

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING – 17 APRIL 2013

REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Scrutiny Committee has met on one occasion, namely the evening of 26 March 2013.

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 agreed they now be removed from the list. However, regarding min. no.38 (01/11/12), it was disappointed all members of the council had as yet not received an update relating to E-citizen and Firmstep and hoped this information would be subsequently provided. In respect of min. no.50(3)(ii) as this expenditure had not been identified in the budget, the committee was slightly concerned where the monies came from and who authorised the expenditure. Also referring to no.50(3)(iii), whilst noting the response, the committee felt it might be appropriate to look at this more closely before it was removed from the list.

It then turned to the main item of the evening and received a presentation (copy appended to the minutes) on **Welfare Reform**. In so far as what it would mean to the borough's residents and the council's preparations to implement the welfare reform changes by central government. The committee was addressed by Councillor Phil Hamman (Cabinet member for Shared Services & Corporate Support) and Joanne Bentham (Benefits Team Leader), Gail Lowe (Benefits Team Leader), Amy Kenyon (Benefits Team Assessor) and Hannah Young (Benefits Team Leader) in the council's Business Transformation service.

The committee thanked all the guests for their attendance and comprehensively responding to comments and enquiries from members of the committee. It noted with gratitude the offer to provide information on the welfare reform changes to all members of the council. The committee would look further for information relating to the matter of over-occupancy. It was very pleased to note the council's work liaising with partners such as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and the work to avoid homelessness. The committee was also pleased to receive an assurance from the Cabinet member that the impact of the welfare reform provisions would be monitored and reported to it, and all councillors would be notified/updated as matters progressed.

The next and final item discussed by the committee was an **Update on Scrutiny Reviews and Scrutiny Matters**. The work of the committee's Health Inequalities task group had progressed and a workshop had been arranged for 8 April. A number of interested parties had been invited with a very pleasing high take-up. The chairman had circulated to members of the committee the minutes of the most recent meeting of Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee (5 March). This was that committee's last meeting as its activities over the last four years were reviewed. The meeting was then informed that some members of this council's Scrutiny committee had attended the 'Hand Up or Hand Out' seminar on welfare reform and a Health Champions Course.

In respect of the forward plan, for the first time the committee also looked at the Cabinet forward plan in addition to its own. This was to assist the committee to look ahead at issues that it might want to look at before they were considered by the Cabinet. The committee indicated that it was interested to look at the; Chorley & South Ribble Health & Wellbeing Action Plan, Select Move Allocation Policy and, Renewable Energy SPD – adoption.

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

COUNCILLOR MICK TITHERINGTON
CHAIRMAN
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE