

COUNCIL 3 FEBRUARY 2016 – WORK OF THE CABINET
LEADER’S SPEECH

Thank you Madam Mayor, it gives me great pleasure to up-date Council on the work of the Cabinet since the December meeting of Council.

Before I do I’d like to take a moment to echo your sentiments regarding the floods that we experienced on Boxing Day. As I’ve already said in an earlier answer, the floods brought by Storm Eva were little short of catastrophic and all our hearts go out to residents who were affected.

I would just like to take the chance to say, yet again, a huge thanks to everyone involved in the rescue and recovery effort. The community spirit that was shown across the borough was humbling and shows what an incredible place we live in.

As I promised right from the outset, a drop-in session and public meeting has been arranged for 11 February at Radcliffe Civic Hall which will include representatives from the Environment Agency, Bury Council and other partners.

I can also assure residents that since 2013 the Council has been working with the Environment Agency and encouraging them to investigate the viability of several options to reduce the risk of flooding to residents and businesses in Radcliffe.

In December 2015, a matter of days before the floods, the Agency provided us with details of a £9m scheme and indicated that this had been given an indicative allocation in their 6 year Capital Programme. However they also made it clear that for the scheme to go ahead they would need a multi-million pound contribution from the Council.

Sadly the floods that actually happened showed that even had this scheme been in place the unprecedented amount of rain that fell on Christmas night, and the impact on river levels, was such that there would still have been severe flooding and I can assure people that we are now working with the Agency to urgently re-design the scheme and develop a robust funding package.

Madam Mayor I would also like to say a brief, and personal, thank you to Council for electing me and my partner Ian as Mayor and Consort for the coming municipal year. We are truly honoured.

Moving now to the work of the Cabinet since Council last met.

Madam Mayor, on 28 January the Queen gave her assent to the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016. This piece of legislation heralds a landmark moment for the future of local government and especially for the provision of devolved services in Greater Manchester.

It means that crucial decisions can now be taken in GM, about GM and for GM.

For our part, Cabinet has put in place various delegations that will allow the Chief Executive, in consultation with myself, to consent to the various orders that will bring the Act to life, including the establishment of an elected Mayor and the devolution of health related functions.

These really are exciting times which is why Greater Manchester is officially the most exciting place in the UK....well according to the Guardian it is!

Madam Mayor the Cabinet also considered and approved the Annual Health and Safety Report.

This is a crucially important document that provides a formal mechanism for monitoring and assessing organisational performance; recognising significant concerns and issues that impact on health and safety management and performance; reviewing organisational arrangements and adopting organisational and departmental work plans and targets.

The Annual report is also a forward looking document that considers new legislation, national and local health and safety priorities and current areas of development. I certainly commend the report to all members of Council.

Finally Madam Mayor Cabinet approved the development of a groundbreaking Adolescent Support Unit which will not only provide much needed help to families but will also deliver considerable efficiency savings.

Madam Mayor, I would also like to take a moment to celebrate some recent Council successes.

I am particularly proud of the work we are driving forward to support the recently launched Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategy.

We have attracted additional £100,000 of funding from DCLG to strengthen accommodation based support for victims along with an additional £110,000 of innovation funding through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner which will help to develop the STRIVE initiative.

This initiative aims to reduce repeat incidents through a focus on intervention and early prevention, including funding to test new ways of working with perpetrators.

Not only is this vital for the safety and well-being of victims but it is also a classic example of public service reform in action.

Madam Mayor, our so called back office services have faced massive pressure over the past few years and yet they truly are the engine room of the Council.

For this reason I was thrilled to hear that our Legal team have been awarded accreditation under the Law Society's Lexcel scheme.

This is the national quality mark for excellence in legal practice management and excellence in client care and it demonstrates our Legal team's commitment and ability to consistently deliver services that meet client expectations, improve overall satisfaction and assist regulatory compliance.

Well done to all concerned!

In terms of quality marks, the good news just keeps rolling in.

Ramsbottom Pool & Fitness Centre and Castle Leisure Centre have been awarded Good in their recent Quest inspections.

Quest is the UK quality scheme for sport and leisure and this achievement shows very clearly the Council's continued commitment to improve the design and management of our leisure facilities.

We have also just been informed that we now have ASA 'Learn to Swim' Accreditation.

Madam Mayor, a number of our schools have been formally assessed for Green Flag awards for work involving recycling, food waste recycling and sustainability.

For example, Mersey Drive Primary got their 3rd Green Flag last year which is an amazing feat! St Marie's Primary got their second Green Flag running up to Christmas and Chesham Primary got their first Green flag just before Christmas.

Well done to all of them!

Talking of Flags...the Council itself has been reaccredited for Purple Flag status which means that we can once again demonstrate excellence in the way that our evening economy is managed showing that Bury town centre is a wonderful place to visit.

We have also had the great news that we have moved up the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index showing that Bury Council is a wonderful place to work.

I know that these last two issues are the subject of written questions so I won't say any more other than to offer congratulations to everyone who has helped to deliver all of these outstanding outcomes.

Talking of congratulations I would like to congratulate Sharon Beattie who has been appointed as new Chair of the Children's Safeguarding Board replacing Gill Rigg who was chair for 7 years.

We are delighted to have appointed someone of Sharon's calibre and we also owe Gill a huge debt of gratitude for the work that she's done during her time in office.

Madam Mayor, I'm sorry to labour these good news stories...well actually I'm not sorry at all.

We all know that local government, and Bury in particular, is being battered by the Government's spending cuts just so that the Chancellor can reward his friends at places like Google by letting them off the hook when it comes to paying tax.

And yet here in Bury we have done what we promised the people of our borough we would do.

We have shown enormous resilience by not only protecting front-line services and finding more efficient ways of working but by holding our heads up and focussing on delivering the best possible outcomes for our residents and businesses.

Madam Mayor, this borough of ours is a wonderful place to live, work and learn and I will repeat what I said at the last Council meeting...this Labour led administration will fight tooth and nail to keep it that way.

Thank you.

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