

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING – 5 MARCH 2014
REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Scrutiny Committee met on the evening of 28 January 2014.

The first item considered was **Matters Arising** which listed the outstanding matters from previous meetings. The committee agreed to remove Scrutiny Review of Worden Park-progress report, Dog Fouling and, Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy and Risk Register 2014/15. Although it felt that for now the matters relating to the Performance Monitoring Report: Mid-Year 2013/14 (April 2013 to September 2013) and Waste Management Partnership should remain.

Next the committee turned its attention to the **'My Neighbourhoods' Arrangements**. The committee commended the My Neighbourhood Chairmen and supporting officers for their enthusiasm and excellent work. It recommended that all councillors be further encouraged to get more involved with the My Neighbourhood Forums and their local community projects and be provided with learning/development opportunities to help them engage with their residents/communities. The committee recommended that greater links be made between the My Neighbourhood Forums and partners (such as health, housing associations and leisure). It also recommended that the follow-up/action arising and feedback on issues raised by residents/communities at My Neighbourhood Forums be reviewed and improved. The committee requested that the Governance Committee review the process for agreeing expenditure (with a view to streamlining the process). It recommended that the sharing of good practice across the council's five My Neighbourhood Forums be in a more effective and structured way. The committee recommended that more thought be given to ensuring that plans and projects were representative of the wider community and not reliant on a small number of residents attending My Neighbourhood Forum meetings. It would continue to monitor the activities, arrangements and workings of the My Neighbourhood Forums.

The committee then considered an update on the council's **Housing Service**. The committee strongly encouraged the Cabinet member (and Leader of the Council) to resolve the current vacant post of Director of Planning & Development as soon as possible. It welcomed the organisation of a Member Learning Hour in February 2014 on Affordable Housing. The committee looked forward to learning why properties without mains gas were not eligible for the Winter Warm Scheme. It requested that in view of the relatively low take-up last year, an evaluation of the cheaper energy scheme be carried out to ensure resources were used effectively. The committee requested that customer friendly information be produced for residents explaining how the Disabled Facilities Grant process worked. It expressed concern that certain developers could be manipulating the council's policy on affordable housing so they do not fulfil their obligations, on which it may make recommendations in the future

The next item was a report on the **Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities – responses to recommendations**. The committee noted the responses and agreed to convene a meeting of the committee's Health Inequalities Task Group.

The final item discussed by the committee was an **Update on Scrutiny Reviews and Scrutiny Matters**. The committee noted progress with its reviews of planning and drainage & flooding and, the NHS Healthcheck: Joint Scrutiny Review. The chairman reported that the Director of Public Health had attended Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee who was anxious to engage/be involved with the District Councils on the public health agenda recognising their part in the Health and Wellbeing Project. In respect of meetings and training attended by members – none were reported. The committee considered and noted its forward plan and also that of the Cabinet.

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

COUNCILLOR MICK TITHERINGTON
CHAIRMAN
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE