

ANNUAL REPORT

2023/24

Introduction

Welcome to South Ribble Council's Annual Report 2023-24. This report provides an overview of our activities and achievements over the past 12 months, highlighting the steps we have taken to deliver on our corporate priorities and our commitment to delivering great core business. As a Council we are dedicated to providing exceptional services working with our partners to deliver support to our communities and businesses, making South Ribble a great place to live, work and visit.

Our **vision**:

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

Our **priorities**:

- An Exemplary Council
- Thriving Communities
- A fair local economy that works for everyone
- Good homes, green spaces and well places

Delivering great core business highlights...

Climate initiatives and Biodiversity

The Council has implemented a number of climate initiatives as part of our pledge to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the borough. In July 2023, the Council adopted the Biodiversity Action Plan, which outlines actions for the next five years to restore and enhance local biodiversity. Over the year, achievements include exceeding our tree planting targets across the borough through our partners and tree giveaways, introducing peat-free compost alternatives for South Ribble and our suppliers, and implementing a policy requiring all developments to incorporate Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) into the planning system, ensuring new projects positively impact local biodiversity.

Communications

The Council's communications function plays a vital role in fostering transparency, engagement, and trust within the community through clear, consistent, and accessible communication. Over the year, the service ensured that residents and all stakeholders were well-informed about council initiatives, services, and events through various channels, including our core social media channels (Facebook, LinkedIn, and X) websites, printed publications and through the press. South Ribble social media channels have seen a net audience growth of 5.5%, a 4.4% growth rate in engagement with a 2.3% engagement rate per impression.

Democracy and Local Election

The Council's continued commitment to democracy ensures that the voices of our residents are heard and represented. The Council successfully delivered the South Ribble Local Elections in May 2023 for all 50 seats across 23 Wards. We have supported Council and committee meetings, including task groups and informal working groups, facilitating transparent and efficient decision-making processes that directly impact our community. Additionally, Mayoral engagements have been organised, fostering community spirit, raising funds for local charities and promoting South Ribble. Through these actions, we continue to uphold the principles of democracy, ensuring that our governance is inclusive, transparent, and responsive to the needs of our residents.

Planning

To help shape the current and future development of the borough, the Council continues to ensure that new development is conducted in a sustainable way, contributing to economic growth and regeneration whilst protecting and conserving the natural and historic environment. Key initiatives include promoting affordable housing, enhancing infrastructure, and preserving green spaces, through the consideration and approval of planning applications. Progress has been made with the development of a comprehensive Local Plan, which sets out the vision and framework for land use over the next 15 years. Through extensive public consultation and collaboration with stakeholders, the Council is committed to creating a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive community for all residents of South Ribble.

Customer Services

In 2023, the Council launched the Customer Access Charter which sets out our approach to customer services and standards of care, ensuring that we are providing the highest level of service to residents and users of Council services. Over the year, the Contact Centre has supported residents with accessing key Council services such as housing, waste and recycling, taxi licensing, revenues and benefits (i.e. council tax and business rates), local land charge register, pest control and electoral services. It is important to us that customers can access services in a way that suits them, as such we offer online, telephone email and face to face support.

Parks and Open Spaces

We have delivered a number of improvements to our parks and open spaces, enhancing their visual appeal, accessibility, and safety for residents. Improvement works delivered over the year include a new dementia garden at Strawberry Valley Park with raised planting beds and seating, along with an accessible loop footpath. At Worden Park, the Walled Garden's potting greenhouse frame has been replaced, and the historic Icehouse has undergone repair and conservation, adding a window for interior viewing, and ensuring its structural stability. Restoration work has also taken place on the last remaining wall of the main part of Worden Hall, which was demolished in the early 1960s following a fire in 1941. A new community garden and toddler play space have been developed at Mounsey Road Pocket Park, a large tower slide has been replaced at Withy Grove Park, and lighting has been upgraded to energy efficient LED lighting at four playgrounds, improving safety. These enhancements contribute to residents' health and wellbeing, creating an enjoyable and inclusive environment for all.

Licensing


Throughout the year, the Council has processed over 961 licensing applications to maintain statutory standards for taxis, personal and premises licences (for selling alcohol or regulated entertainment), gambling, scrap metal, caravan sites, and street collections. This ensures public safety, fair trading, and supports local businesses across South Ribble. The Council also collaborates with multiple agencies, including the Police, Lancashire County Council, and other local authorities, to address broader issues beyond licensing enforcement. For example, using information from the public, Police, and our compliance visits, we conducted a test purchase operation with Trading Standards to combat underage sales in South Ribble. One premises was fined by the Police, and the Council provided a list of actions, including 'Challenge 25' staff training. Additionally, the Council chairs the Event Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) for South Ribble, offering advice to event organisers on safely managing events of over 500 attendees, ensuring successful and safe community events.

Recruitment System

The Council is committed to being a fit for the future council which involves transforming how we do things and implementing innovative solutions. We have launched a state-of-the-art recruitment system and new careers website, to help us in attracting talent and creating a skilled workforce to deliver our services. The new system improves the user experience, reducing bias through anonymous shortlisting and automating processes for a seamless experience. It is now easier for people to apply for roles at the Council, reducing the time taken to fill vacant posts and has boosted the number of applications received by 48%

Delivering great core business outcomes...

Created **48** wildflower meadows and introduced **34** rewilding areas (grass left unmown) to improve biodiversity across the borough.



20,000+ people attended Council events across South Ribble, including Music in the Park, Penwortham Live, Longton Live, Taste of Leyland, and the Christmas Lights Switch On.



316,547 social media engagements.



42.76% household waste sent for reuse, recycling, or composting.



77,748 calls answered via the customer contact centre.



135 premises inspected by the Council's Licensing team.

7,768 face to face contacts via the contact centre.

1,047 planning applications processed in the year.

15,453 email contacts received via the customer contact centre.



Achieved a **32%** turnout at the South Ribble Local Elections in May 2023.



Facilitated over **60** Mayoral engagements supporting our communities and promoting South Ribble.

Supported around **120** Council and committee meetings, task groups, informal working groups and other Member meetings.



An Exemplary Council highlights...

- Through our Chorley and South Ribble Partnership we have created a shared intelligence platform that combines different data to provide place-based insights. Bringing together data across the different partners allows us to better understand our communities and make informed decisions about the services we provide.
- The Council launched a brand-new website in July 2024 enabling residents and businesses to securely access council services digitally across all types of devices (laptop, tablet, PC or smartphone). The site meets all accessibility standards and is convenient and easy to use, ensuring that everyone can get information, make payments or report issues. Improvements to the website will be ongoing to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of our communities.
- The Council continues to create shared services to build resilience across both Councils, improve operations and make cost savings. This year we have moved to a Shared Building Control Service and shared management arrangement for the Streetscene and Waste service. By implementing shared services we have become a more efficient Council, including creating capacity in our workforce, streamlining processes and adopting different ways of working, meaning our residents benefit from better quality services.
- There are several services that are now shared equating to over 260 staff across both councils. These services include a Shared Senior Management Team, Finance, Governance Services, Communications and Visitor Economy, Transformation and Partnerships, ICT, Customer Services, Property and Development, Pest Control and Building Control.



Investment

- Invested £993k to ensure high quality and responsive services, progressing delivery of our ambitious Transformation Programme.
- Invested £110k to support the sharing of intelligence to design and deliver services that meet local needs and target those who need our help the most.

Thriving Communities highlights...

- The Council launched its Social Prescribing Service in September 2023 to help people take control of their health and wellbeing. Our Social Prescribers provide personal and tailored support to individuals based on what matters to them. We have helped people overcome loneliness and isolation, manage long term health and low-level mental health conditions, we also provide support to families and children around diet and exercise and emotional wellbeing. Social prescribing is a wrap around service to help build confidence, new skills and community resilience.
- We have successfully delivered our Cost-of-Living Action Plan which aims to address cost of living factors by delivering early help and intervention to prevent issues arising or offering immediate or short-term support to residents who need emergency provision. We work alongside our partners, offering advice and support and distributing financial payments and affordable warmth grants to those finding themselves in hardship. We have delivered the 'Cost of Living Roadshow' a borough wide bus tour, to reach out to people in their local community. The roadshow enabled people to access support from both the Council and other local agencies such as Citizens Advice, Credit Union and Progress Housing.
- The Council opened the South Ribble Family Wellbeing Centre in Lostock Hall in March 2024 which is home to a baby bank and family support service. The facility allows families, parents and children to spend time having fun and getting any support that they need. Expectant and new parents can get access to emergency supplies for babies.
- The Council successfully hosted its flagship event 'Music in the Park' 2024 in the stunning Worden Park. This event attracted visitors from across the borough and beyond, featuring 11 high-profile acts and showcased 19 businesses, offering a variety of services and products. This was our best attendance yet, with ticket sales rising to over 4,000. The event not only brought the local community together but also promoted tourism and boosted South Ribble's local economy.
- South Ribble Council won the award for Large Organisation of the Year from the Bikeability Trust. The award recognises the Council's high standard of service and significant contributions to the success of the national Bikeability Scheme, a cycle training programme for school children.
- We delivered the Affordable Warmth (Warm Homes) scheme, providing replacement boilers, windows and insulation with the view to improving energy efficiency, reducing carbon footprints and energy bills.

Investment

- Invested £84k into the Social Prescribing service working with partners to enhance provision, address health inequalities and improve outcomes for residents.
- £300k has been invested in the local community for the purchase and renovation of Green's Dance Centre to create the South Ribble Family Wellbeing Centre in Lostock Hall.
- Invested over £1m through the Disabled Facility Grant to provide specialist adaptations to meet the care and mobility needs of more than 100 people with disabilities to enable them to live independently with privacy and dignity.

A fair local economy that works for everyone highlights...

- The Council has secured external funding to deliver significant improvements to Leyland town centre, supporting economic growth in the town centre. The £38 million project will deliver a refurbished Leyland Market, create a new market square, deliver a range of affordable townhouses and apartments, alongside the development of a new business hub to create a space for local businesses to learn and work together. The project will be delivered by 2026 and has reached an exciting stage with site clearance works complete at the former Iddons Factory and on Quin Street. Whilst the works are underway, the market will move to Kings Court, for a period of twelve months from late September 2024.
- As part of the Council's commitment to ensuring that each development taking place across the borough gives back to local communities and puts money back into the local supply chain, a range of social value initiatives have been delivered during the demolition and site clearance for the Leyland Town Deal, Quin Street. These include paying all employees above the minimum wage, creating apprenticeships, work placements and training opportunities for local people, employing two ex-offenders to support their reintegration into the workforce, donating over £1k to local training courses for CV and interview skills, and providing employees with access to well-being programmes.
- The Council remains committed to supporting local businesses in reducing their energy usage and costs through the Business Energy Efficiency (BEE) Scheme. The initiative has provided fully funded energy audits and Council grant support to help eligible businesses implement recommended energy saving (carbon reduction) measures.
- To support residents into employment and training the Council delivered a range of skills and employment events. Careers fairs have been delivered at schools across the borough providing young people with information and guidance to explore varied career paths. In July 2023, the Council hosted the Recruitment Roadshow, which was attended by over 400 people and had 45 businesses and support organisations looking to recruit to vacancies. Other support offered included CV writing, maths skills (Multiply) and the completion of job applications.



Investment

- £2.2m in year investment has been made in the Leyland Town Deal scheme.
- Invested £285k to continue to support eligible local businesses through the Business Energy Efficiency (BEE) Scheme.

Good homes, green spaces and well places highlights...

- The Council has delivered a number of improvement schemes to enhance the quality and accessibility of play areas and green spaces across South Ribble. Ryden Avenue play area in Leyland has been rejuvenated with new play equipment aimed at toddlers, up to 6 years, including climbing frames, slides, seesaw, roundabout, swings, sensory and let's pretend equipment. Hutton play area has also seen major improvements aimed at toddlers (ages 2-6) and juniors (ages 7-12). The Council has delivered state-of-the-art facilities such as a zip line, somersault bars, grasshoppers, dino swing and much more. South Ribble Borough Council have plans for even more play area refurbishments next year including Longton, New Longton and King George V and Tardy Gate.
- 19 electric vehicle charging stations have been installed at various locations as part of our commitment to sustainability. Locations include King Street, the Leisure Centre, the Railway Station in Leyland, Kingsway Car Park in Bamber Bridge and Cann Bridge Street and King George Playing Fields in High Walton.
- South Ribble has successfully retained all four of its Green Flag Awards. Worden Park, Hurst Grange Park and Longton Brickcroft have proudly held this prestigious award for over ten years, while Withy Grove Park has maintained its status for a second year. The Green Flag Award scheme recognise and rewards well-managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark for excellence in park management across the United Kingdom and globally.
- The Jubilee Gardens Extra Care Scheme commenced on site in September 2023 and will provide 75 apartments with supported living facilities. Construction has progressed over the year with successful completion of the ground works, steel frames and masonry works are at an advanced stage. All spaces have been designed with accessibility and adaptability in mind, incorporating sustainable energy designs such as air source heat pumps, solar PV panels, electric vehicle charging supporting the Council's carbon neutral ambitions. The scheme will be completed and open to the public by summer 2025.
- The developers of the Jubilee Gardens scheme, Caddick Construction have pledged £6.6m of social value investment to create a lasting legacy through a host of initiatives to support the local community. Social Value initiatives that have been delivered on the scheme already include employment opportunities for 10 individuals that have been long-term unemployed, the site team volunteered and donated £5k to remodel the Base Community Centre with new flooring, painting and installing racking to support the foodbank; donated £2.5k to Derian House Trees of Love event and provided 120 employees with access to multi-dimensional wellbeing programmes. Caddick also made a pledge to localise its supply chain spend to the Central Lancashire area, with a commitment to spend with local subcontractors and local businesses.

Investment

- £20.5m investment as part of our commitment to provide more affordable housing, the council will deliver the Jubilee Gardens extra care development.
- Invested £1.3m to deliver a number of improvement schemes to enhance the quality and accessibility of play areas in South Ribble.
- £211k has been invested to protect the local environment and to help address the issue of the climate emergency.
- Invested £95k to refurbish Hutton Play Area and £70k to refurbish Ryden Play area.

An Exemplary Council outcomes...



39%

of South Ribble staff as a total of the council workforce are shared with Chorley Council.



70%

of customers were satisfied with the service they received through the Council's Contact Centre.



£700k

of financial savings have been achieved through shared service reviews at South Ribble.

104

people have successfully completed basic digital skills training to support them to access Council services online.



The shared intelligence platform has **20 datasets**

from across the Chorley and South Ribble Partnership and can be compared with national data such as the Census, Office for Health Improvements and Disparities, Police, and many more.



54%

of service requests are received online.

70%

of staff within shared services say that they are satisfied with their job.



83%

of calls to the Council's Contact Centre were answered within 5 minutes.



Thriving Communities outcomes...



Delivered **2,975**

active school sessions during curriculum time at after school clubs and school festivals and competitions.

150+

residents attended the 'Cost of Living Roadshow', providing them with access to practical support and advice from both the Council and other agencies.



£89k

provided through the Warm Homes Grants to 29 Households, providing essential upgrades and energy efficiency support to help the long-term reduction in energy bills.

16,018

residents participated in activities delivered by the Council.

Our school uniform pop-up shop has supported over **700** families with uniforms and is good for the environment, preventing the clothes from going to landfill.



96%

of clients of the Social Prescribing service reported an increase in their overall wellbeing and 73% of clients reported a reduction in loneliness.



The Council has delivered **1,418** places to residents through the Bikeability scheme to promote cycling skills and safety.

Gifted **3** bicycles and loaned cycles to over **100** children through the Bikeability scheme.

The Holiday and Food (HAF) programme provided **8,585** places, engaging with families across the borough.

653 people have been referred to the Social Prescribing Service. The service has provided over **5,995** hours of support, including signposts and referrals made to **88** partner agencies.

65

households supported with Step Up Grants totalling over **£60k**, providing support with larger household items such as white goods, carpets and support with rent arrears and energy debt.

541

households were supported through the household support payments scheme.

£145k

of household support payments to residents who needed short term financial assistance to meet the costs of energy, food and other household essentials.

£160k

of grant funding provided to **11** community-based organisations that provide essential and practical support to local residents, this includes food banks, community centres and the refuge.

A fair local economy that works for everyone outcomes...

4,290

people attended business, skills, careers and recruitment events provided by the Council.

£39k

paid to 20 eligible businesses through the Council's Business Energy Efficiency (BEE) Scheme.

85.4%

South Ribble overall employment rate.

7,917_{m²}

of employment floorspace created for economic use.

852

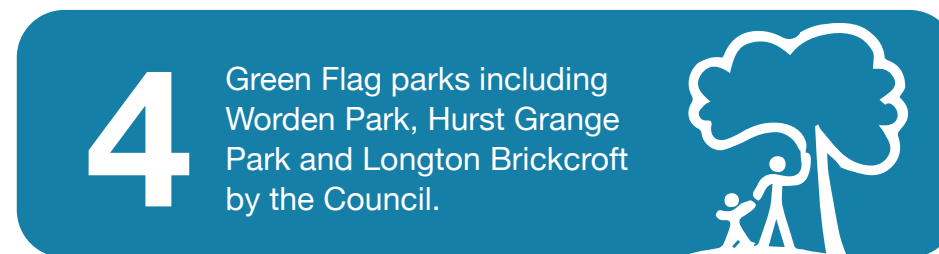
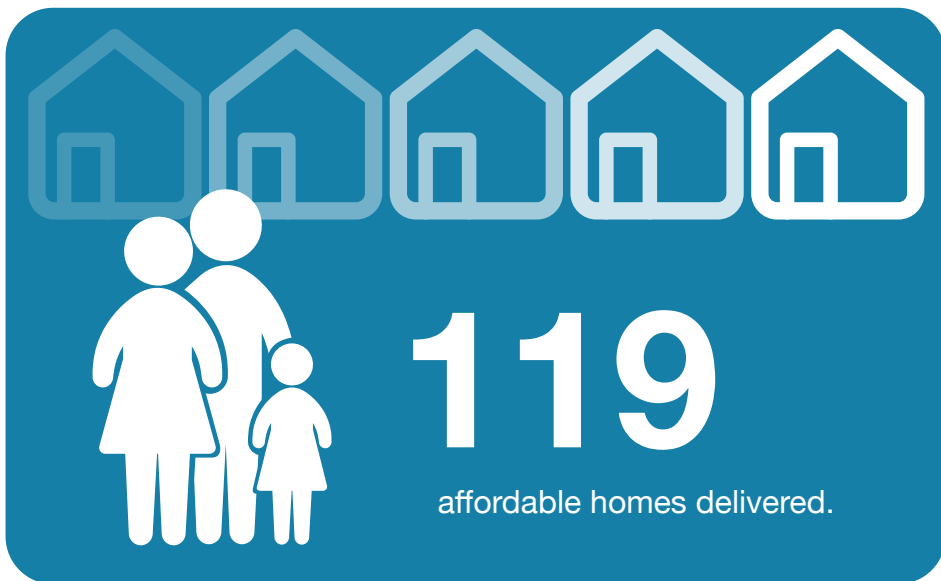
business engagements/support provided by the Council.



30%

social and local economic value added from Council contracts.

Good homes, green spaces and well places outcomes...



Communities can access services and support when they need them

We are committed to helping our residents through the cost-of-living crisis by providing practical and financial support. We recently helped a local family secure permanent housing after being made homeless and living in emergency accommodation. As a self-employed single parent, saving money on a low income was a challenge and living in temporary accommodation meant the family had minimal private space and a lack of cooking facilities to prepare family meals, which impacted their wellbeing. The Council's Communities and Housing Team worked with housing partners in finding the family a new home and secured a Step-Up Grant to help them furnish the property creating a comfortable and happy living environment for the family.

Residents will have positive mental health

Our Social Prescribing Service is a way of supporting people by connecting them with activities, groups, and services to improve their health and wellbeing. A client was referred to the council by their GP due to financial struggles and debt which led to development of an alcohol addiction. We provided one on one comprehensive support, assisting them in applying for numerous benefits that they were entitled to. Additionally, we referred them to the local food bank and helped in building their confidence through motivational interviewing and health coaching.

Their finances are now more manageable with benefit payments to help cover rent. Through the Household Support Fund, we provided a £150 voucher to spend on doing up their garden, to aid wellbeing. They now refer to their garden as their "little haven". They have also completed a Mental Health First Aid course and set future goals to pursue further courses, with the potential to work in a role supporting others with their mental health.

Reflecting on the support they received from the Social Prescribing Link Worker, the client said: "I have no idea where I would be today without all your help. I don't like to think about how bad things would have gotten if you didn't come along. The support you've given me has been phenomenal. You make my very limited trips out of my home very enjoyable and calming. Thank you so much; you are a great credit to your organisation. I feel so much better in myself. Thank you!"

Enabling every person and community to thrive

Providing people with a choice of quality recreational activities and a sense of belonging is key to healthier and happier communities. A young person at St Patrick's Primary School, Walton-le-Dale wanted to attend the council's Bikeability course to gain cycling skills but did not have access to a helmet or cycle. The council provide the necessary equipment for the duration of the course, which helped the youngster progress from a 'wobbly-wheeler beginner' to completing a Level 2 course on the roads. Upon completion of the course, the young girl was upset that she wouldn't be able to carry on riding at home due to not having access a bicycle. To support her continued cycling journey, the council's Active Travel Team gifted the borrowed bicycle and helmet, and her parent contacted us to share that she was "squealing with delight" upon hearing that she would be gifted a bicycle. Cycling not only benefits health and well-being but also contributes to reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality in our area. By investing in cycling proficiency, we are investing in the future of our community.



