

AGENDA FOR OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



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To: All Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillors : R Bernstein, C Birchmore, A Arif, N Bayley,
N Boroda, D Green, N Jones, K Peel, T Pilkington,
D Vernon (Chair) and M Walsh

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 January 2023
Place:	Council Chamber, Bury Town Hall
Time:	7.00 pm
Briefing Facilities:	If Opposition Members and Co-opted Members require briefing on any particular item on the Agenda, the appropriate Director/Senior Officer originating the related report should be contacted.
Notes:	

AGENDA

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 *(Pages 3 - 12)*

The minutes from the meeting held on 01st November 2022 are attached for approval.

4 MATTERS ARISING

5 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.

6 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

A period of up to 15 minutes will be allocated for questions and supplementary questions from members of the Council who are not members of the committee. This period may be varied at the discretion of the chair.

7 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY UPDATE *(Pages 13 - 22)*

Report from Councillor Cummins, Cabinet Member for Housing Services

8 TACKLING FUEL POVERTY *(Pages 23 - 30)*

Report from Councillor Cummins, Cabinet Member for Housing Services attached.

9 HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE AND LGA PEER REVIEW PROGRESS UPDATE *(Pages 31 - 36)*

Report from Councillor Alan Quinn Cabinet Member for Environment, Climate Change and Operations attached.

10 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: 1 November 2022

Present: Councillor D Vernon (in the Chair)
Councillors R Bernstein, C Birchmore, A Arif, N Bayley,
N Boroda, N Jones, K Peel and T Pilkington.

Also in attendance: Councillor O'Brien, Leader
Councillor Gold, Cabinet Member for Finance and Communities
Sir Howard Bernstein
Sam Evans, Executive Director of Finance
Sarah Poruu, Assistant Director of Regeneration Delivery
Robert Summerfield, Assistant Director of Regeneration
Delivery
Jacqui Dennis, Director of Law and Democratic Services
Chloe Ashworth, Democratic Services

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor D Green and Councillor M Walsh

OSC.1 APOLOGIES

Apologies are noted above.

OSC.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

OSC.3 MINUTES

It was agreed:

The minutes of the meeting held on the 06th September 2022 be approved.

OSC.4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no outstanding matters arising.

OSC.5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (Pages 7 - 10)

Notice had been received of 5 questions. The Chair advised that copies of the questions had been circulated to all Councillors. The Chair also gave an undertaking to make these available on the Council Web Site.

Questioner	Topic	Responding
David Stanley	Lease	Cllr O'Brien
Mandy Gane	The Longfield Suite	Cllr O'Brien
Steve Devine	Prestwich Public Engagement	Cllr O'Brien
Andrea Turner	Prestwich Neighborhood Plan	Cllr O'Brien
Steve Wright	The Longfield Suite	Cllr O'Brien

OSC.6 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

There were no member questions.

OSC.7 REGENERATION UPDATE

It was agreed that this item will be split into two sections.

Part A: Sir Howard Bernstein provided an overview in relation to the work he is supporting regarding Radcliffe Regeneration.

Sir Howard advised the Committee that a strong and robust management team is in place and the scheme has an engaged contractor onboard who is engaged with the work programme.

Areas highlighted as potential concerns are transport and the department of education delivering a national procurement programme to open the new School in the required timescales.

To address these concerns Sir Howard Bernstein advised, Greater Manchester have backed the regeneration scheme and supported the bid that went into central Government, in conclusion we now have confirmation that £9 Million has been earmarked for Radcliffe. In addition, Sir Howard assured Committee Members that work has been done to support the department for Education to deliver the schemes that will ensure the school is delivered in timescales needed.

Finally, Sir Howard advised the People and Communities strategy may be a piece of work the Committee want to review in the future.

In addition, Councillor O'Brien provided a brief overview of the work undertaken as part of the Radcliffe Regeneration Scheme and gave thanks to officers and local members for their support and work so far undertaken.

Discussions took place regarding the Parking Strategy recently developed by WSP Ltd. In assurance to the Committee the Leader advised this work can be viewed and is a report that will be shared with elected members following the meeting. Further questions took place regarding the parking in Radcliffe, and when this will be considered considering the building of the Radcliffe Hub.

The Committee were reassured that a project board and details such as transport and contractual restrictions are in place to increase the likelihood of the school being delivered by September 2024.

Part B: Councillor O'Brien provided an overview of Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan, Prestwich Town Centre, and Bury Business Improvement District (BID).

Ramsbottom plan sets out a series of high-level proposals and concepts that look to enhance the town centre for residents, the business community, and visitors. Proposals include creating quality workspace in the heart of the town, as well as identifying opportunities for improvements to the built environment, public realm and active travel routes.

Prestwich: The Council and Muse Developments Ltd have agreed to form the Prestwich Regeneration LLP to bring forward a multi-phase, mixed use regeneration scheme. It will comprise a Community Hub accommodating Council services (library, adult learning and community / well-being space) and Public Sector partners. In addition, there is an opportunity

to deliver a market (food and beverage), retail space for established independent traders, residential apartment buildings, town houses and a green travel hub / multi storey car park.

Bury BID: The model will help to deliver the Council's ambitions for Bury town centre and the town centre businesses, it will create a strong/effective partnership approach and be complimentary to the regeneration and development work of the Council, particularly linking to the implementation of the Bury Town Centre Masterplan and the emerging Economic Development Strategy that will support inclusive economic growth.

A member sought assurances on how partnerships will shape the regeneration work and how it will continue. In response Councillor O'Brien advised partnership working is a key priority and some of the partnership relations included are transport providers including Transport for Greater Manchester, Housing Partners and Health services. In assurance to members Cllr O'Brien advised the detail of the health partnerships will be evidenced though ensuring new services such as leisure and health providers will be suitable and accessible to residents.

Discussions took place regarding the spaces each township will have for business units. In conclusion members were advised feasibility work is taking place but there is enough demand for each place in the Borough and commercial assessments are taking place to ensure the product is fit for purpose for each area. In addition, the business support team and the growth hub will be involved in discussions to support businesses in these units to put packages of support in place for businesses.

Assurances were sought regarding not pricing local and independent businesses out the market. In response Councillor O'Brien did assure the Committee that the strength of Prestwich is its local offer and is successful for smaller scale single unit businesses.

Further discussions took place regarding Social Value and an overarching Strategy will be brought forward soon.

Discussions took place regarding health promotion and illness prevention and how this will be included in regeneration plans.

The Leader was asked if we are confident that we have the skills in Bury to deliver on regeneration. In response Councillor O'Brien advised the varying sectors, such as the digital offer is being worked on to promote digital inclusion, skills and education.

The Committee questioned the transportation required to engage all other area's together with the opportunities the regeneration work will offer, for example Whitefield. In response Cllr O'Brien advised that Whitefield has been designated for the high street task force.

Discussions took place regarding the Metrolink and linking up with Ramsbottom. In response Councillor O'Brien advised this has been of keen interest to Rossendale but there are still many considerations that need to be discussed prior any decisions are made.

It was agreed:

1. The Chair thanked Sir Howard Bernstein, Councillor O'Brien and all officers for their attendance and engagement with the Committee.

OSC.8 BURY FOOTBALL CLUB

It was agreed that Bury Football Club be discussed as urgent business and taken after the regeneration item.

Councillor Vernon advised he wished to raise the recent Bury FC vote on the merger and the Council's decision to withhold the £450,000. Councillor Vernon asked for an update, potential options going forward and whether the funding is going to still be available.

In response Councillor O'Brien advised the result of the vote showed that a merger was not immediately possible. In addition, Councillor O'Brien did confirm it would be a huge mistake to assume the result of the vote would be an endorsement of a 'go it alone approach'. At this stage the Council's money (£450,000) cannot be accessed as the merger has not yet taken place which ultimately does not meet the conditions set in the Cabinet report. If conditions can be met by another means and potentially with another opportunity in the future, we would seriously consider putting the offer back out.

Geoff Little, Chief Executive reiterated that as a Council the position has always been that the investment is dependent on there being community benefit and being commercially viable which requires a merger.

Members of the Committee were assured discussions are taking place with Government Officials regarding their funding on the matter.

Councillor O'Brien did advise there are some opportunities for progression such as Gigg Lane could be rented out and this will be explored and if this is not an option fans may wish to revisit the decision at a future date.

Councillor Vernon thanked Councillor O'Brien for his update on the Bury Football Club merger.

OSC.9 THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30TH JUNE 2022

Councillor Gold, Cabinet Member for Finance and Communities outlined the forecast financial position of the Council at the end of the first quarter of the 2022/23 financial year based on information known on 30th June 2022. The report sets out the position for both revenue and capital and provides an analysis of the variances, both under and overspending.

Councillor Gold highlighted that as at the end of quarter 1 there is a projected forecast yearend deficit of £1.5 million on the revenue budget and this is before utilisation of the utilities reserve of £1.5 million. The highest areas of overspend is within the One Commissioning Organisation which is £2.5 million, Operations at £1.1 million and Children's £1 million. These are however offset by an underspend of £3.6 million of which £2.5 million is on borrowing costs due to rephasing.

A member sought clarity on how the quarter 2 outcomes are looking now we are nearing this period. In response, Sam Evans, Executive Director of Finance advise that we now have confirmation of the pay award, rising pressures in Children's Services and we are in negotiations with Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation who we purchase our gas and electricity through. The One Commissioning Organisation pressures are not changing significantly, and the Persona savings are being taken into the next financial year.

A member questioned if financial modelling has taken place against the cost of borrowing, in response Sam Evans did advise that this is currently taking place and the rephasing will be included in the quarter 2 Cabinet report.

A member questioned if it is correct to assume it is cheaper to run 3 Knowsley Place than Bury Town Hall. In response Councillor Gold responded to confirm this is correct but the Town Hall will show the positive effects of the window replacement scheme soon and it's important to note we lease 3 Knowsley Place but we own the Town Hall and it is £682,000 per annum and

subject to a 3 year review. In addition, it was requested that the costings of the temporary boiler system be provided to the Committee

A member sought assurances on the delivery of savings; it was stated that there is a forecast delivery against the total savings (target of £18.9 million) is £15.46 million. It was asked what is being done to close the gap and ensure the required savings are made. Councillor Gold assured the Committee regular meetings discussing the delivery of savings and holding Executive Directors to account takes place.

Discussions took place regarding the Airport Dividend receipt is now pushed back to 2026/27. Sam Evans, Executive Director of Finance advised how interest incurred through the loan borrowed is covered. Discussions are currently taking place regarding the recovery and when the repayment can commence.

It was agreed:

1. The play area and park strategy to be circulated to members of the Committee
2. Councillor Jones questions and answers submitted before the meeting will be circulated with the minutes for members to view
3. Further information on the 'Streets for all' allocation to be circulated to members.
4. Members be provided with costings to the Council of the temporary boiler system currently being used.

OSC.10 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY REFRESH

Councillor Gold, Cabinet Member for Finance and Communities provided an overview of Bury Council Medium Term Financial Strategy which runs to 2025/26 and will be refreshed as part of the annual budget setting process in February 2023. A mid-year review of the Strategy has been undertaken as a matter of good practice and in the context of the unprecedented inflationary and demand pressures being experienced so far this year. The review has indicated a provisional budget deficit of £29.204m in 2023/24; a further gap of £3.475m in 2024/25 and a further £5.866m in 2025/26.

A member challenged the savings that are made and then not delivered. In response Councillor Gold concluded transformation is being looked at and a paper is being taken to December Cabinet. Sam Evans, Executive Director of Finance added that capitalisation of staff salaries is being done to mitigate overspends.

Discussions took place regarding unpaid leave for members of staff, and how buying leave and unpaid leave is being promoted which in turn is supporting savings. Members asked how this is managed with service delivery. In response Sam Evans did advise there is a balance especially around front-line service delivery, and it is not mandatory.

Further discussions took place regarding increases in charges that are set out in Appendix 3. In response Councillor Gold did advise the proposed charges are going through consultation and necessary to keep services functioning and have been benchmarked with other local authorities.

Councillor Vernon thanked Councillor Gold and Sam Evans for their attendance.

COUNCILLOR D VERNON
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 10.00 pm)

Public Questions – Overview and Scrutiny 01/11/2022

1. I am Chair of Village Greens Community Co-Operative and our old lease ran out on the premises we lease off Bury Council in the Longfield Precinct over 3 months ago. We are still waiting for a new lease or head of terms for the new lease to be issued. Could I please ask when a new lease will be sent to Village Greens as we are currently on a temporary agreement and have no lease in place. This is preventing us from complying with some of our legal obligations

David Stanley

The council has drafted the Heads of Terms for the lease at Village Greens. The Councils property services department have instructed legal services (31.10.2022) to issue the lease which will be with you in the next week. Please accept our sincerest apologies for the delay. We will ensure your lease is progressed as soon as practicable.

- 1a. Will the Council cover any legal fines that could be incurred from the new lease being issued.

David Stanley

Jacqui Dennis, Monitoring Officer provided assurance to the member of the public that the matter will not get to the stage where fees or penalties are incurred as a result of the delay with the lease being issued as she will oversee the matter.

2. The Longfield Suite offered a wide range of health and well-being activities, clubs and events which benefitted residents and visitors of all ages, every day of the week. The Suite also acted as a destination which brought extra footfall into the shops, bars, restaurants and businesses in the area.

The re-development is not due to start until December 2025. Why does the Longfield Suite remain closed?

Mandy Gane

Following a review of civic venues, it became clear that significant investment is required in order to bring the building up to a useable standard. Closure due to the Covid 19 pandemic also reduced demand for activities, which has not returned. Staff resources, formally assigned to management of the building, have now been re-assigned and are no longer available. The decision to close the facility was made by Cabinet in May 2021.

- 2.a Please can you inform me where that information is documented so it can be read?

Mandy Gane

In response the Leader advised he can share the initial Cabinet decision when this was made.

***Julie Gallagher, Democratic Services who was supporting the public in the gallery provided Mandy with the link to access the report whilst at the meeting.*

3. With regards the Prestwich Redevelopment, the document being presented titled: Prestwich Scrutiny Prestwich Oct 22, the 'Indicative Plan' (section 7.1) states the Phase 1 'Public Engagement' period will start in October 2022 and end in December 2022. My question is: How long will the Phase 1 public engagement period actually last bearing in mind it is now the 1st November and no engagement has started.

Steve Devine

The team are keen to consult with residents throughout each stage of the design/development of the project. The planning for events and preparation of materials for the first phase began in October 2022, and we will begin the consultation process in late November. Regular events will be held throughout the design period and up to the submission of planning documents in October 2023.

- 3.a Does this mean the consultation period has been amended from three months to now just four weeks?

Steve Devine

The Leader clarified that the intention was never to run the consultation for three months. The intention was a 6-week consultation and there is still scope to do this. We want to ensure

the views of all residents and businesses are taken into consideration

4. How will Bury Council incorporate the neighbourhood plan that Prestwich Village Neighbourhood Forum are formulating into the Council's planning application for the town centre process - given the Council have a legal requirement to support and consult with the Forum?

Andrea Turner

At this stage the Prestwich Village Neighbourhood Forum is not formally constituted as a Neighbourhood Forum but we take the engagement as a positive step in people wanting to be engaged in a formal way. Letters have been sent to the forum to explain the processes and to offer support from officers along with being happy to support the forum informally. There is a process to go through to be formally recognised and therefore at this stage the Council has no legal obligation to support the forum.

5. I believe the Council does have a legal obligation to consult with the Prestwich Neighbourhood Forum under the Localism Act.

Steve Wright

If the forum was legally constituted then the Council would have a legal obligation to, however this forum is not yet legally constituted. However, we should engage with as many residents as possible, and we are willing and supporting the forum to become legally constituted.

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SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 12TH January 2023

SUBJECT: Homelessness strategy update

REPORT FROM: Councillor Cummins, Cabinet Member for Housing Services

1.0 Background / update

The Council has a statutory duty to support people that are homeless in the Borough and the Council must have an updated and robust Homelessness Strategy to clearly demonstrate how we will meet the required statutory duties and obligations for homelessness in the Borough.

Over the past decade Bury has seen a gradual increase in homeless cases within the Borough with greater increases over the past 5 years.

In 2020 a new Housing Strategy was agreed for the Borough of Bury which included a commitment to end rough sleeping by 2024. The new Homelessness Strategy has been co-produced with the Bury Homelessness Partnership to deliver this, by applying the Borough-Wide 'Lets Do it' ethos of prevention, early intervention and the targeting of public service resources.

The strategy continues to build and expands on the wonderful work that has been done to date. Homelessness is an issue and continues to be high on the national agenda since the new homelessness strategy was approved in April 2022.

The 'Everyone In' response to the COVID-19 pandemic has shown what can be achieved in addressing rough sleeping with a joined-up response, whilst helping people in transformative ways with sufficient funding. We need to continue to build on this progress and the commitments in this strategy reflect this.

The strategy continues to be a wide-ranging and proactive response with the community and all stakeholders playing a vital part in helping to deliver. Integral to our response is involving those individuals who have lived experience or who have been disproportionately affected by homelessness in shaping our services and delivery so that they best meet the needs of those people that need them most with the focus of delivery through the Homelessness partnership, lived experience and all stakeholders and partners in the Borough.

Therefore the same priorities and principles remain :-

- The Homelessness strategy from 2022 to 2025 continues to set out how we will strategically deliver services and meet homeless and rough sleeping demands over the next 3 years to provide the best support and accommodation within the Borough from both a statutory and non-statutory perspective.
- At the heart of this strategy continues to be the commitment to prevention, early intervention, sustainment both support and accommodation and the co-design of solutions with communities aligned with the Councils corporate 'Let's Do It !' and Housing Strategies.
- The strategy continues to be co-delivered by the Homeless partnership and key stakeholders and continues to deliver the vision for how the strategic objective to eliminate rough sleeping and prevent homelessness will be achieved and how outcomes for these vulnerable people will be secured through a proactive, multi-agency approach.
- The focus continues to be prevention and sustainment of accommodation but importantly support despite the challenges and increasing demands over the past 12 months.
- The strategy is continually being refreshed and reviewed due to the changing landscape of homelessness and new challenges such as the cost-of-living crisis and the ever increasing refugee and asylum seeker demands within the Borough that impact on Statutory and non-statutory services.

2.0 Context

Demand on Council housing services including statutory homelessness and rough sleeping has continue to increase since the strategy approval and since the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. Over the last 24 months demand for statutory services in Bury has increased by over 46% and expected to increase further and the number of rough sleepers and non-statutory customers has more than doubled and continues to increase and is becoming more challenging to accommodate and support due to the increasing complexities and with the resources and suitable accommodation available.

The increase in demand in Bury continues to align with GM, regional and national trends and the proportion of pressure experienced locally remains consistent with other boroughs. The reason for this increase includes:

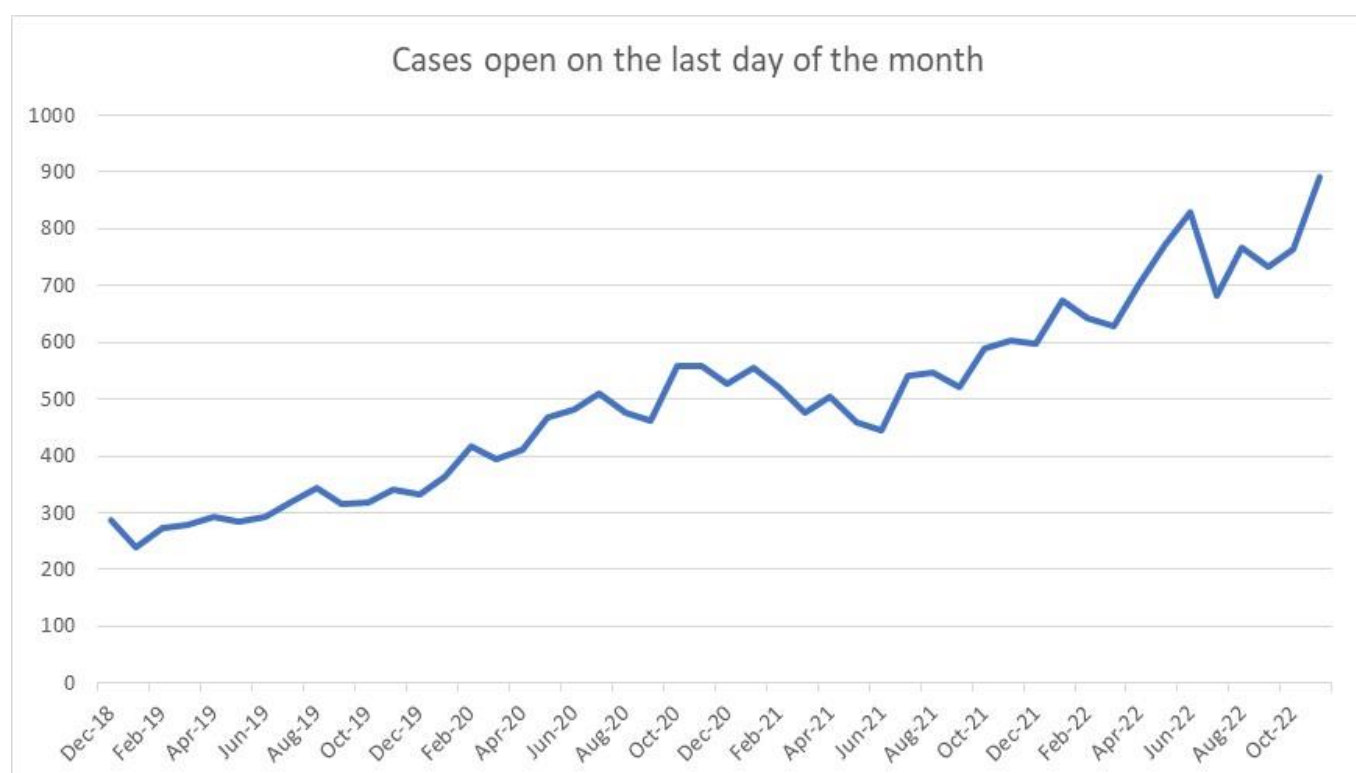
- The impact of complex lives which can result in an inability to sustain mortgage payments or a rented tenancy and subsequent evictions. The majority of homeless people have experienced some combination of financial, emotional, health or substance abuse.
- Mortgage reposessions and the cost of living crisis – even though we haven't seen the full impact of the crisis, the expectation over the next 12 months will see numbers increasing further, particularly working families and people due to their ability to pay their mortgages and rent with the associated housing and general costs. This would be a new co-hort accessing the service as most people at present are reliant on the benefit system.
- PRS – Evictions and Section 21 notices – mainly affordability issues but also landlords looking at other options due to the Government initiatives / intervention that now make it more difficult for landlords in the PRS to operate and is now less attractive to rent properties.
- Asylum seekers and refugee crisis that have had an impact on both statutory and non-statutory services and the impact of the new Home Office dispersal and resettlement scheme introduced this year.

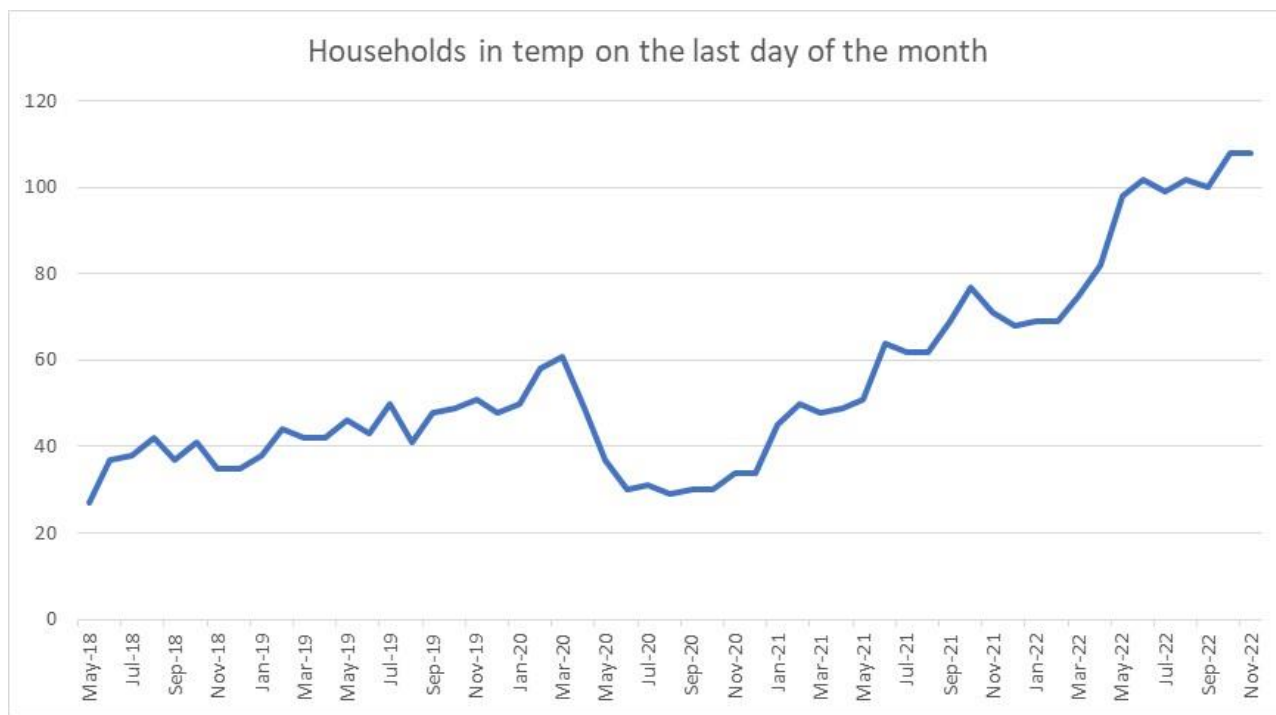
- The lack of available and affordable move-on property because of the short housing supply in Bury means people are staying longer in emergency accommodation, which limits availability for others. The average length of stay in emergency accommodation is currently 169 days.

The Council continues to deliver the significant work across all housing and homeless partners to respond to this context, which is described within this report.

3.0 Headline Data / statistics

Open Homeless statutory cases each month					
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
April	not collected	293	412	505	701
May		285	467	460	772
June		293	481	446	829
July		318	511	540	682
August		344	476	547	766
September		316	462	523	732
October		319	559	588	765
November		340	557	603	892
December	287	333	527	597	
January	239	363	556	674	
February	274	417	521	642	
March	278	394	476	630	





		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021 -22
ROUGH SLEEPERS	Single Male	7	16	75	77
	Single Female		4	17	21
	Single Transgender				1
	TOTAL	7	20	92	99

4.0 The Homeless Strategy – Themes and prevention

The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 requires local authorities to take a preventative approach to homelessness through a multi-agency approach; this is delivered in Bury through an independent Homelessness partnership comprised of community leaders; service users; the Council, commissioned providers and partners, Housing Associations, charities, voluntary sector and Six Town Housing to name a few.

Preventing Homelessness is the key objective. Homeless prevention and meaningful response can only be achieved on a system-wide, multi-agency basis.

The Homeless partnership has therefore continued to work as a collective and continues to comprise and be delivered on the seven key priorities and themes:

- Prevention
- Person
- Property

- Promote
- Purpose
- Place
- Partnership

The underpinning action plan, key activities within include:

- Specific awareness raising for young people around homelessness
- Promoting life skills and managing debt in all situations.
- Early interventions in all aspects and not just housing but Health, Childrens & Adults services including external agencies and partners.
- Early tenancy sustainment support for tenants and people at risk of homelessness.
- Performance and data measured correctly for local needs, as well as national and regional insight to align resources and react positively to increasing trends and demands. Proactive approach rather than reactive which provides better outcomes.
- Prevent people being discharged from hospital before housing options in place.
- Resolutions to the challenges created by welfare reform.
- Strengthening Private Rented Sector (PRS) landlord support, advice and assistance to avoid S21 notices and evictions
- A clear plan to be ready for people - 'in-reach'" prevention work (how to manage a tenancy) with prisons / prison liaison with operational pathways
- Training offers for all frontline staff to address barriers to housing, including debt management.
- Ensuring that the Asylum and Refugee community are given early housing options and support.
- Partnership approach with all stakeholders to help prevent homelessness and improve resources and capacity.

The Council and Six Town Housing (STH) are still working together to ensure they have a robust and deliverable tenancy sustainment strategy for all our social tenants and tenancies that form the majority of our homelessness move on accommodation. The strategy will provide clear strategic direction, outcomes and expectations in how STH and their partners seek to sustain tenancies and accommodation to better prevent homelessness, and which is becoming ever more important due to the increasing demands and trends of homelessness. The Strategy will be designed for application within Council housing stock in the first instance, but with engagement from landlords in the private rented sector to broaden its potential application to help reduce the demands on our 'front door' and Council duty.

The sustainment strategy once approved will define partnership arrangements for identifying and supporting people at risk of eviction and the eviction process itself, should that ultimately occur. More fundamentally, however, it will seek to define how public services identify and proactively support people with complex lives who, as a result, may be at risk of tenancy failure. This includes residents experiencing domestic abuse, for example, or affected by anti-social behaviour; financial deprivation or substance misuse.

The service needs greater capacity to align with better prevention work but also the sustainment of accommodation linked with the Councils Neighbourhood model and the Lets Do It! Strategy. This approach is also vital to supporting and linking in with other community resources such as Six Town Housing and their housing officer capacity across our most deprived neighbourhoods to prevent homelessness.

The strategy will focus on supporting the 'person' not the 'property' to break the cycle of homelessness for many complex and high need residents. The intention is to use the neighbourhood model to bring together all public services in a place to share insight; stratify risk and proactively intervene in high-risk situations. This strategy will be led by STH involving key partners including the Council's Adult and children Services, GMCA, DWP, Health services, Housing Associations and GMP. The final strategy is nearing completion and approval.

4.1 Statutory homeless response

The most recent restructure of services 18 months ago, we designed services to be more focussed and efficient on statutory and non-statutory services based and evidenced on demands at that time but also to make the required savings of circa £250k. Since the restructure numbers have continued to increase as shown in this report and the service is now becoming increasingly under resourced to meet current and future demand.

The service is currently supporting and assisting 964 homeless cases and on average the Council receives around 250 homeless self-referrals / new cases per month (a 300% increase from before Covid 19) and 60+ "duty to refer" cases each month.

In response, the Council Homelessness and Housing Options team:

- manages 115 properties to meet the statutory duty which is a mix of dispersed houses, maisonettes and flats. This portfolio provides a total of 364 bed spaces when at full capacity.
- provides wider, personal support and facilitates outreach to people who need to access emergency accommodation
- seeks to move people into more sustainable accommodation as quickly as possible.
- Proactive work with PRS Landlords to avoid Evictions.
- Robust partnership and multi-agency working across all sectors and stakeholders.

In addition to fulfilling the Council's statutory duties in relation to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, the team also provide specialist support to particular vulnerable cohorts including:

- Victims of domestic abuse (DA). As part of a recent review of DA arrangements and the development of a new strategy, the provision of specialist housing for singles of both genders and families has now been implemented through a commissioned service with Safenet within the Borough with floating support when appropriate.
- Council Care Leavers through a long-standing arrangement to provide priority support to Looked After Children in order that these children become independent at the point of adult hood. As part of the Childrens and Young Persons improvement plan, arrangements for care leavers are currently under review to ensure all services support and meet the Councils corporate parenting responsibilities.
- Asylum and Immigration support services to refugees and asylum seekers through pathways with new commissioned services, Serco and the Home Office.

4.2 Support to rough sleepers

The Council continues to see increases in rough sleeper numbers over the past 12 months with a 1300% increase since 2018/19. The current number of recorded rough sleepers is 34 in our supported accommodation via A Bed for Every Night (ABEN) and other commissioned emergency accommodation with a further 47 rough sleepers supported into longer term move on accommodation. We have recently implemented our additional cold weather provision when temperatures go below zero degrees to ensure all rough sleepers are supported and accommodated during the cold weather. Due to the success of the above provision and funding we currently have 1 known rough sleeper actually on the streets, with whom the outreach service is working closely with to engage and move into appropriate supported accommodation. This number would have been significantly more if this non-statutory provision wasn't developed and available due to best practice operational procedures.

The Council continues to receive additional external funding from GMCA for ABEN and DLUHC via RSi (Rough sleeper initiative) and RSAP (Rough sleeper accommodation programme) and over the past 12 month this has amounted to circa £1m of additional ring fenced funding which is in addition to the Homeless Prevention Grant that all Councils receive to meet their statutory duties.

This funding continues to be invested in commissioned provision through independent partners.

The team with our partners continues to have success in moving rough sleepers into more secure, longer-term accommodation, despite the increase in caseloads.

4.3 Asylum dispersal, including refugee crisis (Afghan & Ukrainian).

Over the past 12 to 18 months demand and funding for asylum and immigration support has significantly increased. Historically the Council typically supported the dispersal of around 40 families each year, through the Home Office and Serco. In Bury this is a challenge in the context of the scale of statutory demand as described and the shortage of housing supply which means the private rented sector is similarly at full capacity.

The current provision and capacity in supporting refugees and asylum seekers in the Borough has increased aligned to the funding and good practice with a more joined up and robust response to meet current and future demands and comprises of:-

- ARAP supported accommodation for the Afghan refugee crisis – 10 family properties dispersed across the Borough and supported via a commissioned partner to approximately 40 people.
- Ukrainian refugee crisis – Supported through two home office schemes – Homes for Ukraine and the Family visa scheme. We currently have 62 hosts and 107 refugees and 4 families via the family visa route with two already placed into permanent housing.
- Statutory homeless services – Pathways into Council accommodation once the Home office determine the immigration status of asylum seekers in their dispersed accommodation in Bury and then duty passes to the Council.
- Multi agency approach with all stakeholders across all sectors, voluntary, faith and public. Recent Strategic Migration partnership group has been set up.

The Home office introduced a new dispersal and resettlement scheme during 2022 and is currently consulting with the NW Local Authorities. Bury is specifically working

collectively with GMCA and the NW RSMP (Regional Strategic Migration Partnership) to provide robust feedback during the consultation phase with the Home office. There is a clear desire to continue to support asylum seekers across Greater Manchester but the lack of affordable and suitable accommodation is now becoming saturated within all 10 LA's and the current number of placements across GM and the NW is disproportionately high when compared to the rest of the UK and other regions.

The new compulsory dispersal and resettlement programme should balance out asylum numbers fairly and equitably across all regions of the UK to ensure the right support and outcomes are achieved. Despite the new dispersal scheme and remit, the expectation and impact over the next 12 months of increased numbers of asylum seekers will still be significant and the projected numbers, therefore demand and numbers will continue to increase in Bury.

The current number of asylum seekers in temporary Home Office accommodation within the Borough is 435. The proposed number for Bury through the consultation would be an increase of 132 to 567 by December 2023. The Home office is currently working to a cluster limit of 1:200 residents which could mean an actual increase to 970 based on current population levels within the Borough with a 100%+ increase. This worse case scenario would mean an increase of Home office and Serco accommodation of over 100% from circa 150 to 300 properties in the PRS. Even the lowest number stated would be extremely challenging in the short and medium term due to the lack of suitable and affordable accommodation within the Borough. The cost-of-living crisis and the general increases in homelessness make the impact of these numbers more significant.

The Home office when factoring in their dispersal and cluster ratios to determine asylum numbers do not include the additionality of the refugee co-hort and their other existing pathways such as ARAP (Afghan) and Homes for Ukrainian and the family visa schemes, in Bury this adds a further circa 150 refugees within the Borough that we are already accommodating and supporting in either permanent or temporary housing or via hosts.

The wider impact is on the Private rented sector which in Bury is already small and expensive, an objective for the Council is the supplement our social housing stock to meet demands by accessing and incentivising PRS landlords to increase access to properties in the PRS for homelessness and people on our housing register and robustly access the 1000+ long terms voids in the PRS. Its likely that we will be competing with Serco for these properties and market forces are likely to increase rents further, make the properties less affordable which would be counter productive and have a negative impact on expected outcomes.

4.4 – UASC – Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children

A recent letter from the Minister of State for Immigration has highlighted the increasing number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children in holding hotels across the UK and the need to place them into more suitable temporary or permanent accommodation via Local Authorities with a temporary incentivised funding stream, phase one until February 2023 and phase 2 from March 2023 onwards.

These children are likely to be suffering trauma and serious distress due to their unfortunate situation and will need individual and specific tailored support to ensure the right positive outcomes are achieved aligned with appropriate accommodation.

Immigration officials will share more data on future forecasts for unaccompanied children so that local authorities can plan and prepare for these future arrivals.

Therefore, at present the increased numbers of UASC to Bury are unknown but a clear action plan will be needed to ensure all situations can be planned and managed to avoid any unnecessary risks and ensure all UASC placed within Bury are appropriately supported and accommodated. Internal discussions are required to agree a lead.

5.0 Future strategy and innovation

The Homeless and Housing Options service continue to be active in identifying and securing funding to explore new delivery models and maximise support for vulnerable people.

At present, over the past 12 months a total of approximately £1m of extra short-term ring-fenced homeless funding has been secured via successful bids since 2021/22.

The wider Housing department needs to be innovative and flex to meet the increasing demands for social and affordable housing over the next 12 months and beyond.

Building more social and affordable housing in partnership is key in the longer term but short terms objectives and strategies are currently being developed to meet the increasing demands for our people that need it the most.

A key strategy in potentially meeting these demands in the short term to medium term will be the empty homes strategy and accessing the 1000+ long term voids in the private rented sector for our most vulnerable families and people.

The continued development and delivery of a Bury Homeless Hub is becoming increasingly important to support our more complex and high need people and would provide a hub of 30 temporary supported self-contained units. This is an important further opportunity to help meet the increasing demands and the gap in supporting our more complex and high need individuals of all ages that are homeless or at risk of homelessness (Rough sleepers, Statutory single homeless and care leavers). This provision will fundamentally change for the better how we are able to support our single homeless in partnership with stakeholders in a modern, safe and fit for purpose building with 24/7 support.

6.0 Conclusion / Summary

There is no doubt that the next 12 months will be extremely challenging for the Council in ensuring we meet our statutory duties and obligations but despite these challenges and demands our strategy and robust delivery will continue and there is confidence we will meet the challenges head on for the benefit of our most vulnerable families and people. Partners must remain focussed around prevention and sustainment activity, to ensure the whole system is robustly supporting all homeless people from rough sleepers to statutory homeless families and single people.

A key issue within Bury is limited access to affordable housing and the small and high-cost private rented sector. Housing supply issues constrain both move-on options for people in emergency accommodation and the opportunities for people to access and maintain independent affordable housing.

It is Council policy that we do not use B&B provision to accommodate our homeless families and customers which is the correct approach and good practice. If the opportunities highlighted within this report are not maximised or delivered to increase the pipeline for suitable and affordable accommodation within the next 12 months, it

may mean unfortunately that we have no other option to consider bed and breakfast and hotel accommodation to meet demand and our Homeless statutory duty as a Local Authority.

The Council continues to robustly deliver the homeless strategy with all stakeholders and the homeless partnership. A partnership steering group meeting in January 2023 will review the action plan and reflect on the past 12 months to re-priorities as needed to include the new challenges such as the cost of living and asylum dispersal. A recent review of the plan objectives show that we are successfully delivering over 80% of the expected outcomes and on track to deliver all objectives over the next 2 / 3 years in a collaborative and partnership approach.

Feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny committee is welcome including, for example, how:

- homeless prevention is aligned to the principles and priorities within the borough strategy, *Let's do it*.
- asylum seekers, including Afghans and Ukrainians, are welcomed to the borough and the potential impact of the new Home Office Dispersal and resettlement programme
- The challenges of the cost of living and the general increases in Homelessness
- the Council maximises its relationship with partners, including our Arms Length Management Organisation, Six Town Housing, to sustain and prevent homelessness and extend support to the vulnerable.

List of Background Papers:- None.

Contact Details:- Phil Cole, Head of Homelessness & Housing Options

SCRUTINY REPORT

MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny

DATE: January 2023

SUBJECT: Tackling Fuel Poverty

REPORT FROM: Cllr Cummins

CONTACT OFFICER: Michelle Stott

1.0 BACKGROUND

On the 19 January 2022 a full Council meeting debated a notice of motion in relation to fuel poverty.

The Council noted that:

- 1 Research from Friends of the Earth shows that 13% of households in Bury are living in fuel poverty – and heating homes accounts for 44% of local carbon emissions.
- 2 Rising energy prices will make this significantly worse, and the National Energy Action charity has warned that rising household energy bills could cause at least 2 million more homes to slip into fuel poverty
- 3 All housing in our borough should be insulated to a minimum of EPC C standard with good quality loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, double-glazing and draught exclusion.
- 4 The Government have set a target to upgrade all housing to the above standard by 2030. To meet this target a total of 5,859 homes in Bury would need insulation upgrades each year.
- 5 The scale of this challenge is significant but at the same time we must make a commitment to end fuel poverty and excess carbon emissions from poorly insulated homes and develop a strategy to achieve this goal.

Council therefore committed to:

- 1 Ensure that we are doing what we can as an Authority to provide advice and support to residents struggling through fuel poverty, and specifically ask for the appropriate Cabinet Member to bring a report to meetings of the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the next two months providing an update on the support the Council and its partners are able to offer.

- 2 Strengthen its procedures to enforce minimum standards of energy efficiency in the private rented sector – making sure landlords without an EPC certificate for their properties are fined, and properties with an inadequate EPC rating are prevented from being rented.
- 3 Publish a statement of intent and set locally appropriate eligibility criteria to access Energy Company Obligation funding via Local Authority Flexibility arrangements – allowing more vulnerable and low-income households in our area to access funding to better insulate their homes.
- 4 Ensure new housing is built to the highest possible energy efficiency standards through reviewing Local Plan policies and introducing additional Supplementary Planning Guidance to ensure the use of low-carbon materials, heat pumps rather than gas heating systems, and renewable energy as much as possible.
- 5 Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs asking that the Government adopt the recommendations relating to retrofitting homes and buildings in the Blueprint for a Green Recovery report published in January 2021.
- 6 Request the appropriate Cabinet Members to bring a report on these wider issues to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee within the next twelve months.

2.0 ISSUES

Since these commitments were made the government has announced an energy price cap freeze meaning the average annual bill will be around £2,500 (£3,000 from April). However, if residents use more, then they will pay more. National Energy Action predicts that even with this support, 6.7 million UK households could be in fuel poverty which is an increase of 2.2 million from last year. The Cost-of-Living Crisis has exacerbated the situation with clients left choosing whether to heat or eat.

According to Sub-Regional Fuel Poverty Data from BEIS the Chesham Fold Estate in Bury is disproportionality affected and has the highest numbers of households in Fuel Poverty reaching a staggering 32.9%. Therefore, the Council has made significant strides to tackle this with the following measures:

Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan

In response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis the Council has established an Anti-Poverty Steering Group consisting of members from organisations whose remit includes activity relevant to influencing the poverty agenda such as:

- 3rd Sector Organisations
- Bury Council representatives
- Six Town housing / Registered Providers
- DWP
- CABB
- GM Poverty Action

- People with lived experiences
- Other partners on an ad hoc basis to provide specialist knowledge of particular themes when required

The Group reports to the Health and Wellbeing board and there is a standing item at each meeting for an update of progress. The anti-poverty steering group is chaired by the Director of Public Health.

The objectives of the group are:

- Bring together key stakeholders who have a role to play in contributing to reducing poverty and its impact on Bury residents
- To ensure activities are coordinated for maximum impact and that all partners are supported and adequately resourced to deliver their role
- To raise the profile and awareness of the impact of poverty within the Bury Community, the Council and its services, and partner organisations and what is being done to address this
- To audit what is currently happening to address this issue and identify gaps or areas for development
- To provide oversight and scrutiny when partners are developing/introducing policy and practices related to anti-poverty to ensure an evidence-based approach
- To deliver the action plan which is jointly owned and delivered against by all partner agencies, and which fits within the wider Greater Manchester anti-poverty strategy
- To advocate for regional and national policies which will support the anti-poverty agenda
- To Monitor data, trends related to poverty
- To act as a channel of communication for the development of initiatives tailored to local needs
- To develop a network to share work, research and good practice
- To ensure the work undertaken by the group to address poverty is co-designed by those who have experienced poverty
- To regularly share news around any developments and progress the group has made with relevant partners and the public
- To direct, monitor and evaluate appropriate use of council and national funds eg Household Support Fund

The outcomes of the Group are

- To reduce the levels and impacts of poverty in the Bury population
- To tackle the stigma around socio economic exclusion
- To establish an effective partnership response to preventing and tackling poverty

Since this group was established an Anti-Poverty Strategy has been developed (see background documents) and a Delivery Plan has been developed to ensure a proactive driven approach to tackling Poverty across relevant themes one of which is dedicated to Housing related poverty which includes Fuel Poverty.

Two productive Cost of Living Summits have also been held to provide opportunity to contribute towards the current approach of the Steering Group and identify gaps in the delivery plan. To give space for wider discussion on implications being seen in the community; Hear voices of people experiencing poverty; Identify any groups missing out on support and promote tools and opportunities to access support.

Household Support Fund

The Council has decided to allocate amounts from the latest round of Household Support Fund to assist people with their energy bills –

- Direct provision of vouchers to support energy costs of those known to Bury Council/ NHS Greater Manchester (Bury) of having living equipment which requires electricity – up to £232k
- Direct provision of vouchers to support energy costs for Care leavers up to the age of 25 based on feedback from Children's Strategic Partnership Board and Corporate Parenting Board – up to £20k

Other categories will be provided with general support which it is also expected is likely to be spent on fuel or food.

- Direct provision of vouchers to those of working age on Council Tax Support and Employment Support Allowance (Income related) but not on Universal Credit – up to £245k
- Ongoing targeted identification of households through public service leads in neighbourhoods (including Early Help and pastoral teams) and trusted referrers (including Bury Community Support Network). Immediate financial support in conjunction with wider financial resilience advice and information. Promotion of support through targeted communication and engagement and connection through Community Hubs where individuals not engaged in wider services – up to £270k.

It is expected, based on earlier rounds of funding that all the above amounts will be spent during the period of the scheme.

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

Wave 1 of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund is being delivered to the Chesham Estate. There are 28 properties in various stages of retrofit works with 10 completed and the programme in progressing well. Solar PV, insulation, LED lighting, window and door replacements and preparations for external wall insulation are all in progress. The scheme includes 100 homes having retrofit energy efficiency work completed and the scheme will be completed by March 2023. Grant funding for this project is £993k with match funding of £370k from the Council.

The SHDF wave 2 has been open for expressions of interest and a further bid from the Council and STH has been submitted for a further 250 homes to have similar fabric first retrofit works completed during the next two financial years. The bid is being submitted as part of a consortium bid with other housing providers in the Northwest and will be submitted by GMCA as the lead organisation. The maximum grant that can be expected is £5,000 per home with match funding provided by the Council through the HRA.

Further updates will be provided once the bid has been assessed and the awards notified.

Winter Wellbeing Packs and Home Energy Visits

Six Town Housing are also producing approximately 200 Winter Wellbeing packs for their most vulnerable tenants which will be distributed throughout December and January. In the past STH have issued packs to mainly elderly tenants but this year they are accepting referrals for:

- Tenants / families who are in debt or struggling financially
- Vulnerable tenants

- Households on low income
- Vulnerable elderly living in the community

The packs will include single quilt or blanket, non-perishable food, warm hats, gloves, socks, thermometers, mini hot water bottle, thermal mug, anti-bac gel, selection box, hot chocolate sachets, plus lots of tips and information on how to save energy costs.

Six Town Housing are also offering home energy advice visits for tenants by an Energy Advisor who will offer sign posting for energy support on fuel bills and saving energy. Data loggers are also utilised to record temperature and humidity over a period within the homes, to identify any underheating or humidity problems. This has resulted in the provision of additional loft insulation or adding radiators in unheated rooms as well as checking cavity wall insulation for any cold spots which may require insulation removal and reinsulating.

Damp and Condensation Issues

The tragic death of Awaab Ishak as a result of the unsatisfactory performance of Rochdale Boroughwide Housing with regards to damp and mould has reiterated the Council's responsibility to residents of Bury not only in social housing but in all tenures. The increase in residents suffering from fuel poverty is likely to increase the number of homes with damp and condensation issues, in part due to residents inadequately heating their homes.

We are keen to prioritise housing standards work across all tenures and are currently exploring all available options to allow up to increase the capacity within the small enforcement team, which includes working with our colleagues at the Combined Authority to help us identify key target areas for proactive intervention, alongside opportunities for growing and developing the team to increase our enforcement capacity and drive-up standards.

We are currently pulling together our data on housing disrepair over the 3 years, but this has also highlighted some issues within our data recording system. This has been acknowledged at a service level and we are currently out to tender for a new IT service provider.

The private rented sector team is the Council's housing enforcement team, and they cover all tenures across private sector housing in the borough. They are responsible for enforcing against poorly performing landlords across the borough in order to drive up standards and administering the mandatory HMO licensing scheme.

With resource levels currently at 1.8 FTE Environmental Health Officers, the team is only able to offer a service that responds to requests for service. Due to this lack of resource, capacity has not allowed any proactive visits. Partnership working is required to order improve housing conditions across the borough with support required from other Council departments, therefore options are being considered.

There are opportunities at a GM Level that we can take advantage of, in order to support and sustain our housing enforcement provision such as the GM Good Landlord Scheme. This is an opportunity for the Council to recruit a suitable candidate for an apprenticeship with a view to becoming a qualified and competent private sector housing enforcement officer after a 3-year training programme. It is the first programme of its kind across GM. The project is being partially funded through GMCA, so offers the Council the ideal opportunity to recruit and train the future workforce at a reduced rate. It had been acknowledged that one of the issues currently facing housing

enforcement across the region is an ageing workforce and lack of junior officers in the sector. This project aims to address that.

In addition, GMCA have recently been awarded £2.1million from DHLUC to implement an enforcement project across the region, to test the theory that improving capacity in enforcement teams can lead to an increase in enforcement and civil penalty fines, which in turn can sustain a housing enforcement service. This successful bid has only just been announced and it is not yet clear how much each LA will receive from the pot, but it offers an exciting opportunity to increase our existing enforcement capacity here at Bury.

Six Town Housing are also undertaking responsive visits to tenant homes to undertake damp surveys and identify any remedial action required to treat and prevent the condensation and subsequent mould re-appearing.

2.6 Capital Investment Programme

Six Town Housing has been focusing the investment programme on the replacement of windows and doors across the estates and have started recently on the Chesham Estate with the whole scale replacements with double glazed windows and high-performance composite front and rear doors. Properties adjacent to the M66 motorway will also be benefitting from triple glazing to the elevation facing the motorway to assist with noise reduction as well as improving thermal efficiency.

2.7 MEES Enforcement

The Private Sector Housing Team has a dedicated officer who is undertaking targeted proactive work to promote the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards in the private rented sector. To date the Officer has interrogated information obtained from the Landmark EPC register in conjunction with information provided by Council Tax and Land Registry searches, to identify non-compliant landlords for potential enforcement action. (Properties that have an Energy Performance Certificate rating of F or G are deemed to be non-compliant according to the regulations). The Officer has written to 187 identified properties (and visited where appropriate) to provide advice to residents and inform landlords of their obligations. She has also promoted grants for energy efficient retrofit measures. Of these 187 properties - 74 have now improved:

EPC Rating	Number of Properties Improved
B	1
C	18
D	33
E	22

The average annual energy bill savings per property is £269 and the average investment per property by landlords is £1528.

The Officer is actively engaging with the remaining landlords to improve their properties, alongside identifying other potential non-compliant properties across the Borough for future targeting. The Council has not yet been required to take enforcement action, as Landlords once notified of their obligation, have worked with us to improve their properties. However, should landlords fail to engage then enforcement of the regulations will be undertaken where there is the potential to fine landlords. To decide on the level of fine three factors are considered, the culpability of the offender, the potential for tenant harm and the severity of risk. The maximum penalty cannot exceed £5,000.

The Officer is externally funded by BEIS on a temporary basis until the 31st March 2023, however there will be a requirement for the Council to find the funds to continue this statutory function in the new financial year onwards.

2.8 Statement of Intent

Greater Manchester's Statement of Intent for ECO4 Flexible Eligibility, for all 10 GM Councils, went online as of 1st November and can be viewed on:

[Domestic and non-domestic energy efficiency - Greater Manchester Combined Authority \(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk\)](https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

The procurement of delivery partners has commenced with the application form for GM's approved installer list for ECO4 Flexible Eligibility published on the Chest. The deadline for installer applications is 12 noon 6th January 2023. The Chest link is: [ECO4 Flexible Eligibility Deliverer - Approved Installer List \(due-north.com\)](#).

2.9 Emerging Local Planning Policy Update

Bury Council is currently in the process of preparing a new development plan that will comprising the Places for Everyone (a joint development plan for nine Greater Manchester districts) and the Bury Local Plan to replace existing policies set out in the adopted Bury Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

Once adopted, Places for Everyone (PfE) and the Local Plan will both be used as the basis for determining future proposals for the next 20 years or so and both plans will include policies designed to improve energy efficiency.

PfE is currently at a relatively advanced stage having been submitted to the Government and currently being subject to Examination. Subject to the outcome of that Examination, it is anticipated that PfE will be adopted in 2023. Further progress on Bury's Local Plan will also be made in early 2023.

Until such time as replacement policies are in place, existing policies in the adopted Bury Unitary Development Plan will be used to determine planning applications, including Policy EN4 on energy conservation.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are developed to support and provide further detail on adopted planning policies. It is anticipated that these a suite of SPDs will be prepared to support new PfE and/or Local Plan policies as and when these are adopted.

2.10 Chief Executive Letter

The Chief Executive wrote to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs asking that the Government adopt the recommendations relating to retrofitting homes and buildings in the Blueprint for a Green Recovery report published in January 2021 on the 27th of January 2022.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The Council is taking positive action towards targeted advice and assistance, through the installation of retrofit measures via grant funding and the Councils capital investment programme to improve energy standards, reduce energy bills and keep residents warm.

The Council needs to continue to fund the statutory function for the Enforcement of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards.

The Council recognises that there will be greater prevalence of damp and mould related issues as a direct result of residents not adequately heating their homes. Therefore, a proactive joint effort between Six Town Housing and the Private Rented Sector Enforcement Team is required to provide advice to residents. To enable this there needs to be greater partnership working as there is limited resource capacity especially within the Private Rented Sector Enforcement Team, therefore there needs to be support provided from other relevant services.

List of Background Papers:-

<https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/how-happen-coroner-rules-awaab-25515299>



Cost of living and
anti poverty strategy



CoL_DeliveryPlan_b
yQuarter.docx



003 Environment
Secretary 2022.01.27

Domestic and non-domestic energy efficiency - Greater Manchester Combined Authority
(greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

Contact Details:-

*Michelle Stott – Unit Manager for Private Sector Housing
m.d.stott@bury.gov.uk*

Executive Director sign off Date:_____

JET Meeting Date:_____

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny

DATE: 12 January 2023

SUBJECT: Highways Maintenance and LGA Peer Review Progress Update

REPORT FROM: Councillor Alan Quinn
(Exec Member for Environment, Climate Change and Operations)

CONTACT OFFICER: Neil S Long
(Assistant Director of Operations)

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Earlier this year the Council initiated a Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review of highway maintenance to understand whether the level of existing investment gave the Council value for money and at the beginning of June the LGA Peer Review took place. The scope of this review was to look at the following elements of work –
- Highways resurfacing programme.
 - Highways preventative maintenance programme.
 - Highways inspections.
 - Highways Asset Management Policy; and
 - Strategic asset management and longer-term planning.
- 1.2 Peer challenge is a key part of sector led improvements based on the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) peer review methodology. It is not an inspection – lead peers are invited as ‘critical friends’. The HMEP strategic review focussed on four key components
- **Context and priority setting** – transport policy, corporate vision, and stakeholder expectations
 - **Planning and performance** – strategy, performance, data and information and lifecycle planning
 - **Enablers** – leadership, risk management, asset management and monitoring
 - **Delivery** – programme, service delivery and procurement
- 1.3 The LGA Peer Review team interviewed the Council’s senior leadership team, including the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder, and Deputy as well as officers from across Engineers and Streetscene as well as representatives from TfGM. Focus groups were also held with officers to understand how the highways maintenance service is delivered and managed.
- 1.4 The outcome and findings of the LGA review were reported to Overview and Scrutiny on 19 July 2022. This report provides a progress update as detailed in section 2.4 below.

2.0 ISSUES

- 2.1 The LGA Peer Review Team were asked for an independent view on the following five key questions: -
- Given the size and condition of the Council's highways network, is the current level of capital and revenue funding appropriate for managing the highway asset and meeting the Council's statutory duty to maintain the highway?
 - Is the Council's Strategic approach to reactive, preventative, and planned maintenance suitable and sufficient?
 - Is the Council's delivery approach to reactive, preventative, and planned maintenance suitable and sufficient?
 - Are the expected returns in the current level of investment as would be expected in terms of condition improvement, insurance claims and public satisfaction?
 - Following on from £20m of investment over the last 6 years, is the Council acting prudently in seeking to invest a further £10m in the highway network over the next 3 years? Should further investment be stopped, paused, reduced, or increased

- 2.2 In terms of the impact on the highway network of the HIS and DfT investment, this can be quantified as follows –

- 45 roads (or sections) resurfaced in HIS 2.
- 13 roads proposed for 22/23
- 12.1km in length for HIS 2 (6.8km complete and 5.3km to do).
- 3620 Sq. M of paving re-laid at The Rock
- In 21/22 94.5% of £3.6m major resurfacing was completed
- In 21/22 the £1m (112,000 sq. m of surface dressing/micro asphalt surface treatment programme completed
- In 21/22 12,000 pothole repairs completed
- In 21/22 and additional £70k spent on white lining works
- In total for 21/22 84.4% (£5.6m) of the planned £6.6m was spent

2.3 Strengths identified during the review

- 'Let's do it' strategy provides a clear vision for Bury focusing on growth, communities, and delivery. Evidence also exists showing that the strategy is being embedded within the service.
- GM 2040 Transport Strategy - Bury is positioning itself to maximise the opportunities for the district by developing its own Bury Transport Plan.
- Relationships with TfGM are established and positive and it is clear that Bury are performing within the GMCA to maximise all opportunities.
- A fit for purpose service, the £10m capital for HIS3 is required.
- Some excellent areas of work highlighted around Key Road Networks which is being shared as best practice by TfGM (asset data management and deterioration model)
- Good relationship between service, portfolio holders and other elected members
- Network – there is clear evidence of improvement
- Ongoing review of organisational structures to better equip the service to meeting existing and future demands
- The Loyalty and commitment shown by staff and the Exec Cllrs was obvious
- 100% attendance at all the LGA meetings including group meetings which is not often seen and was appreciated.
- There is renewed focus on delivering an improved customer experience as a priority with progress being made on new web presence

- In-house delivery of reactive works – the workforce is skilled, committed, empowered to deliver with embedded H&S practices
- Evidence of operational improvement, e.g., vehicle and kit replacement aligned with green agenda, move to Alloy system, handheld / digital approach
- Professional and multi-skilled teams across the departments, multi-tasking to get things delivered

2.4 Considerations and Future Development Progress Update at December 2022

Considerations and Developments	Progress Update
Significant levels of deterioration in our unclassified roads are driving up complaints, demand, risk and add to the reputational problems for the service.	Agreed that the allocation of future HIS3 and CRSTS funding of capital resurfacing to be targeted at unclassified network, with a ratio of 80% unclassified and 20% classified. Preventative maintenance programmes of work are already heavily targeted towards unclassified network.
We need to capitalise appropriate professional fees, to be retained as growth/capacity, and not to be presented as saving options.	Restructure proposals for Streetscene and Engineers to be implemented in 23/24, building capacity through increased fee charges to capital allocations
Service in a precarious position following sustained reductions – in some areas 75% of required revenue budgets historically reduced.	Agreed
Develop the relationship with TfGM but some real improvements in this aspect already being seen.	Partnership work continues with TfGM, in particular Key Route Network Asset Manager who sits on our HAMP officer group.
Improve our Policy Processes and procedures to add reassurance around our delivery – make our delivery more visible.	This will be addressed through the development of the HAMP (Highways Asset Management Plan) and programmes of work will be on our website and updated regularly. Series of Portfolio Member workshops established and ongoing
Further Project management support required in the service to get the fundamentals in place.	There is a Programme Managers post proposed in the Engineering Services restructure that will have these responsibilities across the entire capital programme delivered by Engineering Service. Restructure proposals planned within Streetscene will build project management

	capacity
Wider consultation on developing the £10m HIS3 needs to take place with Members and staff feedback together with challenge and scrutiny	Programme of works is being developed by colleagues across asset management and highways – Early consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder is currently taking place through a series of workshops before any wider consultation.
Establish a corporate capital programme board.	<p>A departmental Project Delivery Board has been set up within Engineering Services to ensure the effective delivery of the highways capital programme, including resurfacing schemes, road safety schemes and active travel and other schemes.</p> <p>A corporate review of capital process is currently progressing and a capital programme board will be established following the review.</p>
An update to the Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP) is required to reflect deterioration in parts of the asset, climate change and emerging transport plan.	The HAMP is currently being redrafted to reflect this and the Let's Do It Strategy.
Embed data and evidence-led approach to track performance, delivery, and success.	<p>Asset Management is a data/evidence led approach with data being used to track the deterioration of our highway network so that funding can be targeted effectively.</p> <p>Streetscene have established a service dashboard and performance management processes are in place</p>
IT/Digitalisation is a key development for the service and is key to transform – Staff in particular fed back they could perform better with increased focus and support in this area.	<p>Hand-held devices are currently being explored for streetworks inspections which will make the inspection and processing of streetworks more efficient.</p> <p>Streetscene service is fully digitised, although further system development is ongoing. Recently implemented mapped based reporting systems for highways, drainage and street lighting.</p>
Workforce Planning and development essential – need for graduates and apprentices and rebuilding the loss in capacity.	<p>There are 3 apprentices currently being recruited within Engineering Services.</p> <p>Graduate and apprenticeship programmes have been embedded in Streetscene for a number of years.</p>
Update, resource and deliver communications strategy – to raise	Yes, we are working towards developing a comms plan for all our schemes to raise

awareness and deliver behavioural change, end to end across all stakeholders.	awareness and share information.
Increase use of benchmarking against other GM authorities and the wider highways sector to measure successful outcomes, and limited focus generally on performance management across Operations.	Benchmarking takes place across all disciplines through the Greater Manchester groups attended by colleagues across Engineers and Streetscene. Further benchmarking is carried out through APSA
Collection / use of performance data to improve service delivery and customer satisfaction.	NHT survey results are used to improve service delivery.

3.0 CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Following the recent LGA peer review of highway maintenance an action planning day took place 12 July 2022.
- 3.2 The programming for the £10m HIS 3 (23/24 to 25/26) and other funding such a CRST is now progressing with initial workshops with the Leader and Portfolio Members to be followed with wider consultation with Members and Stakeholders and challenge from scrutiny.
- 3.3 The actions following the LGA review are progressing well. Proposed restructures in Engineers and Streetscene are now well developed and include consultation with staff and trade unions. The restructures are aimed at building additional capacity through capital funding and to deliver an extensive programme over the next 5 years including improvements to road infrastructure, road safety schemes and active travel schemes.

List of Background Papers: -

LGA Peer Review - position statement
Highways Asset Management Plan (HAMP)

Contact Details: -

Neil S Long - Assistant Director (Operations)
Peter Stokes – Head of Streetscene
Carmel Foster-Devine Head of Engineers

Executive Director sign off Date: 20.12.22
Cabinet member sign off Date: 19.12.22

JET Meeting Date: _____

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