

## Council meeting – 12 September 2012

### Questions:-

The Leader of the Council

### Question running order:

1<sup>st</sup>: Liberal-Dem

2<sup>nd</sup>: Conservative

3<sup>rd</sup>: Labour

4<sup>th</sup> : Independent

#### 1. Councillor Pickstone

Could the Leader outline how the recent announcement by Government on promoting growth through support to the housing sector, will impact positively in Bury.

**A. We have all seen the damage that has been done to the construction industry in recent years. Stalled development sites; people struggling to get on the property ladder; and developers reducing the number of projects they are working on have all had a negative impact on the economy and employment opportunities.**

**What we have also seen is a range of initiatives from Government designed to kick start the housing market, none of which have been particularly successful to date. I remain in hope that the new announcements will be more beneficial and promote the Borough's wider economic aims but we need to see more of the detail first.**

**If the headlines are to be believed, some positives may exist. Guaranteeing debt for housing associations could give them greater freedom to develop much needed affordable housing. The Housing Joint Commissioning Partnership in Bury is already carrying out its largest affordable housing programme for many years – largely as result of effective working relationships with the Council. Bury is a place where registered providers can do business and further financial support to that sector could help to bring forward more sites.**

**Similarly, additional money for empty homes and extending the 'FirstBuy' scheme to help aspiring homeowners with a deposit are steps in the right direction. However with the amounts involved being relatively small in comparison to the problem, I do not expect Bury to see a noticeable impact from the changes.**

**The major disappointment is how this announcement has been used to launch another attack on the planning system. Relaxing the rules, including proposals to limit section 106 conditions on**

affordable housing, undermines this Council's ability to deal with local issues in favour of national house building targets.

The supply of property is not the immediate problem. Builders will build houses providing there is demand. The concern for us is that demand remains weak and the recent announcements will do little to free up lending particularly to first time buyers.

## 2. Councillor Walker

Q. In view of recent criticism in the Bury Times of elected members for "repeatedly" exercising discretion and going against officers on planning issues and so "wasting money," could I ask:-

1. How many planning applications have been submitted since May 2010?

**2,645**

2. How many of these have been dealt with by Officers and how many have gone to Planning Committee?

**Officers – 2,264**

**PCC – 232**

3. How many of those applications presented to Committee with Officers' recommendation to approve have been refused by Councillors?

**10**

4. How many of those refusals by Councillors against Officer recommendation have then gone to appeal?

**8**

5. How many such appeals have been successful?

**4**

6. How many such successful appeals have resulted in costs against Bury MBC?

**0**

7. What has been the total cost since May 2010 of such cost awards?

**£0**

8. What has been the total income received since May 2010 from the fees which are levied nowadays on those submitting planning applications?

**£989,910.00**

**A**

The information requested is already provided in reports presented to Planning Committee with an annual report in April and half yearly update in October (examples attached). The relevant figures have been inserted in the question above.

### **3. Councillor Simpson**

Has the Government any plans to localise the Social Fund?

**A. I would like to thank Councillor Simpson for her very timely question and the simple answer is yes. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolishes the discretionary Social Fund which provides community care grants and crisis loans and the Government intends that from April 2013 the support available will be devolved to local authorities which will be free to determine how this is spent.**

### **4. Councillor Bevan**

The Borough of Bury currently appears to be awash with fly posting, particularly in Ramsbottom town centre. The current procedure of street care teams removing offending fly posting from street furniture as part of their normal duties does not appear to be working in practice. Highways Officers only act upon complaints from members of the public. In addition, little if any enforcement action appears to be taken against those perpetrating this anti-social behaviour. Can the Council Leader or Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Regeneration undertake to review the current system to ensure that this Council is proactive rather than reactive on this important issue?

**A. Prosecution of offences is complex but Environmental Protection have, in the past, had some success in prosecution one of the Country's leading offenders. We know that in the current economic climate business are looking for every opportunity to promote their business and there has been an increase in fly posting on highways street furniture.**

**Councillor Bevan will be aware of the recent removal of a significant number of posters from street furniture in Ramsbottom and that the businesses have been advised of further action if the offence is repeated. This procedure is to be developed further such that whenever flyposters are removed this is followed by warnings or enforcement action.**

**The Council's Highways Team will of course continue to routinely remove fly posting on street furniture and respond to complaints.**

## **5. Councillor O'Hanlon**

Could the Leader please outline who took the decision to close the recycling centre at the Longfield Centre in Prestwich? What consultations with local elected members took place?

**A. The Executive Member took the decision to close the recycling centre, for the reasons outlined at the time.**

**It was a magnet for fly tipping, particularly from businesses seeking to avoid costs of waste collection and disposal. The Prestwich Street Cleaning team had to spend a considerable amount of time keeping the site clean, paying in excess of £200 per tonne to dispose of the waste picked up.**

**We also suffered continual problems with contamination of the recycling banks, meaning that the recyclables were lost (as was the income of £25 per tonne) and they then had to be disposed of instead (at a cost of £210 per tonne). Furthermore, we suffered problems with ongoing vandalism, including arson attacks on the paper and card banks.**

**Now that we have comprehensive kerbside recycling collections in place across the borough there simply isn't the same need for such recycling centres any more.**

**Local elected members were informed of the impending closure of the site about a fortnight in advance. No comments or objections were received other than from Cllr O'Hanlon and his questions were answered in full.**

## **6. Councillor Gunther**

Can The Leader/Cabinet member responsible for recycling please explain why an extra 450 tonnes of waste has had to be deposited into landfill recently?

**A. At month 3 the waste sent to landfill is 450 tonnes higher than assumed in the levy.**

**However, this figure should be looked at in the context of the fantastic recent progress made in recycling and the reduction in residual waste.**

**The actual residual household waste tonnage collected in 2010/11 was 48,689 tonnes**

**2011/12 was 37,076 tonnes**

**This compares with month 3 forecast for the full year 2012/13 of 33,590 tonnes (target is 32,500 tonnes).**

**The Council has set itself a very challenging target to reach a recycling rate of 50%. To ensure that this is achieved I would ask all households to play their part in limiting extra costs by recycling as much as possible. To this end, a concerted publicity campaign urging residents to recycle more is about to be launched. Furthermore, brown bin collections are to be expanded**

**into more rural areas in October, town centre on-street recycling introduced, school food waste recycling launched along with a push on commercial waste recycling.**

**Background**

**Recycling performance and targets:-**

	<b>Actual (Month 3)</b>	<b>Month 3 target</b>	<b>Year End Target (2012/13)</b>
<b>Contract</b>	<b>43.2%</b>	<b>46.2%</b>	<b>43.3%</b>
<b>Household</b>	<b>48.8%</b>	<b>51.5%</b>	<b>48.5%</b>

**7. Councillor Tariq**

Can the Leader update the Council on NDR Collection Rates?

**A. Thank you Councillor Tariq for your question. As at 31 July Bury had collected 49.81% of the business rates due for the year and this meant that we had the highest collection rate in Greater Manchester.**

**8. Councillor Bevan**

The Department for Communities and Local Government has begun publishing online details of all goods and services spent over £250 as part of the Coalition Government's commitment to transparency, accountability and openness. Bury Council has been publishing details of all goods and services spent over £500 since April 2010. As the Council Leader says that he is committed to openness and transparency, can he pledge that by April 2013 this Council will extend its published data to include all transactions above a new lower threshold of £250. This will mean more information on items such as travel expenses, office supplies and mobile phone bills allowing residents to see exactly where their taxpayers money is being spent so as to root out waste, avoid duplication and increase value for money for taxpayers.

**A. Councillor Bevan is absolutely right when he says that we are committed to openness and transparency but given the huge savings that we are having to make as a result of the funding cuts imposed on us by the coalition Government we need to focus our efforts on front-line services and so we cannot devote yet more resources towards publishing details of such low levels of spending.**

**9. Councillor Pickstone**

Could the Leader outline what measures will the Council be putting in place to ensure a safe celebration of 'bonfire night' this November?

**A. We are part of Operation Treacle. This is an AGMA wide event tackling the anti social behaviour around Halloween and Bonfire night.**

**Trading Standards contribution is as follows:-**

**Joint inspections with Fire and Police to all firework retailers/wholesalers.**

**Test purchases at targetted retailers by a young volunteer.**

**Training of PCSOs.**

**Assisting in the Be Safe Be Cool event at all schools in the borough.**

**Dealing with complaints from the public re ASB or safety of fireworks.**

**Distribute safety posters to schools.**

**AGMA and Bury had been showing a steady improvement in ASB over the previous years. There was a small slip backward last year so Treacle is being more aimed at the schools.**

#### **10. Councillor Wiseman**

Can The Cabinet member for Community Development please confirm the attendance figures at each of the 6 Township Forum's by members of the general public (excluding people who are co-opted onto the forum or council officers) at the last cycle of meetings?

**A. The numbers of public attending each meeting of the Township Forums are set out clearly in the minutes and are as follows:**

**Radcliffe – 10 July – 7**

**Whitefield and Unsworth – 10 July – 33**

**Bury West – 16 July – 8**

**Ramsbottom, Tottington and North Manor – 16 July – 5**

**Prestwich – 18 July – 28**

**Bury East – 18 July – 16**

**These numbers do not present a full picture of the way Township Forums have engaged with our local communities. Advisory Group members (of the Township Forums) represent local community groups which in turn represent significant numbers of local residents. Advisory Group members are able to use these networks to communicate important issues about the work of their Township Forum.**

**The public meetings are just one element of the Township Forum initiative. The key focus of the Township Forums is to set and drive local priorities through the development of a Township Plan. I am pleased to advise that a report on the progress made across**

**all of our six Townships in relation to the development of these plans is being shared at Cabinet on 19.09.12.**

**It is clear that these Plans have brought together Advisory Group members, other community representatives, councillors and partner organisations at a local level, to work towards identifying ways in which local issues can be addressed. They provide an important vehicle for local stakeholders to work together to make a difference. They help ensure that local people have a means of monitoring the impact and progress of the Township Forum and the difference it is making to quality of life in the area.**

**All Township Forum members have a responsibility to support the development of these local plans and encourage people to become involved. The successful bid for additional funding to the national Alcohol Prospectus Scheme in Bury East demonstrates the potential of the Township Forums and Plan to 'make a difference'. Similarly, Township Forums have supported the two Portas Pilot bids in Radcliffe and Prestwich (led by the local business community). It is pleasing to hear that these have recently attracted some additional (national) funds, particularly in the current financial climate.**

**The value of the Township Forums is also recognised in major public consultation exercises – for example budget setting. Views on proposals to introduce a new Council Tax Support scheme will also be sought at the next round of Township forums.**

**In addition to this, the Forums provide an opportunity for residents to discuss important local issues pertinent to their Township. This includes local events, concerts and other projects. An example of this is the Radcliffe Township Forum; the next meeting will be used to raise awareness of and support the Radcliffe Empty Property Pilot Project.**

**We continue to promote the Township Forum initiative through posters, information on the internet, press releases and, more recently, twitter and use of twitter hash tags for each Township Forum.**

## **11. Councillor Fitzwalter**

The Labour Council has committed to a 20 mph scheme which will have an enormous impact on road safety in the Borough. Can the Leader please inform me of the progress of the Scheme?

**A. A report seeking approval to the promotion of a three-year programme of Environmental Traffic Calming Schemes designed to reduce the legal speed limit to 20mph on streets within selected residential estates and areas located throughout the Borough will be considered by Cabinet in a week's time, on 19 September.**

## **12. Councillor O'Hanlon**

Following the flash flooding that hit Prestwich over the summer, could the Leader outline what additional resources been made available to make good road surfaces and parkland areas that were damaged? What assessment has been made of drainage systems and if any work needs to be undertaken to prevent similar occurrences in the future?

**A. No additional funding was required to address damage to highways or parkland following the Prestwich floods. Response teams acted quickly to rectify any damage within existing budgets. There was a time resource allocated through the responsive action taken at the time and immediately afterwards including a successful joint response with emergency services. A meeting was recently held with key partners including the Police, Fire and Ambulance Services involved with the response in Prestwich in order to review the procedures and any learning that can be taken from the incident.**

**United Utilities are aware of the drainage problems that arose during the Prestwich flooding and have been undertaking some minor schemes in the Prestwich area.**

## **13. Councillor Caserta**

Can the Leader or Cabinet Member for Young people and families assure us that their 2011 Manifesto pledge to "Continue to provide Home to School Transport for those who need it and continue to develop the Education Welfare Service" will be kept?

**A. Thank you for your question Councillor Caserta.**

**Id like to start by saying Bury Labour Group is proud of the fact that, unlike the remains of the Conservative group opposite, we did actually produce a manifesto for the local elections, so that the people of Bury would know what they would get if we were elected, and we are proud that we have stood by those commitments.**

**In terms of Home to School Transport we are of course currently consulting on some changes to local arrangements and we will consider the response to that consultation very carefully before reaching a final decision. We are sure the conservative group will support the proposals, as they are very similar to ones they produced when in power.**

**Our proposals also ensure that for low income families in receipt of qualifying benefits will continue to receive free travel.**



**We have stuck to our promise. You ask in your question Cllr Caserta "Continue to provide home to School Transport for those who need it". The answer is yes.**

**I'm not sure what your concern is about the Education Welfare Service. We have changed its name to School Attendance Team but it has actually grown in size as the schools are buying in a higher level of service than we used to provide. It is a success story.**

**14. Councillor Daisy Bailey**

Can the Leader give an update on Schools Capital Maintenance Programme?

**A. This year's allocation is £4.2million.**

**15. Councillor Gartside**

Under the new "Planning Protocol" which is due to come before this Council later this year, can the Leader / Cabinet member assure us that members of the public and Councillors will be allowed to ask questions to the Chair of Planning and Planning Officers at site visits ?

**A. The suggested Protocol in the report on the Agenda tonight is to deal with site visits only.**

**Site visits are useful for Members of the Planning Control Committee to identify the physical features of the proposal particularly where it may be difficult to understand these in a written report. They are arranged under delegated powers in consultation with the Chairman once the application is due to formally go before the Committee or by resolution of the Committee when it formally sits. National guidance acknowledges that visits can be unaccompanied (without the applicant and objectors); or accompanied but run on strict lines (ie not allowing any arguments to be expressed on site).**

**Custom and practice has developed within the Council whereby site visits for the Planning Control Committee involve engagement with the applicant, objectors and supporters by Members.**

**The Protocol is to readjust this position to fall in line with what is seen as the most fair and equitable approach in the national guidance and to mitigate legal risks of challenge; and so to that extent if approved, members of the public and other Councillors will not be invited to attend site visits.**

**They will, of course have opportunities in the process of consultation and publicity of the planning application to make representations and comments on an application, in order that these may be reported and conveyed to the Committee who will make the final decision. (Speaking rights permitted at Committee are ordinarily one person for and one person against the application, with representation by Ward Councillors whose area is affected by the particular application).**

#### **16. Councillor Stella Smith**

Can the Leader say what the Council is undertaking to improve recycling rates in the Borough?

**A. A number of initiatives are planned for delivery shortly, which are designed to provide a boost to recycling rates. These include the following:**

**A concerted promotional and PR campaign, designed to encourage residents to recycle more**

**Door to door canvassing in those hard to reach areas where participation in recycling is lower than average**

**Introduction of town centre, on-street recycling**

**A drive to push up recycling of commercial waste**

**Maximising recycling at all schools, including the introduction of food waste collections**

**Introduction of an additional 800 brown bins for the collection of garden and food waste in the more rural areas of the borough in October**

**Completion of the roll out of recycling collections from all flats in the Borough.**

#### **17. Councillor Caserta**

Can the Leader or Cabinet Member for Young people confirm the up to date numbers of looked after Children and explain exactly what action is being taken to reduce the costs associated with this service that continues operate significantly outside of budget ?

**A. Thank you for your question Councillor Caserta. The numbers change daily as children move in and out of care but at 31 August we looked after 342 children.**

**This is obviously more than we would wish but reflects the huge rise in demand there has been in children's social care as a consequence of the death of Peter Connolly and the huge pressures on family life caused by a double dip recession.**

**We only take children into our care as a last resort and all applications have to be agreed by the Family Court so I am entirely satisfied that every child who is in our care needs to be. The increases in our numbers are in line with those in Authorities elsewhere.**

**Managing the costs is of course a major problem, which we are trying to tackle in a number of ways. We have used the Early Intervention Grant to develop new services for families on the edge of care to help them stay together safely, such as our Hope Fellowship work on domestic violence recently praised by Ofsted. We are looking to launch a major foster carer recruitment drive to provide for more children in house rather than use expensive agency placements or residential care and we are seeking to discharge orders for children where it is safe to do so and have a good record on securing adoptions for children for whom this is the agreed way forward. The Director and his team are meeting every month to look at all children in expensive placements to see if they can be moved to lower level and cheaper provision.**

**We will continue to ensure we get the most cost effective care that we can for the children we look after, but I am not prepared to compromise on their safety and well being if we do need to act.**

#### **18. Councillor James**

Why were the recycling bins moved from Prestwich and Radcliffe?

**A. These two recycling centres were magnets for fly tipping, particularly from businesses seeking to avoid costs of waste collection and disposal. The respective Street Cleaning teams had to spend a considerable amount of time keeping the sites clean and we had to pay in excess of £200 per tonne to dispose of the waste picked up.**

**We also suffered continual problems with contamination of the recycling banks, meaning that the recyclables were lost (as was the income of £25 per tonne) and they then had to be disposed of instead (at a cost of £210 per tonne). Furthermore, we suffered problems with ongoing vandalism, including arson attacks on the paper and card banks.**

**Now that we have comprehensive kerbside recycling collections in place across the borough there simply isn't the same need for such recycling centres any more.**

## **19. Councillor Quinn**

Recently the GMP informed the Prestwich Carnival Committee that they can no longer support the Grand Parade around Prestwich due to cuts. Will the leader do whatever he can to make sure the Council supports Prestwich Carnival which is now the biggest independent carnival in Greater Manchester and attracts over 30,000 local people?

**A. The Carnival is the biggest annual event in Prestwich and attracts over 17,000 people. It is enjoyed by the whole community and is a fantastic example of community cohesion, bringing together all communities and age groups. The communities take the lead and showcase their own talents and raise huge amounts of money for a number of charities during the course of the day.**

**The organisers are very well supported by volunteers who help to steward the event throughout the day.**

**Bury Council always has, and will continue to, support the carnival in any way it can and offer advice and guidance to the organisers to ensure the event can run smoothly making best use of the volunteers that it has.**

## **20. Councillor Frith**

Can the Leader please give me an update on the £100k allocated by the Youth Cabinet and how many projects have benefited?

**A. There have been 16 projects which were allocated money. The projects were Borough wide. The Youth Cabinet was allocated the task of selecting projects across the Borough, without Councillor involvement.**

## **21. Councillor Holt**

Does the Leader agree that all elected members of this Council, as local community leaders, have a valuable role to play in promoting and supporting community cohesion within the areas they represent? Please could he outline proposals for supporting them in this role?

**A.**

**All members of this Council will agree that Bury's diversity is one of its strengths.**

- **We are proud that our six townships are home to numerous and distinctive communities who function and grow in harmony together rather than being divided**
- **This does not mean that we can be complacent. Members and partners work hard to address issues that are potentially divisive.**
- **Leadership is a key theme running throughout our Community Cohesion Strategy. This includes the leadership provided through our work with Team Bury – reflected in Team Bury’s ambitions of “the place to live in Greater Manchester” and “each township thriving”.**
- **Councillors, as community leaders, also have an important role to play in supporting and promoting this work**
- **Due to the significant number of Councillors who are currently integral to School Governing Bodies, we are proposing to deliver training to School Governors on equality and cohesion issues within the school environment. This massive opportunity will enable members to take a lead in affecting the lives of children and young people in our borough. We would ask all relevant members to support this initiative.**
- **We are also providing generic community cohesion training for all Councillors that can be accredited as part of their individual member development plans.**
- **We are also working on the development of Bury Insight, a system that will provide up to date, accessible data/information for Councillors on the different socio-economic issues/trends relevant to their wards. This is due to go live from October 2012.**
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## **22. Councillor Southworth**

Could the Leader of Council tell us how many young people we are looking after at present?

**A. There are to date 340 young people in care.**

## **23. Councillor Cassidy**

What progress has the Council made on the Housing Allocation Policy?

**A. The Council has been consulting with a range of stakeholders in recent months to obtain views on a number of emerging issues. This initial phase is now coming to a conclusion and it is my intention to seek Cabinet approval in October to formally consult on a new draft policy.**

**The consultation process will last for approximately six weeks and it will be as extensive and inclusive as possible. It will no doubt generate a lively debate as we attempt to get the best for local people and take into account the legislative requirements of allocations and homelessness, the wishes of housing providers and the expectations of tenants, Members and the wider community.**

**Whilst we need a new policy to match changes in legislation and case law, I want to ensure that everybody has an opportunity to comment and that we give due consideration to the views submitted. This makes it difficult to give a definitive timescale at this point although I would expect there to be a final draft for consideration by Cabinet sometime in the New Year.**

#### **24. Councillor Carter**

What has the Council done to improve the issue of dog fouling in the Borough?

##### **A. Fixed Penalty notices**

- 10 dog fouling fixed penalty notices (FPN's) have been issued since February 2012, including 8 in the past 3 months.
- FPN's patrols are targeted to fouling hotspots which include parks, country lanes, public footpaths and residential areas.

##### **Signage and Posters**

- New design brightly coloured 'no fouling' signs are now being distributed. Existing signs are being replenished with over stickers. We have had 40 requests for new signs since April 2012.
- A selection of school competition posters have been reproduced and distributed as posters to park notice boards and libraries. Examples of stickers and posters enclosed.
- 125 therma-plastic signs for displaying on footpaths are now in stock, and have started being installed at parks and schools where we have had problems with fouling.
- Magnetic signs for Council vehicles are also being developed.

##### **Dog Bins**

- There are 400 dog bins in the Borough and 30 new dog bins on order. The bins will be re-painted as required with new no fouling stickers or children's design stickers before the end of September 2012. Dog walkers can put bagged dog waste in any litter bin.

##### **Educational initiatives**

- Primary Schools are being contacted to arrange for school talks.
- Dog poop bags are being handed out as required by rangers and the dog warden.

##### **Impact**

- We have seen a drop in complaints about dog fouling and dog signage to Environmental Health since April 2012

## **25. Councillor Matt Bailey**

Can you give an update on the Backing Young Bury Initiatives please?

**A. I would like to thank Councillor Bailey for his question and welcome the opportunity to update Council on the major achievements in the year so far.**

**Over the past year this Labour administration has demonstrated a genuine commitment to increasing the number of learning and working opportunities for young people.**

**Our in-house Backing Young Bury programme is designed to provide young people with a wide range of opportunities including; Work Experience, Pre Employment, Employment and Employment Support.**

**In addition to this The Backing Young Bury offer to businesses in the Borough is being led by an external partnership whose role is to identify suitable apprenticeships and match these to young people in the Borough.**

**Since January 2012, the Backing Young Bury campaign has provided 132 learning and working opportunities with the Council, of which:**

- 44 have been work experience placements and have been accessed by a variety of people, which include school and college students, the Pupil Learning Centre, university students, NEET individuals and those furthest away from the job market.**
- 29 have been extended work experience placements (DWP and work ready) and have been accessed by those furthest away from the job market and those with learning difficulties and disabilities.**
- 10 have been pre-employment placements. These have been accessed by a variety of young people including two looked after children, three candidates have progressed from BYB work experience at O2 and the remaining five have been filled by those who were not already in education, employment or training.**
- 19 being corporate apprenticeship placements and have been accessed by a variety of people. Including school leavers, those coming off an extended work experience placement or pre-employment scheme and moving onto the corporate apprenticeship programme. Of which, 70% of the**



**June intake have been secured by those not already in education, employment or accessing training.**

- **Employment Support – Support is being provided for 30 young people from Elmsbank high school in terms of employability, CV tips, Interview techniques, job search skills, work experience and the role of Local Government in Bury.**

**Similar successes have been achieved through our external partnership and:**

- **To date 11 unemployed Bury residents have secured employment under the external Backing Young Bury Initiative through the Greater Manchester Commitment to Youth Employment.**
- **O2 has worked in partnership with the Council to develop a high quality work experience programme and have just committed to delivering a further comprehensive two week work experience activity. 50% of young people on the scheme from the first cohort have secured employment.**
- **Using external funding we have developed an extended placement programme within the Council which is designed to assist those with multiple barriers to get jobs; of the 19 who started on programme, 14 successfully completed and 7 have secured employment so far. The remainder are still being supported.**
- **Working in partnership with local businesses, 21 unemployed young people are being supported through Backing Young Bury to gain jobs.**
- **A further 59 employment and training opportunities are available for unemployed Bury young people as part of the GM Commitment.**