

**Minutes of: RAMSBOTTOM, TOTTINGTON AND NORTH MANOR TOWNSHIP FORUM**

**Date of Meeting:** 11 January 2016

**Present:** Councillor D Gunther (in the Chair)  
Councillors I Bevan, J Daly, L Fitzwalter, I Gartside,  
D Gunther, R Hodgkinson, K Hussain and Y Wright

**Also in attendance:**

**Public Attendance:** 28 members of the public were present at the meeting.

**Apologies for Absence:** Reverend Steve Openshaw - RETM/CTIR  
Alistair Waddell – Greenmount Village Community Group

---

#### **RTNM.597 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

#### **RTNM.598 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

That the Minutes of the last meeting of the Township Forum held on 9 November 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair

#### **RTNM.599 MATTERS ARISING**

Further to Minute RTNM.442, Public Question Time, Mr Booth referred to the issue that he had raised regarding the use of drones on Council land at Summerseat Lane South and asked if any guidance had been received. He explained that after the last meeting he had read about an incident in the paper where a child had been seriously injured by a drone.

Councillor Shori stated that if drones were being used on Council owned land the Council would take action against them.

Mr Booth asked if the use of drones could be added to list of prohibited usage on the sign at the land at Summerseat Lane South.

Councillor Bevan reported that since the last meeting of the Forum the Secretary of State had rejected the appeal relating to the proposed anaerobic digester at Ramsbottom. The company concerned had limited time following this decision to appeal to the courts but as far as Councillor Bevan was aware, nothing had been submitted to date.

#### **RTNM.600 POLICE UPDATE**

PC Rick Abram from the Ramsbottom Area Team reported that there had been incidents of youth annoyance across the area which the Police had been targeting. Some legal steps had been taken against a few individuals involving restorative justice. There had been a couple of serious assaults and enquiries were still

ongoing in relation to these. There had been 3 or four burglaries over the past few months with a couple occurring over the Christmas period.

PCSO Graham Lee reported that there had been a number of thefts from motor vehicles around the Tottington area which had spiked over the Christmas period. There were a few burglaries in Tottington before Christmas and there had been two in January to date. Other than that it had been a quiet start to the year.

It was reported that across the Forum areas there had been a stable and steady start to the year.

**It was agreed:**

That Sergeant Terry Dunning, PC Rick Abram and PCSO Graham Lee be thanked for their update and their attendance at the meeting.

**RTNM.601 2016/2017 BUDGET CONSULTATION**

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

It was explained that funding received from central government would continue to reduce. It was reported that for 2016/2017 it was estimated that the Council will have to cut £11.6 million from its budget as core funding was being reduced by 10.75%. It was anticipated that the Council's funding would be cut by over 30% in the coming 4 years. This is on top of the £54million lost since 2010.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Councillor Gartside stated that he would like to have a meeting with Steve to discuss the figures which had been set out more thoroughly as he felt that the reduction in funding versus efficiency savings could be looked at differently.
- Councillor Gartside referred to the grants to voluntary sectors and the

fact that these were always important to the Council as the voluntary sector carried out such important work. Councillor Gartside asked if the Council had received input from the 3rd sector in relation to commissioning.

Councillor Shori explained that the 3rd sector were in the process of setting up a joint commissioning hub. The Council were in consultation with them about funding and had also been in discussions with individual organisations but no decisions had been made. It was also explained that the 3rd sector had had to work hard to find their own efficiencies due to their funding being reduced year on year.

- Dr Falmai Binns referred to the statement regarding the digital advantages of accessing services on-line and explained that the Affetside and Hawkshaw were without adequate broadband which put the residents of these villages at a disadvantage. Dr Binns explained that the Council had not assisted with the issue but there was now a legal obligation for them to do so. The cost to provide the network boxes required would be £60,000.

Steve Kenyon explained that the Council had worked with AGMA to help areas where broadband was an issue. Councillor Shori stated that he would look into the obligations referred to around this issue.

- Mrs Brenda Headley asked what would happen if people did not want to access services digitally.

Councillor Shori explained that the Council was aware that not everybody would want to access services digitally and would still be providing a face to face option for services but, where possible customers would be encouraged to access services on line.

- Mr Schwarz stated that the Council could save money by repairing the potholes better. He asked whether other ways of carrying out repairs had been considered.

Steve explained that the Council had trialled a machine called a Velocity Patcher which had proved very successful. Following the trial the Council had purchased one of the machines.

- A member of the public asked when the staff restructuring would take place.

It was stated that this would be ongoing throughout the course of the 2016/2017 financial year. There had already been a number of people who had left the authority under different schemes such as voluntary retirement or severance and some employees had taken flexible retirement which allowed them to reduce their hours and access their pension whilst the Council retained their skills.

- Councillor Fitzwalter stated that the austerity programme put in place by the Conservative government could be reined in.

- Councillor Wright asked whether complaints had increased in the previous years since the Council had had a reduction of £54 million in funding.

Councillor Shori stated that the Council continued to be a highly performing Council even following the cuts and that complaints had reduced.

- A member of the public referred to the alternative service delivery models and asked what was meant by this.

Steve explained that the Council had recently established an adult social care company which transferred the services providing adult social care into a commercial business that could work as a private provider as well as offering support on a social basis. This allows the Council to work on a commercial basis and have an income stream.

- A member of the public asked what service redesign meant.

It was explained that this meant looking at the way the Council currently works with its partners such as the NHS and doing it differently. It could involve sharing back office resources and joint commissioning.

- Councillor Daly referred to grant optimisation and asked how this could be done differently or increased.

It was explained that there were a number of grants available from different agencies and it was a matter of ensuring that all of those available were applied for. There were opportunities such as Homes and Communities Agency grant to support affordable housing as well as grants similar to the 'I Will if You Will' grant.

- A member of the public stated that they had heard that the Council would be selling off its parks and recreational land.

Councillor Shori stated that the Council had no interest or desire to sell any of its parks. The Council had sold some buildings that were no longer used and small areas of green space which are no use to the public.

- Councillor Daly asked what the financial cost was to the Council following the recent collapse and subsequent demolition of the Waterside in Summerseat. Councillor Daly stated that he was aware that the building had not been insured by its owners.

It was stated that the work at the site was not yet complete. Once all of the costs to the Council were known the debt would be recovered through legal action.

- Councillor Gunther asked how the changes to the business rates would affect the Council?

It was explained that the details were not yet known on how this would work but it was expected that there would be some sort of top up and tariff system in place.

Councillor Shori explained that the government was allowing Councils to add a Social Care Precept to its Council Tax charges of up to 2%. It was explained that this would equate, on average to 50p per week per household.

Councillor Shori asked those present to indicate whether they would be happy to pay this.

The majority of those present indicated that they would be happy to pay the 2%.

**It was agreed:**

That Councillor Shori and Steve Kenyon be thanked for their presentation.

**RTNM.602 OPEN FORUM/PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

Noel Booth asked whether the school based at Summerseat had now moved to its new site at Radcliffe.

Councillor Gunther stated that she had been advised that the school would be moving out over the Christmas period and Training would move in.

A member of the public asked whether any funding had been granted from the Township Forum towards the War Memorial fund.

It was explained that no application for this had been received.

Janet Smith reported that Ramsbottom Heritage Society had requested that the bowling green to the rear of the Ramsbottom Civic Hall be registered as an asset of community value. This had been granted by the Council but the owners of the site had objected and the decision was now being decided by a tribunal.

A resident of Manchester Road in Ramsbottom explained that Manchester Road was continuously flooding which meant that the houses situated on the road were at constant risk of flooding. The cause for this was that the road was neglected by the Council and obstructions were not being removed. The residents have had to cover costs for clearing the road themselves but the problems return very quickly.

Mr Ali, a resident of Hawkshaw Lane stated that basic maintenance was not being carried out by the Council's Highways team. He had been requesting that the culverts on Hawkshaw Lane be cleaned but this had not been done. Mr Ali explained that he had contacted the Council on a number of occasions to raise his concerns and he had not received a response. Mr Ali stated that the Council should develop protocols for basic maintenance across the borough and stick to them.

Councillor Wright explained that she was assisting residents in Tottington with issues relating to blocked or broken culverts.

Councillor Hodkinson explained that the weirs that feed into the culverts from the two lodges near Carr Street in Ramsbottom had not been maintained properly and this had added to the flooding issues on Boxing day causing them to overflow down into Crow Lane where some properties had flooded.

Mr Ali stated that the A676, Bolton Road at the boundary with Hawkshaw and Bolton regularly flooded. This had been reported more than 6 months previous and nothing had been done. The pooling water on the road surface was dangerous in any conditions but more so when icy. The issue had also been reported by local Councillors.

Councillor Daly reported that the head teacher and other staff members at the school where he was a governor were regularly verbally abused and insulted by parents over issues with parking outside the school. He was aware that this also happened at other schools and asked if somebody from the Council could advise on what to do. It was also asked whether a protocol could be developed for schools.

### **RTNM.603 TOWNSHIP PLAN - UPDATE - FOR INFORMATION**

Dave Thomas presented the Township Plan for information.

### **RTNM.604 FUNDING REPORT - FOR INFORMATION**

The funding report was presented for information.

A member of the public asked what would happen to the amount of £7750 which had not been allocated and whether it would be carried over to the next financial year.

It was explained that this decision would be made at the budget meeting of Council

### **RTNM.605 PENSION WISE**

Councillor Gunther explained that she had been made aware of a pension advice service that was being run by the Wigan branch of the CAB and offered across Greater Manchester. Councillor Gunther asked whether the Forum would like to receive a presentation from them at the next meeting.

#### **It was agreed:**

That a representative from the Pension Wise scheme be invited to the March meeting of the Township Forum.

**COUNCILLOR Gunther  
Chair**

**(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 9.10 pm)**