

**Q1.** With the recent report that "Thousands of police visits 'criminalise' children in care homes", could the Leader assure members that children from Bury that are placed in residential care homes outside of the Borough are monitored, and are not the subject of such action.

**A.** We currently have 23 young people in residential care out of approximately 300 children and young people in our care, so they are a very small, but important, part of our group of young people in care. The children are closely monitored through placement' visits and social workers consultations with other professionals. The children have all been informed regarding Bury's advocacy service and majority are accessing this service.

We receive incident reports such as young people causing damages to the placement or assaulting staff which these incidents are dealt by social workers and follow up meetings. We have had a very small number of incidents involving our young people but these have been carefully managed.

We respond to any Ofsted concerns within 48 hours and we use an ISP system (Information sharing protocol).

This alerts us to any ongoing issues from 10 local councils that have signed up to the placements North West contract for any contracted home by them. Additionally we also have sight of regulation 44 visits that are completed on every children's home and also monthly reports from the homes.

In summary we have a comprehensive set of arrangements in place and deal with any issues swiftly and sensitively

**Q2.** As part of the Education White Paper, it is proposed that the land owned by the local authority for the school will be transferred to the Secretary of State when schools are forcibly converted to academies. One commentator has described it as the biggest land grab since the dissolution of the monasteries. Can the Leader give us a rough figure for the value of these important Council assets the Secretary of State is proposing to take from the Council without one penny of compensation?

**A. The fire insurance value of the schools concerned in Bury is £378.6 million.**

**If Bury is typical this would suggest a national figure of somewhere in the order of £100 BILLION**

**Q3.** Can the Leader confirm how many of the Bury family of schools are academies and if there are any schools who have expressed a wish to become academies?

**A. 4 Bury Primary Schools are Academies – 3 of these are 'forced' Academies (Elton Primary, Radcliffe and Gorsefield) and 1 a converter Academy (Yesoidah).**

**There are no Secondary or Special School Academies in Bury.**

**4 Primary schools and 1 Secondary school have stated to the Local Authority that they are actively exploring Academy Status at present. Officers are working with them closely.**

**Given that we have a total of 82 schools this means that just 6% of our schools are currently interested in becoming academies.**

**Q4.** Can the Leader explain what impact the recent budget will have on the Borough's residents?

**A. The Budget delivered by George Osborne was a political and economic disaster and one that really should have led to the Prime Minister sacking him as Chancellor of the Exchequer. It was also a disaster for this Borough.**

**It showed that Osborne had missed every target he set for himself with growth revised down, business investment revised down and government investment revised down. It also showed that this Government has failed on the budget deficit, failed on debt, failed on investment, failed on productivity, failed on trade deficit, failed on the welfare cap and failed to tackle inequality in the country.**

**Until the Labour Party made the Chancellor see sense Bury residents with disabilities were at risk of losing vital personal independence payments whilst at the same time billions were being handed out in tax cuts to the very wealthy.**

**This was the ideal time for the Government to set out a long-term plan to help those on the lowest incomes in Bury but instead they chose to make lack of security and risk of poverty the reality for many people in Bury.**

**We saw yet more cuts to public services, Bury being completely ignored when it came to flood defence funding, 85p in every £1 of the personal allowance rise going to the richest, the biggest land grab in history and mates' rates deals for big corporations on tax.**

**If even Iain Duncan Smith couldn't stomach it then what hope is there?**

**Instead it is left to this Council, with our partners, to make the most of the money we receive to ensure that our most vulnerable residents are supported, that our pupils get the best possible education, that we help to reduce poverty in the borough, that we make Bury a better place to live, visit, work and study and we continue to provide and commission the excellent services that our residents rely on.**

**Q5.** At the budget presentation Council Shori told us about his new project to create a "not for profit" operation to act as an energy supplier for the people of Bury. Can he tell us when he expects this to come on line, how much it will cost to setup and the annual cost to this council to operate the system?

**A.** **The exciting and innovative project to set up an Energy Company that I announced in my budget speech continues in its development.**

**This company would purchase gas and electricity from the wholesale market, supplemented by local energy generation where available, which would then be supplied to a range of customers. It would have many benefits including generating revenue and reduce energy cost for the Council itself as well as for our commercial and domestic customers. In providing reduced energy costs for our residents, it would significantly help to tackle our levels of fuel poverty in the borough, estimated to be 10% or over 8000 households.**

**The two main options in relation to the detailed arrangements for this company have already been developed quite considerably. It is expected that this work will be fully completed soon, to enable a decision by July or August this year. The two options have different benefits, with differing levels of control, return, costs and risks. Depending on which option is taken forward, the implementation could take between six and twelve months.**

**The costs of developing and setting up the company and its running costs will very much depend upon the option adopted. In addition the capital costs will be in part determined by the outcome of quite significantly developed investigations into the possibility of European funding. Whilst the full details of the set up and running costs are not yet available, it is expected that we will have a clear picture of this over the next 2-3 months.**

**It is hoped that we will see this company set up and the significant benefits being delivered within Bury within the next twelve to eighteen months.**

**Q6.** Could the Leader confirm who submitted feedback to the Call for Sites under the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and can he tell us what the next steps will be?

**A.** **As part of the preparation of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, a 'Call for Sites' was undertaken to allow landowners and potential developers to identify sites that they feel are suitable for future development.**

**Around 650 such sites have been submitted across Greater Manchester and 68 of these are within Bury.**

**It is vitally important to stress that ALL the sites put forward have been submitted by landowners and developers. The Council has NOT submitted any sites and has NOT formed any views at this stage as to whether the sites that have been submitted are suitable for development.**

**The sites that have been put forward have recently been published in the interests of transparency and so that the public are aware of all the ideas and proposals that have been submitted to date.**

**All of the sites will be subject to detailed consideration over the coming months and Council officers and Members will be heavily engaged in this process.**

**Q7.** Could the Leader tell us how much of the £700m earmarked for flood defences is being spent in Bury?

**A.** **On 17<sup>th</sup> March the Chancellor announced an extra £700m would be made available for flood defence funding. He said it was to be targeted at Leeds, York, the Calder Valley and various locations in Cumbria.**

**At this stage there is no indication that the Government has made any additional funding available for the Irwell valley in Bury.**

**This means that we are still in the position that there is a very significant shortfall in funding for the Environment Agency's draft flood defence proposals for Radcliffe and Redvales. The Council has made it clear**

**that we will help with this shortfall but we are also calling on the Government to increase funding for the scheme.**

**I have arranged to meet Sir James Bevan from the Environment Agency to push Bury's case for the speedy completion of the draft proposals and for additional funding.**

**Q8.** It was recently announced in the press that following the success of the Solita Restaurant in Prestwich, the owner now plans to open another venue in Prestwich. Does the Leader agree with me that the Council's investment of £2m along the Prestwich High Street (opposed by the Tories and Lib Dems) has and will encourage businesses to come to Prestwich?

**A.** **The regeneration and consequent business investment in Prestwich was, and remains, the principal reason that the Council has made such a significant investment into the High Street scheme.**

**The further investment recently announced by Solita is hugely welcomed and is a tangible example of how businesses see Prestwich as a bright and exciting place in which to invest.**

**As the Bury times reported, the owner of Solita said: "Prestwich is a great location because it is central to Bury and Radcliffe and not too far from Manchester, but it's one of the only places that has a traditional village area in the town. "**

**I am also delighted that this investment, and hard work by the Council, has led to yesterday's announcement that Muse Developments has signed an agreement with the Hollins Murray Group (HMG) to progress the long awaited regeneration of the Longfield Shopping Centre.**

**Plans for the future of the shopping centre will now be developed by Muse in consultation with HMG and the Council, and in consultation with the people of Prestwich.**

**In their press release Muse made it clear that the High Street regeneration scheme played a big part in their decision to invest in Prestwich.**

**Q9.** Following the recent survey which showed that 1 in 10 employees of the Authority reported bullying in the last 12 months could the Leader please inform members as to how many, bullying, harassment and whistleblowing concerns that its HR departments have received in each directorate and how many compromise/settlement agreements (and the total cost) the Council's legal department has signed off in the last five years? What consideration has been given to undertaking an anonymised independent engagement survey to take action on this issue?

**A** **The Council takes any allegation of bullying and harassment very seriously and we place the utmost importance on dignity and respect for all our employees which is why we already have a number of key policies and practices in place to prevent and deal with incidences.**

**In response to this question 26 Dignity at Work complaints have been investigated in the past three years (6 since April 2015) and there have been 18 cases which have been handled via the mediation route (4 since April 2015).**

**There have been 7 whistleblowing cases in this timescale.**

**Settlement agreements are brought about for a very wide variety of reasons and it would be misleading to link these to the issue of bullying or harassment.**

**I would reiterate that any incident of bullying is one too many and we are taking positive action led by senior management on this issue. It should be noted however, the position in Bury appears to be much better than the national picture.**

**In terms of taking action, a positive action taskforce has been established along with an Employee focus group to make our policies work effectively on the ground in practice.**

**We have a further survey planned for the autumn which will be anonymous as are all of the staff surveys we carry.**

**Q10.** Does the Leader regret that as he and his Cabinet member for Environment vacate their respective posts in a few weeks time they leave behind a legacy of dumping of domestic refuse and will be remembered for moving to a three weekly collection of grey bins ? Despite this, could I extend best wishes to them for their future success and happiness.

**A.** I'd like to thank Cllr Walker for his good wishes and I'm sure Cllr Isherwood will echo this. Cllr Walker has always been a worthy adversary and I only hope that when he eventually steps down he is as proud of his legacy as we are of our.

**Because, yes, we are very proud of the legacy we leave behind - a legacy of leadership, of environmental improvements and financial prudence.**

**I am proud that Bury was the first Council in England bold enough to move to a 3 weekly residual waste collection service in October 2014 – a move that has been replicated by our neighbours Rochdale and is to be replicated by Salford in the coming months.**

**I am proud that Bury is seen as a leader in this regard.**

**Members and officers have been invited to speak on this subject at a number of regional and national conferences and many other Councils from across the UK have either made contact or actually paid a visit to Bury to learn from our experience, given its obvious success.**

**I am proud that in the first 12 months of the 3 weekly collection service the collected bin waste recycling rate in Bury increased by 10% to 55%, and I am proud that**

**this scheme has delivered a saving of £860,000 a year which has helped to protect other Council services from the ravages of his Government's cuts.**

**And despite Cllr Walker's rhetoric I am pleased that in the same period of time the tonnage of fly tipped waste picked up by the Street Cleansing service has remained static, relative to the 12 month period prior to implementation of the 3 weekly collection service.**

**Q11.** Can the Leader provide an update on the Boxing Day floods for the people who left query forms after the Public Meeting in Radcliffe on the 11 February?

**A. Answers to the most commonly asked questions have been posted on the Council website. People who filled in query forms have been sent a copy of these questions by email or by post.**

**We are in the process of addressing the remaining specific questions shortly, and this will be done directly and through the three community flood resilience groups we are proposing to establish for the Radcliffe Road area, the Dumers Lane area and the Riverside Drive estate.**

**We have also provided financial support to over 600 residents and businesses and we are working with the same residents and businesses to deliver flood resilience measures to their properties as well as helping the Environment Agency to developing the flood defense scheme.**

**Q12.** Would the Leader please outline what positive actions have been taken by the Council to address the response to the employee survey regarding 10% of employees feeling they had been subject to bullying and harassment in the workplace?

**A. As I said earlier, and it is important to repeat it, this Council takes any allegation of bullying and harassment and the dignity and respect for all our employees extremely seriously and we have a number of key**

**policies and practices in place to prevent and deal with incidences.**

**Again, as I said earlier, whilst any degree of bullying is unacceptable, the position in Bury shows that such behaviour is actually less prevalent than the national picture. Research across the country suggests that incidences of workplace bullying and harassment are on the increase. Indeed, the TUC estimates that nearly a third of people are bullied at work.**

**What we now need to do is to look hard at the Bury figures and identify exactly what is behind the figure and whether the source of the alleged bullying is internal or external.**

**A positive behaviour task force has been established by the Chief Executive to be chaired by Pat Jones-Greenhalgh with representatives from a wide range of occupational areas. This group will work alongside an Employee focus group.**

**Both groups have a project plan with a six monthly timescale to 'make a difference' in practical ways and to make the policies we have work in practice. The aims of the groups are to put into place actions that will;-**

**Empower employees and managers, at all levels within the organisation, to take responsibility for developing a professional, honest, open and respectful culture**

**Encourage positive, acceptable behaviour in the workplace, and seek to eliminate instances of unwanted behaviour**

**Equip managers to lead teams through change in a way that encourages positive behaviour, by empowering their staff but knowing when and how to intervene appropriately should any form of unwanted behaviour arise**

**Develop a culture where all employees feel confident to speak up, knowing that they will be listened to and have**

**any concerns tackled sensitively, transparently, fairly and effectively.**

**The groups will report back after six months and I look forward to seeing real progress in this area following the commitment to action from managers and staff across the council.**

**Q13.** Given the recent tragedy of the death of a young boy who was supposed to be receiving Elective Home Education (EHA), can the Leader assure me that the EHA children in Bury are carefully monitored and regular home visits are carried out.

**A. The School Attendance and Inclusion Service commission an experienced School Improvement professional to carry out monitoring visits when we are notified of any such arrangements. These visits are supported by a School Attendance Officer.**

**An initial visit is offered within 8 weeks of being informed that a child is possibly being home educated and a follow up appointment is offered after the first six months, following this, visits are usually offered on an annual basis.**

**It should be noted however that local authorities have no statutory duties with regard to monitoring the quality of home education on a routine basis and some parents prefer to provide evidence that they are educating their child(ren) in another format rather than meeting with someone from the local authority.**

**We are very flexible and accept various forms of evidence such as samples of children's work; writing, pictures, artefacts, photographs or videos of learning activities or learning outcomes or by submitting a report from an independent tutor.**

**Also, where parents of a child who is not yet statutory school age or has never been on the roll of a school in Bury decide to Electively Home educate their child, they have no duty to inform the Local Authority.**

**So we do monitor when we are made aware of these arrangements given the resources we have available and our limited legal powers in this area.**

**Q14** Despite getting assurances that the road markings in Ramsbottom town centre will be reinstated by the end of February the work has still not been done. Can the leader give assurance that this work has been scheduled and advise when it is going to be done?

**A. As promised an order to reinstate the road markings on Bridge Street and Railway Street, Ramsbottom was been issued to our external contractor in time to meet the February deadline.**

**Unfortunately, this work is heavily dependent on the weather and the contractor has told us that inclement weather has delayed the works, but they intend that they will be completed over the next few weeks.**

**Q15.** Can I congratulate the Leader on his commitment to allocating extra funds to the upgrading of play areas across the Borough. Can he update on how much money has been set aside to upgrade the play areas in my Ward, Elton, and which of them will be completed in this current financial year.

**A. Works will be undertaken this financial year at the following Play Areas which are in or serve Elton Ward:-**

- 1. Woodhill Rd Play Area and Ball Zone**
- 2. Brandlesholme Play Area**
- 3. Purbeck Play Area paths**
- 4. Whitehead Park Play Area**

**Whitehead Park is in Church ward, but serves Elton ward as a neighbourhood park.**

**All works is programmed for completion by March 2017**

**The total spend in Elton ward is £83,000 which is part of a major £800,000 investment programme set to boost**

and improve play areas across the Borough over the next 12 months.

As a result of the investment 30 out of 60 play areas across the Borough will be fully or partially refurbished.

Providing good quality and locally accessible play areas is so important for our local children and young people to help provide a good start as well as support health and wellbeing.

**Q16.** Can the relevant Cabinet Member please give an update on the progress made so far in securing the Football Associations "3G Football Pitch" match funding for potential new state of the art facilities in our Borough?

**A.** The current funding that is available through the Football Foundation is nearing its end and as such all funding has either been spent or assigned to projects ready for submission, however the County FA are confident that there will be a new round of funding towards the middle of 2016.

Members may be aware that Goshen full size all weather pitch was damaged beyond repair during the Boxing Day floods. Discussions are ongoing between the self managed facility, Bury Council and the County FA regarding developing a new 3G pitch at Goshen.

Bury Council officers are also exploring the potential for a joint development of a 3G sports pitch, involving a local community sports club and a secondary school that would enable an application to be made for funding to the Football Foundation.

Bury also has 4 fully functional full size flood lit all weather pitches linked to high schools at Broadoak, Castlebrook, Parrenthorn and Woodhey.

**Q17.** In a previous meeting of this Council, the Leader committed to a review of bus lanes in the south of the Borough. Could he update members on this review?

**A. We have been unable to commence work on a wider review due to pressure of work and significantly reduced resources. However it is our intention to commence a wider review later this year and we will be happy to provide Councillor Pickstone with a more detailed time table once it is available.**

**Q18.** Can the Council Leader confirm what is being done to address the appalling state of the roads and footpaths in Ramsbottom?

**A. Councillor Bevan will be aware that at last Council the Labour Group announced an additional £500,000 for pot hole repairs this financial year. I can assure him that we intend that a proportion of these monies will be invested in the road network in Ramsbottom based on an assessment of road condition, risk and need.**

**I would also remind him that within the last 12 months the Ramsbottom area has benefited from extensive resurfacing works to Bolton Road West, Bolton Street and Dundee Lane.**

**The Council has also invested in new machinery that can carry out permanent repairs effectively and efficiently and this is already being utilized across the Borough including in Ramsbottom.**

**Q19.** Will the Leader of the Council join me in congratulating the organisers of the recent Ramsbottom Chocolate Festival for another successful event.

**A. I am delighted to congratulate all the organisers of the 2016 Festival.**

**For the eighth year running the two day Chocolate Festival was a great success with over 20,000 visitors estimated to have attended the event. With additional family entertainment provided in addition to the popular Street Market the Business Group felt that visitors to this**

**year's festival were spending longer in the town, and that the local economy and businesses across the town have benefitted as a result.**

**I am pleased that the Council has continued to work successfully with the Business Group to enable, facilitate and encourage organisation of the Festival by the Business Group themselves. Our role now includes formal support where needed such as licensing and road closure requirements, together with support to promote the Festival further afield via the VisitBury web site and social media. Through our business liaison function the Council will continue to support the Ramsbottom Business Group, and other Business Groups where they exist, wherever possible to ensure that this and other important event activity continues helping to retain the Borough's position as a premier destination for retail, leisure, tourism, and culture.**

**Q20.** Could the Leader of the Council please inform members now many school crossing patrols are currently not operational, and how many others do not have permanent allocated staff members in place?

**A. There are currently 18 vacant school crossing patrol sites that do not have a permanent member of staff allocated to them. The number of sites that are not operational can change on a daily basis as priority is given to allocating relief/supply staff to cover unassisted crossings.**

**For the past few weeks there have been 9 crossings left without cover, these have all been assisted crossings (pelican or puffin), all unassisted crossings have been covered using relief staff. The school crossing patrol coordinator assesses the risk when making the decision about which crossings will be left empty and which will be covered with supply staff taking into account road speed and the road layout near/around the school.**