SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on 28 June 2017 at 9.30am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: T Lewis (Chairman for the meeting), B Bernard, G Minshull, T Palmer, R Savage and J Wilby

Apologies: Councillors B Duffin, D Fulcher and C Gould

Substitute Member: Councillors: L Dale (for D Fulcher) and D Goldson (for C Gould)

Cabinet Members in Attendance: Councillors: Y Bendle and K Mason Billig

Other Members in Attendance: N Legg

Officers in Attendance: The Director of Growth and Localism (T Horspole), the Commercialisation Director (D Fergus), the Head of Environmental Services (B Wade) the Senior Governance Officer (E Goddard) and the Waste and Environment Strategy Officer (J Webb)

1203 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 25 May 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
Members referred to the report of Cllr N Legg, which provided members with an update regarding the work of the Norfolk Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (NHOSC), over the last six months.

Cllr Legg presented his report, providing more detail on each of the topics outlined in his report.

Referring to Community Pharmacy Changes, which involved the reduction in government subsidy for some of the smaller pharmacies, Cllr Legg explained that there had been concerns that this would lead to closures across the county. However, he believed that this had not been the case, and he felt the impact on health care to be minimal for South Norfolk. He confirmed that this was a national issue, and was not only confined to Norfolk.

Members noted that the Norfolk and Waveney Sustainability and Transformation Plan was an ongoing item regarding plans to transfer funding from current providers, in to community projects, with an aim of reducing the demand on hospitals. This was a gradual process, and it was noted that any meaningful effects might not be realised short term.

Turning to Continuing Healthcare Provision in the Community, Cllr Legg explained that the NHOSC had examined the effects of a new policy introduced by the Clinical Commissioning Groups, regarding the delivery of NHS Continuing Health Care. This involved the support received when patients left hospital, for example through care homes or care in the community. Members noted that Health Watch Norfolk had carried out an independent evaluation of complaints and feedback since the adoption of the new arrangements and this had outlined disparities in some areas.

Cllr Legg explained that the NHOSC had also received a report from IC24 regarding the process with the NHS 111 and GP Out of Hours Service. He was pleased to advise members that these services had improved considerably, since previous discussions which had highlighted a number of shortcomings.

Members also noted that the NHOSC had considered Children’s Mental Health Services and that a report concerning Waiting Times for Children’s Mental Health Services, would be considered at the 20 July meeting of the Committee. Cllr Legg was concerned that there was limited mental health support for children in Norfolk, explaining that more statistics were needed to assess the extent of the problem. He explained that the needs of some children were highly specialised and that it would be unrealistic to expect Norfolk to provide all the services needed. The current provider of these services was the Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust, but even this did not cover an area big enough to justify the provision of highly specialised services.
General discussion followed on how the Council could support the work of the NHOSC, and Cllr Legg reminded the Committee of the Council’s responsibility to promote good health.

Cllr Y Bendle, the Cabinet portfolio holder for health, explained that the Council did not have the expertise to directly deal with some issues, such as children’s mental health, however the Early Help approach did help to identify health care issues. The Council also supported various voluntary organisations, that could provide more specialist help. Cllr Bendle also referred to the Council’s role on the Health and Wellbeing Board, which assessed the current and future health and wellbeing of residents. She also gave mention to the Council’s involvement with an out of hospital scheme, whereby the Council would be advised of potential applicants for Disabled Facilities Grants. Members were also reminded of the work currently being rolled out to introduce Social Prescribing, through the Council’s Community Connectors. Cllr Bendle acknowledged that it was difficult to work closely with doctors and hospitals, but felt that there had been a definite shift towards a more joined up approach, reminding members that all services had to work within financial restraints.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Legg for his update, suggesting that the Committee should continue to look for areas where it could make a positive impact on any of the points raised.

1205 WASTE AND RECYCLING COLLECTION SERVICE

The Head of Environmental Services reminded members of the background to the report, explaining that it sought to assess whether the remodelling of the Council’s Recycling and Collection Service had realised its objectives and achieved the financial savings anticipated. The report also examined recycling contamination and recycling targets, along with details of marketing campaigns.

The Head of Environmental Services outlined the key issues relating to the remodelling of the collection service, explaining that the pattern of work had completely changed, with four-day week collections and a single point of rubbish transfer at Costessey. As part of the remodelling, 84% of properties had received a new collection day, which had inevitably led to a number of missed bins. However, the service had since settled, and the number of missed bins had significantly reduced to a tiny fraction of the total number of bins emptied each week.

Members noted that the new rounds had been designed to absorb growth, together with that of commercial waste customers, without the need for more resources, and this had already been the case in the north of the District, where approximately 1000 properties had been added over the last year. Budget savings had been realised, with the overall net budget for the domestic waste
collection service decreasing in 2017/18 (compared to 15/16), despite an increase in inflation and an increase in MRF gate fees and the cost of contamination. The Committee also noted that the changes had reduced the bank holiday disruption, thus leading to savings in overtime costs.

Cllr K Mason Billig, the Cabinet portfolio holder for recycling, commended the Council’s staff on what had been a fantastic effort to ensure a smooth and efficient changeover. The Commercial Director stressed that this was a continual improvement drive, with the service having the capacity to deal with future changes as they occurred.

In response to queries, the Head of Environmental Services confirmed that space was still an issue at Ketteringham Depot, and that he continued to work closely with the Highways Agency and nearby landowners, to seek to provide more space for the fleet. Reference was also made to the recent waste disposal lorry fire on the A47, and officers explained that the service had coped well with a temporary loss of a vehicle. With regard to the brown bin collection service, members were informed that a new contract for disposal would soon be going out to tender, with an outcome expected in the Autumn. This service continued to grow and a decision on whether there was a need to remodel this service might be required in future.

Turning to contamination, members were referred to the Contamination Strategy and Action plan (Appendices 1 and 2), which detailed various incentives and campaigns to reduce contamination, both locally and across the whole of Norfolk. Members noted that there was an aim to reduce contamination rates to 8% (currently there was an average of 10.2% contamination rate in South Norfolk). The Head of Environmental Services explained that contamination rates had increased along with the range of materials accepted, but added that the regime for sampling had also become stricter.

The Committee agreed that as more materials had been added, some residents had become more confused over what could and what could not be placed in the green bin. Members agreed that education was key and that there was a requirement for clear and simple messaging for residents. During debate, some members supported the production of simple stickers for either the outside or inside of the bin, with others preferring an expanded list in leaflet form. It was generally accepted that different forms of marketing would suit different people.

The Waste and Environment Strategy Officer advised the meeting that those areas where there was a 12% or more contamination level had been targeted, by way of knocking on doors, providing more information on specific materials and answering queries. This work did produce positive results, however it was noted that problem areas tended to be in more transient populations, where residents were likely to move on regularly, and new tenants move in.

In response to a query regarding mini recycling centres, the Head of Environmental Services explained that there were no plans to cease their use and reminded members that they accepted a wider range of materials, such as cooking oil. A number of parish
councils and community groups also benefited from these sites. He reminded members that they should report any abuse of the recycling bank areas, or overflowing recycling banks, to the Council, in addition to fly tipping in general.

With regard to recycling performance, members’ attention was drawn to the comparative data at paragraph 3.3, noting that South Norfolk was top in Norfolk for dry recycling and joint second when combined with the composting of green waste. To increase the recycling rate further, members noted that more materials, such as food, would need to be recycled, and this could only be achieved with additional costs to the Council.

During discussion, the Head of Environmental Services explained that considerable work took place behind the scenes to avoid supermarket waste, with much of any excess food going to food banks. Campaigns still sought to reduce packaging in all industries and he drew attention to a grant of £50,000, awarded to the Norfolk Waste Partnership from Sainsburys supermarket, to actively support waste prevention. Members discussed similar successful promotions, such as the “Love Food, Hate Waste” website, which had been an excellently branded campaign.

Members in general felt enthused by the progress that had been made and supported the continued efforts for improving performance and the Council’s strategies in tackling contamination.

It was

RESOLVED: To note the contents of the report.

1206 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME, TRACKER AND CABINET CORE AGENDA

The Committee noted the Work Programme, Tracker and Cabinet Core Agenda.

It was noted that a review of the Member Grants would be considered at the 15 November 2017 meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, and would be added to the work programme.

Cllr G Minshull suggested that a review of the Armed Forces Covenant could be considered at a future meeting of the Committee.

Members noted that the meeting scheduled for August would only take place in the event of a call in.
(The meeting concluded at 11:25 am)

Chairman