



NORWICH City Council

Committee name: Cabinet

Committee date: 17/01/2024

Report title: Scrutiny Committee Recommendations

Portfolio: Councillor Kendrick, cabinet member for resources

Report from: Head of legal and procurement

Wards: All wards

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Purpose

To consider the recommendations made by scrutiny committee in relation to a review of the effectiveness of scrutiny committee on 23 November 2023 and on the Equality Information Report 2024 on 7 December 2023.

Recommendation:

To consider whether to adopt all or some of the recommendations from the scrutiny committee.

Policy framework

The council has five corporate priorities, which are:

- People live independently and well in a diverse and safe city.
- Norwich is a sustainable and healthy city.
- Norwich has the infrastructure and housing it needs to be a successful city.
- The city has an inclusive economy in which residents have equal opportunity to flourish.
- Norwich City Council is in good shape to serve the city.

The scrutiny committee is an important part of the democratic process, helping hold the cabinet to account and exploring how services are performing. As such, a well performing scrutiny committee can contribute to all corporate priorities.

Report details

A review of the effectiveness of scrutiny committee

1. Members used the October meeting of the committee to hold an informal session to conduct a review of the effectiveness of scrutiny committee.
2. To start this work, officers designed a survey sent to all councillors which sought to understand members views on a range of questions posed by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS).
3. The session in October considered the following:
 - a) The CfGS design principles and understanding the different views in the room as to how to move forwards
 - b) The outcomes of the survey sent to all councillors
 - c) Establishing priority areas of focus
 - d) Agreeing how to move the work forward
4. A number of key themes emerged from the debate as follows:
 - a) Setting of the work programme
 - b) Training for the committee
 - c) Use of substitutes
 - d) Relationship with cabinet
 - e) Promoting scrutiny
 - f) Resources
5. Officers presented a report to members summarising the workshop and recommendations at the committee meeting on 23 November 2023. Members considered a number of recommendations, and committee agreed several in relation to promoting the work of the committee and improving the topics selected for consideration.
6. One proposal to highlight and where the committee are seeking the support of cabinet is the proposal to adopt a scrutiny-executive protocol. This is recognised good practice and would outline how the relationship between scrutiny and cabinet would work.
7. With cabinet's support it is intended to develop a document for approval by scrutiny and cabinet, which would incorporate a number of the other recommendations made by scrutiny committee including liaison between the chair and group leaders; the attendance of cabinet members at scrutiny and the attendance of scrutiny at cabinet.
8. Cabinet members are requested to support this recommendation.

Equality Information Report 2024

9. Members considered the Equality Information Report (EIR) at the 7 December 2023 meeting of the committee. Councillor Giles, cabinet member for communities and social inclusion attended committee and gave a presentation to members on the EIR and took questions.
10. Members commended work on the report and noted areas of success and considered areas where improvements or greater clarity could be provided and the following recommendations were agreed for cabinet to consider:

Recommendation	Rationale	Implications/ resource requirements
Include information on the performance of the Reducing Inequalities Target Areas (RITAs) against outcomes in the next EIR report;	Unclear as to how success was being measured or evaluated in relation to RITAs.	Officer time to consider and agree relevant method to record performance.
Explore the potential of reporting the volume of customer contact resolved at the first point of contact;	To monitor the effectiveness of the council's ability to resolve customer enquires at first point of contact.	Officer time to consider and implement means to record and officer time to record and collate data.
Investigate a process for evaluating the equality compliance of parks and outdoor spaces;	Concern was raised that measures to prevent the use of pedestrianised areas by motor bikes and mopeds impacted on access for disabled individuals.	It was suggested by Councillor Giles that this could possibly be included when the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy was considered. If it could be included as part of a scheduled review it would reduce the impact on resources. Officer time to review and consider.

Consultation

11. These proposals were considered and agreed by members of the scrutiny committee. There has been no specific consultation on these proposals.

Implications

Financial and resources

12. Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2022-26 and budget.
13. Any additional financial requirements where activities cannot be undertaken within existing resources will need to be subject to further consideration, and approval through a business case. This will need to include an appropriate funding source being identified and/ or being built into future years' budget processes.

Legal

14. The proposals largely request that cabinet consider exploring specific matters further. If these result in formal business cases, the legal implications will require due consideration at that time.

Statutory considerations

Consideration	Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:
Equality and diversity	<p>In relation to a review of the effectiveness of scrutiny committee members considered measures aimed at increasing access to and the diversity of voices at committee.</p> <p>As a local authority, the Council has a statutory requirement to publish an annual Equality Information Report.</p>
Health, social and economic impact	There are positive impacts associated with a number of projects as detailed throughout the EIR.
Crime and disorder	There are positive impacts associated with a number of projects as detailed throughout the EIR.
Children and adults safeguarding	There are positive impacts associated with a number of projects as detailed throughout the EIR.
Environmental impact	There are positive impacts associated with a number of projects as detailed throughout the EIR.

Risk management

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
None at this stage.		

Other options considered

15. There have been no other options considered for this report, as it is a factual report based on the outcome of committee meetings that have already taken place.

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

16. This report will allow cabinet to make a decision on whether or not to take forward some or all of the recommendations.

Background papers:

[Report on the effectiveness of scrutiny committee and minutes of the meeting.](#)

[EIR, presentation and minutes of the meeting.](#)

Appendices: None

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