

Public Document Pack

Mike Kelly FCIQB MCIM
Chief Executive

Our Ref LW
Your Ref OSC/LW
Date 3 December 2013
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Legal & Democratic Services
Division

Jayne Hammond LLB (Hons) Solicitor
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TO: All Members of Council

Councillors : S Briggs (Chair), A Audin, K Audin, D Bailey, M Bailey, N Bayley, I Bevan, J Black, P Bury, G Campbell, S Carter, R Caserta, D Cassidy, J Columbine, M C Connolly, A Cummings, J Daly, E Fitzgerald, L Fitzwalter, J Frith, I Gartside, J Grimshaw, D Gunther, M Hankey, S Haroon, P Heneghan, T Holt, K Hussain, T Isherwood, M James, D Jones, J Lewis, A Matthews, S Nuttall, D O'Hanlon, N Parnell, T Pickstone, A Quinn, K Rothwell, R Shori, A Simpson, J Smith, S Smith, S Southworth, T Tariq, B Vincent, R Walker, S Walmsley, J Walton, M Wiseman and Y Wright

Dear Member/Colleague

Council

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which will be held as follows:-

Date:	Wednesday, 11 December 2013
Place:	Bury Town Hall
Time:	7.00 pm
Briefing Facilities:	If Opposition Members and Co-opted Members require briefing on any particular item on the Agenda, the appropriate Director/Senior Officer originating the related report should be contacted.
Notes:	

AGENDA

The Agenda for the meeting is attached.



Electronic service of legal documents accepted only at:
E-mail: legal.services@bury.gov.uk
Fax: 0161 253 5119

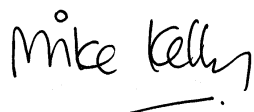
Town Hall
Knowsley Street
Bury BL9 0SW
www.bury.gov.uk

Reports are enclosed only for those attending the meeting and for those without access to the Council's Intranet or Website.

The Agenda and Reports are available on the Council's Intranet for Councillors and Officers and also on the Council's Website at www.bury.gov.uk – click on **Agendas, Minutes and Forward Plan**.

Copies of printed reports can also be obtained on request by contacting the Democratic Services Officer named above.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style. Below the signature is a short horizontal line.

Chief Executive

AGENDA

1 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members of the Council are requested to declare any interests which they have in any items or issues before the Council for determination.

2 **MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL** (Pages 1 - 10)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 16 October 2013 in Digest 5 (2013/2014)

3 **MAYORAL COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

To receive communications from the Mayor and any announcements by the Leader of the Council or the Chief Executive on matters of interest to the Council.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

To answer questions from members of the public, notice of which has been given, on any matter relevant to the Council or its services to the community. Up to 30 minutes will be set aside for this purpose. If time permits, further questions will be invited from members of the public present.

5 **RECOMMENDATIONS OF CABINET AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES** (Pages 11 - 24)

COMMITTEE/DATE	SUBJECT	RECOMMEN
Cabinet – 27 November 2013	Treasury Management Strategy – Mid Year Review 2013/14	<i>To note t</i>
Corporate Parenting Board – 28 November 2013	Corporate Parenting Board Annual Report to Council	<i>To endorse t</i>

6 **LEADER'S STATEMENT AND CABINET QUESTION TIME** (Pages 25 - 46)

To receive a Statement from the Leader of the Council on the work of the Cabinet and to answer written questions from Members of the Council to the Leader and Cabinet Members on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties which affect the Borough, provided the necessary written notice has been given.

Verbal questions on the work of the Cabinet since the last Council meeting will be allowed subject to a limit of one question per Councillor.

7 **JOINT AUTHORITIES - REPORT BY THE COUNCIL'S REPRESENTATIVE AND QUESTIONS** (Pages 47 - 54)

(A) A report by the Council's Representative on the work of the Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority, Councillor Cummings.

(B) Questions (if any) on the work of the Joint Authorities to be asked by Members of the Council for which the necessary notice has been given in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.2.

8 **REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL** (Pages 55 - 62)

9 **COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME** (Pages 63 - 70)

Report attached

10 **NOTICES OF MOTION**

1. Domestic Abuse

"Council notes that domestic abuse affects every community in Bury: rich or poor, white or black, old or young, gay or straight. Over the past 12 months, Greater Manchester Police dealt with 3,570 cases of domestic abuse in Bury.

This represents the tip of the iceberg. It is estimated that one in four women will experience domestic abuse at some point in their life. It doesn't just affect women, 17% of the victims who report domestic abuse to police in Bury are men. Domestic abuse isn't just physical, many people suffer serious emotional turmoil at the hands of abusive partners.

Council notes that help and advice is available to victims of domestic abuse and those who fear their friends or loved ones may be victims at the www.endthefear.co.uk website.

This council resolves to make a stand against domestic abuse by:

- working with the Police and Crime Commissioner, Greater Manchester Police, the NHS, housing associations, other agencies and most importantly of all, local communities across Bury to make clear that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable;
- doing all we can to encourage people to report domestic abuse to the police;
- instructing the Chief Executive to report back by April 2014 on progress made by this Local Authority and partner agencies to improve and enhance services provided to victims of domestic abuse.

The Council agrees to sign up to the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Commissioner's promise to "say no to domestic abuse" at www.gmpcc.org.uk/endthefear and encourage as many Bury residents as possible to do the same."

In the names of Councillors A Audin, K Audin, M Bailey, D Bailey, N Bayley, J Black, P Bury, G Campbell, S Carter, D M Cassidy, J Columbine, M Connolly, A J Cummings, E FitzGerald L Fitzwalter, J Frith, J Grimshaw, S Haroon, P Heneghan, T Holt, A Isherwood, M A James, D Jones, J S Lewis, A K Matthews, N A Parnell, A Quinn, K Rothwell, R Shori, A Simpson, S Smith, J Smith, S Southworth, T Tariq and S Walmsley.

2. Bury Library

"This Council notes the proposal to install a Sculpture Centre in part of the building presently occupying Bury Library. This Council believes Bury Library to be an invaluable and much loved community asset benefiting the residents of our Borough. This Council is opposed to any plan to reduce the present footprint of Bury Library believing there to be no culture, educational and economic argument to support this. We are further opposed to any reduction in books and other material presently held by Bury library and available for members of the public to borrow. This Council believes the facilities and services presently offered by Bury Library should be maintained at their current level.

THIS COUNCIL therefore resolves to:

1. Cease installation of a Sculpture Centre at Bury Library
2. Not to spend £75,000 or any sum of tax payers money carrying out renovations or alterations to the structure of the building at this time.
3. Allow Bury Library to maintain its present footprint.
4. Retain all lending and reference materials presently held by Bury Library.
5. Retain the present level services and facilities currently offered by Bury Library.
6. To employ a permanent staffing structure solely based at Bury Library to allow for the above."

In the names of Councillors I Bevan, R Caserta, J Daly, I Gartside, D Gunther, M Hankey, K Hussain, S Nuttall, B Vincent, R Walker, J Walton, M Wiseman and Y Wright

11 SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORTS AND SPECIFIC ITEMS "CALLED IN" BY SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

12 QUESTIONS ON THE WORK OF OUTSIDE BODIES OR PARTNERSHIPS

Questions on the work of outside bodies or partnerships on which the Council is represented to be asked by Members of the Council (if any).

13 **DELEGATED DECISIONS OF THE COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

Questions on the delegated decisions made by the Regulatory Committees and Scrutiny Committees contained in the Digests of Decisions 5 and 6 (2013/14) published since the last ordinary meeting of the Council, providing four clear working days' notice has been given of the question.

Members are asked to bring to the meeting their copy of Digests 5 and 6 (2013/14)

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Minutes of: AN ORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 16 October 2013

Present: The Worshipful the Mayor (Councillor S Briggs), in the Chair; Councillors M Bailey, D Bailey, I Bevan, P Bury, G Campbell, S Carter, R A Caserta, D M Cassidy, M Connolly, AJ Cummings, J Daly, E FitzGerald, L Fitzwalter, I B Gartside, J Grimshaw, D L Gunther, M Hankey, P Heneghan, T Holt, K Hussain, A Isherwood, M A James, D Jones, J S Lewis, A Matthews, S Nuttall, D O’Hanlon, N Parnell, T D Pickstone, A Quinn, K Rothwell, R Shori, A Simpson, S Smith, J Smith, S Southworth, B Vincent, R E Walker, S Walmsley, J F Walton, M J Wiseman and Y Wight

Apologies for Absence: Councillors A Audin, K Audin, N Bayley, J Black (CI), J Columbine, J Frith, S Haroon and T Tariq

Public attendance: 27 members of the public attended the meeting

C.439 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1. Councillor Connolly declared an interest in any item which related to staffing as his partner is an employee of Bury Council.
2. Councillor Jones declared an interest in any item which related to staffing as his wife is an employee of Bury Council.
3. Councillor Holt declared a personal interest in Minute C.447(2) "Notice of Motion – Royal Mail," as he is a retired postman and a member of the Communications Workers Union.
4. Councillor Walmsley declared a personal interest in Minute C.447(2)"Notice of Motion – Royal Mail", as she is a member and activist of the Communications Workers Union.
5. Councillor Bevan declared a personal interest in Minute C.447(1), "Notice of Motion – School Meals," as his spouse is employed at Summerseat Methodist Primary School and he has a child in that School’s Reception Class who will benefit from the Central Government Proposal.

C.440 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 11 September 2013 be signed by the Mayor as a true and correct record.

C.441 MAYORAL COMMUNICATIONS

1. The Mayor referred to the recent passing of former Councillor and former Mayor, Winston Ramsey, and Members observed a brief silence as a mark of respect.
2. The Mayor referred to the following forthcoming events:-

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- Local Democracy Week was taking place between 14 and 21 October 2013, and events programmed included a talk on Democracy on Thursday, 17 October 2013 and a Question Time Session on Saturday 2 November 2013.
- The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers would be staging a Homecoming Parade on Tuesday, 19 November 2013.
- The Mayor would be hosting a charity Afternoon Tea on Friday, 25 October 2013.

C.442 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Mayor reported that there were no written questions from members of the public. Questions were invited from members of the public present and the following issues were raised:-

Issue	Questioner	Answered By
1. Proposal to create Academy in respect of Radcliffe Primary School and steps taken by the Council to oppose it	Mr S Wheeler and Ms K Hopwood	Councillor Connolly (Undertaking given to write to the Secretary of State reaffirming the Council's position)
2. Creation of Sculpture Centre in Bury Library; re-allocation of space and group use	Ms S Smith and members of Save Bury Library Campaign	Councillor Connolly
3. Use of food banks within Bury	Mr J Mallon	Councillor Connolly
4. Provision of Broadband in Rural Areas	Mr C Davies	Councillor Connolly

C.443 RECOMMENDATIONS OF CABINET AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Minutes 1 and 2 of the meeting of the Democratic Arrangements Forum on 3 October 2013 – Managing the Business of Council – Deadline for Member Questions to the Leader and the Six Month Rule.

It was moved by Councillor Connolly and seconded by Councillor John Smith and it was:-

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the deadline for receipt of questions from Members to the Leader at meetings of the Council be changed to Midnight on the Thursday prior to the Wednesday Council Meeting.
- (2) That Council Procedure Rule 16 be amended to read as follows:-

16.1 Motion to rescind a Previous Decision

A motion or amendment to rescind a decision made at a meeting of Council within the past six months cannot be moved.

16.2 A Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council acting under delegated powers may rescind a resolution adopted under delegated powers within a period of six months provided the Summons to attend the meeting of the Committee or Sub-Committee contains a notice that the matter is to be reconsidered.

16.3 Motion Similar to One Previously Rejected.

A motion or amendment in similar terms to one that has been rejected at a meeting of the Council in the past six months cannot be moved."

C.444 LEADER'S STATEMENT AND CABINET QUESTION TIME**(a) Written questions (Notice given)**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Connolly, made a statement on the work undertaken by him since the date of the last Council meeting. The Leader and the relevant Cabinet Members answered questions raised by Councillors on the following issues:

No.	Issue	Questioner	Answered by (and action)
1.	Spot fines for incorrect use of waste bins	Councillor Gunther	Councillor Southworth
2.	Business Rates	Councillor Southworth	Councillor John Smith
3.	Apprenticeships	Councillor Pickstone	Councillor Connolly
4.	Bury Library and Sculpture Centre	Councillor Daly	Councillor Lewis
5.	Council Tax Arrears	Councillor Quinn	Councillor John Smith
6.	Tree Pruning	Councillor O'Hanlon	Councillor Isherwood
7.	Planning Applications and Job Creation	Councillor Nuttall	Councillor Isherwood
8.	Pot Holes and IT use	Councillor Parnell	Councillor Isherwood
9.	Bus Lane Enforcement Fines	Councillor Pickstone	Councillor Isherwood
10.	Sharing Services	Councillor Gartside	Councillor John Smith
11.	Street Safe Schemes	Councillor Jones	Councillor Isherwood
12.	Empty Houses	Councillor O'Hanlon	Councillor Shori

13.	Community Fund	Councillor Rothwell	Councillor Walmsley
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Due to the lack of time to answer questions 10 to 13 inclusive, the Leader gave an undertaking that copies of the answers to those questions will be circulated to all Councillors. The Leader also gave an undertaking to make these available on the Council Web Site.

(b) Oral questions on the work of the Cabinet since the last Council meeting (without Notice)

14	Civic Venues Progress Report	Councillor O'Hanlon	Councillor Lewis
15.	Affordable Accommodation – Social Rented Sector	Councillor Rothwell	Councillor Shori
16.	Independent Review of Civic Venues and Castle Leisure Car Park	Councillor Walker	Councillor Connolly
17.	Creation of Credit Union	Councillor FitzGerald	Councillor Connolly
18.	Expenditure in respect of proposed Sculpture Centre	Councillor Gunther	Councillor Lewis
19.	Civic Venues – consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Councillor Hankey	Councillor Connolly
20.	TUC action in respect of Health Service cuts	Councillor Quinn	Councillor Connolly
21.	Manchester Airport Industrial Centre	Councillor Caserta	Councillor Connolly
22.	Castle Leisure – Diving Facilities	Councillor Daly	Councillor Connolly

C.445 JOINT AUTHORITIES – REPORTS BY THE COUNCIL'S REPRESENTATIVE AND QUESTIONS

- (a) Councillor Connolly, the Council's representative, on the Crime and Police Panel, gave a verbal report on the work of the Committee to all Members of the Council.
- (b) The following questions had been received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.2.

No.	Issue	Questioner	Answered by
1.	Victoria and Shudehill Metrolink Stations	Councillor Pickstone	Councillor Grimshaw (Representative on the Committee for Greater Manchester)

			Transport)
2.	Out of action lifts at stations	Councillor Pickstone	Councillor Grimshaw (Representative on the Committee for Greater Manchester Transport)

C.446 CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL – CONSTITUTION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

A report of the Leader was submitted which sought approval to revised Terms of Reference of the Corporate Parenting Panel and a change of title to "Corporate Parenting Board."

It was moved by Councillor Connolly and seconded by Councillor John Smith that the report be approved and it was

RESOLVED

That the draft Terms of Reference for the Corporate Parenting Panel (CPP) be approved and in future the CPP to be known as the Corporate Parenting Board.

C.447 NOTICES OF MOTION

Three Notices of Motion have been received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12:-

1. Government Announcement regarding School Meals

A motion had been received and set out in the Summons in the names of Councillors O'Hanlon and Pickstone.

"This Council welcomes the announcement by the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg that all pupils in reception and years 1 & 2 will receive a hot school meal free of charge.

Council notes that:

a - Around over 6,800 pupils in Bury schools will be eligible for a hot lunchtime meal.

b - It is estimated that this will save families an average of £437 per year - a £2.5 million annual saving for Bury families (assuming 100% take up of existing free school meals).

c - Pilot schemes have indicated that where meals have been provided pupils have been two months ahead of their peers academically and increased literary and numeracy levels by 5%.

d - Universal free meals have also improved behaviour and concentration levels at schools in the pilot areas.

e - Research by the Children's Food Trust has indicated that up 14% of low income families have failed to make a claim for free school meals.

f - Universal free meals will assist hard pressed families who are struggling to balance the family budget.

Council Resolves:

To work with our local schools and with parents to ensure a successful roll-out of this initiative and in particular to ensure that the provision of appropriate healthy meals.”

It was moved by Councillor Campbell and seconded by Councillor Heneghan as an amendment that the motion be amended by the addition of the following:-

“Although this Council welcomes any initiative to support hard pressed families who are struggling to balance the family budget, this Council believes that this initiative does not come close to addressing the hardship this Government has placed on families in Bury, many of whom are having to resort to food banks, pay day lenders and loan sharks to feed their families. This Council condemns the relentless cuts in funding for Bury and the impact this has on hard pressed families.

The Council would also like to raise its concerns regarding the discussions taking place presently that this initiative would be funded through the ‘pupil premium’. Taking into consideration the Chancellor of the Exchequer announcing in his summer review that there will be a 20% reduction in the Educational Services Grant, this will place further pressures on schools and appears at odds with the Government policy that schools budgets will be ring fenced.”

The amendment on being put with 27 voting for, 15 against and one abstention was declared carried.

The following substantive motion on being put with 27 voting for, 0 against and 16 abstentions was declared carried:-

“This Council welcomes the announcement by the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg that all pupils in reception and years 1 & 2 will receive a hot school meal free of charge.

Council notes that:

a - Around over 6,800 pupils in Bury schools will be eligible for a hot lunchtime meal.

b - It is estimated that this will save families an average of £437 per year - a £2.5 million annual saving for Bury families (assuming 100% take up of existing free school meals).

c - Pilot schemes have indicated that where meals have been provided pupils have been two months ahead of their peers academically and increased literary and numeracy levels by 5%.

d - Universal free meals have also improved behaviour and concentration levels at schools in the pilot areas.

e - Research by the Children’s Food Trust has indicated that up 14% of low income families have failed to make a claim for free school meals.

f - Universal free meals will assist hard pressed families who are struggling to balance the family budget.

Council Resolves:

To work with our local schools and with parents to ensure a successful roll-out of this initiative and in particular to ensure that the provision of appropriate healthy meals.

Although this Council welcomes any initiative to support hard pressed families who are struggling to balance the family budget, this Council believes that this initiative does not come close to addressing the hardship this Government has placed on families in Bury, many of whom are having to resort to food banks, pay day lenders and loan sharks to feed their families. This Council condemns the relentless cuts in funding for Bury and the impact this has on hard pressed families.

The Council would also like to raise its concerns regarding the discussions taking place presently that this initiative would be funded through the 'pupil premium'. Taking into consideration the Chancellor of the Exchequer announcing in his summer review that there will be a 20% reduction in the Educational Services Grant, this will place further pressures on schools and appears at odds with the Government policy that schools budgets will be ring fenced."

2. Royal Mail

A Motion had been received and set out in the Summons in the names of:-

Councillors A Audin, K Audin, M Bailey, D Bailey, N Bayley, J Black, P Bury, G Campbell, S Carter, D M Cassidy, J Columbine, M Connolly, A J Cummings, E FitzGerald, L Fitzwalter, J Frith, J Grimshaw, S Haroon, P Heneghan, T Holt, A Isherwood, M A James, D Jones, J S Lewis, A K Matthews, N A Parnell, A Quinn, K Rothwell, R Shori, A Simpson, S Smith, J Smith, S Southworth, T Tariq and S Walmsley.

It was moved by Councillor Holt and seconded by Councillor John Smith:-

"This Council recognises the hard work carried out by our local postmen and women in delivering the Royal Mail Universal Service Obligation. The Council also recognises the huge changes Royal Mail have made to improve the service, address the pensions deficit and ensure the business is more successful, efficient and profitable.

The Coalition Governments' plans to sell off this national institution will undoubtedly have a detrimental effect on service levels, the uniform pricing structures and impact disproportionality on those living in rural areas. The privatisation could also jeopardise job security and protection of our "posties" conditions of employment.

This Council therefore calls upon our two Constituency MP's to lobby the Government immediately to oppose the Privatisation of the Royal Mail. Our MP's should also ensure the Government works progressively with both Royal Mail and the Unions to further enhance the organisation and the service offered to businesses and the wider public."

It was moved by Councillor Walmsley and seconded by Councillor Parnell that the motion be amended as follows:-

"Paragraph 2:

Delete: "The Coalition Governments' plans to sell this national institution"

Insert: "This Council regrets the Privatisation of Royal Mail which..."

Paragraph 3:

Delete: "oppose the Privatisation of the Royal Mail. Our MP's should also."

The amendment on being put with 27 voting for, 15 against and one abstention was declared carried.

(At this stage in the Proceedings it was moved by Councillor Daly and seconded by Councillor Gunther that the question be now put with 27 voting against, 15 for and one abstention the motion was declared lost.)

The following substantive motion on being put with 27 voting for, 15 against and one abstention was declared carried:-

"This Council recognises the hard work carried out by our local postmen and women in delivering the Royal Mail Universal Service Obligation. The Council also recognises the huge changes Royal Mail have made to improve the service, address the pensions deficit and ensure the business is more successful, efficient and profitable.

This Council regrets the privatisation of Royal Mail which will undoubtedly have a detrimental effect on service levels, the uniform pricing structures and impact disproportionality on those living in rural areas. The privatisation could also jeopardise job security and protection of our "posties" conditions of employment.

This Council therefore calls upon our two Constituency MP's to lobby the Government immediately to ensure the Government works progressively with both Royal Mail and the Unions to further enhance the organisation and the service offered to businesses and the wider public."

3. Broadband Services

A Motion had been received and set out in the Summons in the names of:-

Councillors I Bevan, R Caserta, J Daly, I Gartside, D Gunther, M Hankey, K Hussain, S Nuttall, B Vincent, R Walker, J Walton, M Wiseman and Y Wright.

It was moved by Councillor Gartside and seconded by Councillor Daly:-

"This Council notes the crucial role that high speed broadband now plays in people's everyday lives. However, there are still many rural communities in our Borough that do not have access to high speed broadband.

This Council views this situation as a serious inequality that should be addressed immediately.

Therefore, this Council resolves to push for all rural and any remaining urban areas in our borough that do not have high speed broadband to receive their share of the £990,000 of Government funding held by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities.

This Council also resolves to do everything it can to ensure that high speed broadband is turned on as quickly as possible once the funding has been received from AGMA."

On being put, the motion was unanimously declared carried.

C.448 SCRUTINY REPORTS AND SPECIFIC ITEMS "CALLED IN" BY SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

There were no Scrutiny Review Reports or specific items "called in" by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be considered at this Council meeting.

C.449 QUESTIONS ON THE WORK OF OUTSIDE BODIES OR PARTNERSHIPS

There were no written questions on the work of the outside bodies or partnerships on which the Council is represented, submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.2.

C.450 DELEGATED DECISIONS OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES

There were no written questions asked on the delegated decisions of the Committees or Scrutiny Committee contained in the Digest of Decision No.d 4 (2013-2014).

THE WORSHIPFUL THE MAYOR

(NOTE: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 10.10 pm)

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REPORT FOR DECISION

Agenda Item	
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DECISION OF:	CABINET OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE COUNCIL
DATE:	27 NOVEMBER 2013 4 DECEMBER 2013 11 DECEMBER 2013
SUBJECT:	TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY – MID YEAR REVIEW 2013/14
REPORT FROM:	CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE & CORPORATE AFFAIRS
CONTACT OFFICER:	STEPHEN KENYON, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES (FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY)
TYPE OF DECISION:	COUNCIL
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	The report is within the public domain
SUMMARY:	<p>This mid-year report has been prepared in compliance with CIPFA’s Code of Practice, and covers the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An economic update for the 2013/14 financial year to 30 September 2013 • A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy • The Council’s capital expenditure (prudential indicators) • A review of the Council’s investment portfolio for 2013/14 • A review of the Council’s borrowing strategy for 2013/14 • A review of any debt rescheduling undertaken during 2013/14 • A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2013/14

OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	It is recommended that, in accordance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, the report be noted.
IMPLICATIONS:	
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes
Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	Treasury Management is an integral part of the Council's financial framework and it is essential that the correct strategy is adopted in order to ensure that best value is obtained from the Council's resources and that assets are safeguarded.
Statement by Executive Director of Resources:	There are no additional resource implications. Treasury management activities so far have produced a projected underspending for the year of £0.934m. This will help to support other areas of the Council's budget that are under pressure from user demand or economic conditions.
Equality/Diversity implications:	No
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	Yes
Wards Affected:	All
Scrutiny Interest:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR: STEVE KENYON

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Cabinet Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
No	Yes	N/a	N/a
Scrutiny Commission		Committee	Council
Overview & Scrutiny Committee		Cabinet 27/11/13	11/12/13

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council operates a balanced budget, which broadly means that cash raised during the year will meet cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operations ensure this cash flow is adequately planned, with surplus monies being invested in low risk counterparties, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering optimising investment return.

The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Council's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Council, essentially the longer term cash flow planning to ensure that the Council can meet its capital spending obligations. This management of longer term cash may involve arranging long or short term loans, or using longer term cash flow surpluses, and on occasion any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Council risk or cost objectives.

As a consequence treasury management is defined as:

"The management of the local authority's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks".

- 1.2 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management was adopted by this Council on 24 February 2010.

The primary requirements of the Code are as follows:

1. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Council's treasury management activities.
2. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Council will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
3. Receipt by the full council of an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement - including the Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy - for the year ahead, a **Mid-year Review Report** and an Annual Report (stewardship report) covering activities during the previous year.
4. Delegation by the Council of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions.
5. Delegation by the Council of the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to a specific named body. For this Council the delegated body is: Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

- 1.3 This report fulfils the requirement to produce a mid-year review.

2.0 ECONOMIC UP-DATE

2.1 Economic Performance to date

- 2.1.1 During 2013/14 economic indicators suggested that the economy is gradually recovering, albeit from a low level. After avoiding recession in the first quarter of 2013, with a 0.3% quarterly expansion, the economy grew 0.7% in Q2.

There have been signs of increases in household spending in the summer, with a pick-up in retail sales, mortgages, house prices and new car registrations.

- 2.1.2 The strengthening in economic growth appears to have been reflected in the labour market, with employment rising at a modest pace. Pay growth also increased slightly in April, by 1.0%; well below the rate of inflation causing continuing pressure on household's disposable income.
- 2.1.3 The Bank of England extended its Funding for Lending Scheme (FLS) into 2015 and sharpened the incentives for banks to extend more business funding, particularly to small and medium size enterprises. To date, the mortgage market still appears to have been the biggest beneficiary from the scheme, with mortgage interest rates falling further to new lows. Mortgage approvals by high street banks have risen as have house prices, although they are still well down from the boom years pre 2008.
- 2.1.4 Turning to the fiscal situation, the public borrowing figures continued to be distorted by a number of one-off factors. On an underlying basis, borrowing in Q2 looked to be broadly in line with last year's figures, highlighting the Government's difficulty in reducing borrowing while economic growth was relatively lacklustre. The 2013 Spending Review, covering only 2015/16, made no changes to the headline Government spending plan, and monetary policy was unchanged in advance of the new Bank of England Governor, Mark Carney, arriving. Bank Rate remains at 0.5% and quantitative easing also stayed at £375bn. In August, the MPC provided forward guidance that Bank Rate is unlikely to change until unemployment first falls to 7%, which was not expected until mid 2016. However, 7% is only a point at which the MPC would review Bank Rate, not necessarily take action to change it. The three month to July average rate was 7.7%.
- 2.1.5 CPI inflation (MPC target of 2.0%), fell marginally from a peak of 2.9% in June to 2.7% in September. The Bank of England expects inflation to fall back to 2.0% in 2015.
- 2.1.6 Tensions in the Eurozone eased over the second quarter, but there remained a number of triggers for a renewed flare-up. Economic survey data improved consistently over the first half of the year, pointing to a return to growth in Q2, so ending six quarters of Eurozone recession.

2.2 **Outlook for the next six months of 2013/14**

- 2.2.1 Economic forecasting remains difficult with so many external influences weighing on the UK. Volatility in bond yields is likely during 2013/14 as investor fears and confidence ebb and flow between favouring more risky assets i.e. equities, and safer bonds. Downside risks to UK gilt yields and PwLB rates include:
- A return to weak economic growth in the US, UK and China causing major disappointment to investor and market expectations
 - The potential for a significant increase in negative reactions of populaces in Eurozone countries against austerity programmes, especially in countries with very high unemployment rates e.g. Greece and Spain, which face huge challenges in engineering economic growth to correct their budget deficits on a sustainable basis.
 - The Italian political situation is frail and unstable: the coalition government fell on 29 September
 - Problems in other Eurozone heavily indebted countries (e.g. Cyprus and Portugal) could also generate safe haven flows into UK gilts.

- Monetary policy action failing to stimulate sustainable growth in western economies, especially the Eurozone and Japan.
- Weak growth or recession in the UK’s main trading partners - the EU and US, depressing economic recovery in the UK.
- Geopolitical risks e.g. Syria, Iran, North Korea, which could trigger safe haven flows back into bonds.

2.2.2 Upside risks to UK gilt yields and PWLB rates, especially for longer term PWLB rates include: -

- UK inflation being significantly higher than in the wider EU and US, causing an increase in the inflation premium inherent to gilt yields.
- Increased investor confidence that sustainable robust world economic growth is expected, together with a reduction or end of QE operations in the US, causing a further flow of funds out of bonds into equities.
- A reversal of Sterling’s safe-haven status on a sustainable improvement in financial stresses in the Eurozone.
- In the longer term - a reversal of QE in the UK; this could initially be implemented by allowing gilts held by the Bank to mature without reinvesting in new purchases, followed later by outright sale of gilts currently held.
- Further downgrading by credit rating agencies of the creditworthiness and credit rating of UK Government debt, consequent upon repeated failure to achieve fiscal correction targets and sustained recovery of economic growth, causing the ratio of total Government debt to GDP to rise to levels that provoke major concern.

2.2.3 The overall balance of risks to economic recovery in the UK is now weighted to the upside . However, only time will tell just how long this period of strong economic growth will last, and it remains exposed to vulnerabilities in a number of key areas. The longer run trend is for gilt yields and PWLB rates to rise, due to the high volume of gilt issuance in the UK, and of bond issuance in other major western countries. Near-term, there is some residual risk of further QE if there is a dip in strong growth or if the MPC were to decide to take action to combat the market’s expectations of an early first increase in Bank Rate. If the MPC does takes action to do more QE in order to reverse the rapid increase in market rates, especially in gilt yields and interest rates up to 10 years, such action could cause gilt yields and PWLB rates over the next year or two to significantly undershoot the forecasts in the table below. The tension in the US over passing a federal budget for the new financial year starting on 1 October and raising the debt ceiling in mid October could also see bond yields temporarily dip until agreement is reached between the opposing Republican and Democrat sides. Conversely, the eventual start of tapering by the Fed will cause bond yields to rise.

2.2.4 Capita Asset Service’s (formerly Sector) Interest Rate Forecast

	Sep-13	Dec-13	Mar-14	Jun-14	Sep-14	Dec-14	Mar-15	Jun-15	Sep-15	Dec-15	Mar-16	Jun-16	Sep-16	Dec-16	Mar-17
Bank rate	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.50%	0.75%	1.00%	1.25%
5yr PWLB rate	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.60%	2.70%	2.70%	2.80%	2.80%	2.90%	3.00%	3.20%	3.30%	3.50%	3.60%	3.70%
10yr PWLB rate	3.70%	3.70%	3.70%	3.70%	3.80%	3.80%	3.90%	4.00%	4.10%	4.20%	4.30%	4.40%	4.50%	4.60%	4.60%
25yr PWLB rate	4.40%	4.40%	4.40%	4.40%	4.50%	4.50%	4.60%	4.70%	4.80%	4.90%	5.00%	5.10%	5.10%	5.10%	5.20%
50yr PWLB rate	4.50%	4.40%	4.40%	4.40%	4.50%	4.60%	4.70%	4.80%	4.90%	5.00%	5.10%	5.20%	5.20%	5.20%	5.30%

The Capita Assets Services forecasts above are for PWLB certainty rates.

Capita Assets Services take the view that the unemployment rate is not likely to come down as quickly as the financial markets are currently expecting and that the current MPC view is more realistic. The prospects for any increase in Bank Rate before 2016 are therefore seen as being limited. However, some forecasters are forecasting that the Bank of England is too optimistic as to when the 7% level will be reached and so do not expect the first increase in Bank Rate until spring 2017.

3.0 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY UP-DATE

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2013/14 was approved by the Council on 20 February 2013.

There are no policy changes to the TMSS; the details in this report update the position in the light of the updated economic position and budgetary changes already approved.

4.0 THE COUNCIL'S CAPITAL POSITION (PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS)

This part of the report is structured to update:

- The Council's capital expenditure plans;
- How these plans are being financed;
- The impact of the changes in the capital expenditure plans on the prudential indicators and the underlying need to borrow; and
- Compliance with the limits in place for borrowing activity.

4.1 Prudential Indicator for Capital Expenditure

This table shows the revised estimates for capital expenditure and the changes since the capital programme was agreed at the Budget

Capital Expenditure	2013/14 Original Estimate £m	2013/14 Revised Estimate £m
Non HRA	8,855	16,664*
HRA	7,628	8,226
Total	16,483	24,890

Note* - Increase due to approved slippage.

4.2 Changes to the Prudential Indicators for the Capital Financing Requirement, External Debt and the Operational Boundary

The table shows the CFR, which is the underlying external need to incur borrowing for a capital purpose. It also shows the expected debt position over the period. This is termed the Operational Boundary.

	2013/14 Original Estimate £m	2013/14 Revised Estimate £m
Prudential Indicator - Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)		
CFR – non HRA	129,764	129,514
CFR – HRA	40,107	40,531
Housing Reform Settlement	78,253	78,253
Total CFR	248,124	248,298
Prudential Indicator – External Debt / the Operational Boundary		
Borrowing	189,400	189,400
Other long term liabilities	7,300	7,300
HRA Settlement	79,300	79,300
Total	276,000	276,000

4.3 Limits to Borrowing Activity

The first key control over the treasury activity is a prudential indicator to ensure that over the medium term, net borrowing (borrowings less investments) will only be for a capital purpose. Gross external borrowing should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2013/14 and next two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years. The Council has approved a policy for borrowing in advance of need which will be adhered to if this proves prudent.

The Assistant Director of Resources reports that no difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with this prudential indicator.

A further prudential indicator controls the overall level of borrowing. This is the Authorised Limit which represents the limit beyond which borrowing is prohibited, and needs to be set and revised by Members. It reflects the level of borrowing which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. It is the expected maximum borrowing need with some headroom for unexpected movements. This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

Authorised limit for external debt	2013/14 Original Indicator	2013/14 Revised Indicator
Borrowing	293,800	293,800
Other long term liabilities	7,400	7,400
Total	301,200	301,200

5.0 INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO 2013/14

5.1 In accordance with the Code, it is the Council's priority to ensure security of capital and liquidity, and to obtain an appropriate level of return which is consistent with the Council's risk appetite. As set out in Section 3, it is a very difficult investment market in terms of earning the level of interest rates commonly seen in previous decades. Indeed, the introduction of the Funding for Lending scheme has reduced market investment rates even further. The potential for a prolonging of the Eurozone sovereign debt crisis, and its impact

on banks, prompts a low risk and short term strategy. Given this risk environment, investment returns are likely to remain low.

- 5.2 The Council held £48.2m of investments as at 30 September 2013 (£18.6m at 31 March 2013) and the investment portfolio yield for the first six months of the year is 0.89% against Sector’s suggested investment earnings rate for returns on investments placed, for periods up to three months in 2013/14, of 0.50%.

Type of Investment	£ million
Call Investments (Cash Equivalents)	38.6
- NatWest £34.7m	
- Bank of Scotland £3.9m	
Fixed Investments (Short Term)	9.6
- Bank of Scotland £9.6m	
Total	48.2

- 5.3 The Assistant Director of Resources confirms that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the first six months of 2013/14.
- 5.4 The Council’s budgeted investment return for 2013/14 is £1m, and performance for the year to date is in line with the budget.
- 5.5 The current investment counterparty criteria selection approved in the TMSS is meeting the requirement of the treasury management function.

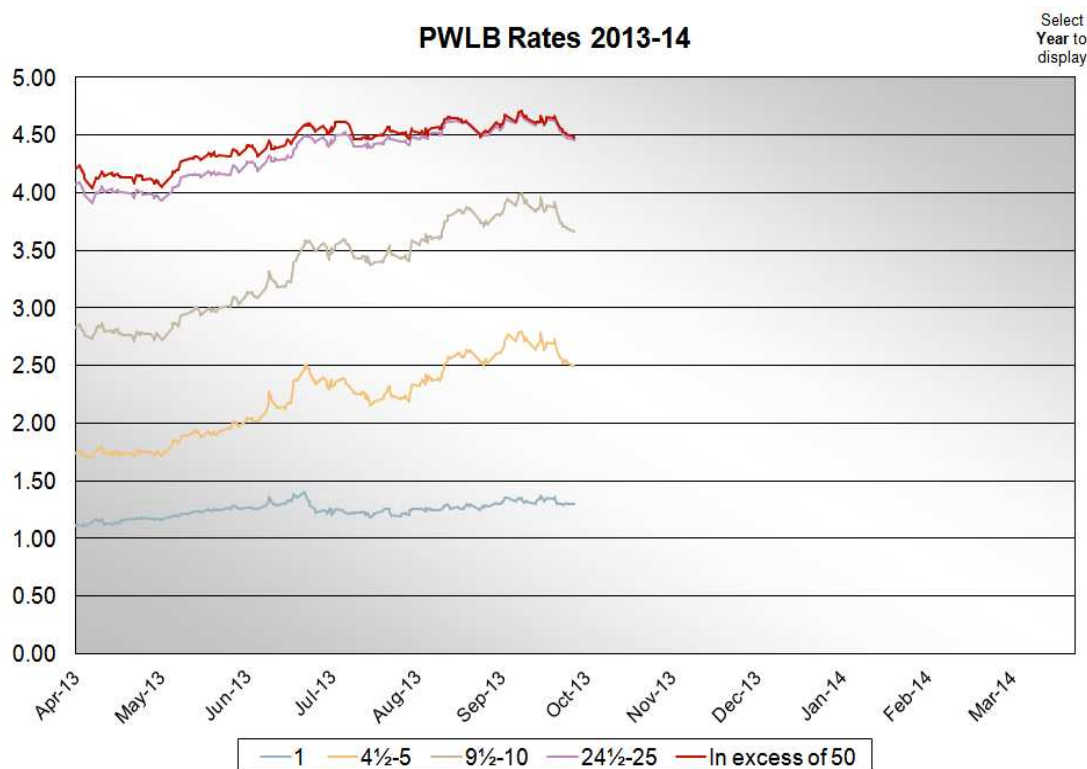
6.0 BORROWING

- 6.1 The Council’s capital financing requirement (CFR) for 2013/14 is £248.3m. The CFR denotes the Council’s underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. If the CFR is positive the Council may borrow from the PWLB or the market (external borrowing) or from internal balances on a temporary basis (internal borrowing). The balance of external and internal borrowing is generally driven by market conditions. The table below shows the Council has borrowings of £209.7m and has utilised £38.6m of cash flow funds in lieu of borrowing. This is a prudent and cost effective approach in the current economic climate but will require ongoing monitoring in the event that upside risk to gilt yields prevail.

	30 th September 2013			Forecast 31 st March 2014		
	Principal		Avg. Rate	Principal		Avg. Rate
	£’000	£’000		£’000	£’000	
Fixed rate						
PWLB Bury	153,862			146,362		
PWLB Airport	4,829			4,078		
Market Bury	46,000	204,691		57,500	207,940	
Variable rate funding						
PWLB Bury	0			0		
Market Bury	0	0		0	0	
Temporary Loans / Bonds	5,003	5,003		2,003	2,003	
Total Debt		209,694	4.43%		209,943	4.15%

Lender	Rate	Amount	Start Date	End Date
Buckinghamshire County Council	1.13%	£5m	05/04/13	05/07/16
Humberside Fire Authority	0.39%	£2m	15/07/13	14/07/14
West Midlands Police	0.68%	£2m	08/08/13	24/07/16
Total		£9m		

- 6.3 The graph below shows the movement in PWLB rates for the first six months of the year to 30.09.13:



7.0 CO-OP BANK

- 7.1 Earlier this year the Co-op Bank, the Council's bankers, saw its credit rating downgraded. Whilst advice, and our own analysis, suggested that there was no increased risk as a result of this it was felt prudent to ensure that any overnight cash balances were reduced to an absolute minimum and this remains the policy. The authority holds no longer-term investments with the bank.
- 7.2 The Co-op have now announced that they intend to withdraw from the local government banking sector in 2015. Whilst this is disappointing, because the Co-op offers an ethical banking service that is in line with the Council's ethos, there is no immediate impact or risk to the Council and, co-incidentally, this date coincides with the end of our current contract with the Bank.
- 7.3 The authority will now begin to work with the Bank and with colleagues from other authorities that use the Co-op to look carefully at options for the way forward. Of course when a major player withdraws from the market then there is the danger that the reduced level of competition can lead to increased costs and so we will be looking at all procurement options including the pros and cons of tendering jointly with other councils.

8.0 DEBT RESCHEDULING

8.1 Debt rescheduling opportunities have been limited in the current economic climate and consequent structure of interest rates. No debt rescheduling was undertaken during the first six months of 2013/14.

Councillor John Smith

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs

List of Background Papers:- None

Contact Details:- Stephen Kenyon, Assistant Director of Resources, Tel 0161 253 5237; E-mail s.kenyon@bury.gov.uk

Corporate Parenting Board

Bury
COUNCIL

**Agenda
Item**

MEETING DATE: 28 November 2013

REPORT TITLE: Annual Report to Council

CONTACT OFFICER: Jackie Gower Assistant Director, Social Care & Safeguarding

1.0 BACKGROUND

This highlights key issues from the year end performance information for Looked After Children and the priorities for the Service for Looked After Children.

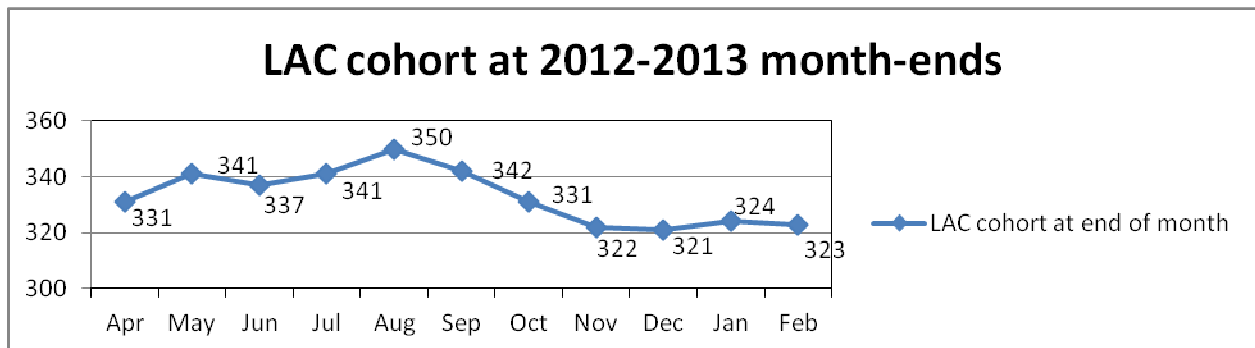
Jackie Gower started as permanent Assistant Director in January 2013, and has focussed on service improvement. A Strategic Lead for Children and Young People in Care and Placement Services Liz Shingler has been appointed. Mandy Williams is acting as Interim in this post until Liz moves into it.

2.0 WHAT IS WORKING WELL

- Achieving legal permanency – We have continued to have a high rate of Adoptions, Special Guardianship and Residence Orders – This is very positive for Bury children. At the end of the year, 18 Bury children were placed with Adopters.
- The duration of Care Proceedings has dropped from 67 weeks to 42, Bury was performing poorly so this improvement is welcome, and we are working under the Family Justice Review new Public Law Outline to reduce this to 26 weeks. This will be better for children as it will reduce drift and delay.
- Placing children near to home is a continued strength and enables children to be better supported and maintain family contact. Bury performs well against our statistical neighbours in this.
- The 'invest to save' has significantly increased the number of in-house Foster Placements that are available for Bury Looked After Children. We have recruited an additional 16 Foster Carers as at 31st October 2013 which means we have 29 new in house Foster Placements. This is a tremendous achievement, and is due to the support of the Corporate Parenting Panel and Councillors.
- The 'invest to save' in Adoption as well as the Adoption Reform Grant has resulted in the approval of 29 Adopters in the last 18 months.

- The total number of children and young people in residential care remains low, at 23; this means that the majority of our children are live within either their own extended Family, or a Foster family.
- Educational outcomes are good. We currently have 10 young people at University.
- Health needs are well met. The CAMHS Outreach team (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) continues to provide expert consultation, advice and training to professionals and carers for children and young people in care. The team works with approximately 25% of the CYPiC population in Bury and is greatly valued by colleagues in social care, education and health.
- We are successful in preventing the majority of young people from being discharged from care too early and in supporting them to acquire independence skills. Those who leave care at 16 and 17 are very few and mainly do so at their own behest. There are currently 22 young people in continuing care, which means they are remaining with their Foster Carers post 18
- We have been working to closely manage and monitor the external placements and Care Leavers Accommodation budgets. The Commissioning Team have ensured that savings are made by being part of regional commissioning for Foster Care and Residential Placements. The overall spend on these placements has decreased due to close management, however we are still over budget.

3.0 WHAT NEEDS TO WORK BETTER AND WHAT ACTION IS IN PLACE TO ADDRESS THIS



- 3.1** Although Bury has a relatively stable number of Looked After Children; the number per head of population is high compared to our extended comparator group average. Our target remains to reduce the overall number of Looked After Children, a figure of 290 children would bring Bury in line with the group average and below that for the North West as a whole.

In order to address this we have set up a formal Legal Planning process to monitor and gate keep requests to initiate Care Proceedings.

We have undertaken specific audits to promote discharges of care orders where they are no longer needed, and to promote the use of Special Guardianship and Residence Orders. We have seen a small decrease in the total to 317 in mid November 2013, however it is too early to tell if this reflects a trend.

We are looking to develop a resource that supports families and diverts children on the 'edge of care', and are looking at a 'support care' model.

- 3.2** The number of children placed with Independent Foster Carers is too high and does not always provide local placements. They do not provide the best value for money.

We are not performing well with regard to placement stability; we need to ensure that Looked After children and young people move in to their permanent placement as soon as possible, and are supported to remain there. In order to achieve this we need to ensure that we have sufficient placements available to make the right match for each individual child according to their needs

The 'invest to save' in Fostering and Adoption is for three years and we will continue to recruit and support in -house Foster Carers and Adopters. We will explore 'payment for skills' for Foster Carers in order to attract Carers for more complex children and teenagers and to compete with Independent Agencies.

We are exploring ways of supporting Carers with SGO's and have a pilot project which funds 0.5 worker, and is funded by the Adoption Reform Grant, we are considering ways to develop this work.

The Corporate Parenting Panel Work Area which covers Placements is developing a Placement Strategy for Looked After Children, and this will detail how we will provide sufficient locally based placements for children and young people in our care, and support and divert those young people on the edge of care. It will also address how to make further financial savings. It will be presented to the Panel early next year.

4.0 HOW HAVE YOU INCLUDED THE VOICE OF THE CHILD/YOUNG PERSON?

- Key priorities reflect the issues that young people confirm are important to them, especially in relation to stability, keeping siblings together and contact with family.
- "Madhouse" participation days continue to be provided in each school holiday - 7 days per year and offer children a collective opportunity to have their voices heard. There is also an annual residential which took place in the Summer holidays and was attended by 13 children this year.
- A high participation rate in reviews of the Care plan is maintained this year and Reviewing Officers are keeping in direct contact with children and young people between their review meetings to ensure that their views remain central.
- Children's Rights Service continues to visit children when they first come into care to ensure that they know who to contact if they need advocacy support.
- The CiCC contributed to the Corporate Parenting Strategy and have set up a Junior CiCC which is attended by 14 children in our Care.
- The CiCC requested that the Annual Awards were reinstated and this took place, planning for the next Awards Ceremony is well underway.
- Care Leavers have contributed to a review of their Service.

5.0 IS ANY ACTION REQUIRED FROM CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL

1. Corporate Parenting Board approve the content of the report.
2. To ensure the Annual report is considered at the Full Council meeting held on Wednesday 11th December 2013.

List of/Link to Background Papers : Children's Social Care Performance Information Report 2012/13

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[Report Author]

COUNCIL MEETING
11 DECEMBER 2013
LEADER'S STATEMENT

Madam Mayor, Members and Officers of the Council, there has been two meetings of the Cabinet since the last meeting of the Council.

Broad Band

The Cabinet were pleased to agree Bury's share in a £14m investment across Greater Manchester which ensures nearly 100% broadband coverage across a number of key areas in the Borough, notably:

- Bradley Fold
- Bury Freetown
- Bury Town Centre (Chamberhall)
- Pilsworth
- Radcliffe Town Centre
- Affetside
- Ainsworth

Greater Manchester's ambition is to become one of the world's top 20 digital cities by 2020. To meet this ambition all of the AGMA Leaders have signed up and provided financial support to ensure both residents and business are connected to the world wide web with access to superfast download speeds of up to (30 Mega bits per second) not sure that all that means other than it good news all round. Eight of the 10 Districts are contributing £312,000 which will assist in creating new jobs and provide a support framework for mature and start up businesses both in rural and inner urban areas. Manchester and Salford have a separate scheme via a different funding route.

Tobacco Control Strategy

I would ask Members to note this statistic. Each year in Bury it is estimated that smoking costs our local public services over £50m in costs through littering; domestic fires; medical treatments; sickness absence days; the effects of passive smoking and so on.

The purpose of the strategy is to engage with our partners to drive down tobacco use and therefore reduce health inequalities and poverty amongst the population of Bury.

With limited resources available, the strategy aims to ensure that our tobacco crusade is a priority for everyone in Bury.

Our three priorities are:

1. Enabling smokers in Bury who want to quit, to be able to quit with the right support.
2. Tackling the accessibility of tobacco products for young people, particularly in relation to illegal and illicit tobacco, underage sales and niche products.
3. Protecting children, families and communities from the effects of second-hand smoke.

Month 6 Financial Monitoring Report

I was pleased to see the level of overspending is coming down and let's not forget the context of this in so far as we have already cut budgets by £28 m. The position at month 6 compared with the same period last shows that the current projection is for an overspend of £0.696m on the General Fund (compared to £1.266m at the same time last year).

We of course remain vigilant and determined to manage the overspend in the face of severe demand pressures in Childrens and Adult Services.

Best of Bury Business Awards

Remember the date 22 November 2013 folks, it was the date of the first ever Bury Business Awards ceremony to celebrate and showcase the important contribution local businesses make in the life and well-being of residents in our Borough.

I, along with the Mayor were very proud to be there to spend a most marvellous and inspiring afternoon as award after award was presented to 17 businesses and where lots of Highly Commended and Commended certificated also were awarded.

The buzz in the room was electric, the praise the Council received for making these awards a reality proves we really are walking the walk to build a strong economy here in Bury.

Grace's Place

It was my privilege along with the Mayor to attend the Launch of a £1m funding appeal to create Bury's first ever Children's Hospice, which would see children from not only from Bury but Rochdale, Heywood and Oldham being able to access services, many at a time of great need or crisis.

I hope we all do what we can to promote this appeal and we have placed links on our web site to encourage visitors to the web site to make a donation.

LGA Peer Review

As Members will know, I agreed to a Peer Review Challenge of the Council conducted by the Local Government Association.

I wanted to do this in the spirit of our commitment to openness and transparency. When I announced this review at the Council meeting in September I promised the report would be published for all to see. Whilst I await the full report I am pleased to give Members some headlines:

The review found there is strong and effective Leader and Chief Executive, working in partnership and the Council appreciates and recognises the scale of the political and financial challenges.

The Council's senior partners in Team Bury value and actively support the Wider Leadership Board and are engaged in leadership and governance of Greater Manchester combined authority (AGMA);

The group were impressed with Dual mandate for Executive Directors which works well and is suited to Bury's circumstances along with political structures that allow wider engagement of frontline members in cabinet portfolio and budget setting processes;

The Council are clear about key priorities, arising from public consultation and widely known amongst frontline staff and partners; and have been successful at protecting frontline services from budget reduction to date and where Bury widely regarded by residents, partners and regionally as well cared for;

On finance the Council has a good level of general balances; substantial earmarked reserves and significant provisions; history of delivering on budget overall where the devolved financial model works well; creating ownership; strong sense of autonomy to manage budgets; encourages managed risk taking and where Star chamber process provides wider visibility and moderation of departments

There are, of course, areas where we can do better and an action plan will be brought to Cabinet in due course.

Increments

Madam Mayor, just recently I was pleased to announce the re-instatement of increments for affected staff which is a small gesture after a period of unprecedented changes to their terms and conditions.

All Members need to be aware, one of the 'stand out' comments from the LGA Peer Review was the commitment from our staff and their loyalty to Bury despite the very many challenges they have faced.

I have to say I wasn't surprised to hear these positive comments because on this side of the Chamber we have always valued our staff and know what important and valuable jobs they do day in day out for our residents. Its shame all local councillors don't share those sentiments.

New Housing Office

On Monday I was pleased to attend with the Mayor the formal opening of the new Housing Reception facility at the Town Hall. In customer care terms it's a vision of the future. I would strongly recommend all Members to pop in to see and experience the new facilities. Anyone who has visited previously will not recognise it. It is a splendid example of a listening council where many of the new features have come from what customers have told us they want.

It's a bright and user friendly space with an area set aside for children and subtle colours and even a bubble feature to create a calming atmosphere. A new web site called 'Ask B' has been created as a one stop shop for new applicants and those that simply what information has also been launched.

Bury College

We all know how good the College is in looking after its many thousands of students. In particular the challenges in providing many hundreds of meals from their four restaurants all staffed by Catering students

Well, all that hard work has paid with Bury College being the first college in Greater Manchester to receive a Commitment Award an Achievement Award and Excellence Award for their catering services. To win this top prize the judges were impressed to see that the College provides snacks that are low in sugar and salt, reduces total salt used, markets healthier options and shows a commitment to recycling.

Children and Young People Now Awards.

I want to congratulate Early Break, one our leading voluntary groups, where they were recently shortlisted for three national awards. I have just heard that Early Break have done very well by winning the Health and Well Being Award. In addition, the team were highly commended in the Early Intervention Programme category.

Adult Learning

I am sure all Members will join me in congratulating Gill Hughes and her wonderful Adult Learning Service Team who have recently be audited as part of the work the service undertakes for Open Awards.

The Auditor heaped praise on the work of the team in which he highlighted the "Excellent management and quality assurance of course programmes" and that " the overall management, administration and quality assurance/improvement of Open Awards course programmes is outstanding".

Furthermore, at the end of his visit, the Auditor said that he intends to invite other centres to contact Bury regarding good practice as we are in the **top five** of the hundreds of providers he is responsible for.

Madam Mayor that concludes my statement.

End

Council Meeting – 11 December 2013

Questions:-

The Leader of the Council

Question running order:

1st: Labour

2nd: Liberal Democrat

3rd: Conservative

1. Councillor Jones

With so many libraries closing around the country, disproportionately so in the North, can the Leader provide a comparison of the situation in Bury with the other AGMA Authorities?

A. Thank you Councillor Jones. I'm sure you are aware that despite the huge cuts in funding that the library service has had and continues to manage, we are proud to confirm that all 17 of Bury's libraries will remain open for business and with their opening hours intact. We have contacted local authorities across the region and can confirm that:

- **Tameside: closed 5 libraries in October 2012.**
- **Bolton: Closed 5 libraries between January to April 2012.**
- **Liverpool: Closed 3 libraries from April 1st 2012.**
- **Cheshire West and Chester: One library closed last year.**
- **Warrington: Mobile library service closed**

2. Councillor Pickstone

The Leader will no doubt be aware of the proposals for a Greater Manchester Smart Motorway which will affect the M62 and M60 as it passes through our Borough. Will he join with me in asking the Highways Agency to consider environmental measures which will reduce the impact of additional traffic on immediately neighbouring communities, particularly in Simister, Whitefield and Prestwich?

A. As part of a consultation on Phase 1 of the Manchester Smart Motorways Scheme, the Highways Agency consultants have submitted an Environmental Assessment to the council for consideration. This extensive document looks in detail at the likely impacts of the scheme on the local environment. Our officers will assess this document and make any necessary comments to the Highways Agency before the deadline of 20th December 2013.

The details of Phase 2 of this scheme are still to be confirmed and it is likely that this phase will be considered a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and would require an application to the planning inspectorate for a Development Consent Order. Consultation with statutory environmental bodies, local authorities and the public is a major component of the process for obtaining a Development Consent Order.

3. Councillor Bevan

Can the Leader of the Council confirm what actions the Council took to support the small businesses in the Borough on Small Business Saturday on 7 December 2013?

A. Town Centres Business Support supported Small Business Saturday through distribution of information via social media streams and direct emails and meetings with local business groups throughout the borough. We also encouraged local businesses to take part, register and put on special in-store activities/offers.

Since its conception, the @TownCentresTeam twitter handle has promoted and supported small businesses with information on how they can help themselves with promotion, funding, finances, government legislation etc., on a continued effort throughout the year. This is mirrored with other social media channels and retweeted through the various streams monitored/updated by Business Support.

This is in addition to global emails to over 8,000+ Bury Council employees and working with the local press/media to enhance exposure.

The Council also continues to support the borough's businesses in many other ways such as through the new virtual Business Engagement Team, through our sponsorship of the Best of Bury business awards and by opening up our procurement procedures to make it easier for Bury businesses win contracts with the Council.

We must be doing something right because the Government has recently given Bury Council a national award for being the Best Council to Do Business With.

4. Councillor Cummings

Could the Leader tell us how much money has been invested in Radcliffe lately?

A. Bury Council is committed to investing in all parts of the borough and I am proud that Radcliffe is no exception.

Whilst the party opposite promised much and delivered little in Radcliffe, I am delighted that this Labour administration has put its money where its mouth is.

We have just embarked on an exciting multi-million pound regeneration project in Radcliffe Town Centre, which will deliver a refurbished Market Hall, new public toilets, a revamped bus terminus and a new retail scheme. A planning application for the Market Hall is to be submitted next week and it is anticipated that the works will start as early as next March.

I'm also pleased to say that myself and the MP for Bury South, Ivan Lewis, will soon be meeting with Sir Michael Heller chairman of London and Associated Properties about investment opportunities in Radcliffe.

Although Radcliffe's excellent bid for Portas Programme monies was ultimately unsuccessful, the Council has nonetheless pledged £10,000 of its own money to the Radcliffe Town Team.

The Team is currently reviewing its options for investment, although I understand that there is a preference for works which will compliment the refurbishment of the Market Hall, to maximise the impact of the expenditure.

Radcliffe has a heritage to be proud of and the Council has worked hard to secure an investment of £250,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to investigate and celebrate the surviving medieval core of the town, which is centred on Radcliffe Tower, St Mary's church and the Tithebarn. The contribution of volunteers has been immense and I am thrilled that the project has engendered such local interest and pride.

In the field of education, the Council has recently spent £635,000 refurbishing and repairing four primary schools in Radcliffe. This is in addition to the £12m spent on building the new Millwood Special School which opened its doors last year and has proven to be an enormous success, with a recent OFSTED inspection judging all areas of the school to be outstanding.

Members will recall that the Council has also approved £617,000 to part fund the Radcliffe empty property pilot. In partnership with Six Town Housing the strategy will involve a total investment of £3m in order to bring around 30 private sector properties back into use and available for affordable rent over the next two years. The project will target properties that have been empty for at least six months and are causing the greatest negative impact.

The Council has also secured £950,000 to create a pioneering scheme which will improve the quality of life for people with dementia. The work will be carried out at Rose Court, bringing yet more much needed employment into the town.

We should also not forget that last year saw the completion of the £6m Red Bank extra care facility in Radcliffe. This award winning scheme has been designed to provide much needed affordable housing into the town by providing 40 independent apartments for older people requiring support.

Finally, sport and leisure within Radcliffe is also benefitting from the Council's spending priorities:

- **There has been a £13,000 enhancement to Close Park outdoor gym and to the Bolton Road Park outdoor table tennis facility**
- **£85,000 has been spent on play area improvements at Coronation Park, Bright Street, Snape Street, Bolton Road Park and Close Park**
- **Tennis courts have been refurbished at Close Park and Bolton Road Park at a cost of £10,000**
- **£13,000 will shortly be spent on the refurbishment of the Bolton Road ball zone.**

At a time when the Council is rising to the challenge of the most severe Government spending cuts in living memory, the examples that I have just given add up to a total investment of over £25m which must surely make it absolutely clear to everyone that this Labour administration sees Radcliffe as being a worthwhile priority for investment.

5. Councillor O'Hanlon

Would the Leader join with me in welcoming the announcement by the Coalition Government of a 50% discount in Business Rates to encourage businesses to occupy vacant town centre shops? What steps will the Authority take to maximise the benefit of this initiative for our town centres?

A. Town centres have been decimated by the recession created by this Government's woeful economic policies and so, yes, I do welcome the very belated support that was announced in the Autumn Statement. I also welcome the announcement that at long last the Government are going to take action on the shambolic appeals system that they have presided over and which has caused untold suffering and unnecessary expense for businesses up and down the country.

I am also delighted that the resolution passed by this Council in September 2013 calling on the Government to extend small business rate relief has been heard in Whitehall and that the Chancellor has done exactly what the Council asked him to do.

Of course, I will be even happier when I see evidence that these measures have been fully funded by the Government in a way that means that Bury's businesses and taxpayers will not be unfairly disadvantaged in the way that we normally are from the distribution of Government funding.

Bury Council is committed to helping businesses in any way that we can, as evidenced by our recent national award as one of the best Councils to do business with, and so we will be very happy to promote the new relief through our contacts with the managers of the Rock, Millgate and Longfield centres, through the local Chamber of Commerce, the Business Growth Hub, local estate agents, Township Forums, local traders' groups, the Council's own Business Engagement Group and New Economy to name but a few.

6. Councillor Walker

Can the Leader advise us how much income has been generated by introducing Sunday car parking charges in Bury Town Centre and how many fines have been levied on those who have not paid and displayed? What have been the staffing costs of supervising Sunday parking?

A. £25,500 income has been generated from Sunday charging. Sunday parking is still being monitored by the existing Sunday enforcement resources who report that there is major compliance for Sunday parking. Therefore no penalty charge notices have been issued to date and there have been no additional staffing costs.

7. Councillor Black

What has the response been to council's campaign to encourage residents to downsize their grey bins from 240 litre to the smaller 140 litre?

A. From January 140 litre grey bins have been offered FOC to residents as an alternative to paying £25 for a new or replacement 240 litre bin.

Between January 01 and December 06 x3272 140 litre grey bins and x446 240 litre grey bins have been issued to residents in the form of new or replacement bins.

8. Councillor Pickstone

Could the Leader please inform members how many hours of adult home care was provided in the last two years and estimated for the current year? Could the figures be separated for home care paid for by the authority and that paid for by the recipient?

A. This response covers all adults 18+, not just older people 65+.

The in-house home care service was transformed to become a specialist Reablement Service during 2010/11. As a consequence, the vast majority of home care is now commissioned by the Council and provided by external providers.

The total hours of domiciliary care delivered during the past 2 years were:

2011/12 – 192,700 hours

2012/13 – 253,900 hours

This is a 32% increase between the two years.

The estimate of the number of hours for the full year 2013/14 is 304,000 hours, an increase of approx 20% over 2012/13.

The Council commissions home care for customers with an assessed need under Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) eligibility, and pays for this under its statutory duty of care.

The Council does not currently keep records in respect of self funders who would approach providers directly and pay themselves for the care they receive. However, customers do contribute towards the cost of their care package – in respect of home care this stood at approximately 38% customer contribution during 2012/13.

9. Councillor Vincent

This Council has received £400,000 by way of an extra dividend from Manchester Airport. This money was an unexpected windfall. Can the Leader of the Council confirm what it has been spent on, or what the Council propose to invest the money in?

A. The additional dividend was earned as a result of the innovative work done by the Labour led Association of Greater Manchester Authorities to bring about a deal to acquire Stansted Airport. This deal was aimed at increasing the profitability of Manchester Airport Group (MAG) and which in turn was aimed at increasing the value of our taxpayers' investment in MAG whilst also increasing the return that we earn from that investment.

Bury Council has taken a very prudent approach to the use of the additional income and we have decided to bring it into our revenue budget and use it to help offset the demand pressures that our services face and to go some small way towards offsetting the £38m that we have had to cut from our budget thanks to the actions of the coalition Government.

Of course this contrasts with the reckless suggestion from the party opposite that we should spend the money on vote-winning schemes without troubling ourselves to think of the future.

10. Councillor Southworth

Last year a large sum of money was given to fund a recruiting programme for new Foster Carers in order to limit the need to use Independent Fostering Agencies and Out of Borough placements. Can you please update me on how effective this has been, how many extra Foster Carers have been recruited and how, as a result, the use of more expensive placements has been reduced?

A. Thank you for your question Councillor Southworth.

The Invest to Save has had a very positive impact on the fostering service. We have used the financial investment and new staff team to really push forward the need for Bury Children to be placed with Bury Foster Carers. Since April 2013 we have increased our general foster carer households by 16 and currently have 10 households in assessment.

We are booking up for February's 2014 training and have three households already booked on. We have run training every two months since the initial investment in September 2012 with the first applicants being approved in April 2013. These training groups are always full. Our initial inquiries have soared and we are hitting our target of 21 initial enquiries each month, averaging 21.5 each month.

Our initial target was to increase our baseline of foster carers by 10 households by 31st March 2014. We are well on track to exceed this target. We continue to market our service within in Bury. We have monthly ads in local papers, we have held a number of community events across the borough, going out and engaging with the public and talking about the fostering task.

I am also pleased to confirm that all parties on the Council have agreed to include fostering advertising on campaign material and newsletters. We are eagerly awaiting our new joint fostering and adoption website which will offer an efficient and informative service to existing foster carers and to people interested in fostering.

In budget terms we are making positive progress. Although our budget is still overspending our agency placement spending has reduced £800k compared with last year, reflecting the improvement in our fostering capacity and a range of other initiatives. We are working on a further invest to save which will look at how we attract foster carers for older children and those with

additional needs, who we currently need to place in Independent Placements or residential provision.

In conclusion we are delighted with how the initiative is going and the success it is having. I would like to thank the opposition parties for their support. Getting Bury carers for Bury children not only saves money but greatly improves their life chances.

11. Councillor O'Hanlon

Could the Leader please inform members of the level of preparation of the Authority for winter weather? Has the Council been able to provide additional grit bins for areas that need them?

A. Preparations have been made ready for the winter maintenance service that commences in early November. Salt levels for road gritting have been restocked. The 5 gritting vehicles are in place at Bolton from where we work in partnership with Bolton Council. In advance of any wintry weather salt bins will be restocked. So far this winter the gritters have been out on 6 occasions.

The salt bin locations for this winter season have been decided. We do not have the resources to provide salt bins in every road or street that isn't on a gritting route. We have to limit the number of bins we provide so that critically we are able to maintain them at times of most need. As a result we are unable to provide any more salt bins.

12. Councillor Daly

What is the Council doing to address the problem of unlawful, obstructive and sometimes dangerous parking outside schools in the Borough when children are being picked up at the end of the school day?

A. A number of primary schools have now signed up to the "Safer Parking Charter" which involves banners being displayed outside schools to highlight the issue to parents.

Furthermore Parking Services regularly request additional enforcement by NSL outside schools at both ends of the day.

A large amount of schools are now on the additional enforcement list which is causing resource problems in attending all the schools on a regular basis.

However enforcement is difficult as many of the restrictions near schools require an observation period before a penalty charge notice can be issued.

13. Councillor Simpson

I understand that the Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety has worked with the Police and Crime Commissioner to establish a small fund for voluntary and community groups across the borough – please can you provide further details on this?

A. Bury has been allocated £10,000 from the Police Property Act Fund, and voluntary groups can bid for some of this money to help them in their work. Organisations must demonstrate how the project to be funded meets the priorities in the Police Crime Plan for Greater Manchester and the Local Township Plans in Bury focusing on one or more of the following themes:

- **Driving Down Crime**
- **Building and Strengthening Partnership work**
- **Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour**
- **Protecting Vulnerable People**
- **Putting Victims at the Centre**
- **Maintaining Public Safety**
- **Supporting Individuals Vulnerable to Violent Extremism and Serious Crime**

Individual grants of up to £500 are available and funding decisions will be made by a panel which will include the Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety, Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities and Community Safety, Chief Officer of Bury Third Sector Development Agency, Member of Greater Manchester Police and a Member Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.

Application forms can be requested from Liz Saunders in the Communities team.

14. Councillor Bevan

Can the Leader of the Council update Ramsbottom Members regarding the Council's consultations with the owners of the former Mondi Paper Mill site on Bridge Street, Ramsbottom in terms of the potential future development of the land?

A. There has been no formal approach to the Council in relation to the redevelopment of this site since April 2013, where the land owner sought views on the redevelopment of the site for a mixed use scheme. Pre-application proposals are confidential and therefore the details of the proposals are commercially sensitive and cannot be released. However, it is understood that the site is once more on the market.

15. Councillor Carter

Can the Leader please give an update on how many 20 mph zones have been completed?

A. A total of eleven 20mph speed limit schemes are substantially complete and the associated Traffic Regulation Orders for these are all operative. Works on site have already commenced on a further four schemes and Traffic Regulation Orders for these will become operative at the earliest opportunity.

16. Councillor Daly

In Bury we have at least 8 breweries, more per head than London. What can the Council do to support this thriving local industry and to make Bury the real ale capital of Britain?

A. It is good news to learn of a growing SME sector in our Borough. Bury Council had worked hard to build relationships with our local business community. We will continue to build those relationships by offering a first point of contact for business leaders through our Business Engagement Team. This team has been pulled together from areas of the Council that have contact with our local business community. This piece of work has been developed on the back of our visits to businesses over the last 2 years. A key part of this work is to develop a streamlined facility to get key business related messages out to our small, medium and large businesses and indeed to those residents who are on the verge of their Business Start Up journey. At a national and regional level there is a myriad of support for business to start up, to grow, to invest and to access support. We will be promoting the Business Growth Hub, Access to Finance, New Enterprise Allowance, Start Up Support, Digital Support , support in employing young people and any other information advice and guidance that is out there. One of our officers has recently visited a small independent brewery to share information about the financial incentives offered for those small businesses that want to employ a young person.

17. Councillor Stella Smith

Could the Leader tell us how many food banks are now operating in Bury?

A. In a modern society it is shameful that the poorest and most vulnerable members of society have been treated so badly by the coalition Government that reliance on food banks has tripled over the last year alone. The Trussell Trust, which runs 400 food banks across the UK, has handed out supplies to more than 350,000 people between April and September this year. Even more scandalous is the fact that a third of those being helped were children, and a third needed food following a delay in the payment of benefits. Bury's Poverty Strategy (2013-2016) sets out our approach to tackling pockets of poverty that exist within the borough, including food poverty. This is within the context of a challenging economic climate and welfare reform. The Poverty Strategy is discussed and reported to Bury's Welfare Reform Board which is the over-arching body tasked with developing Bury's approach to tackling the implications of the Government's Welfare reform agenda.

The Welfare Reform Board has received progress updates regarding the valuable work of the Community Food Action Group which has been meeting in Bury since March 2013 with the following aims;

"To work in partnership to alleviate food poverty in our Borough"

Members of this group include Bury Council representatives, Porch Boxes, Mosses Centre, Churches Together, Christians Against Poverty, Calico (Bury Rough Sleepers project), Rotary, Incredible Edible, Caritas and others. The Group has established a network in order to explore and map out long-term needs, gather information about what is on offer, and publicise this appropriately.

Although the Porch Box scheme is the one widely recognised and valued “food parcel” provider in Bury, the group have also identified a number of other organisations that regularly give food parcels, and others that provide free or heavily subsidised hot meals on a regular basis.

A Food Mapping exercise has been carried out and a full list of providers is now available to agencies to point people in the right direction. The list is still work in progress as the group are constantly finding new groups or organisations offering help to people in Bury. Members can access a copy of this list by contacting Cindy Lowthian, Communities Manager.

We are currently working with our partners on the Welfare Reform Board to explore opportunities to fund a temporary role to further help co-ordinate work on food poverty in the Borough. The aim would be for this role to work within the Bury Support Fund Team.

18. Councillor Parnell

Would the Leader like to comment on the recent award to Bury Hospice as Community Impact Best in Class at the inaugural Made In Bury Business Awards 2013, and to congratulate all the community finalists for the tremendous contribution our community groups make to the lives of the borough’s residents.

A. The inaugural Made In Bury Business Awards held on Friday 22 November was a fantastic success. The room was buzzing with excitement and it was quite breathtaking to witness the drive and commitment that our business community have for their individual businesses and for our town and its people. The award to Bury Hospice was well deserved and they in turn thanked the community of Bury for supporting them and their important work. Indeed we should thank all our community groups for their role in developing and maintaining strong and safe communities. The Made in Bury branding was adopted from the work done to engage communities to feel proud and connected to our townships. We thought that it was crucial to take that branding and embrace it with our business communities as well.

19. Councillor Fitzwalter

Could the Leader of the Council please provide an update on the progress made by the Digital Inclusion Steering Group, which is a joint council trade union initiative, committed “to support all people in Bury in their efforts to access and use the internet?”

A. The Council recognises that people’s expectations about how they access our services is changing and we also know that one way of tackling the crippling effect of the coalition Government’s cuts is to move towards ‘digital by default’ for the provision of relevant services.

However it is essential that we take steps to ensure that this doesn’t mean that people are excluded from accessing services this way. For that reason, working in partnership with Unison, the Council has established a Digital Inclusion Steering Group which I am very proud to Chair.

The Group originally consisted of representatives from all front-facing Council services, Unison and our Organisational Development team but we have now extended the Group's membership and invited Six Town Housing, Job Centre Plus and the Citizen's Advice Bureau to join us.

We have recently appointed a graduate on a fixed-term contract to manage and implement the project and his first task has been to carry out a survey to determine levels of inclusion among Bury Council staff. The results of the survey will allow us to take targeted action to address any internal exclusion issues and, as the borough's largest employer, this in turn should begin to address wider exclusion issues.

We are also undertaking a borough-wide mapping exercise to identify all internet access points in Bury, including those provided by the Council, the 3rd sector, DWP and other public and private sector partners. Out of this we will be able to highlight areas and groups of residents who may be digitally excluded again allowing us to take targeted action to close any gaps

The project will be launched formally in January with a partner conference that will aim to attract delegates from all parts of the borough and from as many agencies as possible.

I am particularly pleased that this work is being carried out in partnership with Unison who have sourced some funding to assist the project. In addition Unison Learning Reps will be available to help strengthen digital inclusion amongst Bury Council staff.

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Briefing note for Cllr Tony Cummings, Bury Council meeting, 11th
December 2013

GMWDA Update

The main challenge for the Authority in recent months has been to identify potential budget savings to reduce the levy payments for Districts, and the Authority has agreed to a 12.5% saving target with AGMA, the same as that faced by Bury.

This is a particularly challenging target for the Authority in the short term, due to the nature of the Contract, which represents over 95% of the Authority's total spending. Despite the relatively fixed nature of the Contract, the Authority has begun to explore some difficult decisions in this area to maximise the savings that can be delivered in the short term. Early in the New Year, the Authority aims to set out how it will provide Districts with a 0% levy increase in 2014/15, and hopefully a levy reduction in 2015/16.

Despite the budget pressures, the focus continues to be to drive up recycling to 50% by 2015/16, increase landfill diversion to at least 75% by 2015/16, thereby reducing the financial and environmental burdens of dealing with the 1.1 million tonnes of waste the conurbation produces each year.

Bury's recycling performance has continuously improved - from 25.8% in 2010/11 to 43% last year. For 2013 (to October), Bury's recycling rate is up to 45.25%. This ranks Bury third out of the nine Greater Manchester Authorities. (*Stockport and Trafford currently lead the nine Authorities, with recycling rates of 64% and 57% from April 2013 to the end of October 2013.*)

The last couple of years have been strong for the Authority overall, with the conurbation-wide recycling rate now at 44.33% from April 2013 to October 2013, with landfill diversion at 53% in the same period. *(For comparison, these figures were 27% and 37% respectively in 2006/2007, before the start of the Contract.)*

Whilst there has been some delay in finalising construction of the thermal power station at Runcorn this facility will begin commissioning in the next month, and our studies indicate that once online, the facility will boost landfill diversion. This represents a considerable environmental benefit in reducing carbon dioxide in Greater Manchester.

Other initiatives to report are:-

The 'our aim is zero waste' campaign to reduce the amount of waste landfilled. Big improvements in performance both overall and for Bury in particular, show that not only are the new facilities that have been constructed having a benefit, but also that the changes in collection practices and the communications campaigns that have been run have had a great effect.

The new In-Vessel Composting facility at Salford Road, Over Hulton in Bolton has been completed, and most of Bury's green and food waste is now processed at this facility. All of the facilities to which Bury delivers its waste are now completed, and at this point the Authority is working with its contractor to fully optimise the facilities to deliver the strongest possible performance.

Significant work is being put into improving recycling in low-performing areas - for example the EU-funded LIFE+ project. This project secured over half a million pounds of funding to deliver communications campaigns specifically targeted at low-performing areas across Greater Manchester. So far, in Bury this project has

established "recycling ambassadors" in flats across Bury ; a recycling rewards campaign in Radcliffe and a culture-based campaign with the Jinnah Centre and with Asian communities around the town centre that will run until mid-January 2014.

However, the biggest gains can be made through improving the engagement with local residents to make them enthusiastic and accurate recyclers all of the time. Of course, as our performance in recycling shows, many residents of Bury already are enthusiastic and accurate recyclers, but we still only capture just over half of the potential recycle that is put out each week in the four bins. The enthusiasm for recycling in Bury is demonstrated by the sales of the Revive compost, which is made from the green and food waste delivered to the IVC facilities. This is an excellent demonstration for residents of the beneficial products that can come out of their efforts to recycle.

It is also hoped that in 2015 the more successful campaigns that were not run in Bury can be repeated here, to help to further boost recycling.

In summary, by using our sustainable waste management facilities to their maximum potential and fully engaging the public in recycling, it is expected that Greater Manchester can achieve 50% recycling and 90% landfill diversion by 2015/16; which would be an achievement that everyone in Greater Manchester could be proud of. This will also generate significant savings, which can be passed through to Districts in the form of lower levies, so pushing recycling and landfill diversion continues to make sound financial sense.

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COUNCIL

11 DECEMBER 2013

JOINT AUTHORITY QUESTIONS

Transport for Greater Manchester

Councillor Pickstone

Transport for Greater Manchester

Is the Authority's representative on the Transport for Greater Manchester Committee aware of the 400+ signature petition which has recently been submitted to T4GM protesting about the re-routing of the 154 bus service? What can be done to address the travel needs of people who now have no direct public transport options between the Bury Old Road areas of Prestwich and Pilsworth?

(Councillor Noel Bayley to respond)

Transport for Greater Manchester has received the petition that has been submitted.

The subsidised service 154 operates Monday to Saturday hourly daytime and is operated by First. Transport for Greater Manchester officers have been concerned about punctuality problems on this service for some time and initial changes were made in January 2013 when the service was revised to no longer call into Tesco, Cheetham Hill. Due to continuing punctuality problems, TfGM officers carried out further work with First to look at further options for addressing these.

Service 92 between Bury and Manchester, which operates commercially Monday to Saturday daytime half hourly, was revised to serve Pilsworth in January 2013 following representations from local Councillors and Whitefield Township Forum. This service covers a significant proportion of the route previously served by the 154. Therefore it was decided that service 154 be re-routed from Monday 2 September to operate directly via Manchester

Road and Bury New Road to Stanley Road and Moss Lane then as the previous route via Ribble Drive.

Passengers to/from Pilsworth to Prestwich can use service 92 to Besses o' the Barn, where they can change to high frequency service 135 via Bury Old Road or alternatively change at Prestwich Centre for service 154.

For hospital journeys, passengers can use service 92 to Bury Interchange or Besses o' the Barn before using Metrolink to visit the North Manchester General Hospital.

A survey carried out before the changes were made showed that an average of one unique passenger per trip was affected by the changes. Whilst we do not wish to inconvenience residents, in an era of reduced public finances, this is a rational decision to maintain costs and the performance of the network as a whole.

Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority

Could the Authority's representative on the Waste Disposal Authority please outline what options the Authority is currently considering about the closure of Household Waste Disposal facilities in the forthcoming financial year?

(Councillor Cummings to respond)

Thanks to Cllr Pickstone for his advance notice of the question.

As he is aware the latest round of cuts heaped on local government by the Coalition Government will see a further 12.4% average local reduction in 2015/16 in spending power for the GMWDA districts. That is on top of the 30% plus already imposed to 2014/15.

As a levying body the GMWDA is not immune from those pressures, and has been asked by AGMA Leaders and also through the budget challenge process, to look to maximise potential budget reductions and hence reduce the burden of the levy on Bury and other districts.

As always the GMWDA treats such challenges very seriously, but with over 95% of our spend associated with a 25 year

PFI Contract reductions have to be looked at in that area. The GMWDA is therefore exploring a range of options to meet cost reductions, including examining its HWRC network. That process is however being conducted in a very robust fashion and at its 22nd November meeting the GMWDA Members asked for further information to be brought forward on a range of budget reduction measures. A Special Purposes Committee has been set up for the 20th December and following that it is envisaged that a range of options will be approved for consultation to begin. In turn that will allow a robust budget and levy to be set on the 7th February 2014.

At this stage I cannot give a list of possible sites because there is not yet one that has been agreed by Members. I will however ensure that after the 20th December all Members of the Authority are advised of proposals and I will seek their views to take back to the 7th February GMWDA meeting.'

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REPORT FOR DECISION



DECISION MAKER:	Council	
DATE:	11 December 2013	
SUBJECT:	Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel	
REPORT FROM:	Chief Executive	
CONTACT OFFICER:	Mike Kelly	
TYPE OF DECISION:	Council	
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	This paper is within the public domain	
SUMMARY:	To present a report of the Independent Remuneration Panel which met on 14 November 2013.	
OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	Members are recommended to approve the following additional Special Responsibility Allowances: 1. £1,200 per annum for Deputy Cabinet Members; 2. £350 per annum plus £30 per hour for each Hearing Panel attended for Standards Independent Persons.	
IMPLICATIONS:		
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes. Members Allowances are subject to consideration and recommendation by the Independent Remuneration Panel.	
Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	The recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel will incur annual costs of £7,550 plus £30 per hour for attendance at Hearing Panels. This will be funded from the saving arising following the reduction of Cabinet posts from seven to six in May 2013; £9,155.	
Statement by Executive Director of Resources:	There are no additional resource implications arising from this report	MO
Equality/Diversity implications:	None arising from this report.	
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	Yes Under the Local Authorities (Member Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel must make recommendations to the Council about allowances paid to members.	JH
Wards Affected:	All	
Scrutiny Interest:	None	

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Cabinet Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
Scrutiny Committee	Cabinet/Committee	Council	
		11.12.2013	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The attached report contains recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel in respect of the payment of Special Responsibility Allowances.
- 1.2 The Council at its Annual Meeting on 14 May 2013 established six posts of Deputy Cabinet Member to work with the six Cabinet Members. At the same time the number of Cabinet Member posts with Portfolio was reduced from seven to six.
- 1.3 The position of Standards Independent Person was established following the implementation of the Localism Act of 2011. At the same time the Council appointed a Standards Independent Member to serve on the Standards Committee. There are two places established for each position but following a recruitment process in 2012 only one position for each has been filled. The Independent Person is Kenneth Wainwright and the Independent Member is David Gremson.
- 1.4 With regard to the Independent Member, where he/she is asked to serve on a Hearings Panel then the Members' Allowances Scheme provides for the payment of out of pocket expenses on loss of earnings. There is currently no provision in respect of the Independent Person.

3.0 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel are set out.
 - 3.2 The basic cost of the recommendations is:

Standards Independent Person	-	£350
Deputy Cabinet Member	-	6 x £1200 = £7,200
Total	-	£7,550
 - 3.3 The total cost of £7,550 needs to be set against the saving achieved by the deletion of a Cabinet Member position. This is currently £9,154.52 based on an Allowance of £10,171.69 with a 10% reduction as agreed by Council on 14 September 2011.
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List of Background Papers:-

None

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**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL
TO THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL TO BE HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, 11 DECEMBER 2013**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, Local Authorities must establish and maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel. The purpose of the Panel is to make recommendations to the Local Authority about the allowances to be paid to Members.
- 1.2 The Regulations require that Independent Remuneration Panels should have at least three members. Members of Panels cannot be Members of any Local Authority in respect of which the Panel makes recommendations and must be independent of the Council.
- 1.3 Bury MBC has appointed an Independent Remuneration Panel which currently consists of the following members:-

Colin Smith OBE (Chair) Retired Local Authority Chief Executive.

Ronald Schwarz : Resident of Bury and retired Head Teacher.

Arnold Wilcox-Wood : Rock Triangle Centre Director.

Geraldine Greene : Resident of Bury and Voluntary Sector Worker

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Members of the Panel were asked to undertake a review of the Bury MBC Members' Allowance Scheme and in particular to consider the following issues:

1. Whether or not there should be a Special Responsibility Allowance in respect of Deputy Cabinet Member positions.
 2. Whether or not there should be a Special Responsibility Allowance in respect of the Independent Person appointed by the Standards Committee.
- 2.2 In order to arrive at a determination on these issues the Panel considered the following information:

The current Members' Allowances Scheme for 2013/14.

The actual payments made with regard to Special Responsibility Allowances following the decision of Council taken on 14 September 2011 to impose a 10% reduction.

The Role Specification of the post of Deputy Cabinet Member and payments made by other local authorities in respect of this type of position.

The effects of the Localism Act 2011 on the Standards Regime and the role and duties of the position of Standards Independent Person.

The role of the Standards Independent Person which includes:

- The consideration of complaints against councillors in conjunction with the Monitoring Officer;
- The Independent Person, must be consulted prior to a decision being made on a complaint against a Member that has been investigated. The Council must also consult with that person when deciding whether to accept or reject a new complaint when it is received. The Independent Person will also be available for consultation by the Member who is the subject of the complaint.

3. POST OF DEPUTY CABINET MEMBER

- 3.1 The Panel concluded that the position of Deputy Cabinet Member should qualify for payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance on the basis that the duties set out in the Role Specification should be the subject of challenging performance through the management review process.
- 3.2 The Panel further concluded that the Special Responsibility Allowance should be set at £1,200 per annum. This represents approximately 12% of the Cabinet Member SRA. Whilst the Panel accepted that this was lower than the examples before it, (for example Oldham's rate equated to 16%), it considered it to be reasonable when set against the Role Specification and when

considering that very few neighbouring authorities had a similar position, making comparison difficult. The Panel asked that the impact of the new arrangements be reviewed when the new system has had time to allow the benefits to be quantified.

4. POST OF STANDARDS INDEPENDENT MEMBER

- 4.1 The Panel concluded that the position of Standards Independent Person should attract a Special Responsibility Allowance in recognition of the duties placed upon this post by the Localism Act.
- 4.2 Given the nature of the Standards Process, and the fact that there can be significant periods of time where there are no complaints to deal with, the Panel concluded that the Allowance should consist of a base figure plus an hourly rate.
- 4.3 The Panel concluded that the position of Standards Independent Person should attract a Special Responsibility Allowance of £350 per annum plus £30 per hour for each Hearing Panel attended.

5. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The Members' Allowances Scheme be amended by the addition of Special Responsibility Allowances as follows:
 - £1200 per annum for Deputy Cabinet Members;
 - £350 per annum plus £30 per hour for each Hearing Panel attended for Standards Independent Persons.

Colin Smith
Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

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REPORT FOR DECISION



Agenda Item	
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REPORT TO:	COUNCIL
DATE:	11 DECEMBER 2013
SUBJECT:	LOCAL SCHEME OF COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT
REPORT FROM:	DEPUTY LEADER and CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE & CORPORATE AFFAIRS
CONTACT OFFICER:	MIKE OWEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
TYPE OF DECISION:	COUNCIL
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	The report is for publication.
SUMMARY:	The report provides Members with an up-date on the local Council Tax Support scheme and sets out recommendations to continue to deliver a local scheme within the available budget.
OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	<p>Council is asked to agree that the Scheme introduced with effect from 1st April 2013 is continued without change from 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015.</p> <p>Council is also asked to approve that agreement of the specific legal wording of the local Regulations enacting the Council Tax Support Scheme set out in the report be delegated to the Executive Director of Resources in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Affairs and the leaders of the two other political parties represented on the Council.</p>
IMPLICATIONS:	

Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes
Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	<p>The financial implications arising from the report are centred around the large cut in Government funding that accompanied the localisation of Council Tax support. The existing scheme was designed to address this gap while providing as much protection as possible for the most vulnerable claimants.</p> <p>The performance of the scheme is closely monitored and to date caseload and collection are within anticipated projections. However, given the fixed nature of the government grant to fund the scheme, the risk continues that increased take up or reductions to the income of existing claimants will have a direct impact on local authorities.</p> <p>It is strongly recommended that Members do not seek to absorb the loss of Government funding from within existing resources due to the parlous state of the Council's budget in future years.</p>
Statement by Executive Director of Resources:	In considering the nature of the local scheme, it is important to recognise that collecting increased, or any, Council Tax from people who previously had higher levels of Council Tax Benefit is both challenging and costly. However, the comment by the s151 Officer regarding the lack of available existing resources to cover the funding cut is fully supported.
Equality/Diversity implications:	A comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment on the 2013-2014 scheme was completed following consultation. Given that no changes to the scheme are proposed, this remains applicable.
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	The legal duties on the Council are set out in the report. The supporting legislation for local schemes has not been changed from the original Council Tax support scheme. There is no requirement to consult unless changes are made.
Wards Affected:	All

Scrutiny Interest:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
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TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR: Mike Owen

Chief Executive/ Senior Leadership Team	Cabinet Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
No	Yes		
Scrutiny Committee	Committee	Council	
No		11/12/13	

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 The report outlines the background, current scheme, context of overall Welfare Reform and recommendations for delivering a local scheme of Council Tax Support with effect from April 2014.

2.0 CHANGES TO THE SCHEME

2.1 The current local scheme was introduced in Bury from April 2013. Prior to this, a national scheme was in place: Council Tax Benefit. This was administered by local authorities but prescribed in extensive detail by the Department for Work and Pensions. Council Tax Benefit paid the full liability for Council Tax for the poorest claimants. Local authorities were, to all intents and purposes, fully funded by DWP for their Council Tax benefit expenditure: local authorities therefore did not carry the risk of changing caseloads or changes in the level of deprivation.

2.2 The abolition of Council Tax Benefit and introduction of local schemes included the provision that the grant payable to Councils was set at 90% of the estimated spend on Council Tax Benefit in 2012-13. This meant that Councils had to address a 10% cut in the funding they received. Furthermore, the level of support was fixed for 7 years meaning that Councils will have to bear the risk of cost of increases and any increases in claimant numbers.

2.3 Before agreeing a scheme the Council had a duty to consult with major precepting authorities (Police and Fire) and such persons it considers to have an interest in the scheme.

2.4 The key issues the Council faced as a result of the introduction of local schemes were:

- Extremely tight timescales with the supporting legislation to allow the introduction of local schemes only receiving Royal Assent in December 2012.
- The funding to be provided for the new provision was cut by 10%.

- Council Tax collection from those households that received partial Council Tax Benefit was already more difficult than from those with incomes above the benefit threshold. This presented even more challenges to Council Tax collection.
- The Government's changes did not allow Councils complete freedom in the design of their schemes and it was stipulated that the elderly were to be protected. This provision remains and meant that as around 45% of Bury's benefit caseload were classed as elderly the cuts for working age claimants had to be higher. In Bury, protecting pensioner claimants means the percentage cuts for working age claimants was estimated to fall within the range of 15%-20%.
- The risk of changing caseloads was transferred to local authorities i.e. funding had to be determined in advance, not based on actual spend.

3.0 LOCALISED COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

3.1 The scheme which was established in Bury, following consultation, reflected the Council's priority in considering the needs of vulnerable people and aimed to mitigate the detrimental impact it would have on residents who would face increased Council Tax due to restrictions on the amount of Council Tax Support they would be entitled to.

3.2 In order to help meet the reduction in Government funding it was necessary for the local scheme to incorporate the following specific changes from the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme:

- Second Adult Rebate withdrawn
- Awards capped at Council Tax Band B
- Awards not paid where the weekly amount was less than £1
- Back-dated benefit abolished
- Non-dependent deductions increased by 20%
- Upper capital limits reduced to £8,000

3.3 The following provisions were also incorporated into the scheme:

- Various groups were defined as 'vulnerable' and therefore protected:
 - people in receipt of disability benefits
 - carers
 - lone parents with children under 5
 - war pensioners
 - the bereaved (for a period of 12 months)
- A new nil non-dependent deduction category for the low paid was introduced. This was to avoid the situation where a single person in receipt of a low level of wages finds it cheaper to move out of the family home because their non-dependent deductions are greater than their contributions to rent and Council Tax if they were to rent their own property. This particularly affected young people on apprenticeships.
- From April 2013, discretionary Housing Payments could no longer be used to support Council Tax and therefore a Discretionary Support Scheme to support vulnerable residents with extreme hardship and support the transition into work for low paid residents. This was funded via the discretionary Bury Support Fund established in April 13.

- 3.4 The remaining shortfall was covered by withdrawing the local Council Tax Over-65s discount and by implementing Council Tax charges for empty properties and second homes.

4.0 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2014/2015

- 4.1 The Council is required to review and amend its scheme annually.

- 4.2 In doing this it is necessary to consider a variety of factors:

- Performance of the scheme in 2013/14
- The level, and adequacy, of Government funding for 2014/15
- The Council's overall financial position
- Options for changing the scheme if required
- The outcome of previous consultation

- 4.3 To date the 2013/14 scheme appears to be meeting its objectives although from a purely financial perspective this can vary and fluctuate throughout the year. However, take-up and Tax collection assumptions are being closely monitored and to date collection overall remains strong and in line with targets whilst caseload has actually decreased slightly.

- 4.4 Government funding for Year 2, 2014/15, remains the same as for Year 1 and reflects a 10% cut in the level of support provided in the last financial year of the national scheme i.e. 2012/13. As funding is fixed consideration has therefore to be given to whether further cuts to the existing scheme need to be made, taking account of how the scheme has performed in relation to that projected.

- 4.5 Given that claimant numbers and collection rates are assumed to be broadly in line with 2013/14 then the shortfall is in line with that assumed for the current year.

- 4.6 The Council could consider amending the scheme to make it more generous and reverse some of the detrimental changes made in Year 1 of the scheme. However, the Council is not in a position to fund any part of the shortfall from savings elsewhere in the budget due to the already considerable pressure on it. It is considered unrealistic to require a reduction in spend on services to residents in other areas of the Council to fund the gap. Furthermore, Members are reminded that the funding gap is on-going and it would not be prudent to fund this from reserves which would only provide one-off funding.

- 4.7 Furthermore, whilst caseload has decreased slightly it would be imprudent to rely on this trend continuing. Therefore it would be a risk to rely on this to make any positive changes to the scheme at this stage.

- 4.8 Finally, it is also worth noting that whilst there is a small discretionary Support Fund (£30K) available to customers experiencing severe hardship few customers have presented themselves in extreme hardship due to the detrimental changes to the scheme.

- 4.9 Alternatively the Council could consider amending the scheme to further cut payments to local residents and, in doing so, reduce the reliance on Council Tax income to meet the funding shortfall. This would free up funding to support other Council services.
- 4.10 Further changes to the scheme could include restricting payment to Band A, including child benefit (which is currently disregarded) as income, or applying a percentage cut across the board as many local authorities have done in their Year 1 schemes.
- 4.11 However it should be noted that the current scheme was the subject of widespread consultation and it is meeting its financial and social objectives. In comparison to other local authorities who adopted schemes including cuts across the whole caseload there has been relatively little negative feedback. For this reason, and given the acceptable current year performance, it is not recommended that the scheme should be tightened.
- 4.12 The above analysis suggests that there is confidence that the current scheme meets the needs of its residents while being financially sustainable. In addition the Council's overall financial situation means that there is currently no option to amend the scheme to make it more generous. It also remains somewhat precarious in terms of any change to caseload or collection rates could have a financially detrimental effect. As a result it is recommended that the 2013/14 scheme is carried forward into 2014/15 unchanged.

5.0 WELFARE REFORM CONTEXT AND AGENDA

- 5.1 The changes to Council Tax Benefit/Support is part of a wider series of changes that make up the Government's welfare reform agenda and reform of local government finance. Bury Council have sought to alleviate the impact of Welfare Reform from this change and others by working with residents where possible.
- 5.2 The Welfare Reform Board oversees all partnership initiatives in relation to Welfare Reform. The Board includes representatives from Bury Council, Six Town Housing, Citizens Advice Bureau, Department for Work and Pensions and various landlord organisations.
- 5.3 The impact of Welfare Reform on Bury has been significant. As at the start of the financial year:
- Numbers affected by reductions in Council Tax Support: 794 households
 - Number affected by under-occupancy charges (`bedroom tax`): 1500 households
 - Number of Six Town Housing tenants affected by under-occupancy charges: 938

It should be noted that residents may have been affected by more than one of the above changes.

- 5.4 Changes to the Sanctions regime administered by DWP have also had an adverse effect on residents. The system has been made stricter in terms of when and how long for a sanction is applied to claimants.

- 5.5 It should be noted that the timescales for the introduction of Universal Credit have recently been significantly altered. This has a bearing on administration of CTS as it is currently administered in conjunction with Housing Benefit: which is due to be subsumed into Universal Credit. Original timescales were that this would start in October 13. However, the Government has notified local authorities that they will be fully funded to continue administering Housing Benefit until 2015 at the earliest. Further, pensioner claims will not be considered as part of Universal Credit until at least the financial year 2017/18.
- 5.6 Various initiatives have been developed under the Welfare Reform Board:
- Close working with Citizens Advice Bureau: both Bury Council and Six Town Housing fund CAB staff to advise customers on maximising benefits and other income and also on debt advice where appropriate.
 - Bury Council has seconded staff to work with Six Town Housing staff on a temporary team: the Housing Solutions Team. This team is in the process of contacting all residents affected by the under-occupancy charge in order to advise on budgeting options, downsizing or applying for a Discretionary Housing Payment.
 - Corporate Debt Approach: this centres around the need to protect income due to the Council as well as providing support to those in debt. It involves taking a holistic approach to individual customers who owe debt to the Council and Six Town Housing. As well as providing debt advice and support it also includes signposting to other agencies where appropriate to help customers back into work or where more detailed debt advice is needed.
 - Working with third parties such as the European Social Fund and Step-change to ensure customers are signposted to these organisations where appropriate. Front-line staff have been trained to identify and signpost customers where relevant.
 - Credit Union: this has recently been established in Bury and links are currently being developed in order to ensure customers are signposted to the Credit Union where appropriate rather than going to payday loan companies.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The Council has to review the operation and content of its Council Tax Support scheme on an annual basis.
- 6.2 Given that the current performance of the existing scheme is in line with original projections, and in light of estimates claimant numbers, it is recommended that the existing scheme is retained with no alteration for the financial year 2014/15.
- 6.3 The performance of the scheme continues to be closely monitored and will be reviewed and amended as appropriate on an annual basis.

COUNCILLOR JOHN SMITH
DEPUTY LEADER/CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND CORPORATE AFFAIRS

List of Background Papers:-

None

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