

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Scrutiny Committee

Meeting held at 6.00pm on Tuesday, 22 September 2015 in Wheel Room, Civic Centre, West Paddock, Leyland PR25 1DH

Present:-

Councillor M Titherington (in the chair)

Councillors Mrs Ball, Mrs Blow, Coulton, Martin, K Jones, Mrs B Nathan, M Tomlinson, Mrs K Walton, Watkinson, Wharton and Mrs Woollard

In Attendance:-

Darren Cranshaw (Scrutiny and Performance Officer) and Andy Houlker (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance:

Councillor Michael Green (Cabinet member for Housing & Healthy Communities) and Councillor Mrs M Smith (Leader of the Council) and Mark Gaffney (Director of Neighbourhoods, Environmental Health & Assets), Denise Johnson (Director of Development, Enterprise & Communities), Steve Nugent (Head of Human Resources) and Ian Parker (Director of Corporate Governance & Business Transformation (Monitoring Officer))

Public Attendance:- 1

Other Members & Officers:- Councillors Ms Bell, Bennett, Foster, Mrs Mary Green, Mrs S Jones, Mrs Moon, P Smith and Snape

Minute No.	Description/Resolution
9	Apologies for Absence There were no apologies as all members of the committee were present.
10	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.
11	Minutes of the Last Meeting RESOLVED (unanimously): That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the chairman, subject the wording of min. no.5(6) being amended to read as follows ‘the committee requests this council look for good practise in other councils to try and increase the amount of affordable housing’.
12	Matters Arising from Previous Meeting(s) The committee considered the list of matters arising from the last and earlier meetings. It was agreed to remove all the matters from the list, with the exception of the following: 23/06/15 – Performance, Budget and Risk monitoring report – year end 2014/15 (April 2014 – March 2015) – Min. No.5 (3, 4, 6, 7, 8 & 9)
13	Cabinet Member Update – Housing & Healthy Communities The chairman welcomed the Cabinet member for Housing and Healthy Communities (Councillor Michael Green) and the Directors of Neighbourhoods, Environmental Health & Assets (Mark Gaffney) and Development, Enterprise & Communities (Denise Johnson). The Cabinet member thanked the committee for the invitation to discuss matters in this new portfolio (3-4 months old). The elements of the portfolio fitted very well together.

Housing was constantly moving, being currently high on the national political agenda and locally the City Deal made housing very important. The council was working on its Housing Strategy which needed to be correct as this would shape City Deal creating a practical bright vision for South Ribble as a whole. The council was working in partnership to do its best for the young in the borough, similarly it endeavoured to influence partners regarding health in the borough. All these had links with the City Deal which would impact on such services to residents.

The Cabinet member indicated that the Housing Strategy was scheduled to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting in November. It had been delayed because of the national agenda, after Cabinet the strategy would go out to consultation. There were issues of supply and affordability and around quality and sustainability of communities. He commented that some properties were unoccupied. The strategy would be supported by an action plan to measure success.

In respect of health matters, the Cabinet member referred to the new Health & Wellbeing Partnership which now included Preston. One major/key item on that partnership's agenda was the City Deal. As this would have a significant impact on South Ribble, Preston and Chorley. For example there was a need to look at the provision of GP facilities to support growth across the borough which required a dialogue with the NHS and health providers. The cabinet member confirmed that members would be kept updated on the work of the partnership.

Regarding young people the committee was informed that the county council had created a new partnership (Childrens Partnership Board) with a footprint of South Ribble, Chorley and West Lancashire. It was early days and very difficult to assess its effectiveness, the first meeting looked at such matters as e-safety and child sexual exploitation.

The Cabinet member confirmed that whilst housing was in his portfolio, homelessness was not in his portfolio but Corporate Support (Councillor Mrs Moon). He was not in a position to respond on what preparation/actions the council had in place to assist victims of the refugee crisis. There was cross working between portfolios for the good of residents of South Ribble.

Responding to an enquiry about long-term empty properties, the committee was informed that there were 559 in February 2015 and 359 in September 2015 (down 36%). The council had written to them indicating schemes available and visited/inspected all those properties. There were in differing, states of repair, time empty and reasons why empty. Also regarding this topic and responding to the committee, the Cabinet member indicated that he would look at means to measure the success of reducing the number of empty properties. He was pleased with progress to date which had had a positive impact on the waiting lists and informed committee that to raise awareness, there was an empty properties week at the end of November.

The Cabinet member responding to an enquiry regarding the provision of affordable housing confirmed that in 2014/15, 97 units had been provided against a target of 35 and that at the moment 35 units would remain the council's target. He felt that the topic should not be just chasing numbers but also needed to be wider such as a quality fit for residents of the borough. Whilst the committee felt that with City Deal the target should be higher, the Cabinet member commented that the figure could be revised in the future but comparisons should not be made with other local authority areas. He indicated that the council's Housing Strategy would show how aspirational the council was.

The Director of Development, Enterprise & Communities added that going forward the council needed to look at the process of the housing market and how it worked. The types of housing, in the right place that are needed for current and future residents. There were properties not being occupied, as cannot get properties adopted by a registered provider (ie housing association). The housing market was currently very fluid and the council needed to look at how housing at national level affected the local market. The Cabinet member indicated that this would form part of the Housing Strategy and that

there would be a Member Learning Hour on Affordable Housing.

The Cabinet member indicated that the blank column under measures of success on page 3 of the report was because it was very early days and as yet were intangible. This would be completed in due course.

In respect of the right to buy scheme, the Cabinet member confirmed that it was the government's intention to extend the scheme. The proportion of home ownership had fallen in recent years. There could be an impact on housing associations which would be assessed as part of the Housing Strategy.

The committee was pleased to see that the waiting list for disabled facilities grants (DFGs) had reduced. The Cabinet member acknowledged that there had previously been a problem. However this had been dramatically reduced by the council dealing with these itself and the dedication of its staff. There were currently 82 on the list (about £400,000) of which about a third were high priority. The council had looked at those on the list and what they required, some had voluntarily come off the list, in some cases the adaptation was provided but not necessarily gold plated. If the contribution was prohibitive to a resident there was dialogue with the county council to best meet the person's needs and the council also passported/signposted people to providers. The Director of Development, Enterprise & Communities added that there was never enough money to deal with these. The funds were allocated by the county council from its Social Care Fund. The key issue was to ensure the council got the most funds it could for its residents.

The Cabinet member confirmed that the council had successfully bid but not all the monies under the Better Care Fund had as yet been allocated. It was suggested this and DFG improvements/adaptations kept people out of hospital and saved money for the CCGs/NHS. The council ought to be stressing that this prevention needed to be funded to stop people from going into hospital.

In respect of the Counter Terrorism Act, the Cabinet member was pleased to comment that South Ribble was not a high risk. The funding was being used on such as training staff and ICT security. The council was currently producing an action plan.

The council had successfully bid for funding from the Police & Crime Commissioner which was being used on such as training (child sexual exploitation), security for vulnerable residents, mobile CCTV and diversionary activities. The council always sought potentially available funds.

The Cabinet member commented that in respect of the positive reduction of overall crime figures in the borough, the council met as part of the Crime & Disorder Partnership, with the police separately and from time to time with the Police & Crime Commissioner. Whilst the council welcomed that these figures were still reducing it needed to be monitored.

The Cabinet member confirmed that this council continued to press the county council for the creation of an extra Care Housing Scheme in South Ribble.

Responding to an enquiry about little information from the teaching hospitals about the pressures from City Deal, the Cabinet member commented that the health authorities had been a little reticent in coming forward. The City Deal was delivering the Local Development Framework (LDF) at an accelerated rate and part of that was health needs. That was why the City Deal had been added as a key priority on the Health & Wellbeing Partnership. He felt there should be additional health facilities (such as minor operations etc) in South Ribble instead of residents having to either go to Chorley or Preston. This would reduce the impact on transportation. This should be promoted at every opportunity and there was a member Learning Hour on Your Hospitals Your Health consultation at 6.00pm on 29 October 2015.

	<p>RESOLVED (unanimously) that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the committee thanks the Cabinet member for Housing & Healthy Communities the Directors of Neighbourhoods, Environmental Health & Assets and Development, Enterprise & Communities their attendance and answering the committee's questions; 2. the committee appreciates that this is a new portfolio which the Cabinet member is getting to grips with and requests that he attend and present a progress update to the committee in six months; 3. the committee <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) looks forward to receiving and commenting on the forthcoming Housing Strategy; and ii) looks forward to the strategy having ambitious SMART targets including around affordable housing; 4. the committee thanks the Cabinet member for the offer to provide the committee with regular updates on the Health & Wellbeing Partnership and involving it in relevant projects; and 5. the committee is grateful to the Cabinet member agreeing to work with the committee's Health Steering Group.
14	<p>Scrutiny Review of Loneliness and Social Isolation – Cabinet response</p> <p>The Cabinet member for Housing and Healthy Communities (Councillor Michael Green) remained present and was joined by the Director of Corporate Governance & Business Transformation (Monitoring Officer) (Ian Parker). The Cabinet member was grateful to the committee's tasks group for looking into this matter which was fundamental to some residents. The council would now like to take it up and run with it for the benefit of residents of the borough. It was envisaged initially that the council would pilot an area to assess the level of demand (numbers) in the community. Whilst partners and interested groups may have signed up, at present it was an unknown quantity and there was a key need to fill in those blanks. The county council had also identified this as a key issue and this council would work closely with it.</p> <p>In response to the chairman, the Cabinet member acknowledged that it was known that of 65+ year olds approximately 6-13% were affected, but it was not known where they were. One barrier to this was data sharing. The council was currently in contact with a GP surgery to try to identify those that might need help. The scale needed to be assessed and partners informed. It was anticipated that there would be a latent demand that partners would need to address.</p> <p>The Cabinet member indicated that one area it was looking towards was its My Neighbourhood Forums (MNF). Letters were being sent to their chairmen/vice-chairmen to recommend and encourage that these to raise the profile of the issue in their areas. Also Gateway staff were being given dementia friendly training along with other frontline staff. The council was looking within existing budgets at steps to become a Dementia Friendly Borough. Councillor Coulton (Chairman – Western Parishes MNF) commented that there would shortly be a meeting of the MNF chairmen/vice-chairmen and it would be helpful if the Cabinet member came and spoke about this. If invited, the Cabinet member was more than happy to attend and talk about the pilot. The council needed to start somewhere and build on that.</p> <p>The Cabinet member commented that some years ago the council had previously had an Older Peoples Partnership set up by the county council and later by Age Concern. However, the council felt there were other ways to do this. The council's Older Peoples Champion was keen to pursue and the South Ribble Partnership (SRP) was seen as fundamental with a number of key partners. The Health and Wellbeing Partnership (HWP) also needed to be very conscious of the older people's needs agenda. It was felt appropriate to create a third partnership but work smarter with existing ones and see what influence the council can have with these and review later. The Cabinet member added that it was not for him or the council to say if the council's champion would have a place on the SRP and if not, there were other ways/mechanisms of working with the SRP.</p>

	<p>The Cabinet member stated that the pilot would look at numbers of people by contacting people in this area on a triage system (telephone/visits etc). The Director added, who benefited, which part of government, the council would look for sustainability (such as a previous project Health in the Home). The council had contacted a GP surgery which though initially resistant was now showing positive signs it would share data. For example there may be 200 people over 75 years old who would receive a telephone triage (with right questions obtained from partners). Some may not realise or want assistance. There may be 25% that then receive a home visit with information collected relevant to partners and given to them, conscious of latent demand. This may result in additional demand on services of 1-1000 per annum. On completion of the pilot see were the root went such as central government, county council, NHS etc. Along with conversation with those agencies/partners that might benefit (make savings) from identifying and addressing these issues such as Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) and NHS.</p> <p>The Director confirmed that there was not specific budget and the cost would be met within existing budgets, such as the outbound calls by Gateway (ie 200) could be spread over two months. The Director added responding to an enquiry that it was not possible to predict everything from history but it was known that bereavement was a trigger point. Gateway staff had been trained and offered a bereavement service.</p> <p>The Cabinet member re-assured that the council would work with partners on the scripting of appropriate questions etc to avoid upsetting individuals. However, it was anticipated that some might simply not want to respond.</p> <p>Responding to the committee in respect of recommendation 8, the Cabinet member commented on the recent history and confirmed that he had requested a policy on the letting of the Banqueting Suite and that the possibility of lettings at subsidised rates for community groups be explored.</p> <p>A member of the public suggested in respect of recommendation 7, that the council also used its existing Forward newspaper to publicise events as it circulated to all properties in the borough. The Leyland Guardian also had an events section. Also an article be included in Forward by the Cabinet member be included in the Christmas issue (when it was known people felt most lonely).</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously) that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the committee thanks the Cabinet member for Housing & Healthy Communities and the Director of Corporate Governance & Business Transformation for their attendance and answering the committee's questions; 2. the committee welcomes the Cabinet member's offer to meet with the 'My Neighbourhood' chairmen about loneliness and social isolation; 3. the committee is pleased the Cabinet member confirms that the Lettings Policy for the Banqueting Suite is being reviewed and encourages the council to let the suite at a reduced rate to community groups; and 4. the committee requests that a progress report be presented in six months.
15	<p>People Action Plan – out-turn 2014/2015 and draft 2015/2019</p> <p>The chairman welcomed the Leader (Councillor Mrs M Smith) and the Head of Human Resources (Steve Nugent) commenting that this was a very favourable report. The Leader thanked the chairman for accepting the report and highlighted the pleasing reduction of sickness absence to 6.06 days (2014/15) with a revised target of 5.9 days in 2015/16. She also added that the council's coaching scheme was going very well.</p> <p>The Leader confirmed that the council's level of sickness absence was very low compared to other local authorities. However, it was a very difficult area to control/manage as it did not need a lot of staff absences to take the figure up which could not be anticipated. There was long term sickness 6-12 months (53% of total) and those cases the council gave as much support as possible. The council's aim was to reduce the level further but it was not guaranteed.</p>

In respect of staff performance appraisals, the Leader commented that this was an annual question with a number of factors affecting the figure and why it was 95% not 100% (such as staff turnover, form not returned etc). The council strove to get this figure as high as possible.

Responding to an enquiry regarding the coaching scheme, the Leader stated that 25-30 managers had now completed the course and were now able to have a coaching conversation with their staff. This could mean that the manager not necessarily instruct a member of staff but work with them to get more out of it. It was hard to measure, quite broad and holistic and not necessarily tangible but feedback was being sought. She added that most forward thinking organisations tried to have a coaching culture. It was also open to members of the council and could be included as part of formulating an individual member's Member Development Plan.

The Leader stated that the provision of a cycle shelter at the Civic Centre would be looked at.

The health and wellbeing initiatives were felt to be beneficial and appreciated by staff. There was always a high take-up of the health and wellbeing day (tomorrow). The Head of Service indicated that about 15-20 staff regularly attended the Pilates class. Some staff with muscular skeletal issues benefited and also staff found it useful as a means to talk/network. There was also Body Pump which had about 12 attendees. Whilst not having figures to hand it was understood a large number of staff (50-60) took up the offer of a flu jab. Also some frontline staff had received a Hepatitis B jab. The Leader accepted that there was a cost but this was not large and it was felt the benefit to staff and council outweighed that.

The committee applauded the council on the new Apprentice Scheme. The Leader commented that initially the council had envisaged four apprentices but with a different way of working it had been able to increase this to 10. She hoped that as they progressed they could find a position within the council but the Leader did not know what the future held.

In respect of business transformation in Appendix A, the committee was informed that whilst this area came under the portfolio of the Cabinet member for Corporate Support (Councillor Mrs Moon), the council was identifying areas to increase efficiencies and effectiveness which would be reported to members.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that:

1. the committee thanks the Leader and the Head of Human Resources for their attendance and answering the committee's questions;
2. the committee was very pleased to receive and note the report and commends the council on a positive report and progress made with the People Plan;
3. the committee
 - i) applauds the council on the reduction of the level of sickness absence and hopes it will be able to reduce this further; and
 - ii) recognises the effort of council staff to achieve the reduced level of sickness absence
4. the committee encourages the council to aim for a 100% response to the employee appraisals;
5. the committee welcomes the offer to look at the possible provision of a bike shelter at the Civic Centre; and
6. the committee congratulates the council on the new Apprenticeship Scheme.

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Member Development Plan – out-turn report 2014/15 and draft 2015/19

The Leader (Councillor Mrs M Smith) and the Head of Human Resources (Steve Nugent) remained present. The chairman welcomed the addition of the council's two member development champions (Councillors Ms Bell and Mrs Snape). The Leader indicated that a lot was happening. She commented that the Member Learning Hour sessions were

becoming increasingly important as a means to impart knowledge, especially on planning with the recent session planning for non-planners. The current top subject was on the Combined Authority with at least two sessions being scheduled shortly. This was a very important topic with a lot of information members' needed to digest before the council made some decisions.

As a newly elected member to the council in May, Councillor Mrs Snape felt that the new member induction programme had been very effective. Although as yet, she had not seen the evaluation results. The Head of Service confirmed that these were being compiled. The Leader agreed it would be helpful to know where effective and not. When members were elected there was a great amount of information to absorb and given in small chunks was helpful. As was the mock council (held a couple of days before a normal meeting of the council). The Leader confirmed that when the feedback was analysed it could be shared with members. Councillor Mrs Snape added that it was often difficult to give an evaluation straight after a session because sometimes you needed time to evaluate and see how to put the information in to practise.

It was confirmed that other methods of evaluation were used in addition to forms, such as simply talking to individual members.

In response to an enquiry the onus on evaluation feedback in some part also lay with an individual member who could contact a member champion or the person who led the session. This was something members could be reminded of. The Head of Service added that feedback was very rarely negative but very supportive and positive. The Leader understood the comment that the recent learning hour on planning might have appeared rushed but there were a few new members of staff who might not have been used to addressing councillors. There was always a danger that these sessions might over ran the allocated hour (6-7pm).

It was confirmed that all members would be given the opportunity to have a personal development plan which would include their individual learning needs. It was also an opportunity for the member to discuss their preferred learning method/style. The Head of Service added that in November there was a learning hour on members' personal development plans.

The Leader commented that the learning hours sessions were aimed to help/support members' in their role and it was up to individual members whether they chose to attend or not. It was acknowledge that some sessions were more interesting and/or relevant to councillors than others. A recent session she attended on the council's statement of accounts had about seven members present. Members were always encouraged to attend these sessions.

The Leader confirmed that the member learning hour was that, an hour (6-7pm) and members knew what to expect. Yes, there were certain topics such as planning that could justify longer, but these should take a smaller area and then have another session later. However, she could foresee the topic of a Combine Authority taking longer, but councillors had to be up to speed on this matter before the meeting of council in November.

In addition the Leader stated that members on the council's quasi-judicial committees such as licensing and planning had a mandatory training session. Members on those committees had to attend that session before they could sit on that committee. There was cross party support for mandatory training on those committees.

RESOLVED (unanimously) that:

1. the committee thanks the Leader, the Member Development Champions and the Head of Human Resources for their attendance and answering the committee's questions;
2. the committee is pleased to receive the positive report;
3. the committee welcomes the positive initial feedback on Member Induction

	<p>following the full borough election in May 2015;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. the committee requests that alternative ways be explored to evaluate the effectiveness of member training, including feeding back the results to members; and 5. the committee strongly supports the importance of and endeavours that members attend mandatory training sessions.
17	<p>Investors in People (IIP) The committee had no questions and was more than happy to receive and note the report. Members had previously received a presentation at a meeting of council and many of the Investors in People recommendations had been included in the council's People Plan.</p>
18	<p>Scrutiny Work Programme 2015/2016 and beyond The chairman referred to the committee's draft work programme and that most topics to be examined in 2015/16 could be grouped under the two headings 'health' and 'highways'. Initially the committee proposed to set-up a Health Steering Group consisting of no more than six members and to appoint that group's chairman.</p> <p>RESOLVED (unanimously) that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the committee's draft work programme 2015/16 and beyond be adopted; 2. the committee establishes its Health Steering Group consisting of no more than six members and that the chairman is councillor Mrs B Nathan; and 3. the names of the remaining five members of the Health Steering Group be submitted by the two political groups.
19	<p>Update on Scrutiny Matters</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Verbal update on Lancashire County Council's Health Scrutiny Committee – the chairman reported he had attend two meetings held on 15 July and 1 September 2015. The first had concentrated on an overview the county council and partners work to assist rest homes to reduce the number of residents' falls and for them to have policies in place to deal with falls. The second meeting had focused around the fragmentation of commissioning and delivery of health services amongst partners. b) Member feedback on meeting and training attended on behalf of the committee – Councillor Martin reported that he and three other members of the committee had attended a course for scrutiny chairmen. This was heavily subscribed and had been very interesting/useful. c) Cabinet and Scrutiny Forward Plans – the committee noted the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee Forward Plans.

..... Chairman

(The meeting finished at 8.54pm)