

# Scrutiny Committee

## Minutes

Thursday, 04 December 2014 at 18:30

Present:

Councillor Plant (in the Chair), Bird, Collins, M Coleman, Jones, Myers, Robinson-Payne, Smith, Sutton, H Wainwright, Weymouth and Wright.

Councillor Connell attended as a substitute for Councillor Grey.

Councillor T Wainwright and Councillor Fox (attended as observers).

Mrs V McNeil (Head of Nplaw), Mr G Mitchell (Interim Chief Executive), Mr Robin Hodds(Cabinet Secretary) and Mrs K Smith (Senior Member Services Officer).

### **1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **2 COMMITTEE FORM OF GOVERNANCE**

The Cabinet Secretary read out the introduction to the report stating that this report would also be considered by Cabinet on 10 December 2014, and to Council on 13 January 2015.

The Head of nplaw explained to the committee the difference between the leader/cabinet system and the committee system. It was reported that following the 2011 mayoral referendum it appeared that there would not be a need to have another referendum in order to introduce the committee system. Counsel's opinion to confirm this was expected shortly.

It was reported that the committee system does not have to be politically balanced on committee's if there was unanimous agreement from all Councillors and did not have to have a Scrutiny Committee. The Council could agree that any decision for funding over £1/2 m would have to go to full Council for decision.

Concern was expressed that there was insufficient information on costs in the report. The Committee were informed that the reason for this was that without an exact structure for a new committee system it was unclear what the increase in the amount of work and meetings would be and therefore could not be costed accurately. Comments were made about the addition of an additional member

services officer along with the costs at a time when the council is trying to make savings. The Head of nplaw re-iterated that the cost would be dependent on the number of committees set up and the frequency of the meetings and that by meeting less frequently this could balance out the costs. It was reported that Council would not be able to ratify decisions that had already been made by a committee through its delegated authority it would only be able to ask a committee to re-look at it's decision. Single Member Cabinet decisions would not be made in the Committee System.

A Member asked how the new committee system was working at Norfolk County Council and did this cost them more or less as the Council can not afford additional costs. A Member replied that they had been told that it had saved them £5,000 but this had not been confirmed.

The Cabinet Secretary reported that under the previous Committee system the Councils Member Services department consisted of five full time and one part time employee, and now the Member Services Department consists of two full time and one part time employees.

Concern was expressed that the current system could be open to manipulation if a cabinet member was persuaded on a decision and that single member decisions were made with no evidence of how that decision was made.

A Member stated that he felt that the committee system devolves decision making to a larger political group of people allowing more opinions and input and cross party debates. Another member stated that the current system could be amended to include more Councillors and involvement.

The Chief Executive Officer reported on the discussion that had taken place prior to the change to the Cabinet form of governance in 1999 when the shortcomings and limitations of the Committee form of governance had been recognised over many years. The discussions about changing an executive form of governance had shown that this system would provide further clarity for the democratic process, would also provide a more efficient decision making process, and was widely promoted by business and partners.

It was pointed out that the Council was looking to reduce its number of officers asked how the Council would cope with running this system.

It was suggested that a Sub Committee of the Scrutiny Committee be created to look at possible structures and costings for a committee system. After clarification of the motion, this motion was lost.

(Councillor Sutton requested that it be recorded that he did not vote in favour of this recommendation).

**RESOLVED:**

That the Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that the current status quo should remain for the Councils term of governance.

The meeting ended at: 20:32

# Scrutiny Committee

## Minutes

Thursday, 18 December 2014 at 18:30

Present:

Councillor Plant (in the Chair), Councillors Collins, Bird, Grey , Jones, Myers, Robinson-Payne, Smith, Sutton, Weymouth and Wright.

Councillor T Wainwright attended for item 7.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Coleman and H Wainwright.

Mrs J Beck ( Director of Customer Services), Mr A Carr (Group Manager - Tourism & Communications), Mr C Rowland (Corporate Policy and Performance Officer), Mrs L Goodman (Events Manager), Mr R Hodds (Cabinet Secretary) and Mrs K Smith (Senior Member Services Officer).

### **1      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest given at the meeting.

### **2      MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 October were confirmed subject to the amendment that Councillor Bird was present at the meeting as a substitute for Councillor Myers.

### **3      Item Title**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2014 were confirmed subject to the amendment that the figure stated as a saving by Norfolk County Council was not £5,000 but should be £65,000 and that Councillor Sutton had stated that a structure could be implemented to allow Council to make decisions.

### **4      PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Corporate Policy and Performance Officer reported that a number of indicators were now completed and these included KP05, KP20, KP08, KP19 and KP16. Also there were some that now fall into the Transformation remit and these included KP01, KP10, KP18, KP15 and KP17.

The Cabinet Secretary reminded the committee that it had been previously agreed that the Chief Executive Officer would report quarterly to Scrutiny on the Transformation Programme.

A member spoke of KP05 and asked if the council was satisfied that its systems are robust enough to cope with the increase in the number of applications. The Director of Customer services stated that she was confident that the Council has processes in place to cope. A member pointed out that there were still 105 cases awaiting a decision and asked how long these would take to finalise, it was reported that these were predominantly renewals.

A Member noted that three Strategic Planners had left and asked if these had been replaced. It was reported that one of the posts had been removed by a restructure and the other two posts were now being advertised but this would not affect the Local Plan deadline.

Clarification was sought on KP11 and why 60% of bottle banks would be reduced. It was reported that there are certain areas where the bins gain credits for the Council as businesses use these but residents are now able to put glass into their wheelie bins so this meant that some of the bottle banks could be removed. The committee then discussed the recycling contamination rate and the cost of this to the council along with recycling on the go.

A member asked what benefit the council had received from Coastshare. The Director of Customer Services stated that Finance and printing were currently involved and that they were looking to include HR.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That Coastshare be included in the Scrutiny Work Programme and be considered at a future meeting.

## **5 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2014-15**

Members were advised that the following items should be included on the agenda on the 22 January 2015 meeting:-

Budget Monitoring

Town Centre update by the Town Centre Manager

Flexible Working Business Case

It was agreed that a Review of GYB Services and Great Yarmouth Market Place would also be considered in the future. Members asked for clarification on the progress of the PIP's. The DCS clarified that this tender for the PIP's will be advertised and let by April 2015 with a commencement date of November 2015 to avoid the issues previously experienced with the contract.

## **6 COUNCIL EVENTS**

The Director of Customer Services presented the report on Council Events including the SWOT analysis and Market Research. She stated that 127 events had been held which shows a steady growth. Clarification was sought on the amount spent on weddings in May and it was reported that the weddings were held during the day

when the building was already open and staff were at work so there were no other costs. It was confirmed that there had been an increase in the number of weddings booked. A Member asked for clarification on the Charity's rate if this was the same as a not for profit rate. It was pointed out that if events were being run as a business the Council needed to be clear about the income that they wanted to achieve. The Director of Customer Services stated that the increased salary costs related to Job Evaluation changes which is not specific to events. The events profit ratio is currently being looked at.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted.
- (ii) That Council Events be reviewed again by Scrutiny in 12 months time.

## **7 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC**

The following paragraph was moved for pages 72-75 of the report:-

"That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12(A) of the said Act and contains details of confidential financial matters."

## **8 COUNCIL EVENTS**

The meeting ended at: 19:57