

Cabinet

Wednesday, 13th October, 2021, 6.00 pm

Held at Bamber Bridge Methodist Church, Station Road, Bamber Bridge, PR5 6ED

Cabinet in the Community – Bringing our Democracy to You

This meeting of the Cabinet is being held at Bamber Bridge Methodist Church, Station Road, Bamber Bridge, PR5 6ED. **A map of the location is provided on page 5 of this agenda.**

Parking is available to the front and rear of the venue and teas and coffees will be available from 5.30pm.

The meeting will be available to view live on [You Tube here.](#)

At the meeting members of the public will be able to ask questions of the Leader and members of the Cabinet for up to 1 hour.

If you have any queries, please contact democraticservices@southribble.gov.uk

Agenda

1 Welcome and Introduction

The Leader of the Council and Chair of Cabinet will introduce this first “Cabinet in the Community” meeting.

A promotional leaflet and a copy of the location map is attached.

2 Public Question Time

Members of the public to ask any questions of the Leader and Cabinet for up to an hour.

3 Apologies for Absence

4 Declarations of Interest

(Pages 5 - 8)

Members are requested to indicate at this stage in the proceedings any items on the agenda in which they intend to declare an interest. Members are reminded that if the interest is a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (as defined in the Members' Code of Conduct) they must leave the room for the whole of that item. If the interest is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, but is such that a member of the public could reasonably regard it as being so significant that it is likely that it would prejudice their judgment of the public interest (as explained in the Code of Conduct) then they may make representations, but then must leave the meeting for the remainder of the item.

5 Minutes of the Last Meeting

(Pages 9 - 16)

Minutes of the last meeting held on 15 September 2021 attached to be signed as a correct record.

6 Notice of Executive Decisions / Cabinet Forward Plan

The Notice of Decisions / Cabinet Forward Plan is available to view on the Council's web page for the period [1 October 2021 – 30 September 2022](#).

ITEMS OF THE LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER (STRATEGY AND REFORM)

7 Peer Challenge 2021

(Pages 17 - 46)

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive.

8 South Ribble Annual Performance Report 2020/21

(Pages 47 - 68)

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive.

ITEMS OF THE CABINET MEMBER (PLANNING, BUSINESS SUPPORT AND REGENERATION)

9 Business Recovery Post COVID Member Working Group update

(Pages 69 - 74)

Report of the Director of Planning and Development.

ITEMS OF THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER (HEALTH AND WELLBEING)

10 Progress on Climate Emergency and Air Quality Work

(Pages 75 - 88)

Report of the Director of Communities.

Gary Hall
Chief Executive

Electronic agendas sent to Members of the Cabinet Councillors Paul Foster (Chair), Michael Titherington (Vice-Chair), Aniela Bylinski Gelder, Bill Evans and Matthew Tomlinson

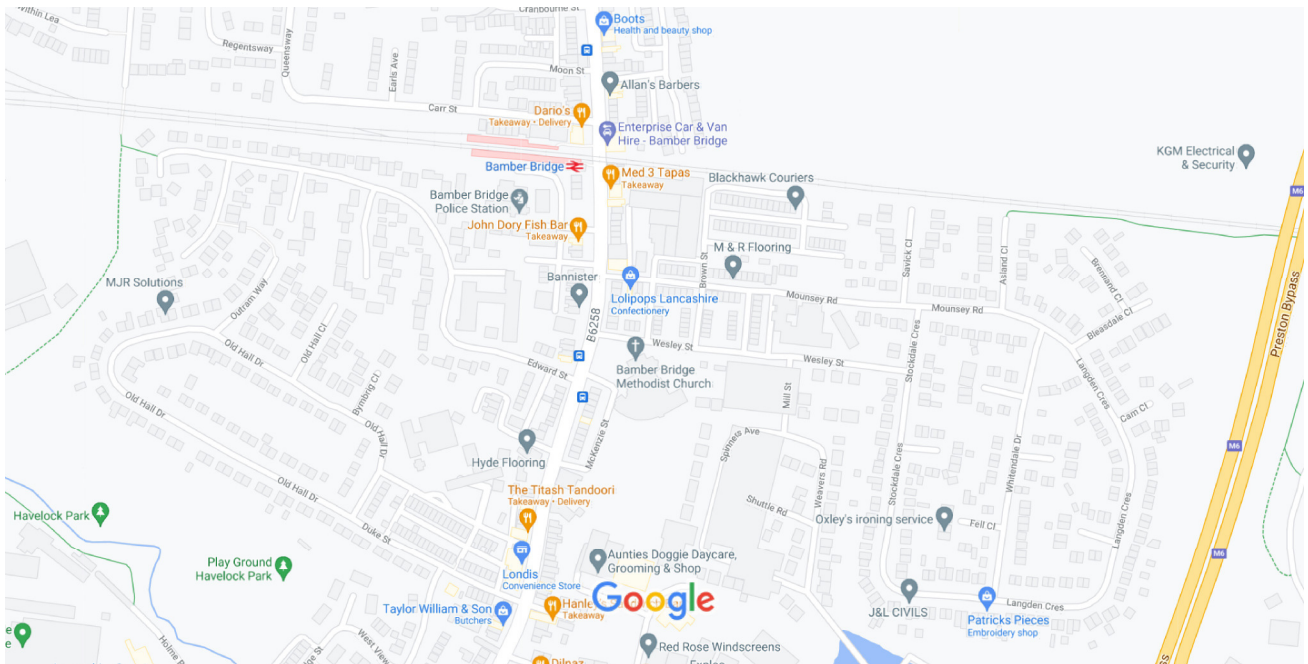
The minutes of this meeting will be available on the internet at www.southribble.gov.uk

Forthcoming Meetings

6.00 pm Wednesday, 17 November 2021 - Shield Room, Civic Centre, West Paddock, Leyland, PR25 1DH

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 1



Map data ©2021 50 m

This page is intentionally left blank

Cabinet in the Community

Bringing our democracy to you

Your questions answered

Wednesday 13 October, 6pm
Bamber Bridge Methodist Church,
Station Road, PR5 6ED

We're taking some of our Cabinet meetings to local venues across the borough – have your voice heard at a special Q&A session. The Leader and Cabinet at South Ribble Borough Council will be on hand to answer any questions you have.

What is a Cabinet meeting?

South Ribble's Cabinet comprises of the Leader of the Council and four Cabinet Members of the Council. Each has responsibility for a defined service area.

The Cabinet is responsible for carrying out almost all of the Council's functions in delivering services to the community. They meet once a month to make key decisions relating to the council and its services.

Who are the Cabinet Members?

Cllr Paul Foster - Leader of the Council responsible for strategy and reform
Cllr Mick Titherington - Deputy Leader responsible for health, wellbeing and leisure
Cllr Aniela Bylinski Gelder - Responsible for communities, social justice and wealth building
Cllr Matthew Tomlinson - Responsible for finance, property and assets
Cllr Bill Evans - Responsible for planning, business support and regeneration



This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 5



Minutes of	Cabinet
Meeting date	Wednesday, 15 September 2021
Members present::	Councillors Paul Foster (Chair), Michael Titherington (Vice-Chair), Aniela Bylinski Gelder, Bill Evans and Matthew Tomlinson
Officers:	Gary Hall (Chief Executive), Louise Mattinson (Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer), Neil Anderson (Assistant Director of Projects and Development), Howard Anthony (South Ribble Partnership Manager), Dave Whelan (Shared Services Lead - Legal & Deputy Monitoring Officer), Darren Cranshaw (Democratic, Scrutiny & Electoral Services) and Clare Gornall (Democratic and Member Services Officer)
Other members and officers:	Councillors Adams, Alty, Bretherton, Campbell, Coulton, Forrest, Mary Green, Michael Green, Lomax, Martin, Ogilvie, Rainsbury, Sharples, Mrs Smith, P Smith, Walton, and Wooldridge.
Public:	1

(Prior to the commencement of the meeting, a minutes' silence was held for Councillor Christine Melia who had recently passed away).

29 Apologies for Absence

There were none.

30 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Foster announced that he had been appointed to the North West Employers' Organisation Board and his Register of Interests would be updated accordingly.

There were no declarations pertaining to the items on the agenda.

31 Minutes of the Last Meeting

Decision made

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

32 Cabinet Forward Plan / Notice of Executive Decisions

The Cabinet considered its Forward Plan / Notice of Executive Decisions for the period 1 September 2021 – 31 August 2022.

Agenda Item 5

2

One member drew attention to a number of items listed as likely to contain exempt information. The Leader indicated that the items would be reviewed and where possible, reports would be considered in public.

Decision made

The Cabinet Forward Plan / Notice of Executive Decisions for the period 1 September 2021 – 31 August 2022 be noted.

33 Shared Consultation Framework

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member (Strategy and Reform) presented a report of the Deputy Chief Executive presenting the consultation framework for approval.

A member of the public asked a question in relation to the equality monitoring questions, querying the need for such personal information to be gathered. The Leader strongly disagreed, arguing that the information supplied is optional and the data assists the Council in improving its services to residents.

Decision made

1. That the Consultation Framework in Appendix A be approved;
2. That a "Consultation Checklist" be developed complementary to the list produced as part of the Community Involvement Review.

Reasons for decision

The Consultation Framework set out how South Ribble Borough Council undertakes consultations.

Without a framework, consultations may not be consistently planned and undertaken in the proper way across the council. This can lead to poor consultations and consequently poor decision making. This framework is a shared approach across Chorley and South Ribble Councils which will provide a consistent approach for staff to work too.

Consultation is also a way for communities, residents and businesses to engage with the Council and shape their local area. Without a framework key features that promote inclusivity and accessibility may not be routinely applied, inadvertently leaving some voices unheard.

The framework provides officers across South Ribble Borough Council with the guidance and tools to undertake high quality consultations as and when needed.

Alternative options considered and rejected

To not have a framework. As shared services continues to develop consultations could continue to be undertaken unilaterally by services, however the quality may be inconsistent. Further to this, different processes across shared teams could lead to

Agenda Item 5

3

confusion or misapplication, whereas a single shared framework will provide consistency.

34 Quarter 1 Performance Monitoring Report 2021-22

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member (Strategy and Reform) presented a report of the Deputy Chief Executive providing Cabinet with a position statement for the Corporate Strategy for quarter one (April – June) 2021/22.

The Cabinet considered the recommendations of the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel held on 13 September 2021 which were as follows:

The Panel:

1. thanks the Leader and Chief Executive for attending and for their detailed report;
2. welcomes the performance report and progress made in the first quarter of the year;
3. is grateful for the commitment for the new single strategic partnership to be scrutinised in the future and potential for joint scrutiny;
4. asks that the key performance indicator for fuel poverty be reviewed as part of the next refresh of the corporate strategy;
5. looks forward to receiving further information on the number of young people engaged in the community conversations and the link being made with mental health;
6. welcomes the offer of further examples of the outcome from the community hubs in future reports and the proposed evaluation;
7. looks forward to future reports including information on credit union take-up rates; and
8. is grateful for the offer of an update on the pre-planning advice services resuming and customer service response times.

Arising from members' questions on this item concern was expressed about the cost of building affordable homes in the borough, particularly the McKenzie Arms project which may require redesign. The Leader of the Council stressed that the Council was committed to investment in building affordable homes particularly in terms of social value to the borough.

A question was asked by a member of the public relating to the tree planting figures and regarding the percentage of trees which had not survived. The Leader of the Council disputed the figures quoted, added that the trees are planted by Lancashire County Council and that South Ribble's tree officers are aware that not all trees planted are expected to survive.

Agenda Item 5

4

Decision made

1. That the report be noted.
2. The recommendations of the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel be accepted.

Reasons for recommendations

The Council's performance framework sets out the process for reporting progress against the objectives of the Corporate Strategy. Robust monitoring ensures that the council continues to deliver its priorities and achieves the best outcomes for residents.

Alternative options considered and rejected

None

35 Workplace Strategy

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member (Strategy and Reform) presented a report of the Deputy Chief Executive requesting approval for the Workplace Strategy 2021-24.

Arising from questions from members regarding balancing flexibility with consistency, the Chief Executive gave assurances that the needs of the service would be prioritised.

Decision made

That the Workplace Strategy be approved and progressed to support the future efficient operation of the organisation.

Reasons for decision

To realise the social, economic, and environmental benefits of new ways of working in line with the changing operating context and workforce expectations.

Alternative options considered and rejected

To revert back to pre-Covid-19 working practices. This option has been rejected based on the opportunities presented to modernise our approach and in line with feedback from staff.

Agenda Item 5

5

36 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report 1

The Cabinet Member (Finance, Property and Assets) presented a report of the Director of Finance with 2 elements:

- 1) setting out the revenue and reserves forecast for the Council as at 31st July 2021 and
- 2) overall financial position of the Council in respect of the capital programme as at 31st July 2021.

Arising from discussions a question was asked by a member concerning pension costs. A response was provided by the Director of Finance.

A member of the public referred to allocation within the capital programme for both leisure facilities in 2023/24 and the Decarbonisation Scheme and enquired which was the priority.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member (Health and Wellbeing) indicated that both were important priorities. He stressed that ageing leisure centre stock needs investment but there is no set date on when this will happen.

Decision made

a) 2021/22 Corporate Revenue Budget Monitoring Report - position as at 31st July 2021

1. To note the forecast position for revenue and reserves as at 31st July 2021.
2. To note the variations to the revenue budget made during the period, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.

b) 2021/22 Corporate Capital Programme and Balance Sheet Monitoring Report – position as at 31st July 2021

1. To approve the revised capital programme as attached at Appendix A which reflects all amendments to the programme that have been approved in the 4 months to 31st July 2021, as detailed in paragraph 11.
 2. To note the position in the Balance Sheet Monitoring section of the report in respect of cash, investment and loan balances, and debtors as at 31st July 2021.
- c) That the comments of the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel be welcomed and accepted.

Reasons for decision

There is a forecast break-even position against the budget at 31st July 2021 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

Agenda Item 5

6

The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy reported that working balances were to be maintained at existing levels due to the financial risks facing the Council. The balance at the last reporting period (2020/21 Outturn) was £4.141m. The forecast level of general fund balances as at 31st March 2022 remains at £4.141m.

The decision ensures that the Council's budgetary targets are achieved, and the Council's Capital Programme is monitored effectively.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

37 Land Transfer at Vernon Carus

The Cabinet Member (Finance, Property and Finance) presented a report of the Director of Commercial taking forward the ambitions of the Council's Leisure Facilities Strategy which has the key ambition of developing local Sport and Community hubs across the Borough as a means of widening access to Leisure Facilities and promoting the concept of Leisure Local.

The report also builds on a report taken to Cabinet on 20th June 2020 which gave permission for officers to commence negotiations on the transfer of the land at the Vernon Carus Site. The new report sought a final decision on agreeing a transfer of land at the Vernon Carus Sports Club, Factory Lane, Penwortham and Penwortham Reservoir (see Appendix A - Plan of sites) to South Ribble Borough Council from Lane End Developments Construction Ltd.

Arising from member question regarding risk, the Chief Executive indicated that a substantial amount of risk had been mitigated by completing all backlog of maintenance. It was confirmed that the annual inspection would be carried out by an accredited inspector.

Decision made

1. That Cabinet approves the transfer of the land and reservoir to South Ribble Borough Council and the receipt of the sum of £500,000
2. That Cabinet approves the principles of the outline Master Plan. Further reports will come back through Cabinet and Council around the phasing of delivery and funding options for the component parts.
3. That Cabinet approves the funding of £150,000 plus a £25,000 contingency for the refurbishment of the existing Sports Club and Changing Rooms as phase 1A of the proposed Master Plan. The £150,000 is to be funded from s106 and £25,000 from the new Leisure Local budget.

Reasons for decision

The Transfer of the land in question is linked to a wider Housing development being driven by Trafford Housing Trust. The transfer of the site to the Council is an

Agenda Item 5

7

opportunity to take forward the new concept of Leisure Local as put forward in the Leisure Facilities Strategy adopted by the Council in October 2020.

Strategically, the Council has adopted a new Leisure Facilities Strategy through Cabinet. This highlights an ambition to develop leisure and community hubs across the borough as part of the concept of Leisure local.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The Council could choose not to accept the transfer of the land to South Ribble Borough Council. This would represent a missed opportunity in terms of developing a local Sports and Community Hub in-line with the objectives of the Leisure Facilities Strategy.

[Following the above item, the Chair announced that the next meeting of the Cabinet would be held on Wednesday, 13 October 2021 at 6.00pm at Bamber Bridge Methodist Church, Station Road, Bamber Bridge].

38 Exclusion of Press and Public

Decision made

That the press and public be excluded for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

39 Museum, culture and tourism team review

The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member (Strategy and Reform) presented a report of the Deputy Chief Executive requesting approval for the new structure for the shared museum, culture and tourism team following a period of formal consultation.

Decision made

To agree the proposals for the new structure as set out in Appendix A.

Reasons for decision

To complete the creation of a shared communications and visitor economy service with a new team that will take on the tourism function and the operation of the South Ribble Museum and Exhibition Centre and Worden Hall.

Alternative options considered and rejected

The preferred option does focus on a wholly shared team and the only realistic alternative is to keep the team working separately for Chorley and South Ribble, which would not deliver the benefits outlined above and is not in line with the previously agreed aspiration to have a shared team in this part of the organisation.

Agenda Item 5

8

If we kept the team operating each site separately there would still be a cost increase to South Ribble to operate the Worden Hall site, manage the museum and create a tourism role that is focussed on bringing visitors into the borough to support the local economy.

40 Award of contract for work on South Ribble Tennis Centre car park

The Cabinet Member (Finance, Property and Assets) presented a report of the Director of Commercial concerning the award of contract to the successful contractor for the work to extend the Car park at South Ribble Tennis and Fitness Centre as part of a wider refurbishment programme at the Council's Leisure Centres.

Decision made

1. That Cabinet agrees to the spending of up to £180k on the car park at South Ribble Tennis Centre to be funded from the Capital programme sum earmarked for the refurbishment of the Council's Leisure Centres.
2. That Cabinet delegates responsibility to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets in liaison with the Director of Commercial Services for the awarding of the contact to the successful bidder to complete the extension to the car park at South Ribble Tennis and Fitness Centre following a procurement exercise underway which is being carried out under the Council's procurement rules.

Reasons for recommendations

This is a long-standing project that has been discussed for a number of years whilst SERCO managed the Leisure Centres. This decision is about taking this project forward to relieve the congestion experienced at the South Ribble Tennis and Fitness Centre car park at peak time use within the Leisure Centre and allow for increased use of the facilities.

This decision will also allow the Council to take forward a key aspect of the Council's Leisure Facilities Strategy which is to widen access to its Leisure Centres.

Alternative options considered and rejected

There was always the option of not doing this project. This would mean that the car park would continue to be congested at South Ribble Tennis and Fitness Centre car park and therefore the Centre would struggle to develop into the future.

Chair

Date

Report of	Meeting	Date
Deputy Chief Executive (Introduced by Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member (Strategy and Reform))	Scrutiny Committee Cabinet	Tuesday 12 th October 2021 Wednesday 13 th October 2021

Is this report confidential?	No
------------------------------	----

Is this decision key?	No
-----------------------	----

Peer Challenge 2021

Purpose of the Report

1. To share the final report of the LGA (Local Government Association) Peer Challenge 2021.

Recommendations to Scrutiny Committee

2. To review the final report produced by the LGA peer team (appendix A) and consider the proposed action plan (appendix B) to respond to the recommendations.

Recommendations to Cabinet

3. That the final report be accepted.
4. That the action plan is approved for delivery.

Reasons for recommendations

5. To ensure the ongoing improvement of the council in response to the findings of the peer team.

Other options considered and rejected

6. As part of the peer challenge process the council is expected to review, acknowledge and respond to the recommendations made by the peer team.

Corporate priorities

7. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Agenda Item 7

An exemplary council	Thriving communities
A fair local economy that works for everyone	Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

Background to the report

8. The peer challenge process is not an inspection but rather an improvement-focused opportunity to explore and reflect on different areas of performance and planning.
9. It involves a team of peers made up of chief officers and experts from across the sector engaging with the council, considering key plans and documents as well as meeting with officers, members and partners.
10. The peer challenge process considers a number of factors including:
 - Understanding of the local context and priority setting
 - Financial planning and viability
 - Political and managerial leadership
 - Governance and decision making
 - Organisational capacity
11. The council can also select additional areas for focus which included the progress made against the Annual Governance Statement action plan, and the approach to development of the community hubs.

The peer challenge process

12. The peer challenge took place between the 30th June and 2nd July 2021. Although originally intending to attend the Civic Centre, restrictions linked to the pandemic prompted a decision to complete the process virtually with the peers using video conferencing to undertake their enquiries.
13. The peer challenge team was made up of five senior officers and members from other authorities who were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise. Prior to the challenge, the peer team were provided with a range of documents and information, including a position statement which set the scene for the challenge.
14. While on site the team spoke to more than 65 people, including a range of council staff, councillors, external partners and stakeholders through over 34 meetings and focus groups totalling 144 hours contact time.

Findings

15. On the final day the team presented their initial findings and subsequently submitted them to the council in a final report. This report can be found at appendix A.
16. In summary, the peer team recognised the promising nature of the work to date and outcomes in relation to governance that have been achieved, while delivering effective services throughout the pandemic and continuing to change ways of working including the implementation of shared services.

Agenda Item 7

17. There is more to do and the good work to date needs to be embedded. Plans and strategies also need to be developed to clearly set out the way forward for the council.
18. The peer team identified 8 recommendations to support continued improvement through a combination of 'quick wins' and longer-term objectives.
- a) Embed a culture of good governance
 - b) Provide full clarity on the ambition and plans for shared services
 - c) Programme Plan for future work and political priorities
 - d) Medium Term Financial Strategy
 - e) Assurance on capital programme delivery
 - f) Organisational development and Management Practice:
 - g) Community Hubs
 - h) Political engagement in a balanced authority
19. The full report was published on the council website in line with LGA requirements.
20. An action plan has been developed to outline how the council intends to respond to the recommendations with key milestones to be managed by the Senior Management Team. The full action plan is included at Appendix B.

Climate change and air quality

21. The work noted in this report does not impact the climate change and sustainability targets of the Councils Green Agenda and all environmental considerations are in place.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

22. The recommendations made by the Peer Team, most notably in relation to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and capital programme delivery, are welcomed and will be incorporated into the development of these areas to support the Council's continuous improvement.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

23. The action plan responds to the matters raised by the Peer Review and implementation of it will strengthen the ability of the Council to plan and deliver outcomes for the residents of South Ribble.

Appendices

Appendix A: Final peer challenge report

Appendix B: South Ribble peer challenge action plan

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
Victoria Willett (Service Lead - Transformation and Partnerships)	vicky.willett@southribble.gov.uk	01772 635505	27.09.21

This page is intentionally left blank


South Ribble Borough Council

Corporate Peer Challenge

30 June – 2 July 2021

Feedback report





1. Executive summary:.....	3
2. Key recommendations:	5
3. Summary of the peer challenge approach	7
4. Feedback	10
5. Next steps	21

1. Executive summary:

South Ribble Borough Council (SRBC) has made progress to address historic governance issues and challenges since their previous Corporate Peer Challenge in 2017 under the new Leadership of the Council since 2019. The scale of these challenges, as illustrated by External Auditors and previous peer reviews, was significant, and progress has been made. However as set out in this report, and as already recognised by the Council, further work is required to both consolidate work to-date and continue the Council's journey of improvement.

The peer team recognise the promising nature of the work to date and some of the outcomes achieved with many reforms being implemented as part of the Council's 2020 Annual Governance Action Plan. It is also encouraging that SRBC have engaged with external perspectives and constructive challenge to support this work through the corporate peer challenge process.

Concurrently, the Council has continued to deliver effective services for residents whilst also responding to the unprecedented challenges and issues presented through the Coronavirus pandemic. Councillors and officers across the organisation deserve recognition for their work to support local communities and neighbourhoods in addressing the challenges of COVID 19 and responding to a fast-paced and changeable context both nationally and regionally. The Council deserves further recognition for managing this work whilst simultaneously implementing shared services with Chorley Council, and the additional work and challenges that this will have presented.

The peer challenge team were due to spend three days on-site in South Ribble to complete this review. However, due to rising COVID-19 rates and Government guidance to minimise travel into the wider Lancashire area, it was agreed that this phase of the work would be completed virtually ahead of a physical revisit. The Leadership of the Council deserve credit for facilitating this change in approach at short notice, and this provides further evidence for their appetite for improvement.

Geographically, SRBC is a district council situated in Lancashire in the North West of England and takes its name from the river Ribble which provides a natural northern boundary to the borough. The borough covers approximately 44 square miles and contains a population of 110,527 residents in 50,200 households. The largest proportion of residents live in the Leyland and Penwortham areas, with the remaining population spread across a rural geography. The borough has strong transport connectivity, with motorway networks including

the M6, M61 and M65 providing good links into the neighbouring city of Preston and town of Blackburn. This connectivity also enables commuting into Greater Manchester and the Liverpool City Region.

The politics of SRBC is finely balanced; the political make up at the time of the CPC consists of 22 Labour, 22 Conservative, 5 Liberal Democrat and one Independent Councillor. The Council was Conservative led from 2007 – 2019, but following all-out elections became no overall control. Since 2019, the Council has been led by a Labour administration, supported through a ‘confidence and supply’ agreement with the Liberal Democrats on an issue-by-issue basis.

The peer team engaged with representatives from across the political groups and recognised that a significant deal of political energy and time is still expended addressing the history of SRBC, and that the opportunity exists now to move attention to more productive and forward-facing issues. This will require SRBC to develop a shared narrative for their past which is not politically coloured but owned across the organisation.

The Council’s governance challenges have been illustrated by their External Auditors issuing statutory recommendations for three consecutive years from 2017-2020, with a Section 24 report being issued in 2018. The administration was candid in describing these failings to the peer team and has developed an action plan in response to these issues and pro-actively used internal audit to offer further checks and assurance. The Council has made progress against all 13 strands in their Action Plan, including reviewing the constitution, developing a new performance framework, and implementing a new Organisational Development Strategy to address the cultural challenges needed alongside practical improvements.

The progress against this action plan is commendable, as is the prioritisation that these issues have been given within the Council. However, further work is needed to embed these principles; a continued focus on good governance should be maintained. Furthermore, there are some further issues beyond the current content of the action plan that need to be considered, including management of risk, use of controls and issues relating to information governance.

Since 2019, SRBC has experienced changes in both political and managerial leadership, with the election of a new administration, and the suspension and subsequent dismissal of the Council’s previous Chief Executive. The Council used this point to build on shared services arrangements and introduce a shared management structure across SRBC and

the neighbouring authority of Chorley, enabling the Councils to share skills and experience, and provide additional resilience to both areas. This shared Leadership Team is built on the longstanding shared financial and assurance services, and the more recent sharing of corporate services with further work underway to share ICT and customer services. The peer team heard a range of views (both positive and negative) regarding this programme of work and would encourage the Council to clearly set out their future ambition and appetite for shared services and to communicate these plans with staff and partners. It was also clear that knowledge of the proposed changes was different across the organisation, more clarity is needed so that staff and members know what is happening next and at what timescale.

As the Council continues to manage their immediate response to and plan for the longer-term recovery from COVID-19 it will be important that resources are prioritised across the competing demands of improving internal processes, progressing shared services, managing COVID recovery, as well as wider political aspirations. This balance and breadth of programmes over the coming years is manageable but will require careful planning and allocation of resources. It will also be important to provide clear communication to staff on the relationships and interdependencies of these initiatives, to support their understanding of prioritisation and the contribution of their roles.

2. Key recommendations:

The main body of this report contains a range of findings and recommendations which will support SRBC, and many of these may be easy to implement “quick wins” and practical actions. The report presents the feedback that was delivered to SRBC on Monday 5 July with the key recommendations listed below:

Recommendation One: Embed a culture of good governance: SRBC need to build on their momentum and progress regarding governance. This includes ensuring that their existing reforms have embedded within the organisation’s processes, practice, and culture, as well as considering further areas that may not currently be within the scope of the Council’s existing action plan.

Recommendation Two: Provide full clarity on the ambition and plans for shared services: One of the strongest themes to emerge during this peer review was the shared services arrangement with Chorley Council. It is the view of the peer team that the Council needs to be clearer on the over-arching vision, aims and timescales relating to shared

services including the processes that will be used to achieve these. This presents the opportunity to build on the progress that SRBC have made on shared services to-date and generate further staff support for future phases. This issue was also highlighted in the LGA revisit to SRBC following their 2017 Corporate Peer Challenge.

Recommendation Three: Programme Plan for future work and political priorities: There are several key priorities that exist at SRBC simultaneously. This includes a corporate commitment to governance improvements, an ambitious capital programme, COVID-19 recovery proposals, and future ambitions for shared services. Whilst this ambition is laudable, there is a need for the Council to carefully programme manage interdependencies and ensure that there is appropriate corporate capacity to deliver this breadth and depth of work.

Recommendation Four: Medium Term Financial Strategy: The Council has managed their finances well in responding to the immediate issues of COVID 19. However, the Council's current MTFS contains a rising budget gap through to 2024, and further work is required to assure proposals already contained and develop further policy options for future years.

Recommendation Five: Assurance on capital programme delivery: The Council plans to significantly increase their capital delivery programme over the next four-years. However, this is a largely borrowing funded programme and the minimum revenue provision of these plans should be built into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Further research should also take place on capital funding for this programme as borrowing from PWLB is more difficult than it has been in the past and cannot be used for any form of financial yield.

Recommendation Six: Organisational development and Management Practice: The Councillors and Officers of SRBC have worked extremely hard to support residents throughout the Coronavirus pandemic and political and managerial leaders are rightly proud of these achievements. As the country moves through the national roadmap to ease restrictions, SRBC should consider how these achievements are recognised, managing the wider workforce in returning to the workplace, and introductions for those who may have joined the Council during this period. There is also a need for more standardised practice to HR across council directorates.

Recommendation Seven: Community Hubs: SRBC have developed a community led

approach to resident engagement through their Community Hubs. This model has real potential to reshape the Council's dialogue and relationship with its residents. This approach also has the potential to support improved engagement with residents, and SRBC should consider the impact of Community Hubs on their wider methods and channels of engagement, including the approach to incorporating questions at physical meetings. These issues should be included in the review of Community Hubs in the Autumn of 2021 to ensure that this opportunity is not treated in isolation and is instead considered alongside wider impact on the Council's relationship with residents and all the Council's work. These community hubs provide a new opportunity for the Council to raise the profile of their wider services with residents.

Recommendation Eight: Political engagement in a balanced authority: The finely balanced politics of SRBC places further emphasis on the need for effective cross-party working relations. Given the challenges ahead it is important to ensure, where possible, a strong cross-party consensus on many of the priority and long-term issues that are facing the borough. This should include consideration of the contribution that Scrutiny can make to provide constructive challenge on issues and building on the sharing of information across political groups that has been developed during the COVID pandemic.

3. Summary of the peer challenge approach

The peer team:

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced Elected Member and officer peers from across the sector. The make-up of the peer team reflected the Council's requirements and the focus and scope of the corporate peer challenge. Peers were selected based on their relevant expertise and were agreed with you in advance. The peers who delivered the South Ribble Borough Council Corporate Peer Challenge included:

- **Arthur Charvonia:** Chief Executive (Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council).
- **Cllr Peter Fleming:** Leader (Sevenoaks District Council).
- **Cllr Bryony Rudkin:** Deputy Leader (Ipswich Borough Council).
- **Emma Foy:** Section 151 Officer (Hart District Council).
- **Kevin Powell:** Executive Director (Broxtowe Borough Council).

- **Matt Dodd:** Peer Challenge Manager (Local Government Association).

Scope and focus:

The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges that the LGA undertakes. These are the areas that are critical to councils' performance and improvement:

- 1. Local priorities and outcomes:** Are the Council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the Council delivering effectively on its priorities and achieving improved outcomes for all its communities?
- 2. Organizational and place leadership:** Does the Council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
- 3. Governance and culture:** Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of respect, challenge, and scrutiny?
- 4. Financial planning and management:** Do the Council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a clear plan to address its financial challenges?
- 5. Capacity for improvement:** Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the Council have the capacity to improve?

Additionally, SRBC asked the peer team to provide feedback in two additional areas. This included a dedicated focus on the Council's approach to governance and their progress against their Governance Action Plan, as well as providing comments on the Council's approach to Community Hubs, including any considerations for their further development.

The peer challenge process and methodology:

Peer challenges are improvement focused; and it is important to stress that this process is not an inspection. The methodology is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of individual plans and proposals. Instead, the peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them through documents, interviews and focus groups.

From 2017-2020 the LGA completed 447 peer challenges, including 182 Corporate Peer Challenges. The delivery of challenges was naturally impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic

in 2020 and during this time the LGA moved resource to support the sector in addressing the immediate response to COVID 19. During this time the LGA also developed alternative offers to support Councils, including remote peer support conducted online, remote corporate health checks, and facilitated discussions on post COVID responses through dedicated recovery panels, sharing expertise and experience across the sector.

South Ribble Borough Council previously undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge in 2017 and their progress against this report was followed-up with a 'revisit' in 2018. This report will draw on the findings and recommendations from this previous review as appropriate to illustrate continuity or changes at the Council. However, it should be noted, that the findings and recommendations of this report are standalone with regards to the Council in 2021, reviewing the organisation in its current context.

This review was originally agreed to be completed physically on-site with South Ribble Borough Council from 30 June to 2 July 2021. These dates were agreed in Spring 2021, subject to the national road map and proposed easing of lockdown restrictions.

Following the delays to the easing of national restrictions, and the introduction of Government advice to limit travel into and out of Lancashire in response to high COVID rates in the area, it was agreed that it was not appropriate to complete this work physically. In this context, the team offered the Council the option to either complete this challenge later in the year or undertake the work virtually through online methods. It is to the Council's credit that they supported this work being completed virtually at short notice. The Peer Team believe that this approach has not limited their understanding of the Council, or the ability to develop recommendations to support improvement.

In advance of this review, SRBC produced a Position Statement that self-assessed their achievements and performance across the themes of the review. This was reviewed by the peer team alongside a range of supporting documents to ensure familiarity with the Council and the issues they are facing.

During the three-days that the team spent completing this challenge they conducted a range of focus groups and interviews with Councillors, Officers and external partners triangulating their findings. During this time the team:

- Spoke to over **65 people** including a range of Councillors, staff, partners, and neighbouring authorities.

- Gathered information and views from more than **34 discussions, interviews or focus groups** as well as observing regular meetings, additional research and reading.
- Collectively spent over **144 hours** with the Council to determine our findings, the equivalent of one person spending over four weeks in South Ribble Borough Council.

This report provides an overview of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and Members. The peer team recognise that the opportunity to conduct a six-month revisit with SRBC following the publication of their Report and Action Plan will enable further validation of the findings of this report, and to experience the physical culture of the organisation in person.

4. Feedback

4.1 Understanding the local place and priority setting:

SRBC shared a breadth of information about the local area. This shows that, in comparison to wider areas of Lancashire, the borough is relatively affluent, but with pockets of deprivation (with three wards falling into the bottom 20% of deprived areas nationally), and a significantly higher than regional average rate of employment (with 88.8% of those aged 16-65 in employment compared to a North West average of 74.5%). The position of relative prosperity of the borough is further illustrated by the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index score of 0.12 (North West average of 0.15) and the Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index score of 0.1 (North West average of 0.13).

Beyond the statistical information provided by the SRBC, the peer team were impressed with the in-depth knowledge, understanding and commitment to the local area demonstrated by all Councillors who met with them. Councillors across the organisation were able to demonstrate both current and historical insights at both a borough and ward level.

The Council has implemented a performance management framework as part of their Annual Governance Statement Action Plan. This provides a clear channel to present performance information into formal council meetings and improve member understanding on performance issues and priority setting. The Council's framework is clear and provides information on both performance against targets and direction of travel to support informed conversations on a range of issues.

To further strengthen the approach, the Council should regularly review performance targets

to ensure that they are both testing and realistic, as well as ensuring there is ongoing dialogue regarding the measures that may need adding or removing to reflect political priorities. The council may also want to consider how performance information is used to inform the work-programme of committees such as Scrutiny, and whether further value could be added with an additional focus on performance issues that may benefit through more formalised analysis or working groups. Furthermore, whilst targets are shown within the framework, SRBC may wish to consider the phasing of targets to better illustrate their improvement over time and allow consideration of known milestones and interdependencies. Finally, the Council should consider how this information is used in conjunction with business processes and HR practices to embed performance management within the culture of the organisation through both service planning and incorporation in one-two-ones with staff.

The use of the performance management framework correlates with external performance reports generated through tools such as LG Inform. This illustrates that the council is performing better than sector averages on issues such as delivery of affordable homes and levels of household waste sent for recycling. However, this report also illustrates the challenges facing the borough, including a number of public health issues such as obesity, levels of activity and smoking prevalence.

The Council undertook a Resident Survey in 2020 and received over 1,700 responses, this is an important process for understanding both the priorities of residents and their perceptions of the Council. Many responses from this survey are in-line with national averages with 67% satisfied with how the Council runs things and 82% satisfied with their local area. However, this survey also highlights some areas for improvement, this includes 54% of respondents believing that the Council acts on local concerns and only 51% feeling well informed about the Council. These figures compare less favourably with national averages through the regular 'are you being served' survey of 61% and 67% respectively and illustrate the potential for improved engagement with residents and sharing of information.

The Council's approach to developing Community Hubs could be a tool that addresses these issues, and further enhances their understanding of place. This approach was informed by a cross-party group established in 2019 to review historic Neighbourhood Forums, considering themes of engagement, volunteering, and wider work with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector. The review concluded that each of the borough's five neighbourhood areas should be supported through an autonomous group which would set

their own workplan, with lead Councillors and a dedicated area officer. It will be important that the impact of these hubs is considered alongside wider processes of the Councils so that their relationship is complementary or replaces current approaches as appropriate.

The peer team recognise that Community Hubs are still relatively new, with work programmes finalised in March 2021. However, the team was enthused by the potential of this model and the Council's commitment to 'bottom-up' engagement, and organisation's comfort with divestment of control to allow areas to progress at alternative paces and on alternative paths. SRBC have committed to a six-month review of this work to be completed in the autumn of 2021, and the peer team appreciate that this will be an important juncture to share lessons learnt across the five groups. It will be important that this review considers the organisational commitment that is required to deliver on this potential, including the investment of officer time and financial resources. These are currently in place but will need constant review as the role of these Hubs continues to emerge. These changes will also need to be reflected in the governance surrounding these Hubs including their Terms of Reference. The team were also struck by the leadership and enthusiasm provided by the lead portfolio holder for this work. Finally, the work of these hubs needs to be aligned to the Council's priorities within their Corporate Strategy, and this will require balancing with the Council's commitment for this to be a 'bottom-up approach'.

There are already encouraging developments that have been brought through this work to-date, including good cross-party working at a local level. Tangible benefits include an example of one Community Hub leveraging matched funding to support new changing facilities at a local cricket club. Effective engagement at this local level should help to address the finding from the 2020 resident survey that only 18% of respondents felt that they could influence local decisions. Finally, the Community Hubs offer an opportunity for the Council to strengthen engagement approaches with groups that the Council has not historically engaged with. It is important that the Council considers how the hubs are used as a clear channel for holistic engagement, extending beyond the current practice of contributions at physical meetings.

4.2 Organisational and place leadership:

The previous peer challenge of SRBC highlighted key Leadership challenges facing the Council as illustrated in their 2017 report: "*This is a council which does not currently exhibit clear, strong, or positive collective leadership*". There have been further changes in both political and managerial leadership since the last Corporate Peer Challenge, including five

different Section 151 officers over the past five years.

The introduction of a Shared Management team with neighbouring Chorley Council has brought increased stability, including the appointment of a shared interim Chief Executive in the summer of 2019 (which has now become permanent) and, more recently, the appointment of a Section 151 Officer to work across both authorities. The wider approach of a Shared Management Team across both councils supports the sharing of skills and provides additional resilience at this level. During our time on site, the Peer Team heard feedback that praised the political and officer leadership of the council for their collective and positive approach.

However, the introduction of the shared leadership team has created important questions for SRBC to address. These include the impact on organisational sovereignty, with many of those that the peer team met keen to emphasise the importance of the need to counter any narrative of a “Chorley takeover”. In this context there is a need for SRBC to consider and define the aspects of sovereignty which are most important, and the areas that they will be applied. This will support communication with staff and partners, whilst also providing a clear framework for future ambitions and decisions regarding shared services.

The peer team also recognise that there is an important distinction between sharing services across two councils and dual running services across two councils. There are currently key distinctions in a number of services and processes which would benefit from standardisation and reduce the risk of asking officers to double run work. Further work is required to support officers to work as effectively as possible in a shared services environment including considerations on where processes can be merged or aligned, such as officers no longer having to maintain two separate email accounts or calendars as this process creates additional demands for officers and can cause confusion when arranging meetings, responding to Councillor queries, and working in a timely manner.

The peer team received positive feedback for the contribution that the Chief Executive has made since 2019. This included staff appreciating the visibility and approachability throughout the pandemic and councillors across parties appreciating the sharing of information across groups in a timely and appropriate manner.

The council's leadership was demonstrated through their response to COVID-19, with South Ribble partners highlighting productive relationships with the Council at strategic and operational levels. This included the Council acting as Deputy Chair to the Local Resilience

Forum throughout 2020 to support a joined-up response to the pandemic across organisations. Operationally, this is illustrated by the provision of 15,685 meals through the council's 'holiday hunger offer', with the Council recognising that their previous model of vouchers was not feasible within a COVID context. The Council worked closely with teachers to identify vulnerable children and provided food parcels for schools to distribute. This scheme grew from working with 16 schools to being present in all 51 schools in the borough by the end of 2020.

Both the political and managerial leadership of the Council deserve praise for the prioritisation that they have given to improving the Council's Governance through the allocation of resource and capacity. This has taken place within the context of managing the Council's response to coronavirus.

The Council has conducted regular staff surveys including in 2013, 2015 and 2019 and accompanied by a 'pulse' survey completed in 2021. These surveys are a good process in learning the opinions and views of the workforce and should be maintained to measure views and shape the Council's communication with staff, approach to organisational development and informing key decisions, such as returning to the workplace following the coronavirus pandemic.

However, the staff survey results in 2019 illustrate a deterioration in morale at the council from the 2015 baseline. In this four-year period there were 30 measures which deteriorated by more than 3% whilst only two measures improved by the same amount. The Peer Team recognise that the 2019 survey does not represent the Council in 2021, and that this survey was completed against the context of changes to political and officer leadership. However, these results illustrate the historic context that the organisational leadership needs to be attuned to when considering further engagement.

Finally, the leadership of the Council would benefit from a clear and shared narrative about the organisation's history. During our time on site, the peer team heard a range of views and opinions regarding the historic issues of the Council, and a shared narrative will prevent further energy being expended on these issues. Furthermore, it is important that there is a shared understanding and ownership of progress across the council to avoid the risk that issues have been addressed through '*people coming in*' or *through a 'takeover'*. This comfort with the organisation's past is essential in being able to articulate and demonstrate progress, and for embedding changes within the culture of the Council, rather than risking incubation with a small number.

4.3 Organisational governance and culture:

SRBC have been issued with a 'statutory recommendation' to improve by their external auditors for three consecutive years which included specific recommendations to take forward the findings and recommendations from the Council's previous CPC and their locally developed Action Plan including the establishment and operation of Improvement Reference Group to support this work. In June 2020 the Council approved an Annual Governance Statement Action Plan to address these issues and in March 2021 it was reported to SRBC's Governance Committee that this action plan had been substantially complete. There is a total of 13 actions within the SRBC action plan, and progress can be demonstrated against all key areas, this includes:

- Reviewing the Council's governance policies and strategies (anti-fraud, anti-corruption, anti-bribery, and whistle-blower policies).
- Reviewing the Council's constitution, including financial regulations and scheme of delegation.
- Developing a key partnership framework, Communications Strategy and Organisational Development Strategy.

The peer team recognise that the Council has made demonstrable progress to improve their approach to governance and there is a clear commitment to these issues across staff and councillors. However, it is important that the Council recognises that there is still more work to do, particularly given their challenging starting point and the challenges of embedding cultural changes during the pandemic.

An important process to build on this work and entrench sound principles of risk management across the Council is to visibly demonstrate the application of new policies, including the Council's new risk management system, and communicating the benefits of change through processes such as internal audit. This will help to illustrate and 'bring to life' the changes in processes that to this point may have felt theoretical or abstract in nature. Furthermore, this will be an important stage in SRBC being able to demonstrate and communicate progress with tangible cultural examples beyond procedural reforms.

The peer team met with members of the Council's Governance Committee. This committee currently appears to have a dual role, also operating as a more traditional function of an audit committee and addressing wider governance functions. The CPC revisit of 2018 highlighted to SRBC a recommendation to review this Committee with a view to separating these

functions and this does not appear to have happened. This will bring the Committee more in-line with sector norms and will also support with an increased clarity regarding the role and functions of this Committee amongst its Members. It is clear to see that the group has met regularly over the past 12-months and supported the Council's oversight and progress against their action plan. It may support the Council's progress to refine the group's terms of reference to provide further clarity on these functions. Furthermore, minor practical reforms could improve the effectiveness of this committee. This would include the potential use of pre-meetings to support the best use of meeting time. These Committees would also benefit from additional clarity regarding their agenda setting processes, ensuring that their work programme is aligned to the strategic direction of the Council. Finally, this clarity regarding work-programme will support members and officers to identify the other processes and forums which decisions can be scrutinised and reduce the risk of scope creep for the Committee.

Beyond the Council's existing action plan there are a number areas of further work that need to be considered, including SRBC's approach to Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) audits, updates for Information Asset Registers and wider ICT controls. The Council should continue to work constructively with both internal and external audit to incorporate these issues in their next phase of improvement. The Council should also consider the potential improvements that could be made regarding issues of Equality and Diversity, with the peer team finding uneven consideration of the impact of equality and diversity considerations across reports. The Council would also benefit from making sure that recent Equality Impact Assessments are published alongside historic reports on the relevant pages of the Council's website.

Finally, given the political make-up of SRBC, consideration should be given on how to maximise the benefits of cross-party relations and constructive political challenge. There are examples of all groups working effectively together, including work on priority issues such as the Climate Change working group and at a locality level through Community Hubs; this should be built on where possible. This includes considering the role that challenge and scrutiny plays in decision making, and the peer team would recommend that further work is completed to develop this challenge through forums such as Scrutiny, Budget Scrutiny and Governance Committee considering their work programmes and agenda setting, with the Peer Team noting that the Chairs of these forums are currently held by parties within the confidence and supply agreement, and that the more common practice across the sector is for these roles to be held by opposition Members.

4.4 Financial planning and management:

SRBC has managed the immediate financial challenges presented by COVID-19 effectively. This is shown through a surplus in their 2019-2020 budget of approximately £500,000 net, and the Council maintaining their level of General Fund Reserves at £4.2m. The Council has a three-year Medium-Term Financial Strategy which is aligned to their corporate priorities and accompanied by a four-year Capital Plan. This MTFS contains sensibly cautious assumptions regarding the potential impact of the Fair Funding Review on the Council's finances and the temporary nature of COVID support grants received in 2020 and highlights the challenges facing the Council's assumptions: *"Until the government completes the fair funding review and the reset of business rates, the council will have to continue with considerable uncertainty in its budget planning"*.

Whilst the peer team appreciate the uncertainty presented by these factors, it also felt that further work is required to refine the Council's MTFS. This will include SRBC being able to assure themselves regarding the delivery of saving proposals contained within their current plans, whilst also identifying further savings as needed. This is illustrated by the MTFS containing a gross budget gap (prior to actions being taken) of £150,000 in 2021-2022, with this figure rising to £3.3 million in 2023-2024.

With this in-mind further work is needed to articulate and quantify the level of savings that will be delivered beyond 2021-2022. The Council would benefit from there being more dialogue across officers and members regarding the proposals, prioritisation, and requirements to support financial sustainability. The appointment of a new Section 151 officer will support this process through regular and accurate quarterly reporting processes.

Furthermore, the Council's budget and MTFS does not reference specific risks and the Council's risk management strategy does not currently identify any financial risks, therefore further work is required to support the identification and management of financial risks and should be linked to the wider corporate governance and risk management.

Over this period there will be a need for the Council to invest in efficiencies to achieve the required reduction in their net expenditure and address these forecast budget deficits. The MTFS provides an indication of the Council's strategy, including investments within the borough that may generate income and through the realisation of savings through joint contractual arrangements. There are also emerging themes which will identify future savings including base budget reviews, a programme of shared service reviews, and consideration of additional income sources.

The Council has delivered a range of historic savings, including through the expansion of shared services with Chorley Council. The first phase of this work is forecast to deliver savings of £328,000 in 2021-2022 rising to over £508,000 by 2023-2024. During the peer team's time on site, they heard some confusion regarding the future phases and stages of shared services. Therefore, there is a need for SRBC to agree and clearly communicate the future phases for shared services, and the milestones attached to these budget proposals.

The appointment of a new Section 151 officer has been well received within the Council and will provide the opportunity to deliver further internal improvements whilst also bringing stability and enhanced leadership to some of these issues.

It is important to note that the plans that will be delivered through this wider transformation programme support the Council to manage its budget effectively and prudently. Whilst the full quantity of savings required through these workstreams and programmes will be impacted by the wider national context and funding reviews there is a need for SRBC to maximise the potential and delivery of these efficiencies.

The Council has an ambition to significantly grow and extend their capital programme delivery over the coming years. The Council reported a significant under performance against their planned capital programme for 2019-2020, delivering £3m against a programme of £12.9m with the coronavirus pandemic naturally impacting on delivery. However, within this context SRBC should assure themselves that this does not reflect a lack or loss of capacity for project management that would impact on the delivery of the budgeted capital programme.

The growth of the capital programme from £3m in 2019-2020 to £24.4m in 2023-2024 will not only create capacity challenges but will also bring practical implications to the Council's wider financial framework. SRBC are planning to support this programme through a mixed use of reserves and borrowing. There does not appear to be any current proposals from the Council to use capital receipts to support this programme and the Council may wish to consider their Asset Management Strategy for any potential that exists in this area. The Council should also consider their Prudential Borrowing Strategy given its plans to make extensive use of its borrowing powers as this will naturally impact upon the SRBC Revenue Budget and Minimum Revenue Position. Finally, the approach of using reserves and borrowing raises an important question regarding how sustainable this approach will be in-terms of affordability.

The peer team heard a range of views from across political groups regarding these financial issues and would encourage the use of external training to support informed political debate on issues such as Treasury Management, CIPFA consultation responses and capital financing to facilitate this. This training will also help to ensure that there is a shared

understanding of the Council's financial context across the organisation and support a more dispersed ownership of financial management.

Finally, whilst the Treasury Management Strategy has been reviewed; the Council is risk averse around its counterparty listing and it has been stated that that policy was implemented following the collapse of the Icelandic Banks. The peer team would, therefore, invite the Council to discuss alternative investments over longer time periods with Link Asset Management to explore whether higher levels of investment income could be received whilst still mitigating risk.

4.5 Capacity for improvement:

The Council is already on an improvement journey which offers a foundation and momentum to these issues. The Council agreed to a corporate peer challenge to support this process and facilitated this review being completed online at short notice which illustrates an organisational commitment to improvement and learning from across the sector.

The peer team met with a range of talented staff across the organisation, who, along with local Councillors are clearly invested in both the borough of South Ribble and the Council as an organisation. The Council has also developed new Organisational Development Strategies to support staff engagement as well as conducting pulse surveys to monitor wider workforce issues. It is important that this approach to organisational development is considered alongside the Council's transformation programme; and the Team appreciate that this interdependency is flagged in the Council's Organisational Development Strategy and would encourage these links to be built further as appropriate.

The pulse survey that the Council completed in April 2021 was set against the context of the coronavirus pandemic. This will have had a significant impact on staff through responding to national guidance, supporting new requirements (shielding residents, vaccine support) as well as amending existing practice through working from home arrangements and the introduction of online meetings, as well as the future return to physical meetings and work environment. This professional impact will have taken place against the wider background and personal concerns which have seen a national rise in levels of anxiety recorded. The Council was mindful of these issues and this context when launching the survey and was keen to use this timing to gather information and identify issues to support their work.

It is important that findings of the pulse survey are viewed in this context, recognising the

broader range of issues that will have contributed towards results, with 9% and 14% of respondents rating their health and mental health as poor (159 responses). Importantly, 27% of respondents were not aware of the support that was available from their employer, demonstrating the need for more work to be completed to communicate and promote these offers to staff.

During our time onsite, the peer team heard that management practice of HR processes was not consistent across service areas. This included differing approaches to managing the return to the workplace environment following COVID-19, and inconsistent practice on holding one-to-one meetings with staff. The lack of one-to-one meetings was highlighted by 24%. Therefore, within this context, it is important for the Council to address these issues and ensure that there is standardised and supportive practice across the organisation.

The previous peer challenges of SRBC highlighted staff morale as being a significant issue facing the council. This was not an issue that was raised during this review; however, the peer team recognise that this may be an area to consider as part of the six-month review.

However, the team did recognise a wider capacity challenge that may be a risk to the Council with a concentration of knowledge, information and decision making within a small number of key roles. The Council would benefit from dispersing this across more people to give more capacity to senior leader and empowering the wider workforce.

This may be partially reflected in the 2021 pulse survey with 29% of respondents flagging issues related to workload, capacity, or deadlines. This requires SRBC to consider the capacity of staff and the distribution of work, especially given issues of shared services, transformation, governance improvement and COVID recovery. Furthermore, the Council should be mindful of the pace of change and the subsequent need to communicate and engage regularly.

The council also regularly produces workforce profiles to monitor the make-up of staff, including gender, ethnicity, and age profiles across the Council, but also reporting for different pay levels. This reporting is clear and transparent and includes information on the profiles of those applying for prospective jobs with SRBC. This information will support the Council to represent the borough that they serve, and the Council should engage with these profiles to consider any wider practice that could support this representation (e.g., the use of blind process recruitment). Finally, the Council has also made progress to address their historic gender pay gap which was 5.89% in 2017 and has reduced to 0.89%, performing above the

north west average.

The peer team were also impressed by the Council's approach to member development. This is a clearly structured programme which is built around the model of a 21st century councillor and has included 10 internal courses delivered by staff from across SRBC on issues from equality and diversity to General Data Protection Regulations with 48 of 49 members having development plans in place.

5. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss, and reflect on these findings over the coming weeks. To support transparency, the Council is expected to publish this report within six weeks. There is also an expectation that an action plan is publicly available within eight weeks of the report's publication.

Both the peer team and LGA are keen to build on the relationships formed through the Corporate Peer Challenge. This process includes a six-month check-in, and the peer team is keen to use this process to physically visit colleagues at South Ribble Borough Council in light of the first stage of this programme being completed online. This will offer the opportunity for the peer team to be updated on the Council's progress against the Action Plan and offer further support to colleagues and peers.

In the meantime, Claire Hogan, Principal Adviser for North West, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Claire is available to discuss any further support the Council requires and can be contacted by email (Claire.Hogan@Local.gov.uk) or mobile phone (07766250347).

This page is intentionally left blank

South Ribble Council – LGA Peer Challenge Action Plan – 2021/22

All actions to be owned by Senior Management Team

Recommendation	Description	Action	Timescale
1: Embed a culture of good governance	<p>SRBC need to build on their momentum and progress regarding governance. This includes ensuring that their existing reforms have embedded within the organisation's processes, practice, and culture, as well as considering further areas that may not currently be within the scope of the Council's existing action plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and refresh the governance action plan alongside the production of service assurance statements Monitor progress through the Corporate Governance Committee Refresh governance training and support for staff and new starters Build awareness and strong governance culture through the 'Passport to People Management' course to be completed by all managers 	<p>By March 2022</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>By January 2022</p> <p>By April 2022</p>
2: Provide full clarity on the ambition and plans for shared services	<p>One of the strongest themes to emerge during this peer review was the shared services arrangement with Chorley Council. It is the view of the peer team that the Council needs to be clearer on the overarching vision, aims and timescales relating to shared services including the processes that will be used to achieve these. This presents the opportunity to build on the progress that SRBC have made on shared services to-date and generate further staff support for future phases. This issue was also highlighted in the LGA revisit to SRBC following their 2017 Corporate Peer Challenge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage political leadership at both councils to determine the aspirations for future shared services Maintain effective internal communication around future changes and develop a specific comms plan for future change if appropriate Consolidate phase 1 and 2 shared services by delivering the service development plans and completing benefits realisation 	<p>By November 2021</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

3. Programme Plan for future work and political priorities	<p>There are several key priorities that exist at SRBC simultaneously. This includes a corporate commitment to governance improvements, an ambitious capital programme, COVID-19 recovery proposals, and future ambitions for shared services. Whilst this ambition is laudable, there is a need for the Council to carefully programme manage interdependencies and ensure that there is appropriate corporate capacity to deliver this breadth and depth of work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce the Corporate Strategy as the key document setting out the vision, priorities and long term outcomes • Ensure that the council's budget and medium term financial strategy plans and resources the priorities identified in the corporate strategy • Embed the performance management framework through mandatory training, a network of officers and internal audit programme • Quarterly Senior Management Team programme board meetings to monitor Corporate Strategy programme delivery and business plan delivery 	<p>Corporate Strategy programme to be approved by Council November 2021</p> <p>Budget set up end of February 2022</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing, with quarterly SMT meetings</p>
4. Medium Term Financial Strategy	<p>The Council has managed their finances well in responding to the immediate issues of COVID 19. However, the Council's current MTFs contains a rising budget gap through to 2024, and further work is required to assure proposals already contained and develop further policy options for future years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and deliver the transformation programme of actions to address future budget challenges 	<p>February 2022</p>
5. Assurance on capital programme delivery	<p>The Council plans to significantly increase their capital delivery programme over the next four-years. However, this is a largely borrowing funded programme and the minimum revenue provision of these plans should be built into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Further research should also take place on capital funding for this programme as borrowing from PWLB is more difficult than it has been in the past and cannot be used for any form of financial yield.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a methodology for assessing capital programme projects that may require PWLB funding to ensure it meets the new requirements • Continue to ensure that the budget accounts for the minimum revenue provision required by the capital programme 	<p>December 2022</p> <p>February 2022 and ongoing</p>

6. Organisational development and Management Practice:	<p>The Councillors and Officers of SRBC have worked extremely hard to support residents throughout the Coronavirus pandemic and political and managerial leaders are rightly proud of these achievements. As the country moves through the national roadmap to ease restrictions, SRBC should consider how these achievements are recognised, managing the wider workforce in returning to the workplace, and introductions for those who may have joined the Council during this period. There is also a need for more standardised practice to HR across council directorates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the staff thank you and recognition event in October 2021 • Roll out the new corporate induction process to ensure comprehensive training for new staff • Deliver the Passport to People Management programme to ensure consistent management standards 	<p>October 2021</p> <p>December 2021</p> <p>March 2022</p>
7. Community Hubs	<p>SRBC have developed a community led approach to resident engagement through their Community Hubs. This model has real potential to reshape the Council's dialogue and relationship with its residents. This approach also has the potential to support improved engagement with residents, and SRBC should consider the impact of Community Hubs on their wider methods and channels of engagement, including the approach to incorporating questions at physical meetings. These issues should be included in the review of Community Hubs in the Autumn of 2021 to ensure that this opportunity is not treated in isolation and is instead considered alongside wider impact on the Council's relationship with residents and all the Council's work. These community hubs provide a new opportunity for the Council to raise the profile of their wider services with residents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete an interim review of community hubs in autumn 2021 with full review in March 2022 • Implement the recommendations of the review 	<p>November 2021/March 2022</p>
8. Political engagement in a balanced authority	<p>The finely balanced politics of SRBC places further emphasis on the need for effective cross-party working relations. Given the challenges ahead it is important to ensure, where possible, a strong cross-party consensus on many of the priority and long-term issues that are facing the borough. This should include consideration of the contribution that Scrutiny can make to provide constructive challenge on issues and building on the sharing of information across political groups that has been developed during the COVID pandemic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular all party Leader meetings • We will work with the LGA and CfGS to examine our approach to our committee meetings to ensure they reflect best practice. As part of this we will also consider the effectiveness of the scrutiny function. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>By March 2022</p>

Report of	Meeting	Date
Deputy Chief Executive (Introduced by Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member (Strategy and Reform))	Cabinet	Wednesday, 13 th October 2021
Is this report confidential?	No	
Is this decision key?	No	

South Ribble Annual Performance Report 2020/21

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Cabinet with a summary of the council's achievements during 2020/21 and provide an overview of the challenges and opportunities facing the council in 2021/22.

Recommendations to Cabinet

2. Cabinet is asked to consider and note the report.

Reasons for recommendations

3. The Annual Report forms part of the council's performance management framework and supports the council in reflecting on its performance over the previous year.

Other options considered and rejected

4. N/A

Corporate priorities

5. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

An exemplary council	Thriving communities
A fair local economy that works for everyone	Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

Executive summary

6. In spite of the challenges and periods of uncertainty as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the council has continued to deliver the priorities and projects set out in the Corporate Strategy while leading the community recovery and maintaining quality services.. This report outlines the key achievements, challenges and opportunities.

Agenda Item 8

7. Looking to the future, the council will need to respond to anticipated increased demand for services during the pandemic recovery period while meeting financial challenges and continuing to improve performance.

Background to the report

8. At Council on 30th September 2020, the Corporate Strategy was updated and refreshed to ensure that the Council can continue to meet the needs of the borough.
9. The four priorities identified in the strategy are:
 - An exemplary council,
 - Thriving communities,
 - A fair local economy that works for everyone,
 - Good homes, green spaces, healthy places.
10. The annual report is a key mechanism for presenting information about the Council's performance to residents, partners and key stakeholders. The report provides information regarding the activities which have been delivered against the refreshed Corporate Strategy to meet our vision and corporate priorities.

Summary of the report

11. The South Ribble Annual Report is attached at appendix A. The key headlines from the report are as follows.

Covid-19 Community Response in 2020/21

12. In 2020 the council led delivery of the "South Ribble Together" community hub, a dedicated programme to support the most vulnerable in borough through the Covid -19 pandemic. South Ribble Together was formed as a direct response to Covid-19 and was a collaborative effort between the council, local partners, volunteers and community groups. This includes key partners such as Progress Housing Group, Citizen's Advice, Lancashire Adult Learning, Age Concern Central Lancashire, Lancashire Constabulary, NHS Primary Care Network, Lancashire Fire and Rescue, Lancashire County Council and the Department for Work and Pensions.
13. Overall, South Ribble Together programme has delivered over 1,500 food parcels and made 6,966 calls to support the boroughs clinically extremely vulnerable residents. Other support offered through the programme included the collection and delivery of prescribed medication, advice and signposting to various health and financial wellbeing services and referrals to appropriate statutory agencies.
14. Assisting local businesses through the pandemic has been significant element of the support offered, implementing the national grant programmes at pace. The council has awarded £31.1 million in business rate relief and has processed £34.9 million worth of Covid-19 support grants, amounting to 7,053 payments. This support has offered business with a vital lifeline as whilst the restrictions were in place.

Agenda Item 8

Key Achievements

15. An Exemplary Council

- The first phase of the extension of shared services between South Ribble and Chorley Council was delivered including Legal, Democratic Services and Electoral Services, Transformation and Partnerships, as well as Communications and Visitor Economy. This will increase resilience, share expertise, create opportunities for staff and reduce operating costs as part of continuously improving our operations and service delivery.
- Partnership working has been strengthened by bringing together partners from across Chorley and South Ribble to form a single strategic partnership with the aim of making better use of resources to influence bigger changes that can deliver better outcomes for the residents of South Ribble.
- In January 2020, the council launched its new website after an extensive development process which involved user testing to ensure that it was designed according to customers' needs. The website offers a better customer experience by being more accessible and easier to navigate to encourage greater use of online services.
- Alongside the website the council aims to further develop the use of digital, technology and data through the Joint Digital Strategy to improve services and deliver better outcomes for customers. An example of this is the implementation of shared customer focused software in the contact Centre, which increases access to call data helping improve advice offered and decision making.
- The majority of the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan (AGS) has now been delivered including a review of the constitution, member training, development of a performance management framework and adoption of a key partnership's framework. This will help to ensure that the council is clear, open and transparent in its activities as part of being an excellent, well managed organisation.

16. Thriving Communities

- To ensure that residents have positive mental health, the council has published a directory of mental health support services available to residents on the council website. The council has also secured a mental health first aid training package for staff and lead members through Lancashire Mind.
- Communities and residents have been engaged in new ways to encourage participation and contributions with eleven successful community conversations events held across the borough. The conversations enabled residents to get to know their local councillors and get involved by sharing their concerns or ideas.
- The Council has awarded over £21,000 to a range of community projects across the borough through the councils Community Boost Fund. The projects that received funding include Bamber Bridge Foodbank, facilities at Gregson Lane Playing Fields, footpath improvements at Farington Lodges, entrance to the Eagle & Child Bowling Club, New signage for the St Mary's and Rawstorne Road Conservation Areas and facilitate additional mental health awareness activity.
- The council has been delivering projects as part of the action plans for each community hub area. The community team have delivered 1,106 opportunities that have benefited residents. Examples of the activities delivered include Dementia Friends training sessions, School Uniform Shop, South Ribble Together, Winter Warmth and South Ribble in Bloom children's competition.

Agenda Item 8

- The council has retained the prestigious Silver Award in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) from Ministry of Defence. This award recognises employer's commitment to supporting the armed forces community and their families.

17. A fair local economy that works for everyone

- The Leyland Town Board supported by the council has been successful with the Town Investment Plan bid for the Leyland Town Deal to attract national funding to revitalise the town centre. This means that there is potential to use the Town Deal offer of £25 million to invest in three key project areas which are town centre transformation, market regeneration and a business advise and skills enterprise hub (BASE).
- The community wealth building programme which seeks to achieve a sustainable local economy was progressed with the appointment of an officer, development of a programme of activity including an online social value portal to measure procurement outcomes, and launch of a credit union branch to provide access to ethical finance for all residents.
- The council has successfully delivered crucial support to businesses as part of the Covid-19 community response to help maintain a strong business sector. The council processed 7,053 grants, totalling £34.9 million as part of the government's programme of support. In addition to the grants the council has supported businesses with access to other available support services such as the Job retention Scheme, BOOST and Lancashire's Business Growth Hub

18. Good Homes, Green Spaces, Healthy Spaces

- As part of the council's commitment to protecting the local environment and tackling climate change, the council has successfully delivered a number of initiatives within the green agenda. This includes the planting of 16,944 trees across the borough, delivery of the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle campaign, installation of Solar panels and energy monitoring software at the Civic Centre, cycle storage facilities for staff at Moss Side Depot, and hosting a virtual event for World Environment Day.
- The council has commenced the project to renovate historic Worden Hall building at the centre of Worden Park into a community and events venue. Hoarding around the site has been erected and the Folly Coffee House has been moved to a temporary location in the courtyard for the duration of the construction works. Initial work will involve the contractor setting up a works compound and ensuring the construction site is secure, ready for clearance and demolition. The works will transform the building into a flexible community use space with provisions for small events and weddings. The council anticipates the refurbishment works to be complete in time for the 2022 Leyland Festival.
- The council has provided more affordable housing through the completion of Tom Hanson House in May 2021. The development in Bamber Bridge comprises of nine new affordable flats that are available to be let by residents
- Work has been completed to bring the management of South Ribble leisure centres back in-house. This will benefit residents by providing better quality facilities and improved health and wellbeing programmes.

Agenda Item 8

Council Spending

19. The council has invested in improvements across the borough that has helped deliver better long-term outcomes for residents. Examples of investments starting in 2020/21 and continuing into 2021/22 include:

- £ 1,414k invested in the Joint Digital Strategy to improve services through the use of technology,
- £245k invested on the Holiday Hunger project supporting vulnerable families and children
- £1,753k invested to refurbish, improve and develop play spaces across the borough
- £2,961k invested to progress the delivery of affordable homes and bring forward the Extra Care scheme
- £3,973k invested on developing a bid for Leyland Town Deal to attract national funding to revitalise the town centre.

Future Challenges in 2021/22

20. Looking forward to 2021/22, the council faces a number of challenges which includes the recovery from Covid-19 pandemic, the potential financial constraints of cuts to public funding and increased demand for services from residents, ensuring there is the appropriate governance culture and system in place. There is a clear plan to sustain support for the most vulnerable residents, get council services back on track, protect local businesses and to ensure that the council has robust governance arrangements ensuring a transparent and accountable organisation.

21. As part of our Corporate Strategy, we will continue to invest in our communities to support a strong post-pandemic recovery. This includes in the progression and delivery of key development projects, such as the McKenzie Arms, Extra Care Scheme and Town Deal, which will provide essential facilities both for residents as well as businesses, building local assets. We will also continue with our ambition to deliver sustainable, efficient, and value for money services through delivery of phase two of shared services, finding new ways to deliver services through a single strategic partnership, and progression of our Green Agenda. This will ensure that we continue to foster thriving communities and deliver high quality services for our residents.

Climate change and air quality

22. N/A

Equality and diversity

23. Equality and Diversity is embedded within the Corporate Strategy and how the council acts. An equality impact assessment was undertaken as part of the corporate plan refresh and each individual project will have its own equality impact assessment.

Risk

24. N/A

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

25. There are no direct financial implications for this report.

Agenda Item 8

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

26. There are no issues or concerns to raise from a Monitoring Officer perspective. The report is for noting.

Background documents

- ▶ Corporate Plan, approved 30th September 2020

Appendices

- ▶ Appendix A – South Ribble Annual Report 2020/21

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
Michael Johnson (Shared Service Performance and Policy Officer)	Michael.johnson@southribble.gov.uk ,	01772 625546	28/09/2021

South Ribble Borough Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

southribble.gov.uk



Welcome

This report presents South Ribble council annual report for 2020/21. It provides an overview of activities and achievements over the last 12 months, outlining the key steps that we have taken to ensure that we continue to deliver our vision and priorities as outlined below:

Our vision:

A healthy and happy community, flourishing together in a safer and fairer borough that is led by a council recognised for being innovative, financially sustainable and accountable.

An exemplary council

A council that:

- Delivers high performing services that represent value for money
- Understands the community and works with partners to make things better
- Is open and transparent in its activities

Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

A borough with:

- A choice of decent, affordable housing
- Commitment to protecting the local environment
- A choice of quality recreational activities

Thriving communities

Places where:

- Residents have positive mental health
- People get involved and have a sense of belonging
- Communities can access services and support when they need them

A fair local economy that works for everyone

A council that:

- Increases access to training and jobs
 - Grows and supports sustainable businesses
- Invests in improving the borough



Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member (Strategy and Reform)**Cllr Paul Foster**

Our Corporate Strategy set out an intention to support our residents, businesses and communities to face new challenges as we emerge from the pandemic and grasp the opportunities on offer.

I'm proud to present this report which sets out how much we have achieved over the last twelve months, providing vital support to residents through our South Ribble Together Hub while continuing to maintain quality services and progress our improvement agenda.

It is important that we recognise the efforts of all of our staff, volunteers and partners and thank our amazing communities for working with us to make South Ribble a great place to live.

You will see from this report that we are in a great place that is ready for the future, with a council committed to developing a healthier, fairer and more sustainable borough where everyone can achieve their potential.

Cabinet Member (Finance, Property and Assets)**Cllr. Matthew Tomlinson**

It has been a very challenging year for our communities and colleagues. As well as supporting businesses and communities to get back on their feet, we've maintained a focus on the future and getting the best long-term outcomes for our borough. We've spent £2.5m on delivering the priorities in the Corporate Strategy and progressed major developments including work on the Town Deal to reinvigorate the town centre, Worden Hall and Extra Care facilities as well as vital affordable housing.

Looking ahead it is my priority that we remain a financially stable and accountable organisation that makes the best use of resources to achieve more for our residents.

In a typical week we.....

Answer **1986** calls through the council's contact centre



Receive **704** self-serve requests online

Recycle **403** tonnes of household waste



Plant **326** trees across the borough

Spend over **£9,700** of Disabled Facilities Grants



Prevent **7** people from potentially becoming homeless

Process **18** planning applications



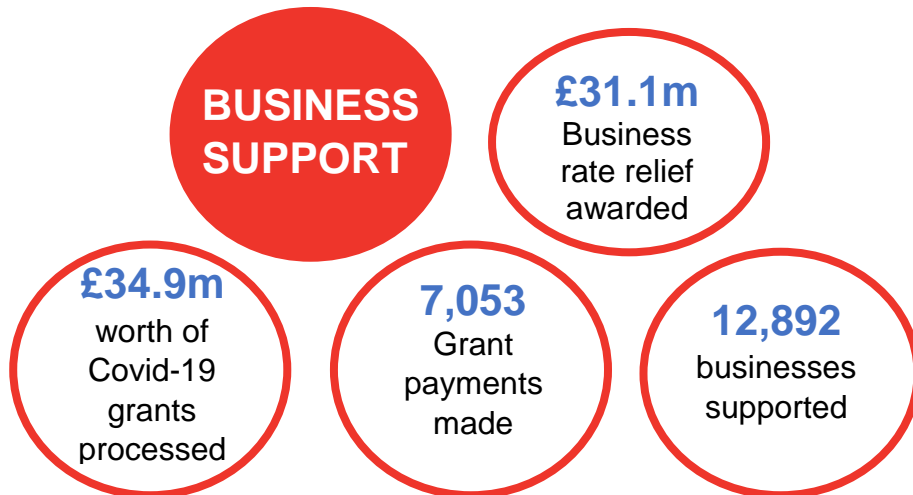
Receive over **10,600** visitors to the council's website

Covid 19 Community Response

Starting in March 2020 and running throughout the last 18 months, the council led delivery of the “South Ribble Together” community hub, a dedicated programme to support the most vulnerable in borough through the Covid -19 pandemic. South Ribble Together is a cooperative effort from the council, local partners, community groups, charities and volunteers to engage and support the most vulnerable residents within the community. This includes key partners such as Progress Housing Group, Citizen’s Advice, Lancashire Adult Learning, Age Concern Central Lancashire, Lancashire Constabulary, NHS Primary Care Network, Lancashire Fire and Rescue, Lancashire County Council and the Department for Work and Pensions.

The support offered through the community hub included:

- Proactively contacting residents who may be vulnerable or struggling
- Provision of emergency food parcels / practical support with collection and delivery of shopping
- Collection and delivery of prescribed medication
- Referrals to appropriate statutory agencies.
- Help with accessing and signposting to various services such as Health, Financial advice



SOUTH RIBBLE
TOGETHER



6,696 calls made by the council to support the clinically extremely vulnerable

1,500 food parcels provided



550

Prescriptions collected and delivered

516

Vulnerable people supported

47

Clinically extremely vulnerable people supported

94

People prevented from homelessness



AN EXEMPLARY COUNCIL

Delivers high performing services that represent value for money

Understand the community and work with partners to make things better

Is open and transparent in its activities



Key Achievements 2020/21

- **10.5%** increase in the number of service requests received via self-serve channels
- **13.1%** improvement in the average number of days taken to process a new housing benefit claim to 14.43 days



A single strategic partnership that represents both Chorley and South Ribble boroughs has been formally agreed between partners from both South Ribble Partnership and the Chorley Public Service Reform Board. The newly formed partnership will bring together key partners including the police, fire, hospital, voluntary, community, business, education and housing sectors to drive better outcomes for residents by sharing experience, knowledge and resources.



The council has successfully delivered the first phase of the extension of shared services between South Ribble council and Chorley Council. This has involved the sharing of services such as Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services, Transformation and Partnerships, as well as Communications and Visitor Economy. This will reduce costs of operating services across both councils whilst strengthening resilience and creating more development opportunities both for staff and for the council as an organisation.



The council has successfully delivered the majority of the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan (AGS). This included a review of the council's constitution, development and review of various corporate policies, frameworks and strategies, and the delivery of awareness training to staff and members. The AGS continues to improve the transparency and openness of the council.



The Joint Digital Strategy aims to further develop the use of digital, technology and data to improve services and deliver better outcomes for customers. The systems used by both Chorley and South Ribble councils' customer contact centres have been reviewed and aligned. New customer focused software has been implemented, which increases access to call data helping improve advice offered and decision making. Telephony has also been reviewed, and Microsoft Teams has been rolled out across both authorities providing greater resilience and improved flexibility.



In January 2021, the council launched its new website. The website now features audio visual tools to support those with additional needs, which allows users to read aloud, translate, magnify, and change the colour of text on each page. The website includes a revised user interface that delivers better quality interactions with customers by providing accessible and easy to use online services.



Thriving Communities

Residents have positive mental health

People get involved and have a sense of belonging

Communities can access services and support when they need them



Key Achievements 2020/21

- **1,016** residents benefitted from opportunities created by the communities team. This includes initiatives such as the Dementia Friends training, School Uniform Swap, Winter Warmth and South Ribble in Bloom Children's competition.



11 community conversations events were successfully held across the borough, taking place in each neighbourhood area and engaging with 278 members of the public. The informal events provided members of the community the opportunity to get to know their local councillors, where they could share any ideas or concerns.



Action plans for each community hub area have been agreed with a number of projects delivered. Examples of some projects being delivered include:

- 'Living Room Live' (an online version of Penwortham Live Community Music Festival).
- Provision of plants and trees to the new Peace Garden at the rear of the Civic Centre.
- In partnership with the local Dementia Action Alliance, the council has renewed South Ribble's Dementia Friendly Borough Status for 2021/22
- £30,000 has been secured from the Lancashire Environment Fund to create a new dipping platform at Farington Lodges

- Bamber Bridge, Lostock Hall and Walton le Dale Community Hub has provided match funding to Holland House Residents Association to fund a community defibrillator on the external wall of Walton le Dale Junior FC changing rooms.
- Improvements are underway to Church Road Gardens in Bamber Bridge, with a key feature commemorating the 1943 Battle Of Bamber Bridge. The university of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) and Preston Black History Group have been supporting the council on an historically accurate account of the event.



A foodbank network has been established, supporting residents with food, cleaning products, toiletries, pet food and baby related goods. The foodbank network ensures there is a co-ordinated approach between members. All foodbanks in the network are registered food providers with Environmental Health to ensure the appropriate safeguarding and governance arrangements are in place.



The council have secured a mental health first aid training package for staff and lead members through Lancashire Mind. The mental health training will provide the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support people's mental health. In addition, a "Youth mental health support services' directory has been published on the council's website to raise awareness of mental health services both locally and nationally.



Thriving Communities

Residents have positive mental health

People get involved and have a sense of belonging

Communities can access services and support when they need them



The council awarded more than £21,000 to a range of community projects across South Ribble. The projects that received funding include the premises at Bamber Bridge Foodbank, changing facilities at Gregson Lane Playing Fields, Footpath improvements at Farington Lodges, entrance to the Eagle & Child Bowling Club, New signage for the St Mary's and Rawstorne Road Conservation Areas and facilitate additional mental health awareness activity. A sum of £25,000 is available through the council's Community Hubs Boost Fund each year.



The council has retained the prestigious Silver Award in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) from Ministry of Defence. The ERS recognises employers who support members of the Armed Forces community and their families and inspire others to do the same. This includes employing current and former service personnel and demonstrating flexibility to allow Reservists and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers to meet their commitments in uniform.





A FAIR LOCAL ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

Increases access to training and jobs


Grows and supports sustainable businesses


Invests in improving the borough

	Key Achievements 2020/21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over £34 million administered in Covid-19 Business grants • 7,053 business grant payments made • Over £31 million was awarded in Business Rate relief 	

		<p>In June 2021, the council facilitated the first Unify Credit Union branch to open in South Ribble. The Credit Union will provide access to ethical and sustainable finance for all residents, supporting the ethos of an inclusive local economy</p>
---	---	---

		<p>The Leyland Town Board supported by the council has been successful with the submission of the Town Investment Plan bid. Leyland Town Board has the potential to use the Town Deal offer of £25 million to invest in the three key project areas, which are town centre transformation, market regeneration and a business advice and skills enterprise hub (BASE). The project is subject to the submission and approval of business cases for all three project areas, with the aim to deliver the Town Deal scheme by the year 2026.</p>
---	--	--

	<p>South Ribble council has implemented the Social Value Portal to be used as a tool to measure the council's procurement outcomes and to quantify benefits such as local spend and job creation. The social value portal will contribute to the long-term wellbeing and resilience of the community by securing local value through local spend.</p>
---	---

	<p>The council has provided support to help local business recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, by delivering business rate holidays and administering the government's programme of support grants. The council paid out 7,053 grants, totalling £34.9 million. In addition to the grant support, businesses been supported to access other support services available such as the Job retention Scheme, BOOST and Lancashire's Business Growth Hub.</p>
---	--



GOOD HOMES GREEN SPACES HEALTHY PLACES

A choice of decent, affordable housing

Commitment to protecting the local environment

A choice of quality recreational activities

Key Achievements 2020/21

- 387 people were prevented from being/becoming homeless
- 16,994 trees were planted across the borough
- 37 affordable homes were delivered
- 5 playground areas refurbished

The council has delivered a range of green initiatives to drive forward a commitment to addressing climate change. This includes extensive planting of trees across the borough, the delivery of the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' campaign, installation of Solar panels and energy monitoring software at the Civic Centre, cycle storage facilities for staff at Moss Side Depot, and hosting a virtual event for World Environment Day.

Refurbishment works have commenced to restore the historic grade two listed Worden Hall, located at the heart of Worden Park into a community and events venue. The works will see the hall transformed into a flexible community use space with provisions for small events and weddings.



The council seeks to address the gaps in the housing market by bringing a number of development sites forward. In May 2021, the development of Tom Hanson House in

Bamber Bridge was completed providing 9 new affordable flats to be let by residents.



The council has taken on the management and running of the South Ribble leisure centres. This includes the Tennis Centre and leisure centres in Leyland, Bamber Bridge and Penwortham. Operating the leisure centres through a wholly owned company will mean that South Ribble residents can benefit from better quality facilities and improved health and wellbeing programmes linked to the centres.

Investment

The council continues to invest in improvements right across the borough that have helped deliver better long-term outcomes for residents.

An exemplary council



£1,414,999 invested in the joint digital strategy to improve services through the use of digital technology.

Thriving communities



£245,800 invested on the Holiday Hunger project supporting vulnerable families and children by providing access to food during the school holidays.



£50,000 invested to support positive mental health for young people through officer resource to deliver a programme of early intervention activity.



£159,417 invested in the Community Hubs to provide accessible services that meet the needs of local areas.

Good homes, green spaces, well places



£5,508,641 invested to refurbish existing leisure sites and enhance facilities.



£1,753,303 invested to refurbish, improve and develop play spaces across the borough.



£2,793,000 invested in Worden Hall to bring it back into use as a vibrant community asset.



£2,961,786 invested to progress the delivery of affordable homes and bring forward the Extra Care scheme.

A fair local economy that works for everyone



£25m secured as part of a bid to invest in Leyland as part of the Town Deal fund



£150,000 invested on a plan to retain wealth and grow the local economy through progressive procurement framework and social value policies.



£150,000 invested to bring forward proposals to provide local businesses with additional financial support beyond any central government grant assistance

Over the next year we will need to consider:

Covid-19 Recovery

Over the next 12 months, the Council will be focused on delivering the recovery plan in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is a clear plan to sustain support for the most vulnerable residents, get the council back on track, protect local businesses and deliver the projects and improvements that matter most to our residents. We will support employability and work proactively to return to local economic growth.

Resources and Capacity

To meet the changing needs of our borough within the financial constraints the Council faces, it is vital that we continue to improve as an organisation and transform the way that we work.

As well as looking at our processes and systems, developing our workforce and investing in new technology, we will further extend our shared services with Chorley to build in additional capacity and resilience.

Organisational Change

The environment in which the Council operates is constantly evolving, driven by economic uncertainty, changing customer needs, technological developments, and the Covid-19 pandemic has been a catalyst for change. This will mean that we need to plan for a range of scenarios so that we can sustain high quality services for our residents.

The Council will continue to work towards a balanced budget, delivering the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and driving forward our transformation programme to ensure that the organisation is in a strong position to respond to any future challenges.

Governance

Over the next year the Council will continue to improve the governance environment and ensure that it has a robust governance system in place.

The delivery of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) will ensure that the council is a transparent and accountable organisation. Frequent reviews and audits will be carried out internally to ensure the systems effectiveness and provide confidence to the public, that Elected Members and Officers are acting with integrity, that decisions are made transparently and that the best interests of the public are protected.

Looking ahead to 2021/22

Going forward, we will continue to focus on delivering positive outcomes for residents. Some of the key projects that we will be delivering over 2021/22 include:



Thriving Communities



Events for all the family: As we recover from the pandemic, we will work safely to provide a range of events across the borough including Music in the Park and celebrations for the Queens Jubilee. Events and activities will provide things to do and places to go for families from South Ribble, increasing a sense of belonging as well as encouraging visitors to support the local economy.

Community hubs: We will continue to grow our community hubs as a key mechanism for residents to engage with the council and help shape service delivery within neighbourhoods in line with local priorities.



Parks and Open Spaces: We will continue to make improvements to parks and open spaces in the borough to provide high quality outdoor leisure facilities for our communities. This includes improvements to Strawberry Valley Park Playground, which will feature a new ball court and new accessible site access. Other sites that will be invested in include The Holme Playground, Moss Side Village Green Playground, as well as Birch Avenue Playground. This will have associated benefits physical and mental wellbeing and foster thriving communities.



An exemplary council



Shared Services: Shared services with Chorley Council will be progressed, which will include the sharing of our ICT and Customer Services over 2021/22. This is part of our Corporate Strategy commitment to delivering an exemplary council, as the move will improve resilience, capacity, and efficiency across each authority as well as deliver significant financial savings.



Modern workplaces: We will deliver our Future Workplace Strategy to improve our working environment and practices as part of ensuring a fit for purpose, future-ready organisation. This will support a positive working culture for staff and promote the delivery of excellent services for our customers.



Good homes, green spaces, well places



Green Agenda: Following our declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019, we will be further be delivering against our commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2030. This includes relaunching our tree give away as part of our ambitious aim to plant a tree for every resident. Additionally, we will be investing in green infrastructure, such as electric charging points, upgrading the council fleet to electric, as well as completing the green links programme to provide 8km of cycling routes and 5km of walking routes around the borough to facilitate sustainable transport.



McKenzie Arms Site: Construction works at the former McKenzie Arms site in Bamber Bridge will commence, with the vision to transform the current disused site and create quality affordable housing. Options for the development will be considered to ensure that it meets local needs and demands, with works expected to be completed in June 2022. Green issues will be placed at the centre of designs to ensure that it is sustainable and works with the natural environment.



Leisure Local: We will promote and run community sports and activity programmes at local schools, community centres and sports clubs across the borough promoting access for all., encouraging physical and cultural activity within every community, tackling health inequalities and enhancing the quality of life of our residents.



Extra Care Scheme: An extra care facility will be developed off West Paddock, which will include up to 68 one and two-bedroom rental apartments for elderly people and those with dementia. The facility will provide round the clock support, pre-planned care packages tailored to the individual needs of residents, as well as communal facilities to encourage social interaction and reduce social isolation. This forms part of commitment to supporting communities through the provision of quality new affordable homes and enabling elderly residents to live healthier and independently for longer.



Sports Pitch Hub: We will complete works to create new 3G artificial sports pitches at Bamber Bridge Leisure Centre. The works will include a new accessible sports pavilion that will house four new team changing rooms and showers, social and storages rooms, as well as a catering facility. This development aims to extend sports opportunities to more people and encourage residents to get involved in leisure activities and enjoy a healthy lifestyle. The development will be supported by the Tree Planting Scheme, which will include the planting of over 1,000 trees on the site. This will enhance biodiversity in the area and support local wildlife.



A fair local economy that works for everyone



Town Deal: We will be developing detailed proposals for enhancing Leyland town centre. These will be submitted as part of our bid for the Government's Town Fund. If successful, we will receive up to £25 million in funding to deliver the proposal, which will include creating a vibrant civic space to provide a focal point within the town centre, a new green area that will provide an urban oasis off Hough Lane, as well as commercial development opportunities to diversify the town center's offering and accommodate the ambitions of the local economy.



Supporting the post pandemic recovery: Communities and residents will continue to face challenges as a result of the pandemic and as a council we can provide a range of services and support including employability, housing and financial assistance as well as supporting access to a range of other partners.



Building wealth in South Ribble: We have a vision of a more resilient local economy that involves and benefits the local people and area. Traditionally local economies rely on large external businesses to provide jobs, goods and services for local residents. This results in decisions and profits flowing out to wherever the company is based, or the goods are produced.

We are striving to take the opposite approach, looking inwards to the borough and working to develop, retain and protect local wealth including money, assets (such as land or buildings) and the environment. We will lead as a council with our approach and also start to develop opportunities within the community.

southribble.gov.uk



Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Planning and Development (Introduced by Cabinet Member (Planning, Business Support and Regeneration))	Cabinet	Wednesday, 13 th October 2021

Is this report confidential?	No
------------------------------	----

Is this decision key?	No
-----------------------	----

Business Recovery Post COVID Member Working Group Update

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to summarise the activity and actions of the Business Recovery Member Working Group following their final meeting in August 2021.

Recommendations to Cabinet

2. That Cabinet note the contents of the report and congratulate the Group on their work over the past 18 months.
3. That Cabinet support the recommendations arising from the Group which will be the subject of future discussions and reports for key decisions.

Reasons for recommendations

4. The Group has met regularly during the COVID Pandemic and has served an extremely useful vehicle to shape business support. Given that we are emerging from the pandemic now it is felt that the group's business is done but could be reconvened should the need arise in the future.

Other options considered and rejected

5. The only other option is to continue with the Group but it is felt it has had a large impact during the pandemic and has set plans in motion for the period beyond. Given this it was felt by the Group to have a final meeting in August but clearly the Group could reconvene if needed.

Corporate priorities

Agenda Item 9

6. The report relates to the following corporate priorities: (please bold all those applicable):

An exemplary council	Thriving communities
A fair local economy that works for everyone	Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

Background to the report

7. Following the COVID19 pandemic, the lockdown, and the major impacts on the economy a dedicated response to the business community was required. South Ribble Council were charged by central Government to deliver grants to small businesses and those in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. More recently South Ribble have been delivering discretionary grants.
8. Alongside the delivery of grants the Council has also provided a dedicated enquiry line and email for businesses to seek advice from.
9. Given the impact on the economy it was decided that a Member Working Group should be formed to assist and advise officers and the Cabinet in supporting the local economy and shaping the recovery phase.
10. The Member Working Group first met on 10th June 2020 and has met 19 times until August 2021.
11. The Member Working Group was set up with the following Members:
- Cllr. J Flannery (Chair)
 - Cllr. W. Adams
 - Cllr. D. Howarth
 - Cllr. P. Smith
12. Additionally, the Member Working Group has been serviced by the Director of Planning and Development, and representatives from the Investment and Skills, Finance, and Revenues and Benefits teams.
13. The first report of the Working Group was considered by Cabinet in August 2020 which identified what the group had achieved in its first few months and areas to focus on moving forward.

Business Grants

14. A key focus for the group has been the delivery of the COVID Business Grants. The key achievements as at the close of the grants schemes (excluding ARG3) is as follows:
- £34.9 million of grants awarded to local businesses
 - 7,053 individual grant payments made to 2,056 businesses
 - 19 different grant streams managed and delivered

Agenda Item 9

15. At each meeting the Group was provided with an overview of where the various grant streams were up to and any emerging issues.. The Group particularly focused their work on the discretionary grants where the criteria were looser and the Council had the authority to award grants differently to the set criteria for small businesses and those in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector.
16. In terms of the discretionary grants the Member Working Group heard about particular anonymised business circumstances and provided views on these so that Officers consider them as part of any grant approval process. The Group were also very keen to ensure payments have been issued quickly whilst recognising that a robust and fair process needs to be maintained.
17. The grant delivery met all the Government requirements and importantly we distributed all funding awarded to us. This has meant the Council has received an additional £706,699 of funding through the ARG3 programme. The Business Recovery Group have considered how best this funding could be used and have recommended to the Leader that the funding should be matched with the £150,000 identified in the Council's budget to deliver the following:
 - Summer Grant for Market Traders
 - Recruitment/ Training/ Re-Training Grants (for unfunded training)
 - Sector Skills / Recruitment Support e.g. Hospitality & Care Sectors
 - Bringing Empty Premises back into use
 - Reconfiguring workplaces to be Covid Secure / Resilient (not capital)
 - Start-up Grant – Home Based
 - Start-up Grant – in premises
 - Late ARG applicants on hardship grounds (loss of income) – home based
 - Late ARG applicants on hardship grounds (loss of income) – in premises
 - Contingency Fund for previous grants verified after payment cut-off
 - Mental Health Support to Business Owners

Business Engagement

18. One key area that the group was keen to explore is hearing views from local businesses. A range of businesses and organisations were invited to attend the group to share experiences and issues. The Group were encouraged that the feedback was that the economy of South Ribble has not been as impacted as much as some other areas but there was a clear recognition that the economic impacts may well not yet be seen. The Group were also encouraged that the views held by the Council were in sync with the business community.
19. The key issue that has come out very strongly from the businesses is the impact on mental health from the crisis and the consequences for a healthy workforce. This was identified by businesses who spoke at the meetings but also other businesses who have contacted the Councillors separately and also in day to day support provided Officers. This is an area the Group would particularly like the Cabinet to focus on in the future.
20. The Group has also received reports on wider responses at the Lancashire County level such as the Lancashire Recovery Plan and the role of the Lancashire Economic Partnership. Furthermore they have discussed with Officers options for where the business support needs to be focused beyond COVID.

Agenda Item 9

Recommendations to Cabinet

21. Key issues that the Group would like Cabinet to focus on in the future are as follows:

- Providing support for mental health within the business community for employers and employees
- Massive strides forward have been made with micro businesses which we didn't know existed therefore those relationships need to be kept, developed, and supported
- A Business Forum or event to be held as soon as possible to engage with the micro and SME businesses with a view to shaping our support in the future
- Business hubs would provide a useful vehicle for businesses to network and establish connections. Schemes such as The Business and Skills element of the Leyland Town Deal are an example of how this can happen. There is an opportunity to deliver hubs in other parts of the South Ribble
- That an economic strategy and action plan be developed to maintain momentum
- That the Member Working Group pause their work for now but to be on standby to meet as and when the need arises

Climate change and air quality

22. The work noted in this report does not impact the climate change and sustainability targets of the Council's Green Agenda and all environmental considerations are in place.

Equality and diversity

23. The Business Grants have been open to all eligible businesses. Where Businesses have had difficulties for instance in terms of format of forms the team have adapted and assisted businesses to complete their applications so that no business is unfairly treated.

Risk

24. All the grant processes have been developed in conjunction with Audit colleagues with all risks minimised. Set anti fraud checks on business and applicants have been undertaken for every application made.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

25. As outlined in the report the Council received additional funding of £706k to implement the third round of ARG, this must be spent by the end of March 2022. In 2020/21 the Council set aside £150k of reserves to further supplement the support outlined in this paper.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

26. There are no legal implications arising from this report. Any future decisions to be made in this context will follow due process.

Background documents

Agenda Item 9

COVID Business Grants Guidance

Appendices

None

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
Jonathan Noad, Director of Planning and Development	Jonathan.noad@southribble.gov.uk	01772 625625	29 th September 2021

This page is intentionally left blank

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Communities (Introduced by the Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member (Health and Wellbeing)	Cabinet	Wednesday, 13 October 2021

Is this report confidential?	No
------------------------------	----

Is this decision key?	No
-----------------------	----

Progress on Climate Emergency and Air Quality Work

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on the actions and progress that has been around the Climate Emergency and Air Quality work streams.

Recommendations to Cabinet

2. To note the progress that has been achieved towards the Councils net-zero goal and completion of the air quality and Climate Emergency Action Plans.

Reasons for recommendations

3. To provide members with an understanding of the work that has been achieved to date.

Other options considered and rejected

4. The report is for information only no other options have been considered.

Corporate priorities

5. The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

An exemplary council	Thriving communities
A fair local economy that works for everyone	Good homes, green spaces, healthy places

Agenda Item 10

Background to the report

Climate Emergency

6. The effects of man-made climate change are identified as one of, if not the biggest, threat to humankind and the wider environment. Understanding, acceptance and desire for action to combat this threat has grown over the last few years.
7. The most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has confirmed that the global warming target of 1.5°C will be exceeded within the next 20 years, with escalating and compounding impacts on severe weather events, flooding, climate refugees, food production and the spread of disease.
8. In 2021 the IPCC issued a new report stating *“it is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere, ocean and land. Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, oceans and cryosphere and biosphere have occurred.”*
9. It continues by identifying that *“global temperature rises will continue throughout the 21st century under all modelled scenarios and a global temperature of 1.5°C and 2°C will be exceeded during the 21st century unless deep reductions in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions occur in the coming decade”*
10. It is imperative that humans take all possible action to limit the impacts of the above events. The Council as a social leader, regulator, employer and developer has a morale and legal duty to minimise its emissions and impact on the environment, prepare for the impact of climate change, adapt and encourage others to do the same.
11. Please note that this document refers to emissions of “carbon” or “carbon dioxide”. This should be considered shorthand for all greenhouse gas emissions, not just carbon dioxide.
12. In July 2019 the Council declared that the effect of climate change within the borough poses an immediate danger to the Health and Wellbeing of our residents. The result was the declaration of a Climate Emergency, see Appendix 1, setting a goal of net-zero carbon emission by 2030 for both the Council activities and the borough as a whole.
13. A cross-party Climate Emergency Group were formed to work with officers to achieve this goal. The task group have met regularly to move the agenda forward.

Air Quality

14. The borough of South Ribble has five declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA's), located in Penwortham, Walton-le-Dalton, Bamber Bridge, Lostock Hall and Leyland. Each one of these areas has been declared due to the likely exceedance of the national annual mean objective for the pollutant Nitrogen Dioxide, NO₂. The objective level being 40µg/m³.
15. In 2018 and updated Air Quality Action Plan was approved by Council covering the full borough. This action plan contained several measures to improve air quality across the borough, but specifically within the declared AQMAs.
16. Since that date public understanding and concern regarding poor air quality has increased.

Agenda Item 10

17. Many of the measures identified within the action plan have been completed but there is still more to be done to improve air quality across the borough. Many of the actions are also mirrored in the above Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Update on progress

Climate Emergency

Climate Emergency Strategy

18. In July 2020 members approved and adopted at Full Council, a Climate Emergency Strategy, this has since been updated, and official approved at Full Council in July 2021. The updated Strategy together with an annual greenhouse gas report detailing the carbon footprint of the both the Council and the borough is provided in Appendix 2.
19. The Climate Emergency Strategy (the Strategy) provides background to the Climate Emergency issue, our current position in terms of the Council and the borough and identified categories of areas to concentrate on to achieve the overall goal of net-carbon neutral by 2030.
20. The Climate Emergency Strategy will be regularly updated, currently this will be yearly and will detail any changes to the aims and objectives of the strategy. Importantly the document sets out the Council's current carbon footprint calculation and compares this to previous years and to the Council's identified baseline of 1990 allowing progress towards the Council's carbon neutral aim to be monitored.
21. It should be noted that the Council's footprint has increased over the previous year. This is as a result of several reasons. The waste service was brought back into Council control resulting in additional carbon emissions from fuel consumption. In addition, water consumption and wastewater treatment have also been included within the Council's footprint.
22. Next year's footprint is likely to increase again. In April 2021 the Leisure centres came back under direct Council control. These buildings now form four of the six largest energy using buildings within the Council estate. While the previous operators also declared a Climate Emergency and were working towards reducing their carbon emissions due to the enormity of the works required to the leisure centres and timing of the contracts no decarbonisation works have been undertaken at these sites.
23. However, since April the Council have undertaken decarbonisation plans for the six sites and work is underway to identify efficiency savings and funding to decarbonise these buildings.

Climate Emergency Action Plan

24. In order to achieve the Council's goal to tackle the enormity of the task at hand buy in from all stakeholders is required along with a plan to move forward in a timely organised manner to achieve the net-zero goal.

Agenda Item 10

25. As the Council's goal included not only the Council operations but that of the wider borough, it was essential that the public and business communities within South Ribble were included within the formulation of the action plan.
26. A full public consultation was undertaken, asking for suggestions in how we can achieve this goal. Unfortunately, the consultation was undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic, many businesses were closed, including schools and many people had more immediate concerns.
27. The Climate Emergency Action Plan, attached in Appendix 3, was subsequently written based on the responses received and the work undertaken by the cross-part Climate Emergency Group was approved at Full Council in July 2021.
28. The Action Plan sets out short, medium, and long-term goals under each of the Climate Emergency Strategy's five key categories. It sets out the actions which the Council will concentrate on over the coming years to achieve the stated goal of net carbon neutral by 2030.
29. Work is currently underway to ensure each action is provided with a detailed description and methodology, including where possible timescales and costings for completion of the action.
30. The Climate Emergency Action Plan will undergo regular reviews. This is essential to maintain the document, consider new technologies, legislation and policy that will emerge over the coming years and ensure the council's goal is achieved.
31. During the next year the emphasis of the work to be undertaken as part of the Action Plan will be on internal operations to showcase the Council as a community leader and on building community interaction through schools, businesses and community groups.
32. It is envisaged that the next review will follow a wider public consultation following the lifting of restrictions imposed as part of the pandemic. This is hoped to identify further actions that can be included to reduce the carbon emissions within the community.

Activities undertaken to date

33. Since the 2019 declaration work has progressed in several areas to move the overall Climate Emergency agenda forward. This section provides a brief overview of some of the progress made.

Funding Streams

34. The work to decarbonise the Council's activities will involve capital expenditure and changes to the way we currently operate. As a result, a significant amount of time has been spent by officers in attempting to secure external funding.
35. The Council have applied for several Government Grants over the last 12 months to assist with the decarbonisation of the council's estate.

Agenda Item 10

36. Grant bids have principally been made to secure funding from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), through their Low Carbon Skills Funding and Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme Grants.
37. The Council have been awarded £145,004 through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme to make energy efficiency improvements to the Civic Centre. These works included:
 - a. LED lighting throughout the building,
 - b. solar panel installation to the roof,
 - c. a new Building Management system to monitor and control energy usage within the building, and across the estate in the future.
 - d. New energy efficient water heaters,
 - e. Battery storage for the solar panels.
38. At the same time the Council have completed decarbonisation plans for six of the largest energy using buildings within the portfolio. These being the Civic Centre, Moss Side Depot, Leyland, Penwortham and Bamber Bridge Leisure Centres and the South Ribble Tennis Centre, collectively referred to as 'the Big 6'.
39. The Decarbonisation Plans identify what works will be required to each building to decarbonise, i.e. to reduce the carbon emissions of the building through improved energy efficiency and alternative technologies. The Decarbonisation Plans are presented in Appendix 4.
40. The Council have just been awarded £223,000 through the Low Carbon Skills Fund to undertake feasibility studies on the implementation of the measures identified for the Big 6 buildings and to undertake further decarbonisation reports for the remainder of the Council's estate.
41. Further grant funding, £45,000, has also been obtained to assist with the enforcement of the Domestic Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) Regulations. These regulations require a minimum level of energy efficiency within privately rented properties and over 1400 properties have been identified within South Ribble which fail to achieve the required standard.
42. The funding will be used to identify the individual properties failing to achieve the minimum standard of an EPC rating E and to take enforcement action against the landlords. The work will also identify owner occupied properties failing to achieve this minimum standard and those occupiers will be sign posted to the available energy efficiency grants offered by the Council.
43. Thus, improving the lives of many of the most vulnerable people within the Borough will helping to lower the carbon footprint of the current housing stock.
44. Finally, officers are just completing two further bid applications. The first is for another round of Public Sector Decarbonisation works to the remaining five buildings forming the Big 6 energy users. This is likely to consist of a bid for £4-5 million, however the Council will be required to contribute towards the bid at an equivalent cost of replacing the current technology for a like for like replacement. i.e. a fossil fuel heating system for another fossil fuel heating system.

Agenda Item 10

45. The second bid will be for grant funding from this year's Air Quality Grant through the Department for Environment, Food and Rural affairs (DEFRA). The grant bid will be 100% funded from the grant with no contributions required from the Council.
46. This grant application is being considered but is anticipated to include a request for funding to cover:
- Education campaign to be piloted at Leyland Methodist school for encouraging active transport and anti-idling – campaign then to be rolled out across all other schools in the Borough
 - Traffic monitoring to enable traffic light optimisation in the AQMA
 - Improved Signage to encourage the use of alternative routes away from declared AQMA's
 - Cycle storage and maintenance pilot schemes to encourage active travel within the borough.

Green Agenda Program

47. Towards the end of 2020 the Council reviewed its corporate priorities and introduced a Green Agenda program. The Green Agenda Program brought together a number of different actions from across the Council. In total 10 projects were identified under the program and these have been progressed over the previous year.

48. These include:

1. Improvement of the borough's green infrastructure
 - ▶ Installation of 5Km of Cycle/Pedestrian pathways
 - ▶ Improvements to 8Km of footpaths across the green links programme
 - ▶ Delivery of the OLEV grant bid to install four electric vehicle rapid charging points across the borough
 - ▶ Plant 27,500 trees by March 2021
2. Raising awareness and promoting action:
 - ▶ Host the council's first event to contribute to the annual 'World Environment Day' in 2021
 - ▶ 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' campaign to promote, encourage and increase recycling and reduction in single use plastics
 - ▶ Promotion of affordable energy saving schemes
3. Developing actions for the Council as an employer and organisation
 - ▶ Paper audit of the organisation
 - ▶ Energy audit of the Civic Centre
 - ▶ Audit of corporate travel
 - ▶ Installation of solar panels at the civic centre
 - ▶ New cycle storage facilities at Moss Side depot

49. The cycle and footpaths extensions and improvements have been completed.

50. The electric vehicle charging point installation is due to be completed by the end of the October, with further grant bids to be submitted for additional charging points across the borough.

Agenda Item 10

51. A total of 62,274 trees have been planted in the last two years over halfway towards the Council's four-year target of 110,000 trees.
52. Due to the Covid Pandemic the World Environment Day event was virtual, with regular social media posts and additional information provided on our website.
53. The 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' campaign was introduced to improve recycling rates across the borough and reduce waste contamination. Overall, the project has proved to be a great success, feedback from Lancashire Renewables has indicated a significant reduction in contamination of mixed recycling.
54. The figures have continued to reduce over the life of the project, although February has seen a slight increase in contamination, the project finished on the 12th March and overall there has been a significant reduction in contaminated bins since the start of the project of 2636 bins which represents a reduction of 75% in contaminated bins presented on a weekly basis.
55. Work has progress to advertise the various energy saving schemes and grant work available to residents to improve energy efficiency within the housing sector. Combined with the above-mentioned Housing enforcement action around the MEES regulations this work will help to further reduce energy demand and lower the carbon footprint from this sector.
56. The audits for paper usage, energy consumption and internal travel are currently under way, with data being collected.
57. Two phases of solar panels have been installed at the civic centre and these are currently producing clean renewable energy, reducing the Council's energy costs and lowing the carbon emissions.
58. New cycle storage facilities have been installed at Moss Side Depot and conjunction with the facilities at the Civic Centre, including changing facility provide a suitable and realistic alternative to travel by car for employees.

Engagement and influencing Others

59. To achieve the council's goal will require the involvement of not only Council employees but the whole borough, from businesses, residents and educational and community groups.
60. As such engagement with stakeholders has been identified as a key component of the Climate Emergency (and Air Quality) Action Plan. Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic prevented many of the planned activities.
61. However, the council have been working with colleagues across Lancashire to move the Climate Emergency agenda forward, particularly at Chorley in addition to regular meetings with the borough's largest housing provider Progress Housing. This early work has assisted with the developing new ideas, and the identification of opportunities to achieve

Agenda Item 10

the council's goal while building partnerships that will help and support the Council in the future.

62. Work with the Councils Communication teams is progressing to actively use social media to communicate with the residents and businesses and a two year Climate Engagement Officer role has just been advertised with the ultimate aim of engaging, educating, and encouraging residents, businesses, schools and community groups to think along the net-zero carbon lines and promote opportunities to lower carbon emissions across the borough.
63. A consideration of the impact of all decision on the Council's carbon emissions is to be included on all Council decisions. Additional guidance and wording will be provided over the coming months to enhance this consideration and it is hoped that eventually the issue is to be embedded in all decisions with a consideration of actual changes to carbon emissions being considered.

Air Quality

64. As with the work on the climate emergency the Covid pandemic has significant interfered with many of the actions planned against the air quality action plan, particularly those around engagement and encouraging the use of public transport.
65. As a requirement of the Environment Act 1995, which sets out the Local Air Quality Management requirements and Annual Status Report (ASR) on air quality is required to be submitted to DEFRA.
66. This report details the latest pollutant monitoring results and updates on any actions taken within an Action Plan.
67. The latest ASR, covering the year 2020 has been submitted to DEFRA and the is attached in Appendix 5.

Climate change and air quality

68. The work noted in this report impacts directly on air quality and the Climate Emergency declaration. The Report is however for information only and no actions are recommended from the report. As such there will be no impact on air quality or carbon emissions from the report.

Equality and diversity

69. There are no equality or diversity implications from this report.

Risk

70. There are no addition risks associated with this report.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

Agenda Item 10

71. The report is for information only and there are no financial implications of the report.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

72. The importance of the Climate Emergency & Air Quality Action Plans cannot be overstated. Clearly, we must do everything to implement that. This report is for information only, and there are no direct legal issues identified from the report.

Appendices

(Appendices 2 – 5 are web links)

Appendix 1 – Climate Emergency Declaration 2019

[Appendix 2 – Climate Emergency Strategy 2021](#)

[Appendix 3 – Climate Emergency Action Plan 2021](#)

[Appendix 4 – Decarbonisation Plans for the 'Big 6'](#)

[Appendix 5 – Air Quality Action Plan 2018](#)

Report Author:	Email:	Telephone:	Date:
Neil Martin	Neil.martin@southribble.gov.uk	01772 625336	30 th September 2021

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 1 – Climate Emergency Declaration

(The Notice of Motion is an exert from the Agenda and Minutes of Council meeting, 24th July 2019 – all full copy of the agenda and minutes is available at <https://southribble.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=1471&Ver=4>)

Notice of Motion

Notice of the following motion has been submitted in accordance with standing order number 10(2). The motion is proposed by Councillor Ken Jones and seconded by Councillor Matthew Trafford.

“This Council declares that the effect of climate change within the borough poses an immediate danger to the health and well-being of our residents and therefore proclaims a Climate Emergency with immediate effect.

To combat this threat, the borough sets a goal of rendering the borough carbon neutral by the year 2030. For avoidance of doubt, this goal means the borough shall produce no net carbon emissions by this date, taking into account of actions that have the effect of removing carbon from the environment.

In order to implement this decision, the borough shall create a Standing Working Group on the Climate Emergency. The Group shall be made up of the following:

Cabinet Member responsible for the Environment (in the Chair);

Chairs of each Neighbourhood Forum;

Representatives of each political group represented on the council (2 Labour Members (including Air Quality Lead), 1 Liberal Democrat Member. 2 Conservative Members);

Air Quality Lead;

Such other Members, including co-opted members, as the working group shall consider appropriate.

The Standing Working Group on the Climate Emergency shall:

Incorporate the Council’s existing Air Quality Action Plan into its wider plans;

Devise and propose further measures in pursuit of its goals;

Monitor progress towards its goals;

Report back to full Council at least four times per year on its progress in achieving its goals.

The standing Working Group on Climate Emergency shall be resourced through the Council’s annual budgets going forward.”

Minutes:

The motion was moved by Councillor Ken Jones, seconded by Councillor Matthew Trafford. Councillor Jones delivered a presentation on the effect that climate change was having on the world.

The Motion stated:

“Climate Emergency

This Council declares that the effect of climate change within the borough poses an immediate danger to the health and well-being of our residents and therefore proclaims a Climate Emergency with immediate effect.

To combat this threat, the borough sets a goal of rendering the borough carbon neutral by the year 2030. For avoidance of doubt, this goal means the borough shall produce no net carbon emissions by this date, taking into account of actions that have the effect of removing carbon from the environment.

In order to implement this decision, the borough shall create a Standing Working Group on the Climate Emergency. The Group shall be made up of the following:

Cabinet Member responsible for the Environment (in the Chair);

Chairs of each Neighbourhood Forum;

Representatives of each political group represented on the council (2 Labour Members (including Air Quality Lead), 1 Liberal Democrat Member. 2 Conservative Members);

Air Quality Lead;

Such other Members, including co-opted members, as the working group shall consider appropriate.

The Standing Working Group on the Climate Emergency shall:

Incorporate the Council’s existing Air Quality Action Plan into its wider plans;

Devise and propose further measures in pursuit of its goals;

Monitor progress towards its goals;

Report back to full Council at least four times per year on its progress in achieving its goals.

The standing Working Group on Climate Emergency shall be resourced through the Council’s annual budgets going forward.”

The motion was debated across the Chamber, with Councillors, David Howarth, Keith Martin, Paul Foster, Mick Titherington, Matthew Tomlinson and Matthew Trafford speaking in favour. Although an ambitious target, Members felt that they owed it to the residents to look into this issue as a matter of urgency and held a strong belief that they could bring about change.

An amendment to the motion was proposed by Councillor Caroline Moon, and seconded by Councillor Michael Green. Along with some minor changes to wording and a reduction in the membership of the Standing Working Group, the amendment sought to extend the goal of rendering the bough carbon neutral to 2050 in line with central government targets.

Whilst being in support of the motion and the Council's ambition to take a lead, Councillor Alan Ogilvie spoke in support of the amendment, as he felt the 2030 target was too ambitious and over promised on what could realistically be achieved by this authority.

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was LOST (Yes: 16, Abstention: 1, No: 26)

The vote on the substantive motion was then taken and was subsequently RESOLVED (Yes: 30, Abstention: 13, No: 0). The motion was CARRIED.

This page is intentionally left blank