

**SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Meeting held at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 23rd January, 2013 in Shield Room, Civic Centre, West Paddock, Leyland, PR25 1DH**

**Present:-**

Councillor Clark (Mayor)

Councillors Mrs Ball, 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, Mrs Jones, Kelly, Marsh, Martin, McNulty, Mrs Moon, Mrs Mort, Mullineaux, Nelson, Mrs Noblet, Otter, Pimblett, Prynne, Rainsbury, Mrs M Robinson, S Robinson, Mrs M Smith, P Smith, Stettner, Titherington, C Tomlinson, M Tomlinson, Dr S Tomlinson, Miss Walker, Walton, Watts, Mrs Woollard and Yates.

**In Attendance:-**

The Chief Executive (Mike Nuttall), the Director of Corporate Governance (Maureen Wood), the Democratic Services Officer (Carol Eddleston)

The Democratic Services Manager (Martin O'Loughlin) for item 8 (Pay Policy)

**Public Attendance:-**

9 and 1 press

**Other Officers:-**

7

<b>Minute No.</b>	<b>Description/Resolution</b>
70	<p><b>Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs Beattie, Hughes, O'Hare, Patten and Suthers.</p>
71	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>The Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate Governance and any other members of the council's senior management team present declared prejudicial interests in item 8, Localism Act 2011 – Pay Policy, as this related to themselves and, left the meeting during consideration thereof.</p> <p>Councillor Michael Green declared a personal interest in item 2 of the Report of the Cabinet, Preston City Deal: Expression of Interest, as a Lancashire County Councillor Cabinet Member.</p>
72	<p><b>Minutes of the Last Meeting</b></p> <p>Whilst not disputing the accuracy of the minutes, the Leader rose to dispute Councillor M Tomlinson's description at the last meeting of the stance taken by Labour Group members at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 1 October relating to the localisation of the council tax support scheme. Councillor M Tomlinson replied that his error had been corrected by Labour Group members after the last Council meeting and apologised for his poor levels of</p>

	<p>accuracy. He concluded by saying that his group remained implacably opposed to the proposals relating to the localisation of the council tax support scheme.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.</p>
73	<p><b>Report of the Cabinet</b></p> <p>The Leader presented the report of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 January. The report was seconded.</p> <p>In relation to item 3 of the Cabinet Report, South Ribble's Tenancy Strategy Document, Councillor Titherington suggested that the document provided Registered Social Landlords with an opportunity to subject their tenants to fear and insecurity. He suggested that members of the Conservative Group did not know how ordinary people lived and this document sought to stigmatise them. He pointed out that a number of members of this Council had been brought up in council houses at a time when people had security of tenure and it was believed that everybody had a right to a decent living environment. Under the strategy document people who were striving to improve their lot could end up homeless. He suggested that attempts had been made to make the best of a bad job but said that the council should strive to produce a policy which would not allow tenants to be badly treated by unscrupulous landlords.</p> <p>Councillor M Tomlinson acknowledged that this was being driven by central government rather than this council but said that the document was flawed and questioned how it could be right that a good tenant whose earnings had increased could be told that they had to leave.</p> <p>Councillor W Bennett said he thought it was a good report which encouraged flexibility on tenancies and afforded a lot of protection to tenants. He pointed out that it did not affect anyone on current tenancies.</p> <p>Councillor Hanson predicted that communities would be destroyed and suggested that tenancies should be for life. Councillor Foster said that more effort should be put into building more social housing for residents and he suggested that Councillor W Bennett was out of touch with the people he represented. Councillor Heyworth believed that the strategy document would destroy all the good work of various agencies and residents on the Wade Hall estate that had generated a strong community spirit in that area.</p> <p>Councillor Pimblett said that he agreed wholeheartedly with comments from the Labour Group but pointed out that the strategy referred to a review after no less than five years, thereby implying that a review would happen after more than five years.</p> <p>Councillor S Robinson pointed out that the Labour Group was not alone in caring about the residents that its members represented. He echoed Councillor Pimblett's comment about the timeframe for review referred to in the report and suggested that some opposition members had not read the report properly.</p> <p>Councillor Ms Bell acknowledged that some of the comments made did appear to be jumping to conclusions without reading the small print in the strategy document but she could not see any evidence that charities and homelessness officers had been consulted. With her long experience of working with homeless young people she could understand why some tenants may be given tenancy on a probationary basis.</p>

	<p>Councillor Michael Green pointed out that most residents in social rented properties were hardworking and trying to better themselves but labour councillors across the country seemed averse to landlords being able to evict tenants who behaved anti-socially or did not pay their rent. Councillor M Tomlinson stressed that it was important for landlords to be able to move people on in circumstances of this kind.</p> <p>The Leader pointed out that Councillor Hughes had stressed at Cabinet that this was a consultation document. She urged members who had comments on it to submit them as part of the consultation process. She reminded the meeting that the Council worked closely with Housing Associations and had been battling to generate more affordable housing in the borough for many years.</p> <p>In relation to item 6 of the Cabinet Report, Mayor and Deputy Mayor 2013/14, Councillor Watts bemoaned the number of years since any Labour Group member or Bamber Bridge or Leyland ward member had been nominated as mayor.</p> <p>RESOLVED that:</p> <p>1) The report of the Cabinet be noted (unanimous);</p> <p>2) Residential Extensions SPD – Adoption (unanimous)  (i) the Supplementary Planning Document be adopted; and  (ii) authority be delegated to the Director of Planning and Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Housing to make minor text, layout and formatting amendments following the completion of the four week period stipulated by Part 12 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012;</p> <p>3) South Ribble’s Tenancy Strategy Document (YES – 30, NO – 20)  (i) the contents of the draft strategy be approved for consultation purposes, and  (ii) authority be delegated to the Director of Planning and Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Housing, to amend the draft strategy in the light of any representations made during the consultation period and to then implement;</p> <p>4) Timetable of Meetings (unanimous):  The timetable of meetings for 2013/14 attached at Appendix B to the report be approved; and</p> <p>5) Mayor and Deputy Mayor 2013/14 (YES – 49, ABSTENTION – 1)  Councillor Mrs D Gardner be confirmed as Mayor elect for 2013/14 and Councillor G Walton be nominated as Deputy Mayor elect for 2013/14.</p> <p>Councillor Mrs Gardner took the opportunity to thank members of the Council for bestowing this honour on her and said that she would carry out the role of Mayor with dignity and enthusiasm.</p>
74	<p><b>Report of the Governance Committee</b></p> <p>Councillor Foster commended the report of the Governance Committee meeting held on 28 November 2012. The report was seconded. As Councillor Foster had not been able to attend the meeting, Councillor W Bennett took the opportunity to highlight how pleased the committee had been to learn that the council’s rental income was above budget and that there would be a significant reduction in external auditor charges moving forward.</p>
75	<p><b>Report of the Boundary Committee</b></p> <p>The Leader commended the report of the Boundary Committee meeting held on 27</p>

	<p>November 2012. The report was seconded. The Leader said she would find out more about how the Boundary Commission wanted the council to proceed at a meeting with Boundary Commission representatives in early February.</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimous):</p> <p>That the report 'Electoral Review of South Ribble Council Proposals in Relation to Council Size' contained at Appendix 1 to the report be approved as the submission to the Boundary Commission.</p>
76	<p><b>Pay Policy</b></p> <p>(The Chief Executive and the Director of Corporate Governance and any other members of the council's senior management team present declared prejudicial interests and left the meeting during the consideration thereof).</p> <p>The Leader presented the report which by law had to be approved by Council in an open forum by the end of March of each year and be published on the website. There was no change to the policy which had been approved by Council in February 2012. The report was seconded.</p> <p>Councillor Titherington observed that although it was stated on page 1, section 4, that salary increases for all posts within the Council were set nationally, 'through collective bargaining between the national employers and trade unions', this was not in fact the case as the coalition government had imposed a freeze in local government pay increases. He reminded the meeting that he had proposed a notice of motion at the September meeting that the Council should agree to pay a living wage to all its employees. This motion had been lost but he was pleased to see that Penwortham Town Council had recently committed to paying a living wage to its employees. He argued that SRBC should implement a living wage policy and in doing so would help to reduce the benefits bill. In the current circumstances he could not support the pay policy but would be able to do so if the Council undertook to pay a living wage.</p> <p>The Leader recalled the lengthy debate at the September meeting but declined to go over the issue again, saying that staff at this Council got a very good deal, particularly when the employer's pension contributions were taken into account. She pointed out that Penwortham Town Council had two employees, both of whom were senior managers and were in no way affected by the living wage issue.</p> <p>In response to a question from a member of the public, the Leader pointed out that the council already published on its website what it was legally required to publish but would be happy to provide specific, additional information upon request, if it was reasonable to do so and if the requested information was available.</p> <p>RESOLVED that (YES – 30, NO – 19): The Pay Policy be approved.</p>
77	<p><b>South Ribble Borough Council's Localisation of Council Tax Support Scheme</b></p> <p>In presenting the report, Councillor S Robinson outlined the council's responsibility for collecting council tax and for administering council tax benefit and explained that government proposals would see this authority's grant from central government which covered the cost of the current council tax benefit scheme being reduced by around 10%. He said that the council had consulted externally on its proposals for developing the local scheme and the feedback had been overwhelming, unambiguous and clear and the proposal was to accept and implement the public view. If the council did nothing to recover</p>

the reduction in funding to council tax benefit, it would face a shortfall of around £84,000, and for other preceptors this figure would be in the region of £500,000. The report was seconded.

Councillor M Tomlinson said he recognised that the requirement to devise a local support scheme had been imposed by central government and he commended the officers for the hard work that they had done in responding to this requirement. However, he said that the working poor would be affected by the proposals and members were being asked to support an attack on what was currently only meagre financial assistance. He spoke of the effect that the proposals would have on people such as single mothers in part time employment and couples who were both in low paid jobs. He quashed the myth that the majority of the social security bill came from payments to young people of working age, saying that in fact the majority actually went to pensions, approximately 20% in housing benefit direct to pensioners, and 3% in Job Seekers' Allowance. He said that the proposals attacked a small part of society which needed help the most. He enquired what the council would do to chase those residents who could not afford to pay. He suggested that if the council was serious about raising more money through council tax, it should undertake a review of council tax bands at the top of the scale for those who could afford to pay more.

Councillor Hamman said that the council had a very good recovery rate and, although the new scheme would undoubtedly throw up new issues, the council would continue to seek to recover all debt. New systems in place already involved officers talking to residents before they got into difficulties making payments.

Noting press releases about prosecutions of benefit fraudsters, Councillor Titherington said that the council should strengthen its efforts to ensure that those who were entitled to receive benefits actually applied for and received them. Nationally low paid jobs now accounted for 20% of the workforce and benefits essentially subsidised bad employers. The Leader confirmed that the council did indeed promote and encourage relevant people to claim benefits and published appropriate telephone numbers.

Councillor Pimblett sought clarification of whether people of working age who could not work due to disability would be affected and enquired how much it would cost to actually collect the money. Councillor S Robinson confirmed that the elderly and disabled were protected and that every effort would be made to pursue council tax where it was due.

Councillor P Smith pointed out that the council was simply implementing government policy and that although the proposals had been out for consultation for some time, opposition members had failed to propose a better scheme. Councillor W Bennett commended members and officers for their hard work on the proposed scheme and echoed Councillor P Smith's comments about no alternative proposals coming from the Labour Group.

Councillors Prynne and Foster observed that 1000 responses could not be considered to be representative against a population of more than 120,000. Councillor Foster said that the labour group's position was that council tax bandings should be reviewed. Councillor S Robinson pointed out that a review of council tax bandings could only be carried out after a revaluation of properties. A revaluation due in 2010/11 had been shelved by the labour government as it had known that it would cost them votes.

The Leader outlined the initial work that the county council had co-ordinated to try and identify a possible county wide scheme. The county council had employed consultants who had identified three possible schemes, two of which were based on a % deduction and one based on a flat rate deduction. Most councils had dismissed the more complicated of the two % deduction schemes and this council considered that the flat rate scheme was the

	<p>least complicated and less work-intensive and was the best thing for South Ribble residents. She assured the meeting that the consultees had been randomly selected and not hand-picked.</p> <p>In response to a question from Councillor Prynne about protecting young people who did not qualify for the full Job Seekers' Allowance, the Leader pointed out that the criteria about who was protected had been laid down by government.</p> <p>RESOLVED (YES – 29, NO – 21) that:</p> <p>1) recovery of any reduction in funding to Council Tax Benefit in full from working age claimants be approved;</p> <p>2) a flat rate reduction of £3.50 per week be sought from working age claimants, and</p> <p>3) a scheme be formally adopted and published in January 2013 to take effect from 1 April 2013.</p>
78	<p><b>Questions to the Leader</b></p> <p>In response to a request from Councillor Ms Bell, the Leader said that she would be happy to encourage people to get involved in International Women's Day on 8 March and would be happy to help if she could.</p> <p>The Leader agreed with an observation from Councillor Heyworth that it seemed to be taking a long time to conclude the winding up of the Nursing Association Management Committee and she agreed to do what she could to expedite the process.</p> <p>In response to an observation from Councillor M Tomlinson about the number of people in temporary employment, the Leader acknowledged that temporary and short term contracts seemed to be the way of the world these days.</p>
79	<p><b>Questions to Members of the Cabinet</b></p> <p>Deputy Leader, Neighbourhoods and Street Scene</p> <p>Councillor Heyworth spoke of ongoing issues of flooding and contaminated water from Cricketers Brook in the Parkgate Drive and Cumberland Avenue area. He suggested that until a longer term solution was identified there should be some warning notices and safety railings erected. Councillor Kelly spoke in support of Councillor Heyworth and suggested that there appeared to be difficulties in getting the relevant agencies to work together to identify a solution.</p> <p>A resident from each of Parkgate Drive and Cumberland Avenue spoke with great feeling about the history of the flooding, the attempts taken to try to resolve the issue and the effect that it had in the local area and on local properties. Local councillors and the council's Drainage Technician were thanked for their efforts to date but the Council was urged to do what it could to make the area concerned a great place to live. Councillor Heyworth also took the opportunity to praise the council's Drainage Technician for his work.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Street Scene, Councillor Mullineaux, thanked the local members and the members of the public who had spoken about this issue. He had arranged a meeting with residents, members and officers on 31 January at which he would pick up all the points which had just been raised and therefore did not propose to speak further. He reassured the meeting that the council was doing its best to seek a solution. He acknowledged the great work that this council's officers did.</p>

	<p>Regeneration, Leisure and Healthy Communities</p> <p>Councillor M Tomlinson expressed his regret at the demise of the Bean Drinking Coffee House on Hough Lane and said that the proprietor, as the former chairman of Leyland Business Forum had been a driving force behind many of the forum's initiatives. He urged the council's Regeneration team to do what it could to ensure that the forum continued and that another effective chairman was identified to replace him. Councillor P Smith agreed that this would be a sad loss for Hough Lane and said how important it was for local people to support local shops and businesses. He would discuss with the Regeneration team and had already had discussions about how the council could help small businesses with small business rate relief.</p> <p>Councillors Forrest and P Smith spoke briefly about the forthcoming Health Matters Scrutiny Committee meeting on 29 January and Councillor Titherington took the opportunity to recommend members to attend where there would be an opportunity to hear about changes to the NHS and question some local health organisations about health services in South Ribble.</p> <p>Strategic Planning and Housing</p> <p>Councillor Forrest noted that there was a Supplementary Planning Document on Renewable Energy out for consultation and enquired whether anything was being considered with regard to fracking. The Leader said that the county council had recently held a conference on fracking and although she had not been able to attend she had now received the associated papers but would defer to Councillor Hughes on his return.</p> <p>Councillor C Tomlinson asked the Leader to pass on thanks on behalf of himself and of his fellow ward member Councillor Forrest to Councillor Hughes for his efforts in securing a resolution to the now demolished tandoori take-away on Chapel Brow.</p>
80	<p><b>Questions to Chairmen of Committees and My Neighbourhood Areas</b></p> <p>There were no questions.</p>
81	<p><b>Questions to Representatives on Outside Bodies</b></p> <p>In response to a question from Councillor Forrest about the Lancashire Police and Crime Panel, the Leader confirmed that the Police and Crime Commissioner had attended panel meetings so far but the Chief Constable had not. The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 29 January in Blackburn and would be open to the public. She was aware that the commissioner was conducting roadshows around the county but none was arranged for South Ribble and she would be interested to find out why.</p> <p>In response to a question from a member of the public about whether it was appropriate for the Police and Crime Commissioner to stand down until the ongoing investigation into his conduct had been concluded, the Leader said that this would no doubt be discussed at the meeting on 29 January. Following a debate at the last meeting it had been decided that the monitoring of the commissioner's conduct would be the responsibility of the county council's Monitoring Officer.</p>

The meeting closed at 8.29pm.

..... (Mayor)