

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: 11 January 2016

Venue: East Northamptonshire House, Cedar Drive, Thrapston

Time: 7.30 pm

Present: Councillors:- Jake Vowles (Chairman)
David Jenney (Vice-Chairman)
Rosalie Beattie Dorothy Maxwell
John Farrar Janet Pinnock
Helen Howell Valerie Raven-Hill
Sylvia Hughes Geoff Shacklock

284. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Paul Bland, Head of Planning Services, to his first meeting of the Committee.

285. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on 11 November 2015 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

286. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

287. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

288. QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.3

There were no questions submitted under Council Procedure Rule 10.3.

289. UPDATE ON CALL-IN OF POLICY DECISIONS

The Committee updated on the activities of the Council's policy committees and sub-committees and decisions taken since the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee. No decisions made by the Finance Sub-Committee, Personnel Sub-Committee, Welfare Reform Sub-Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee notified by the date of the meeting had been required to be called in.

The Planning Policy Committee was waiting for the Inspectors Report on the Joint Core Strategy to be received, which was expected in March.

RESOLVED:

That the update on the call-in of policy decisions be noted.

290. PERFORMANCE REPORT – QUARTER TWO 2015/16

The Corporate Support Manager presented a report detailing the performance of the Council in respect of agreed indicators and other statistics for the period July to September 2015.

The Committee were advised that the council's partners had been successful in being awarded £200K in development funding and £2.5m in project funding for the Nenescape Landscape Partnership to deliver works and activities along the Nene Valley. The Committee congratulated the Bid Team in obtaining the funding.

The Committee considered the indicator on applications called in to committee, which would have been delegated to officers. The target had been amended to 20% from 10% but was still not being met. It was noted that the government was trying to encourage quick decision making in the planning process but it was important that the right balance was found.

Members considered the detailed measures in respect of the Waste Team and any impact the vehicle fire in July 2015 may have had on performance. The Head of Environmental Services confirmed that following the fire, waste had still been collected and for service users it had been a seamless process. However the vehicles which had been destroyed had in-cab systems which were used for recording information such as bins which had not been put out for collection which may have resulted in inflated missed bin statistics as non presentation could not be verified as previously. It was noted that the Council was currently looking at future options for vehicles as part of the procurement for the next waste contract.

The Committee also noted the achievements of the various service areas of the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

291. SERVICE PLAN REVIEW – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

The Head of Environmental Services presented details of the activities within the Environmental Services Service Plan. Environmental Services provided a diverse range of services which all Members engaged with.

The vital support provided by Disabled Facilities Grants was acknowledged. This was a budget which was always spent and demand could not always be met. Members acknowledged the key role environmental services played in the health and wellbeing of residents and it was important that East Northamptonshire's voice was heard at a county level.

RESOLVED:

That the Head of Environmental Services be thanked for the presentation and the content of the service plan be noted.

292. PUBLIC TRANSPORT SCRUTINY GROUP – INTERIM REPORT

The Executive Director presented the interim report on the review of public transport being undertaken by the Public Transport Scrutiny Group.

The group had met on a number of occasions and had reached a number of interim conclusions around access to medical facilities, CallConnect and Serve.

The group now wished to look at a number of other areas including undertaking a survey of larger employers in the District to establish whether they were experiencing recruitment difficulties due to travel issues, whether there would be any interest in a car sharing scheme and opportunities to better utilise any buses or vehicles they operated for other users. The group would also look at the possible use of technologies such as Apps to establish car sharing schemes.

Members raised the issue of how ENC compared to the other districts in distributing voluntary sector grants and how much of that went into transport schemes. It may be necessary to review how grants were spent to see if they could be used to support transport in the District. It was agreed to bring back a report in June.

RESOLVED:

That the Public Transport Scrutiny Group's interim report be noted.

To request the County Council to give ENC prior notice should the proposed reduction to the bus subsidies budget impact on East Northamptonshire, principally by affecting the subsidies provided to CallConnect, in order that representations can be made if necessary.

293. PLANNING ENFORCEMENT SCRUTINY GROUP – TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Executive Director presented the draft Terms of Reference for the review of planning enforcement for comment. Having drafted terms of reference for the review, it was necessary for the Committee to give approval in order for work to continue.

The aim of the review was to make the enforcement process better for all including residents, ward Members and developers. Members were asked to consider any sites they felt would be useful to review to develop understanding for incorporation into the terms of reference.

RESOLVED:

That the Terms of Reference for the Planning Enforcement Scrutiny Group, as attached at Appendix 1, be approved.

Chairman

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
REVIEW GROUP**

Subject	Planning Enforcement Activity
Members of the Review Group	Cllrs David Jenney, V Raven Hill and D Maxwell
Lead Officer	Paul Bland, Head of Planning Services
Other Officers supporting the Review	Sharn Matthews, Executive Director Democratic Services Officer - to be confirmed
Purpose and Objectives of Review	<p>To review in a holistic manner the enforcement activity undertaken by this council in relation to the following activities:</p> <p>Implementation of plans and conditions relating to approved planning permissions (including building control regulations and listed building consent)</p> <p>Other works undertaken which breach planning regulations</p> <p>The review will explore:</p> <p>the volume and nature of enforcement activity undertaken by the council and</p> <p>the range and constraints on actions available to the council</p> <p>the balance between efficient development management processes, business friendly approaches and formal enforcement activity</p> <p>the effectiveness of current enforcement policies and consistency of application</p> <p>Where possible comparison will be made with activities/resources at other councils.</p> <p>The outcome of the review will be a report to Scrutiny Committee outlining any proposals for improvement to enforcement processes in order to meet the National Planning Practice Guideline for effective enforcement i.e.</p> <p>tackling breaches of planning control that would otherwise have an unacceptable impact on the amenity of the area</p> <p>maintaining the integrity of the decision-making process</p> <p>help ensure that public acceptance of the decision-making process.</p>
Council Officers/External	Planning Development Manager

Organisations/Partners / Stakeholders to be involved in the Review	Building Control Manager Sample Town and Parish Councils – to include Sudborough and Collyweston
Resources required/Approach to be taken	TBC – is likely to include Planning Admin/Technician (for volumetric data analysis) The Review Group will consider a variety of information sources: Volumetric data on volume and type of enforcement activity over the past 3 years Detailed case study of the following sites: Keats Way, Rushden Rushden Hospital, Wymington Rd Collyweston Slates Drift The Sidings, Thrapston Sovereign Grange, Kings Cliffe Menage, Sudborough LGO Enforcement Complaint Comparison of approaches and resources with at least one other council
Activity	Completion date
Appoint Lead Officer	11/1/16
Agree Terms of Reference and scope of review	11/1/16
Agreed dates for provision of update reports (where required)	14/3/16
Identify and contact participants to contribute to the review	30/1/16
Identify documentary and other evidence to input into the review	28/2/16
Complete information gathering	31/3/16 – it is anticipated that monthly meetings of the review group will be required
Lead Officer to prepare draft report for consideration by the Group	30/4/16
Final report submitted to the Scrutiny Committee	30/6/16

Guidance Note for Participants

To make the review as useful as possible, the Group will gather together information and examples to help them consider a variety of issues. These might include how and why the Council or other body does things, how well they are done and whether there is room for improvement.

To help the Group do this, council officers, individuals and representatives from relevant organisations will be asked to participate in the process. By participating in this process there is an opportunity to discuss issues in detail, which should contribute towards a successful outcome.

What is involved?

To make the process a success we want to make sure that Participants feel able to attend and take part. To this end we will ensure that any meetings held with participants will –

be as informal as possible.

always seek to be constructive and not judgmental.

always treat people with respect and listen to the things they wish to say.

How the process will be carried out

Appointment of Lead Officer

Gathering information and data. This may include:

Gathering policy documents, monitoring reports and information, correspondence and documentation (as appropriate).

Written submissions from individuals, partners, agencies, organisations etc.

Examples of 'good practice' from other Local Authorities/Organisations.

Seeking information from invited participants. This may include:

Gathering information, comments etc. on the operation of existing policies, practices and procedures.

Considering current methods of monitoring and review.

Seeking examples of where partnership approach works well/less well.

Identifying any gaps/areas for improvement.

Proposed Methodology

The process will be carried out in accordance with the Council's Constitution and any legislation covering the conduct of Council business (eg Access to Information and Data Protection legislation).

The Lead Officer will:

Co-ordinate the gathering of information and data, as directed by the Group.

Work with the Group to identify any individuals or groups whose participation could be helpful.

Work with the Group, where necessary, to prepare a question plan and any other supporting information to be sent out to invited participants. This is to help the Group and the participants prepare for and get the most out of their discussions.

Assist the Panel to carry out the process in a constructive and positive manner.

Produce a report on the process and findings for the consideration and approval by the Group for submission to the Scrutiny Committee.