

AGENDA FOR

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Contact:: Leigh Webb
Direct Line: 0161 253 5399
E-mail: l.m.webb@bury.gov.uk
Web Site: www.bury.gov.uk

To: All Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillors : D Bailey, S Carter, D Cassidy,
A Cummings, J Daly, I Gartside (Chair), M James,
Mallon, S Nuttall, O'Brien, J Smith and T Tariq

Dear Member/Colleague

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Date:	Thursday, 12 June 2014
Place:	Bury Town Hall
Time:	7.30 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:	Please note amended start time.

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider whether they have an interest in any matters on the agenda and, if so, to formally declare that interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING *(Pages 1 - 6)*

Minutes of the last meeting held on 25 March 2014 are attached.

4 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A period of 30 minutes has been set aside for members of the public to ask questions on matters considered at the last meeting and set out in the minutes or on the agenda for tonight's meeting.

5 WORKLESSNESS OVERVIEW PROJECT GROUP *(Pages 7 - 16)*

Report attached.

6 POVERTY STRATEGY REFRESH 2014-2016 *(Pages 17 - 50)*

A report from Claire Jenkins, Head of Customer Support & Collections, is attached.

7 DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2014/15 *(Pages 51 - 56)*

A report from Leigh Webb, Principal Democratic Services Officer, is attached.

8 URGENT BUSINESS

Any other business which by reason of special circumstances the Chair agrees may be considered as a matter of urgency.

Minutes of: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 25 March 2014

Present: Councillor M Hankey(in the Chair);
Councillors D Cassidy; S Carter; A J Cummings; J Daly; L Fitzwalter; M James; P Heneghan; D O’Hanlon and T Tariq

Public in attendance: 1 member of the public was present at the meeting.

Also in attendance: Councillor Campbell– Cabinet Member for Children and Families.

Apologies for absence: Councillor S Nuttall

OSC.913 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Heneghan declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute OSC.916 below, LGA Safeguarding Diagnostic and OFSTED Update as the Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Families and took no part in discussions on this item.

Councillor Heneghan also declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute OSC.920 below, School Admissions Overview Project Group as the Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Families and took no part in discussions on this item.

OSC.914 MINUTES

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the meeting, held on 12 February 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

OSC.915 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions asked by members of the public present at the meeting.

OSC.916 LGA SAFEGUARDING DIAGNOSTIC AND OFSTED UPDATE

Further to Minute OSC.306 of the meeting of this Committee, held on 4 September 2013, the Cabinet Member for Children and Families presented a report setting out details of the Ofsted Single Inspection Framework published in December 2013. The report outlined the new Inspection process, the judgement criteria used and the experiences of Local Authorities who had recently been inspected under the new framework.

A copy of the Single Inspection Framework (SIF) Action Plan was appended to the report setting out progress made since the last report to the Committee in September 2013.

The Executive Director of Children's Services reported on the outcomes and findings from the recently completed Ofsted Early Help Thematic Inspection and Local Government Association Safeguarding Diagnostic.

Questions and comments were invited and the following issues were raised:

- In response to questions relating to workload, the Executive Director explained measures being taken to ensure manageable and safe caseloads across social work teams. The Executive Director referred to the issue of statutory thresholds of work and highlighted the importance of having adequate administrative support to relieve pressure on Social Workers.
- With regard to the issue of Management Information, the Executive Director reported that systems had been improved but acknowledged that there was still further scope to maximise the gains achieved from the IT software through increased staff training and liaison with other Authorities.
- In response to a question concerning the general level of progress made by the Department, the Executive Director highlighted the difficulties faced, which included changes to legislation and frameworks; previous investment issues in relation to management; increasing demand aligned with a reducing level of resource. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families referred to the positive work being undertaken and recognised the improvements made and the increase in levels of self awareness within the service.
- Councillor O'Hanlon highlighted the importance of listening to children and suggested providing examples of individual complaints, and increased performance information within the Action Plan. It was explained that the Action Plan was a high level summary document which looked to reference specific plans, actions and initiatives.
- Members of the Committee recognised the improvements made in relation to the SIF Action Plan and noted the challenges faced under the new Inspection framework. Discussion took place about the role of the Committee in monitoring progress and challenging performance.

It was agreed:

1. That this Committee endorses the SIF Action Plan and recognises the progress made since September 2013
2. That, as part of this Committee's Work Programme for 2014/15, an Overview Project Group be set up to monitor and challenge performance in relation to the SIF Action Plan.

OSC.917 CORPORATE PLAN – QUARTER 3

A report was submitted by the Leader of the Council outlining the progress during quarter three 2013–2014 for the corporate performance indicators and projects within the Bury Council Corporate Plan. The information had been extracted from

the Performance Information Management System (PIMS) and provided by the responsible services.

Questions and comments were invited from members of the Committee and the following issues were raised:

- Councillor O'Hanlon requested further detail on the actions being taken in relation to the level of residual household waste per household
- Councillor Carter referred to the ongoing work of the Council to promote the use of Foster Carers and suggested that, in addition to the indicators around adoption, the next performance report include an indicator relating to fostering.
- Members of the Committee highlighted issues around levels of staff sickness and requested details of the actions taken to reduce this figure.

It was agreed:

That the Assistant Director of Personnel be requested to submit a report to a future meeting of this Committee providing a breakdown by Department of sickness levels within the Council along with the actions taken to manage the issue.

OSC.918 CORPORATE PLAN 2014 -15 – PROPOSAL OF KEY PROJECTS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Following issues raised at previous meetings of this Committee, the Executive Director of Adult Care Services submitted a report setting out a number of proposed key projects and performance indicators to be referenced in the Corporate Plan for 2014- 15. It was reported that, following a Team Bury planning event in February, as well as continuing with the current priority "One Council, One Success, Together" the following priorities had been identified:

- A Strong Local Economy
- Stronger Communities
- Health and Well-being

During discussion of this item, Members of the Committee highlighted the importance, in terms of effective overview and scrutiny, of having specific, meaningful, measurable indicators. It was suggested that a future planning session be held to discuss the development of performance indicators.

It was agreed:

That comments and views from Members, on the proposed indicators set out in the report, be forwarded to Democratic Services.

OSC.919 CIVIC HALLS – PROGRESS REPORT

The Assistant Director of Operations submitted a report providing an update of the work undertaken and the progress made on the recommendations made as a

result of the independent review of Civic Halls.

The key points of the review were to:

- Identify underlying issues with the service
- Develop a sustainable business model going forward
- Propose a combination of short and long term options to achieve this
- Improve upon the level of subsidy required at present
- Improve user satisfaction

As a result of the review the following issues were highlighted

- Financial Assessment and Usage levels,
- Marketing and Promotion,
- Pricing Structure,
- Catering,
- Condition of Venues and
- Management of Venues

The report set out the outcomes arising from the review and the actions taken through the development and implementation of improvement plans. Figures relating to usage, income, expenditure and subsidy levels were included within the report.

Questions and comments were invited from Members of the Committee and the following issues were raised:

- The Chair, Councillor Hankey, acknowledged the increased marketing and advertising activity, but questioned how long the current level of trading subsidy could be sustained in the current financial climate.
- Councillor O'Hanlon highlighted the need for capital investment in many of the Civic Halls to enable them to compete with the private sector and suggested invest to save business cases be developed.
- Councillor James highlighted the community value of Civic Halls and, as such, stated that they could not solely be measured against companies operating in the private sector.
- Councillor Daly questioned the ongoing increase in operational expenditure and highlighted that a further, more detailed in depth breakdown of income and expenditure was required.

It was agreed:

That a further progress report be submitted to this Committee setting out detailed income and expenditure information in relation to Civic Halls.

OSC.920 SCHOOL ADMISSIONS OVERVIEW PROJECT GROUP – FINAL REPORT

Councillor Fitzwalter, Chair of the School Admissions Overview Project Group, submitted a report setting out details of the work, findings and recommendations of the Group.

During discussion of the report, Councillor Fitzwalter provided further information in relation to the Prestwich area.

The Chair, Councillor Hankey, placed on record his thanks to Councillor Fitzwalter and the Group for an excellent, thorough report.

It was agreed:

1. That this Committee approves the following recommendations, as set out in the report, for onward submission to the Cabinet:
 - (i) The Group acknowledges the complex nature of school place planning and supports the need for a proactive approach to develop strategies that respond to both short and medium term demands for places.
 - (ii) Whilst acknowledging the difficulties in measuring migration into the borough, the Group highlight the need to regularly monitor patterns and developments through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment; the Council's Core Strategy; and regular liaison with neighbouring boroughs.
 - (iii) Targeted strategies employed to manage demand pressures continue to be monitored with regular consultations with local headteachers at affected schools.
 - (iv) The Group acknowledges that the admissions system is complex but seems to be fair. Members, who are often asked for advice on applications by parents, should be offered an annual briefing from Children's Services on the process and any changes to the system.
 - (v) Consideration be given to the development of a simplified summary of the school admissions paperwork provided to parents
 - (vi) Consideration be given to the role of Elected members in the admissions and appeals process.
2. That further to (1) above, the report to Cabinet include detailed reference to the issues faced in the Prestwich area of the Borough.

OSC.921 WORKLESSNESS OVERVIEW PROJECT GORUP

Councillor Tariq, Chair of the Worklessness Overview Project Group, provided a verbal update in respect of the work of the Group. The Group had met with a number of officers and planned to visit the Radcliffe Works facility and the Council Offices at Whittaker Street. The reception area at Whittaker Street is now a one-stop shop providing a wide range of services and information for anybody attending. Located there are the citizens advice, DWP, Step Change debt charity, Bury Support Fund, Food Bank, internet access as well as the benefits services. These services can assist with providing information as well as signposting to other providers.

Councillor Tariq reported that the Group will be ready to present its findings and recommendations at the first scheduled Scrutiny meeting of the 2014/2015 Municipal Year.

It was agreed:

That the update be noted.

OSC.922 VOTE OF THANKS

Councillor O'Hanlon thanked the Chair, Councillor Hankey, for his hard work and commitment during the Municipal year.

COUNCILLOR M HANKEY
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 10 pm)

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL	ITEM No.
REPORT OF: Worklessness Overview Project Group	
CONTACT OFFICER: Andrea Tomlinson, Democratic Services Officer	
TITLE: FINAL REPORT – June 2014	

INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR – COUNCILLOR TARIQ

The Worklessness Overview Project Group was asked to review the work undertaken by the authority in relation to support offered to the unemployed across the borough and those wishing to return to employment following career breaks or education.

The research carried out involved a large amount of technical information and required in-depth explanation from the officers working in these areas. I would like to thank those officers for their support and patience in this process, particularly Tracey Flynn, Christine Seymour and Michelle Delaney as well as the representatives from the partner agencies; Anne Boocock and Tan Ahmed.

I would also like to thank the other Elected Members of the Project Group for their attendance at the meetings and visits and their input into the work of the Group; Councillors Grimshaw, Gunther, Heneghan and Nuttall.

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the work, findings and recommendations of the Worklessness Overview Project Group.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its first meeting of the 2013/2014 Municipal Year, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that a Worklessness Overview Project Group be established to review and consider the issues affected by worklessness and what the Council and its partners were undertaking in relation to this
- 2.2 The Membership of the Group comprised Councillors Grimshaw, Gunther, Heneghan Nuttall and Tariq (Chair).
- 2.3 The Project Group was delegated to agree its own project plan which is at Appendix 1 to the report.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The Group met on the following occasions:-

31 October 2013
26 February 2014
7 May 2014

- 3.2 Members of the Group attended visits to Whittaker Street and Radcliffe Works.
- 3.3 The group were invited to the 'Have a Go' event which was held on 5 March 2014 in the Elizabethan Suite.

4.0 WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE GROUP

- 4.1 The group received information in relation to the work that the Council were undertaking either independently or alongside partners to assist residents to gain skills, training and employment.
- 4.2 The group also received information in relation to the work that the Council were undertaking either independently or alongside partners to provide residents with assistance in relation to digital inclusion, benefits claims and debt management.

5 SKILLS, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

- 5.1 Bury Employment and Skills Task Group had been established in November 2004 and the current membership was; Bury Council

(Employment, Support and Training, Libraries and Adult Learning, 14 – 19 Team, Organisational Development, Children's Centres, Childcare and Early Years), Connexions, Bury College, Bury Third Sector, ADAB, Skills Funding Agency, Jobcentre Plus, New Economy and Six Town Housing.

There were a number of different schemes being provided across the borough at both a local level and a regional level to assist people to gain employment and/or skills.

5.2 Backing Young Bury was launched in 2012. This scheme was set up to assist young people to gain an apprenticeship place, work experience and employability skills and various pre-employment opportunities including:

- The Super 6 scheme – six months full time paid employment within Bury Council;
- 3Employ scheme – 3 months full time paid employment within Bury Council;
- DWP extended work experience scheme: in partnership with the Jobcentre Plus – provides young people who are claiming JSA the opportunity to gain 8 – 12 weeks work experience.

It was explained that the employers who became involved with the apprenticeship scheme received a package of support which could include funding.

A Work Ready Scheme providing young people who have a learning disability the opportunity to gain 8 – 12 weeks work experience through undertaking a placement within Bury Council had also been established and relevant training to become Work Ready was also provided.

5.3 Connecting Provision activity incorporates traineeships available. This focuses on young people in need of assistance (care leavers/Looked after children/at risk of offending). Individuals are offered 7 weeks with the council, they would keep their benefits and receive on the job training as well as 1.5 days a week with adult learning and sportivate activity once a week. If after the 7 weeks they had done well it could lead to a 26 week paid placement followed by signposting to external job opportunities.

Jobcentre Plus, Adult Learning and the European Social Fund/DWP Families with Complex Needs Project were partners in the Connecting Provision Activity. The future cohorts for this scheme will be aligned with the troubled families work – (SCIL) Supporting Communities Improving Lives.

City Deal sets out a range of bespoke agreements between the government and Greater Manchester Combined Authority based on the needs and opportunities of the region's economy.

They are geared towards accelerating growth, boosting skills and encouraging local decision-making and increased self-sufficiency.

With the only combined authority in the country, Greater Manchester is in a unique position to bring forward this ambitious package of measures.

The Greater Manchester Commitment to Youth Employment ensures that all available grants are secured to support young people into apprenticeships.

The Work and Skills element of City Deal has established a Greater Manchester Apprenticeship Hub. In Bury the Council is working in partnership with Bury College and Jobcentre Plus to establish an Employment and Skills Gateway which is located in the Millgate Shopping Centre within Bury Town Centre.

- 5.4 The Members of the Group also had input into the contents of Bury Councils 'Menu of IAG Activity' (Information, Advice and Guidance) to schools. The menu would help young people start to prepare for employment, ensure that they are aware of apprenticeship opportunities and ensure that the skills needs of local businesses are met. It was hoped that by working together local businesses will find it easier to recruit young people and ensure that the opportunities are created.

Schools were asked to host an apprenticeship session for year 11s which would be introduced by the Council's corporate apprentices. This would allow young people to review the options available to them other than further education. All young people would also be asked to register on the national apprenticeship website where all apprenticeships were advertised.

5.5 Backing Young Bury

To date: 12 Young people have secured a corporate apprenticeship with Bury Council and it was anticipated that this would be increased to 30 over the next 3 years; 70 work experience placements within the Council have been offered since January 2012; 41 out of the 51 available commitment grants have been used to support Bury young people into apprenticeships and there were currently 27 jobs with training funding pots being utilised by Bury Young People. It was explained that the Communities section would benefit from the introduction of a key worker/mentor post to offer support to the apprentices. The position could be funded through external grant support.

5.6 Traineeships

2013/2014 to date: 22 young people recruited in partnership with connecting provision all but one placed on traineeships. Now seeking to work with employers to offer a similar programme with placements in private companies.

5.7 Ingeus would soon be providing support across 6 of the Greater Manchester Authorities including Bury. Ingeus is a leading provider of the Government's 'Work Programme' initiative to tackle long term unemployment by providing employment and training services. Ingeus work alongside over 100 partner organisations and would be providing Bury residents with bespoke solutions.

6 COUNCIL ON SITE SERVICES

6.1 The Members of the group were invited to attend a visit to Whittaker Street Digital Hub in Radcliffe where a range of services are provided that can be accessed by residents. The Digital Hub has been set up to support the digital inclusion strategy and the 'Go on Bury' campaign please see <http://www.bury.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=8653> for more information. The web page has also been set up to provide information across the borough on where residents can access pc's, the internet and work clubs and the information is all held in one place.

7 Internet Access PCs are available to residents with a library membership (or we can join customers if they bring ID) . The PCs can be used for 2 hour slots and allow full access to sites

(with restrictions).

A further 7 PCs are also available with access restricted to Bury Council and Direct Gov site.

Free 2 or 3 hour computer skills training sessions are provided for residents who require assistance to set up an e-mail address, use the internet and log onto certain websites such as DWP and Jobmatch sites. These sessions are provided by Adult Learning and DWP.

3 days a week the National Careers Service provide appointments to help with CVs, training and work opportunities. The appointments are held at Whittaker Street with an on site advisor.

Citizens Advice offer a drop in service on Wednesday 10am to 2pm as well as bookable appointments at other times.

On site telephones are also available to enable contact to Step Change debt charity and the Credit Union as well as other Council services.

7 CORPORATE DEBT MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The Council has recently introduced a Corporate Debt Policy which has been put in place to assist residents who are struggling to repay debt due to a number of different reasons such as changes in circumstances either job related or benefit related.

The policy looks at ways of assisting people through advice and signposting in order to prevent increasing debt.

At the time that the policy was being implemented there were 17 payday loan opportunities in Bury Town Centre alone with extremely high APR attached.

It was also explained that the debt policy looked at the different advice given in relation to sanctions implemented in relation to benefit claims which could leave a person unable to claim benefits for up to 3 years.

8 RADCLIFFE WORKS

- 8.1 The group visited the Radcliffe Works shop in Radcliffe Town Centre. The facility is a tendered service and is currently provided by ADAB.
- 8.2 Radcliffe works had been operating since July 2009 and had seen a steady increase in footfall since. The number of people attending had increased from 1000 in the first year to expected figures of over 2500 for 2014. Initially more men than women were registered but this has now changed to more women attending.
- 8.3 The number of people helped into jobs had been steady with the highest figure being 57 people during 2010.

It was explained that the centre offered a range of facilities including:-

- Job Search skills
- CV preparation
- Form Filling
- Interview Skills
- Employment workshops
- IT courses
- Careers Advice
- Money advice
- Debt Management
- Benefits Advice
- Training Courses including; Security, Health and Safety, Hygiene, First Aid.

18 partners attended sessions on a rota basis during the course of the month and the employment workshops were currently being provided by ASDA.

There were also themed days providing information on issues such as universal credit benefits and mentor days where local successful business men and women visit and successful service users.

Training can also be tailored to individuals following the initial appointment and evaluation.

The main areas of concern that were raised at Radcliffe Works

were computer illiteracy and issues around universal credit.

It was explained that there was a similar facility in place at Prestwich Works which was based in Prestwich Town Centre and is largely targeted at the Orthodox Jewish community in Prestwich to assist the Jewish community to access mainstream services.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 RECOMMENDATION 1

That this Group recognises the hard work being undertaken across the Council and partners to assist Bury residents in gaining employment, skills and training.

9.2 RECOMMENDATION 2

That external funding be sought to provide a key worker/mentor within the Communities section of the Council to support the apprentices.

9.3 RECOMMENDATION 3

That all Councillors receive a training session and/ or information in relation to the work being carried out by the Council and its partners to help people into work and training.

9.4 RECOMMENDATION 4

That all options for regularly advertising the available apprenticeships are considered to ensure as large an audience as possible.

9.5 RECOMMENDATION 5

That the work being carried out by Radcliffe and Prestwich Works be supported and promoted to ensure as many customers as possible benefit from the services offered.

9.6 RECOMMENDATION 6

That the computer access available within Whittaker Street reception is replicated at as many sites as possible across Council buildings in line with the digital inclusion strategy.

9.7 RECOMMENDATION 7

That a report setting out the work of Ingeus in the borough be submitted to the relevant Scrutiny Committee to inform the Members on their work

Contact Details: Andrea Tomlinson, Democratic Services
Telephone number: 0161 253 5133
E-mail address: a.j.tomlinson@bury.gov.uk

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REPORT TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Title:	Poverty Strategy Refresh 2014-16
Date of Meeting:	Thursday 12 th June 2014
Project Lead Officer:	Claire Jenkins
Project Contact:	Sarah Marshall

1.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The Poverty Strategy for Bury 2014-16 is a statutory document originating from the Child Poverty Act 2010, which requires all local authorities to produce child poverty strategies and work with local partners to reduce and prevent child poverty.

2.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny are asked to note and comment on the refresh of the Poverty Strategy for 2014-16.

3.0 SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 Approach

- The Welfare Reform Board has led a refresh of the Poverty Strategy for 2014-16.
- A sub group for the strategy was established to identify areas for development.
- Consulted with project leads and the Welfare Reform Board to update the work referenced in the strategy.
- The board have identified 5 key indicators to demonstrate the prevalence and travel of poverty in Bury and these have been included in the refresh.
- In addition there will be an appendix of indicators to compliment the strategy and action plan, this will be developed by the board following sign off of the refreshed strategy.

3.2 Changes

- Removed strategic issues as an objective and included a section on strategic links as part of the context to the strategy.
- Detailed key indicators as identified by the Welfare Reform Board.
- Ensured all statistics referenced are up to date.
- Amended the 'What have we done so far' section to demonstrate progress that has come from the key work areas of the strategy over the past year.
- Consulted with project leads and the Welfare Reform Board to identify key areas of work for each objective.

4.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 4.1 An Equality Analysis has been undertaken for the Poverty Strategy 2014-16 and it was concluded that the strategy is largely positive by aiming to tackle poverty and inequality.

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Poverty Strategy

2014 - 2016

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Welcome to Bury's Poverty Strategy

I am pleased to present the Poverty Strategy for Bury 2014-2016. At a national level, it is now a statutory requirement for all local authorities to tackle child poverty and in Bury we feel that to achieve this we must look at poverty across all our communities.

Bury is a rapidly growing and changing borough with pockets of severe poverty and deprivation. The continued demographic changes that the borough is projected to experience, combined with the impacts of the financial recession and Welfare Reform, makes addressing poverty more important than ever. The key to successfully reducing and lessening the effects of poverty in Bury will be a joined-up approach across Bury that maximises support to our residents. This will be established through the Welfare Reform Board which includes representatives from Citizens Advice Bureau, Customer Support and Collections, Communities, Department for Children, Young People & Culture, Department for Work & Pensions, Inclusion, Library Services, Overview and Scrutiny, Six Town Housing, Springs Tenant Management Cooperative and Urban Renewal. The intention of the strategy is to highlight the direction of travel for poverty in Bury to the Welfare Reform Board so appropriate action can be flagged and assigned to the relevant partner.

Taking into consideration the challenging economic climate and with fewer resources available, a partnership approach is more important than ever, and all partners have a contribution to make to tackle the impact of poverty, and better communication between organisations can deliver better outcomes for those affected by poverty. Information, best practice and resources can be shared across the partnership organisations resulting in better consistency and effectiveness in our approach to tackling poverty in Bury.

It is well recognised that poverty has a detrimental effect on future life chances and experiencing poverty in childhood can impact on a child's educational attainment, life chances, health, and safety. However, breaking the cycle of poverty is not only about improving future opportunities, but also addressing the impacts of poverty. We need to continue to support people to get back into work, and ensure that low-income earning residents have the resources they need to support their families.

Our Vision in Bury is to reduce poverty by 2020 through a multi-agency approach that tackles both the causes and consequences of poverty.



Cllr Mike Connolly
**Leader of
Bury Council**

Introduction

We define poverty as: *when people's income does not meet the costs of the material, cultural and social resources that are regarded as necessary to provide a minimum acceptable quality of life in Bury.*

When we talk about poverty, we often focus on those people in the world living in absolute poverty, without the resources needed to feed themselves or their family. It can be difficult to identify what we mean by poverty in our own communities, and, indeed, those people who we may identify as living in poverty would rarely consider themselves to be so.

In 2008/09 5.3 million people were suffering from multiple disadvantages in the UK, 1.9 million children lived in workless households, 2.8 million children were in relative income poverty (where incomes are 60% of the median household income), 2.2 million children were in both low income and material deprivation and 1.6 million children were in absolute poverty. There are now 1.8 million pensioners living in poverty which represents 16% of UK pensioners.

It is felt that changes in the benefits system, increases in the cost of living, rising unemployment and fewer job opportunities may have an impact on the levels of poverty. There is an increased necessity to do all we can to reduce poverty which will be challenging because of the reduction in funding for public services, and this will impact on what services and support will be available to our residents.

Some families and groups experience the 'cycle of poverty' which is repeated from generation to generation. Living in a poor family as a child and then as adults they are more likely to suffer from ill-health, be unemployed and homeless, become involved in offending, drug and alcohol abuse, and abusive relationships. However, there are some that may have experienced a change in lifestyle such as redundancy or experienced other life events that impact on their cost of living e.g. birth of a child, caring responsibilities.

Our strategic objectives are:

- **Managing the money** – Many residents find it difficult to manage their finances and in need of advice to deal with debt issues.
- **Claiming what is due** – Residents requiring advice to ensure they claim the benefits they are entitled to.
- **Work works** – Assisting those people who are able to work back into employment.
- **Breaking the cycle** – Preventing the intergenerational cycle of poverty that people are born into.
- **Every Contact Counts** – Ensuring residents are able to access services and confidently sign post when required.

Background

Child Poverty Act 2010

The Child Poverty Act 2010 requires local authorities to produce child poverty strategies and work with local partners to reduce and prevent child poverty in their area. The scale of the task and the action needed is clearly greater for those areas with the highest rates of child poverty.

The Child Poverty Act 2010 established four separate targets to be met nationally by 2020/21:

- Relative poverty – to reduce the proportion of children who live in relative low income (in families with income below 60 per cent of the median) to less than 10 per cent
- Combined low income and material deprivation – to reduce the proportion of children who live in material deprivation and have a low income to less than 5 per cent
- Persistent poverty – to reduce the proportion of children that experience long periods of relative poverty, with the specific target to be set at a later date; and
- Absolute poverty – to reduce the proportion of children who live below an income threshold fixed in real terms to less than 5 per cent

National Child Poverty Strategy

The Government published the first National Child Poverty Strategy in April 2011 which aims to eradicate child poverty by 2020 by improving the life chances of children, protecting vulnerable families and reducing the nation's fiscal deficit.

Two independent reviews have been completed since the Act became law:

Frank Field's Independent Review of Poverty and Life Chances (December 2010)

The report recommended that the Government should give focus on the Foundation Years (0-5) and that a set of Life Chances Indicators (LCIs) should be established. The review also proposes that local authorities should create sets of LCIs to correspond with the national indicators.

Graham Allen's Independent Report: Early Intervention: The Next Steps (January 2011)

This report focussed on early intervention and the need for responsible parties to work together to prevent late intervention which is both expensive and ineffective.

Poverty in Bury

Bury has a population of approximately 189,500 and in 2008/09, 18.2% of Bury's residents were in poverty according to the official definition of poverty. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranked Bury as the 97th most deprived district area in 2004 and this has improved to 114th in 2010. Bury continues to be the 3rd least deprived authority in Greater Manchester (GM) behind Stockport and Trafford.

Older People in Poverty

According to Office for National Statistics (ONS) Bury currently has 34,340 individuals claiming a state pension, which accounts for 19% of the total population and is expected to rise to over 25% by 2050. The number of Bury residents claiming Pensions Credits has reduced by 5% since 2008, however the benefits payment has increased by 15%. People living on pensions very often have a fixed income which can mean increases in the prices of essentials such as fuel and food significantly reduce their available income.

Education and Early Years

Child poverty is strongly linked to problems in later life including educational attainment. In Bury 13.7% of the total school population receive free school meals and are more likely to become Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) three years after completing compulsory education. In December 2013, 6% of young people were NEET (between the ages of 16 and 18 years). This is also associated with negative outcomes such as having a criminal record, poor health, teenage parenthood and negative psychological outcomes.

Economy

In February 2014 there were 1,405 long-term unemployed (six months plus) Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants in Bury which is above the national average. The average earnings of a full-time worker living in Bury are £26,111 per annum which is above the Greater Manchester average. However, the average earnings of a part-time worker are lower than the Greater Manchester average and the numbers of part-time workers has increased since 2005, meaning that more residents will be earning less.

Income

The average house price in Bury has risen by 108% between 1995 and 2014 whilst household incomes have reduced since 2008. There is now a greater risk of households falling into relative poverty which can potentially impact the physical and mental health of members of the household.

Health

Bury has comparatively low levels of Incapacity Benefit (IB)/Employment Support Allowance (ESA) claimants and is third lowest in Greater Manchester. Bury experiences problems with obesity and drug and alcohol misuse which affects individual life chances. The Active People 11-13 survey for Bury reported that of those who participate in sport and active recreation, people who are long term unemployed or never worked represent the smallest proportion (18.3%) In terms of fitness, we offer a means tested Active Lifestyle Discount Card which provides subsidised leisure. In Bury there are 12 green flag parks with facilities such as tennis courts, table tennis, outdoor gyms, run routes, trim trails, play areas and walks that are free to use & open 24/7. Bury has above the national average proportion of mothers smoking during pregnancy. Approximately 48% of IB/ESA claimants claim on mental health grounds.

Key Indicators of Poverty in Bury

The Welfare Reform Board identified 5 key performance indicators to demonstrate the prevalence and travel of poverty in Bury. In addition there will be an appendix of indicators to compliment the strategy and action plan.

1. Proportion of children in poverty in Bury

The proportion of children living in poverty in Bury is calculated to be **17.9%** which equates to 6,629 children. This has reduced from the previous figure calculated by 0.4%.

2. Number of children eligible for free school meals

It was last reported in January 2014 that there are **4474** children eligible for a free school meal. This figure has shown little variation over the past year.

3. Number of food bank provisions supplied

We are able to monitor the number of food parcels issued through the Bury Support Fund. So far over **360** parcels have been provided to families and individuals in extreme hardship.

4. Number of referrals to Bury Citizens Advice Bureau due to debt or benefit issues

Bury Citizens Advice Bureau has frequently reported that **75%** of referrals for their services have been due to debt or benefit issues.

5. Number of referrals to Bury Citizens Advice Bureau due to pay day loans

This is a new area of data and information collection for the Citizens Advice Bureau for 2014-15 so we cannot establish the current prevalence of the use of pay day loans in the borough.

Target Groups

To tackle poverty Bury's partnership organisations needs to understand both their starting point and how it wants to improve. Measuring poverty is not easy: Many of the national measures are not available at a local level, or are not provided frequently enough to provide meaningful indicators of progress.

The over-arching target is "to reduce the number of Super Output Areas within Bury that rank within the most-deprived 25% of Super Output Areas in the country."

Information on performance against this target would only be available every three to four years, as and when the national Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is published by central government. However the IMD is the primary recognised measure of deprivation used in this country, it allows comparisons to be made over time and with other areas, and is available at a small geographical level, allowing pockets of deprivation to be identified. This is particularly important for Bury as we do have these small areas where people are living in deprivation scattered right across the borough.

The target groups are:

1. Households living on benefits – working age jobless/workless including those with dependent children.
2. People in low-paid and/or low-skilled employment – the working poor.
3. Vulnerable adults living on fixed/low incomes and/or benefits – This would include the retired poor.

This will give a clearer picture of all residents who are living in poverty. This is particularly important as the Welfare Reform Board is keen to ensure that its strategic outcome focuses on all residents in poverty, and not solely on children living in poverty, currently the main focus of current central government policy and initiatives.

It is important to note that much of the research, and the focus groups undertaken highlighted that people do not readily identify themselves as being in poverty. This is an important message which needs to inform our work to support the target groups.

Consultation

Residents' focus group

A focus group was carried out during the Poverty HIGHLIGHT Review involving ten people with different circumstances. The majority of the group defined poverty as when "you can't afford to eat or clothe yourself." The group suggested that one location for benefits advice, less confusing paperwork, confidence building courses, training in a non-formal environment, flexible jobs that fitted around childcare and free childcare would help their current situation.

Partnership Workshop

A workshop was held in September 2011 involving staff from Team Bury organisations. As well as partnership organisations, children and young people, people during moments of need, lone parents, neighbouring authorities, children's centres, schools and colleges, service users and Revenues and Benefits should be involved in future consultation. A variety of methods were suggested.

The group also identified the need to link in with the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, work with housing services, signposting to agencies, financial and budget training, a targeted response is required, engagement with families in crisis, 'self help', incentives to improve life, fuel poverty awareness and bringing work into Bury employment sites.

Focus Groups

A number of focus groups were held in February 2012 with young people, people living on benefits and people with disabilities. All of the groups involved agreed that poverty is an issue in Bury and that they were personally aware of people in poverty. The groups gave very similar responses regarding what they felt poverty was and how it could be reduced.

The groups provided many views as to how the issue of poverty can be resolved including targeting children to break the cycle of poverty, financial support, counselling, more apprenticeships, and support with finding employment, charity fundraising opportunities and more assistance for people with disabilities to re-train for jobs. The majority of responses were centred on finance, employment and training, and the benefits system.

Strategic Links

The Poverty Strategy reflects the priorities for Bury for 2014-15 as follows:

1. **A Strong Local Economy** – this is integral for reducing poverty as it will create greater job opportunities for local residents.
2. **Stronger Communities** – will ensure better integration of people from all backgrounds ensuring they have equal life opportunities.
3. **Health and Wellbeing** – a good standard of health and wellbeing in the borough equips people to engage with the community and economy.
4. **One Council, One Success, Together** – reducing poverty requires a whole borough approach that must be incorporated into every council service where possible.

Tackling poverty in Bury will not be done through this strategy alone. Through the Welfare Reform Board we have established how Bury is reducing the prevalence and impact of poverty through a multi agency approach as demonstrated below.

Affordable Warmth Strategy:	Sets out how the affordable warmth partnership aims to tackle fuel poverty and assist Bury residents to achieve affordable warmth. The main focus is to improve the energy efficiency of homes, maximise householder income, reduce energy consumption and, where possible, help reduce the cost of energy to the consumer.
Bury Local Plan Core Strategy:	Seeks an even spread of employment growth across the borough and addresses our regeneration areas to fit.
Bury Mental Health Strategy:	Identifies how our social and economic circumstances can increase the likelihood that we will develop a mental health condition such as living in poor housing or being homeless, being unemployed, having a low income, or having a poor education.
Bury Drug & Alcohol Strategy:	The socio economic experience (low income, deprivation, unemployment, poor housing plus lack of education etc) of an individual can effect patterns of behaviour relating to drug and alcohol use, and although Bury is the third least deprived authority in Greater Manchester it does contain areas of deprivation. The Drug & Alcohol Strategy will address substance misuse through the delivery of a 'Recovery Focused Service' helping individuals to become abstinent, and along with education, training and support will equip them to with the tools address the full range of need.

Community Cohesion Plan:	Recognises the work we need to do with the voluntary, community and faith sectors across Bury to actively engage communities to build fair and more equal communities and create a sense of belonging.
Digital Inclusion:	Promotes particular support is provided for our most vulnerable groups, to ensure that their quality of life and life chances are not adversely affected by any digital divide This includes people applying for jobs, housing or benefits – all of which must increasingly be done online.
Economic Development Strategy:	Sets out to create long-term, sustainable and competitive economic growth in the borough; Key themes that are crucial in achieving this are encouraging skills development to address Bury’s and Greater Manchester’s economic needs and attracting and retaining talent. We will do this by working together in ensuring residents have access to high quality careers advice and guidance, increasing the volume of work experience opportunities, effective partnership working and working with employers to increase the diversity of their workforce.
Equality Strategy:	Objectives include improving educational achievement of vulnerable children, enabling greater autonomy for elderly people and people with disabilities, understanding and working to reduce levels of hate crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic violence and aiming for a workforce which reflects our diverse community.
Health and Wellbeing Strategy:	Includes the cross-cutting priority ‘Starting Well’. Public Health and Early Years are working together on this, ensuring a positive start to life for children, young people and families by supporting positive and resilient parenting, developing integrated services across education, health and social care focussing on the needs of children and creating positive opportunities for young people.
Homelessness Strategy:	Initiated the Housing Employment and New Opportunities (HEN) project to help homeless people enter into work training and employment.
Housing Strategy:	Through partnership working it supports the ‘Green Agenda’ to maximise energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty, encourages affordability of property across the townships and identifies the needs of specific groups such as older people, people with disabilities and homeless households.
Six Town Housing Neighbourhood Strategy:	Focuses on challenging unacceptable behaviour, tackling crime, anti-social behaviour, and building community confidence; improving educational attainment levels; improving the environment; improving health and well being; providing high quality housing; and providing employment and training opportunities.

What have we done so far...

The **Welfare Reform Board** was founded as the over-arching body in developing Bury's approach to Welfare Reform and has been in operation since October 2011. The focus has been on a partnership approach involving the sharing of information, publicity campaigns, approaches in terms of developing relevant policies and the sharing of funding opportunities. The board is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this strategy and has supported the developments outlined below.

Our **Corporate Debt Policy** has initiated a partnership approach to make sure that those who have the means to pay do pay and those individuals or families in genuine crisis receive the targeted help and support they need to prevent increasing debts, promote personal capacity and create better life chances. This approach was adopted by the council in October 2013 and has since been integrated by Six Town Housing into their working practices. So far cases have been trialled with the corporate debt approach leading to a reduction of customer debt worth over £18,000.

Bury's **Digital Inclusion** strategy was approved in October 2013 and gained a pledge of support from members of the Bury Wider Leadership Group. A steering group has been established involving representatives from key partners and the third sector. As a result, digital access points and additional available support across the borough have been mapped out and a central digital hub has been developed at Customer Support and Collections and is ready to go live.

October 2013 also saw the launch of Bury's **Credit Union** to provide people in the borough with access to affordable lending facilities. This is a joint project between Bury Council and Six Town Housing in partnership with Manchester Credit Union. Contact centres at the council and Six Town Housing have been briefed as well as wider organisations in the third sector, community and private sector so they can pass on the benefits of Credit Union to customers.

National Careers Service has been a key partner in continuing **Prestwich Works** and **Radcliffe Works**, providing career advice and support at Whittaker Street and opening the **Bury Employment Gateway** in Bury Millgate Shopping Centre with Bury College.

The **Housing Solutions Team** consists of staff from Benefits, Housing Options and Six Town Housing and has been in operation since July 2013. Although a temporary team they have taken a proactive approach by contacting customers affected by the under occupancy charge who aren't paying to provide them with advice and information, with the view to identify potential solutions.

Through joint working with Step Change, Bury residents now have access to free **Debt Advice and Budgeting Skills**. Whenever a customer needs help dealing with debts they can be easily transferred to free, independent debt and budgeting advice at the first point of contact. Speed dial has been put on all contact centre phones and on all free phones in the Whittaker Street and Town Hall reception.

Backing Young Bury has used the connecting provision model to target those young people who have the greatest barriers to employment, in order to gain the biggest impact in the community and the greatest savings in the future. Using all locally funded provision and shaping it into one offer for young people who are the furthest from securing employment. Since September 2012, over 4

cohort intakes, 38 young people have engaged with the Backing Young Bury Connecting Provision Traineeship Programme. Over 85% of these young people progressed onto the 6 month paid Jobs with Training placement, with over 65% progressing onto an apprenticeship, contract extension or new employment thereafter. By working with priority groups Bury Council has been able to draw down the **Youth Contract** and GM Commitment Grants to recycle into further activity. It is anticipated that by October 2014, over £105,000 will have been sourced from external funding streams, complimenting the in-kind match funding through positive and proactive partnership working.

Members have set up a **Worklessness Overview Project Group** to gain an understanding of how worklessness is being tackled in Bury. The group has begun to visit key initiatives and liaise with partners and will present their findings to overview and scrutiny at the beginning of the municipal year.

Customer Support and Collections have worked with partners to raise awareness on how **Discretionary Housing Payments** can help people affected by welfare reform. The Discretionary Housing Payment scheme provides a small amount of funding to deal with anomalies and hardship in situations where normal Housing Benefit does not cover all the rent. Single points of contact have been established with partners across the public, private and third sector, to make sure we are working together to help the people in the most genuine need.

April 2013 saw the introduction of **Bury Support Fund** to provide a local provision which is easily accessible to those who have a genuine need for short-term financial or food help towards crisis and resettlement into the community. The overarching approach has aimed at not only alleviating immediate need but also to provide financial advice to customers in order to maximise their incomes and provide a better solution to debt or financial problems.

We have been **Working Together to Tackle Food Poverty** through the Community Food Action Group that was set up at the beginning of last year. The group is made up from members from across the public and third sector and its key aim has been to "Feed hungry people in our Borough" and tackle food poverty in Bury. As a result of this group we are now more aware of the use of food parcels in Bury and a need for a food development worker has been identified to drive forward service collaborations to develop community facilities, ensuring food provisions at the point of need and longer term help is in place.

During 2013 we promoted and referred residents to the **Greater Manchester Energy Advice Service** (GMEAS) to access Energy Company Obligation Funding for free central heating boilers and insulation. Homes will have increased energy efficiency and therefore residents will benefit from reduced energy bills. Bury also took part in and promoted 2 Greater Manchester Energy Auctions.

The **HEN Project** (Housing Education and New Opportunities) commenced in February 2013. The successes of the project since then are that of the 52: 10 gained employment, 16 completed voluntary work, 4 enrolled into college, 3 undertook further training and 52% underwent a health screening.

Issues Arising

Universal Credit

In November 2010 Government presented the Universal Credit: Welfare That Works White Paper that lays out plans for a fundamental welfare reform with the aim of reducing welfare dependency, to ensure that 'work pays and is always seen to pay'. Elements of the new Universal Credit system will be implemented from 2013 onwards and is envisaged to combat worklessness and poverty. It will replace the current working age means tested benefits and will support those that go back to work. It will also provide a basic allowance with additional elements for children, disability, housing and caring.

Fuel poverty

In 2010 approximately 12,810 of the national proportion of properties were experiencing fuel poverty in Bury. Fuel poverty is caused by a combination of low incomes, expensive energy and energy-inefficient homes. Bury's Affordable Warmth Strategy 2011 - 2016 has been produced in line with the national targets set in the National Fuel Poverty Strategy 2001 but we are unlikely to eradicate fuel poverty by 2016 due to rising fuel prices and the recession. However, we have had many successful projects over the years since our original Strategy was produced in 2005 e.g. insulation schemes such as the 'Toasty Bury' scheme, winter warmth campaigns such as the 'Kill the Chill' and Bury Healthy Homes projects which have contributed towards achieving affordable warmth for Bury residents.

Troubled Families

The Supporting Communities, Improving Lives Programme builds on existing work both within Bury and across Greater Manchester to improve and reform public services, with the twin aims of reducing dependency/cost of public services and improving outcomes for those families who may be defined as troubled, complex or experiencing multiple problems. Essentially the programme focuses on those families who are known to, and receiving interventions from, a range of services. It will critically evaluate current services and aim to develop improved solutions to both address the needs of families currently meeting the criteria, and prevent families becoming complex in the future.

The programme addresses Team Bury's priority of "Managing complex needs in communities and neighbourhoods and promoting personal responsibility" and incorporates the delivery of Bury's commitment to the national Troubled Families programme.

Poverty Commission Report 2013

The Greater Manchester Poverty Commission published its findings on 15 January 2013 and calls for special measures which will assist more than 600,000 Greater Manchester residents who are experiencing the effects of extreme poverty. In addition, it calls for action to prevent nearly 1.6 million people (nearly half the population of Greater Manchester) sliding in to deeper poverty. Local authorities and others are encouraged to set up their own energy provider companies, credit unions and bulk food purchase 'supermarkets/foodbanks'. This would see shareholder profit replaced with reduced prices, social responsibility and greater benefit to the local community.

Managing the Money

Living in poverty is stressful. There are competing demands on a limited income, and many residents find it difficult to manage their finances. With the terms of how these are impacted by Welfare changes to Sanctions a key priority. As well there are also impacts being to residents. It detrimental effect on to the Council including which makes mitigating in everyone`s best

The key areas of work

Financial Inclusion

Group – aims to situation of tenants and range of approaches by commitment to address

creating pathways into work and training for the most isolated and vulnerable residents, connecting people to opportunities to gain the right skills to access good jobs, sharing best practice, combining resources to tackle common problems, developing new partnerships and embedding financial exclusion and worklessness into all aspects of the partnership.

Bury Council/Six Town Housing Corporate Debt Policy – provides a clear, consistent and transparent approach to debt collection for the Council, Six Town Housing and its Third Sector partners. Our clear objective is to make sure that those who have the means to pay do pay and those individuals / families in genuine crisis receive the targeted help and support they need to prevent increasing debts, promote personal capacity and create better life chances. High level case conferences will be introduced to a limited number of customers

Our Strategic Objectives

changes to benefits in paid and the reductions Reform, including the and Social Fund this is as the financial impact, on health and well- can also have a collection of income due council tax and rent the detrimental effects interest.

include:

and Worklessness

improve the financial residents of Bury via a establishing a financial exclusion,

in genuine need where there are multiple complex debts and multiple complex issues. The corporate debt policy will ensure a clear and consistent approach to corporate debt and make sure we are working together to support our most vulnerable.

Credit Union – We recognise how the welfare reform will have a negative impact on many of our most deprived families and individuals within the borough. Many of these facing the biggest impact are often excluded from affordable lending facilities and struggling to deal with debts. In order to prevent further deprivation it is essential that all people in the borough have access to affordable lending facilities and increase financial capacity. Now a Credit Union is established within the borough of Bury, the work required is to promote its benefits to residents and increase its uptake to help support our most vulnerable and help prevent further deprivation.

Debt advice and budgeting skills – In partnership with Step Change we can now provide our residents who are struggling financially with free, independent debt advice and budgeting skills. Giving people the skills to take responsibility for their own finances and understand the real cost of borrowing money, how to deal with creditors and planning for the future is invaluable in helping people to avoid and/or manage debt.

Guidance for Residents Regarding Switching Energy Providers - According to Ofgem as of November 2013 the average dual fuel bill in Great Britain for those paying by standard credit is £1,385 which is £130 more than in 2011 and 5% of customers are in debt to fuel suppliers with an average debt of £439 for electric and £433 for gas. Therefore to ensure residents are able to afford their energy bills they will be provided with advice throughout the year regarding energy price comparison and switching energy providers e.g. directing residents towards collective energy auctions and online price comparison websites.

Welfare Reform Board – As Bury adapts to the introduction of Universal Credit to support those residents affected the board will utilise its working relationship with the Department of Welfare and Pensions to raise issues and feedback on the progress of implementation. This input will contribute to how Universal Credit is integrated nationally.

Reducing Demand – Corporate Debt - This is a new approach to dealing with people in debt. There are three main principles of this approach which are to ensure that every person in debt has access to: free, independent, debt advice and budgeting skills, affordable lending facilities, employment opportunities and support in to work.

Claiming What is Due

Ensuring our residents claim what they are entitled to and that they are aware of changes to their benefits following the Welfare Reform will be key to improving the quality of life for those residents who are benefit-dependent. The changes to the Welfare State are the largest since its inception in 1948. As well as changes to the actual benefit system which customers will need support to understand and access, changes such as applications being made on-line and the ethos enshrined in the `Customer Commitment` mean changes in the way we deal with our customers.

The key areas of work include:

Bury Support Fund – localising support for resettlement and people facing crisis. Bury Council has a discretionary fund to help people in exceptional need and without the financial means to provide for themselves. This could be a short-term need because of a crisis or emergency that poses an immediate and substantial risk to their health and safety. Also the fund helps to support vulnerable people to stay in the community rather than entering care or those who need help to set up a permanent home when leaving temporary accommodation.

Under Occupancy – the Customer Support and Collections department helps people who find themselves worse off as a result of welfare reform changes. This work includes supporting customers through the changes, raising awareness and working in partnership to make sure customer's have access to relevant advice and support where needed. This can take the form of money management / debt advice, support into work, or in limited cases help from the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme. Key outcomes will be increased personal capacity, reduced risk to people falling into debt and supporting people into work.

Working together to tackle Food Poverty - as the impacts of the welfare reform continue to impact across the borough we have identified an increased demand for food amongst our most vulnerable people. Through the Bury Support Fund it has been established that within Bury there are a number of vulnerable families and individuals suffering food poverty. We have found that working together with Porch Boxes and other services improves the overall package of help we can offer to the most vulnerable and those in need. Food parcels are fast becoming part of structural support system to help assist longer term solutions and we are closely monitoring the take up and increased demand for food parcels with the onset of Universal Credit.

Energy Company Obligation Funding (ECO) and other energy efficiency schemes - by making homes more energy efficient this will lower residents' energy bills and ensure that they are more affordable. Therefore new energy efficiency schemes are co-ordinated and delivered through AGMA with Bury being centrally involved. One of these energy efficiency schemes is delivered by the Greater Manchester Energy Advice Service (GMEAS) and utilises Energy Company Obligation Funding to provide free central heating boilers and insulation for eligible residents in Bury. Therefore residents will be referred to GMEAS for assessment and access to this funding and other energy efficiency schemes that are developed over time.

Benefit Checks – reassessing someone’s entitlement to benefits and support when they come into contact with council and partnership services for financial help is crucial to ensure they are claiming what is due. People’s circumstances can easily change as can the support that is available to them. By working with our partners we aim to check a person’s current claim at all points of contact.

Discretionary Housing Payments - the scheme provides a small amount of funding to deal with anomalies and hardship in situations where normal Housing Benefit does not cover all the rent. A Discretionary Housing Payment Policy has been produced to make sure targeted help and support is going to the right people. Customer Support and Collections are working with partners to raise awareness on how DHP can help people as a short term solution whilst working towards positive long term change.

Reducing Dependency & Building Resilience – as the government continues to make savings there will be changes to the way it operates and supports those in need. Inevitably some residents will have to reduce their dependency on the state for an income and become resilient in adapting to the changes ahead. We can support this by enabling people to access information on the opportunities available to them through self service points and digital inclusion.

Work Works

For those people who are able, taking up work is widely recognised as both the quickest route out of poverty and an effective safeguard against entering poverty. This involves a holistic approach and is more wide-ranging than simply encouraging customers to apply for jobs. It involves a whole host of agencies including the third sector to address worklessness and initiatives to help customers become 'work ready'.

The key areas of work include:

Preventing and Reducing Youth Unemployment – We will continue in partnership to increase the number of jobs, apprenticeships and work experience opportunities for Bury young people. We will work with partners to enable our young people to access to high quality, impartial, information, advice and guidance to develop sound employment aspirations and make informed education and training choices, including apprenticeships. We will support national and regional programmes in this area such as Talent Match, GM Commitment, AGE Grant and GM Youth Contract extension.

Bury Employment and Skills Plan – To reduce inequalities in Bury by improving employment rates and the quality of employment available. The priorities are to improve intelligence by sharing and co-ordinating a range of labour market information held by partners, making it possible for all residents living in target areas or facing specific disadvantages and barriers to find work and engaging with local employers to encourage and support workforce development, diversify their workforces and address skills shortages.

Bury Adult Learning Service – offers a range of learning opportunities designed to assist people to develop the underpinning skills that support entry into further training and employment. Courses in literacy, numeracy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and IT qualifications are offered along with a range of courses offered aimed specifically at learners with additional needs to support employability e.g. Enterprise Skills, Communication for Life and Work.

Develop linkages across internal and partner organisations – We will develop a better understanding of how interventions across welfare to work, skills, health and local government can work together to improve employment and skills. This will include ensuring that we are prepared for the roll out of Universal Credit and all other Welfare Reforms to ensure we have the tools and mechanisms to ensure or residents fully understand the implications of Welfare Reform to themselves and their families. We will work across the PSR themes (Public Service Reform) to influence the design of delivery and investment models which addresses the current gap in provision for those residents within the Employment and Support Allowance cohort: supported by the principles of a family-based approach (where appropriate), with sequenced and evidence-based interventions.

Bury Community Learning Partnership – brings together key providers of adult learning to develop a collaborative approach to support the planning and delivery of informal adult learning. It promotes personal development, family learning and learning which helps to strengthen communities. The work focuses funding on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate in learning, improves confidence and well-being, and develops key skills to support employability and supporting progression into higher level learning.

Sport and Physical Activity Service Pool of Volunteers – help with holiday activities, events and activities for young people. Volunteers can earn credits to go towards payment for essential and desirable qualifications to become a sports coach or assistant. Volunteers also get involved in larger events such as the Ramsbottom Festival and Bury Light Night.

Support employers to recruit from priority groups – We will work in partnership with partner organisations to inform our local business community of the range of high quality pre-employment, post-employment support, wage incentives, Access to Work and other supportive mechanisms that are available to support workless residents from priority groups.

Prestwich and Radcliffe Works – Bury Council have commissioned a third sector organisation to manage the Working Neighbourhood model of locating information, advice and support agencies into one easily accessible location. Agencies working together help local residents to develop their work skills, access impartial careers advice and undertake job search activity with support.

Universal Credit – will require a culture change for those affected as they will be receiving their benefits differently. Payments will go into their bank accounts once a month like a working wage and will reduce gradually as people earn more so they won't lose all their benefits at once if they're on a low income. This will encourage and support people to enter into employment.

Work Programme Leavers – this new project for 2014 will target those Employment and Support Allowance (ESA WRAG Group) who have been on the work programme for 2 years and not found sustained work to intensely support them back into employment. Those taking part in the programme will have a personal work and well being coach to help and guide them in finding work and once they have entered into employment they will continue to receive support for 12 months.

Breaking the Cycle

People who are born into poverty all too often live in poverty throughout their lives. Raising aspirations and expectations is really important in helping people get out of poverty. Schools and colleges also have a vital role in ensuring our children and young people develop aspirations and expectations to be all they can be. Adult customers to benefit may need intensive work and signposting to relevant agencies in order to give them the optimum support to break the cycle and ensure the changes needed to achieve this are firmly embedded in people's lives.

The key areas of work include:

Connecting Provision - Backing Young Bury - The scheme provides opportunities for young people including extended work experience, pre-employment training and employment skills workshops. Almost a third of all Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants are aged between 16 and 24. Backing Young Bury aims to improve the learning and working opportunities for young unemployed people by working in partnership within the council and externally with our business community, colleges and training providers. This is still correct although we are now in the third and final year of the project. Youth unemployment has decreased in Bury but there are still pockets of young people who remain far from securing employment.

Supporting Communities, Improving Lives - As part of Greater Manchester's Whole Place Community Budget Pilot and the national Troubled Families programme we will be working with our partners to improve and better co-ordinate our services to families who face a range of issues.

Bury Employment Gateway - set up in partnership with the National Careers Service and Bury College, based in Bury's Millgate Shopping Centre the gateway will deliver; professional advice to help people find suitable apprenticeship job vacancies, guidance on relevant training and support to help overcome barriers preventing them getting work, a wide range of employability courses and the latest IT facilities and resources. It aims to work with customers and potential employers to create a service which combines support, training and valuable transferable employment skills.

Engagement with schools and colleges - work experience can provide young people with a real understanding of the world of work, the social benefits, and sense of achievement and satisfaction that arises from earning the money in your pocket. All too often the experience can be mundane, unfulfilling and uninspiring. Good work experience is a spring board to permanent employment and can provide the motivation for a young person to continue to learn or train. We will engage with schools to promote work experience and ensure that young people are aware of apprenticeships as a viable career choice. An increase in the number of progressions into apprenticeships locally will provide our young people with the skills that employers demand and enhance a young person's earning potential in the labour market in the future.

Doorstep Sport Clubs – National programme being delivered in Bury to provide a vibrant and varied sporting offer to young people in disadvantaged communities that is designed to grow their motivation and ability to adopt a sporting habit for life. The coaches who run the clubs are special people - skilled in leading sport as well as in supporting young people to make the best of themselves. The coaches are local and know the communities they work in. The young volunteers who co-run the clubs will gain new skills and qualifications and grow as they learn to lead.

Every Contact Counts

The paid and volunteer workforce of Team Bury is immense, with a wide reach and, for some of our workforce, access to residents who other services cannot reach. We need to ensure that when our services are in contact with residents, that our front-line staff are confident and able to signpost people to other appropriate services. This includes addressing how the Council provides its services with the key mantra of 'digital by default' and the self-service this involves, while at the same time ensuring we have a resilient digital inclusion approach which assists those customers who may need support in achieving this.

The key areas of work include:

Children's Centres - independent research demonstrates that Children's Centres are an effective way of supporting families to overcome the experience of living in poverty. We need to maximise and support the effectiveness of our network of Children's Centre to support as many families as possible.

Township Forums - Township Forums have been created to promote engagement and partnership at the local level. There are six Township Forums across the borough and public meetings are held six times a year, usually in the evenings, in local community venues.

Customer care training – is now available to staff as an e-learning or tutor-led course. The programme is available to front-line employees who are new to the council and for those who would like to develop the skills which contribute to exceptional customer service.

Digital Inclusion - as a council we want Bury to be a digitally included society where all residents have the skills and facilities to access the internet and use computers. We are working to improve access to online facilities and support people to develop their internet skills. This is essential to ensure that the people of Bury have increased life chances, a better quality of life and are not adversely affected by any 'digital by default' policies.

Driving cultural change – as changes are implemented through Welfare Reform and Universal Credit it is not just our customers and residents who need to adapt, our staff do too. Engaging with staff on the front line of council services so they are aware of these changes and what support is available to customers is crucial in ensuring we reach all those who need it. This has been successful in communicating the principles of digital inclusion, with a key liaison officer actively engaging with staff, and this approach is to be continued.

Glossary

To help you read this strategy, an explanation of the special words and phrases that you will find used in the strategy is set out below:

What does it mean?	
Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA)	A local government association representing the ten local authorities of Greater Manchester and includes other public, private and voluntary sectors. AGMA works together to drive new investment, co-ordinate planning and deliver results for its residents.
Bury Citizen's Advice Bureau	Provides a free and comprehensive advice service to Bury's residents. The service helps to resolve legal, money and other problems by providing confidential advice.
Bury Youth Cabinet	A group that supports young people to have a voice and to make positive changes for others. The group is supported by the United Kingdom Youth Parliament (UKYP) and allows young people to work alongside politicians at all levels to ensure that young people are well represented.
Employment Support Allowance	Replaced Incapacity Benefit and Income Support paid on incapacity grounds in 2008. It offers personalised support and financial help to prepare for work.
Equality Analysis (EA)	Provides a comprehensive and consistent approach for analysing the effect upon equality and community cohesion of all our services, policies and practices.
HIGHLIGHT Review	An intensive six-week structured focus on a particular issue. It involves research and consultation and will provide an in-depth understanding of the issue.
Incapacity Benefit (IB)	See Employment Support Allowance.
Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	The Index pulls together data on different forms of deprivation into one overall deprivation score. The main types of deprivation that are easily measured are: income (poverty), employment (or exclusion from the labour market), education, health, crime, access to services and housing.
Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)	A benefit paid to eligible people who are currently unemployed and looking for work.
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 require PCTs and local authorities to produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of the health and wellbeing of their local community.
Life Chances Indicator (LCI)	Performance indicators that emphasise personal and individual characteristics rather than social and environmental factors.
Office of Fair Trading (OFT)	The UK's consumer and competition authority. Their mission is to make markets work well for consumers by being open, fair and vigorous competition with each other for the consumer's custom.

Office for National Statistics (ONS)	Collects, compiles, analyse and disseminate a range of economic, social and demographic statistics relating to the UK.
Office of Communications (OFCOM)	The communications regulator that regulates the television and radio sectors, fixed line telecoms, mobiles, postal services, plus the airwaves over which wireless devices operate.
Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM)	Promotes competition, wherever appropriate, and regulates the monopoly companies which run the gas and electricity networks.
Super Output Area	SOAs are a unit of geography used in the UK for statistical analysis. SOAs were created with the intention that they would not be subject to frequent boundary change. The SOAs referred to typically have around 1,500 residents.
Team Bury (Local Strategic Partnership)	Team Bury is the name given to Bury's Local Strategic Partnership. The partnership consists of the major public agencies and representatives of other sectors of the community and works to deliver the ambitions for the borough – as set out in the Community Strategy.
Welfare Reform	The Welfare reform Act 2012 became law in March 2012. The Act introduces a wide range of reforms to the benefits and tax credits system.

Throughout this plan, you will find further details on what we have done and what we plan to do next. We hope you find this useful. If you have any comments or questions on how we could improve further, please email us at improvementteam@bury.gov.uk

Contact us

For further information about the Poverty Strategy please contact:

- : Log on to www.bury.gov.uk
- 7 Email us at improvementteam@bury.gov.uk
- * Write to us at Policy and Improvement Team, Bury Council, Bury Town Hall, Knowsley Street, Bury, BL9 0SW



Equality Analysis Form

The following questions will document the effect of your service or proposed policy, procedure, working practice, strategy or decision (hereafter referred to as 'policy') on equality, and demonstrate that you have paid due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

1. RESPONSIBILITY

Department	Communities & Wellbeing	
Service	Policy & Improvement Team	
Proposed policy	Bury's Poverty Strategy 2014-16	
Date	07/05/2014	
Officer responsible for the 'policy' and for completing the equality analysis	Name	Sarah Marshall
	Post Title	Performance Officer
	Contact Number	0161 253 7658
	Signature	Sarah Marshall
	Date	07/05/2014
Equality officer consulted	Name	Mary Wood
	Post Title	Principal Officer – Equalities
	Contact Number	0161 253 6795
	Signature	 14/2014
	Date	29 th May 2014

2. AIMS

What is the purpose of the policy/service and what is it intended to achieve?	<p>The Child Poverty Act 2010 requires local authorities to produce child poverty strategies and to work with local partners to reduce and prevent child poverty in the area. In Bury, we feel that in order to achieve this we must look at poverty across all of our communities, and this document provides details of our key strategic objectives, projects and performance indicators.</p> <p>The strategy was written in February 2013 and has been refreshed in May 2014 to reflect on progress to date and take account of any new developments. The Welfare Reform Board is responsible for monitoring progress against the strategy.</p>
Who are the main stakeholders?	<p>Welfare Reform Board Team Bury Partnership organisations Third sector All council departments All front line staff All residents of Bury</p>

	Six Town Housing.
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3. ESTABLISHING RELEVANCE TO EQUALITY

3a. Using the drop down lists below, please advise whether the policy/service has either a positive or negative effect on any groups of people with protected equality characteristics. If you answer yes to any question, please also explain why and how that group of people will be affected.

Protected equality characteristic	Positive effect (Yes/No)	Negative effect (Yes/No)	Explanation
Race	No	No	
Disability	Yes	No	The Poverty Strategy has five strategic objectives including 'Claiming what is due' which will look at ensuring our residents claim what they are entitled to and that they are aware of changes to their benefits following the Welfare Reform. This will be key to improving the quality of life for those residents who are benefit-dependent, many of whom are disabled. Another objective is 'Work works' which takes a holistic approach to addressing worklessness, developing skills and encouraging employers to diversify their workforce.
Gender	No	No	
Gender reassignment	No	No	
Age	Yes	No	The Child Poverty Act 2010 requires local authorities to produce child poverty strategies and work with local partners to reduce and prevent child poverty in their area. However, this strategy looks at poverty across all our communities as well as children. There are five strategic objectives within this strategy, one of which is 'Breaking the cycle' which includes projects to assist our children and young people to develop aspirations and expectations to be all they can be. The strategy also takes into account childcare and early years to promote early intervention

			which is more effective in reducing long term poverty.
Sexual orientation	No	No	
Religion or belief	No	No	
Caring responsibilities	Yes	No	There are five strategic objectives within the strategy. The 'Breaking the cycle' strategy looks at people who are born into poverty all too often live in poverty throughout their lives. Raising aspirations and expectations is really important in helping people get out of poverty. Schools also have a vital role in ensuring our children and young people develop aspirations and expectations to be all they can be.
Pregnancy or maternity	No	No	
Marriage or civil partnership	No	No	

3b. Using the drop down lists below, please advise whether or not our policy/service has relevance to the Public Sector Equality Duty. If you answer yes to any question, please explain why.

General Public Sector Equality Duties	Relevance (Yes/No)	Reason for the relevance
Need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010	No	
Need to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (eg. by removing or minimising disadvantages or meeting needs)	Yes	By working to address and reduce poverty the strategy will benefit all residents in the borough who experience poverty but will particularly help children, older people and those who are disabled who are disproportionately affected.
Need to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (eg. by tackling prejudice or promoting understanding)	No	

If you answered 'YES' to any of the questions in 3a and 3b

Go straight to Question 4

If you answered 'NO' to all of the questions in 3a and 3b

Go to Question 3c and do not answer questions 4-6

3c. If you have answered 'No' to all the questions in 3a and 3b please explain why you feel that your policy/service has no relevance to equality.

4. EQUALITY INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT

4a. For a service plan, please list what equality information you currently have available, **OR** for a new/changed policy or practice please list what equality information you considered and engagement you have carried out in relation to it.

Please provide a link if the information is published on the web and advise when it was last updated?

(NB. Equality information can be both qualitative and quantitative. It includes knowledge of service users, satisfaction rates, compliments and complaints, the results of surveys or other engagement activities and should be broken down by equality characteristics where relevant.)

Details of the equality information or engagement	Internet link if published	Date last updated
Residents' Focus Group - A focus group was carried out during the Poverty HIGHLIGHT Review involving ten people with different circumstances. The majority of the group defined poverty as when "you can't afford to eat or clothe yourself." The group suggested that one location for benefits advice, less confusing paperwork, confidence building courses, training in a non-formal environment, flexible jobs that fitted around childcare and free childcare would help their current situation.	N/A	2009/10
Partnership Workshop - A workshop was held in September 2011 involving staff from Team Bury organisations. As well as partnership organisations, children and young people, people during moments of need, lone parents, neighbouring authorities, children's centres, schools and colleges, service users and Revenues and Benefits should be involved in future consultation. A variety of methods were suggested.	N/A	Sept 2011
Focus Groups - A number of focus groups were held in February 2012 with young people, people living on benefits and people with disabilities. All of the groups involved agreed that poverty is an issue in Bury and that they were personally aware of people in poverty.	N/A	Feb 2012

4b. Are there any information gaps, and if so how do you plan to tackle them?

5. CONCLUSIONS OF THE EQUALITY ANALYSIS

What will the likely overall effect of your policy/service plan be on equality?	The overall effect of the strategy on equality is positive particularly in respect of disability, age and caring responsibilities by aiming to reduce poverty and inequality, which is disproportionately experienced by people with these characteristics.
If you identified any negative effects (see questions 3a) or discrimination what measures have you put in place to remove or mitigate them?	None
Have you identified any further ways that you can advance equality of opportunity and/or foster good relations? If so, please give details.	None
What steps do you intend to take now in respect of the implementation of your policy/service plan?	The refresh will be considered by Overview and Scrutiny for approval. The strategy will be made available to staff and residents via the internet and the progress of the key projects and performance indicators will be managed and monitored by the Welfare Reform Project Board.

6. MONITORING AND REVIEW

If you intend to proceed with your policy/service plan, please detail what monitoring arrangements (if appropriate) you will put in place to monitor the ongoing effects. Please also state when the policy/service plan will be reviewed.

The Poverty Strategy includes key projects and performance indicators which will be managed and monitored by the Welfare Reform Project Board on a bi-annual basis.

COPIES OF THIS EQUALITY ANALYSIS FORM SHOULD BE ATTACHED TO ANY REPORTS/SERVICE PLANS AND ALSO SENT TO THE EQUALITY INBOX (equality@bury.gov.uk) FOR PUBLICATION.

Scrutiny Report

Agenda Item	
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MEETING: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: 12 JUNE 2014 (7.30PM)

SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2014/2015

REPORT FROM: LEIGH WEBB, PRINCIPAL DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER

CONTACT OFFICER:

1.0 SUMMARY

This report sets out details the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee along with a Work Programme Prioritisation Protocol to assist in the development of a Work Programme for 2014/2015.

2.0 MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION/DECISION

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested to:

Agree and set an Annual Work Programme for the 2014/2015 Municipal Year, in accordance with Committee's remit, previous work and the Work Programme and Prioritisation Protocol.

3.0 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3.1 Terms of reference

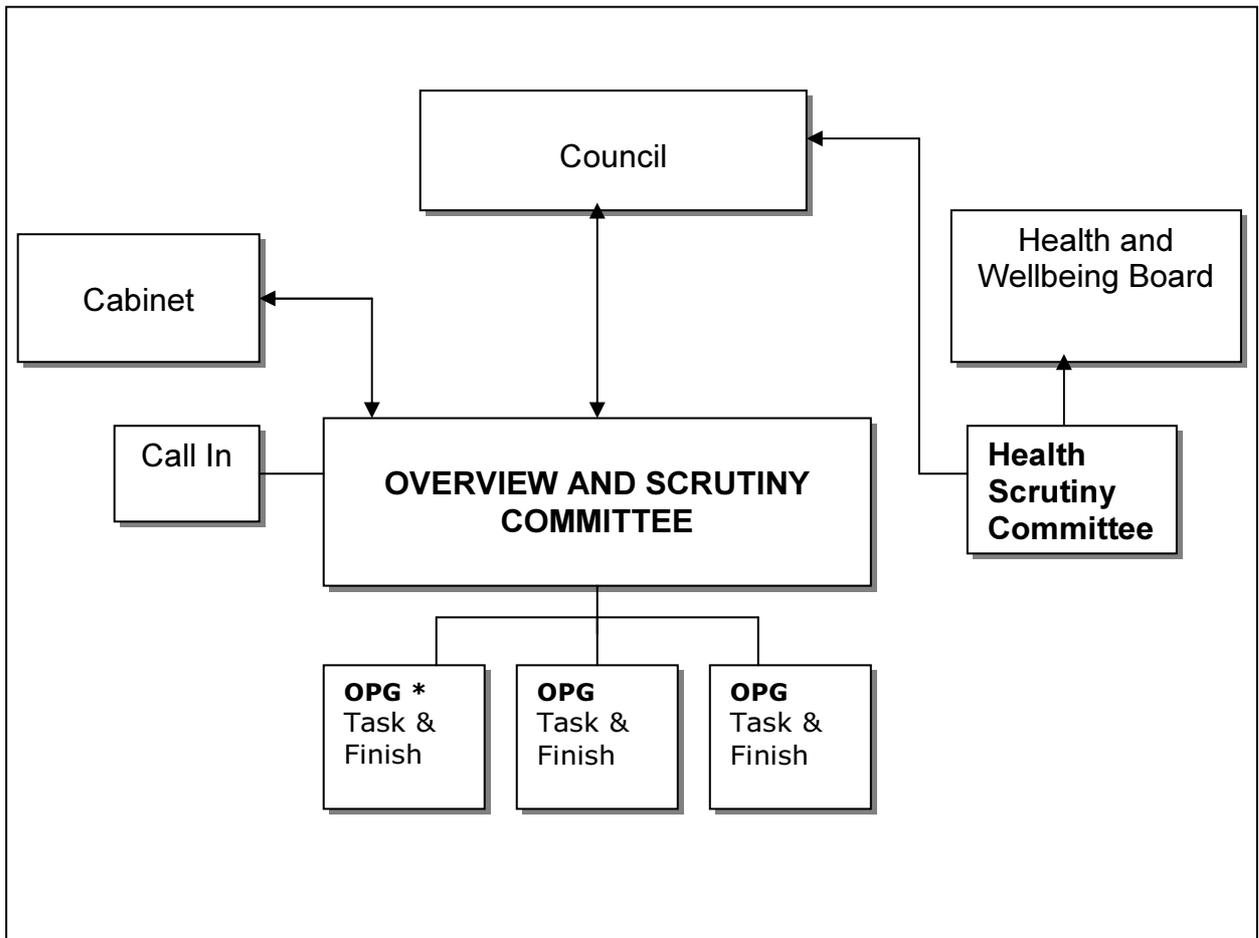
- To review and scrutinise the decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions.
- To review and scrutinise the performance of the Council in relation to its policy objectives, performance targets and all particular service areas.
- To set up, appoint and monitor Scrutiny Panels (set up to carry out reviews of policies, services or the impact of decisions).
- To make recommendations to the Cabinet and/or appropriate Committee and/or Council arising from the outcome of the Scrutiny process.
- To review or scrutinise decisions made or other action taken in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions.

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- Oversight of the provision, planning and management of the Council’s resources including its budget, revenue borrowing assets and audit arrangements.
- Oversight of the Council’s corporate plans and strategies and the monitoring of the corporate plan and departmental plans.
- To scrutinise outside bodies and partners relevant to the Council.
- To receive all reports from external inspectors.

3.2 Scrutiny Structure

The current scrutiny structure was adopted by Full Council on 28 March 2012, based on the findings of a review carried out by the Overview Management Committee. The structure makes provision for the setting up of time-limited task and finish Scrutiny Panels to carry out detailed work into specific topics. These Panels will be set up and monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with membership drawn from all backbench Councillors. The diagram below sets out the current scrutiny structure.



* Overview Project Group

4.0 WORK PROGRAMME 2014/2015

- 4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is required to set a work programme for 2014/2015.
- 4.2 A well thought out and effective Work Programme will allow work to be time-tabled to ensure completion and help determine when and what resources may be needed.
- 4.3 Within the Programme it is important to ensure that there is the capacity to provide an urgent response to issues that arise during the year and need to be dealt with at short notice. Scrutiny of Key Executive decisions will form a large element of the Committee's work during the year and it is important that flexibility is built into the Work Programme to allow for this to take place.
- 4.4 To assist in the development of an outcome focussed, measurable, realistic and timely Work Programme, a Prioritisation Protocol is set out below. The Protocol sets out some initial questions to be asked of proposed topics and includes further questions and filters to help achieve a prioritised and deliverable work programme.

4.0 SUGGESTED ITEMS ARISING FROM LAST YEAR

During last year's work, the Committee resolved that the following items be carried over for further consideration:

- Welfare Reform
- Staff Sickness Statistic/Actions by Department

At the last meeting of the Committee held on 25 March 2014, the following resolution was agreed:

"That, as part of this Committee's Work Programme for 2014/15, an Overview Project Group be set up to monitor and challenge performance in relation to the SIF Action Plan. "

5.0 CONCLUSION

The information contained in this report provides an outline of the terms of reference for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee along with a Work Programme Prioritisation Protocol to assist in setting an outcome based, focussed, balanced and deliverable work programme based on the priorities of Bury Council and its residents.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Contact Officer: Leigh Webb, Democratic Services
Telephone number: 0161 253 5399
E-mail address: l.m.webb@bury.gov.uk
Date: 3 June 2014

Prioritising Topics for Scrutiny

When deciding which items to include on the Scrutiny Work Programmes it can sometimes become confusing and difficult to identify the topics which are most important or worthy of scrutiny.

Section 1 - At the outset

When topics have been identified as possible Scrutiny Work Programme items, Members and their support Officers should ask the following of each topic identified;

- **Does the issue have a potential impact for one or more sections of the population?** Yes – Leave on Work Programme
- **Is the issue strategic and significant?** Yes – Leave on Work Programme
- **Is there a clear objective for scrutinising this topic?** Can objective be identified – Yes leave on Work Programme
- **Is there evidence to support the need for scrutiny?** Yes – Leave on Work Programme
- **What are the likely benefits to the Council and its customers? What do we hope to achieve?** If identifiable – Leave on Work Programme
- **Are you likely to achieve a desired outcome?** Can benefits to Council and customers be achieved?
- **What are the potential risks?**
- **Are there adequate resources available to do the activity well?**
- **Is the Scrutiny activity timely?** Yes – Leave on Work Programme

Section 2 – Criteria to Reject

Once the questions above have been answered and the topics are still included on the Work Programme, Members should move onto the following rejection filters:-

Reject if;

- The issue is being examined elsewhere e.g. officer group, other Councillor group.
- Issue was reviewed less than 2 years ago
- New legislation or guidance expected within the year
- No scope for scrutiny to add value/make a difference
- The objective cannot be achieved in the specified timescale
- Changes are currently being /have recently been implemented

Section 3 – Prioritisation of Topics

The following questions should be asked when looking to prioritise potential work programme items.

Public interest

- Has the issue been identified by Members through surgeries and other contact with constituents?(on how many occasions – more occasions warrants a higher score).
- Has a user dissatisfaction with the service been identified? (complaints).
- Topic identified through Market Surveys/Citizens Panel.
- Has the issue been covered in the local media?

Internal Council priority

- Council Priority area?
- There is a high level of budgetary commitment to the service/policy area (as percentage of total expenditure)
- There has been a pattern of budgetary overspends
- The service is a poor performer (evidence from performance indicators/benchmarking).

External Factors

- Central Government priority area
- Issues raised by External Audit Management Letter/External Audit Reports.
- Key reports or new evidence provided by external organisations on key issue.