

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL
COUNCIL MEETING – 19 JULY 2017
REPORT OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

On this occasion the Scrutiny Committee met on Thursday 22 June 2017.

Initially the committee looked at matters arising from its previous meetings. As the list contained a number of issues dating back over a couple of years, Members agreed to extract relevant outstanding matters and liaise directly with the Cabinet Member to ensure a robust response was provided. It was intended that future agendas would only consider matters arising from the previous meeting.

The Committee then welcomed Karen Sharrocks, Chair and Howard Booth, Community Works Manager to the meeting, who were attending to update the Committee on the progress of the **South Ribble Partnership**. The Committee were informed that the group continued to work closely with its partners including this authority to successfully deliver a sustainable community strategy, develop new opportunities and lead on public service reform. The Committee were also made aware that the greatest threat to the Partnership will be the potential loss of the Partnership Manager post, when funding for the position runs out in March 2018 and welcomes that the Council will consider its financial contribution to the future of the partnership later in the year. The Committee requests that robust action plans and success measures be developed for the delivery of the community strategy ambitions.

The Committee then looked at the **Peer Review and Improvement Plan** and thanked the Leader and Corporate Improvement Manager for attending. The Leader accepted that the administration faced difficult times ahead and that strong leadership was needed to drive through the change needed to improve the performance of the Council. The Committee requested a progress report on the recommendations from the scrutiny review of licensing be provided to a future meeting of the Committee and welcomed the Leaders commitment to a cross-party working group as part of the review of leisure services. The Committee also welcomed the steps that were being taken to improve on member/officer relations and asked for consideration of the completion of a more regular employee survey to ensure the good progress was maintained. In addition the Committee plans to undertake a scrutiny task group to review staff morale.

Next the Committee turned its attention to the **Year-end Performance Report** and expressed their concern that some of the targets had not been achieved. Although explained by the Leader that the Council's performance was above national averages, Members sought to clarify the authority's position in relation to specific areas that included a review of Environmental Health and the Business Rates Retention Scheme (BRR). The Committee noted the Leader's commitment to ensure that the capital budget is effectively managed and spent in the future, although it was requested for future reports to provide greater commentary on the financial report and capital programme, in a format that could be more easily understood. A briefing on the business rate retention capital budget and level of reserves will be provided at our next meeting. The Committee also asked for the provision of the council tax collection rate for those people who are part of the council tax support scheme.

The authority are reviewing how it collects its data in the future and the Committee asks that a robust mechanism for measuring resident perception targets be developed to ensure that good customer satisfaction is maintained. Members also recommended that further work be planned to achieve the target for the number of empty properties brought back in to use. Members welcome the proposed new format for quarterly performance reports and asks that the member survey be prioritised and carried out as soon as possible.

Finally the Committee considered the Cabinet's Forward Plan and were informed that there would be some changes to future meetings of the Committee to ensure that Scrutiny meetings take place before Cabinet. Once agreed, the dates would be circulated to all Members.

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

COUNCILLOR MATTHEW TOMLINSON
CHAIRMAN
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE