

## Council meeting – 17 October 2012

### Questions:-

The Leader of the Council

### Question running order:

**1<sup>st</sup>: Conservative**

**2<sup>nd</sup>: Labour**

**3<sup>rd</sup>: Liberal Democrat**

**4<sup>th</sup>: Independent**

#### **1. Councillor Caserta**

Could I ask the Leader how many Council staff have been made redundant by this Council since May 2011 both voluntary and compulsory and what has been the cost to the Council?

**A. At the outset I would point out that this is public information available on the Council's website .**

**During 2011/12 there were 44 compulsory redundancies and 128 voluntary redundancies and early retirements . In 2011/12 the total cost of these redundancies to the council amounted to £1.4m, compared with £1.8m when the former Conservative administration was in control. Full details of the numbers and costs of redundancy are detailed in the annual statement of accounts published by the Council.**

**Councilor Caserta will be aware that there was an increase in the number of compulsory redundancies during 2011/12 and that this was largely due to the impact of the Con-Dem government's budget deficit reduction strategy that led to cuts in our revenue budget amounting to £10m. Furthermore the implementation of STAR reviews agreed by the former Conservative administration resulted in an increased number of employees facing redundancy.**

**I am pleased to advise that 31 employees were successfully redeployed into other roles in 2011/12 as a result of this administration's commitment to job protection – this was an increase on the previous year and a 15% improvement in redeployment numbers overall.**

#### **2. Councillor Southworth**

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

**A. There are to date 345 young people in care.**

### 3. Councillor Pickstone

Could the Leader please update members on progress on securing savings outlined in the Plan for Change in 2012-13 in the Environment and Development Services department? Could you give details of what savings have been made in 2012-13 to secure the following targets: £87,000 environmental services, £311,000 roads and transport and £185,000 'clean and green' services?

**A. I can reassure Councillor Pickstone that the savings identified and agreed at the Council budget setting meeting in February this year for 2012/13 will be achieved. In my view it is much more important to look further ahead across all plan for change review areas and ensure savings for 13/14 and 14/15 are achieved. To this end you will be aware that the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny last week agreed to establish working groups for each of the service review areas. This will provide the opportunity for Members to look in more detail at the savings targets and the development of options and proposals going forward.**

### 4. Councillor Bevan

Could the Council Leader confirm that this Council will be ready for any severe weather over the next few months (including snow, ice and flooding) and what progress has been made over the last year to ensure that the Winter Service Policy and Operational Plan will be effective in keeping our Borough's roads open during the winter of 2012?

**A. Preparations have been made ready for the winter maintenance service that commences in early November. Salt levels for road gritting have been restocked and the rotas and training for gritting drivers has been completed. The 5 gritting vehicles are in place at Bolton from where we work in partnership with Bolton Council. In early November and in advance of any wintry weather salt bins will be restocked.**

**The exceptional weather conditions that occurred during the summer created surface water flows that exceeded the capacity of the drainage system for a short period. The problems encountered were not related to a lack of maintenance or blockage of the drainage system. Gullies are cleaned on a cyclical basis and locations that suffered flooding were attended to again when the flooding subsided. These procedures will be implemented again should the need arise together with working closely with our key partners.**

## **5. Councillor Gartside**

Is the Cabinet Member responsible for overseeing the implementation of the "Plan For Change" reviews confident that they will all be completed by the end of this financial year in order to achieve the 7.9 million pounds of required savings identified in the 2012/13 Budget Report ?

**A. Thank you for your question and interest in ensuring that as a council we can meet the savings required of us. The Plan for Change is, of course, much more than the reviews that are currently underway, in fact it is our road map for ensuring we meeting all the financial challenges ahead of us, up to the end of 2014/15.**

**When the budget for 2012-13 was agreed, it was forecast that the savings requirement would be £17.7million to cover the 3 years to 2015. I would like to take this opportunity to update council on the latest forecasts which take into account the council tax cap placed on local authorities, the implications of the unfunded council tax freeze and welfare reform costs. This latest information means we now have to find at least a further £6million of savings over the coming two years; possibly more depending upon the full impact of the final settlement.**

**Unhelpfully, this is not likely to be known until the new year – we have to wait until the Chancellor has delivered his Winter (sorry Autumn!) Statement on 5 December.**

**The Plan for Change sets out how we would meet the original forecast, through a combination of internal efficiencies, existing policies and new proposals including the reviews you mentioned. We are now looking at how we update the Plan for Change to ensure we can meet the even more challenging savings requirements placed on us by this Condem government.**

**However, to focus on 2012-13, as your question does, I think it is important to point out that the Plan for Change has delivered almost £5.5million of efficiency savings already this year alone. The reviews were tasked with delivering £588,000 of savings in 2012-13 and are on schedule to achieve this. As a former Finance Portfolio Holder you will be fully aware of the robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms we have in place. I can also offer my full support and co-operation to the sub groups which are now overseeing progress through Overview & Scrutiny.**

**The programme of reviews and a detailed timetable have already been published, and we have a clear programme management framework in place to ensure the reviews are undertaken in line**

**with the timetable. Members may have indeed already participated in the consultation exercise for the review of libraries – almost 4,000 people did! We have also now agreed with the Chair and members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that overview groups will be set up for each review, and we look forward to the input of elected members to all the reviews. An approach, I think you will agree, that is much more open and transparent than publishing a list of budget cuts in late December or early January.**

**We are committed to meeting the savage savings requirements placed on us by this coalition government, because we are a responsible administration and because we are forced, yet again, to implement Condem decisions, made at a national level, in our Borough. However we would be failing our staff and residents if we didn't undertake detailed reviews to plan the future of services, and simply continued to salami-slice budgets without a sound strategic framework. Lists A & B are no way to manage an organisation as complex as the council and did a great dis-service to our staff and communities.**

**We want to involve staff, residents and all members of this council in the Plan for Change – it is our future and we need to work together to make it right for Bury. Salami-slicing and sniping from the sidelines will not deliver, but managed, well-thought out and informed decision making will. We, each and everyone of us in this Council Chamber, has a responsibility to deliver the Plan for Change. I hope that members opposite will take this opportunity to “do the right thing” and support the Plan for Change.**

## **6. Councillor Rothwell**

In view of reports recently from Stonewall and AIDS UK regarding the significant number of incidents of homophobia being experienced by Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual pensioners in care homes and through the Domiciliary Care Service, what steps does the Council take to identify such homophobia whether it occurs in either the Statutory or Private Sector and what action does the Council take to stamp out such abuse which is not only distasteful but a flagrant breach of the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

**A. Local Authority employed staff have the Dignity at Work policy in place which clearly identifies sexuality as a protected characteristic and references types of inappropriate behaviour so that staff understand what could constitute abuse or harassment. Although this is technically a policy about how staff treat each other it also acts to raise awareness with them of the issue both in terms of the people they work alongside and the customers they support. Staff being well informed is a key factor in ensuring that abuse or harassment is not a feature of workforce behaviour, and also in spotting potential issues in how customers are treated by those around them or behave towards each other.**

**We provide equality awareness training for staff at induction and continue to roll this out across existing staff teams. This explains the protected characteristics and the need for people not to be discriminated against. Again this raises awareness of what is/is not acceptable and ensure the workforce are well informed to avoid inadvertently discriminating against someone, and to recognize the signs of harassment or abuse of customers by others.**

**In addition people accessing Adult Care Services are assessed and should people wish to declare their sexuality this would lead to a discussion about any concerns the customer may have in this regard and any effects on their life, and potential risks identified. We also monitor safeguarding alerts which highlights to us any instances of abuse which are of a discriminatory nature and linked to a protected characteristic. This would therefore highlight any concerns about homophobic abuse which we would then address.**

**Stonewall have produced a new guide - Working with older, lesbian, gay and bisexual people. A Guide for Care and Support Services' - which is available as a handbook or can be downloaded from the Stonewall web site.**

**We have printed copies off and have cascaded within the service.**

**In terms of Private and voluntary sector care providers Adult Care Services Quality Assurance and Development Team undertake Quality Assurance Reviews of the Council's contracted providers of Residential and Domiciliary Care Services. The team undertakes reviews against a framework which includes measures for assuring that providers have an awareness and knowledge of diversity and human rights and have the competencies to support the diverse needs and human rights of people who use services.**

**Furthermore, contracts for Residential and Domiciliary Care Services contain specific clauses in relation to providers having to comply with equalities legislation. Failure to do so would represent a material breach of the contractual terms and conditions and as such the contract could be terminated with immediate effect.**

## **7. Councillor O'Hanlon**

Can the Leader explain who is at fault and why Primary Schools in the Borough are not receiving milk that the Council has contracted to deliver?

**A. School milk is purchased via a Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation contract from Fresh Pastures CIC, a Wakefield-based producer. Fresh Pastures supply to a large number of local authorities and they have been our supplier for the past 4 years. During this time they have provided a highly reliable, cost-effective service.**

**Problems with supply of milk occurred at the beginning of the current term when no milk was delivered to Bury schools on both the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September. Further delivery failures occurred on 13<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September and 3<sup>rd</sup> October. The initial cause was attributed to machine breakdown at the supplier's production plant, but it later became apparent that the main issue was the reduction in milk available to Fresh Pastures from their usual suppliers and their inability to secure alternative supplies as a result of the general tightening of milk supplies nationally.**

**The Council and its officers responded immediately to these issues although Members should remember that the problems caused by the supplier's failures affected a number of authorities, not just Bury. Working with YPO we acted to ensure that Fresh Pastures took a number of steps to bring things back into line including sourcing new supplies on the open market, working extra shifts, purchasing extra equipment and serving notice on other customers so that supplies can be prioritised to schools**

**In addition to working on resolving the issues with the current supplier we have commenced the procurement process for an alternative supplier and in doing this uppermost in our selection criteria will be assurance that any new supplier will be able to meet the additional requirements of Bury schools and source sufficient additional supplies in the current constrained market.**

**I hope that all Members will support the swift and decisive action taken by the Council and not attempt to make political capital out of something caused by circumstances beyond the Council's control.**

## **8. Councillor Hankey**

Can the Leader please provide an update as to what plans there are in the pipeline (if any) for the old Viva Sol building on the Rock?

**A. The Council has been working very hard with the owners of the Rock to ensure that progress is made on this part of the development site and I am pleased to say that a Planning application was submitted by Thornfield Properties (Bury) Limited on the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2012 for the demolition of the former Sol Viva nightclub building and redevelopment of the site to provide 4 no. Class A3 restaurant/cafe units, covered walkway and associated public realm works. The application will now be progressed through the appropriate planning procedures.**

## **9. Councillor Simpson**

Can the Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Health and Wellbeing confirm the position with regard to the number of complaints received by the Department over the last three years?

**A. The number of complaints received by Adult Care Services over the last three years is as follows:**

<b>2009/10</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>2010/11</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>2011/12</b>	<b>89</b>

**Whilst in some respects it is 89 too many, it equates to 1.3% of total customers and has to be set this against a background of extensive organisational change including:**

- The modernisation of residential care to reduce in-house capacity and refocus services**
- Huge changes to learning disability day centres to bring services closer to where people live**
- The introduction of re-ablement and crisis response services**
- National reforms around Disabled Parking which saw big changes to the issuing of Blue Badges as well as the service relocating from Seedfield to Textile Hall**
- A major restructure of Assessment and Care Management processes and structures**
- Expansion of personal budgets to give people more choice and control over their care**
- Last but not least, the requirement to manage demand within a budget that is increasingly under pressure**

**Whilst I am pleased at these results, we cannot be complacent. It takes a lot of hard work from dedicated staff to maintain customer satisfaction and it is through their efforts that we are in this position.**

#### **10. Councillor O'Hanlon**

Can the Leader confirm how many extra gullies have been cleaned and what additional procedures EDS have implemented To prevent a repeat of the flooding that Prestwich suffered recently?

**A. The gullies in the Borough are cleaned on an annual cyclic basis together with additional responses to specific request for cleaning and flooding issues. Both gully wagon teams are initially deployed at times of heavy rainfall to attend known 'hotspots' where the potential for flooding is known to be greatest. The crews will be diverted from these routine checks to deal with emergency call-outs as they are received. In the event that the extreme weather conditions of the summer are repeated, we have the facility to call on the services of our external drainage contractor to provide additional support.**

#### **11. Councillor Gunther**

Considering the intention to convert existing and sometimes derelict garage colonies into residential accommodation within the Borough

Would the Leader agree with me, considering the amount of pavement, street parking and domestic gardens which have been converted to hard standing to accommodate the growing number of cars, there might be beneficial to invest in these garage colonies making them secure, charging a rent and thus reduce the hazards caused by pavement and street parking. It should be remembered that the current plan could and probably will lead to even more cars parked on domestic roads.

**A. I presume this relates to the report that I intend to bring to Cabinet in November regarding the future use of a number of garage sites.**

**Whilst not wishing to pre-empt that debate, particularly as the report is not yet finalised, there are a few points that I would like to make. I would agree that the quality of residents' parking can leave a lot to be desired – but that is reality. Whether for security, mobility or pure convenience, most people want to park their car as close as possible to home, not some distance away on a garage colony.**

**This changing pattern of living has left sites where there is little, or in some cases, no demand. It is only right that we challenge the use of such assets as they cost us money to manage and maintain – money that we can ill afford in the current climate. By the same token, I would be hard pressed to convince the Cabinet**



**Member for Resources to invest in unwanted sites especially as the rental income that garages attract is low.**

**It's too speculative and risky at a time when we have no spare cash.**

**But just to put things in context, two thirds of garage sites will be untouched by this review. It has been a genuine attempt to strike a balance between:**

- **Meeting demand for garages**
- **Minimising costs to the Council and Six Town Housing**
- **Getting best value – whatever the future use of the asset**
- **Meeting community aspirations**

**Extensive consultation has been carried out with local people over the past 18 months to get to this point and it's not over yet. As and when Cabinet decide to declare any of these sites 'surplus to requirements', we will continue to work with communities to find solutions and future uses that benefit the local area.**

## **12. Councillor Heneghan**

How many tenants of Six Town Housing will have their housing benefit cut as a result of the introduction of the Spare Room Tax from April 2003?

**A. The latest details from our Benefits Service indicate that 938 cases are affected.**

**Through the Welfare Reform Board the Council, Six Town Housing and other partners are working together to raise awareness of the issue with tenants and to assess what practical steps can be taken to help people to avoid financial hardship. Also, we are aware that the effect of the spare room tax is not restricted to Six Town tenants. Households across the rented sector are in a similar situation with some having to contend with multiple changes in their benefits situation. Again we are taking steps to identify and help the people that may be affected.**

## **13. Councillor Pickstone**

The Government has issued guidance for local authorities on tackling the problems of poor or abusive private sector landlords. With the Leader commit to sign up to support Shelter's campaign to support of Shelter's 'Evict Rogue Landlords' campaign, and to ensure that Bury plays it's part to tackle 'rogue landlords' in this borough?

**A. There is no place in Bury for landlords who exploit tenants or put them at risk. We have taken action against such individuals (and companies) in the past – and will continue to do so in the future.**

**Whilst it is right for Shelter to highlight this issue, the Council's aim is to get quality housing across the board. Accordingly we cannot afford to focus just on enforcement. We need to work with new landlords to get them into the right habits, support others to raise standards and tackle those that disregard the rules. This requires a mix of education, evaluation and where necessary enforcement – balancing proactive work such as empty homes initiative and the successful Landlord Accreditation Scheme with reactive, statutory enforcement powers.**

#### **14. Councillor Holt**

**Does the Leader agree that work to build cohesive communities in Bury is central to what we do? What plans are in place to review and refresh Team Bury's Cohesion Strategy which is due to expire in 2013?**

**A. Bury is a place where I am very proud to live, work and enjoy my free time. Community Cohesion lies at the heart of what makes us a strong, vibrant and safe community and is central to all we do.**

**I am pleased to say that I have commissioned the Communities Group (of Team Bury) to review and refresh our Community Cohesion Plan for the next three years. The group, which I chair, comprises of representatives from Bury's Third Sector, faith representatives, Older People Forum, Children and Young People's Service, BME Forum, LGBT network, Greater Manchester Police and colleagues from NHS Bury and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.**

**I am committed to ensuring that the Council's contribution to the refreshed Team Bury Cohesion Plan for 2013-16 will build on the good work already undertaken in Bury including our multi-agency work with partners to tackle and combat hate crime, work with schools such as the 'Be Safe Be Cool initiative', training opportunities for Councillors and the development of Township Plans.**

**The Plan is being developed around a number of key themes including: Leadership, Active Engagement, Promoting Shared Values and Belonging, Developing Confident Citizens, Community Safety and Resilience and Positive Communications.**

**I will be bringing the proposed Cohesion Plan for 2013/16 to Cabinet later this Autumn to outline the Council's continuing and valuable role in this vital area of work.**

## **15. Councillor Black**

The Council's quarterly performance report highlighted the pressure on the Adult Care Services Budget. Can the Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Health and Wellbeing confirm what steps are being taken to acknowledge the hard work of carers in our community whose role alleviates the pressure on Council Services?

**A. Carers play a vital role in supporting some of the most vulnerable people in our communities and I am happy to acknowledge their dedication and the time they give to helping others.**

**In recognition of the crucial role they play, the Council is keen to ensure that Carers themselves are supported. Carers are entitled to have an assessment of their needs and Adult Care Services will work with them to produce their own support plan. Based on these assessments, 389 carers now have a personal budget which they can use for traditional services such as night sitting or pay for more innovative activities, such as relaxation therapies, to improve their health and well being.**

**Recharging the batteries is a common objective and so we are seeing a continued focus on services that give carers a break and some respite from the rigours of caring. It is clear that carers need space and like the freedom that a personal budget gives them.**

**We also need to ensure that carers have access to the information and advice they need – in a way that suits them. A number of people can find it hard to approach the Council which is why commissioning the Carers' Centre to provide independent advice, guidance and training forms an essential part of the local Carers Strategy.**

**With growing demand and ever tightening budgets, the role of carers becomes increasingly important. Accordingly, I am pressing Adult Care Services to explore ways of developing different carer services which will assist more individuals. A number of projects are at the planning stage (including a carer's discount scheme with local businesses) and I hope to be able to bring you more on that as it develops.**

#### **16. Councillor Daisey Bailey**

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

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

#### **17. 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.**

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

Will the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Children Services join with me in congratulating the leadership and staff of The Sedgley Park Children's Centre for the excellent Ofsted Inspection report recently. This classed the Centre as good with excellent aspects. Within a diverse community with many challenges this clearly reflects the hard work and dedication of all involved?

**A. Yes I am delighted to join you in congratulating Sedgley Park Children's Centre on their excellent inspection, which was well deserved and reflects the hard work of Vicky and her team at the centre. Our children's centres across the Borough go from strength to strength delivering excellent and much needed services to all of our communities.**

#### **19. Councillor Cassidy**

Will the Housebound Library Service be affected by the Libraries Review?

**A. The library review is looking at all aspects of the Library Service and will put forward options that will go forward for consultation with the public in November. No decision will be taken on any aspect of library services until all stakeholders have been consulted.**

#### **20. Councillor Bevan**

Could the Council Leader confirm what has been spent so far in this financial year on tourism/promotional activity for the Borough of Bury (with comparisons by Township) and what is planned with the remainder of the 2012/13 budget?

**A. I understand that the question relates to expenditure on tourism matters and have therefore not included reference to other various events and activities, but have included information concerning tourism development and the Tourist Information Centre.**

**It is not possible to break down the information by Townships as this is not recorded, however I can provide the following Borough wide information:**

**So far this year £82k has been spent on staffing the TIC and Tourism Development.**

**A further £77k will be spent on employees and Tourism Development.**

**In addition to continuing to provide the day to day services, the remaining budget will include expenditure on the following:**

- **Manchester Countryside Project.**
- **East Lancashire Railway – Joint Marketing.**
- **Subscription to STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) – visitor information for Bury.**
- **Contribution to Travel Trade Guide for Greater Manchester.**
- **Coach visit promotion – operators' events.**
- **Food and Drink in Bury - promotion/development.**
- **Visit Bury website development.**