

Norwich City Council
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

ITEM 7

REPORT for meeting to be held on 17 September 2015

Review of co-operative innovations and solutions and suggestions for how Norwich might benefit

- Summary:** The report summarises the background to this topic and work currently being progressed to allow an initial discussion by the committee about areas they may wish to focus on in more detail and to come up with any initial suggestions.
- Conclusions:** The report should enable the scrutiny committee to determine any initial recommendations they may want to make that could benefit Norwich.
- Recommendation:** To agree areas for further review and any initial recommendations.
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Report

Background

1. The original purpose of this item agreed at the Scrutiny work planning meeting in June was *“Norwich City Council is a member of the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network and has been able to begin harnessing some of the benefits which it offers. The objective would be to review. Cooperative councils are providing the opportunity for local government to reclaim values at local level, give communities greater control over their own lives, and, crucially, to ensure the state works with them in supporting them to transform their lives.”*
2. The founding traditions of the co-operative movement are based on collective action, co-operation, empowerment and enterprise. The founding principles of the “Rochdale Pioneers” have been refined over time by the [International Co-operative Alliance](#), summarised by the [Co-Operative Councils’ Innovation Network](#) “Our Network is based on the Co-operative values developed by the International Co-operative Alliance: **“self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity... honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others”**.”
3. In February 2013 Norwich City Council joined the Cooperative Councils’ Innovation Network. This is a collaboration between local authorities based on sharing learning and good practice on better ways of working, for and with, local people for the benefit of their local community. The focus has very much been on ways to support transformation given the very significant financial challenges facing both councils and many of the communities they serve.
4. The council’s current blueprint which guides how services and structures are designed (and so the council’s transformation programme) aligns closely with a co-operative council approach as it is based on being a collaborative council that works effectively with its citizens and partners from all sectors to maximise the impact of its limited resources for the city. Similarly, the detailed principles within the blueprint set out a range of co-operative type approaches.
5. Over the last couple of years the council has carried out directly and enabled others to apply a range of co-operative type approaches in Norwich. Just a few recent examples would be:
 - Supporting a range of collective purchasing schemes such as for energy and solar panels
 - Involving communities in the prioritising and shaping of service provision and resourcing through community engagement and tenant involvement
 - Encouraging specific communities to determine agreements about local priorities and their role and that of the local authority through the co-creation of neighbourhood agreements.
 - Supporting the establishment of a range of community groups to carry out specific activities important to the local communities.
 - Encouraging local people to get involved in local democracy and decision making through a number of activities such as the City Visions project aimed at young people and the Get Involved project.

- Enabling communities to help to run community assets and facilities e.g parks, community centres etc.
 - Commissioning a range of voluntary organisations and consortiums to work with local communities in Norwich.
 - Developing a co-produced needs assessment for social welfare advice with partners and providers to inform the commissioning of advice services.
 - Supporting credit unions and a range of other approaches to enable financial inclusion.
6. Some examples of other types of work carried out by members of the Co-operative Councils' Innovation Network would be as follows:
- Edinburgh City Council have enabled the establishment by local students, working closely with a local housing association and the university, of a students housing co-operative to provide an affordable alternative to the private rented sector and address specific issues in their local housing market.
 - Oldham Council working with a range of other partners have supported the establishment of the Oldham Enterprise Trust which aims to encourage entrepreneurialism amongst young people and create jobs through providing business support and small loans and grants to 16 and 17 year olds.
 - York City Council and Science City York have enabled the creation of GeniUS York which draws on open innovation approaches and collaborative city engagement to open up the process of tackling different challenges. Challenges for the city are posted on an online platform and people are encouraged to meet new people, explore ideas and possible solutions before emerging solutions are tested through surgeries.
 - Glasgow City Council have established a future savers project where all pupils of a certain age in the city are automatically given access to a credit union savings account as part of their wider work to encourage financial inclusion.
7. Over the last few months, as part of the council's transformation programme, a detailed review has been carried out of the council's neighbourhood model and services informed by the council's financial context and a range of information and research, including the scrutiny review of building social capital in the city. This will lead to a number of proposals for change and new and different approaches, many of which will be co-operative in nature. The first draft of the review is unfortunately not quite ready to be shared but it will be by later in September. This will then be shared with the budget cross party working group before being formally considered by both cabinet and scrutiny committee in October alongside the wider transformation work.
8. Alongside this, work has also been carried out to refresh and update the council's overarching blueprint which again will come to cabinet and scrutiny committee in October with the transformation work. There will also be an all member briefing on the transformation work in late September.
9. Similarly, a range of work has been carried out to further develop the council's approach to reducing inequalities in Norwich, which will include co-operative approaches and will also be ready for consideration in October.

10. As such, the scrutiny committee may wish to consider co-operative opportunities again, in detail, when looking at the transformation work in October and when considering the update on progress on the scrutiny review of building social capital in Norwich, currently scheduled for the scrutiny committee work programme in November.