

# **Transformation Strategy Consultation Summary**

**March 2011**

## **The Consultation Process**

The Leader launched the transformation process at council on 15 September 2010. Following the launch a wide range of briefings and consultations were undertaken with stakeholders. These include:

- Staff briefings and workshops
- Our Voice – residents
- Team Talk - employees
- Focus groups of residents (including young people)
- Political groups
- Overview Management Committee
- Strategic Priorities Executive
- Trade Unions
- Public Sector Partners
- Private Sector Partners
- Voluntary and community sector
- Faith Leaders

This consultation process helped to shape and develop the draft Transformation Strategy which was launched for consultation on 28 February 2011. Again an extensive consultation exercise was undertaken including the stakeholders identified above. During this consultation period people were able to comment on the draft transformation strategy via an on-line comments form or by emailing – [yourviews@bury.gov.uk](mailto:yourviews@bury.gov.uk).

These two methods of consultation generated 45 responses from individuals and seven from organisations within Bury.

As well as the above, five focus groups were held with members of Community Voice (our citizens' panel). In total the focus groups consulted with 54 members of the panel. Another focus group was also held comprising seven young people aged between 12 and 15. The focus groups were asked a series of structured questions that were based around the ten commitments in the draft transformation strategy.

One ordinary petition was also received containing 697 names. The petition stated "I want Bury services to continue to be delivered directly by Bury Council for Bury's people."

## **Consultation responses**

There were a number of positive comments received about the development of a strategy in itself, even if there are differing views as to the content of the strategy:

"I fully support a strategy that aims to manage the challenges ahead rather than annual 'knee jerk' reactions to budget cuts..."

The themes within the responses received were both varied and numerous so in order to aid understanding they are grouped into themes under the ten commitments.

### **1. We will start with the assumption that can be tested, that the Council will not directly deliver services.**

This commitment received by the far the most responses. Some respondents expressed concern at the concept that the council will not deliver its own services, whilst others were willing to accept this option as long as the quality of services was upheld.

There is general belief in the council delivering services especially in the areas of child protection and looked after children –

*'I do not feel that the private sector has a good understanding of council services especially Children's services to be able to adequately perform the service required and I think it is a dangerous move'*

*'I hope existing service providers are given the chance to improve efficiency before they lose their jobs. All the experience of your staff will be wasted if you give contracts to others who may fail to deliver or hold the Council ransom or reap huge profits for private stakeholders on the back of public money'*

*'Local Authority workers carry out some of the most difficult jobs in society and are some of the most undervalued workers'.*

*'If 80% of residents say they are happy with Council services then surely this indicates Bury council staff are providing a high quality service as demanded by tax payers.'*

Conversely some respondents were happy for certain services to be outsourced as long as the quality of service was maintained, it provided value for money and that performance was measured. Respondents were

concerned that the quality of services would fall away. Concern was also raised about how and to whom they would complain about a service. They needed to know that someone at the council was still in control of the service.

*'We accept however there may be better ways of running some services that will incur lower costs, without harming the service'.*

Other responses also mentioned the need to still retain council staff to monitor the contracts, so how would that then see a reduction in costs overall?

**2. As each service is reviewed, new ways of delivering that service will be considered using the objective criteria set out in the transformation toolkit.**

It was felt that emphasis needs to be placed on delivery and provision of services not bureaucracy.

There was some concern that if changes are made will it really be for the better.

Respondents wanted the reviews to be consulted upon especially with the service users.

**3. Each review will consider a range of options for providing the services in the future. These include stopping the service, working with partners, self management by community or voluntary groups, volunteering and commissioning to secure best value.**

Respondents felt that although some services could be managed by volunteers, not all could and that it was too simplistic a view. Respondents also felt that they would need more information about volunteering and would need to be supported by the council to do this.

Respondents mentioned that there was scope for linking volunteering with skill accreditation. They felt that people needed to see that they are getting something back from volunteering. It would also give people work experience which is vital.

*'I am not against the draft transformation strategy in principle but it is critical that managers consult front line staff who understand in practice not just in theory the potential for local communities to become more involved in the running of services'*

Respondents also mentioned that using volunteers could be difficult in some services as they cannot be told to *'clock in at 9 and leave at 5 – they are volunteers.'*

*' There is a suggestion that volunteers and private provision will provide a more cost effective service but they only cost less because they pay less and there is no quality assurance'*

*'Residents should be taught how important it is to take personal responsibility for certain issues e.g. litter. This would then reduce the expenses spent on this service.'*

*'Need to look at all sensible options.'*

#### **4. All proposals for changing current delivery arrangements will have full engagement with agreed groups.**

Respondents raised a number of concerns

- Is consultation really listened to?
- If you do consult use plain English
- Consult before decisions have been made.
- Longer consultation periods needed

Respondeees wanted to ensure the STAR reviews also consult widely and with the appropriate people/service users.

Respondents were pleased to have been asked to comment on the draft strategy but were also concerned that large numbers of people in Bury didn't even know about it and felt that more and better communication about important documents like this was needed.

#### **5. All transformation implementation plans will identify savings to support the overall savings requirements.**

It was felt that this statement should be strengthened to enforce savings not just identify them.

#### **6. The current organisational structure of the council will be reviewed to ensure it best supports the range of services and functions in the future.**

Respondents took the organisational structure to also include the democratic structures and wanted to see more transparency in councillor expenses and queried the need for so many councillors.

*'Structures should be based on functionality not individuals'*

**7. New technology, including greater use of agile and home working, will be used to improve access to services and increase productivity**

This commitment was not disputed, utilising home working and new technologies are seen as a way to improve service provision and productivity.

The use of new technology in lighting e.g. LED lights was mentioned.

**8. We will buy goods and services in a more co-ordinated way to get better value for money and reduce costs.**

The general view from respondents was that more work should be done in co-ordinating services with neighbouring authorities especially around the areas of procurement, legal, trading standards, human resources and information technology.

*'Co-ordination and communication needs to take place within the council as well as outside of it to reduce costs and get better value for money'*

**9. We will look at our land and buildings and assess how they fit into our future plans and if they provide value for money.**

General view was yes, this needed to be done – *'stop renting buildings until all space in buildings owned and used by the council are full'*

*'The Council should look to use multi- functional buildings i.e. integrate both private and public services into one building to save costs. If services are going to be delivered by private and public sectors, merging services into the same buildings will provide more co-ordination between services.'*

**10. New opportunities for working with partners and investing public money in different ways will be fully investigated and used to support the implementation of the Transformation Strategy.**

This commitment was fully supported by respondents

*'Council's can be too inward looking - it will be good for Bury Council to work with other councils and partners'*