

Questions:-

The Leader of the Council

Question running order:

1st: Conservative

2nd: Labour

3rd: Liberal-Dem

Question 1 – Councillor Caserta

In previous years the Phoenix Centre in Prestwich has received an annual grant of £28,000 from Bury Council. Last year it was proposed that this grant should be withdrawn and that a dialogue should be opened with PMYA with a view to establishing a more independent scheme of financial management. The present administration restored the grant of £28,000. Could the leader of the Council please advise what improvements have been made at the Centre since the grant was reinstated?

A. The grant is in place to make sure that the Phoenix Centre is kept in good running order.

The grant covers the day to day running costs of the Phoenix Centre so that it is not under threat of closure ie. the caretaker, security and fire alarms, day to day repairs and maintenance. Any residual funding that is left over once expenditure on essential running costs has been incurred, can be directed towards Youth Work or other projects.

Bury Council is still in regular discussions with the Phoenix Centre with regards to agreeing a Service Level Agreement for essential service provision.

Question 2 - Councillor Grimshaw

Due to an increase in dog fouling across the Borough, what action can the Council take to tackle this?

A. Where local dog fouling issues have arisen, the Council has acted promptly to increase patrols, raise awareness and increase signage. It is important to have quality evidence in place before enforcement or a fixed penalty notice can be pursued and we encourage residents to provide relevant information that may lead to the identification and detection of dog fouling offenders. Any information would of course be treated in the strictest confidence.

I can also announce our intention to introduce a comprehensive high profile campaign and programme of actions aimed at reducing issues of dog fouling, raising awareness and penalizing irresponsible dog owners. These measures include increasing enforcement capacity, serving more fixed penalties, new signage, poster campaign, replacing worn out dog bins, school awareness and stencil signage on footpaths in appropriate locations.

We are committed provide streets and open spaces that are cleaner and safer for everyone.

Question 3 - Councillor Mary D'Albert

Could the Leader outline what the decision has been regarding the purchase by the Authority for the former Prestwich Household Waste Disposal Site? Who made this decision and what consultation was there with ward members?

A. This matter was considered carefully by the Council's Property Strategy Group which weighed up such matters as the asking price, on-going costs, planning considerations and potential end uses.

The site is situated in Green Belt and, as such, will not be capable of being used for any commercial use. Despite this it has been valued by GMWDA's agents on the basis of an industrial use with an asking price running into the hundreds of thousands of pounds. Ownership of the site will also incur substantial holding costs, such as Business Rates, repairs and maintenance, security and prevention of fly tipping.

In view of this, and the fact that there is no obvious use to which the Council can put the site, and being mindful of the impact of the Government's spending cuts, it was decided that purchase of the site would come nowhere near to representing value for tax payers' money.

Members are also asked to remember that the Council will retain an element of control over the site as Planning Authority.

Question 4 - Councillor Wiseman

Each ward in a Township Forum area has a small allocation of funds available to support Community Groups. Would the Leader consider amending this so that the funding allocation is made to the Township Forum as a whole rather than to the individual wards? This has worked well in the past, allowing a more effective allocation of community support whilst retaining the local element.

A. The Community Fund makes available up to £1,000 per ward to support voluntary and community groups at an individual ward level, and approximately 100 applications have been received since the scheme was introduced last July. Additionally a borough wide allocation of £13,000 is available for cross-ward applications that have an impact across more than one ward.

The Review of the Township Forums includes an assessment of the effectiveness of the current funding application process for grants to voluntary and community groups. The Review survey has invited thoughts and suggestions on the current funding process. All responses will be analysed and will inform the final Review to be brought to Council in May 2012.

Question 5 – Councillor Noel Bayley

In light of views expressed in recent letters to the Bury Times that "employees are a liability", does the Leader agree with me that our workforce are in fact an asset to the Borough?

A. Thank you for your question.

This Labour administration has consistently acknowledged that Bury has a dedicated and committed workforce who take pride in their work and continually go the extra mile.

It is this dedicated and committed workforce that has been key to the successes that we have had. The continual improvement in performance and standards of service are testament to the pride that employees have in the public service.

Here are just a few of the many reasons why our workforce are an asset:

- **Through Bury in Bloom, employees have helped to make Bury cleaner, safer and greener. Bury has been awarded 'Best large town in the North West' for eight consecutive years (from 2004 to 2011)**
- **The successful implementation of the managed weekly bin collection has resulted in a 50 per cent rise in recycling in Bury since the new waste collection service started last October**
- **Last October the town buzzed with light and action as venues threw open their doors to offer a huge and eclectic mix of arts, music, performance, and much more. Bury Light Night was the first of its kind in Greater Manchester, packed with special and unusual events against a backdrop of lit-up buildings and animated public spaces. Businesses stayed open, and shoppers were kept busy at the town's first ever late night specialist market.**
- **Bury Market continues to attract over 250,000 shoppers each week and has helped to place Bury firmly on the map**

For these and many other reasons I believe that we have a committed workforce who are a real asset to the Borough.

Question 6 - Councillor Tim Pickstone

How many Councillors does the Leader expect there to be on Bury's Health and Wellbeing Board?
How does this compare to neighbouring authorities or other Metropolitan Boroughs?

A. The Health & Wellbeing Board is currently working through an emergent phase and will be moving to operate in shadow form by April 2012. During the shadow year the focus will be to bring the various partner agencies together to highlight ways of delivering improved wellbeing and to reduce inequalities across our communities through the emergent joint Health and Wellbeing strategy. From this point we review the role and purpose of the shadow HWB board membership including elective member representation ensuring this is fit for purpose from April 2013. We will also be addressing the architectural framework required to service and monitor the actions of the Health and Wellbeing Board, including relationships with Scrutiny and the wider Council.

There are wide ranging variations on Health and Wellbeing Board structures and membership but most authorities have adopted the Health and Wellbeing format on what is best for their localities and partnership arrangements. We in Bury are working to that end.

Question 7 – Councillor Gunther

Could the leader of the Council please advise me what celebrations are being planned by Bury Council to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth?

A. To celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen there are numerous events and activities taking place across all six of the Borough's Townships. These include:

**A Diamond Jubilee celebration at Bury Parish Church,
Jubilee celebration events in Hoyles Park; Greenmount; Close Park,
Radcliffe**

**Jubilee Beacons at Peel Tower, Sedgley Park Rugby Club, and in
Radcliffe,**

Tree planting by Elton Vale Valley Preservation Committee,

A Jubilee Party at Hunters Hill Estate in Whitefield.

A celebratory lunch at Topping Fold

The Council is actively supporting community groups, local residents and voluntary organisations who wish to organise their own events and we encourage people to come forward to enable us to promote the Jubilee celebrations through our social media, web site and Township Forums.

Furthermore, I am delighted to announce that in recognition of this significant occasion, the Council will mark the Diamond Jubilee by the planting of a commemorative tree in each of the Borough's six townships.

Question 8 - Councillor Columbine

As part of the Plan for Change, could the Leader confirm that there are no imminent plans to implement redundancies amongst library staff?

A. Thank you for the question. I know why you are asking this question and so do certain Members opposite.

As far as any imminent redundancies are concerned, we have no plans, no numbers or identified any individuals amongst library staff. I will repeat again for Members opposite, we have been open and transparent throughout the development of the Plan for Change to our staff both in writing and at staff roadshows. Members know that the Library service is to be reviewed during 2012-13 and all staff will be fully involved at each stage of the process, which should be allowed to be conducted without it being used as a political football.

Question 9 - Councillor Vic D'Albert

How much money has the Authority borrowed, and how much has been spent from its resources to date on settlement of 'equal pay' claims? What is the total amount that is expected to have been borrowed and how much money from existing resources once the process is complete?

A. Members will be aware that the Labour administration have delivered on another manifesto commitment and offers have now been made to all equal pay claimants. As a result we have been able to obtain an adjournment of the Court of Appeal hearing until August 2012 whilst claimants consider the offers, which also means that we will avoid adding to the huge legal bills already run up by the previous administration.

However, until all claimants have responded to the offers it will not be possible to quantify the actual cost of settling the liability. What I can say is that in February 2010 the previous administration made an on-going provision of £900,000 within the revenue budget to cover anticipated borrowing costs and current indications are that this will remain adequate, with any further settlement costs being met from available reserves.

Question 10 - Councillor Harris

The "Plan for Change" review gives the views of the public on the desired priorities for action by Bury Council. How do you propose to allocate spending on this between the six townships?

A. The Plan for Change reviews will involve a considerable amount of consultation - this will ensure that the reviews recognise issues arising at Township level.

It is not always prudent to allocate funding at Township level - many of the services under review are Council-wide services for the benefit of all residents and visitors to the Borough.

Too much fragmentation can mean the Authority misses out on economies of scale, or creates duplication - which we are keen to avoid with our "One Council" approach.

That said, Councillor Harris will be aware that a separate review of Township Forums is taking place (interim report on tonight's agenda); this review will explore funding opportunities at Township level.

Question 11 – Councillor Campbell

Can you please inform the Council on why we haven't taken up the weekly collection support and introduced weekly collections of grey bins?

A. Since we introduced the new waste collection system last October, the Council's recycling rate has dramatically increased by 50 per cent. This is a great achievement, and it's thanks to the residents of Bury who have really taken up the challenge to recycle as much as they can. The more we recycle the better, especially for local taxpayers, because we don't have to pay so much in landfill tax costs.

We also hope that our recycling rate will climb even higher in the next few months once we deliver 25,000 brown bins - for food and garden waste recycling - to the homes in Bury which don't yet have one.

Given that, it would be a backward step to revert to weekly collections of residual waste, and it may even lead to a drop in our recycling rates, which would be bad news for Bury both financially and in terms of protecting our environment.

Question 12 - Councillor Donal O'Hanlon

Could the Leader outline plans going forward to sponsor Bury Football Club? Who makes the decision to extend sponsorship?

A. Could I first make the point that the commissioned programme arrangements is a Health and Wellbeing partnership with Bury FC. This is a new two-year partnership agreement with Bury FC and has been designed to deliver a range of interventions that will address health inequalities in target communities across the borough. This is an important step in delivering the aspirations of the new Health and Wellbeing strategy through community engagement. The programme will have four elements:

- 1. To increase levels of physical activity**
- 2. Engage communities in healthier lifestyles**
- 3. Engage socially excluded groups through sport**
- 4. Promote a positive and healthy environment**

The work is to be commissioned by Adult Care Services and the agreement would be for a 2-year period at a total cost of £56,000 per annum and in addition, the club will continue to display the Council's logo on the first team's strip.

There is an option to extend this partnership following a performance report back to Executive in February/ March 2014.

We expect to see a return on our money in terms of enhanced community development and reduced demands on the health and social care system. We will, of course, be monitoring the programme to ensure that the social value is achieved but the club's track record is good and I am confident that the partnership will be productive and produce better outcomes for local people.

Question 13 – Councillor Walker

In view of the fact that when the recent Council Budget Meeting agreed to nearly £8 million in savings this year and plans for nearly £18 million cuts in three years, with the specifics of the actual “efficiencies” required (and the related staff reductions necessary) being left very vague until the outcome of at least 12 “reviews”, could the Leader update us on these Reviews? How much progress is being made? How many Consultants are being used so far? How much are these Reviews costing? How many officer Committees have been established and how many meetings held? Is this an exercise in hiding the cuts from Members of the public until 2013?

A. The Plan for Change and budget proposals included a total of eight reviews of services. Following the agreement of council to these proposals, detailed project plans are currently being drawn up. These plans are being developed by members of staff, and they will meet as small project teams to ensure that work is carried out in line with the project plans. As was made clear in the report, each of these reviews will involve extensive consultation with the public and staff, and it is important that sufficient time is allowed to ensure this consultation is effective.

Undertaking thorough reviews does take time, and some reviews will take longer than others, for a range of reasons. It is certainly not an exercise in hiding the cuts from members of the public, and the commitment to full consultation makes that clear.

Question 14 - Councillor Boden

The question relates to the wide ranging reorganisation of the NHS in Bury despite the high universal rejection by the administrative, ancillary, and clinical staff of the changes which are being imposed. Do we have an estimate of the cost to the NHS in Bury of the changes being foisted on them?

A. My thanks to Cllr Boden for his question.

The simple answer is that I don't know how much it will cost NHS Bury to implement this rotten Bill, a Bill which has no public or professional support; a bill which wasn't even in the Conservative manifesto.

Whilst the costs to NHS Bury may never be known, we do know that some £2 billion pounds of tax payer's money is being provided to allow for this privatisers charter to go ahead and start the process of dismantling one of the most treasured part of our public services

It proves that engagement by this ConDem Government is a sham and no matter what happens this Bill will be forced onto us and NHS Bury will no doubt try its best to limit the financial cost.

Question 15 - Councillor Ann Garner

Could the Leader outline when the Authority will be consulting of lists of community assets as outlined in the Localism Act 2012.

A. This question is almost identical to the one that Councillor Garner asked at the last Council meeting and due to inaction on the part of the Government the answer I must give her is also almost identical to the previous answer.

Although the Localism Act has received Royal Assent, the provision covering community assets is not yet in force and so we are left waiting for further details. More importantly, the Government have not yet passed regulations answering important questions such as exactly what qualifies for inclusion in the list, what is meant by "community and voluntary organisations with a local connection" and what constitutes a "community interest group" when considering the vitally important matter of extensions to moratoria on sales.

We are now told that these regulations may not be available until October 2012 and I can assure Members that once the Government has given us sufficient information with which to properly prepare a register then work will begin promptly.

Question 16 – Councillor Frith

Will the Leader give a commitment that Backing Young Bury vacancies or opportunities will be given first to our Town's Looked After Children?

A. I would like to thank Councillor Frith for raising a question about this very important issue. Members will recall that I pledged his commitment to supporting young people through the Backing Young Bury Initiative last December. The aim of Backing Young Bury is to provide learning and work opportunities for all young people in Bury. Through the initiatives and work streams that have been developed, our aim is to provide appropriate support that is tailored to individual needs. This support extends to all young people on the programme including Looked After Children, young people with learning difficulties and disabilities and those not in employment, education or training, (NEETS).

As part of the Backing Young Bury offer we work in collaboration with the Looked After Children Team to actively encourage looked after children to apply for apprenticeship and work experience opportunities. We have also ring fenced 1/5th of all the apprenticeship opportunities for LAC, and give them priority on work experience schemes.

Members of the LAC team sit on the Backing Young Bury Steering Group and they help us promote these opportunities with young people.

Within the recruitment process, we have taken positive action to support LAC applications and liaise with the LAC team to identify LAC applicants. We have also amended the interview benchmark to give preference to LAC candidates.

Following appointment contact is made with the LAC team / extra mile to provide additional support with the line manager so that the young person can access appropriate support networks within the workplace.

All apprentices have access to the peer to peer mentoring support scheme known as 'Apprentice Amigos!' to support them in their new role.

Question 17 - Councillor Mary D'Albert

Could the Leader outline how many serious road accidents involving pedestrians there have been in the Authority in the last three years for which there are figures? How many of these involved children (under 16)?

A. I currently have records of all verified collisions in Bury for the last three years (2009, 2010 and 2011) with the exception of data for the last two weeks or so of December 2011 as this has yet to be released.

These records identify a total of 70 serious pedestrian casualties during this period with 4 of these proving to be fatal.

26 of these serious casualties were children under the age of 16. None of the fatalities were children.

Question 18 - Councillor Quinn

Does the Leader agree with me that instead of wasting £150m of tax payers money on the election of police commissioners the Government should be putting that money into frontline policing?

A. My thanks to Cllr Quinn for his question

It's difficult to understand why there is a need for this radical, untried and untested proposal, given the great strides and improvements in Policing where many communities are benefitting from sustained reductions in levels of crime and anti-social behaviour. These reductions, I may add come at a time when this ConDem Government are decimating Police budgets and destroying Police Officer moral in the process.

I fail to see how a Police and Crime Commissioner on a wapping salary will 'make the difference' in the way this ConDem government suggest. This is not the wild west; nor do we need a Sherriff; nor is this in the spirit of public scrutiny where public officials risk being seen as courting populist issues simply to get re-elected.

The establishment of a Police and Crime Commissioner is indeed a waste of public money built on an ideological proposal from an out of touch ConDem Government.

Question 19 - Councillor Vic D'Albert

Could the Leader outline whether the Authority will consider measures to alleviate parking problems for residents who live near to entrances to Heaton Park? What special measures will be put in place for the Stone Roses concerns in June/July 2012?

- Councillor Quinn

In June over 240,000 people will converge in Heaton Park for three Stone Roses concerts. Can the Leader reassure the people of Prestwich that he will do whatever he can to make sure these concerts pass off with the least interruption possible to them?

A. Measures will be put in place similar to those that were adopted for the Oasis concerts, i.e. temporary no waiting at any time orders will be processed for all the side roads in the vicinity of the Park and on Sheepfoot Lane. Relevant cones and signs to deter concert traffic will be put in place on each of the concert days.

The traffic management proposals are, however, still being discussed at regular multi-agency meetings and are yet to be finalised.

A. The arrangements for these concerts have been the subject of extensive discussions between representatives of the organisers, Manchester City Council as owners of the venue and the various statutory agencies.

Detailed plans are being put in place to manage the event, which will be finalised over the coming weeks. The knowledge gained from the Oasis concerts which were held in 2009 has led to significant changes in the way the event is to operate, and whilst events of this scale will inevitably lead to some disruption, Members can be assured that the interests of local residents are the key priority in your officers' discussions with the event organisers and the City Council.

Question 20 – Councillor Matthews

The roads in Besses over the last few months have become potholed where repairs were carried out over last year, and some of them are now becoming dangerous. Could the Leader tell us if the money given by the Government for the repair of pot holes will be enough to carry out repairs to those in Besses and the rest of the Borough?

A. In order to help Local Authorities deal with the damage to the road network caused by the severe winter of 2010/11, the Department for Transport (Dft) granted additional maintenance funds of £400,090 to Bury Council for the 2011/12 financial year.

The works to deliver that programme were completed by the end of September 2011 and published on the Council’s website. These works were in addition to the existing revenue spending on highway maintenance.

We have not yet be made aware of any additional funding of a similar nature being made available for 2012/13.

The Council’s revenue budget includes expenditure of £1,080,400 on minor maintenance works in 2012/13 compared to £1,185,400 in 2011/12.

Question 21 - Councillor Ann Garner

Could the Leader outline how waste taken by residents to Household Waste Disposal Sites contributes to the Authorities recycling targets? How does waste taken by residents to the HWD sites located in neighbouring authorities contribute to our recycling targets?

A. Waste taken by Bury residents to Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) does not contribute to Bury Council’s recycling performance. It contributes to the recycling performance of the Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority.

Waste taken by Bury residents to HWRCs outside of Greater Manchester would contribute to the recycling performance of e.g. Lancashire CC.

Only waste collected or generated by Bury Council contributes to its own recycling performance.

Question 22 - Councillor Tim Pickstone

Could the Leader outline how many reports have been received so far this financial year regarding ‘pot holes’ or road and pavement surfaces? How does this compare to the previous three years?

A. The number of reports generated from Customer Enquiries are:

	C’way	Footway	Total
2008/09	1,207	969	2,176
2009/10	1,335	737	2,072
2010/11	1,553	619	2,172
2011/12	1,384	603	1,987

Question 23 - Councillor Donal O'Hanlon

Could the Leader provide a breakdown of Council Tax received by ward?

A. It is certainly possible to let Councillor O'Hanlon have information on Council Tax by ward but as it will require specialist reports to be run from the Council Tax system I am not able to provide the figures tonight. I have asked the Executive Director of Resources to speak to the Member to determine precisely what figures he wants and then a detailed written answer will be provided to Councillor O'Hanlon and to all Members of Council.

Question 24 – Councillor Ann Audin

When will the library review be completed and when will we find out what is happening to libraries in Bury?

A. The Library Review will commence in the financial year 2012/13. The review will include a full and comprehensive consultation process with all stakeholders to ensure that the review delivers the best possible outcome for the borough.

As we are still at the pre-review stage, it is difficult to predict when the final decision on the future of libraries in Bury will be confirmed, but as the review is to be completed in financial year 2012/13, it is expected that any suggested options for library services will be known by March 2013.

Question 25 – Councillor Rothwell

What impact is the significant increase in recent years of thefts of metal having on the Council in terms of the cost and inconvenience of having to replace metal items such as manhole covers, drain/gully covers, pedestrian guard rails, and handrails on slopes and steps?

A. The total cost to Bury Council of replacing metal stolen year on year from 2007/08 to 2011/12

2007/08	£37,300
2008/09	£42,500
2009/10	£37,300
2010/11	£36,000
2011/12	£56,600

Question 26 - Councillor Tariq

Could the Leader tell me what plans the Council has to provide much needed traffic calming measures on the Redvales Road Area?

A. The council will be introducing some traffic calming features in the Redvales area within the next few months.

The works include a build-out on Redvales Road and a chicane on Tarn Drive.

Both features were the subject of a consultation exercise carried out in Summer 2010 but have been kept "on hold" since this time.

In addition, the completion of these works provides an opportunity to consider further works in order to establish a 20 mph Zone throughout the Redvales estate.

Investigations are currently ongoing to identify what further measures will be required although it is expected that the scheme will utilise repeater signing and carriageway roundels in place of physical measures throughout.

It is anticipated that the scheme could be implemented before the end of the 2012-13 financial year.

Question 27 – Councillor Bevan

1. Can the Leader of the Council confirm how many bins have been reported to the Council as having been missed from collection since May 2011?

2. How many times have the crews had to return to collect unemptied bins, and what has been the cost?

3. What action has been taken to ensure that bins are not missed from collection, including staff retraining and disciplinary action?"

A. 1. Missed bin reports (all colours)

6897 (May to end of Feb)

Missed bin reports (all colours) per 100,000 collections

Average of 132 per month (May to end of Feb)

May-Sep 2011 there was a total of 727,740 collections per month.

Oct-Feb 2012 there was a total of 463,310 collections per month.

2. Every effort has been made to return to every report received of a missed bin since the service changes in October, in order to give residents every assistance in managing the transition to the new collection service.

3. Every effort is always made to ensure that the number of missed bins

is kept to a minimum but with the introduction of new collection rounds in October there was bound to be some disruption to collections, with crews unfamiliar with new rounds.

There could be any number of reasons why a bin is reported as missed and they are not all the fault of the collection crew. It is not unusual for residents to put their bin/s out late or in a different place to where the crew might expect when service changes of this magnitude are made.

When missed bins are reported they are investigated by a Charge hand. The reasons for the miss are identified, with the resident and/or crew spoken to where appropriate.