

COUNCIL MEETING
14 DECEMBER 2011
LEADER'S SPEECH

Madam Mayor, Members and Officers of the Council, members of the public, it gives me great pleasure to report on the work of the Executive since the last meeting of the Council on the 26 October 2011. I would also like to update Members on progress from previous decisions taken by the Executive.

Since our last Council meeting the Executive has held a meeting at the New Kershaw Centre, Deal Street, in East Bury.

Madam Mayor, I should like to pay tribute to our colleagues in the community and voluntary sector for hosting the recent Executive meeting and other meetings and events led by this Council.

Bury's community and voluntary sector plays an absolutely vital and often unique role in all of our townships.

And Madam Mayor, this Administration, has ensured that community and voluntary sector groups continue to receive essential support to grow and prosper in these very difficult economic times through direct financial assistance and through Third Sector Commissioning Fund support.

I would now like to report on the work of the Executive since last Council.

Madam Mayor, I should like to highlight the very important policy matters that were considered and approved at the Executive meeting held on 9 November 2011.

I am pleased to advise that the Executive approved a proposal to introduce alternative meal provision arrangements in the Learning Disability Day Service. This decision will promote independent living skills and enable service users to have more choice and control over what they eat, when they eat and how much they pay, whilst also being better able to meet their specific cultural and/or dietary needs.

Madam Mayor, the Executive also considered a report on the consultation with communities affected by the in principle decision taken by the Executive on 22 August 2011 concerning the Community Resettlement Service.

As a listening Council I am delighted to report that the communities of Radcliffe have engaged with this Council – through their elected officials and through the officers of the Council – in a constructive and positive way to drive this policy area.

Madam Mayor, the Executive also considered a number of reports in discharge of the Council's statutory functions and obligations, these included: a decision to approve an 8 week period of consultation for the Core Strategy – a very important planning document that will guide the future development of the Borough up to 2028;

The Executive also approved a report that sought to delegate certain functions to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to ensure delivery of the Greater Manchester Road Activities Permit Scheme. Madam Mayor, this is a very important decision that is designed to minimise disruption to our local communities caused by previously unco-ordinated highway works across the conurbation.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority provides an opportunity to better co-ordinate highway network works and jointly administer the operational framework.

Madam Mayor, I am absolutely delighted to report, significant progress has been made in resolving the long running saga of Equal Pay.

Under this Administration, yet another Labour Manifesto commitment/pledge was "ticked off" where at that Executive meeting a decision was taken to formally resolve the equal pay saga that has been presided over by Members opposite over the last 4 years and in the process racked up costs running into many hundreds of thousands of pounds of taxpayers money.

We have taken a responsible decision to actively engage with claimants legal representatives that it is hoped will help to end the uncertainty faced by current and former employees and which in my view also secures the best possible value at this time for taxpayers and safeguards the Council's financial position.

I am unable at this stage to reveal any further details because this could prejudice the Council's negotiating position. Nevertheless!! This remains a testament to this Administration's acceptance that with power comes responsibility!!

Madam Mayor, much has been said negatively about the recent 'Day of Action', some of which will be discussed later. However, what hasn't been discussed is the very good response by the Council in maintaining key front-line service to our most vulnerable. I hope at some point this will be acknowledged by Members opposite.

Madam Mayor, with your indulgence, as this is the last meeting of the Council before Christmas, I should like to spend a few minutes reporting on progress on a number of decisions from previous meetings of the Executive.

v The performance from the new Waste Management Collection is encouraging with recycling rising from 28% to 43% in the first month. I can also announce that, as a result of this news, we are now looking at the feasibility of completing the roll out of Brown bins from the spring of next year.

Thanks to the diligence and dedication of Council Officers I am delighted to announce a stunning result which will see over £4 million pounds being spent to build 150 new affordable Homes with many being built on several former garage colonies over the next few years. This includes 10 new older people's bungalows at St Mary's Court in Prestwich and . This of course comes on top of the new £6 million 40 bed Extra Care development at Redbank in Radcliffe.

Madam Mayor, we all know the difficulties our young people are having in finding jobs.

The Council, in its role as Community Champion, has been looking at way to help young people at this most difficult of times.

I am pleased to announce that this administration will be re-launching an expanded Backing Bury Campaign early in the New Year.

Young people in our community are particularly disadvantaged in securing jobs and even opportunities for work experience and work preparation in this toughest of economic climates.

I could spend the rest of the Council meeting reflecting upon why Bury's young people face such a tough time of it:

- The depth and speed of government cuts;
- The withdrawal of the Education Maintenance Allowance;
- The reduction in the number of places in further and higher education and,
- The abolition of the Future Jobs Fund.

But I won't. What I do want to focus upon is this Administration's commitment giving young people a real chance in life:

- A chance to get work experience;
- A chance to be ready for work, and,
- A chance to get a job.

As Chair of our Local Strategic Partnership, I have asked Luran Chatburn, Principal of Bury College to bring to me proposals on how partners in Bury can assist this Council to realise this opportunity.

Turning specifically to the Council, I have asked Cllr Peter Bury to lead the Council's efforts in this area, and I urge all members of this Council to support Cllr Bury in this endeavour to open up new life chances to our young people.

Madam Mayor, this is the season of goodwill. May I take this opportunity to wish all members and officers of the Council and all residents present in the public gallery a very happy and peaceful festive season. END