

# SCRUTINY REPORT

**MEETING:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**DATE:** 28 August 2012

**SUBJECT:** Plan for Change update

**REPORT FROM:** Cllr Jane Lewis, Cabinet Member for Leisure,  
Tourism and Culture  
Cllr Gill Campbell, Cabinet Member for  
Neighbourhoods and Regeneration

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Graham Atkinson, Executive Director for  
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## 1. Summary

This report provides an update on the Plan for Change Reviews to date and allows the committee to have overview of the next steps in the Leisure and Parks and Countryside reviews. The Committee will have an opportunity to comment on a range of proposals which have been developed prior to a decision by Cabinet and prior to a range of engagement and consultation activities with stakeholders and members of the public.

## 2. Matters for Consideration/Recommendation

The Committee is asked to note the proposals being put forward for the two review areas and provide input and comments which can be incorporated into the final proposals prior to Consultation and decision by Cabinet.

## 3. Background Information

The Plan for Change, approved by Executive in June 2011, sets out the strategic direction for the Council to manage many of the financial challenges ahead as well as new statutory responsibilities, such as the Localism Act and integration of the public health function within the local authority.

The Plan for Change sets out the vision for Bury to lead, shape and maintain a prosperous, sustainable Bury that is fit for the future.

To support his vision we are committed to the following outcomes:

- reduce poverty and its effects
- supporting our most vulnerable residents
- making Bury a better place to live

The Plan for Change provides a starting point for us to consider the efficiency and effectiveness of what we do; to look at the needs of our changing customer base; to consider the demand we face for services and ensure we manage the expectations of the customer in an environment where we have less resources.

The Plan for Change is committed to ensuring an open and transparent process, actively seeking the views of the local community, listening to ideas, and where possible acting on these ideas.

It is now just over a year since the Plan for Change was approved and in this time the Council has undertaken two consultation exercises.

In the Choices Consultation, results indicated that the most important priority was *supporting vulnerable people*, with a '*strong local economy*' and a '*decent place to live*' selected as choice two and three respectively.

The results of the Choices Consultation helped inform the 3-year Programme of Savings, which sets out how the council intends to achieve £17.7m savings by 2015.

Whilst the Plan for Change develops a strategy to address anticipated funding reductions for three years to March 2015, a number of risks remain due to external factors;

- The Plan for Change is based upon anticipated funding reductions extracted from the Comprehensive Spending Review using national control totals; the picture locally for Bury will not be confirmed until precise funding settlements are announced.
- Local Government Finance is subject to considerable reforms, notably the proposed retention of Business Rates at a local level. The consultation for these proposals is currently ongoing (till late September). It is likely the final scheme (and impact for Bury) will not be confirmed until late 2012 / early 2013.
- The general economic climate continues to be challenging, and the likelihood is that Public Sector spending restrictions will continue in 2016 and beyond. It is therefore critical that the Plan for Change identifies savings which are sustainable, and can be further developed in future years.

Within the Programme of Savings the council outlined that some service areas would be subject to further review before savings were made. The review process is designed to help us understand 'why we do what we currently do' and how the organisation may need to change to ensure these service areas are fit for the future.

The review areas are Community Safety (CCTV), Environmental Services and Economic Development, Parks and Countryside, Highways, Leisure and Libraries.

In addition Adult Learning will be reviewed to contribute to our internal efficiencies savings targets.

The reviews have various timescales in place, with some such as the Libraries Review being a more complex process in order to ensure that all the legal requirements are complied with.

Review teams have been tasked to put forward a sustainable, long-term vision for the service area, which will make sure we continue to commission or deliver core services that demonstrate value for money in a challenging public sector financial climate and if appropriate also ensure we meet our statutory requirements.

There are a number of savings proposals which are operational decisions and therefore not referenced in this document. They cover savings, for example, on Invest to Save income generating proposals, non employee related efficiency savings and better procurement. However the issues that are policy related, have a direct impact on residents/customers and employees are included in this report.

The review options and outcome support the vision, values and outcomes of the Plan for Change and most critically ensure the Council delivers the Programme of Savings on time and on target.

### **Leisure Services Review**

In the Choices Consultation '*Promoting healthier lives*', which considered Leisure opportunities across the borough, was selected as Choice number 7 by respondents.

This choice reflected the role the Council has in supporting local residents to lead healthier lives, offering a range of activities in leisure centres, promoting the importance of health lifestyles and working closely with the NHS.

In the Programme of Savings we said we would:

- develop a long-term leisure vision and facilities strategy, incorporating increased self management of leisure facilities by the groups that use them and further develop capacity in the community/voluntary sector.
- this would help contribute to a savings target of £130,000 to be achieved from 2013/14 onwards

The review has:

- established that although there being no statutory requirement for Leisure, it does contribute to the Team Bury ambition of '*Healthiest Borough in the North West*' and '*The place to live in Greater Manchester*' and the Plan for Change outcomes of '*Supporting our most vulnerable residents*' and '*Making Bury a better place to live*'.
- undertaken further work to develop the areas that will contribute to health improvements. This includes identifying participation pathways that have multi-agency input, including for example, Schools, Children's Services, GP's, Adult Care Services, Public Health and the Voluntary Sector. It also notes the positive contribution that can be made by this service area to the Life Course plan, published in the Marmot review (February 2010).
- developed a vision for members and residents/customers to consider as a basis for the consultation, strategy development and long term planning to be undertaken.
- undertaken a study of the volunteer/community sector to ascertain how they are positioned and able to respond to greater involvement, not only

in this service area, but others too, as well as explore opportunities for increased partnership working.

- considered the options for savings for the 2013/14 financial year.

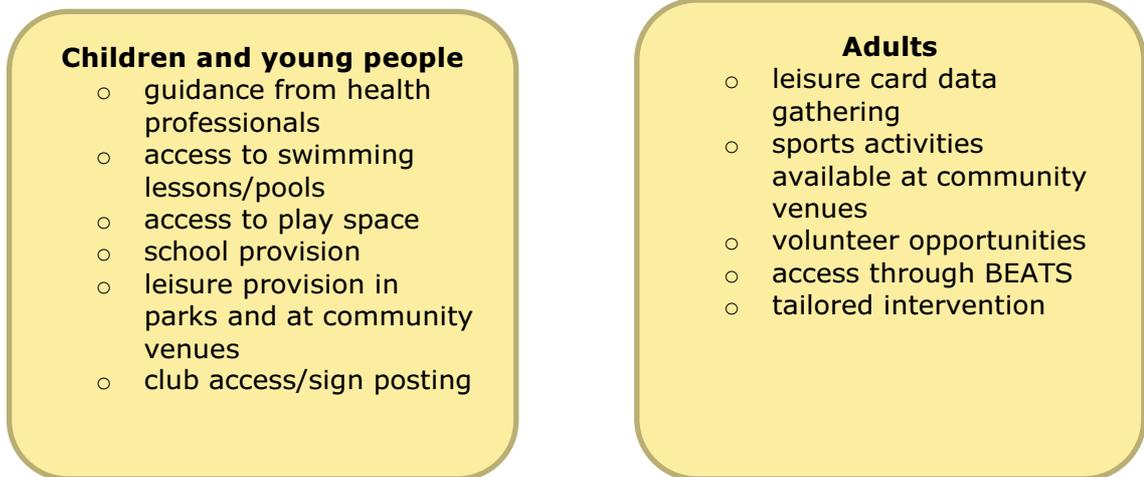
## Key issues

- Draft Vision

Targeting provision to make a real positive difference to the lifestyles and quality of life of people across all Bury's various communities.

- Health Improvement/Public Health Links

Initial work has led to the development of Participation Pathways for Children and Young People and Adults



These are not deliverable by the service in isolation and will only be achieved by high level strategic partnerships with relevant internal and external services and agencies.

Some of the above will be supported by the 5 step Life Course Plan referred to above, from the 2010 Marmot report:-

- starting well – good health for mums and babies
- developing well – encouraging healthier habits
- growing up well – identifying, treating, preventing ill health and building resilience and self esteem
- living and working well – lifestyle and behaviours that influence Health and Well Being
- ageing well – resilience through social networks providing protection from preventable ill health

Linking in to the above and the crossovers that are evident with other services and agencies provides opportunities for the service to make a real contribution to both health improvement and the ill health prevention agenda.

More immediately, the ageing population will focus attention on how provision can be tailored to provide and respond to demand from this growing sector. The JSNA will be an important source of information and evidence to better understand the needs of the local population.

- Asset Management

The Council now has an Asset Plan in place and this is an essential reference point for this service.

In terms of facilities they are currently in a reasonably good state of repair having benefitted in recent years from capital funding through the Backlog Maintenance Programme. However, this is no longer available as a consequence of the reduction in the Council's level of capital receipts. This, added to the age of the buildings (Radcliffe Pool 44 years, Ramsbottom Pool 40 years and Castle Leisure Centre 38 years) means that serious consideration has to be given to how we can provide facilities of this nature in the long term.

Therefore a rationale for future investment needs to be developed and a comprehensive facilities strategy put in place.

- Voluntary Sector

The Leisure Service has significant connection with the voluntary sector because of how the majority of sports clubs are set up. The clubs have in place committed and expert volunteers who are essential to the provision of a very healthy sporting infrastructure within the Borough.

The principle of self management has been in place in this Borough for many years. Based on that experience and understanding of the issues there are many excellent examples of the benefits self management gives to both the clubs and the Council. Most recently, the reopening of the Gymnastics Centre at Goshen has provided an opportunity to bring 4 clubs together to manage the whole Goshen site, thus taking day to day management responsibilities away from the Council.

This concept is one which the Review identifies as a positive way forward and the encouragement, facilitation and establishment of further partnerships and self management agreements are considered to be an important means of sustaining long term provision for leisure.

A study undertaken on the local voluntary sector, which is also relevant to a number of services outside of Leisure, does however indicate some concerns. Chiefly this relates to what volunteers believe might be expected of them and what they may be responsible for. Therefore the study demonstrated that whilst there is a good source of volunteers, the majority want to be led or directed by someone in authority. This is further evidenced by some well established clubs not wanting to take on self management responsibilities on Council facilities.

- Targeted / Universal Provision

Much, although not all of targeted provision is a part of the Sports and Physical Activity Service (SAPAS). This covers leading on the Bury Exercise and Therapy Service (BEATS) scheme, delivering or supporting

activities within hard to reach communities and groups, and supporting the network around sports clubs locally, regionally and nationally.

Going forward it is essential to generate data and evidence from this area of work to understand the impact of the interventions

In terms of universal provision in relation to the non statutory status of leisure, the Review has recognised the importance of gauging residents' needs and demands for the service within available resources. This is also in the context of recognising the private sector provision of some activities, the presence of niche markets and the risks that may be present in keeping the mix and offer of activities in line with customer demands.

- Impact on the workforce/savings targets

£30k has been identified as a savings target from this service in 2013/14. A range of options were considered by the Portfolio Member including fees and charges increases, and scaling down the SAPAS Service. However, these were not favoured because of the existing difficulties on achieving income targets and the contribution SAPAS makes to the improving health agenda respectively. The savings target is therefore focussed on the cafeteria and crèche at Castle Leisure Centre to identify whether other ways of providing these services exist. This could include, for example, reducing the current offer or opening hours by the council, franchising, increasing prices or discontinuation of the service. The latter option if implemented could equate to a maximum loss of 5.2 fte posts. Opportunities for redeploying at risk postholders will be pursued in all cases. In addition, opportunities for VER/VS/FR will continue to be available across the Council which again helps minimise redundancies.

## **Consultation and Next Steps**

Based on the work of the review so far it is clear that there are specific areas where consultation and further planning is necessary. These are:

- for Overview and Scrutiny to input into the long term direction of travel and comment on the draft vision.
- undertake a needs assessment for targeted services to identify barriers to and opportunities for participation.
- to develop Invest to Save/Income generating proposals and options.
- to recommend a process for improving data capture to provide the evidence necessary for objective decision making.
- the development of a facilities strategy once the long term vision is agreed.
- to develop the ideas on the Participation Pathways.
- to undertake consultation with the workforce in accordance with s188 procedures.

Progress on the above will be reported back to Overview and Scrutiny in December 2012.

## **Parks and Countryside and Grounds Maintenance Review**

In the Choices Consultation '*Keeping Bury clean and green*' was selected as Choice number 6 by respondents.

This choice reflected the role the council has in maintaining the borough's 12 green-flag parks, its ranger service and work in nature reserves and the countryside.

In the Programme of Savings we said we would:

- review grounds maintenance, street cleaning and tree management to contribute to a savings target of £150,000
- review Parks and Countryside including the Park Ranger Service, play areas, countryside maintenance and how to increase the number of parks and countryside facilities that are managed by community / voluntary groups to contribute to a savings target of £250,000 from 2012/13 onwards.

The review has

- established that although there is no statutory requirement for the Parks and Countryside/Grounds Maintenance (P&C/GM) Service it does contribute to the Team Bury ambitions, of '*The place to live in Greater Manchester*', '*Visitor Destination*', and '*To have each Township thriving*'. In addition, the service contributes to the Plan for Change outcomes of '*Supporting most vulnerable residents*' and '*Making Bury a better place to live*'. Empirical evidence is however lacking although there are many references from national and international studies which highlight the benefit of green spaces to local communities both in increased satisfaction levels and encouraging greater physical activity which has health benefits.
- raised the issue of the standards the service should aspire to and the very difficult process in gaining acceptance of a reduction in standards.
- developed a vision for members and residents/visitors to consider as part of the next stages of consultation and long term planning.
- examined the idea of greater volunteer involvement and self management, as well as the potential for more partnership working.
- almost completed a mapping exercise of all green spaces and buildings under the ownership of the Council with a view to identifying priorities to be agreed upon through the consultation.
- raised issues similar to those in the Leisure review, including marketing, promotion and community development.
- looked in detail at the areas of savings from this year (2012/13) as well as 2013/14 and 2014/15.
- focussed less on the Grounds Maintenance trading service and the Cemeteries/Bereavement Service.

### **Key issues**

- Draft Vision

Making Bury a better place to live by encouraging local communities to have ownership and commitment to their local parks or green space and for the Council to act as an enabler to encourage this to happen.

- Standards

The awards the service has won are numerous and well deserved.

The In Bloom awards have galvanised significant community involvement and ownership in Radcliffe, and the overall cultural offer in Bury Town Centre including The Met, the ELR, the Fusiliers Museum and the Transport Museum which have benefitted from high standards of floral displays and cleanliness.

However, given the challenging public sector financial climate, the review poses the question of whether such high standards can be maintained.

Therefore it is important for the consultation to capture views on this issue.

This process will be helped by the mapping work currently being undertaken and once completed, will be shared at Township level to agree priorities with residents.

- **Volunteers/Self Management/Partnerships**

Many similarities exist with the Leisure review and the outcomes of the same piece of work on the volunteer network apply here too. The voluntary network is reasonably strong in this sector. 'Friends of...' groups, volunteer rangers, the level of community involvement which supports the In Bloom and Green Flag submissions having been developed over many years through capacity building by the Countryside Rangers, Park Rangers and indeed the self managed clubs themselves. The aim is clearly to encourage even further control to be undertaken by this sector. However, as stated within the Leisure review it does take time to bring volunteers on in terms of confidence, knowledge and skills.

Once established, even the strongest groups do still rely on the support of officers at certain times and within these arrangements the Council does still have a role in ensuring the organisations do deliver in accordance with service level agreements.

Partnership development is also seen as an area improvements can be made to service delivery. There is a very good example of an initiative at Clarence Park, involving Adult Care Services and the voluntary sector which will launch in 2013. This model will provide impetus to similar arrangements in other facilities and Parks.

Through the Localism Act and building on the success of self management, opportunities for asset transfer is an important part of the work going forward. The mapping exercise referred to elsewhere will identify areas and buildings which may be appropriate for transfer.

- **Play Areas**

A challenging part of this review is funding the ongoing maintenance of play facilities in our parks. Since 1999 the Council has benefitted from approximately £200k each year being available from the Airport Dividend which was directed to a rolling programme of play facility refurbishment and replacement. This funding stream is no longer available and whilst other sources will be sought (including S106 monies) it is unlikely the same quantity, or indeed quality, of play facilities can be sustained.

The consultation process will help to identify priorities for the retention of play areas as well as pursue alternate sources of funding.

Over recent years, the frequency of play equipment checks has been reduced. There is an option being put forward to reduce this by a 0.5 fte post but it is recommended that no further reductions are possible in this aspect of the service if appropriate health and safety responsibilities are to be met.

- Impact on the workforce/savings targets

Over the 3 year period of the Plan for Change review, it is anticipated that 9.5 fte posts are at risk. Opportunities for redeploying at risk postholders will be pursued in all cases. In addition, opportunities for VER/VS/FR will continue to be available across the Council which again helps minimise redundancies.

In 2012/13, 3 posts are at risk impacting on the Grounds, Tree and Countryside Maintenance teams, as well as the Ranger Service. This may lead to longer response times, particularly in Tree and Countryside functions.

In respect of the Ranger Service, an option is being put forward to reduce the workforce by 1 fte, leaving 6.5 Ranger posts going forward. The Choices Consultation process earlier in the year did see a number of comments supporting the Ranger Service and specific requests not to reduce this area of provision. However, in proposing this reduction it is with the view that each Township will still have one Ranger in place. The review has recognised the value of the Ranger Service in contributing to the wider benefits of volunteer and community development. In working closer with officers in other areas of Leisure, Libraries, Planning and Township Management it is considered that this can be enhanced in the future.

## **Consultation and Next Steps**

The review process has identified further areas of work requiring consultation and longer term planning. These are:-

- for Overview and Scrutiny to input into the long term direction of travel and to comment upon the draft vision. This then to be the basis for wider consultation, seeking views and comments on issues such as quality and standards, the role of volunteers, the establishment of more self management arrangements, priorities within Townships, the options on the future workforce structure, and to finalise proposals for a further £300k of savings to be achieved during 2013/14 and 2014/15 resulting from the consultation and visioning work.
- the P&C/GM should be part of a wider piece of work to examine the approach to volunteer engagement, development and capacity building, utilising the experience and knowledge developed over recent years.
- to undertake consultation with the workforce in accordance with s188 procedures.
- to report back to Overview and Scrutiny in December 2012.

## **5. Supporting Information (if necessary)**

More information about the Plan for Change can be found online at [www.bury.gov.uk/planforchange](http://www.bury.gov.uk/planforchange)

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