

Council meeting – 14 September 2011

Questions to the Leader of the Council

Question 1 – Councillor Mary D'Albert

Councillors of all parties understood that the St Mary's Court sheltered accommodation scheme was to have a future over a long term timescale up to 2025. Why then is the Council proceeding with helping residents find alternative accommodation and building up schemes to replace the accommodation with an independent sector scheme?

A. The report and recommendations for the future of the Council's sheltered housing stock was approved on 3rd March 2011.

The report focused on improving the quality of what is a valuable housing option for older people by replacing all the bedsit properties and upgrading the other schemes where necessary to meet health and safety, DDA and modern living standards.

One scheme was proposed for immediate closure (Elton Square) – this site to be used for affordable housing. The remaining 6 sites were to be retained and redeveloped as older people's housing (either bungalows or apartments) to maintain sufficient numbers of units (of around 500 properties) to meet demand for this type of housing.

It is recognised that the programme will take time hence the overall end date of 2025. Whilst we may wish to decommission bedsits at the earliest opportunity, complexity of scheme approvals, funding arrangements and tenant aspirations need to be carefully managed. Our primary focus is tenant welfare and the need to improve the quality of older persons' housing in the borough but we are also mindful of the need to avoid derelict sites which can occur if schemes are emptied before replacement schemes are ready.

To manage risks, 3 sites are being progressed in the first phase (Elton Square, Wesley House, Tottington and St Mary's Court, Prestwich) on the basis of limited tenant numbers and/or development opportunities.

The seventeen remaining tenants of St Mary's Court, Prestwich have been informed of our plans for redevelopment. As a result of these conversations a number of tenants have expressed an interest to move to better, alternative accommodation now, including a number of have asked to be rehoused in the current voids at Clarkshill, Prestwich. Throughout this process it has been made clear to them that there is no pressure to move and that they should be completely satisfied with any new accommodation they go to.

We are keen to provide better housing options for older people in the borough and as per the recommendations in the report have

been in discussion with social housing providers. As a result, a bid to the Homes & Communities Agency for the Affordable Housing Programme 2011/15 grant funding has been submitted by a housing association on Bury's Joint Commissioning Partnership to provide ten bungalows for older people for letting at Affordable Rent. Final confirmation of this funding is expected imminently and we will provide Council with more details when these become available.

After the future redevelopment of this new, high quality housing for older people we will provide advice and support to people wishing to be housed in it, in the same way that we have provided help to find alternative housing options for people currently living in St Mary's Court.

Question 2 - Councillor Ahmed

Can the Leader clarify the future plans for the Derby School given that some members of the ruling group have publicly opposed plans to secure its future and enable it continue to provide a high level of academic achievement?

A. Thank you for your question Councillor Ahmed. First of all can I place on record our congratulations to all of the pupils and staff at our High Schools in the Borough for the excellent GCSE results they have achieved this year – they are our best ever and do great credit to the young people, their parents and the staff who work with them. We are very proud of their achievement and the excellent school system we have in Bury.

I visited Derby High School in the early weeks of being appointed and am well aware of the issues there, particularly with respect to their building and its investment needs. I'm not sure which plans to secure its future you are talking about. Derby High School is rightly valued by myself and my colleagues on the Executive, several of whom are or have been governors there and its future is not in any doubt.

I can only assume you are referring to the Bibby Plan, announced in desperation a couple of weeks before the election to relocate it to Radcliffe. I would have to say that to call that a plan is stretching the point – we think of it more as a pre election stunt from a doomed leader of a dying administration who delivered so little for either Derby or Radcliffe during his time in office. Sadly we have been unable to find the fag packet on which Councillor Bibby did his calculations and would ask him to return it to us to see if it is a realistic option to consider.

What we in the Labour group are looking to do is build a robust and properly costed strategy to address the many needs of our schools in terms of capital investment. Clearly this is a very difficult task given the draconian cuts made by the Coalition Government to capital funding for schools following a decade of Labour investment. We will however look at every option to meet

those needs and the resources we do have will be prioritised according to proven need, not who shouts the loudest. As a first step in this I am delighted to report to Council that I will be bringing a report to Executive in October asking them to endorse our bid to be part of the Priority Schools Programme to completely rebuild both Elton High School and Radcliffe Hall primary school. We have a very strong case to make but ultimately the decision will be one for central government.

So we will continue to pursue capital resources to invest in our schools wherever we can and would ask Councillor Ahmed and his colleagues to join with us in doing that rather than sniping from the sidelines.

Question 3 - Councillor Bailey

With the prosperity of Radcliffe as a town dependent on future development and regeneration plans, could the Leader/exec member please update this council as to what support is in place for existing businesses, and what progress is being made to attract new businesses into Radcliffe Town Centre, with a view to making the Centre more commercially viable for future investment and regeneration?

A. Support for Existing Businesses

The Council work with, facilitate and support the Radcliffe Traders Group to which all traders (plus Market traders) are invited. The group meets quarterly and provides an opportunity for existing businesses to work together.

Part of this work includes bringing forward a programme of promotional events and activity aimed at increasing town centre footfall.

In addition the group facilitates exchange of useful business information e.g. Retail Training schemes, Business Rates Relief Information and any relevant campaigns or opportunities such as Independent Retailers Month.

Current activity includes increasing and improving the web presence to promote the Town centre and businesses, and a potential video project to promote businesses.

Going forward the aim is for this and other groups to link in with the Township Forums to ensure the views of the Business Community form a part of the work of the Forums.

Town Centre Masterplan

The Council adopted a new masterplan for redeveloping the town centre in March 2011 that looked to capitalise on the interest shown in Radcliffe by the budget supermarket operators. Unfortunately there are still questions over the commercial viability of the proposed scheme.

The council is exploring the options available to reduce the cost burden on the town centre development, with a view to attracting a developer as soon as it is practical to do so.

This Council remains committed to ensuring that we have a strong economy with employment and business growth opportunities across the entire borough. Promoting new business formation, survival and growth and developing the retail, leisure and office sectors as well as unlocking key employment sites are all key objectives of our Economic Strategy 2010-2018. The Strategy's action plan incorporates projects that will contribute to achieving the objectives of the strategy.

Question 4 - Councillor Vic D'Albert

Will the Leader join with me in welcoming the development of a McCarthy and Stone elderly residential development on Bury New Road in Prestwich?

A. While we welcome new developments in the borough, at the present time this planning application is still being assessed and is yet to be considered by Planning Committee. Therefore, I believe that it is inappropriate for any comment to be made at this time as this could prejudice the Council's and the Committee's position in being able to make an objective, unbiased and unpredetermined decision.

Question 5 – Councillor Harris

The Labour administration stated in its manifesto "we remain committed to equal pay for our employees and will seek to resolve the issue as quickly as possible".

Could the Leader advise us on progress to date in achieving this aim?

Could he also assure the Chamber that all those who are waiting to receive monies due to them will receive settlement before Christmas 2011?

A. I would like to thank Councillor Harris for her insightful question. I have to say that I am extremely pleased to learn that Councillor Harris and the members of the Conservative group have taken the time and trouble to become so familiar with the Labour group manifesto.

I would also like to congratulate Councillor Harris on what appears to be her concern for and commitment to the workforce and in particular to equal pay, which I have to say was sadly lacking in the previous administration. The actions of her colleagues, when in power resulted in a stand-off between the Council and the trade unions, high profile litigation and mounting legal costs. This was at the expense of the workforce, the Council's most valuable asset.

The refusal of the former Leader to actively engage with either the trade unions or the Council's workforce led this Council into a stalemate position with no room for manoeuvre. It has taken significant investment of time and effort on our part to establish a dialogue and more importantly to re-establish a position of trust.

However I am pleased to be able to report that a series of meeting

have taken place and that progress has been made on quantifying the financial implications and gaining a better understanding of the trade union claims. This administration believes that it is important for the Council and the trade unions to acknowledge and accept our respective positions; by doing this we stand a much better chance of resolving the issue. However we are also mindful of the need to give full consideration to our obligations to maintain pay equality for the workforce and our obligations to the council tax payers of Bury.

Because this is a clear departure from the previous administration's "take it or leave it" strategy to settling equal pay claims it is by nature a more lengthy process. We are investing time and effort at this stage because our aim is to achieve a settlement which is fair and affordable.

The discussions are at this stage 'without prejudice' and for that reason I am unable to disclose more detail at this point in time.

With regard to the timing of an offer this Labour administration's primary concern is to achieve a settlement which is realistic, acceptable and affordable. It is not our intention to make hollow and populist gestures immediately prior to the holiday period.

I suggest that Councillor Harris and her colleagues reflect on the seasonal messages delivered to its workforce in Christmas past before seizing upon an opportunity to imply something within the Labour manifesto that has not been stated.

Question 6 - Councillor Tariq

Can the Executive Member for Adult Care, Health and Housing provide us with an update on the ongoing consultation with regards to the community resettlement policy reported to the executive on 22nd August?

A. At the Executive on 22 August 2011 I did give a firm commitment to consult the residents of the Chapelfield estate and I can report that since that time several meetings have been held with tenants and neighbouring residents to explain the proposals, listen to their concerns and develop a way forward. This has been supplemented by a number of one to one meetings to obtain the views of people who may be harder to hear.

As a result of these meetings, it is evident that the concerns of residents have been building up for some time and that their grievances extend beyond the proposals for Community Resettlement. Accordingly we are in the process of gathering this information with a view to developing an action plan in conjunction with Six Town Housing and Environment and Development Services to address those issues where we can.

The engagement process remains ongoing and I am hopeful that we will continue to have a positive dialogue. The comments are helping us to shape our views on the proposals and these will be reported back to the Executive at a future meeting.

Question 7 – Councillor Garner

How many households have applied for larger or additional grey bins in advance of the move to fortnightly collections? How many have been successful?

A. Re: new applications for a 2nd Grey Bin - we have received 89 requests for an application form to apply for an additional grey bin since April 04th 2011.

Of the 89 applications sent out to residents, 26 have been completed and returned to us and only 1 has been refused.

Re: the audit of existing authorised 2nd Grey Bins – We have 941 addresses listed that already have an authorised 2nd grey bin. We wrote to all these residents asking them if they still required the extra bin capacity and if so, to fill out the application form and return it to us.

So far 284 residents have responded and of these 277 have been approved.

Question 8 - Councillor Hankey

The recent public survey regarding the establishment of Township Forums recorded an overwhelming majority in favour of their establishment. However, in absolute terms the total responses covered approximately 0.1% of the electorate – a sample so low as to be statistically insignificant.

If the attendance of the public at the local forums is of a similar level will the Leader look again at these with a view to providing an alternative, more popular, means of public engagement in local issues?

A. Thank you Councillor Hankey for allowing me the opportunity to refer to the fact that we have now formally launched the new Township Forums. (13th September at Radcliffe Civic Suite).

Local democracy and empowering communities to shape decisions that affect their area is a key priority for this administration. In establishing the Township Forums we have given local people a voice to influence how services are delivered in their area. Township Forums are one of many methods in which we, as a listening administration, will promote greater community engagement right across this borough.

Our on-line consultation was the first of its kind, where we asked our partners and the public for their views on the proposed Operating Framework. I am extremely grateful for all the responses we received. All the points made were painstakingly considered before final changes to the Framework were made.

This administration is committed to reinstating local area working and engagement with both the public and our partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors. This is a way of working that was scrapped before this year's May elections showing the party opposite's complete lack of interest in the public's voice.

Question 9 - Councillor Quinn

Can the Executive Member please confirm what provision of day care services will be available for elderly residents of Prestwich should the Redcliffe Care Home close?

A. Consultation on the modernisation of Older People's services identified that the existing day centres, Grundy and Pinfold Lane are not necessarily seen as viable alternatives by stakeholders either due to their distance from Prestwich (Grundy), or due to their specialist nature (Pinfold Lane). From the feedback it was possible to identify a number of core themes which were important to people in terms of day care provision:

- **Transport – many people are reliant on transport to and from day care and would need this to continue. Concerns were expressed about having to travel long distances to access day care.**
- **Meals – the majority of feedback highlighted the importance of day care in ensuring that people had a hot, balanced and nutritious meal, which may not otherwise happen. The good quality and choice of meals currently provided was acknowledged.**
- **Locality – the majority of people were concerned to have a day care service local to Prestwich and therefore within easy access of their home.**
- **Showering and Bathing – some day care users are reliant on the day service to provide them with a bath or shower as they may not have access to this at home due to physical needs.**
- **Stimulation/ Social interaction – a number of issues were raised which relate to the experience of attending day care. For some people it was important to have access to an outside area, for others a stimulating program of activities was important. For some, the option to spend time quietly was desirable whilst for others it was important to maintain friendships with other users.**

Using these themes a number of alternatives have been developed during consultation. If the proposal to decommission Redcliffe is approved, specific provision has been made to invest in development of 2 new day facilities in South Bury:

- 1. Spurr House - a day facility would be created at the existing care home in Unsworth. This would be suitable for**

service users who wish to access their day care and respite at the same facility. It would also provide a range of equipment for people with physical needs and the facility to support bathing and showering if this is assessed as required.

2. Clarkshill - a day facility would be created 3 days per week from the communal lounge at Clarkshill. This idea has arisen from a suggestion during consultation. Tenants are positive about this and it would provide a facility for a small group of people with less physical needs. Existing tenants would also be invited to join in with any activities taking place.

In addition, existing day facilities at Pinfold Lane, Grundy and in Shared Lives may be the preferred option for some users.

If the decision is approved further work would be undertaken to confirm an individuals needs and to identify which day service would fulfill their needs best.

Question 10 - Councillor Garner

When will those households who do not have brown bins be provided with them. What should they do with their food waste while they are waiting?

A. The Council would incur significant additional costs in terms of additional vehicles if it were to distribute brown bins more widely and collection routes are already at full capacity. However, we will be undertaking a piece of work to examine how food waste can be captured from all households once the new collection system is bedded in. In the meantime, food waste from these households should continue to be disposed of in the same manner as before.

Question 11 - Councillor Hankey

Can the leader please provide an update on the current position regarding the four Civic Halls? We understand that further consultation on their future is being undertaken and would appreciate confirmation of the following:

The name of the organisation undertaking the exercise.

The anticipated cost of the new consultation process.

An anticipated timescale for the processing of the consultation and publication of the results.

A. The detailed brief for the review is still being finalised. It is proposed that the review and consultation be carried out by a consultant – Price Waterhouse Cooper. It will not actually involve any cash transaction but will be funded from consultancy credits already held by Bury Council following previous VAT review work carried out. I expect the review to take between 6 and 9 months to complete.

Question 12 - Councillor James

The Government have imposed a timetable on local government employers and unions to make proposals by 9th September 2011 to save £900 million from the Local Government Pension Scheme. Do you share the dismay and disgust of fair minded people including myself and Council employees at this unnecessary and unrealistic deadline to make savings from an already funded scheme?

A. I would like to thank Councillor James for his question.

My understanding is that the scenario described by Councillor James is in fact the case and that the local government employers' and trade unions have been given just over 7 weeks to formulate a package of proposals that will lead to savings within the Local Government Pension Scheme amounting to £900m.

The position is that on 20 July 2011 Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government wrote to the Local Government Group inviting it to conduct discussions with the local government trade unions to establish, by no later than 9 September 2011, a package of measures to secure short term savings by 2014/15, equivalent to a 3.2% increase in employee contribution rates. The Secretary of State's intention is to ensure the necessary legislation is in place by 1 April 2012.

The 9th September 2011 deadline has been arbitrarily imposed without any reference whatsoever to how feasible it actually is to agree and deliver the package of measures to secure short term savings by 2014/15. The deadline appears to have been set with the express intention of introducing the legislative changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme by 1 April 2012.

Eric Pickles has imposed the 9th September deadline as this will allow him to move to the formal, 'statutory consultation' stage by the end of September.

From that point on the Secretary of State has proposed a timetable which will deliver what appears to be a pre-determined outcome. The timetable allows for the minimum periods possible to undertake:

- A 12 week statutory consultation exercise in October, November and December 2011 on the amending regulations;**
- Consideration of responses and decisions by Ministers in early 2012;**
- Making and laying of the amending regulations as soon as possible thereafter; and**
- Scheme changes coming into force on 1 April 2012.**

I agree that the timetable set by national government is unnecessary and unrealistic; in my view it has been designed to ensure that proposals are implemented within a pre-determined timescale.

The haste with which the Secretary of State is proceeding is puzzling to me. Unlike other public sector pension schemes the Local Government Pension Scheme is a funded scheme. It has

£165 billion in assets and it currently takes in over £4 billion a year more than it pays out. The Local Government Pension Scheme has already secured savings in the region of £2.6 billion and it is anticipated that a further £600 million savings will be generated in the future as the impact of the changes introduced in 2008 take effect.

In a written statement from the Treasury it has already been acknowledged that "...the Government recognises that the funded nature of the scheme puts it in a different position" from other public sector schemes. In the same statement the Treasury committed to discussing "whether there are alternative ways to deliver some or all of the savings." The imposition of the 9th September deadline appears to me to be at odds with this statement.

Both government and independent assessments demonstrate that the level of current savings in the Local Government Pension Scheme far exceed the 3.2% savings the government is seeking, so it is unclear why government should be driving forward changes in the scheme with such haste.

Question 13 – Councillor Pickstone

Many of the towns in Bury have recently benefitted from Farmers Markets. Since the appointment of new Township Managers, is their future now secure?

A. The well established Farmers Markets are initiatives within the responsibility of the Environment & Economy Portfolio and have been recognized by other town Centre Business Groups as a key attractor, and the most effective means of publicizing and attracting footfall to their towns. The organization of these events is managed as part of the economic development activity within the Planning Service. Following meetings with the business groups, an expanded borough wide schedule for Farmers Markets was established to enhance the current programme of events in each town centre. This follows pilot market events in 2010 in Radcliffe and Whitefield, in addition to 4 markets held in Prestwich.

It was agreed in March 2011 that this expanded programme, comprising 26 Farmers Markets across the Borough, would operate on a trial basis for 12 months.

The 12 month programme includes 5 markets in Prestwich, 4 in Radcliffe and Whitefield and continuation of monthly markets in Ramsbottom.

The agreement with the current operator has been revised on this basis and is time limited to cover the 12 months to end March 2012. The agreement covers payment of fees/charges, operational details and market rules.

An assessment and review of the viability of the markets is commencing to establish the success or otherwise of the expanded

programme, and to identify any issues which have arisen. The review will include input from Markets, market traders, the current operator, business groups and EDS staff who currently facilitate the markets.

A briefing note will be presented in the New Year to review the Boroughwide programme and agree the way forward.

Question 14 - Councillor Walker

Does the Leader recognise that the introduction of the iPad communication scheme in refuse collection, at a time of a reduction in service, may disturb and alienate residents who are being threatened with a form of intrusive spying on their lives followed by letters asking why they have not put out certain kinds of refuse on different days?

A. There is no reason why residents should be concerned about the proposed new technology. It is not going to be used for any threatening or spying purposes. The aim is to improve communication of information between the refuse vehicles and other locations such as the depot and customer contact centre. The technology will also bring about efficiency savings that could be in excess of £100,000 per year as well as helping residents to recycle as much as possible. This will help the environment and save tax payers money.

Question 15 - Councillor Cassidy

Could the Executive Member inform members of the number of rough sleepers/homeless persons in Bury for each of the past 3 years and the forecasts of them for the next two years?

A. Determining the exact level of homelessness is difficult because not all homeless people make themselves known to the council. This was recognised when the Homelessness Strategy was considered by Internal Scrutiny Committee earlier this year where it was agreed that further research was needed to agree definitions of homelessness, methods of measurement and better cross boundary working across AGMA.

From the figures recorded and reported, the number of homeless acceptances has stayed relatively constant from 121 in 2008/09, 97 in 2009/10 and 115 in 2010/11. The major causes continue to be relationship and family breakdown, including domestic violence although we would anticipate that the economic situation could have an impact in future years.

Work has already been done to improve our understanding of rough sleepers where a count in January 2011 found 1 person sleeping rough. This was followed by a street needs audit which identified a further 3 individuals.

The Council is now reviewing how it collates other homeless data and work is being planned with partner agencies through the Homeless Forum to review how information is analysed and presented. This is to get a better picture of homeless, design our services accordingly and improve outcomes for those who are, and are at risk, of becoming homeless.

Our focus, as outlined in the Strategy, remains on prevention and early intervention to avoid people becoming homeless. This changing focus has seen a positive increase in the number of households helped from 228 to 423 per annum over the past 3 years.

Question 16 - Councillor Tim Pickstone

The Government returning the public health function to local Government. Can the Leader confirm that any funds that accompany the public health function will be ring-fenced? What plans are there to take advantage of this welcome move by Government?

A. Whilst it is our hope that the funds will be ring fenced, there is no decision forthcoming as yet from the Government . Council staff are working closely with NHS colleagues to establish existing costs, contracts and liabilities for those activities we expect to come across but there still a number of unknowns that need to resolved nationally before we can develop our plans.

Question 17 - Councillor Walker

Could the Leader explain how interested parties affected by the Experimental Order closing Knowsley Street in a southerly direction, such as local residents, patients attending the Health Centres and bus users, will be involved in any meeting to decide to make the closure permanent or will this be an Officer decision?

A. The experimental (Prohibition of Entry) Order on Knowsley Street came into force on 7 July 2011 for a period of up to eighteen months, during which time consideration will be given as to whether or not it should remain in operation indefinitely.

Interested parties are currently invited to submit any representations or objections to the Order in writing to the Council Solicitor and have until 6 January 2012 to do so.

After the end of this period, and following the established procedure for dealing with Traffic Regulation Orders, officers will then prepare a report on any objections received. Local Ward Members will be consulted on the report and its recommendations, prior to an Operational Decision being made by Officers in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.

Question 18 - Councillor Boden

Could the Executive Member inform members as to the source of the funding for "Free Schools"?

A. Free Schools are directly funded by central government - currently through the YPLA and in future through the Education Funding Agency when it is established. From the nationally published information it would appear that they will be funded on a broadly similar basis to other schools. We are not currently aware of any proposals to establish a free school in our area and will be consulted if any are developed.

Question 19 - Councillor O'Hanlon

How many residents have taken part in the current consultation process on the future priorities of the Council. How much is this process estimated to cost?

A. As of last Friday we had received a total of 1,855 responses to the consultation. (We can provide an updated figure for the Leader on Wednesday afternoon). These have been completed in many different ways, from the online and paper surveys to council staff meeting the public in libraries, leisure centres, farmers' markets, town centres and at Gigg Lane. The consultation exercise is continuing throughout this week and next, and I would urge all councillors to continue to promote the exercise to their constituents. I have made a clear and strong commitment that we will consult fully with residents on such important issues, and we want as many people as possible to have the opportunity to take part. The exercise itself has been managed and undertaken by a team of council staff, and has been delivered within existing staff resources. There has been a small level of expenditure on travel, printing and room hire as needed. The total additional cost is estimated at £2,600, although I must stress that this cost is within existing budget resources for consultation exercises.

Question 20 - Councillor Boden

Could the Executive Member inform members of the total cubic capacity available for recycled materials from each household per week when the new waste collection arrangements are commissioned later this year?

**A. 60 litres green paper and card bin (4 weekly collection)
60 litres blue glass, cans and plastic bottle bin (4 weekly collection)
120 litres brown food and garden waste bin (57000/82000 residents have a brown bin) (2 weekly collection)**

Question 21 - Councillor Vic D'Albert

Could the Leader please outline what progress has been made in delivering a secondary school in Radcliffe?

A. We remain committed to establishing a new high school in Radcliffe and we are exploring this. We hope to reach a conclusion in the near future.

Question 22 - Councillor Matthews

Could the Executive Member inform members of the amount of carbon dioxide which has been saved from the Council's own activities this year and the amount targeted to be saved next year?

A. Our Carbon emissions in 2009-10 were 30507 tonnes CO₂e. In 2010-11 our emissions were 29813 tonnes CO₂e which means that Bury Council reduced the amount of CO₂e by 694 tonnes last year – that is 2.27%.

We had a long severe winter in 2010-11 so the savings are not as large as we may have hoped.

During the course of 2010 we secured £220,000 of interest free loan funding from Salix to carry out 8 energy efficiency projects in council buildings. All these projects were completed by the end of Dec 2010 and are predicted to save £81,000 per year on energy bills, £5,000 annual saving on Carbon Reduction Commitment allowances and over 400 tonnes CO₂e per year. In February 2011 we launched the Carbon Cost Challenge –a staff energy saving awareness campaign and also employed a Schools Carbon reduction officer. The full potential of all these projects should show in future years.

This year we hope to reduce our carbon emissions by a further 3,700 tonnes. However our success may depend on factors beyond our control such as the severity and the length of the coming winter.

Question 23 - Councillor O'Hanlon

What progress has been made in recent months on the Love Prestwich development strategy for Prestwich village centre?

A. In June 2011 the Hollins Murray Group, leasehold owners of the Longfield Shopping Centre, informed the council that they have entered into a joint venture partnership with developers Terrace Hill who have an established track record in delivering retail based schemes.

As with the outline planning consent granted to the Hollins Murray Group in September 2009 Terrace Hill are looking to bring forward a supermarket base redevelopment of the Longfield Centre. We will be looking to involve local people in these proposals as soon as it is practical to do so. However negotiations between Terrace Hill and the council are at a preliminary stage and it is likely to be some time before it becomes clear when their proposals will become sufficiently well resolved to allow meaningful public consultation to take place.

During these early negotiations we are looking to agree a mix of uses to ensure that the development will be able to maintain commercial viability in what are extremely difficult economic conditions for the development industry as a whole, At the same time will are looking to ensure that the development has a configuration that will boost Bury New Road as the traditional highstreet of Prestwich village, and will provide high quality community facilities that will allow the council to deliver and improve upon the range of services provided by the existing library and Longfield Suite.

Once we have achieved a reasonable degree of agreement with the developer on how this challenging agenda can be achieved the next stage of the negotiations will be to agree a programme that clearly sets out the process for public consultation, sets targets for submitting a revised planning application and for agreeing terms on a Development Agreement between the council as landowner and the Terrace Hill/Hollins Murray Group JV Partnership.