

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Scrutiny Committee

Meeting held at 6.00pm on Tuesday, 12th August, 2014 in Wheel Room, Civic Centre, West Paddock, Leyland PR25 1DH

Present:-

Councillors Titherington (in the chair), Coulton, M Gardner, Michael Green, Martin, Ogilvie, M Tomlinson and Miss Walker

In Attendance:-

Darren Cranshaw (Scrutiny and Performance Officer) and Carol Eddleston (Democratic Services Officer)

Public Attendance:-

1 + 1 press

Officers:-

4

Other Members:-

Councillors Ms Bell, Mrs D Gardner, Hothersall, Hughes and Mrs M Smith

| Minute No. | Description/Resolution |
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| 8 | <p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors K Jones, Mrs S Jones, Otter and Mrs Woollard.</p> |
| 9 | <p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Councillor Martin declared a personal interest in items 5, 6, 8 and 9 as an employee of Lancashire County Council.</p> |
| 10 | <p>Minutes of the Last Meeting</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously) that: The minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman.</p> |
| 11 | <p>Matters Arising from Previous Meetings</p> <p>The committee received the attached tabled update from Councillor Mullineaux on the dog fouling pilot, considered the list of other matters arising from previous meetings and agreed the following:</p> <p>Minute 4 - Performance Monitoring Report – year end 2013/14 – recommendations 3, 4 and 7 should be removed: recommendation 5 should remain, with a report required at the six month stage on the breakdown of efficiencies, how these would be achieved, their impact, and a comparison of target to actual; recommendations 8 and 9 should remain as implementation remained outstanding.</p> |

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| | <p>Minute 5 – Our People Plan Outturn, Draft Our People Plan and Employee Survey Results – recommendations 2 and 3 should be removed.</p> <p>Members expressed concern about the response to recommendation 4 which indicated that 44 out of 273 appraisals remained outstanding and asked a number of questions about the reasons for the delay and the appraisal process generally.</p> <p>The Leader and the Head of Human Resources responded, explaining that to date 91% of the target 95% of those able to have an appraisal had now had one. Although the annual appraisal process was scheduled to be completed between January and April each year to allow service plans to be drawn up and training needs identified, there tended to be some slippage and, whilst 44 appraisals were outstanding at the time the matters arising report was prepared, the figure had now reduced to 24. These were generally due to changes in line management responsibility, secondments and other internal moves which required line managers to allow ‘new’ employees to bed in and for them each to get to know each other. Managers were aware of the importance of carrying out appraisals with all staff able to have one and those outstanding had been identified and the aim now was to have those completed by autumn. The target of 95% was considered to be appropriate although it was acknowledged that it was unlikely that this would ever be reached by April.</p> |
| 12 | <p>Response to the Scrutiny Review of Planning</p> <p>Councillor Hughes, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Housing and Denise Johnson, Director, attended the meeting for this item.</p> <p>Councillor Hughes began by thanking the committee for an in depth review which had given him food for thought. He had reviewed the recommendations and their potential implications with officers and had also discussed them at length with the chairman of the Planning Committee and earlier in the day with Cabinet colleagues. He would shortly provide the committee with a written response to each recommendation and was hopeful that the committee would be pleased by his response. He would also share his conclusions with the Planning Committee.</p> <p>On behalf of the committee the chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for his support to the task group during its review and thanked him and the Director for attending tonight’s meeting. He expressed some disappointment that the committee could not be provided with a more detailed response at this stage but appreciated that Councillor Hughes had essentially been invited to the meeting in order to comply with timescales laid down in the Council’s Constitution. Councillor Hughes confirmed that he would be happy to respond to anything that the committee wished to pass on once members had had an opportunity to read his response.</p> <p>The committee noted with pleasure the attached positive response to recommendation 20 from Lancashire County Council’s Highways department.</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously) that</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Housing be thanked for his support to the review and for attending the meeting; 2) the committee look forward to receiving shortly, and the opportunity to comment on, Councillor Hughes’ response to the review. |
| 13 | <p>Member Development Plan Outturn report 2013/2014 and draft Member Development Plan 2014/2015</p> <p>The committee welcomed the Leader, the Head of Human Resources and the Council’s</p> |

Member Development Champions, Councillors Ms Bell and Mrs Hothersall.

Councillors Ms Bell and Mrs Hothersall commended the Learning Hours which they believed attracted a healthy attendance and positive feedback, and they praised the excellent work of Steve Nugent, Gail Collins and all officers involved in Learning Hours and other training & development initiatives. They pointed out that individual members could make suggestions or requests via them as champions or direct to HR at any time about particular areas on which they would like training; few members did this however and training provision to date had been based around topics identified in members' Personal Development Plans, new legislation and general developments of interest.

In response to questions from the committee about preparation for the May 2015 elections both in terms of information provision to prospective candidates and for new member induction, the Leader said that there would undoubtedly be sessions arranged for prospective candidates. In relation to the post-election induction programme, times had of course changed since 2011, especially in terms of technology developments, and it may therefore be appropriate to have a different approach. However, it would be important to review the lessons learned from the 2011 induction programme, particularly what had gone well, such as the 'buddy' scheme.

The Leader and the Member Development Champions responded to a number of questions about the Learning Hours. There was no baseline for the number of members attending but it was considered that the Learning Hours were very successful and, given the breadth of topic areas, it was not surprising that some were of appeal to a wider audience (eg social media and planning) than others (eg pensions). Suggestions for topics were welcomed from members and the recent sessions on pensions and the business rates retention scheme had come about following requests by the Governance Committee. Holding a session for no longer than one hour, traditionally on a Thursday, had worked well to date as members knew exactly how much time they had to commit to and it allowed concentration levels to be maintained on what could be quite complex subjects. If members felt that a particular area warranted a longer session they could by all means discuss this with HR.

In response to an observation that the only example of a 'major project' in Appendix A was City Deal, the Leader confirmed there were a number of such examples and, from the audience, the Chief Executive said that members were currently actively involved in the preparation of the specification for the new waste procurement service.

Members suggested that the large number of member led My Neighbourhood Forum projects might form the basis of an excellent case study towards Level 2 of the Member Development Charter and enquired if consideration was being given to applying for Level 2. The Head of Human Resources agreed to look into the detailed criteria as he understood that Level 2 accreditation required a specific project taken over a period of time. In addition there would need to be an assessment of the time and resource implications for the authority.

The Head of Human Resources agreed to look into whether it would be possible to offer the ECDL programme to members outside of working hours given that much of it could be undertaken online outside of a traditional classroom setting.

Whilst noting that take-up by members of online training had been virtually non-existent since it was first promoted by the council in 2012, the committee was aware that with the provision of tablets, things had moved on for members and they may now be more receptive to online training. With this in mind, the Leader agreed that it would be useful for members to be provided with a list of what might be available for them to access online.

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| | <p>The Leader said she understood work was underway to establish whether members might access Cllr CONNECT via their tablets but this was proving challenging. Given that all of the 2011 member induction material was accessible via Cllr CONNECT the Head of Human Resources said that it may be feasible to set up a password protected member-only area on the council's website.</p> <p>In response to a question about attendance by members at local events and seminars, Councillor Bell confirmed that the Leyland My Neighbourhood Forum was regularly interacting with other agencies on key topics and challenges and she had in fact emailed all members about a training course being provided by a charity. The Head of Human Resources pointed out that Gail Collins regularly contacted members about forthcoming events which they might find of interest.</p> <p>Responding to questions from the committee about performance against key targets on page 9, the Head of Human Resources recognised that more could be done to measure member satisfaction with training and development and, with this in mind, a member survey of satisfaction with training & development and the member induction process would be carried out in September. Feedback on the quality of training and development provided tended to be limited to the Learning Hours as members did not always feedback on external sessions that they attended.</p> <p>In terms of attendance at Learning Hours, as had been mentioned earlier, some topics were of wider appeal than others and officers and members could do nothing other than encourage members to attend and point out that residents would ultimately benefit by local councillors being better informed. Copies of the slides / presentations at training were routinely provided to those who attended and to any other member who had specifically requested them. The Leader confirmed that she would be more than happy to take suggestions from the committee on how the key actions in the Member Development Plan could be made more SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound).</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously) that the committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) receive a further report at the next meeting on the status of the number of appraisals outstanding; 2) welcome the fact that prospective candidate sessions will be held in the run up to the 2015 borough, parish and town council elections; 3) request that preparation for the 2015 member induction programme commence and that it be included in the Member Development Action Plan; 4) request that further consideration be given to achieving Level 2 of the Member Development Charter; 5) welcome the offer to investigate the possibility of providing access to the ECDL qualification at times convenient to members; 6) welcome the offer to revisit the approach to e-learning; 7) look forward to an update on access to Cllr CONNECT following the roll out of tablets; 8) meet to consider how the Council's action plans might be made more SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound), and 9) thank the Leader, the Head of Human Resources and the Member Champions for attending the meeting and responding to questions. |
| 14 | <p>Scrutiny Review of External Communications - Final Progress Report</p> <p>The Leader and the Head of Human Resources remained in the meeting to respond to questions on this item.</p> <p>Noting that communications underpinned and supported the delivery of the Corporate Plan, the committee enquired how communications priorities were set and whether the Leader would consider a focus and campaign around cleanliness and encouraging</p> |

residents to take pride in their area. The Leader confirmed that the authority certainly set priorities as to what, when and how it was important to communicate. When the My Neighbourhood areas first drew up their area plans it was clear that cleanliness was a common theme and it was agreed that there would be some borough wide targets. In terms of flytipping it had not yet been decided whether there would be a borough wide campaign or whether it would be addressed via 'Love Where You Live'. The Head of Human Resources explained that the Public Relations team had a live plan which identified communications planned around items in the Corporate Plan and this was reviewed on a quarterly basis to identify any gaps or opportunities.

The Leader agreed with a comment that although the Council might be doing a lot of 'really good stuff', residents might think it was not doing anything unless it communicated and promoted more widely, but she pointed out that it was not always easy to get messages out.

In responding to why recommendations 4 (review of public relations policies and procedures) and 8 (central pooling of publicity and communications budgets) had not been implemented, the Head of Human Resources pointed out that the council was constantly looking at how it could improve, but the last few years had seen a period of transition within the PR team due to periods of maternity leave and temporary cover but it was expected that the team would be back to a full complement by the end of September. Publicity campaigns were sometimes led by specific service areas when it was considered that the derived benefits would not justify the time and efforts of the PR team. The committee maintained that there were times when it would surely be appropriate to have a joint campaign particularly in the current economic climate when everyone was expected to do more and more for less.

In relation to recommendation 11, the Leader confirmed that she met on a quarterly basis with the editor of the local newspaper group and the relationship was generally fairly good. There was no formal agenda for the meetings but they essentially provided an opportunity for the council to comment on / raise issues of concern over recent press coverage and for the editor to comment on the type of information the council provided to her. In response to a question from a member about 'information balance', the Leader confirmed that the council tried to ensure that the media were provided with balanced information, particularly around budget time, but the council could not control what was written and or how things were reported. The Head of Human Resources said that the Senior Public Relations Officer robustly and promptly followed up any inaccuracies reported in the local media. From the audience, the Chief Executive pointed out that the relationship with the editor was mutually beneficial as she was keen to increase content about South Ribble to cater for the readership south of the river and we were keen for the borough's events, locations and news to be correctly reported as 'South Ribble' rather than 'Preston'.

In explaining the Council's social media strategy, the Head of Human Resources said that a pilot had originally been launched for the My Neighbourhood Areas and a report had subsequently been produced on the current position and our aspirations. The intention was to roll out Facebook and Twitter to a small number of other areas such as Environmental Health with, in all likelihood, access to Facebook being limited to around 10 officers working closely with the Public Relations team. The Head of Human Resources suggested that the number of 'likes', tweets and friends could help to measure the success of the strategy.

The committee noted that the Council's website would not meet the SOCITM 4 out of 4 standard and asked for an explanation of why this was the case. The Head of Human Resources explained that advice from the Council's IT Manager, the Public Relations team and our website provider, Firmstep, was that the SOCITM criteria were somewhat old fashioned now and their prescribed structure would not lead to an easily usable and

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| | <p>functional website. Additionally, the Council was no longer a member of SOCITM partly due to the high subscription fees and we did not intend to benchmark our website against those of other local councils.</p> <p>Acknowledging that recommendation 19 (mobile applications) was still to be implemented, the Head of Human Resources said that he would ask for a status report from the IT Manager.</p> <p>The committee asked for an update on the council's position on webcasting of council meetings especially in light of recent legislation. The Leader reminded the committee that filming of meetings was already permitted under the Constitution as long as it did not disrupt the meeting. She confirmed that officers were currently looking into options in relation to the possible replacement of the current microphone and voting system and recommendations would come forward in due course.</p> <p>In response to a question and observation from the member of the public, the Leader pointed out that local media knew exactly when meetings were taking place and could, and did, attend when they chose to do so. They also knew about recent legislation changes in relation to filming of council meetings so she did not consider that the council should have contacted the local press to inform them that a member of the public was intending to film tonight's meeting. She did not believe that this council was falling behind other local authorities and repeated that recommendations would come forward in due course about any new equipment requirements for this council.</p> <p>In relation to recommendation 24, the Leader confirmed that she was not aware of any feedback since members adopted noticeboards in the borough but she suggested that the Community Involvement Officers may have had some feedback via the My Neighbourhood areas.</p> <p>In response to a question about recommendation 27, the Leader said that the member web pages referred to in the update would be managed and maintained by the council but there was nothing to stop members setting up a personal website separate from the Council's website.</p> <p>RESOLVED unanimously that the committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) welcome the Leader's commitment to consider a borough-wide campaign to encourage cleanliness and residents to have pride in their local area; 2) look forward to the re-consideration of a business process review of public relations policies and procedures in the autumn; 3) welcome a copy of the council's social media strategy and development of success measures; 4) request a further report on the effectiveness of the Council's website and its measures of success; 5) receive a progress report on the development of mobile applications and individual member webpages, and 6) welcome the Leader's assurance that webcasting would be considered as part of the wider exploration of equipment requirements in light of new legislation and request that the committee be involved in any decision going forwards. |
| 15 | <p>Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities - Progress Report</p> <p>Noting that the majority of the recommendations identified in the report had been accepted and (were in the course of being) implemented the committee asked if the Leader could provide an update on Recommendation 1.</p> <p>In relation to 1) Further consideration to South Ribble becoming a World Health Organisation Healthy Borough, the Leader explained that she had discussed this with</p> |

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| | <p>Councillor Hughes and he was satisfied that the Local Development Framework was sufficiently aligned with the wellbeing of the borough that there would be no additional benefit from taking forward this recommendation. The Leader agreed to respond in writing.</p> <p>The committee noted recommendation 2) Council and partner organisations develop health impact assessments as part of their decision making process, policy development and project management frameworks, which had been allocated to the Health and Wellbeing Partnership.</p> <p>The Leader confirmed that some good work had been done on health impact assessments and by the Chorley and South Ribble Health and Wellbeing Partnership but she was concerned about the suggestion that each My Neighbourhood Forum should have a nominated Health Champion. The forums were designed to take projects forward and she did not wish to see them diverted from their main focus. Councillor Miss Bell pointed out that many of the projects being led by the forums had an underlying beneficial impact on the health and wellbeing of local residents.</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously) that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the recommendations be noted, and 2) the committee look forward to a written response from the Leader to Recommendation 1. |
| 16 | <p>Update on Scrutiny Matters</p> <p>(a) Appointment to Scrutiny Task Groups</p> <p>The committee agreed the following membership of the Ageing Population Task Group: Councillors Coulton, Mrs S Jones, Ogilvie, Titherington and Miss Walker and of the Road Casualties and Deaths Task Group: Councillors M Gardner, Green, K Jones, Martin, Otter and M Tomlinson.</p> <p>(b) Update on Drainage and Flooding Review</p> <p>Councillor M Gardner reported that the Review of Drainage and Flooding was making good progress in exploring the key issues affecting South Ribble. The task group had already held helpful meetings with Ian Welsby and Stacy Carruthers from Lancashire County Council's flood risk management team; Jennifer Mullin and Lee Foden from this council's public health team and Helen Hockehull from the council's Planning service. The task group was now looking forward to meeting with the Leader of the Council and engaging members in the review. Councillor Gardner would keep the Scrutiny Committee updated on developments.</p> <p>(c) Update on Welfare Reform</p> <p>The chairman said that the task group had acknowledged that recent developments signified the most significant changes to welfare reform to date. The task group was in the process of meeting with representatives of relevant organisations and council officers and would in due course formulate a number of recommendations. He suspected that the review would perhaps not be as in depth as originally anticipated due to the enormity of the task.</p> <p>(d) Verbal Update on LCC Health Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>The chairman reminded the meeting that he had circulated committee minutes for members' information and explained public health in the county was split into three themes: Early Living, Living Well and Ageing Well.</p> <p>(e) The chairman reported that he had recently attended useful seminars on Health</p> |

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| | <p>Impact Assessments at county hall and Welfare Reform in Manchester</p> <p>(f) Forward Plans</p> <p>The committee noted its own Forward Plan and that of Cabinet and the chairman suggested it would be appropriate for the committee to consider the Waste Contract before it was taken to Cabinet in November.</p> |
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The meeting finished at 8.35pm.

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