MINUTES OF	**SCRUTINY BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**
MEETING DATE	**Monday, 10 February 2020**
MEMBERS PRESENT:	Councillors Colin Coulton, Colin Sharples and Karen Walton
OFFICERS:	Gary Hall (Interim Chief Executive), Jane Blundell (Interim Section 151 Officer), Howard Anthony (South Ribble Partnership Manager), Darren Cranshaw (Assistant Director of Scrutiny & Democratic Services) and Charlotte Lynch (Democratic and Member Services Officer)
OTHER MEMBERS:	Councillor Paul Foster (Leader of the Council and Leader of the Labour Group), Councillor Colin Clark, Councillor Margaret Smith (Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Conservative Group), Councillor Phil Smith, Councillor Michael Titherington (Deputy Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member (Health, Wellbeing and Leisure) and Deputy Leader of the Labour Group) and Councillor Matthew Tomlinson (Cabinet Member (Finance, Property and Assets))
PUBLIC:	0

11 Quorum

At the commencement of the meeting at 5pm, the Panel was not quorate.

The Council's Constitution states that:

"*During any meeting if the minimum number is not present then the meeting will adjourn for 15 minutes. If, after 15 minutes, the minimum number of members are still not present the meeting will immediately adjourn to a fixed date and time or the next ordinary meeting*." (Point 29.3, South Ribble Borough Council Constitution).

As a result, the meeting was adjourned until 5:15pm when the Panel was quorate.

12 Minutes Silence

A minutes silence was observed in memory of Councillor Ken Jones, who sadly passed away on 8 February 2020.

13 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Will Adams and David Howarth.

14 Appointment of Substitute Chair

As Councillor David Howarth was unable to attend the meeting due to travel issues, nominations were sought for a substitute Chair.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That Councillor Colin Coulton be appointed as Chair for the meeting.

15 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

16 Minutes of the Last Meeting

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That the minutes of the last meeting, held on Monday, 11 November 2019, be signed as a correct record.

17 Matters Arising from Previous Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel Meetings

Members noted the report.

18 Period 1 Performance Monitoring Report

The Panel considered a report of the Interim Chief Executive which outlined the Council's performance during Period 1 (October – December 2019).

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster, advised that this was the first report highlighting performance against the delivery of the new Corporate Plan projects and objectives, adopted in September 2019.

Overall, performance of the projects was good, with 2 of 46 succeeding and 41 on-track.

A Leadership Programme Board has been established to ensure thorough performance monitoring on a rolling basis. This is made up of members of the Council's Leadership Team and Senior Responsible Officers.

Members expressed concerns that the Council's pledge of carbon neutrality by 2030 was off-track as the scope for the climate emergency working group had not been agreed. Certain challenges were acknowledged in devising the climate strategy, but members were assured that progress was ongoing. A climate change officer had been appointed and a further report on climate change would be considered at Full Council in June 2020.

Significant improvements in the performance of the Council's business and conference centre were noted and members queried whether the income target should be increased as a result. This would be reviewed, and further information would be provided to Panel members on the hire fees for the centre.

In response to a query regarding the number of apprentices employed by South Ribble Borough Council, members were informed that nine apprentices were recruited within a 12-month period and that this exceeded a target of 7 apprentices per annum. Information on the number of apprentices recruited since the Apprentice Factory was established was requested and would be provided to Panel members following the meeting.

Members were pleased to note that some recommendations of the Scrutiny Review, 'Mind the Gap', were being implemented to support the borough's most vulnerable residents. A particular example of this was the holiday hunger project which was piloted in Bamber Bridge, Leyland and Penwortham.

An update on the progress of the wider 'Mind the Gap' review was requested for the next meeting of the Panel.

Significant improvements in call-waiting times and the new telephony system were welcomed.

Members thanked the Leader of the Council and the Interim Chief Executive for their attendance.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That

1. the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel welcomes the reassurance provided on the data quality policy and new Leadership Programme Board to ensure robust programme management.

2. the income target for increased commercial income for the business and conference centre be reviewed in the future.

3. the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel commends the Apprentice Factory project.

4. a more detailed update be provided on 'Mind the Gap' at the next meeting of the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel.

5. the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel welcomes the Gateway's improved performance.

19 Budget Monitoring 2019/20 – Quarter 3

The Panel considered a report of the Interim Section 151 Officer which provided an update on the Council's overall financial position at the end of Quarter 3 of the 2019-20 financial year as at the end of December 2019.

Councillor Matthew Tomlinson, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Assets, informed the Panel that an underspend of £272,000 was forecasted for the end of the financial year and that significant work had been undertaken to reduce this forecasted figure over the last quarters.

In response to a query regarding the forecasted staffing underspend, members were assured that the Council was actively trying to fill vacancies and that there has been an increase in staff recruitment. Slight impact on performance was acknowledged as a result of staff vacancies but improvements were anticipated following the development of shared service arrangements with Chorley Council over the course of 2020.

Members had previously requested a breakdown of the budget by service area and this request was reiterated. Further in-depth information would be circulated to all members of the panel.

Pooling arrangements for business rates were queried and members were informed that the council would remain part of the Lancashire Pool for 2020/21 but that arrangements for the following year had not yet been confirmed.

The borough investment reserve accounted for a significant amount of the forecasted underspend, with £4.55 million earmarked for purchasing investment properties. Members queried the governance procedures for changing the Investment Property Strategy to enable expenditure and were informed that amendments would be subject to the approval of Full Council. There was an intention to amend the Strategy.

A further update on the progress of the Green Links project at Shruggs Wood in Leyland was requested.

The panel thanked the Cabinet Member and the Interim Section 151 Officer for their attendance.

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That

1. the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel welcomes the Budget Monitoring report.

2. the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel receives the revenue budget summary breakdown.

3. the Scrutiny Budget and Performance Panel looks forward to the future of the Borough Investment Reserve being presented to Full Council.

4. an update be provided on the Shruggs Wood Green Links project.

Chair Date