

Scrutiny committee

Date: Thursday, 17 March 2022

Time: 16:30

Venue: Council chamber, City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich, NR2 1NH

All group pre-meeting briefing – 16:00 Council Chamber

This is for members only and is not part of the formal scrutiny committee meeting which will follow at 16:30. The pre-meeting is an opportunity for the committee to make final preparations before the start of the actual meeting. The public will not be given access to the Council Chamber before 16:30.

Committee members:

Councillors:

Wright (Chair)
Fulton-McAlister (M) (Vice-chair)
Carlo
Driver
Everett
Galvin
Giles
Huntley
Manning
Osborn
Stutely
Thomas (Va)
Thomas (Vi)

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Agenda

Page nos

1 Apologies

To receive apologies for absence.

2 Declarations of interest

(Please note that it is the responsibility of individual members to declare an interest prior to the item if they arrive late for the meeting).

3 Minutes

5 - 56

To agree the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 12 November, 18 November and 16 December 2021 and 10 January, 20 January, 3 February and 28 February 2022.

4 A sustainable, inclusive Norwich economy following COVID-19

57 - 66

Purpose: For the scrutiny committee to evaluate how the Council is supporting a sustainable, inclusive Norwich economy following COVID-19.

5 Report from the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Purpose: To receive a verbal report from the Council's representative on the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 March 2022.

6 Report of the Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel.

Purpose: To receive a verbal update from the Council's representative on the Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Panel meeting held on 24 February 2022.

7 Scrutiny committee work programme (verbal discussion)

Purpose: To discuss the work programme setting process for the 2022-23 scrutiny committee work programme.

8 Exclusion of the public

Consideration of exclusion of the public.

***9 Exempt minutes**

- This report is not for publication because it would disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as in para 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

Date of publication: **Wednesday, 09 March 2022**



Extraordinary Scrutiny Committee

12:30 to 14:50

12 November 2021

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Carlo, Driver, Galvin, Giles, Haynes (Substitute for Councillor Osborn), Maxwell (substitute for Councillor Matthew Fulton-McAlister), Sands (M) (substitute for Councillor Manning) Stutely, Thomas (Va) and Thomas (Vi)

Apologies: Councillors Fulton-McAlister (M), Manning and Osborn.

Also present: Councillor Price

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Health, safety and compliance in council homes

The chair reminded members that any questions on the exempt appendix would be taken under that part of the meeting. The chair welcomed officers and Councillor Price as chair of the audit committee.

The executive director of community services presented the report. The report set out the council's position in relation to health safety and compliance, the findings of the housing regulator in relation to compliance and the plans in place to return the council to a position of full compliance. Sharon Page, communications manager, Vivian Knibbs, interim director of housing operations and David Gleeson, asset consultant were all introduced.

The chair asked for clarification on paragraph 9 of the report around the ownership of the companies. The executive director of community service said that the paragraph was correct and outlined the ownership of the companies. A second paragraph highlighted by the chair referred to contractual arrangements which were high level descriptions of responsibilities and service level agreements sitting below these.

A member said that it was important that the committee scrutinised this topic and that she had already asked for in depth scrutiny of the subject. The chair said that at its next scheduled meeting, the committee would discuss the work programme and the current discussion would inform a scope for piece of further scrutiny work. Councillor

Waters commented that the monitoring and progress of the compliance work built this in with a number of governance arrangements to report to cabinet. The scrutiny committee set its own work programme and may wish to have those cabinet reports coming to scrutiny.

In response to a question from a member, the chair confirmed that he had received a request from the leader of the council that the scrutiny committee would consider the report, and also a topic form on the subject from Councillor Galvin, and had worked with officers in the usual way to pick an appropriate date for the meeting.

The executive director of community services was invited to outline the report. She confirmed that following her appointment in April 2021, alongside a review of corporate governance initiated by the Chief Executive, she asked asset consultants to undertake a high level review of compliance management in council homes. She wanted a clear understanding of how the council was meeting its responsibilities in this area. The initial finding raised concerns around electrical and fire safety inspections. A series of meetings were held with NPS Norwich to get a baseline position and to identify actions that were needed which were prioritised on a risk basis. In July 2021, the council made the decision to self-refer to the Housing Regulator to consider whether it was in breach of the home standard. The consultants findings were concluded in October and a high level overview of these findings were included in the report. A health and safety compliance board had been established to oversee the compliance plan and the Housing Regulator had the level of assurance it needed to not take any further action against the council based on the plans submitted so far.

A member commented that the risk register at page 20 of the report started to lay out the most critical risks but the timescales for producing a full risk register were missing. The executive director of community services said that the project risk register was under development and it was anticipated that this would be ready as part of the December report to the Housing Regulator.

A member said that the council had taken responsibility and apologised to leaseholders but asked whether the council had done enough. The deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing said that once the issues had been found, she supported the executive director of community services in the decision to self-refer to the Housing Regulator. The council had taken great care in communicating with tenants and leaseholders in a number of ways with letters sent to each of them setting out the situation with contact details if they had any concerns and information in the TLC tenants magazine and on the council's website. There would be investment in computer systems and committed staff and senior officer driving improvements forward. Communication would be paramount throughout the process.

A member asked if the executive director of community services could explain more about the compliance board. She said that she was chair of the board and it was attended by the portfolio holder for housing and for resources, alongside the Chief Executive and the executive director of development and city services with other senior colleagues, such as the council's monitoring officer. The board would meet monthly to a prepare a report for the regulator whilst providing the leadership to drive the plan forward with the right resources.

By way of a follow up question the chair asked how tenants and leaseholders would be involved in the improvement journey as they were not represented on the board. The deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing said that there was already a tenants improvement panel which met in its own right, that she attended. The executive director of community services said that she would also attend the next meeting to give an update and then would attend regularly throughout the process.

A member commented that the report showed the way forward but there was no information showing the responsibility for writing and checking contracts and checking that work had been carried out. She endorsed the suggestion of further scrutiny work as members needed to understand the context of the issues. The chief executive identified that he had placed emphasis on good governance across the council, including around major contracts. A new leadership team had been recruited and heads of services were reviewing contracts within their areas. Shareholder panels had been set up to oversee NRL and NCSL and heads of service were having regular meetings with the managing directors of those companies. A corporate health and safety board had also been set up to look at issues across the council with further training on contract management to ensure there was clarity across the organisation. He hoped that these points gave assurance as to the weight placed on the issue to health and safety.

The leader of the council said that a range of issues had already been addressed and the structures that the chief executive had outlined would provide the information needed. There would be regular reporting on the progress to ensure that the council had the resources it needed to reach 100% compliance within the timeframe set out in the report. There was a need to separate the safety of tenants from a historical exercise which would detract resources from the forward thinking work that needed to be done.

A member asked how the council would be working with the regulator to maintain compliance. The executive director of community services said that as soon as the council was aware of the issues, it self-referred so it was recognised that at that point, it did not have the full picture. The council was working with the regulator as details emerged and was setting out a plan for improvement. There would be monthly meetings with the regulator until 100% compliance had been achieved.

In response to a member's question, the executive director of community services said that with regards to the cost of the compliance the funding would need to be available over a specific time period. There would inevitably be additional costs due to the timescales involved. It was a high priority piece of work so other works may need to be paused but this would be dependent on staff and contractor availability. The asset consultant said that the certifications for the works would all be recorded digitally and would include remedial works against each property.

A member questioned how works were completed where a tenant refused entry. The interim housing operation director said that there was a well developed process to gain access with a contractor making three attempts and where those attempts failed, the case was passed to the housing management team who would attempt to contact the tenant. Where the inspection related to gas, the council could seek to obtain a warrant which was due procedure under legislation. Electrical testing used different legislation and in those cases, if the housing management team had been unsuccessful, they

would work with nplaw to secure an injunction to gain access to the property. However, the council would rather not take legal action if possible. The deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing said that housing officers would always try to work with the individual tenants rather than taking legal action which would be a last resort.

A member commented that £2million was a lot of money and there were a raft of safety issues to mitigate. She referenced that she was aware of an LGSS audit report which stated that there was a lack of robust contract management. She asked how the council could be sure of good governance going forward and why no one was aware of those issues. The executive director of community services said that the report set out the high level findings and a contract was in place between the council and NPSN. Some of the terms of that contract were not as clear as they should be but ultimately, the council was responsible for the health and safety of its homes. The report was clear about what was wrong and what was needed to put it right. The recommendations built in resources to get the work right over the stated timeframe. The executive director of development and city services said that the council had recognised that there was a need for more expertise and this was being sought.

A member asked why no one was aware of the issues prior to the appointment of the executive director of community services and asked whether all areas of the directorate were spot checked. Tenants could have been involved at an earlier point with an emergency meeting. The member felt some formalised tenant involvement on the health and safety compliance board and also oversight from councillors not on the cabinet would ensure transparency and rebuild trust. The executive director of community services identified that there were teams of very dedicated people in the housing service who were doing difficult work. There were some areas of the service that were performing highly and some that with support and changes around IT could see improvement. Her housing background meant the first thing she wanted to check was that compliance and health and safety management was in place and that she could be confident in how it was being dealt with.

The leader of the council said that the administration owned the issues and the responsibility to make them right. There would be regular cabinet reports on compliance which would be available to all members which included the scrutiny committee if it wished to add them to its work program. Opposition representatives were always invited to cabinet and were able to ask questions on reports. The robustness of scrutiny was already well embedded into the system and it was an important function of the council to hold the administration to account and also to understand the progress being made.

The executive director of community service said that before speaking to tenants and leaseholders, the council needed to establish a clear position. The leader and deputy leader of the council were aware of the issues straight away and were consulted on the referral to the regulator. There had been discussions with cabinet members in the late summer about emerging issues and then the information was cascaded.

The chair invited the chair of the audit committee to make a statement and said that members of the scrutiny committee could seek clarification on points he had made.

The chair of audit said that it was good to see the work being done between scrutiny and audit committees and to see the senior leadership team working in new and progressive ways on the issues.

The audit committee had considered a proposal in the 2017-18 internal audit report to postpone the review of the NPS contract as it was told that there was assurance that it would be considered in the next round of contract management. In March 2018, the draft audit plan looked at commissioning and contract management which included contracts for refuse, repairs and maintenance, NPS and waste management so these were being considered as important contracts to review. The 2019-20 annual report showed a lack of robust management in housing contracts due to limited assurance being received. He had concerns around contract management with issues that did not seem to be being picked up until there was intervention from audit and he felt there needed to be more work to provide assurance on contract management. He acknowledged that issues had been identified and were systematically addressed through the senior leadership team looking at areas of risk and said that the audit committee was acting as a critical friend. There had been an abundance of evidence that there were unsatisfactory contracts and there was a need to go back historically and identify any risks and costs arising from these. Changes needed to be implemented and then the fundamental issue of contract management needed to be addressed to establish liabilities.

The chair asked if there needed to be an increased resource in internal audit. The Chair of audit said that the senior leadership team was looking to address underlying issues so it may not be necessary at the moment but ultimately, an additional resource may be beneficial.

The leader of the council said that the first priority was to resolve the compliance issues which was the narrative of the meeting. A decision had been taken in 2017 to bring the joint ventures to an end which was a recognition that the council would be able to undertake that work itself. The work would be informed by a more robust set of governance structures and would be looking at compliance and contract management issues to ensure that council owned companies were performing as expected.

The chief executive said that internal audit was seen as a tool to improve the council and it was helpful that the chair of audit had acknowledged the change of emphasis. Measures had been put in place to improve the capacity and the capability of internal audit and it had always been the intention that the new executive directors would identify gaps in capacity in services. The Covid-19 Recovery Plan showed that services would be reviewed due to changes in expectations and behaviours.

A member asked the chair of audit if he thought that there should be an internal audit investigation into the contract to show where responsibility would lie for contract management. The chair of audit said that since the audit committee had started to look at contract management and had identified issues, he had consistently said that contracts should be looked at retrospectively to fully understand the risk. The work would need to be undertaken by the scrutiny committee and audit committee could be used as a tool for this.

In response to a member's question on how the other areas of the housing service were working, the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing said that there were many aspects of the service working very well such as the rough sleeping team, the work being done with registered partners and the sheltered housing officers who worked closely with tenants.

A member asked what feedback had come from the letters sent to tenants and how would actions to resolve compliance issues be signed off and assessed. The deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing said that as many information channels as possible had been set up. Staff were available on phone lines for the first weekend. Less than one hundred contacts had been made, not all of which were about the compliance issues, which showed that recipients had been reassured. The executive director of community services added that housing officers and NPS staff would assess the actions and the board would have oversight of the programme and its delivery.

In response to a question on training, the chair of audit said that there was a need for training and improving skills was fundamental for councillors. There was also a need to ensure that policies were fit for purpose and being implemented. A member added that it would be useful if members could receive training on functions such as audit, scrutiny, contract management and Key Performance Indicators. She would also welcome regular briefings on housing. The executive director of community services said that regular briefings were held with opposition councillors with community services. The first briefing specifically on housing had already been scheduled.

A member asked if officers could elaborate on how having direct control of the services being brought back in house could help to achieve compliance. The executive director of community services said that the council would have greater control over the services and would also have direct oversight of governance and performance management.

3. Exclusion of the public

RESOLVED unanimously to exclude the public on the grounds set out in paragraphs etc.

***4. Health, safety and compliance in council homes – exempt appendix**

(An exempt minute exists for this item.)

RESOLVED, to note the exempt appendix.

(Members of the public were readmitted to the meeting).

4. Health, safety and compliance in council homes

A resolution was moved to ask cabinet to support scrutiny committee to undertake a review of exactly what happened with regards to health, safety and compliance in council homes. With seven members voting against and two in favour, the motion was lost.

A resolution was moved to allow opposition councillors to sit on the Health and Safety Compliance Board. With seven members voting against and two in favour, the motion as lost.

RESOLVED, unanimously:

- 1) For the chair of the committee and the Executive Director to determine a mechanism to inform the scrutiny committee of progress with regards the matters referred to in the exempt paper;
- 2) That a report comes to scrutiny committee in early summer on the progress in delivering services referred to in the report following the transfer to NCS Ltd;
- 3) That the Housing Compliance Board regularly updates the Tenant Improvement Panel on its progress in securing compliance with required housing standards
- 4) That cabinet considers how compliance and safety risks are reflected in the council's risk register; and
- 5) The provision of training to councillors on contract management, compliance and performance management is reviewed

CHAIR



Scrutiny Committee

16:30 to 18:30

18 November 2021

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Carlo, Driver, Everett, Galvin, Giles, Haynes (Substitute for Councillor Osborn), Maxwell (substitute for Councillor Matthew Fulton-McAlister), Sands (M) (substitute for Councillor Manning) Stutely, Thomas (Va) and Thomas (Vi)

Apologies: Councillors Fulton-McAlister, Manning and Huntley

1. Declarations of interest

Councillor Driver declared an other interest in item 4 below as a council tenant.

Councillor Vaughan Thomas declared an other interest in item 4 below as a welfare rights officer working in the advice industry.

2. Minutes

3. NHOSC update

The representative gave a verbal update. The committee had discussed eating disorders with a particular focus on young people. He had asked about acute hospital facilities supporting young people subjected to additional trauma due to tube feeding and heard that numbers receiving this treatment were low although overall numbers of those with eating disorders had increased.

There had been discussion on the closure of the mental health facilities at Hellesdon Hospital which were due to reopen in December. A decision on making the facility women only had not yet been taken.

With regards to housing, there had been a suggestion that district councils were responsible for the high numbers of patients in beds when they were fit enough for discharge. The representative had highlighted the pressure on Norwich City Council for housing and would report back to NHOSC on those pressures.

The committee had also heard a report on a review of safeguarding at Cawston Park Hospital.

Any further questions for NHOSC could be directed to Councillor Stutely, the representative on NHOSC.

A member asked if there was any work being done to follow up on eating disorders in over 18 year olds as there were issues with the system when patients transitioned from under to over 18. The representative said that eating disorders amongst all age groups were discussed and he would forward some data around this.

A member commented that an item had been taken to the September meeting of NHOSC on vulnerable adults primary care service and she had a number of questions about this. The representative said to forward any questions to him directly.

RESOLVED to note the update of the council's representative on the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4. The emerging new social inclusion agenda following Covid-19

The chair welcomed officers and the leader of the council in the absence of the portfolio holder, Councillor Karen Davis, who sent her apologies due to needing to self-isolate.

The strategy manager presented the report. It set out the council's approach to reducing inequalities in a number of areas and identified lessons learnt from the early stages of the pandemic. There had been locality based work undertaken where the greatest disadvantages had been identified in areas such as food and fuel poverty, digital inclusion and diversity and equality.

The paper showed that Covid-19 had the worst effects on those already facing significant disadvantage. The council had been able to move quickly on work around this due to strong partnerships and this would be built on using the existing reducing inequalities action plan.

The chair commented that the Living Wage was very important to help with reducing inequalities and invited the leader of the council to give an overview of the work being done around the Living Wage in the context of social inclusion.

The leader of the council said that the Living Wage foundation had launched that week. There was an ethical responsibility to have a well supported workforce with good working conditions. An additional thirteen businesses had joined the Living Wage network in 2021 which was uplifting in light of challenges such as Covid-19, zero hours contracts and the transition to a low carbon society. There was a three year programme put in place to establish Norwich as a Living Wage city.

A member asked if there was any data to indicate that those in receipt of the living wage were still using mechanisms such as food banks or several jobs and added if there would be any assurances that those areas in receipt of additional resources for pilot schemes would remain in place. The leader of the council said that part of the

Living Wage Foundation Strategy was looking into 'living hours' and pension schemes as those that worked less hours would still be at a disadvantage.

The neighbourhood and community engagement manager added that the pilot scheme in the Lakenham area was based on a finite amount of funding but opportunities for more funding were always being sought. Resilience within communities needed to be built into the work to create structures that could use additional grant funding and those resources would be deployed wherever it was most appropriate within those areas.

A member asked if there were figures available on how many employers that were Living Wage accredited were paying low wages before the accreditation or were businesses that were already paying significantly above the living wage. The leader of the council said that within the profiles of the workforce of those accredited businesses there would always be staff who were in receipt of wages above the Living Wage but would also have lower paid staff who would benefit from the accreditation. There was also a requirement that all those who were directly employed had to be paid the Living Wage so it was a significant piece of work for companies to ensure all of their roles were compliant. The additional employers joining the scheme meant that around 8,000 employees would benefit.

A member referred to the overlap in areas regarding Reducing Inequalities Target Areas (RITA) and asked if there was a way to give a very focussed local approach to an area. The neighbourhood and community engagement manager said that the council was looking at how best to capture conversations within the community with council staff, such as housing officers, and share that information across services areas. Internally, there was a reducing inequalities group which made the most of those connections to understand how services could work together.

A member highlighted that the heat map in the report showed that the RITAs were sometimes not in direct correlation to need and asked what the long term strategy was on those initiatives and the process for the council to listen to the community and measure how these had worked alongside records of how the money had been spent to achieve those outcomes. The senior strategy officer said that in order to define the areas for a RITA, there was an extensive exercise with partners using pilot data from the Lakenham area to pinpoint wards and then streets that were the most disadvantaged. The maps within the agenda pack showed whether the areas identified post lockdown were still the most appropriate, but broadly the initial areas identified were still those that the work would focus on. In the long term, the approach would be to bring in resources in those areas by working together with partners and looking at what a shared outcome framework might look like. The framework would be a tool to understand community issues and identify partner outcomes and individual projects would take community views into consideration.

In response to a member's question on the council's legal ability to consider not using companies which employed people on zero hours contracts, the council's monitoring officer said that she would need to look into the issue and come back to the member outside of the meeting.

A member asked if those inequalities identified were getting better or worse with interventions. The neighbourhood and community engagement manager said that there were always challenges around quantifying inequalities and the council did not want to overburden individuals with evaluation. There was a need to understand what the council had control over and what could be measured with pilot work. Individual projects could have specific outcome goals but wider projects may not see change for a generation so where data could be collected more frequently to show correlations it would be although it was a difficult and delicate process. The senior strategy officer added that where approaches to issues had worked for partners, these could be replicated by the council.

A member commented that there was a divide between the public and private sector with the private sector making donations to projects but still producing problems, such as having low paid staff who still needed to make use of food banks. Those people living within Norwich were often on lower wages than those that came into the city to work so there was work needed to integrate with the private sector. The strategy manager said that the Good Economy Commission and the City Vision Partnership would be an important part of that work along with the Living Wage group to get all institutions working together. The neighbourhood and community engagement manager added that part of the CRF bid was working with businesses in the community to understand how they could contribute to that work.

(The leader of the council left the meeting at this point).

A member referred to the maps showing areas of deprivation and asked if there was any work being done around unemployment and the wait for benefits which would have a knock-on effect around deprivation. The financial inclusion liaison officer commented that the council's hands were tied regarding Universal Credit legislation but it did have a Council Tax Reduction Scheme which helps to mitigate the impact of Universal Credit legislation. There had also been work done around debt and early intervention to get support for people as soon as possible and to make referrals quickly. There were weekly meetings with multiple service areas to discuss solutions for those needing additional support but there was no quick fix. Out of the sixty Living Wage employers, nine of those were private sector businesses so progress was being made. There was also learning from other cities which had been through the Living Wage City process and a robust three year plan was being formulated.

In response to a question on citizen participation, the neighbourhood and community engagement manager said that there had been a lot of research undertaken to understand the key principles and methodologies and engagement work had been done with community groups. The next phase of work would be to take those principles and look at actions to be worked on against them. There was a need to understand how to get residents to talk to the council and to show that they would see change as a result of their participation. There was a pilot scheme for a community connector role which employed local people from a particular area on a living wage and four appointments had been made to those roles so far. The council wanted to listen to and act upon feedback from local communities. The member commented that residents sometimes felt that they did not get feedback from the council or a satisfactory response to queries which impacted on trust in the council, so a wider look at how the council communicated with residents would be welcome which could include making the language of communications from the council as accessible as

possible and making it clear who residents needed to contact for advice and solutions to issues. The executive director of community services said that this would be a very large piece of work but there was an awareness that work needed to be undertaken on communications with tenants. The member offered to feed in examples of improvement which may help.

(At this point in the meeting, members took a five minute adjournment and resumed at 18:10)

Members discussed the concept of social supermarkets and the value they brought to local communities. The neighbourhood and community engagement manager said that these were identified as a useful resource as part of the Food Poverty Action Plan. There was a social supermarket already planned in the city which had utilised the community asset transfer model with a local café and The Feed had been successful in its bid to run the café element. People could visit to use the café or to get subsidised fruit and vegetables so there was no stigma in visiting. It was linked to the community hub model and there were plans to look at the holistic needs of those who would visit the supermarket so that appropriate referrals could also be made. There were also potential plans to fund workshops and training programmes around cooking.

A member asked if there was a timetable for opening the social supermarket and funding for staffing. The neighbourhood and community engagement manager answered that the process for agreeing licenses for The Feed had started and it was hoped that the venue would be open in the new year. A staff member was already in place and The Feed had external funding for that position.

It was **RESOLVED** to

1) ask cabinet to:

- a) ask cabinet to commission a background report on inequality in Norwich with benchmarking from other cities and long term trends to inform an evidence based framework which would set and link to existing Key Performance Indicators (not to be to the detriment of on the ground work)
- b) consider whether it is legally viable to begin establishing a matrix in accordance with procurement strategy which also includes trade union recognition, lack of use of zero hours contract and broadly comparable gender pay gap with the council
- c) ensure that appropriate resources area available to ensure that the good work on social inclusion projects continues
- d) resource staffing to seek new venues and funding for social supermarkets across the city and to increase provision and extend existing projects.
- e) Engage with communities to ensure participatory budgeting processes.
- f) ensure digital inclusion work continues and is extended where possible.

- 2) ask for the topic of ward breakdown of project delivery to be considered by the scrutiny committee in the new civic year and
- 3) To receive an update on work being done to improve communications with tenants.
- 4) To note that the scrutiny committee recognises the link between inequality and education and would like to consider this as a piece of future scrutiny work, to include how the council works with partners on this issue.

5. Scrutiny committee work programme 2021-22

The chair presented the report.

The meeting scheduled for 2 December 2021 to consider the business plans for NRL and NCSL would instead take place on 10 or 11 January 2022 and would be a remote meeting.

The topic for the meeting on 16 December was designated to consider the Corporate Plan but as this was a full review and not an annual refresh, it would be considered at the meeting on 20 January 2022. Instead, the committee would consider the Equality Information report.

The item on a sustainable and inclusive Norwich economy following Covid-19 would move to the meeting on 17 March 2022.

A member commented that she had submitted a TOPIC form on health and safety compliance in council homes to ask for the compliance issues and contract management to be considered by the scrutiny committee as a substantial amount of information around this topic had not been discussed at meetings of scrutiny and cabinet on 12 November 2021. There was an urgent need to look at the processes around contract management and what went wrong to ensure that it did not happen again.

The chair referred to the meetings held on 12 November and said that the request for the issue to be looked at by the scrutiny committee had been reflected within those minutes. At that meeting of the scrutiny committee, members voted against a recommendation to consider a piece of work reviewing what went wrong to ensure that resources were used to implement the compliance plans. The member said that she wanted to bring the issue to the scrutiny committee again as she did not feel that it was looked at in enough detail.

The councils monitoring officer referred to the constitution and highlighted that a motion that had already been decided within the last six months could not be considered and the request to add the topic to the scrutiny work programme was substantially similar to one considered on 12 November 2021 by the scrutiny committee which had been defeated. The procedure rules were written with full council in mind but did apply to other committees.

The chair added that the scrutiny committee would be looking at various elements of housing safety compliance in the future so although this particular request had been

defeated, there were other resolution passed which meant that the topic would be considered. Processes within the constitution had been followed and the committee had spent considerable time at the meeting on 12 November 2021 dealing with its concerns.

The monitoring officer added that a resolution had been passed at that meeting to look at progress around compliance and the details of the scope of that piece of work would be considered nearer the time by the committee. Members commented that resource should be prioritised immediately to fix the issues but there would be opportunities in the future to review the topic in detail.

RESOLVED to note that:

- 1) the meeting to consider the NRL and NCSL business plans would take place on 10 or 11 January 2022
- 2) the meeting on 16 December 2021 would consider the Equality Information report
- 3) the Corporate Plan would be considered at the meeting on 20 January 2022; and
- 4) the item on a sustainable and inclusive Norwich economy following Covid-19 would move to the meeting on 17 March 2022.

CHAIR



**Scrutiny Committee
Informal online meeting**

16:30 to 18:30

16 December 2021

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Button (substitute for Councillor Everett) Carlo, Driver, Galvin, Giles, Osborn, Maxwell (substitute for Councillor Matthew Fulton-McAlister), Sands (M) (substitute for Councillor Manning) and Stutely

Apologies: Councillors Everett, Fulton-McAlister (M), Huntley, Manning, Thomas (Va) and Thomas (Vi)

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Verbal update from the chair regarding the scrutiny conference on 1 December 2021

The chair had attended the Governance and Scrutiny conference on 1 December which was focussed on scrutiny and governance for local councils during challenging times.

The impact of the pandemic would be profound and long lasting so councils needed to think differently about risk. It showed the need to be realistic about services returning to pre-pandemic levels and that there was a role for communities to come together.

There was a panel discussion with the leader of Croydon Council, a local government adviser from CIPFA and the chair of the Riverside Housing scrutiny board, with the discussion being focussed on housing issues and how good scrutiny could help to avoid these. The Croydon investigation report and the CIPFA Financial Practice Scrutiny Guide were discussed and the chair would circulate links to these to members of the scrutiny committee. Information was also being collated from a series of workshops which would also be circulated once received.

A member asked what improvements Croydon Council had made around scrutiny. The chair answered that issues were still being worked through but it seemed that they were working to be more transparent as an organisation and were welcoming scrutiny

on different issues. There was a fundamental change in the way the organisation was operating.

RESOLVED to:-

- 1) note the update: and
- 2) circulate links to Croydon investigation report and the CIPFA Financial Practice Scrutiny Guide.

3. Verbal update on the Norfolk Countywide Community Safety Partnership Scrutiny Sub Committee

The NCCSPSSC did not meet and the representative would give an update once the meeting had been convened.

The chair invited Councillor Stutely, chair of the task and finish group looking at fly tipping and communal bins, to give an update on the work for the group instead.

Councillor Stutely said that the task and finish group had recently met with officers to discuss a draft report which set out a number of recommendations. Analysis of data collected over the past two years had showed a number of 'hotspots' around the city which gave geographical areas to target with new ideas.

The task and finish group were planning to hold a public meeting with residents from the city with a view to adding any additional ideas into the recommendations which would, in turn, be presented to a scrutiny committee meeting.

Members discussed the terms of reference of the task and finish group and Councillor Stutely commented that although these had been discussed, they were not formally written down and adopted which was a learning point for the next task and finish group. A member suggested that a standard terms of reference for task and finish groups could be developed and the monitoring officer answered that she would be pleased to support the committee in this piece of work, having had experience in similar documents from previous local authorities.

A member commented that the draft report focussed on fly tipping with less information on communal bins. Councillor Stutely said that this had been considered and communal bins were included within the draft recommendations.

The committee discussed the format of the public meeting. A tentative date of 21 January 2022 had been suggested and due to the ongoing pandemic, was likely that it would be held online. The task and finish group would listen to the views of members of the public and incorporate these into the recommendations.

The executive director of development and city services commented that the practicalities of this would need to be thought through as recommendations would need to be aligned to the emerging budget and due to timing, this could be difficult.

RESOLVED to note the update of task and finish group.

4. Equality information report

The chair introduced the item and said that the report was a statutory requirement with scrutiny committee feeding into the cabinet process. He welcomed officers and Councillor Waters to the meeting.

The strategy officer presented the report with the use of slides. She highlighted the duties of the council under the Equality Act 2012 and said that the report had been produced using infographics where possible to ensure it was accessible. The report also included data that was not a requirement of the reporting but gave context to the information.

The council had an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy which set out its four main equality objectives and a review of equalities was being carried out to identify areas for improvement. The Local Government Association framework was used for this which would help to plan and implement real equality outcomes for the citizens of Norwich.

The head of HR and organisational development highlighted the work that had already been undertaken on the Workforce Strategy around equalities which included increased reporting of protected characteristics within the workforce, rolling out a number of training programmes on equality and diversity and unconscious bias and a review of job pages on the council website.

The ethnic diversity of the workforce had increased, with the proportion of non-white employees increasing from 3% to 4.5%. The council was seeing improvements in recruitment statistics from applicants with disabilities and with ethnic minority backgrounds.

The strategy officer listed some of the organisations that would help to shape future equality information reports which included Norfolk Community Law Service, Shelter, MAP, Youth Advisory Board, HKA Norwich, Equal Lives, Norfolk Citizen's Advice, Norwich Access Group, Norwich Door to Door, Better Together, Voluntary Norfolk, MIND, New Roots and Black History Month. Work had also started on developing a Citizen Participation Strategy.

Ben Spratling, graduate management trainee, gave a demonstration of the dashboard software which could be used to interrogate data. The latest data available was from the 2011 census but would be updated with 2021 data once it was available.

In response to a member's question regarding the pay rates for apprentices within the city council, the head of HR and organisational development replied that the council was a living wage employer and paid significantly more than the apprenticeship rates. Entry level apprentices were paid a minimum of £9.81 per hour and technical level apprentices were paid a variety of rates again at a minimum of £9.81 per hour.

A member asked if the head of HR and organisational development could set out some of the measures being taken to improve the diversity of council employees. The head of HR and organisational development identified some key themes which were around building an inclusive workforce, building an inclusive culture and workforce succession planning to retain talent pools. Service reviews were ongoing which included equality

impact assessments and diversity had increased at both shortlisting and offer stages of recruitment. The council had a duty to report on gender pay gap but also reported on ethnicity pay gap and the head of HR and organisational development confirmed that there was no ethnicity pay gap.

The chair commented on the 79.3% increase in the gender pay gap evident in the wider Norwich economy and asked what the reasons were for this. The graduate management trainee said that this was a national trend but was more pronounced in Norwich. The data was survey data rather than observed statistics with a narrow pool of participants. He identified that the reasons for this could only be speculated upon at this point and the data underlying the figures was not robust. The strategy officer added that research had been funded through the Norwich Good Economy Commission into the economic impacts of Covid-19 on women and the finding would be shared when available.

Members discussed the dashboard software and commented on it being a useful tool. The strategy officer said that it was still in development but would be shared once it was available.

In response to a member's question on the LSOAs, the graduate management trainee said that the finest data available was the LSOA and he was not aware of any more granular data.

A member referred to page 55 of the agenda and said that the City Reach service had been replaced by ad hoc GP services. City Reach was set up for homeless people and people migrating from other countries to be able to access vital services. She asked if there were any policies in place to monitor the new version of these services. The strategy officer said that City Reach was funded by the CCG but the council had the pathways service in place now. She would take the question to the appropriate officer for more information.

A member asked if future reports would give more detail around some of the dashboard figures and the reasons behind them – for example, child poverty was consistently very high. She commented that the scrutiny committee could work with some partner organisations to look at these issues in the round. The strategy officer replied that when developing an evidence base for future strategies around some of these issues, the council would draw on a host of available data sources to understand these complex topics. A partnership approach would be key to this work.

Councillor Waters commented that it was in the remit of the scrutiny committee to invite partners to work on topics and the council had the benefit of a rich partnership culture across the city. The data showed inequalities which the council was working hard to tackle to ensure that Norwich was an inclusive city. The chair added that the scrutiny committee had representation on the Norfolk Heath Overview and Scrutiny Committee and could speak to colleagues at Norfolk County Council where there were issues across the functions of both councils.

A member referred to a report written by Friends of the Earth on access to green space and leisure facilities and asked if there had been any analysis of this issue alongside other forms of inequality. The strategy officer said that she was not aware of any

analysis but it was a report that could form the basis of discussions by the Norwich Climate Commission.

A member commented that there were high percentages of customers that declined to answer questions on protected characteristics when making complaints to the council and said that the data was important for equalities monitoring. The strategy officer replied that the existing complaints procedure did not require that information in order for the complaint to be submitted. Work was being undertaken on bringing customer data together and she would take this feedback to the head of service.

In response to a question around young mother rates in Norwich and what work was being done around this, the strategy officer said that she would speak to colleagues linked with health inequalities and circulate some information.

Officers were thanked for answering a number of questions in advance of the meeting and for their work on the report.

It was **RESOLVED** to:-

- 1) Acknowledge the work that has gone into the production of the dashboard, and welcome its future wider rollout,
- 2) Work with the housing partnerships officer to identify topics for scrutiny work around outreach to those who needed to access health and other services, such as legal services and education services.
- 3) Note the work being undertaken around the complaints process and ask for an update on improvements to data collection around protected characteristics.

(Councillors Maxwell and Button left at this point)

5. Scrutiny committee work programme 2021-22

The chair presented the report. Members had discussed under the previous item, inviting a representative of the LEP and the Norwich Good Economy Commission to its meeting in March 2022 looking at a sustainable and inclusive Norwich economy following Covid-19 and asking that the committee pre-scrutinised both the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and the Citizen Participation Strategy. Councillor Galvin offered to complete TOPIC forms for these items to be considered.

The chair reminded members that there would be an additional meeting on 10 January 2022 to consider the NRL business plan prior to it being considered at the January cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED to:

- 1) Note the scrutiny committee work programme 2021-22; and

- 2) Ask Councillor Galvin to complete TOPIC forms on invitees to the March meeting of the scrutiny committee and the inclusion of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and the Citizen Participation Strategy.

CHAIR



**Scrutiny Committee
Informal online meeting**

16:30 to 18:30

10 January 2022

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Matthew Fulton-McAlister (vice chair)
Everett, Carlo, Driver, Galvin, Giles, Huntley, Osborn, Stutely,
Thomas (Va) and Thomas (Vi)

Apologies: Councillor Manning

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Threescore development

The executive director of city and development services presented the report. The council was dealing with rapidly escalating costs in construction and the principles of the contract had already been agreed. More clarity had been received around the costings and the council was keen to move forward and ensure these costs were managed by entering into the contract promptly following the cabinet meeting on 12 January 2022.

The chair invited questions from members.

A member referred to the statutory considerations at page 13 of the agenda and asked what the criteria were for considering a contractor to be a local company. He also asked what the £1.2m contingency would be used for. The executive director of city and development services said the definition of 'local' was not ringfenced to the city but meant that the contractors would draw their supply chain from the local economy as well as having an apprenticeship scheme. The leader of the council added that 90% of the contractors used by RG Carter on existing developments had been taken from within a 40km radius of Norwich.

With regards to the contingency, the executive director of city and development services said that the level outlined in the report was necessary due to the rapidly changing construction market. The council was looking to negotiate a fixed contract price to minimise the risk of price increases.

A member questioned the reasons for the significant reduction in the number of social dwellings outlined at page 12 of the agenda, with a reduction from 83 to 52. He also asked how the risks were overseen and whether whole life carbon assessments were undertaken for the properties.

The executive director of city and development services explained the history of the development proposals on the site and that the numbers had changed through the design process as set out in the report.

With regards to the risk register, the development contract was between Norwich City Council and RG Carter. This meant that it was an HRA development with properties designed to meet the standards of the HRA. The council was the end client so the council managed the risk.

The managing director of NRL commented that there was an aspiration to understand full lifecycle carbon analysis moving forward. The current development focussed on the building performance of the dwelling, but as other developments were started, the company hoped to take on board the wider lifecycle of the development. The executive director of city and development services confirmed that whole life carbon assessments were outside of the terms of the contract outlined in the report, but there were plans to adopt these for future developments.

A member commented that with the rising costs of building materials, there could be the danger of 'corners being cut' and asked if there were strong quality control measures in place. In addition, she asked if the properties would include solar panels.

The managing director of NRL replied that the strength of using the proposed contractor was the resilient supply chain that a large company has in place but also took into consideration local supply chains. He was responsible for quality control and the work of the building delivery team, which included a contracts manager to review and monitor the contract. The senior development officer (enabling) added that cost of adding solar panel had to be taken into account. Carbon reduction measures were already being included in the build but future schemes would be reviewed on an individual basis and solar panels could be included if appropriate.

(Councillor Matthew Fulton-McAlister joined the meeting at this point)

A member referred to the previous discussion on whole life carbon assessments and asked why these had not been considered for this development. The executive director of city and development services said that the standards of the properties were genuinely exemplary and the Passivhaus elements were better than the vast majority of national builds. The process would be refined with each development undertaken.

RESOLVED to ask cabinet to investigate whether it is feasible to include detailed carbon lifecycle assessments in the design of future building phases.

3. Exclusion of the public

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of item *13 and *4 (below) on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

4. Norwich Regeneration Ltd Business Plan 2022-23 (para 3)

(An exempt minute exists for this item)

Members discussed the Norwich Regeneration Ltd Business Plan 2022-23 and asked questions of officers.

RESOLVED to recommend to cabinet the recommendations outlined in the exempt minute.

CHAIR

**Scrutiny Committee
Informal online meeting**

16:30 to 18:45

20 January 2022

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Matthew Fulton-McAlister (vice chair)
Everett, Carlo, Driver, Galvin, Giles, Huntley, Manning, Osborn,
Stutely, Thomas (Va) and Thomas (Vi)

1. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Corporate Plan 2022-26

The strategy manager presented the report. The current Corporate Plan ran until March 2022 and the new Corporate Plan would run from 2022-2026 to align with the Medium Term Financial Strategy. It was a high level strategic document which was shaped by the 2040 City Vision and the council's response to the pandemic. It showed direction of travel with granular detail in the technical appendix. She highlighted the main change to the document which was the change of corporate priorities.

The draft would be discussed by the scrutiny committee and recommendations considered at cabinet on 9 February before being considered at full council.

The chair invited the leader of the council to comment on the draft report. Councillor Waters said that it was interesting to see how priorities had changed over the years and that this Corporate Plan would see an accumulation of a number of issues with Covid at the forefront and Brexit, climate change and increasing inequality becoming more prevalent. The organisation needed to have the right policies and people to be able to deliver services to the citizens of Norwich and with the new Corporate Plan, those additional priorities were tied in with tight timetables. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were in place to test whether those objectives could be achieved. It was a high level document recognising new priorities in difficult financial circumstances.

The chief executive added that the Corporate Plan was not meant to capture everything that the council did, but alongside the Covid-19 Recovery Plan, it was the main strategic framework for the council. It included a set of key deliverables showing the activity that the council would be focussed on alongside KPIs to measure progress.

A member commented the climate change was a cross cutting issue but she felt that the work of the 2040 vision framed it as a way of life issue. Climate change needed to colour the work of all departments and suggested that the council could create a senior level resilience officer with cross cutting council responsibility to ensure the council was working toward and was supported in achieving net zero targets.

Councillor Waters agreed that this was an important point but the documents which contributed to the 2040 vision such as the details of the Climate Commission and the Environmental Strategy described the cross-cutting activity which was already taking place. He was confident that an environmentally compliant economic model was being worked on by the council with a variety of partners. Scrutiny committee received a report in October 2021 giving an update on the council's environmental work and achievements, across all areas. The chief executive added that that this issue had been addressed through a restructure which brought the environmental function into the corporate strategy, engagement and culture team to give it more prominence.

A member asked which barriers the council was referring to removing under the priority 'a fair city'. The leader of council replied that policies around the living wage, the work of the Good Economy Commission around good employment and ensuring decent quality housing were all strands of work to push forward improvements to people's material situations. The cost of living crisis was not just about energy prices; chronic low pay, insecure employment and cuts to welfare support were all factors.

A member referred to the Community Safety Action Plan which was being developed and asked how it differed from previous work around anti-social behaviour and the impact of drugs. In terms of climate change, there was more work needed to ensure that it was a cross cutting issue as there were still financial issues, such as income from car parks, which conflicted with environmental issues.

The chief executive responded that there were clear tensions between economic drivers and climate change ambitions. The income currently received from car parks could not be covered with funding from elsewhere. He highlighted that the Corporate Plan set out a pathway to transitioning away from reliance on car parks but this needed to be done in a transitional way whilst maximising income from other sources. The council had set out an ambitious response to the Transport for Norwich Strategy which would stand alongside any work being done around car parks.

The executive director of city development services added that public space was referred to in the Corporate Plan and the look and feel of the city was key for economic success. There was work being undertaken on a programme of measures using the Towns Deal and the Transforming Cities Fund. Feedback on projects was received from a variety of sources such as interaction with the BID, public consultation on projects and direct engagement with communities and community groups.

The executive director of community services added that the Corporate Plan was clear in its aims and within the technical appendix on how the council would work with partners and access funding to address issues with drugs and anti-social behaviour.

A member commented that within the foreword, there was a reference to the climate emergency framing all of the work of the council. She felt that the Corporate Plan was

missing an opportunity within its structure to reflect that and asked how the challenges around the climate emergency could be brought to the foreground of the report.

The leader of the council replied that the document described what the council had direct responsibility for which was informed by the aspirations of the people living in the city. All policies within the Corporate Plan had been created with consultations on projects and partnership working. The Corporate Plan was refreshed every year and the priorities reflected changing circumstances so it was not a static document.

The chief executive added that the Corporate Plan set out a wider set of policies with clear ambition around climate change, cutting emissions from the council's own estate and working with the City Vision 2040 group and local businesses to create a climate reduction strategy for the city. Local authorities had shown what could be delivered at a local level and central government needed to put resource into this.

In response to a member's question on funding for retro fitting, the executive director of community services said that she was aware of some good initiatives around the country which focussed on pooling resources and skills to tackle these challenges. The council had a large number of homes to consider and would review the HRA business plan to consider priorities.

Members discussed the Key Performance Indicators and it was suggested that those that are 'roll overs' of existing targets due to upcoming reviews could be indicated as such for clarity. It was also suggested that a KPI for the Councillor enquiry service could be included as it would be straightforward to report on.

The chair referred to the Private Renters Charter and asked why a date of December 2025 was set for such an important document which was at the end of the lifespan of the Corporate Plan. The strategy manager replied that more detail was needed within the wording as it should clarify that there was already a charter in place and the work was to review and update the existing document.

On being put to a vote, a resolution to create a senior level resilience officer with cross cutting council responsibility to ensure the council is working toward and is supported in achieving net zero targets was lost.

On being put to a vote, a resolution to increase the target for the total number of private sector insulation measures completed or facilitated by the council was lost.

RESOLVED to ask cabinet to:

- 1) amend the wording of Aim One to 'listen to communities and use their views in decision making'
- 2) amend the wording of Aim Two to – 'Work with partners to increase sustainable transport and improve air quality'.
- 3) Indicate those KPIs that are 'roll overs' of existing targets due to upcoming reviews for clarity.

- 4) Include previous KPIs in performance documents to understand if the council is achieving its targets.
- 5) Include a KPI linked to the Councillor enquiry service.

(As two hours had passed since the beginning of the meeting, the chair took a vote on continuing the business. With eight members voting against, the meeting ended at 18:45)

3. Work Programme

The chair would circulate on a note on this item to members by email.

CHAIR



Scrutiny Committee

16:30 to 19:00

3 February 2022

Present: Councillors Matthew Fulton-McAlister (vice chair in the chair) Everett, Carlo, Driver, Galvin, Giles, Maxwell (substitute for Councillor Thomas Va Lubbock (substitute for Councillor Wright) Osborn, Sands (M) (substitute for Councillor Thomas Vi) and Sands (S).

Apologies: Councillors Huntley, Manning, Stutely, Thomas (Va), Thomas (Vi) and Wright,

1. Declarations of interest

Councillor Fulton-McAlister declared a conflict of interest in item *6 below – NCSL Business Plan 2022-23 as a member of the NCSL Board and would leave the meeting for the discussion and vote on that item.

Councillors Driver, Harris, Kendrick and Waters declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 3 below, The Council's budget 2022-23 as council tenants.

2. Scrutiny committee work programme 2021-22

The chair introduced the item and highlighted that a scope for the item on for the March meeting of the committee needed scoping.

Members discussed the scope for the March meeting of the scrutiny committee which would focus on 'a sustainable, inclusive Norwich economy following Covid-19'. Members suggested that a presentation on the work of the Good Economy Commission would be useful with questions submitted in advance. The presentation could be linked to the cost of living crisis and how this would affect the city and perhaps any mitigating measures. A member suggested that a discussion on the council tax reduction scheme would be useful as there were indications from central government that this may not be available in future years and this could affect the city's economy.

A member asked whether a public meeting with the task and finish group on fly tipping and communal bins would be going ahead. As Councillor Stutely, chair of the task and finish group, had given apologies for the meeting, the monitoring officer replied

that she would ask him to circulate an update to members on this with information on how to engage.

RESOLVED that the scope for the item on a sustainable, inclusive Norwich economy following Covid-19 would focus on the work of the Good Economy Commission and the effects of the cost of living increases on Norwich citizens (including reference to the council tax reduction scheme).

3. 2022/23 budget

The chair introduced the item and said that he would take questions on each section of the report in turn.

He invited Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources, to present the item. The report would be considered at cabinet on 9 February 2022 before being debated at full council. Producing a balanced budget continued to be a challenge but the report set out how funds would be spent on services for the city. It included £3.2m of savings and additional income with £2.1m being drawn from reserves.

The budget continued to prioritise housing in the city with a five-year programme of investments in council owned homes to include kitchen, bathroom and heating system upgrades and solar panel installations.

The chair invited questions from members of the committee on each section of the budget report.

Local government finance

In response to a member's question, the cabinet member for resources said that the impact of not raising council tax would mean around £1.9m less income in 2022/23 which would equate to a 30% reduction in services. The council's revenue support grant had also fallen from £7.8m to £0.22m which was around a 97% decrease over the last ten years.

A member asked what the process would be for a review of commercial investments as the government guidance meant that no further investments could be made. The executive director of corporate and commercial services replied that an asset management review would be starting which would look at the purpose for holding all assets. The assets management strategy would be considered at cabinet in March with all properties being given a review.

In response to a member's question on the impact of the increase in base interest rates, the executive director of corporate and commercial services said that in terms of Treasury Management, borrowing was at a fixed term rate and could be borrowed in advance of need. Regarding cash holdings, this would have a positive return.

A member asked how much revenue had been lost with the enforced four year rent reduction. The deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing replied that it was difficult to say exactly but it was calculated to be approximately £200m which was a significant hit to the council.

General fund

A member referred to page 37 of the report which outlined payroll inflation estimates and asked what would happen if inflation increased. The executive director of corporate and commercial services replied that the paper was based on estimates and assumptions and if inflation increased, mitigations from across the entire budget would be investigated to support that. There was a general fund contingency and a risk reserve, both of which it would be appropriate to use to fund a pay award.

A member asked whether the increased employee costs of £6m at page 55 of the agenda were a total deficit or if it was being spread over a certain time period. The executive director of corporate and commercial services said that there was no timeframe to recover the deficit but the council had to ensure it was meeting its future liabilities.

A member asked why housing benefit expenditure was reducing so much over time. The executive director of corporate and commercial services said that a written response would be given to the councillor on this as the relevant officer was not present.

Members discussed car parking charges both in parks and in relation to additional income for the council. The head of environment services explained that the larger increase in fees for parking at parks in 2022/23 was due to them initially being introduced in the larger parks and they would continue to expand over the less busy parks which accounted for the drop off in figures. In terms of overall car parking fees dropping off in 2024, he explained that there were a number of factors relating to this – the city was seeing an increase in car parking with people returning to the city centre for work and the increase was anticipated to return to pre-Covid figures.

HRA Business Plan and budget

A member asked how opportunities for replacing kitchens and heating systems would be used to make the housing stock more energy efficient and whether the retrofitting grant money could be used for these. The interim head of asset management replied that within the five year plan, the council was looking at a whole house approach to maximise value for money. Aligned with that would be work around sustainability.

In response to a members question on where net zero plans were reflected within the budget, the deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing said that the issue was taken seriously and an asset review of stock was needed to see if it could be enhanced or if major works were needed. The cabinet member for resources added that the council would continue to press central government to help local governments with funding in this area.

A member referred to the disability adaptation budget and asked how the council would continue to support residents. The deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing replied that demand for the service had risen by 95% which was a positive step. There had been 198 adaptations in the financial year and the budget increases had seen value for money for residents.

(Councillor Everett left the meeting at this point.)

A member asked what action could be taken around void property turnaround times as 44 days seemed high when housing was in demand. The executive director of community services said that the council was aware of the challenge and proposals would be brought to cabinet as part of the improvement process and the transfer of building services to NCSL. This would mean that very clear performance targets could be set. The senior finance business partner confirmed that £6.6m figure relating to voids included £4.2m of repairs to cover the backlog with the remainder covering void managements and the neighbourhood services team running costs.

Capital and commercial investment strategy

A member referred to the consultation on the budget and asked how this was fed into the process. The executive director of corporate and commercial services said that there was public engagement and reporting on the results of the consultation and due to the timing of the results, the next stage was to give consideration on how that information was used for the final documents.

In response to a member's questions, the executive director of development and city services said that the team was moving at pace on the review of assets. The executive director of community services added that the processes for this would be escalated to move forward on the Business Plan review.

The cabinet member for resources highlighted paragraph 4.43 which gave details of the £11.4m Towns Deal funding budgeted to be spent on eight projects which had been agreed by the Towns Deal Board.

Treasury Management Strategy

A member referred to risk 13 in the risk register and asked what the impact on the waste services workforce would be with budget cuts and an increased waste KPI to meet. The head of environment services replied that this was outsourced to Biffa and a change to processes had been agreed which would give them the opportunity to engage with the workforce and manage the transition to increased recycling rate. This would continue to be monitored.

A member commented that investing in renewable energy was allowable under the Public Works Loan Board and asked if there was any progress on addressing this. The cabinet member for resources said that the council had a good track record of action on climate and green issues as a whole and would look into investments which further improved climate change targets. The executive director of corporate and commercial services added that there were no obstacles in working together across the council but the challenge would be to find those projects which were self sustaining. The executive director of development and city services said that the council had invested and delivered on a number of fronts, including drawing down on funding to improve estates and manage carbon footprints.

A recommendation that the Council reviews the potential increase in car use and income generated as recognised in the budget versus the corporate plan ambition to reduce car use, increase sustainable transport use and redevelop its surface car parks was defeated with four voting in favour and six voting against.

A recommendation to ensure resource dedicated to appointing a retrofitting task force to oversee retrofitting work with the aim of helping to mitigate cost of living in the city was defeated with four voting in favour and six against.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- 1) Ensure there is political commitment to investing in renewable or green energy projects.
- 2) Where financially and legally viable, fit the lowest carbon emitting heating systems in council properties.
- 3) Ensure there is budget available to carry out any recommendations of the fly tipping and communal bins task and finish group.

4. Appointment of chair

Having declared a conflict of interest in item *6 below, Councillor Fulton-McAlister (vice chair in the chair) left the meeting at this point.

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Councillor Giles as chair for the remainder of the meeting.

5. Exclusion of the public

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of item *6 (below) on the grounds contained in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

***6. Norwich City Services Ltd Business Plan 2022-23 (para 3)**

(An exempt minute exists for this item)

Members discussed the Norwich City Services Ltd Business Plan 2022-23 and asked questions of officers.

RESOLVED to recommend to cabinet the recommendations outlined in the exempt minute.

CHAIR

Scrutiny Committee

16:30 to 18:00

28 February 2022

Present: Councillors Wright (chair), Fulton-McAlister (M) (vice chair), Button (substitute for Councillor Manning), Carlo, Driver, Galvin, Giles, Maxwell (substitute for Councillor Huntley), Osborn, Peek (substitute for Councillor Thomas (Va)), Stutely and Thomas (Vi)

Apologies: Councillors Everett, Huntley, Manning and Thomas (Va), and, Councillor Packer, cabinet member for health and wellbeing

1. Introduction

The chair explained that this meeting had been convened to consider a call-in of a decision the cabinet had made at its meeting on 9 February 2022 to award a contract for the delivery of tennis centre operations in Norwich.

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. The Award of a Concessionary Contract for the Delivery of Tennis Centre Operations in Norwich

(Councillor Waters, leader of the council, on behalf of Councillor Packer, cabinet member for health and wellbeing, and the head of environment services and the parks and open spaces manager, attended the meeting for this item.)

The chair referred to the report and invited the members who had called in the decision to award a concessionary contract for the delivery of tennis centre operations in Norwich to give a short introduction to the reasons for the call-in.

Councillor Galvin thanked the members for attending the committee meeting convened for this call-in. It was important to ensure that public money was spent well and that the contract was fit for purpose. The report to cabinet on 9 February did not have sufficient information to provide comfort that the contract would be fit for purpose without further information.

The chair referred to the questions that had been submitted to form the call-in (set out in paragraph 4) and suggested that the questions would be taken in sections, followed by discussion and an opportunity for members to ask further questions.

The parks and open spaces manager answered questions 1) to 15) under Contract Management. (The full set of questions and the officer response is attached to these minutes as appendix A.)

In reply to a member's questions, the parks and open spaces manager said that the household rate of £35 per annum would not change in the first year of the contract but going forward there was an opportunity to discuss changes to fees with the provider. He did not anticipate that prices would increase steeply after the first year and prices would not necessarily be the same across the city. The head of legal and procurement commented that potential suppliers would be required to provide pricing structures as part of their business plans for evaluation. The supplier would therefore enter the contract with an expected pricing structure in place.

A member commented on question 12) and, with the help of the chair, asked how in affluent areas, individuals, or groups experiencing deprivation or in receipt of Universal Credit, would be targeted to encourage participation and meet inequality targets. The parks and open spaces manager said that this was a good point. Data on this and protected characteristics would be collated and picked up by the new operator. Baseline data had not been collected in 2012 as the focus had been on increasing participation and providing quality facilities on a sustainable financial basis. This data was not available at the present time. Councillor Waters, the leader, replied that the scheme should be considered in the context of the council's active pursuit of its robust anti-poverty strategy, as demonstrated in the budget for 2022/23, where significant sums had been budgeted to support people in financial difficulties and make facilities available to them.

The parks and open spaces manager confirmed that three suppliers had expressed an interest in tendering for the contract.

A member acknowledged that the court surfaces would be permeable but asked what flood risk assessment had been carried out. The parks and open spaces manager said that this would have been conducted as part of the planning application process.

In reply to a member's question, the parks and open spaces manager confirmed that there was no viable alternative to a concessionary contract to provide the service. There had been two expressions of interest from a community group in relation to the courts at Heigham Park at the time of the planning application for that area. One group was provided with information to submit a proposal but later advised that there was limited support within the group to take it forward because of the amount of work involved. The second interested party submitted a business plan which did not offer a viable proposal, or reflect the council's objectives, for the provision of tennis in the park. It would have been more expensive than the cost of playing on a Norwich Parks Tennis run facility. During the time of considering the proposals, LTA funding programmes had reduced from 50% to 25% and then the schemes ceased altogether. A member commented that the community group's proposed charges were £60 per household per annum, significantly more than the current fee of £35. A member commented that the prices were too high for people on low incomes who were experiencing increased costs to eat and heat their homes and now to play tennis. The leader referred to the current government and said that it was an ambition of the city for its residents to enjoy the best quality of life as possible and to

have access to leisure facilities, as well as having sufficient to eat and good quality shelter.

The parks and open spaces manager answered questions 1) to 10) under Equalities and Customer Service, and then answered additional questions from members of the committee.¹

As a follow up to question 1) from the chair, the parks and open spaces manager said that the new operator would be expected to start collating baseline data within one month from the commencement of the contract from existing members, on a voluntary basis and then collect data from new members. A member said that the lack of baseline data was the crux of the matter. He considered that before any further spending on tennis courts, there needed to be an evaluation of the benefit that investment in tennis had made to citizens of Norwich.

In reply to a member's question about clarification on the free use of courts and equipment, the parks and open spaces manager said that people could use their own equipment, but the council did not want a lack of racquets or balls to be a barrier to playing tennis. Residents could play in their own shoes or trainers. It was not necessary to own tennis shoes. Concessions at the parks could provide the keys and equipment to users of the tennis courts on a similar basis to the table tennis at Eaton Park.

A member referred to the investment of £750k in 2012 and asked what the policy objectives at the time were. The parks and open spaces manager explained the focus had been to address the issues of deteriorating courts, increased revenue costs for maintenance and reduced participation. The grass courts were costly to maintain and could only be used for part of the year, and usage had been reduced. At Heigham Park the number of regular groups using the courts fell from five to one. The first contract to deliver high quality, accessible value for money tennis facilities and services on a financially sustainable basis had been for an initial 5 years and extended annually, as a result of annual challenges in getting the new provision delivered. There had been delays to the construction of the all-weather court facilities and with the completion of the facilities at Heigham Park, the council was now at the point of retendering the contract.

The parks and open spaces manager answered a question on the extra hours that the floodlit all-weather courts provided and said that there were some restrictions on court use due to coaching sessions. Court use had grown from zero hours to around 20,000 hours of tennis. The LTA had set a target of 17,000 hours for the current contract. The new sites and contract could not guarantee that this would be doubled. The council was working with the LTA, looking at potential growth in this sector using its database and information from the National Office of Statistics on the number of people wanting to play tennis.

A member asked how households on universal credit would be able to participate as the Norwich Notes were no longer in use and whether there was free use of the facilities available to people. Also, she said that she considered that the

¹ Note that Norwich Parks Tennis will be promoted on the operator's website and not hosted by the LTA as members were advised at the meeting.

membership of 810 households was too low for the amount of public money that had been spent on improving facilities. A significant number of these households came from outside the city council's boundary. The parks and open spaces manager said that the households from outside the city supported the financial sustainability of the scheme and was not an issue as there were courts available for residents. Consideration could be made to increase the cost to non-city residents, in a similar way that non-city residents paid more for allotments.

In reply to a further question regarding uptake from residents in receipt of universal credit, the parks and open spaces manager said that the council did not yet have the data available but that as part of the transition to the new contract it would be collected. Concessions for people in receipt of universal credit would be considered as part of the discussions with the operator. The scheme needed to be financially sustainable.

A member referred to the previous contract arrangements to replace the grass tennis courts because of maintenance issues and that no data of usage was held. Members needed assurance that the data would be collected. No other groups had been involved. She suggested that there was a user group that could contribute, and that the data was published or available to members. The parks and open spaces manager said that the contract officer would manage the contract and ensure the data collection as part of that process. Norwich Parks Tennis who had the contract since 2012, was part of a model that the LTA ran across the country and was one of the few that operated on this basis and raised an income for its local council.

A member commented that low incomes should not be a barrier to playing tennis and that one of the reasons for the all-weather courts had been to provide tennis facilities at Heigham Park was to provide people in receipt of universal credit with access to facilities, as the cabinet member for social inclusion was on record of saying.

The head of environmental services commented on the equality and inclusion evaluation for contractors (appended to these minutes at appendix A). He said that communications to residents would be agreed by the contractor and the parks and open spaces manager and would include marketing on the website and social media to ensure that it was inclusive and encourage people on low incomes or with protected characteristics. He acknowledged that data had been lacking or not as effective as it could be and that lessons had been learned. The contract that had been drawn up in consultation with the LTA would require data on deprivation and protected characteristics, and clear performance indicators.

The parks and open spaces manager answered questions 1) to 3) under Specific Deliverables and then answered additional questions from members of the committee.

In reply to a member's question, the parks and open spaces manager said that there was no data on "no shows" where a player did not turn up for a booked session. It had not been raised as an issue by the current operator. The member commented that to the operator, a booked tennis court equated to a game of tennis played.

The leader reflected on his personal experiences and said that if a court was booked and not used, it denied others the opportunity to play on that court and suggested that the operator was advised if a group did not turn up to play. The scheme also provided access to tennis coaches to enhance tennis skills. Norwich had the highest number of people in the country wanting to play tennis and the additional capacity would meet this demand. The parks and open spaces manager said that the proportion of the population wishing to take up tennis was supported by the LTA's website. The chair commented that like Parkrun, new provision generated an interest and opportunities which was likely to happen with the new courts.

The parks and open spaces manager clarified that the membership for a household would allow one entry through the access gate for a group, even if that included players from outside the household.

During discussion, a member stressed the importance of ensuring that public money was well spent, particularly for the residents concerned about the changes at Heigham Park. The council had provided facilities in difficult circumstances but without a proper understanding and knowledge of the usage. She was satisfied that this information would be collected going forward and therefore could support the proposal (as set out in the cabinet report).

A member commented on the low level of membership at Harford Park of 24 households compared with 93 at Waterloo Park and asked what benchmark would be taken forward to evaluate this. She also commented on that several household memberships were from households outside the city and asked that there should be a differential membership for them. This would help support city residents on low incomes.

The chair commented on the two options available for the call-in to either support the recommendations of the cabinet report or to refer it back to cabinet. The monitoring officer advised that there was a degree of negotiation on the pricing structure written into the contract and that a differential membership fee for residents outside the city council boundary could be considered as part of that process.

Discussion ensued on the relatively low usage of the all-weather court at Harford Park. The parks and open spaces manager said that this was due in part to the poor quality of the surface and that it had no lighting. The expansion of the tennis court provision across the city was being considered by officers and the LTA, and to put funding in place improve the facilities at Harford Park. A member agreed that investment was needed at this park.

Councillor Giles moved and Councillor Maxwell seconded that that the committee supported the cabinet decision, and it could be implemented.

RESOLVED, with 9 members voting in favour, two members voting against, and one abstention, to support the cabinet decision, which can now be implemented.

APPENDIX

Call in for scrutiny of Item 8 Cabinet Committee Date: 09/02/2022

The award of a concessionary contract for the delivery of tennis centre operations in Norwich

Purpose: To consider delegating authority to award the concessionary contract for the delivery tennis centre operations in Norwich.

Recommendation:

To:

- 1) enter into a concessionary contract for the provision of tennis centre operations in Norwich; and
- 2) delegate the award of the contract to the most economically advantageous supplier to the Executive director of development and city services, in consultation with the portfolio holder for Health and Wellbeing

 The call in is to examine **contract management, equalities and customer service**, and **specific deliverables** to check that the city is delivering its aims in this provision of: people living well and great neighbourhoods, housing and environment corporate priorities.

Ref		CONTRACT MANAGEMENT
1a	What constitutes the management of the operation of the courts?	<p>Customer management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service provider is responsible for the management of court bookings and also the point of contact for customer enquiries and complaints. <p>Preparation for play</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operator will ensure that all hard surfaced sports areas as ready for play at all times. • The operator will ensure that the surface will be free of stones, debris, faeces, glass, leaves and litter. • The operator will be responsible for maintaining posts and nets throughout the year. • The operator will ensure that all posts and nets are inspected for defects and repaired or replaced immediately and so ready for use. • The operator will report any signs or vandalism to Norwich City Council • The operator will be expected to conduct weekly site condition checks of all courts (health and safety, any damage, overall condition) and record on a form and evidence is to be produced at monitoring meetings. If there are any concerns or damage noted during the weekly checks, reported by a member of the public or noticed by the operator, the

		<p>operator must notify the council within 24 hours and ensure that appropriate health and safety measures are carried out.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operator will supply Norwich City Council, upon request, with an electronic copy of all inspection data in a format to be agreed with Norwich City Council <p>Maintenance Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Operator will achieve the standard outlined above by a regular programme of maintenance. • Daily bin emptying. • Professional jet wash and cleaning which includes annual moss and weed treatment will be the operator's responsibility. Evidence is to be produced at relevant monitoring meetings of completion of cleaning and treatment works, evidence such as receipts or invoices will be sufficient. All contractors engaged to provide this service will be required to be approved by the council before commencement of works to ensure that methods of cleaning are in accordance with the warranty information for the surface. • Clearing of leaves / debris off the courts will be the operator's responsibility – for preference and to be kinder to the surface the use of a battery-operated blower is required. Any alternative options will need to be specified and then agreed by the council. • The operator will be liable for repairs to surface or equipment due to misuse. If this is proven to be gross misuse the contract may be cancelled with immediate effect and the council would expect any repairs to be made at the operator's cost
1b	In what increments will the annual income to the council of £32,200 for the site costs be provided (payable annually, monthly)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council will invoice the operator for all charges quarterly in arrears.
1c	What the penalties are around non provision of service or non payment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If issues arise with non-provision of service or non-payment these will be picked up early via contract meetings with the aim of working together on an improvement plan to resolve the problem. If this does not resolve the issue then a last resort would be to end the contract.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options would then be to re-procure, potentially delivering a basic service in-house in the interim, eg members can still join and still book and access courts. • The current review of Environmental services business plans will incorporate this as a specific area of risk.
2a	What controls the council has over the rates charged by the company to the public?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single site membership charges will be fixed at £35 per household for the first year of the contract (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023). Following this, membership charges will be negotiated by the operator and the council. The operator will submit proposed membership pricing as part of their business plan.
2b	What control the council has over the membership system operated by the company?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The membership system used 'ClubSpark' is hosted by the LTA and this links bookings with the automated gates at the sites as well as gathering some performance indicators. • The software currently doesn't gather all the information the council requires for the new contract monitoring. This has been discussed with the regional representative of the LTA and they will be feeding this request into their development team. As with all software supplier updates there are certain conditions that need to be met to warrant the investment. LTA did acknowledge there is a need and that will be fed back. In the interim the contractor will be required to put a system in place, which we will develop with them during mobilisation. • Data and software relating to membership is required to be transferred to the next operator at termination of the contract. • This system also facilitates the pay and play operations. • If someone does not have a smart phone or computer bookings are taken manually over the telephone by the service provider. • The system doesn't record all the criteria that will be required to monitor performance against the council's performance indicators. The service provider will be required to put in place a recording system that will meet the council's data requirements for monitoring performance. This will involve requesting new data from existing members from 1 April 2022 to establish a baseline.
3a	What risk assessment/due diligence has been conducted/be required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An options appraisal (assessing risk) has been conducted to ensure the procurement route is appropriate, this has been signed off by the Executive director of development and city services and Business relationship and procurement manager.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate procurement practice has been followed for this contract, in line with public contract regulations and the council's procurement principles. • This includes that the suppliers have been required to complete the standard procurement questionnaire, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Company disclosures, including details of Persons of Significant control and relevant registrations ▪ Mandatory exclusions and discretionary exclusions ▪ Economic and financial standing ▪ Technical and professional ability including ▪ Examples of other contracts they have undertaken and contact details • Procurement has been planned and carried out to allow for appropriate mobilisation between the current contract and new contract. • Financial forecasting is required as part of the quality evaluation for this procurement, a further Dunn and Bradstreet check is conducted on any supplier to ensure they are of financial standing to carry out the contract
3b	Which break clauses are in the contract?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 year plus 5 years. Standard clauses relating to; failure to provide services, breach of licence, financial performance,
4a	Regarding provision of LTA registered venues to ensure safeguarding obligations are fulfilled – what the assessment process is for safeguarding checks: independent or self-led?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The company has a contractual obligation to ensure that all individuals engaged in the provision of the Regulated Activity are subject to a valid enhanced disclosure check undertaken through the Criminal Records Bureau including a check against the adults' barred list or the children's barred list, as appropriate; and monitor the level and validity of the checks under this clause for each member of staff. • LTA registered venues have comprehensive specific obligations that need to be met. • Compliance with both of the above will be monitored via contract monitoring meetings involving the council, service provider and the regional officer from the LTA.
4b	What will happen if a venue fails to achieve minimum (LTA) standards and loses its registration?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The contract officer would work with the service provider and the LTA to ensure an improvement plan is put in place and delivered.
5	Who checks that the company has ensured facilities and services provided are safe?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The contract officer will monitor this through information provided as part of the contract monitoring process, by a random schedule of visits to

		facilities to assess them and recording their findings. Issues will be raised at the contract monitoring meeting.
6	Who audits the accounts of the company to check it is paying the Living Wage, and how often?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audited year end accounts in relation to the council's tennis centre operations are provided by the operator to the council by July each year from 2023. • The contract officer will require evidence of salaries paid and compliance with the Living Wage as part of the contract monitoring process. Contract management meetings will take place every two months unless there are any concerns arising during the mobilisation phase, in which case they will be monthly until the council is satisfied the service is being delivered to achieve the targets set. • Norwich City Council expect the service provider to manage on an "open book" basis with the council able to review progress on a regular basis as agreed with the successful service provider.
7	What is the term of the contract?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 years plus a possible 5 year extension.
8	How will the council audit the above provision during the contract term (will a service level agreement be entered into)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision has not been included in this years audit plan. There won't be an SLA as there is a contract in place.
9a	Who maintains the facilities and to what standard?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above - Contract management 1a • The council is responsible for the annual maintenance of the gates, lighting columns, and scheduled resurfacing and repainting.
9b	Who deals with ad hoc issues such as vandalism?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service provider will report issues of criminal damage to the police and also the contract officer; and ASB will be reported to the council. • The operator will be liable for repairs to surface or equipment due to misuse. • The council is responsible for the lighting columns, fencing and access gates.
9c	If unforeseen issues or maintenance affects profitability, what process is followed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPT has been set up in a way to minimise the risk of this. • A scheduled programme of annual light and access system maintenance, along with scheduled resurfacing and colouring is in place to minimise the risk of unforeseeable in year issues. • The new surfaces are under warranty and will be maintained in accordance with the conditions of the warranty.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service provider is also carrying out weekly maintenance as specified elsewhere to maintain the quality of the courts. • The issue has not arisen in the previous 10 years. If it does arise it will be on a case-by-case basis regarding the specifics of the incident and also the financial situation at the time.
10	Will the company provide an out of hours service if floodlights are misused or is this the council's responsibility?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. The floodlights are the responsibility of the council and would be covered by the council's standard out of hours operating procedures for all its public assets.
11a	How will the company liaise with local residents and park Friends groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norwich Parks Tennis has an established relationships with the Friends of Eaton Park and utilises notice boards managed by the friends to advertise initiatives. Friends of Waterloo Park are relatively new. Awareness of Norwich Parks Tennis is raised with all residents through Citizen periodically.
11b	Will it be encouraged to form links, if so how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring the benefits of NPT and friends of groups is something we will do throughout the new contract. There are some key areas in the PIs we wish to prioritise for driving improvement in first though.
12a	What are the Council's criteria for selecting a provider? Please supply a copy of the evaluation.	APPENDIX A
12b	How much weight will be given to the need to increase use by people from reducing inequality target areas?	APPENDIX A
13	What lessons from earlier contracts for Norwich Parks Tennis has the Council drawn on in formulating the contract for a new provider?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When NPT started it was a new model. Developed with the LTA and 50% funded by them. It was led by Sports development colleagues but delivered at Eaton Park. The LTA had conditions relating to the acceptance of their funding around player pathways. • There have been considerable changes from the original contract to this one based on lessons learnt. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improved alignment with the council's priorities. ○ Driving income generation through player coaching is self motivated by the service provider, our focus needs to be on the activities outside of that which deliver the council's required outcomes. ○ PIs being driven by the council's needs and not the LTA
14	What arrangements will be put in place if the provider is no longer able to satisfy the contract?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See above Contract management 1c

15	<p>What additional arrangements for monitoring and evaluating performance will be put in place based on experience of Norwich Parks Tennis since 2012?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When NPT started it was a new model. Developed with the LTA and 50% funded by them. It was led by Sports development colleagues but delivered at Eaton Park. The LTA had conditions relating to the acceptance of their funding around player pathways. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased framework of PIs to enable more specific monitoring to improve data held to monitor contract performance, identify issues early and make changes. ○ Improved data to target specific user segments ○ The way in which primary data supporting PIs is provided to enable use, manipulation by the council. ○ A need for data types and form of reporting to be consistent throughout the contract and changes approved by the contract officer. ○ Improved folder structure for the saving and efficient retrieval of data. ○ Contract meeting to have an accountable officer, previously this was not clearly specified. ○ Improved contract meeting structure and Terms of Reference agreed. ○ Ensuring that the service provider provides the data required in accordance with pre-meeting timescales. ○ Improved contract management meetings that drill down on the performance and where required drive change and improved performance.
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EQUALITIES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

1	<p>Explain and provide the baselines that the contract seeks to increase on, and by what factor the increase is expected, in these areas: levels of people’s activity; use by local schools; use by specific age groups (which age groups); use by people from reducing inequality target areas; interest and opportunity for people to take up tennis (how will this be measured); use by people with a disability; use of the facilities by members of underrepresented ethnic groups?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council’s expectation is that the understanding of the level of use by protected groups is improved to provide a baseline and that stretching targets are put in place to increase use. These will be informed using improved membership data, Norwich data and LTA data and agreed with the service provider during the mobilisation period. • Data regarding protected characteristics will be dependent on the data being volunteered by members.
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2	How will equipment be provided to those without the means to purchase racquets, balls and tennis shoes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These sessions are usually provided as free ones by the service provider and racquets and balls are made available. Tennis shoes are not required a pair of training shoes or plimsols are adequate to play. • How people transit from free introductory tennis is something to explore with the next service provider in terms of funding to support it and the use of other park concessions on those sites that have them for the loan of equipment. This does happen for table tennis at Eaton Park already.
3	Which groups have been consulted in the drawing up of these requirements and the contract?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tender process has been informed by the council priorities, procurement procedures, learnings from the previous contract and the development officer from the LTA.
4	How will customer satisfaction be measured?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints and compliments will be monitored monthly. The use of a customer satisfaction survey will be discussed with the provider to identify areas for service improvement. It is currently being considered as something that the council may do as part of its contract monitoring. Exact detail requires working up with the service provider to try and maximise the outcomes from the contact to improve the service.
5	Who arbitrates if a complaint is received by the public regarding the service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints will be initially handled by the service provider. If they are unable to resolve it satisfactorily in the eyes of the complainant, the complainant will be able to escalate to the council's complaints process.
6	Will Norwich Notes be accepted by the company in payment?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This has been discussed previously with the existing provider who was open to accepting them but Norwich notes are no longer active.
7	How has the Council addressed the inbuilt bias of the contract towards not increasing use by people from reducing inequality target areas and impacting on the provider income?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tender quality evaluation criteria scores have been weighted to increase the focus on community engagement and reducing inequality. The provision of player development pathways coaching has not been scored as this is the main income generator for the operator but not a priority in terms of the objectives of Norwich Parks Tennis. Performance criteria in the contract are focussed on the objectives of NPT. Performance against these criteria is a consideration when determining an extension after five years.
8	Will the Council ask the new provider to supply free tennis coaching and floodlighting to people on very low incomes and if so, what will be the minimum number of free sessions per annum required?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a requirement to provide free taster days with coaching support and also free open sessions for court use, at all sites and on a quarterly basis. It is unlikely that these will include floodlit sessions.
9	What is the Council's expectation over the increase in the use of courts by groups with protected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council's expectation is that the understanding of the level of use by protected groups is improved to provide a baseline and that stretching

	characteristics based on its experience and monitoring of Norwich Parks Tennis since 2012?	<p>targets are put in place to increase use. These will be informed using improved membership data, Norwich data and LTA data and agreed with the service provider during the mobilisation period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data regarding protected characteristics will be dependent on the data being volunteered by members.
10a	How many tennis sessions annually does the Council anticipate will be covered by Norwich Notes based on its experience of Norwich Parks Tennis since 2012.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See above - Equalities and customer service 6
10	Will regular free coaching and use of floodlights be offered alongside?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use for a supported get into tennis session would be the preferred route. They will not be floodlit sessions.
SPECIFIC DELIVERABLES		
1a	What kind of services are expected to be provided at the pavilion at Heigham Park?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pavilion will be for use by the service provider.
1b	As it is currently derelict, who will undertake the renovations to make it possible to provide services there?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The loss adjuster has agreed a settlement. The work has been tendered and the contract awarded.
2a	What are the improvements at Harford Park tennis courts and when will they be delivered; how does this link to an increase to £35,900.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New floodlighting, re-fencing, resurfacing and repainting. Funding confirmation has yet to be received. The courts will be charged at their current rate of £900 per annum, until the improved facility is delivered.
2b	'A further £7,456 if office space at Eaton Park is required' – what provision does that refer to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current service provider has an office and storage space in the rotunda. It is an option for the service provider to operate out of the rotunda or not.
3	What is the minimum spec for consumables such as nets and balls, and what other items fall under 'etc' here.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum specifications for consumables have not been specified. Currently members provide their own rackets and tennis balls. For free sessions hosted by the operator the equipment provided will be fit for the sessions being held. It is not in the interest of the operator to provide inferior equipment that makes play difficult and discourages people to take up the sport. Etc covers net ties downs and straps.

1.0 QUALITY EVALUATION CRITERIA (80%)

To enable the council to evaluate the proposed quality of service, operators are required to provide **4** method statements. Using their own style, operators should submit detailed responses for the method statements shown below at **point 9.02**. Operators should make their responses specific to each method statement and its requirements and no generic responses should be submitted.

The evaluation of method statements below will be assessed and scored using the following methodology and marking scheme:

1.	Charge requirements & financial forecasts
	<p>Confirmation of a operator's ability to pay the required charges for this requirement as detailed and financial forecasts.</p> <p>Your answer should include business plan, financial forecasts, membership predictions and evidence of how you have arrived at these figures (market research etc.)</p> <p>SCORE: 20 MARKS</p>
0 Inadequate	No evidence has been provided of the operator's ability to pay required charges; financial forecasts have not been provided.
1 Concerns	Some evidence has been provided of the operator's ability to pay required charges, but detail is lacking and financial forecasts have not been provided.
2 Potential	Evidence has been provided of the operator's ability to pay required charges but not in sufficient detail to assure delivery; financial forecasts have been provided and are realistic.
3 Capable	Full evidence has been provided of the operator's ability to pay required charges and financial forecasts have been provided and are realistic.

2.	Safeguarding children and vulnerable adult's
	<p>Referring to the service specification, please set out how your organisation will deliver this service to meet the safeguarding requirements for adults and children. This should include clear details of the roles and responsibilities of key people/ partners involved in service delivery.</p> <p>SCORE: 20 MARKS</p>

0 Inadequate	Operator has provided inadequate information and no evidence covering the requirements of the LTA and Norwich City Council Safeguarding policy. This indicates that the operator lacks certain requirements in this area to achieve required standard of service delivery.
1 Concerns	Operator has provided some information and evidence covering the requirements of the LTA and Norwich City Council Safeguarding policy. This indicates some concern that the operator may lack certain requirements in this area to achieve required standard of service delivery.
2 Potential	Operator has provided information and evidence covering the requirements of the LTA and Norwich City Council Safeguarding policy. This indicates that the operator has potential in this area to achieve required standard of service delivery.
3 Capable	Operator has provided comprehensive information and strong evidence, covering all the requirements of the LTA and Norwich City Council Safeguarding policy. This indicates that the operator can deliver outcomes to the required standard.
3.	<p>Quality of service and marketing plans</p> <p>Outline proposals of how you will deliver the quality of service, this should include your marketing plan.</p> <p>Please refer to Appendix H for a breakdown of key performance indicators in this area. Your answer should include development and enhancement of service.</p> <p>SCORE: 15 MARKS</p>
0 Inadequate	No programmes and plans provided or very limited plans, indication that the operator lacks quality of service and marketing to achieve the required standard of service delivery.
1 Concerns	Some programmes and plans provided but they are not detailed, indication that the operator may lack quality of service and marketing to achieve the required standard of service delivery.
2 Potential	Programmes and plans provided, information is at a sufficient level to indicate that the operator has the potential quality of service and marketing to achieve the required standard of service delivery
3 Capable	Comprehensive and strong programmes and plans, indicating operator capable of delivering outcomes to required standard.

<p>4.</p>	<p>Community engagement and reducing inequality</p> <p>Please explain how you will engage the local community and reduce inequality in Norwich? This should include participation initiatives to address inequalities specifically in relation to deprivation, ethnicity, gender and age and reference how you will measure success.</p> <p>Please refer to Appendix H for a breakdown of key performance indicators in this area; your answer should include how you plan to capture and report on this data.</p> <p>SCORE: 25 MARKS</p>
<p>0 Inadequate</p>	<p>No or very little examples of how the community would be engaged or inequality reduced. Significant indications that operator lacks certain requirements in this area to achieve the required outcomes / information inadequate.</p>
<p>1 Concerns</p>	<p>Some examples given of how the community would be engaged or inequality reduced, but assumptions have to be made and there are some concerns that operator may lack certain requirements in this area to achieve the required outcomes of service delivery.</p>
<p>2 Potential</p>	<p>Examples of how the community would be engaged and inequality reduced have been given, no assumptions have had to made and each of the indicators on Appendix H covered. Information indicates potential to deliver required outcomes.</p>
<p>3 Capable</p>	<p>Comprehensive and strong information indicating operator capable of delivering outcomes to required standard. Examples of engaging community and reducing inequality given with reference to each indicator on Appendix H given.</p>



Committee Name: Scrutiny
Committee Date: 17/03/2022

Report Title: A sustainable, inclusive Norwich economy following Covid-19

Portfolio: Councillor Waters, Leader of the council

Report from: Executive director of community services

Wards: All Wards

OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

Purpose

For the Scrutiny Committee to evaluate how the Council is supporting a sustainable, inclusive Norwich economy following Covid-19

Recommendation:

To determine any recommendations Scrutiny may wish to make to Cabinet.

Policy Framework

The Council has three corporate priorities, which are:

- People living well
- Great neighborhoods, housing and environments
- Inclusive economy

This report meets the Inclusive economy corporate priority.

This report helps to meet Equality, Diversity and Inclusion adopted policy of the Council.

This report helps to meet Supporting the most vulnerable objective of the COVID-19 Recovery Plan.

Report Details:

Background

In setting its work programme, the Scrutiny Committee agreed to include an item on how the Council was supporting a sustainable, inclusive Norwich economy following Covid-19.

At its meeting on 3 February 2022, members of the Committee requested that the report focused on two areas, the work of the Good Economy Commission and the cost of living crisis (including the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme).

Norwich Good Economy Commission (NGEC):

Scope:

1. The NGEC was founded in 2020 as a two-year project to create a forum for our community to come together and address some of the problems in the city's economy. It aimed to generate a space for sustainable, innovative projects, backed by consistent research and evidence, with a mission to "explore how we can achieve an inclusive and sustainable economy that enriches all of our lives". It ends in June 2022.
2. Partners involved in the Commission are:
 - Norwich City College
 - UEA
 - Norfolk Chamber of Commerce
 - Norwich Business Improvement District
 - Norwich University of the Arts
 - Norwich Opportunity Area
 - New Anglia LEP
 - Norfolk County Council
 - Your Own Place – representative of Social Enterprises
 - Future Projects – representative of voluntary sectors
 - Norfolk Community Foundation
 - Norwich City Council

3. The NGEC has been successful in securing funding for its work:

Norfolk Strategic Fund:	£ 90,000
Innovative Projects Fund (managed by New Anglia LEP)	£ 50,000
UEA	£ 10,000
<u>Norwich City Council</u>	<u>£ 10,000</u>
Total:	£160,000

4. This funding has been used on:

Grants for research and pilot projects:	£ 95,000
Staff costs:	£ 50,000
<u>'Diverse voices' engagement and comms:</u>	<u>£ 15,000</u>
Total:	£160,000

5. In addition, NGECC has secured match-funding to extend some projects under the Digital Inclusion and Skills workstreams (see below).
6. NGECC is a member of the City Vision Partnership, playing a key role in helping shape the city on its journey to achieving the 2040 City Vision. In particular, its work contributes to the Fair City theme, which commits to Norwich being a place where the health, wellbeing and life chances of all our citizens will be improved – where barriers to achievement are removed and a high standard of living will be enjoyed by everyone; and the Dynamic City theme which commits to Norwich being a place where entrepreneurs, social enterprises, national and global companies choose to provide good jobs, prosperity and success by 2040.

Progress to Date:

7. Since its inception, NGECC has held quarterly meetings, at which commissioners receive progress updates from Norwich City Council officers (as the secretariat) and make decisions on next steps.
8. The commission established a number of key principles to guide the development of its approach and assess the projects it developed:
 - **Impact** – was there the opportunity to provide significant benefit to Norwich residents, businesses, or other organisations? Would this impact be targeted at those most excluded from current economic benefits, based on local data and evidence of what works?
 - **Gap** – Was there a clear gap or role that the NGECC could play which would complement or support what was already going on? Could we build on assets within communities and the wider system to join up and add value for the longer term?
 - **Innovation** – Was there scope to innovate and test out new approaches? Could we look differently at issues and take a broad perspective on participation in the economy that values a range of assets and contributions?
 - **Diverse voices** – Was it informed by a range of views or perspectives, including those which are often under-represented? How could we work with a range of communities and perspectives to understand, build on and respond to local strengths and opportunities?
 - **Learning** – Would it provide learning that can inform wider practice or develop our understanding of what makes a good economy? How could we learn from and build on evidence from other initiatives within Norfolk and more widely?
9. Commissioners decided that the work of NGECC should focus on several workstreams, where there was particular interest or opportunity for progress in Norwich. These are:
 - a) **Digital Inclusion** – NGECC worked with partners to identify five challenge areas on digital inclusion in Norwich, recognising that there is already a lot of good work ongoing in the area. We have funded five community projects which are due to finish by end of March 2022. Details of the funded projects are published on the NGECC website:

[Digital Inclusion and Innovation — Norwich Good Economy Commission](#)

All projects applied for funding to offer a solution to one of the following five key challenge areas:

1. How can social housing providers work collaboratively to address digital inclusion?
2. What are the future digital skills? What skills will be essential in the next 5 years? How can we effectively upskill residents?
3. How can we support people who have multiple barriers to going online?
4. What innovative solutions can be found if the private and public sector work together to tackle digital inequality?
5. What new solutions can be found to address the infrastructural issues in accessing online (data, broadband and tech)?

NGEC has also convened a workshop for social housing providers around the theme of digital inclusion, which brought partners together who wouldn't normally share information and learning on the topic. A key theme that emerged from this was the need for better connectivity for people, particularly those in temporary situations or on very low to no income. From this we trialed an Emergency Data Bank in summer to autumn 2021. The findings from this are also available at [Digital Inclusion and Innovation — Norwich Good Economy Commission](#). We have managed to continue this work until end March 2022 through funding from the Household Support Fund.

- b) **Skills** – Commissioners used data and local knowledge to choose a place-based approach to explore the issue of adult community skills in Mile Cross. We worked with local partners active in the area to understand the local needs. From this we created a funding stream and worked with a local partner to provide an information point service. We have funded four community projects which have provided learning opportunities for residents and have been working with the Phoenix Centre as our information point partner (with good support from other local organisations). We have received £25,000 match funding from NCIL to extend the programme into the financial year 2022/23, which will include more information sharing, more activities for residents and some focused work around Good Jobs in the ward (in partnership with UEA). More information can be found here: [Skills — Norwich Good Economy Commission](#)
- c) **Good Jobs** – This workstream has undertaken active research to determine what makes a good experience for frontline workers. Its findings reaffirmed that employee satisfaction and wellbeing are critical considerations in creating high quality jobs. In a good economy, workers feel valued and have access to resources for professional development. Findings have been used to develop accessible and [engaging materials](#) for use with employers and communities with key points summarised in 'the four boosts':
1. Let me connect
 2. Care about me and my life

3. Have my back
4. Make me part of the conversation

Next steps include:

- Mile Cross skills funding from April – Dec 2022 (as mentioned above). Scoping and engagement in Mile Cross on the four boosts. Investigating the means to manage well for performance, wellbeing, recruitment and retention. Further work will be determined by initial community response.
- Working with the Norwich Living Wage Place Action Group on ways to collaborate and raise awareness with Norwich employers to encourage, inspire and support employers in Norwich to offer good jobs and the real Living Wage.

- d) **Anchor Institutions** – This term is used to refer to ‘institutions who have an important presence in place (such as large-scale employers) and are tied to a particular place by their mission, history, physical assets, or local relationships’ ([CLES](#), the national organisation for local economies). Service areas such as Procurement and HR in some NGEN partners have been working on related concepts around social value and apprenticeships for some time. Building on this, NGEN has convened a range of anchor institutions across the city to discuss inclusive economy themes, including providing some external facilitation and training from CLES at a seminar on 2nd March attended by Norfolk & Waveney Clinical Commissioning Group, UEA, Norfolk County Council and Norwich City Council.
- e) **Diverse Voices** – This workstream has engaged with members of our community whose voices are seldom heard in discussions about the Norwich economy. A new experimental board game, ‘The New Horizon Experiment’, was developed by Norwich University of the Arts as a flexible tool to help encourage these conversations. Community groups that have played the game include New Routes, Voluntary Norfolk, Age Concern, Norfolk LGBT Project, Mind the Gap, Bridge Plus, The Red Cross and Emmaus. The game has proven useful in encouraging and supporting residents to express their ideas and feelings on Norwich’s economy, what is important to them and how this links to what already exists in the city. Emerging themes from these sessions include:
- a desire to make communities work,
 - prioritisation of mental health needs,
 - improving independence through skills acquisition and
 - reducing and recycling to protect the environment.

To encourage contribution and involvement from sometimes underrepresented members of the community, an open doors exhibition was held at The Forum from 28th February to 5th March. This showcased a gathering of stories, ideas and artwork from Norwich residents, drawn from the engagement under this workstream, describing life, aspirations, hopes and barriers in Norwich. It also provided interactive opportunities to gather more views. NGEN will reflect the views and ideas shared through this workstream in its final

products.

- f) **Social Enterprises** – NGEC identified the advancement of the Social Enterprise sector as important for Norwich and commissioned Your Own Place to undertake research to better understand the challenges it faces and how to address them. This included a report [mapping social enterprise in Norwich](#). The research and report were used to form a successful [application](#) to Social Enterprise UK, giving Norwich the status of a Social Enterprise Place. To support this work and its overarching aim to “*to create the eco-system in Norwich for a better way of doing business that benefits all*”, an action plan will be taken forward by [FUSE](#), a Norwich Community Interest Company, focusing on the following aims that formed part of the application:
- a. Improve the branding and awareness of social enterprises across sectors and the community.
 - b. Improve the support (and access to support) available to social enterprises.
 - c. Improve the access to the right finance options for social enterprise.
 - d. Improve people's knowledge of social enterprise both as a career start-up option and skills development.
- g) **Research and Seminars** – This workstream is focused on raising awareness and introducing new ideas and concepts to conversations about the local economy. NGEC has awarded five grants of £3,000 each to community groups to research topics relevant to a good economy for Norwich:
- Women's key role in the Norwich economy – past experience and future possibilities.
 - Family carers and the caring economy.
 - Learning from the start-ups – This project is capturing information on the experience of small start-up businesses and the challenges faced by this important and innovative sector.
 - Helping SMEs understand their carbon footprint, accelerating a greener economy in Norwich.
 - Sustainable skills project – This project is identifying the types of disconnect that exist in skills support and the local jobs market. The research activities should provide insight into why some local vacancies are not being filled and the types of support needed to help people into these jobs.

All grant recipients are on track to provide final reports by end-March 2022, to be published on the NGEC website.

In addition, GEC has provided online seminars, including:

- [Green Jobs for Norwich](#) – a participatory event. The purpose of this event was to start a wider conversation about the development of green jobs in Norwich. It was arranged in partnership with the Norwich hub of Green New Deal UK, a campaigning organisation which has recently undertaken research on the potential of green jobs in the UK.

- Anchored in Norwich – the role of big organisations in a good city economy. The purpose of this event was to share how anchor institutions were being used to create social and economic value in localities such as Preston and Wigan, show what work was already being done in this area at Norwich City Council, and gauge interest in establishing or exploring an anchor institutions network across the city. It was arranged by the Norwich Good Economy Commission Norwich, with speakers from the Centre for Local Economic Strategy, Wigan Council and Norwich City Council.
- New opportunities in funding and finance - What is out there and how to get it. This seminar was presented by Graham Philip, Head of Funding at Norfolk County Council. Graham advised of trends he'd noticed in how grants and other funds were being awarded, what funders were looking for in applications and then opened it up to speak to the audience to suggest specific funding opportunities for their projects. Slides used in this presentation have not yet been received but will be published as soon as possible.
- The Circular Economy – Looking at how we can maximise value in the economy by maintaining, reusing, refurbishing and recycling.
- The Gendered Economy – Investigating the economic impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on women.
- What is Progress and how can we measure it? – Hosted by Centre for Thriving Places, focusing on measuring what is important to our economy so that we can strive to achieve the right things.

Next Steps:

10. The commission is now focussed on drawing together its learning in order to develop and publish final products by June 2022, at which point the commission ends.
11. Commissioners will attend a workshop in late March to receive updates from the workstreams and to contribute views on key recommendations and make commitments for the final NGEC report, including ideas for continuing momentum on inclusive economy work beyond the commission's lifetime.
12. In addition, the NGEC Chair, Catherine Waddams, will provide an update to the City Vision Partnership Board in late March, in order to gather additional input to inform the report.
13. The secretariat will draft the final NGEC report and associated communications plans for agreement by commissioners.
14. The final report will include findings from all workstreams and make recommendations for further action. The intention is that the recommendations include recognition of where action is already being taken and possibly new commitments from some NGEC partners. Any remaining research outputs, evidence and case studies that have not yet been published will be added to the NGEC website alongside the final report, to provide a library of useful resources open to all.
15. As noted in the Corporate Plan 2022-26, Norwich City Council will respond to the NGEC report by January 2023.

Cost of living crisis and Council Tax Reduction Scheme:

Background:

16. As set out in the [medium term financial strategy corporate overview](#), pressures around joblessness and reduced incomes in Norwich are compounded by the rise in cost of living. Inflation, largely driven by energy bills and food prices, jumped from 2% to 3.2% between July and August 2021. This came at the same time Government announced it would cut the £20 weekly increase to Universal Credit introduced at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.
17. The cumulative effect of benefit cuts and cost of living rises over the winter and into the spring means single out-of-work adults are set to be worse off by around £24 a week by April 2022, a significant fall of around 14 per cent to an already low income ([Resolution Foundation](#)).

Social inclusion and equality:

18. As set out in the [recent paper for scrutiny committee on social inclusion](#), Norwich City Council is committed to reducing inequality in all its aspects, including financial inequality. We recognise that financial inequality in Norwich is being exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis (see appendixes for links to external sources giving a sense of likely impacts on Norwich residents).
19. Officers are working to join up activity across the council on equality, to achieve more for Norwich residents. This includes recognising that equality goes far wider than the protected characteristics listed in equality legislation and that our work on reducing inequality (including financial inequality) is working towards the same aim. Initial scoping meetings took place in February and we are planning a workshop to agree the ambitions of the equalities work and initial areas of focus in April. The work of the group will be reflected in the council's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and refreshed Reducing Inequality Action Plan, which will be published in September.

Council tax reduction scheme:

20. Since 1 April 2013, the council has operated a council tax reduction scheme (CTRS), which replaced council tax benefit. The CTRS helps people on low incomes and/or certain welfare benefits to pay their council tax bill. This provides support to those under the greatest financial pressure. Pensioners are protected by the government so any changes to CTRS only impacts working age claimants.
21. Having made various changes since 2013, the Council maintains the principle of a full support (100% discount) scheme. After discussions with the cross-party member working group, it was recommended that the council retains a 100% support scheme for the 2022/23 year which was approved at budget council on 22/2/22. [Cabinet report – 09.02.22](#)

Implications

Financial and Resources

There are no proposals in this report that would affect the council's finances or use of resources, as it is an update report for discussion rather than a proposal for decision.

Statutory Considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and Diversity	Creating a fairer and more inclusive economy.
Health, Social and Economic Impact	Creating a fairer and more inclusive economy.
Crime and Disorder	N/A
Children and Adults Safeguarding	N/A
Environmental Impact	NGEC's work has included two seminars on environmental themes: green jobs; and the circular economy. These will be reflected in the commission's final products.

Risk Management

Risk	Consequence	Controls Required
Work on an inclusive economy reduces significantly when NGEC comes to an end in June.	NGEC impact is limited.	Materials will be available on the NGEC website, supported by communications to encourage their use. Discussions with the City Vision Partnership and NGEC commissioners in late March to explore support for ideas to keep the legacy going. Norwich City Council has already committed to respond to the NGEC report by January 2023.

Appendices:

None.

Areas for potential further research and reading

[Resolution Foundation](#)

[Bundle: Cost of living crisis – LGIU](#)

[Cost of living crisis: four in ten Britons expect their finances to get worse in next 12 months | YouGov](#)

['Rising cost of living in the UK'](#)

[Norfolk - Deprivation - District | Norwich | InstantAtlas Reports](#)

[\(norfolkinsight.org.uk\)](#)

[How the City Council is Supporting Residents through uncertain times](#)

[\(norwich.gov.uk\)](#)

[CLES What is an Anchor Institution?](#)

[Mapping social enterprise in Norwich](#)

[Social Enterprise Place application](#)

[The medium term financial strategy corporate overview](#)

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