

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting held at 6.00pm on Thursday 21 November 2012 in the Shield Room, Civic Centre, West Paddock, Leyland, PR25 1DH.

PRESENT:-

Councillor Clark (Mayor)

Councillors Mrs Ball, Mrs Beattie, Ms Bell, S Bennett, W Bennett, Bradley, Coulton, Crook, Evans, Forrest, Foster, Mrs D Gardner, M Gardner, Mrs Mary Green, Michael Green, Hamman, Hanson, Harrison, Hesketh, Heyworth, Higgins, Mrs Hothersall, Hughes, Mrs Jones, Kelly, Marsh, Martin, McNulty, Mrs Moon, Mrs Mort, Mullineaux, Nelson, O'Hare, Otter, Patten, Pimblett, Prynne, Rainsbury, Mrs M Smith, P Smith, Titherington, C Tomlinson, M Tomlinson, Dr S Tomlinson, Miss Walker, Walton, Watts, Mrs Woollard and Yates.

IN ATTENDANCE:-

The Chief Executive (Mike Nuttall), the Democratic Services Manager (Martin O'Loughlin) and Democratic Services Officer (Carol Eddleston).

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE:-

4 and 1 member of the press

OTHER OFFICERS:-

4

Minute No.	Description/Resolution
56	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Noblet, Mrs M Robinson, S Robinson, Stettner and Suthers.</p>
57	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
58	<p>Minutes of the Last Meeting</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.</p>
59	<p>Report of the Cabinet</p> <p>The Leader presented the report of the Cabinet and proposed an amendment to item 4, Christmas Car Parking, to suspend car parking charges for three hours on the afternoon of 30 November. This was being proposed to encourage visitors to the Christmas lights switch on and associated events. The report and proposed amendment were seconded.</p> <p>Under item 1, Treasury Management Activity, Councillor Hamman reported that the council had recently received £194K from Landsbanki and was expecting to recover the remainder of its deposit in due course.</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously) that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the Report of the Cabinet be noted subject to the amendment detailed in 3) below: 2) the Treasury Management Report be noted, and 3) car parking charges be suspended from 3.00pm to 6.00pm on Friday 30 November 2012.
60	<p>Report of the Scrutiny Committee</p>

	<p>Councillor Titherington presented the report of the Scrutiny Committee and thanked all Cabinet Members, officers and external guests for their comprehensive and honest presentations and responses to the committee. The report was seconded.</p> <p>Councillor Titherington said that the committee had applauded a large number of Council achievements in its recent meetings but acknowledged that there were significant challenges ahead. He hoped that the Scrutiny Committee would play its part in helping the Council to meet those challenges.</p> <p>He had recently attended a course on appreciative scrutiny with other representatives of the council and had been delighted by the feedback on the Council's own Broadfield Appreciative Inquiry.</p> <p>Councillor M Tomlinson said that he had been asked to make a comment on behalf of the Labour Group that although the report of the 1 October meeting indicated that 'the consensus of the committee was to support Option B' of the council's proposals for Localisation of Council Tax Support Scheme, none of the Labour members supported nor would support Option B. He considered it ironic that the council was planning to make unemployed people pay more council tax when there were so many empty properties which did not all generate full council tax payments.</p>
61	<p>Report of the Governance Committee</p> <p>Councillor Foster presented the report of the Governance Committee as Councillor O'Hare had been unable to attend the meeting on 26 September. The report was seconded.</p> <p>Councillor Foster said that he had long considered that this authority possibly had the best Internal Audit Service in the country. The Internal Audit Manager, Clare Ware, had just taken early retirement and this would be a great loss to the Council. He suggested that the Council might consider writing to Mrs Ware to thank her for her outstanding service to the council.</p>
62	<p>Gambling Policy Review - Gambling Licensing Policy Statement</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure and Healthy Communities, Councillor P Smith, presented the report which considered potential changes to the Council's Gambling Policy. The only changes related to suggestions from the Gambling Commission following updates to the legislation since the last policy was published. The report was seconded.</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimous): That the revised Policy be adopted for a period of three years following 13 December 2012.</p>
63	<p>Scrutiny Review of Worden Park</p> <p>Councillor McNulty presented the report as chairman of the task group which had undertaken the review. He thanked the members of the task group, cabinet members, officers and representatives from the businesses operating on the park who had contributed to a very comprehensive review. The report was seconded.</p> <p>On behalf of the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Street Scene who had been unavoidably delayed, Councillor Hamman thanked Councillor McNulty and the task group for the review and said he had found the session with the business representatives particularly useful in helping to identify some current issues.</p> <p>Councillor Titherington expressed his thanks to the members of the task group. He said that the report acknowledged that the park was a superb local attraction although there was no room for complacency. He commended the report to Council and looked forward to Cabinet taking on the recommendations.</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously): That the recommendations of the review be endorsed.</p>

64	<p>Scrutiny Review of Empty Properties</p> <p>Councillor Nelson presented the report as chairman of the task group which had undertaken the review. He thanked the members of the task group, cabinet members and officers involved. The review had identified a number of problems, not least of which was the resource that would be required to look into and address the problem of empty properties. The report was seconded.</p> <p>Councillor Hughes welcomed the review, acknowledging that it had not been an easy task. He said that empty properties were just one of a number of pressures on the Housing team but he would be more than happy to consider the findings, given that a solution to empty properties would contribute to a solution to homelessness.</p> <p>Councillor Foster commended the report and its robust recommendations. He urged Councillor Hughes to consider what steps could be taken to maximise the amount of council tax paid on these properties. Councillor W Bennett reminded the meeting that empty properties currently attracted a 50% council tax contribution rather than 0%.</p> <p>Councillor Pimblett said it would be useful to have a breakdown of the reasons why properties were empty and details of how many were up for sale or rent, as the picture might not be quite as bleak as first appeared. Councillor Nelson acknowledged that there were a variety of reasons why properties were empty but that it was a 'moving feast' and the numbers were just a snapshot in time. Identifying specific, individual reasons would be extremely resource intensive.</p> <p>Councillor Titherington explained that there were 26 definitions of 'empty' properties and the task group had decided to look specifically at those which had been empty for over 12 months and those which had been empty for at least 10 years.</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously): That the recommendations of the review be endorsed.</p>
65	<p>Appointment of Committees – Proportionality</p> <p>The Leader presented the report which dealt with amendments to committee memberships which were required to ensure compliance with the proportionality requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The report was seconded.</p> <p>At the Mayor's request for nominations Councillor M Tomlinson said his group welcomed the increase in its representation on the Boundary and Standards Committees and wished to nominate Councillor Harrison and Mrs Jones respectively. He went on to say that the timing of the initial meetings of the Boundary Committee meant that one of its original members, Councillor C Tomlinson, would have to step aside due to daytime work commitments. It was proposed that Councillor Heyworth would take his place. The nominations were seconded.</p> <p>The Leader explained that daytime slots had been identified for the first two meetings as the committee needed to meet in quick succession at fairly short notice and the committee meeting timetable was already so heavily populated. Moving forward though it was possible that further meetings might not need to be held during the daytime.</p> <p>RESOLVED (YES – 48; NO – 0, ABSTENTION – 2):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That the membership of committees be amended to increase the Labour Group representation on the each of the Standards Committee and the Boundary Committee by one seat; 2) Standards Committee - Councillor Mrs Jones be nominated as the additional member, and 3) Boundary Committee - Councillor Harrison be nominated as the additional member and Councillor Heyworth be nominated in the place of Councillor C Tomlinson.
66	<p>Questions to the Leader</p>

In response to a question from Councillor M Tomlinson about more appropriate timing of future Police and Crime Commissioner elections to encourage a higher turnout, the Leader said that it had already been confirmed that the next such election would be held in May to coincide with other elections taking place.

In response to a request from Councillor C Tomlinson that the new Police and Crime Commissioner might be invited to address full council, the Leader said that Mr Grunshaw was coming to meet with her and the Chief Executive in early December. She suggested that it might be more appropriate to invite him to Council once he had had a chance to settle into the role.

In response to a question from Councillor Harrison about Community Banks, the Leader said that she was currently finding out more about them and what they might be able to offer.

In response to a question from Councillor Forrest about the state of the local economy and the housing market, the Leader said that there was quite a lot of optimism around and the fact that there were several new commercial buildings under construction was positive. In terms of the housing market the council worked with developers and housing associations on the provision of affordable housing. She reminded the meeting of the First Step initiative that the Council had launched a few years ago which had helped a number of local residents to get on the property ladder. She added that the council would no doubt be happy to introduce another such initiative if the government would provide funding for it to do so.

In response to a number of questions from a member of the public, the Leader acknowledged that employment initiatives being rolled out with the assistance of the county council were bearing fruit and further plans were afoot at the Samlesbury Enterprise Zone.

67 **Questions to Members of the Cabinet**

Deputy Leader, Neighbourhoods and Street Scene

Councillor Titherington asked the Cabinet Member, Councillor Mullineaux, if he could provide an update on the council's policy on CCTV cameras. Councillors Heyworth and C Tomlinson spoke of the ongoing issues of rubbish being dumped in the substation enclosures in their wards and suggested that installing CCTV cameras would assist in identifying the culprits. Whilst this council's officers had always reacted promptly in alerting United Utilities, the latter had indicated that it had no plans to install CCTV. He recalled Councillor S Robinson's mention two years previously of a grant of £20,000 for CCTV cameras and wondered if they might be sited at these locations for a couple of months.

The Cabinet Member, Councillor Mullineaux, explained that CCTV provision was being looked at as part of the budgetary process. As such it was difficult for him to say much at this point in time about whether it would be possible to have cameras in specific locations or, from a safety point of view, whether it was appropriate to name them. Councillor Titherington observed that the review of CCTV provision had been ongoing for some time. He would like to know when it would be complete, how many cameras there were in the borough and how many were actually operational. Councillor Mullineaux said that he would provide these figures and would consider whether anything could be done in the areas of concern that members had referred to.

In response to an observation made to Councillor Harrison about what appeared to be an excessive number of dog waste bins in a relatively small area in Seven Stars, Councillor Mullineaux agreed to look at the spread of the bins in that area.

In response to a request for an update on his recent meetings with police, Councillor Mullineaux confirmed that he received regular updates from the local police and that he, the Leader and the Chief Executive met regularly with police representatives. He was pleased to report that there had been no major incidents since the summer although there were still ongoing enquiries about a small number of playground incidents.

Regeneration, Leisure and Healthy Communities

In response to congratulatory comments from Councillor M Tomlinson to the council's own Regeneration team for its work with and support to local businesses, and to Councillor Michael Green for his work at a county level, and the question of whether the Cabinet Member, Councillor P Smith, would be encouraging the Regeneration Team to replicate the county scheme, Councillor P Smith confirmed that the borough worked closely with the county council on various issues and schemes.

In response to a written question submitted in advance by Councillor Martin, Councillor P Smith confirmed that the borough's four leisure centre sites were equipped with automated external defibrillators and that all first aiders were trained in their use. 50% of their cost had been provided by the Leisure Trust and 50% by the British Heart Foundation.

Strategic Planning and Housing

Councillor Foster referred to a borough council planning application recently considered by the Planning Committee for residential development following the demolition of Northbrook Barn. The officer recommendation had been for approval with conditions but the committee had decided to defer the application. He enquired whether the Cabinet Member had looked further into this application after the Planning Committee meeting and whether a proposal on the site's change of use would come before the Council. Councillor Hughes said that he would look into the matter.

In response to a request from Councillor Mrs Green for any update on deliberations about making the platforms at Leyland railway station more easily accessible, the Cabinet Member invited the Leader to provide an update as she had been a key driver in negotiations. The Leader reported that she had met regularly with Network Rail and Northern Rail, starting discussions some four or five years ago. In that time a number of proposals had been worked up, including for the installation of lifts and, following various submissions to the Ministry of Transport by Network Rail, the Leader had been pleased to learn that very recently the ministry had allocated the necessary funding for Network Rail to undertake the design work for installing lifts.

A member of the public asked the Cabinet Member for his thoughts on safeguarded land and commented on recent cases where the Planning Inspector had overturned Planning Committee refusals of applications to develop safeguarded land sites. Councillor Hughes said that safeguarding was there to ensure a supply of land in the future. Although the council firmly believed that it dealt appropriately and legitimately with planning applications, in accordance with planning law and policy, the Inspectorate sometimes decided to overturn council decisions, making one question the point of having policies in place.

In response to a written request submitted in advance by Councillor Martin for the Cabinet Member to work with Places for People to ensure that former residents of the Maltings were appropriately rehoused, Councillor Hughes confirmed that any loss of accommodation affected the council's ability to house residents but feedback from Places for People was that those who had been rehoused had been satisfactorily rehoused, with some former residents commenting that it had been the best thing that could have happened to them. The Maltings was currently awaiting demolition once United Utilities had disconnected the utilities. The council was in discussions with Places for People about what would replace the demolished building and had made clear that the council felt strongly about the loss of this accommodation.

Councillor Martin had submitted a written question in advance urging the Cabinet Member to look into the feasibility of imposing a planning condition requiring the installation of a defibrillator and provision of training on its use on all approved applications for new public buildings. Councillor Hughes acknowledged that this was an interesting concept and he would make enquiries about it but stressed that decisions on planning applications had to be taken in the context of planning law and policies.

	<p>Governance Committee</p> <p>Councillor W Bennett welcomed the positive statements made in the course of the meeting about a number of the Council's achievements and referred to the External Auditor's positive report to the Governance Committee in September. He asked Councillor O'Hare as chairman of the Governance Committee what his thoughts on the matter were, given that he had been unable to attend the last Governance Committee meeting.</p> <p>Councillor O'Hare took the opportunity to thank Councillor Foster for chairing the last meeting in his absence and to congratulate him on the recent birth of his baby daughter. He acknowledged that it was easy to focus on the negatives and to be critical at times but said that this council was very well run, organised, efficient and prudent and it was particularly gratifying when the external auditor came to the same conclusion.</p>
69	<p>Questions to Representatives on Outside Bodies</p> <p>In response to a number of questions from a member of the public about the Police and Crime Panel for Lancashire, the Leader pointed out that she was just one member of a panel with representatives from all the local authorities in Lancashire. The panel had met only twice so far and was still in its very early stages of formation. Aside from the next meeting which was taking place on Monday 26 November a timetable of meetings had not yet been established but it was envisaged that some meetings would be held in public. She was confident that the Police and Crime Commissioner, Clive Grunshaw, had sufficient integrity to conduct himself as an independent person now that he was in post. She acknowledged that the timescales for setting a budget were extremely tight and she was sure that scrutinising the budget would be one of the panel's priorities.</p> <p>Councillor Titherington reported that the Scrutiny Committee had decided that it would like to invite the new Police and Crime Commissioner to attend a future meeting and he assured the member of the public that that meeting, in line with other meetings of the council, would be open to the public.</p>

..... (Mayor)

The meeting closed at 7.55pm.