

## Council meeting – 11 September 2013

### Questions:-

The Leader of the Council

### Question running order:

1<sup>st</sup>: Liberal Democrat

2<sup>nd</sup>: Conservative

3<sup>rd</sup>: Labour

#### 1. Councillor Pickstone

Could the leader outline how much use is made in the Authority (either directly or through contracting in Adult Care or elsewhere) of staff on so called 'zero hour contracts' and staff who are employed at rates less than the 'living wage' (£7.45 an hour).

**A. I would like to thank Councillor Pickstone for his question and to have the opportunity to explain how the Council operates zero hours contracts. Quite rightly the media has highlighted where employers have misused zero hours contracts to provide employees with less favourable terms and limited employment protection. This is not the case in the Council where the rates of pay for the job, entitlement to holiday pay and employment protection rights are all maintained. All zero hours contracts pay an hourly rate of pay that is the equivalent of substantive postholders.**

**The majority of zero hours contracts are used for employees on the Council's Supply Registers. These have been set up to ensure that we have supply staff that we can approach when required and who have undergone the appropriate vetting and assessment processes. This ensures that supply and casual employees are suitably qualified, registered with the appropriate bodies and have undertaken health and safety and induction training.**

**3,473 individuals are employed by the Council on 'zero hours' contracts. Their contracts have been set up in this way to provide supply staff and casual employees to meet seasonal demand, day to day shortfalls in staffing numbers and/or demands for increased capacity to carry out particular tasks. Some individuals hold more than one zero hours contract; there are 3,473 individuals employed in 4,645 individual positions.**

**Hourly rates of pay are based on the rate for the job and comply fully with minimum wage legislation. Rates and range from £5.45 per hour to £19.24 per hour depending on the position. 2,262 individual positions attract an hourly rate of pay that exceeds the "Living wage"**

**2,163 (almost 2/3<sup>rd</sup>) of these individuals are employed by as schools as supply staff including; teachers, teaching assistants & special support assistants, exam invigilators, mid-day supervisors, crèche workers, EDT Social workers and administrative staff.**

**Zero hours contracts are also in operation within Council departments in where Casual supply staff are employed as residential and home care workers in adult care, cleaners, caretakers, leisure centre staff, civic halls - waiting and bar staff, grounds maintenance, catering assistants, refuse collection and admin support.**

**Across the Council as a whole 1,073 individuals are paid an hourly rate of pay which falls below the definition of a living wage" which is £7.45 per hour. In collaboration with the AGMA Authorities Bury Council is committed to working towards the implementation of the "Living Wage"**

**At this stage I do not have specific details on the numbers of zero hours contracts within commissioned services but will provide this information in writing to Councillor Pickstone.**

## **2. Councillor Hussain**

Would the Leader comment on his views about the issue of "Fracking" and what his administration can do to represent any local communities in Bury affected?

**A. There are no proposals for 'fracking' in Greater Manchester or planning applications pending, nor any discussions being held or have occurred regarding 'fracking' in Greater Manchester.**

**AGMA have prepared a briefing note on this issue which I am happy to share with members. (ATTACHED)**

## **3. Councillor Frith**

Does the Leader agree that, with nearly a third of all Bury's jobseekers 16-24 years old, the one million young people unemployed national statistic really hits home. And that the plight of the young unemployed makes all the more shocking the failure of this Government's Regional Growth Fund which, according to its own figures, hasn't created one single job in Bury North, where my ward of Elton is, since the Coalition came to power. Would the Leader join me in encouraging all our local employers to consider making their next position an apprenticeship in support of Action for Jobs?

**A. Just about the greatest priority we should all have is the future of our young people.**

**It is an appalling indictment of this government that we face the prospect of a lost generation. A bleak future faces increasing numbers of our young people due to Government's inept economic policies. The failure of the Regional Growth Fund in creating any local jobs is the latest example of government initiatives that have had zero impact on the economic development of this borough.**

**But this administration has not stood idly by. One of the outstanding successes of this administration has been our commitment to youth employment through our Backing Young Bury campaign. A campaign that has been nationally recognised an example of best practice. Around 70 young people over the past year have benefitted from our partnership work across Bury- through work experience, apprenticeships and jobs with training. Backing Young Bury has facilitated a more proactive role from the Council and through our closer working relationship with businesses. We are able and willing to**

**promote apprenticeships and indeed any employment support for young people. We actively encourage all local employers to work with us to develop and realise employment opportunities. As part of this approach, we have created Apprenticeships within a range of front line and support positions in the Council. In total 30 additional apprenticeships have been established.**

**This Council puts our young people first - our next generation - and will work tirelessly to secure a brighter future for them. To demonstrate this administration's ongoing commitment to tackling the scourge of youth unemployment I will ensure that we will actively encourage employers to bid for Regional Growth Fund monies in Round 5.**

#### **4. Councillor O'Hanlon**

Does the Leader accept that comments made by the Deputy Leader on 3 July 2013 to this Council ("Settling claims is a legal process and I am advised that it is not appropriate to disclose any financial details as this may impede settlement of any outstanding claims" and "..Some things are secret, some things are confidential - this is confidential. At the appropriate time this may well be disclosed to you") and the subsequent response to the Bury Times shortly after , where the Council announced that the information he would not publicly provide in this Chamber was publicly available, were misleading to this Council, not to mention the public, who have a right to know how such significant amounts of Council Tax payers money is spent?

**A. No I most certainly don't accept that the response given by Councillor Smith was misleading. Your question had three parts to it and went well beyond the scope of the Freedom of Information request submitted by the Bury Times. Cllr Smith based his answer on advice from our negotiators that to release all the information requested could prejudice the Council's position at the negotiating table.**

**I totally agree that Council Tax payers have a right to know how their money is being spent and we have always said that once all claims had been dealt with we would be very happy to release this information, including details of the vast sums wasted on legal expenses by the two opposition parties in attempting to defend the indefensible.**

**Council tax payers also have a right to expect that the people they have elected to represent them will act responsibly and not jeopardise their money and their best interests in an attempt to score political points.**

#### **5. Councillor Caserta**

Can the Leader confirm that Unite the Union's propaganda video aimed at teaching children how to organise public protests will not be allowed to be shown in Bury LEA classrooms?

**A. Thank you for your question Councillor Caserta and for drawing what sounds like an excellent resource to my attention – I wasn't aware of it previously. Unlike the party opposite we are very keen to encourage young people to develop political awareness and develop their voice, which is why**

**we so strongly support the Youth Cabinet and events such as Circles of Influence.**

**In terms of showing the video in schools, this is of course a matter for individual governing bodies to consider, but I am sure they will be interested to hear your endorsement of it!**

## **6. Councillor Simpson**

Can the Leader outline what this Council is doing to ameliorate the effects of the Bedroom Tax on the most vulnerable in our community?

**A. The Council is committed to supporting people in severe need and will assist individuals affected by benefit changes to come to terms with the impact of all of the Government's disgraceful and unfair welfare reforms.**

**For tenants affected by the Bedroom Tax the Council will do everything it can to support tenants who engage with the Council by:**

- **Enabling realistic and affordable payment terms to clear arrears**
- **Maintaining a range of payment/collection methods**
- **Extending debt advice and counselling services**
- **Exploring signposting into work options**
- **Prioritising under occupying tenants within the Allocation Policy**
- **Reserving a proportion of suitable Council properties that become vacant for under occupying tenants (the new allocations policy allows us to hold a percentage of 1 and 2 bed properties back for welfare reform cases)**
- **Reviewing, on an individual property basis, the designation of rooms within that property**
- **Holding regular case conferences to discuss solutions and**
- **The judicious use of discretionary housing payments where short term problems are identified**

**Funding has already been secured for an officer to be appointed within 6 Town Housing for a period of six months to manage customers who need to downsize because of welfare reform and the Adult Learning service are now providing courses for those affected.**

**The Council has also committed to the establishment of a borough-wide Credit Union that will make assistance available to all of our citizens. In addition we have made resources available to another Credit Union that is already operating in the north of the Borough.**

## **7. Councillor Pickstone**

Could the Leader inform members on the estimated frequency of road surfacing (all road surfaces) in the Borough based on our current (2013-14) rate of repairs. (The England average reported by the Asphalt Industry Alliance is 54 years.) How does our estimated frequency compare with 5 years ago?

**A. It is an absolute fact that the Highways Infrastructure nationally is in such a poor state and one which Government should be recognising and addressing. But our capital grants have reduced from £2.199m in 2009/10 to £1.79m in 2013/14 i.e. by £400k.**

**It is also noteworthy and perhaps concerning that Cllr Pickstone utilises statistics that are from an organization (The Asphalt Industry Alliance) who have a vested interest – of course they would like to see more re-surfacing work carried out!!**

**To answer the question, no it is not possible to provide a meaningful estimate for our 2013/14 rate of resurfacing repairs at this stage of the year.**

**The figures quoted in the report Cllr Pickstone is referring to are subject to significant annual fluctuations, partly as a result of one-off funding that has been allocated by Government over recent years.**

- **5 years ago the average frequency would have been 101 years**
- **In 2011/12 it would have been 66 years**
- **In 2012/13 it would have been 160 years**

**It must also be understood re-surfacing is not the only type of maintenance work undertaken. The report quoted by Cllr Pickstone does not reference at all the surface treatment work that goes on annually.**

**We are piloting new methods of surface treatment works to improve the condition of highways as best we can in what are very challenging financial circumstances.**

## **8. Councillor Walker**

At the last Council Meeting on the 3rd July, Mr Tony Lloyd, the Police & Crime Commissioner informed us that he had changed his mind and decided to appoint a deputy who would take his place if he was unable at some future stage to fulfil his duties for any reason. Could the Leader confirm that this is a legally correct procedure and could he also inform of the annual cost of such an appointment?

**A. The Commissioner does have the legal powers to appoint a Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner. The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner was appointed on 26<sup>th</sup> July, 2013 following an open and independent selection process. Sixteen people applied for the role, and an independent panel selected five for interview. The panel comprised: Rochdale Council leader and chair of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities Police and Crime Steering Group, Councillor Colin Lambert; independent Police and Crime Panel**

member, Maqsood Ahmad; and former Manchester Evening News editor Paul Horrocks. The panel interviewed the five candidates before putting forward three for the Commissioner to interview and make the final decision. As part of the application process, candidates were asked to answer a series of questions about their suitability for the role. The salary is £55,000 per annum. This information and further details is available on the following website [www.gmpcc.org.uk](http://www.gmpcc.org.uk).

#### **9. Councillor Cassidy**

Can the Leader provide a comparison of how the number of working age people on out of work benefits in Bury compares with that of other Greater Manchester Authorities?

**A. In Bury 16.0% of working age people are receiving benefits compared to 17.9% across Greater Manchester. Thanks to the hard work of a wide number of agencies in the borough, and to the support that local businesses have provided to Backing Young Bury, we have the third lowest proportion of claimants after Stockport and Trafford.**

#### **10. Councillor O'Hanlon**

Could the Leader update members on the charges the Authority is facing to waste disposal and why these are currently expected to be above budget? What has the actual change in tonnage been that has caused this change? How does this impact on financial projections going forwards?

**A. Waste disposal costs the Council in excess of £13m per year. Each tonne of non-recycled waste sent for disposal through the WDA costs £270.41 in the current financial year, compared with an income of £25 per tonne for recycled paper, glass, bottles & cans. The budget for the WDA levy includes these charges based on estimated tonnages, which we update annually. During the year we monitor the tonnages sent for disposal very closely to identify any variances. In the early months of the current year we identified that some tonnages for some waste streams, particularly street cleaning, were higher than forecast, resulting in a projected overspend. More recently though the street cleaning tonnages have reduced and are back in line with previous years. This will be reflected in future financial forecasts. As the costs of disposing of waste are significant I would urge all residents and visitors to recycle as much of their waste as possible, including using the recycling waste bins recently installed in town centres to minimise the costs to the Council .**

#### **11. Councillor Gunther**

Can the Cabinet member for Leisure, Tourism and Culture confirm that the floor space allocated to Bury Art Museum is to be increased at the cost of reducing the space currently allocated to the Central Library?

**A. The Leader in his earlier statement tonight referred to the exciting new development in the shape of a successful funding bid to the Arts**

**Council that will deliver a Sculpture Centre within our Library and Art Gallery building here in Bury. This new facility will, as the Leader has indicated, have a national and regional significance and help support our already hugely important tourism and cultural offer. An important objective of our Economic Development Strategy is to continue the strengthening of Bury's cultural offer and to grow the visitor economy. We strive to ensure that our cultural products, activities and events integrate with our existing retail and leisure attractions.. This Sculpture Centre development helps ensure that our offer moves forward, and further enables Bury to provide a vibrant mix of activity the appeals to a range of age groups.**

**The introduction of the Sculpture Centre is wholly consistent with the proposals put forward in the two phases of Plan for Change Reviews of the Library Service. Phase 1 of the Plan for Change Review of the Library Service focused primarily on the re-structuring of services primarily at Bury Library. This Phase 1 Review identified a number of agreed actions in relation to Bury Library, including:**

- Retention of Library opening hours**
- No aspect of the current service would be withdrawn,**
- Introduction of innovative and modern service delivery, including the expansion of self service through the use of RFID Radio Frequency Identification.**
- Retention of the computer room with internet access**
- Co-location options to be explored.**

**Possible partners to share the Bury Library complex have ranged from suggestions of a coffee shop, food outlet, Citizens Advice Bureau, to other council partners such as the Bury Carers Service or other office space for the Council; and also to developing co-location within our own service for example with the Art Gallery and Museum Service. The crucial consideration in introducing the Sculpture Centre has been that of retaining all the Library services we have traditionally delivered, as well as opportunities for joint working. Alongside this will be a reduction in the physical library "footprint" with the proposed staffing establishment alongside the introduction of the updated self service provision. The continuing development of library e-services e.g. e-books, will also partly mitigate against reduction in physical stock, alongside our established request system.**

**Just to make absolutely clear- All existing library provision will continue. The opening hours will remain as at present. The Computer Centre will remain and additional space for community group activities will be available in the new community room in the Art Gallery area upstairs as well access to the new Sculpture Centre Workroom area.**

**Can I also make clear that there are no further reductions in staffing levels over and above those originally proposed in the Phase 1 report as a result of this development.**

**I look forward to the opening of the new Sculpture Centre to the public in May 2014.**

## **12. Councillor Quinn**

Could the Leader tell the Council, according to the latest estimates, how much Bury's Government grant has been cut and whether or not other southern authorities have been hit in the same way?

**A. Bury's Start Up Funding Allocation will be cut by a further 13.96% in 2015/16 despite the Chancellor announcing in the Spending Review that local government would face a 10% reduction. For Bury this means that another £9.9m will be cut from our Government support and the Leader has already indicated just how underhand the Government have been in the way that they have dealt with this announcement and he has set out just how devastating this cut will be for local council services.**

**As always, it is clear that southern authorities have been hit less hard by the Government cuts. Detailed analysis shows that the most deprived authorities in England will receive a much higher cut in funding compared to the least deprived authorities. The most deprived authorities will each receive a cut in funding of around 14 to 15% whereas, for example, Wokingham, one of the least deprived authorities, will receive a much lower cut in Start Up funding in 2015-16 of 9.9%. Yet again the Government is looking after its own.**

## **13. Councillor Gartside**

Does the current Labour administration have any plans to either help or further penalise motorists who wish to visit our town centre?

**A. In terms of helping motorists the following initiatives are in place:**

- Pay by phone/cashless parking making it more convenient for motorists who don't have any change when parking or wish to extend their parking without returning to their vehicle.**
- Electric vehicle charging points at various locations in the town centre**
- Street Safe Initiative – 20 mph zones that aim to promote a safer driving environment for motorists**
- We continue to review the bandings in place at our car parks, last year introducing an additional 4 hour band on the Market car park.**

**I'm assuming the reference to penalising motorists pertains to the introduction of Sunday parking charges and the removal of 15 minutes free parking. It is highly regrettable that we are having to introduce these charges but the stranglehold that is being put on Local Government finances is such that income generation has to be considered and they are common place in many authorities around the country. Indeed both The Rock and Millgate multi-storey car parks have charged for Sunday parking for several years.**

## **14. Councillor Fitzwalter**



Would the Leader join me in congratulating Ramsbottom for being the first place in Bury to set up a Credit Union in partnership with the highly successful and well established Mid Rossendale Credit Union and to remind people that it starts on the 9 September?

**A. I am delighted to congratulate Ramsbottom on this achievement. In particular I would like to pay tribute to yourself and Councillor Columbine for all the hard work you have put in, along with the relevant Cabinet members, to make this happen.**

**The Credit Union will play a vital role in helping out people who have been hardest hit by this Government's economic policies and welfare reforms.**

**I am also pleased to confirm that the borough-wide Credit Union will be launched in October and it will operate out of the old Argos building in Bury town centre.**

### **15. Councillor Daly**

Now that phase 2 of the libraries review has been implemented, could the Cabinet member for Leisure, Tourism and Culture confirm how confident she is that the required savings will be made on time?

**A. Cabinet approved proposals on 10 July for changes to the library service to meet the savings targets in Plan for Change. Libraries will be retained in their current premises across the Borough, with savings made by reducing staffing levels and using self service technology.**

**The supplier of the self-service technology has been selected and the system is due to go live in Bury Library in October 2013, with subsequent rollout to other sites on a phased basis, as agreed.**

**Staff are currently being consulted on the reductions in the staffing establishment under s188 of the Trade Union Labour Relations Act. This consultation closes on 30 November, with the intention that the new structure would be in operation by no later than April 2014.**

**We are well on track and I have no reason to doubt our ability to meet the required savings on time.**

### **16. Councillor Columbine**

If we are to lose one third of our Councillors as suggested by our colleagues opposite, can I suggest that we might start by volunteering the Conservative Members for this cut? They constitute about a third of the Chamber, are dismissive of the work of the Council, support a Government who are actively rolling back local democracy and seem to be in favour of smaller government. What does the Leader think?

**A. I would agree!!!!**

**On a serious note this announcement by the Tory Group is a diversion tactic from the real issues facing the Council. Instead of posturing they need to nail their colours to the mast and stand up for the people of Bury.**

### **17. Councillor Jones**

What has been the uptake on trade waste recycling since the Council launched it earlier this year?

**A. We currently have a total of 1140 trade customers. Of these, 130 switched to recycling mixed materials (glass, cans and plastic bottles) with a total of 258 bins, and 150 committed to recycling paper and card, with a total of 274 bins.**

**We continue to actively promote the trade waste recycling service with all our trade customers and are very grateful for so many responding to the initiative in such a short space of time.**

#### **18. Councillor S Smith**

Could the Leader provide an update on the work the Council and our partners have done to reduce ASB as part of the Greater Manchester wide Safe4Summer initiative.

- A.**
- **Council ASB Team, Fire Service and Police did Safe4Summer presentations in six secondary schools across the borough in the run up to the summer holidays.**
  - **Communities stand at the Fire Service Open Day promoting Safe4Summer messages and GM competition to win an IPAD competition**
  - **Safe4Summer Launch in Kay Gnds on 25th May 2013 in partnership with Youth Service. Young people could have a go on the climbing wall, pick up some giveaways, enter our competition and find out all the stuff going on in Bury during the school summer holidays.**
  - **Promoted and supported the Fun Active Bury Activities which took place every Friday night in Whitehead Park and Saturday night in Manchester Road Park during the school summer holidays.**
  - **Fire Service ran weekly caged soccer sessions in Clarence Road Park and Burrs Country Park**
  - **Police ran enforcement campaigns in both north and south of the Borough.**
  - **Council ASB Team and Youth Service supported advice surgeries at New Kershaw Centre for young people caught committing ASB and their parents**
  - **Council hosted a bespoke Safe4Summer webpage with advice and information about how to keep safe and out of trouble over the summer and ensured that other activities that were taking place over the summer months were branded with the Safe4Summer logo.**
  - **Received good media coverage as a result of the Council's Safe4Summer press release including an interview with Radio Manchester earlier in the summer.**
  - **In terms of impact, the Council has had positive feedback from participants in the initiative; a full evaluation of the Safe for Summer initiative and its impact on ASB figures will be available towards the end of the year.**