

## SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL

## COUNCIL MEETING – 21 NOVEMBER 2012

## REPORTS OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Scrutiny Committee has met on four occasions, namely on the evenings of 18 September, 25 September, 1 October and 1 November 2012.

**A. 18 September 2012**

This meeting had been arranged to consider **Lancashire Fire & Rescue Service's Performance Report and Action Plan 2012**. The committee welcomed Mr Ronson, Community Protection Manager for Preston & South Ribble Districts, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.

Mr Ronson gave a comprehensive presentation about the service's Performance Report & Action Plan 2012 and outlined the current consultation on expanding the Day Crewing Plus duty system in six locations in the county, including in Bamber Bridge. This system involved staff self-rostering and being on standby during the evening to respond to emergencies from purpose built accommodation on site.

The committee was pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the consultation and welcomed Mr Ronson's clear and concise responses to our questions. Members were impressed by the close partnership working between the Fire & Rescue Service and partners generally and, more specifically, the multi-agency approach to implementing the learning from the fire at Centurion Way Business Park last December. The committee expressed concern that the Fire & Rescue Service could not legally enforce recommendations to install sprinkler systems in new schools and commercial buildings. Whilst we noted efforts to target specific problem areas we encouraged the service to tackle the increase in the level of fires and arson. The committee encouraged the Council to work with the Fire & Rescue Service to consider ways of promoting home safety checks and safety measures.

**B. 25 September 2012**

The committee started by considering **Matters Arising** which listed the outstanding matters from the last ordinary meeting of the committee. The committee appreciated and noted the supplied explanation/progress on the topics and they now be removed them from the list.

The next item looked at was the **Safer Chorley & South Ribble Community Safety Partnership**. In addition to the Deputy Leader and Neighbourhoods & Streetscene and Director of Neighbourhoods, the committee welcomed Chief Superintendent Stuart Williams and Inspector Steve Evans.

The committee welcomed information that police officers would again be operating from Bamber Bridge. It was mindful and grateful for the offers to investigate any issues regarding 101 calls. The committee commended the Community Safety Partnership on its achievements to reduce the level of crime and hoped those reduced as low as possible before reaching a plateau. It requested that councillors be made more familiar with the operation of mini MATACs and they be informed of activity and given the opportunity to be involved. It noted the review of funding for CCTV. The committee was keen to know the precise role of the Police and Crime Commissioner once elected, welcomed a visit from the successful candidate and the post holder's attitude to the Chorley and South Ribble Crime Reduction Partnership. It also recognised that the PACT meetings needed reviewing/looking at a different way and felt that all were willing to participate.

The committee then looked at the **Waste Management Partnership**. The committee commended the Cabinet member on the success of the Waste Management Partnership. It encouraged the council in its preparations for the renewal of the waste contract and welcomed its future involvement when appropriate. The committee encouraged the council to further promote to residents the financial benefits of recycling in the borough and of

increasing recycling rates. It requested that all councillors on secondary schools' board of governors encourage their respective schools to participate in the council's education programme. The committee also recommended that the council's scheme for the recycling of food waste be further promoted to residents.

Following on from the above item, the committee turned its attention to **Maintaining a Clean Environment**. The committee acknowledged the work of the Cabinet member and others involved in maintaining a clean environment in the borough. It expressed its gratitude to the Cabinet member for agreeing to meet a small number of its members to provide an update on the council's implementation of previous recommendations regarding litter. The committee encouraged the council to continue to step-up its zero tolerance policy approach to litter across the borough.

The final item for discussion by the committee was an **Update on Scrutiny Reviews and Scrutiny Matters**. The committee received updates on the progress of its task groups (Health Inequalities, Housing (empty properties) and Worden Park). This included a very useful site meeting in Worden Park and hoped to soon receive draft reports. Further to the item above, it was agreed that Councillors Coulton, Forrest and Titherington would meet Councillor Mullineaux for a detailed update on the council's implementation of previous recommendations regarding litter. The chairman had been unable to attend the last meeting of Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee, adding that its agenda had not included anything specific to South Ribble. The committee's Forward Plan was noted.

The Chairman took that opportunity to remind members that an additional meeting of the committee had been arranged to consider **Localisation of Council Tax Support Scheme** as part of the council's public consultation. This meeting would be at **6.00pm on Monday 1 October 2012**.

#### **C. 1 October 2012**

This meeting had been primarily arranged to consider as part of its consultation, the council's proposals for **Localisation of Council Tax Support Scheme**. The committee acknowledged the difficult position the council had been placed in, having to develop a local scheme with significant financial cuts that would adversely impact on residents. It requested that the local hardship scheme be reviewed to ensure that where there was genuine hardship, support was available to residents. The consensus of the committee was to support Option B of the consultation, a flat-rate scheme, as it was based on residents' means to pay, rather than the value of their property. It also requested the council develop a communications plan to inform those affected by the changes; whilst appreciating that a Member Learning Hour (welfare regime) was being arranged.

The other item considered by the committee was the **Scrutiny Review – The way the Capital Programme is managed and monitored**. The committee noted the report and thanked the Cabinet member for Finance and Resources for implementing all the committee's recommendations.

#### **D. 1 November 2012**

The committee started by considering **Matters Arising** which listed the outstanding matters from the last ordinary meeting of the committee. The committee appreciated and noted the supplied explanation/progress on the topics and they now be removed them from the list.

The next item looked at was **Development Management**. The committee congratulated the Cabinet member on the performance being made with the Planning Service. It looked forward to a further planning awareness session (workshop etc) and more formal training for all councillors. The committee welcomed the improved performance in dealing with major planning applications. It looked forward to the council publishing its policy on mini wind turbines and recognised the homeless challenge and the council's ability to address homelessness.

The committee then looked at the **Performance Monitoring Report – Mid Year 2012/13 – April to September 2012**. The committee congratulated all those involved on the significant achievements. It shared the Leader's concern that reduced capacity could have an impact on service delivery. The committee recognised the work of the South Ribble Partnership

which it hoped could be sustained over future years. It wanted to work with the Cabinet as the council rose to the challenges of the implication of the government's welfare reforms. The committee welcomed the council's engagement with private landowners, particularly in respect of progress with the McKenzie Arms. It requested that all members of the council receive an update on E-citizen and Firmstep.

The committee then turned its attention to two draft reports for its reviews of **Worden Park** and **Empty Properties**. The committee endorsed both reports for presentation to the meeting of the council to be held on 21 November 2012.

Finally the committee received verbal updates on its Health Inequalities task group, 2013/14 work programme, and noted its forward plan. The chairman also provided a verbal report on his attendance at the meeting of the county council's Health Scrutiny Committee held on 16 October 2012.

I hereby commend the reports of the Scrutiny Committee to the Council.

COUNCILLOR MICK TITHERINGTON  
CHAIRMAN  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE