

**Norwich City Council**  
**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**ITEM 5**

**REPORT for meeting to be held on 30 September 2014**

**Scope of the topics on the scrutiny committee work programme  
2014-2015**

**Summary:** The 17 July meeting of the scrutiny committee set the topics for the work programme up to 19 March 2015. Based upon the member discussion at the July meeting, it was agreed that the scrutiny officer develop the scope of the selected topics in liaison with relevant officers before bringing this report back for adoption at the September meeting of the committee.

**Conclusions:** This report offers a rationale to the topics agreed for the work programme. Also the attached work programme is scheduled in such a way that it pays regard to work streams already planned or underway around the council. As a quick reference the scrutiny work programme also provides a brief summary of the reason for the topic and any outcome sought by the scrutiny committee.

**Recommendation:** That the scrutiny committee

- a) Agrees the final draft of the work programme for scrutiny 2014-2015 and
- b) Agrees the purpose and scoping of the topics for scrutiny as outlined in the report.

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## **1. Topics for scrutiny 2014 – 2015**

1.1 The following four re-occurring items appear on the scrutiny committee work programme as standing items:

- Draft corporate plan
- Performance data monitoring
- The proposed policy and budget frame work
- Annual review of scrutiny

1.2 Members selected the following topics for the scrutiny committee work programme. The attached work programme also sets out the dates for when each of these items will be taken.

- Private rented housing market
- Street scene and road safety overview
- Welfare reform – all agency advice
- Annual equality information report
- Council housing communal areas

1.3 It was also decided that a task and finish group be set up to look at **self-esteem and aspiration in communities**;

1.4 The discussion that gave rise to the setting up of the task and finish group was around looking into how the council worked with communities to empower them, with a specific focus on those who might be hard to reach and with protected characteristics. The task and finish group aims to be able to submit a final report to the scrutiny committee at the March 2015 meeting.

1.5 The members of the task and finish group are; Lucy Galvin (Chair), Charmain Woollard, Sandra Bogelein and Chris Herries.

## **2. Private rented housing market (30 September 2014)**

2.1 This scrutiny session is for the committee to consider and look at ways in which the council is able to safeguard tenants in the private rented sector.

2.2 Due to programming and work streams, this topic is to be taken at the same meeting as this report is going to committee; therefore a fuller explanation of the approach and scope can be read on the specific report for that agenda item.

## **3. Street scene and road safety overview (27 November 2014)**

3.1 By bringing this topic to the scrutiny committee, members will be able to form evidence based overview and understanding of Norwich and road casualty

trends and set them in the wider context of the county. Also this would be an opportunity to look at the work that is carried out to reduce the number of incidents on the city's roads. In forming an overview and understanding of road casualty trends in Norwich and the work that is carried out to reduce casualties, the committee wishes to look at evidence based approaches towards keeping the roads of the city safe.

- 3.2 In previous discussions, members have made a link with road safety and 20 MPH zones with the thought that by reducing speed limits that this might reduce casualties and incidents while also encouraging more people to walk and cycle. It is suggested that the scrutiny committee might wish to look closer at the evidence and to evaluate the effect of 20 MPH areas on the road use and safety.
- 3.3 The Department of Transport are about to commission research into the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits. Whilst the Government believes that there is evidence to support the view that 20mph zones are effective, they accept that there is an evidence gap on the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits. The proposed research will set out to 'establish the effectiveness of 20mph speed limits, in a range of settings'. The Department for Transport states that while data from existing schemes, including Portsmouth and Bristol, indicates possible benefits, the evidence is inconclusive. Unfortunately the final report from the research is not expected until early 2017.
- 3.4 It is proposed that officers from the county council, police, health service and city council attend the meeting of the committee in the autumn to assist members. It would help to be able to form an evidence based view of the historical and current situation by not only looking at the killed or seriously injured performance measure (KSI) data collected by the council. Casualty data that is broken down both on a geographic and road user basis, those presenting to the health service and the analysis that underpins the data led approach to casualty reduction may all help to form the whole picture for members.
- 3.5 In looking at the street scene and related safety issues, members are also keen to assess any effect that verge side and pavement parking and trading may have on the safety of road users, pedestrians and especially those with disabilities.
- 3.6 With the above in mind it is suggested that the scrutiny committee sets out to:
  - a) Understand the roles in the provision of road safety in Norwich and the part played by the police, Norfolk County Council, Norwich City Council and other partners such as the Clinical Commissioning Group.
  - b) Understand the background statistics relating to KSI's.
  - c) Ask if there is any conflict or overlapping activity involving the above agencies.

- d) Ascertain if KSI road safety data alone assists in identifying links between the issue and what might be required on the ground and how to unravel this to understand what is happening and what is required to mitigate problems.
- e) Ask if a more locally arrived at target or suite of road safety targets might be more useful than the current measure.
- f) Find out that when comparing data from district to district, region to region or nationally; 'is the definition that is used by the different parties involved in Norwich /Norfolk regarding slight and serious road crash injuries the same as elsewhere?' Is it easily comparable?
- g) Ask if the definition and method of recording statistics is the same and linked up between the different agencies involved in Norwich.
- h) Look at the street scene and related safety issues possibly associated with verge-side and pavement parking and trading. Does this affect the safety of road users, pedestrians, especially those with disabilities? (There is another related issue that some members are concerned with. This is relating to the possible environmental effect of curb/roadside/verge parking and trading.)
- i) Look at the evidence to evaluate the effect of 20 MPH areas on road use and safety. **NB:** please see also paragraph 3.3.

#### **4. Welfare reform – all agency advice (16 October 2014)**

- 4.1 The focus for this topic is for the scrutiny committee to be able to look at and evaluate the advice and sign posting that is offered and to see if it is meeting local needs. Also this will be useful in assessing how accessible this advice and sign posting is and to be able to suggest ways in which those not coming forward for help might be reached.
- 4.2 Generally the council provides training and guidance for members and officers advising on welfare changes. Along with commissioning a range of debt and financial advice from third sector organisations, the council's money advice team provides debt and money advice to the council's tenants.
- 4.3 Key questions and actions for scrutiny might include:
  - Investigation of the national and local statistics and areas of concern so that thought could be given to 'equality proofing' any benefit take up campaigns that might be embarked upon in the future.
  - How the council and its partners work together to improve benefits take up by those in and out of work and ask would this help further in poverty reduction?
  - An aim of any scrutiny activity in this regard needs to highlight the improvements that this might bring to health and wellbeing and employment retention and participation and think how this might be measured.
  - How can the council work with its partners to highlight eligibility and the benefit to those that might claim and address the barriers that stop people from claiming.
  - What work can be done with employers to promote in work take up?

- Is there value in involving and using more accessible settings, including community and voluntary centres, schools, or even healthcare locations in providing welfare benefits advice?

4.4 In seeking to look at the overall advice picture on offer to Norwich residents and with a particular focus on the impact of the non-take-up of income related benefits it is suggested that the following stakeholders may be consulted;

Voluntary sector advice and advocacy agencies, DWP, the council and Jobcentre plus.

## **5. Annual equality information report (18 December 2014)**

5.1 This will be an opportunity for the scrutiny committee to pre-scrutinise the draft 2015 report before it is taken to cabinet. The scrutiny committee will be able to look at how the council is meeting the equality objectives that were set in the original 2012-2016 strategy.

5.2 There were four objectives in the equality strategy 2012-2016:

- Tackling hate crimes and incidents
- Access to quality information, advice and advocacy – including financial capability
- Treating people with dignity and respect
- Accessible and safe housing

5.3 The strategy 2012-2016 can be found here:

<http://www.norwich.gov.uk/YourCouncil/EqualityAndDiversity/Documents/EqualityStrategy.pdf>

## **6. Council housing communal areas (26 February 2014)**

6.1 Working with the tenant scrutiny panel and other tenants and involving the relevant authorities, to review current policy and look into how tenants can use communal areas.