

LARGER PRINT COPY AVAILABLE PLEASE TELEPHONE: 01493 846325

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 July 2013 – 6.30 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor Stone (in the Chair); Councillors Castle, M Coleman, Fairhead, Field, Hacon, Hanton, Marsden, Shrimplin, J Smith and Wright.

Councillor Peck attended as a substitute for Councillor Collins.

Councillor T Wainwright attended for item 4.

Mr R Hodds (Cabinet Secretary), Mrs M Hartley (Culture, Leisure and Sport Manager), Mr C Rowland (Corporate Policy and Performance Officer), and Mrs K Smith (Senior Member Services Officer).

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 June 2013 were confirmed.

2. SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE – BUS REVIEW

The Committee considered the report from Norfolk County Council detailing a series of improvements to travel information at Market Gates which were being delivered. Additional Bus Information posters had been fitted to the bus stops to improve the quality and quantity of information presented this gave bus routes, local vicinity maps and full details of bus departure times. In addition new bus stop flags had been installed which included the bus service number on the flag offering ease to passengers to locate the correct bus stop.

The Electronic Displays procurement paperwork was being finalised and was being included as part of a larger £0.5m procurement of new signage across Norfolk. These signs would provide live and scheduled bus departure information, as well as other travel information and local information. The software used with the new electronic signage would enable the Council to have control over the screen content so that local events and information could be promoted. This procurement remained on track to be completed during the Autumn with installation prior to Christmas.

It had been agreed with GYB Services that the information Kiosk would receive a regular clean as part of a new contract.

Norfolk County Council had offered funding of £3,700 towards the cost of resolving the pigeon issue and carrying out a deep clean of the area. Erection of appropriate netting and other material that prevents the birds from nesting and causing a nuisance from perching above the public areas of Markets had been purchased and would be installed in the near

future. A deep clean of all the footpaths within Market Gates would be carried out following the installation of the pigeon prevention items. Great Yarmouth Borough Council had also offered funding of £2,800 with the remaining funds being offered by Market Gates Shopping Centre.

Following concern expressed by the Committee of the monitoring of the Clear Channel Contract particularly regarding the cleaning regime of the shelters had resulted in them agreeing to increase the cleaning frequency of the shelters in all the town centre locations.

The Culture, Leisure and Sport Manager reported on the Silent Hobo Hoardings previously located around St Georges Theatre. Seachange Arts had agreed to the temporary loan of the Hoardings and a site visit had been carried out. The Senior Member Services Officer has recently spoken to the Manager of Market Gates Shopping Centre who was in agreement for the Hoardings to be installed in the location but confirmation would be sought from the new owners within the next few days. The Borough Council has sought clarification about insuring the Hoardings and this had been agreed. Seachange Arts would prepare an interpretation board to be installed at the site for visitors. It was pointed out that hoardings were on loan from Seachange Arts for a period of 18 months, however, this would allow the Council time to consider a replacement and the Committee asked that the Community Neighbourhood Manager be approached about a possible community project.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Community Neighbourhood Manager be approached about a possible community project.
- (ii) That the hoardings be installed by the 1 August 2013.
- (iii) That the update report from Norfolk County Council be noted.

3. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Committee considered the reports which were presented to Cabinet and Council and discussed the following questions:-

- (i) Sickness records – have these changed since the restructure?
- (ii) When will all Managers have job descriptions and appropriate pay grades in place, and what is the final cost savings likely to be in comparison with the forecasted savings and does this include any consultancy costs or any other one off costs?
- (iii) Considering the important work needed to be done, should the Leader of the Opposition be a member of the ESG Project Board, if not why not?
- (iv) Under the risk analysis has anything shown up yet, and has the Peer Review had any effect on this?
- (v) Can a breakdown of the actual costs and savings as a result of the changes having taken place be presented?
- (vi) What will be the daily/weekly financial implications of using Senior Officers from other local authorities to cover leave and sickness absence of our own Officers/Managers?
- (vii) What is the policy for recruitment and appointment of the post of Chief Executive Officer, with an explanation of the procedure?
- (viii) What proposals are there for shared services at the moment?

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet Secretary request responses to the questions as detailed in (i) – (viii) above for consideration at future meetings of the Committee.

4. PERFORMANCE MEASURES – 2012/2013

The Committee considered the Council's Performance Report for 2012/2013.

In particular, Members considered the following:-

PM001a-c – The Committee queried the timescales for 'Major' and 'Other' applications. Members also sought clarification over the English average figures being quoted.

PM005b – It was reported that the average time taken to process new claims for Housing and or Council tax benefit was down due to an increase in the workloads due to the current economic situation and the Committee asked what action was being taken to address this.

PM006a – The percentage of Council Tax collection was down by 0.2% and the Committee asked if this was due to staff sickness in this department and what the reduction was in cash terms.

PM007a – The Committee noted that the average void time had increased and it was explained that this was mainly due to the Council leaving a number of one bedroom properties empty in preparation for the new under occupancy legislation introduced from April 2013 and also the way minor repairs are treated in void properties. Instead of getting a new tenant in the property as quick as possible and then do minor repairs when the tenant is in the property, minor repairs are now done during the void period, which has lengthened that period but causes less disruption to the tenant. Major repairs like new kitchens are scheduled in with the tenant and are normally completed within six months of the tenant moving in.

PM010 – Sickness absence had increased from the previous year. The Committee asked how this compared with other authorities. The Corporate Policy & Performance Officer stated that there was no longer national data on this, but Norfolk authorities still share this information, although Councils do measure sickness in different ways. Comparable data for Norfolk authorities will be presented to the next Committee.

5. REVIEW OF WARD COUNCILLORS

The Committee considered the minutes of the meetings of the Ward Members Working Group held on 24 April 2013 and 4 July 2013.

The following actions had been discussed:-

- A Mentoring/Buddying system for new councillors – a named officer who would provide a mentoring/buddying system for both new councillors and existing councillors. Members would receive an induction with regard to community issues.
- Members Handbook – Making use of the Council's design and print services. The named officer who would be able to advise Members on "common" problems.
- Members equipment – that following the issue of i-pad's this issue be reviewed after six months usage.
- Case Work and Engaging with the Community – A Member Services Officer be allocated to help Members with case work. Neighbourhood Managers to provide on the ground support.
- Ward Member Compact – It was reported that much of the compact was already included in the Council's constitution.

RESOLVED:

That further progress reports be presented at future Scrutiny Committee meetings.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

The Cabinet Secretary stated that the Work Programme had been updated following the last meeting and now included dates of meetings that each of the items would be considered.

It was noted that the following items should be considered at the next meeting:-

- Budget Monitoring
- Vauxhall Bridge
- Management Structure
- Senior Management Performance
- St George's Chapel and Pavilion
- Role of Ward Councillors

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be noted.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Thursday, 22 August 2013 at 6.30 pm.

8 CLOSURE OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 7.30 pm.