

South Ribble Borough Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

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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 Rawstone 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

- Over **£34** million administered in Covid-19 Business grants
- **7,053** business grant payments made
- Over **£31** million was awarded in Business Rate relief



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



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 advise 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.



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.



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.



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.

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