

Minutes of: BURY WEST TOWNSHIP FORUM

Date of Meeting: 6 January 2016

Present: Councillor M Hankey(in the Chair)
Councillors J Harris, Kerrison, S Nuttall, S Southworth and R Walker

Also in attendance: Mr P Jones – Brandlesholme Residents Association
Reverend K Selby – Bolton Road Methodist Church

Public Attendance: There were 11 members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence:

BWTF.585 WELCOME

Councillor Hankey welcomed those present to the meeting.

BWTF.586 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Walker declared a personal interest in the item relating to First Buses as he was a regular user of their services.

Councillor Kerrison declared a personal interest in the item relating to First Buses as she was a regular user of their services.

BWTF.587 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the last meeting be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

BWTF.588 MATTERS ARISING

Councillor Walker stated that he had sent his apologies for the last meeting of the Township Forum as he had been attending a School Governor's meeting. He asked that this be recorded as a clash.

BWTF.589 POLICE UPDATE

There were no police representatives in attendance at the meeting.

BWTF.590 2016/2017 BUDGET CONSULTATION

Councillor Rishi Shori, Deputy Leader of the Council and Steve Kenyon Interim Director of Resources and Regulation gave a presentation setting out the budget consultation for 2016/2017.

It was explained that funding received from central government would continue to reduce. It was reported that for 2016/2017 it was estimated that the Council will

have to cut £11.6 million from its budget as core funding was being reduced by 10.75%. It was anticipated that the Council's funding would be cut by over 30% in the coming 4 years. This is in top of the £54million lost since 2010.

This is happening at a time when residents' needs are changing, demands are increasing and expectations are high. The Council and its partners will have to work differently to deliver the best outcomes with the resources available.

The Council will need to prioritise services covering its legal obligations and its priorities to look after the vulnerable; promote a strong local economy and be a good place to live and invest.

The impact of the reduction in budget was set out:-

- Service changes – can't rule out service closures and/or a reduced range of services in future years.
- Explore different ways of delivering services and greater use of partnership working.
- Increased waiting times and /or reduced quality of service
- Limits to what the Council can afford to provide and carry out
- A different relationship with residents – understanding what the Council can and can't do
- Greater use of technology

Steve Kenyon set out the cuts that the Council had experienced since 2011 and explained that these added up to £53.561million.

Steve also introduced a slide setting out where the Council spent its money with the top three areas being Older People – 30p per £1, Children's Services (non schools) – 24p per £1 and Cleansing, Refuse Collection and Disposal – 13p per £1.

It was explained that the way that the funding was allocated was based on a formula which looked at specific areas such as levels of deprivation and other demographics. This meant that Bury received £331pp compared to the national average of £387pp.

There would also be cuts to a number of grants that the Council receives as well as new concerns such as Apprenticeship Levy, Employers National Insurance and the Living Wage. It was also explained that there was uncertainty around the localisation of business rates and how this would impact on the Council.

Work had been carried out to address the cuts and the following measures had been or would be carried out :-

- Alternative Service Delivery Models
- Grant Optimisation
- Grants to Voluntary Sector
- Income generation
- Better use of buildings and Assets
- Procurement saving
- Service Redesign

- Staff Restructuring
- Use of new technology

The consultation had been launched on 10 December 2015 and was asking residents to consider how savings could be made and suggest new ways of working.

The consultation was due to close on 9 February 2016 and all findings would be fed into the budget setting process. The budget was due to be debated at the full Council Meeting on 24 February.

Comments could be sent via e-mail, letter or to a dedicated telephone number.

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments and the following points were raised:-

- Councillor Harris referred to the business rates and asked whether the council would be able to set the rates.

It was explained that businesses would be valued by the Valuation Office Agency and the rate in the pound set nationally.

- Councillor Hankey asked whether the Council could award discounts as an incentive to businesses to keep them in the borough.

It was stated that the Council has introduced a scheme providing discounts for new business in certain parts of the Borough, and also further powers would be available under GM devolution.

- A member of the public referred to Councils receiving penalties for raising Council Tax by more than 2% and asked whether this was still the case.

It was explained that this was still the case and the Council would not be able to raise the Council Tax by more than 2%, but it was reported that a 2% Social Care Precept could be added on top of any rises to help pay for social care needs which were increasing as the population got older.

- A member of the public referred to the living wage and the fact that you have to be aged 25 to receive it. He referred to the need to bring younger people into certain services to get them trained before the living wage kicks in.

Steve explained that the Council do have a very successful apprenticeship scheme which covers all areas of council business from manual to office settings.

- A member of the public asked what the collection rate for Council Tax was.

It was reported that the Council collected 97.5% in year and the rest was recouped later. The Council have very high rates for collection.

It was agreed:

That Councillor Shori and Steve Kenyon be thanked for their attendance at the meeting.

BWTF.591 FIRST BUSES

Dave Brotheridge, Steve Shaw and Dwayne Wells from First Bus attended the meeting to report on First Bus services across the borough and to answer questions relating to First Bus and the bus services they provide.

Dave reported that First Bus would be holding a customer event on 27 January at Bury Interchange between 11am and 1pm outside the Travel Shop.

Dave also stated that representatives from First Bus would be more than happy to attend the Township Forum meetings regularly to update their customers and listen to concerns or ideas.

Those present were given the opportunity to ask questions or make comments and the following points were raised:-

- A member of the public referred to the 472/474 Ramsbottom service which should be every 10 minutes and stated that sometimes you could wait for half an hour without a bus and then 3 would arrive at once.

Dave explained that the high frequency services such as this were prone to bunching if there was a problem on the route. The company had undergone redevelopment and an advanced vehicle location tracking device had been introduced which could see where all first bus vehicles were when out on the road. This would help with issues such as bunching. It was also explained that Ramsbottom is a very popular place to live with just single track roads in and out. If there was any disruption this would have a knock on effect to the whole service.

- Councillor Walker referred to the 98 service which was every 15 minutes and ran from Manchester to Bury via Whitefield, Radcliffe and down Ainsworth Road. The service was not very reliable and was problematic every day. Councillor Walker asked if consideration could be given to some of the buses turning back at Whitefield.
- Mr Berry explained that he spend £50 a month for a bus pass only to receive a very unreliable service. The 7.29am 98 service which went past Whitehead Park was 5 minutes early more often than not. If the 7.29am bus was early the next bus after was 7.49am which was mostly late and always a single deck and therefore very busy.

It was explained that the tracking device would be able to highlight these issues and would show up where vehicles were persistently early.

- Mr Berry also stated that the First Bus app did not show in real time where the buses were and this had meant that he had missed buses on occasions.

Mr Brotheridge stated that he was aware that the 98 service could be better than it was currently and it was hoped that the tracking would show where problems were and then these could be looked at.

- Mr Berry suggested that information could be provided at bus stops informing when the next bus was due as was done at tram stops.

It was explained that this type of service would have to be provided by Transport for Greater Manchester. It had been trialled on a few occasions but the funding hadn't been enough to cover the cost.

- A member of the public stated that there were also issues with the 471 service being late and more than one vehicle turning up at the same time.

Dave explained that there were three main junctions in Bury:-

Heap Bridge, Bury Bridge and Moorgate. If any of these junctions were experiencing problems this would have an effect on the buses and if all three were experiencing problems it could cause gridlock across the town centre which would have knock on effect on the network across the town and further. It was also explained that the removal of the bus lane on Rochdale Road was causing issues with the buses running to time.

It was also reported that any incidents in Manchester could have an effect on other areas due to drivers not being available.

- A member of the public explained that there was a lot of different information available in relation to timetables. When you looked online the information was different to that provided at the Travel Shop.
- A resident from Brandlesholme explained that she had recently had the need to attend the Moorgate Medical Centre on a number of occasions whilst using crutches. To do this on public transport she had to get off the bus (474) at the interchange and then get back on to continue to the Moorgate or catch the other bus (472) and go through Ramsbottom and then down Walmersley Road to get off at the Moorgate. She asked whether it would be possible to make the 474 a true circular route.

It was stated that this would be considered as an option.

- A member of the public stated that some of the buses currently in operation were old and very uncomfortable.

It was anticipated that the older buses would be phased out.

It was agreed:

That Dave, Steve and Dwayne be thanked for their attendance

BWTF.592 ADVISORY GROUP UPDATE

Councillor Hankey welcomed Reverend Kathy Selby to the meeting in her capacity of Advisory Group Member.

Mr Phil Jones representing Brandlesholme Residents reported that the signs for Brandlesholme had been ordered and would be installed as soon as they were ready.

The defibrillator at Tesco on Brandlesholme Road had been installed.

It was hoped that funding would be available to install a bench near to the shops on Brandlesholme Road.

It was agreed:

That Mr Jones be thanked for the update

BWTF.593 OPEN FORUM/PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A resident from Mile Lane asked if there was an update on the old Jolly Carters site on Bolton Road. The site was turning derelict and there was a big green container in the car park that had been there for some time.

Councillor Walker explained that he had written to Mr Fowler at the Council to ask that action be taken at the site. He had asked four specific questions;

- What is the green container located on the car park;
- Why are there are traffic cones and barriers at the entrance to the site;
- How bad does the site have to become before a Section 215 notice can be issued;
- Who owns the land and buildings?

Councillor Walker also reported that the Planning Enforcement Officer had attended the site a few months previously but had not felt it was at a level requiring a S215.

BWTF.594 TOWNSHIP PLAN - FOR INFORMATION

It was agreed:

That the contents of the report be noted

BWTF.595 FUNDING REPORT - FOR INFORMATION

It was agreed:

That the contents of the report be noted

BWTF.596 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was reported that the next meeting of the Bury West Township Forum would be held on Tuesday 8 March at The Elton Centre at 7pm

COUNCILLOR
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at Time Not Specified and ended at Time Not Specified)