SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of South Norfolk District Council held at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton on 22 January 2014 at 9.30 am.

Committee Members Present: Councillors M Dewsbury (Chairman), V Bell, L Hornby, T Lewis, B McClenning, A Pond, S Thomson, K Weeks and J Wilby

Apologies: Councillor T Blowfield

Cabinet Members in Attendance: Councillor D Bills

Non-appointed: Councillor M Edney

Officers in Attendance: The Deputy Chief Executive (A Radford), the Director of Growth and Localism (T Horspole), the Scrutiny Officer (E Nangle), the Head of Business Improvement (P Kearsey), the CNC Business Support Manager (C Smith), the Communities Manager (I Lambert), the Communities Officer – People (O Hill), and the Funding Manager (N Cunningham)

1095 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following members declared an interest in the matters listed below. Unless indicated otherwise, they remained in the meeting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Councillor</th>
<th>Minute</th>
<th>Declaration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M Dewsbury</td>
<td>1099</td>
<td>Norfolk County Council representative to Norfolk Fringe</td>
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<td>L Hornby</td>
<td>1099</td>
<td>Member of Waveney Valley CAB</td>
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<td>B McClenning</td>
<td>1099</td>
<td>Patron of Wymondham Music Festival</td>
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<td>S Thomson</td>
<td>1099</td>
<td>SNC representative to Whitlingham Charitable Trust</td>
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1096 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 18 December 2013 were agreed as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.
CNC BUILDING CONTROL UPDATE

The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the report which gave members an evaluation of the transition from the date of the transfer of CNC Building Control to SNC to the present time. Members were informed that the integration of CNC into SNC had been extremely effective and that staff had responded positively. Following the immediate transfer the focus had been on enhancing the way members of the team worked, introducing one IT platform across the business and provision of mobile capability to increase effectiveness further.

The Committee was also advised that the Council was actively engaged in talks with a number of other local authorities who were interested in joining CNC. Members were informed about plans for the future and opportunities to expand the service and to establish a hub for a regional Building Control model.

The Chairman congratulated officers on the smooth transition of the service.

Responding to a question from Cllr T Lewis, the Head of Business Improvement advised members of the position regarding the new technology that had been introduced to reduce the need for paper files in many cases. The Kings Lynn office was still routinely using a paper system but officers were looking into a way of scanning all documents and negotiations were underway with the corporate scanning team there to enable electronic working in the near future.

The Business Support Manager confirmed that all old paper files were stored by Anglian Archives in Norwich, and that they needed to be kept for the foreseeable future. When old files were needed they were retrieved from archives and scanned in at that stage so that a new electronic file was created.

Officers confirmed that paper files, plans and documents were still needed for large developments, but that the move to an electronic and mobile platform would enable officers to access relevant information on the move without the need to come into the office so often, enabling a more efficient and effective service. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that this way of working was being trialled by the CNC team but would in the future be rolled out to other departments within the Council.

The Head of Business Improvement confirmed that through the lean review of CNC the balance of work, costs and charges would all be examined to ensure the credibility of the service.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised members that financial governance and strategic issues were dealt with through the CNC Board which met quarterly, and that, at officer level, he met regularly with his counterparts from the other partners to discuss operational and financial matters as well as performance statistics.

RESOLVED

1. To endorse the report

2. To review progress of the expansion of the business and the potential Building Control regional hub at a future meeting of this Committee
REVIEW OF VOLUNTEERING

The Communities Officer – People presented the report, which gave members an overview of the work and achievements to date since the appointment of the Community Volunteer Coordinator (CVC) and the current position of volunteering opportunities in South Norfolk.

Referring to the table at 2.9 in which the numbers of volunteers and groups were sorted by Neighbourhood Area, Cllr Bell queried whether this was the only measure of the relevant numbers. The Communities Officer confirmed that the CVC was working with the Business Improvement Team to devise a way of more accurately recording the number of volunteers in the District. He stressed the importance of recording the outcomes achieved as well as the numbers volunteering.

The Chairman suggested that parish councils were often aware of those volunteers within their own communities and could compete against one another to establish which parish had the highest amount of volunteering. Members were reminded about the Community Awards which was a way that local people could put forward those volunteers in their community who deserved recognition for their work.

Members discussed some of the volunteering issues within their own wards and the difficulties that were sometimes encountered by volunteers concerning the duplication of administration and bureaucracy. In particular Cllr T Lewis was concerned that volunteers were often asked to complete forms for CRB and other checks several times - once for each different organisation they worked for, and wondered whether it may be possible to introduce (or lobby for) a ‘passport’ type scheme. The Chairman however had experience of volunteers being reluctant to take on certain volunteering tasks because of concerns about health and safety and/or a lack of checks being carried out. Cllr J Wilby expressed concern that volunteers should not be overburdened by bureaucracy as it may dissuade them from offering their services.

The Communities Officer agreed that it was important to ensure that those volunteering did not lose interest as a result of the administration required of them. These issues and challenges were being uncovered by the CVC and officers were looking at various models to establish where improvements could be made.

Cllr McClenning emphasised the valuable role being carried out by the CVC and encouraged members to engage with communities to find out more about volunteering in their own wards. The Communities Officer asked members to advise the Communities Team when they saw a need for volunteering services in the District, and to make officers aware of the names of any community champions.

Cllr A Pond congratulated officers on the work they were doing to improve the coordination of volunteering in the District and gave the example of Wacton Village Hall as a success story.

RESOLVED

1. To endorse achievements to date and the contents of the report.

2. To investigate whether CRB and other checks could be co-ordinated and dealt with centrally to enable a passport style arrangement and lobby for change if appropriate.
The Communities Manager introduced the report, confirming that its purpose was to present a new Protocol for operational use by officers when establishing or reviewing funding arrangements with voluntary/third sector organisations. This would allow the Council to apply a consistent approach with regard to service level agreements (SLAs) and funding arrangements (FAs).

Cllr K Weeks welcomed the approach and was pleased that existing SLAs would be reviewed using the Protocol.

Members discussed some of the existing SLA arrangements which would be reviewed and were reminded by the Director of Growth and Localism that whilst examining existing and future arrangements, the Council would look closely at each SLA, assessing value for money and ensuring clarity of the desired outcome and delivery options. This would ensure that the service received by the Council was focussed on outcomes and not funding the organisations’ overheads.

Members discussed the terminology used in the report and it was suggested that the term SLA should be replaced with service delivery contract, although members came to the conclusion that the terminology should be left unaltered.

The Communities Manager advised the Committee that a review of existing funding arrangements had been undertaken by budget managers in consultation with the organisations involved and this had led to officers being in a position to determine whether activity being funded should be identified in the draft directorate plans. The Scrutiny Committee had examined the draft directorate plans in detail and once agreed, it was the role of officers to monitor the SLAs, ensuring progress and value for money. The results of this monitoring would be reported to members. Members were reminded that a register of SLAs was available to view on the Council’s website, and that members could choose to scrutinise individual providers if there were any specific concerns that remained unaddressed. The Scrutiny Officer confirmed that concerns about individual SLA providers would be investigated by the Communities Manager and Funding Officer in the first instance, but could be taken to Scrutiny Committee for review on an exceptions only basis.

Cllr Hornby was concerned that the branch names of the Citizens Advice Bureaux as referred to in the report were no longer relevant and suggested that the correct names be substituted.

The Committee discussed the issue of member involvement in the monitoring and reviewing of SLAs with Cllr B McClenning suggesting that members should generally be more involved. It was pointed out to the Committee that the Protocol included plans to fully engage members in the process by being involved in the development of the Council’s Directorate Plans; involvement in the performance management of the SLAs through Scrutiny Committee; and further reviews through relevant Committees if significant performance issues arise. Cllr S Thomson further suggested that ward members should be involved where there is a concern with the performance of a particular SLA.

The Chairman stressed the importance of the provision of advice and encouragement to local groups and organisations to enable them to become more self-sufficient rather than relying on support and regular funding from sources such as the Council.
RESOLVED to recommend to Cabinet that:

1. Service Level Agreements are clearly identified and detailed within the Directorate Plans to enable members to ascertain delivery of key outcomes, possibly by way of a separate table;
2. Organisations subject to SLAs are encouraged and assisted to become self-sufficient in the long-term;
3. Scrutiny Committee is advised of any performance issues relating to SLAs at the earliest opportunity, in line with intervention levels set;
4. A note be added to Appendix 4 (List of SNC’s ‘in scope’ funding arrangements used to inform this review) that outlines the amalgamation of a number of the CABx; and
5. Local members are advised of SLAs in their Ward, in line with the local member protocol.

1100 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME, RECOMMENDATIONS TRACKER AND THE CABINET CORE AGENDA

Members suggested that a report on ‘Job Clubs’ be brought to the 9 April meeting of the Committee.

The Work Programme and Recommendations Tracker were noted.

(The meeting concluded at 11.35 am)

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Chairman