said that the council had a digital inclusion co-ordinator. The officer's work included looking at how services were delivered and how these could be accessed by all residents of Norwich. Devices to access the internet had been handed out to residents and work was being undertaken to ensure that there was digital access for those who needed to use online forms or had a particular issue. Digital champions had been trained both in the community and within the council to assist residents. The work was integral to the council but it was also part of working towards a digitally inclusive city. By way of a follow up question, the member asked how much capacity there was to support other partners and whether the council could make use of its bulk buying powers around IT equipment. The strategy manager said that he would raise this with the digital inclusion officer. In terms of capacity, there was only one officer but one element of the Good Economy Commission work was looking at digital skills and opportunities to work with other partners. The chair suggested to reach out to tech groups within the city to see if they could offer and time to volunteer and support charities with digital work.

A member commented that there would be more people who were unable to pay to play sports and outdoor equipment could be provided in open spaces. The strategy manager said that the council's digital sharing platform, LUMi, could provide opportunities for sports equipment to be used.

A member said that the council should remember that in terms of use of green spaces, not everyone was able bodied and it was important to also remember those with sensory needs. She wanted to see everyone being active at their own level. The strategy manager said that this was one of the many reasons that it was important for Equality Impact Assessments to be completed for each piece of work. A new role had been created in the community enabling team working with those with protected characteristics which would give insight into lived experiences.

(Councillors Matthew Fulton-McAlister and Oliver joined the meeting at this point along with the head of HR and learning.)

A member referred to page 79 of the report and asked why the proportion of applicants to those offered a post was much lower for candidates with a disability and asked how this compared to other organisations. The strategy manager said that the council was part of a scheme which guaranteed interviews to those who identified as having a disability and met the basic criteria for the role. This could lead to a proportionally high number of interviews. The head of HR and learning said that no bench marking had been undertaken around these statistics but the council undertook an equalities check at the short listing stage of recruitment to ensure that all protected characteristics had been considered. Recruitment training covered unconscious bias and equality and diversity training was being refreshed.

A member commented that training needed to be paired with assessments on how it was being used in the workplace to measure whether it was having an impact. The head of HR and learning said that evaluations were carried out after training but longer term evaluations could be put in place. There were not any specific targets

put into place in terms of equality and diversity but development should be part of performance reviews. Staff were encouraged to take up learning and development opportunities.

A member asked whether an annual staff survey took place and whether staff could be asked if they felt safe to disclose their ethnicity or disability. The head of HR and learning said that a periodic employee survey was undertaken and staff did respond to questions around ethnicity and disability. In response to a follow up question, the head of HR and learning said that in terms of gender identity, all staff that had responded had identified as either male or female.

A member asked about reasonable adjustments and gave the example of not using hypothetical situation questions in interviews. The head of HR and learning said that any candidates could contact the council prior to interview to discuss any reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments were also put in place for the workforce and these were determined by individual need.

In response to a member's question on the Norwich Opportunity Area, the strategy manager said that the team was hosted by the LEP. A previous director at the city council had sat on the partnership board. Some of the area have been given additional funding and this was going to be used to work with families and pupils of a school in a deprived area to look at the wider social context of claiming free school means. This could help those families to access other services which would have a positive impact on the children and their educational outcomes.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the draft equalities information report; and
- 2) Ask for a member's briefing to be arranged on the council's approach to working as an anchor institution in the city.

5. NHOSC update

Councillor Oliver, the substitute representative on NHOSC gave a verbal update. The last meeting of NHOSC had been well attended and considered issues around translation services for those with sensory impairments, suicide prevention helplines and a new GP surgery in King's Lynn.

A member commented that the transition of the ear clearance team from a hospital service to one carried out in the community had not been smooth. She was concerned that not all patients who had been having appointments at the hospital had been followed through to their GP surgery. She asked the representative to take forward to question on evaluations on the transition of the service.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the update of the NHOSC representative; and

- 2) To ask the representative on NHOSC if there was any evaluation of how smooth the handover of service for patients being treated for ear clearance from the hospital to the community was, especially with regard to patient follow-up.

6. Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel

The chair asked that any questions be emailed to Councillor Giles, the representative on the CCSPSSP.

RESOLVED to note the update.

7. Scrutiny committee work programme 2020-21

The chair said that the January meeting of the scrutiny committee would consider the council's corporate plan and the budget which would be the substantive item for the February meeting.

A member suggested that the insourcing of the Joint Ventures should be considered by the scrutiny committee before April 2021. It was agreed that a scope for the work would be out together to be considered at the January meeting of the scrutiny committee.

A member proposed the reinstatement of the fly-tipping select committee within the 2020-21 civic year, with evidence being gathered informally. On being put to a vote, the proposal fell.

RESOLVED to

- 1) note the scrutiny committee work programme 2020-21; and
- 2) agree in principle to add the insourcing of the Joint Ventures to the work programme, subject to a scope being considered at the January meeting of the scrutiny committee.

CHAIR

