

COUNCIL MEETING
16 OCTOBER 2013
LEADER'S STATEMENT

Madam Mayor, Members and Officers of the Council, there has been only one meeting of the Cabinet since the last meeting of the Council.

Draft Housing Strategy

Whilst it is no longer a Government requirement to submit a Housing Strategy for regulatory purposes, it remains good practice for local authorities to develop a Strategy which sets out local priorities and provides a guide to registered providers and developers on housing requirements within the Borough.

Bury, as we all know, is an increasingly popular place to live and the strategy looks to develop that unique selling point through:

- Encouraging responsible house building;
- Maintaining the balance between bought and rented properties – with owner occupation expected to remain the principle tenure type;
- Proactively tackling the number of empty homes;
- Partnership working with partners to build decent and sustainable neighbourhoods;

We also want to promote the social aspects of housing in terms of:

- Supporting the 'Green Agenda' to maximise energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty;
- Assessing affordability across the townships;
- Identifying the needs of specific groups such as older people, people with disabilities, homeless households.

Rather than dictate the outcome, it is proposed to test the strategy's findings through the consultation process and engage stakeholders in developing the action plan.

Carers Strategy

We all know the value of carers to our communities and this strategy aims to reinforce our commitment to these unsung heroes. Our key priorities are:

- **The Identification and recognition** of the many thousands of carers; supporting those with caring responsibilities to identify themselves as a carer at an earlier stage and to recognise the value of their contribution.
- **Realising and releasing potential** - Enabling those with caring responsibilities to fulfil their educational and employment potential.

- **A life outside of caring** - Personalised support both for carers, and those they care for, enabling them to continue their family and community life.
- **Supporting carers to stay healthy** - Supporting carers to remain mentally and physically well.

The Bury Carers Strategy 2013-2018 will focus on these key priorities over the next 5 years.

Civic Venues

Much has been written and said over the past few years about the performance of Civic Venues. Following the last review by external consultants Officers have been working to an agreed action plan. For the first time for many many years we are seeing real tangible progress in bringing down the level of subsidies and seeing increased use of the venues. In 2011 when we took over the Administration we inherited a subsidy of some £800,000. The forecast for this year will see that figure reduce by 37%.

Many of the actions included;

- Developing a Marketing plan and objectives for each venue
- Rebranding of suites as individuals rather than group
- Identify Market Sectors, Audience profiling and development
- A dedicated web page and ticket portal
- Cultural Partnership development – The Met - comedy & music, Festwich, SOS Rock, Vintage.
- Partnership arrangements – FORCH, 3rd Party promoters
- Seasonal promotions and brochure
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys
- Improved flexible use of vacant space

Recycling

Members of the Cabinet agreed a pilot project aimed at increasing the resource within the Waste Management Service to improve the Council's household recycling rate from 47% to at least 50%. Given the savings that can be achieved from diverting waste from landfill it is important we look closely at all opportunities to both drive costs down and meet wider environmental benefits.

To get more residents to participate, a self financing initiative has been developed which includes setting up two small specialist teams who will focus exclusively on Education/Awareness raising and Regulatory Activities.

Education

- We want to raise awareness in those areas where there is low participation.

Regulatory Activities

- This team will deal with non participation in recycling, contamination of recycling bins, side waste, fly tipping and there will be an enhanced focus on dog fouling and littering. Use of powers to issue FPN's will be sensitively managed and used only as a last resort. Where evidence is found on fly tipping we will seek to prosecute.

The 2 year pilot will be monitored closely with an aim to increase the recycling rate to a level which in effect exceeds the cost of the enhanced team and contributes to saving the Council money. If at the end of the period this has not been possible, then the pilot will cease.

Light Night

Once again the weather was kind to us and we were rewarded by another 22 stunning and diverse range of activities spread right across the town centre.

I want to publically thank all those employees; partners and of course the many thousands of people who flocked to the town centre for making this such a wonderful annual event for our Borough.

Credit Union

I am pleased to announce Bury's first borough-wide credit union has now arrived and residents of all ages and backgrounds are invited to join it.

It has been set up in partnership by Manchester Credit Union, Bury Council and Six Town Housing, and aims to give people a real alternative to doorstep lenders or payday loan companies.

Credit unions are suitable for everyone, of all incomes and circumstance, not just people who are struggling. They're a reputable, safe and respectable alternative, always putting their members first, and that's why I'm signing up along with the Mayor at the launch tomorrow.

Initially, the credit union will be open for business at customer contact points at Six Town Housing's HQ in Bury (Mondays) and at Bury Town Hall (Tuesdays and Fridays), from 9.30am to 1.30pm.

Britain in Bloom

Madam Mayor I am finishing my statement tonight with a warm glow and its all thanks to our fantastic staff and partners who have made history for little old Bury this year.

I am very pleased to inform Members that Bury in Bloom did extremely well by winning **Gold** for the first time in the national finals. The judges commented that Bury was one of the best in the region and now at the very pinnacle of the national campaign

Other comments from the Judges include

- In the financial climate Bury has risen to the challenge and produced an outstanding entry;
- The change to sustainable planting in many areas in a sympathetic and measured way;
- The business contributions both financial and in kind;
- Excellent initiatives with the schools such as the grow your own planters;
- The involvement of local community groups to keep the town centre and gardens clean and tidy;
- Bury on the whole was very clean and tidy with high standards of horticulture.

I am also pleased to inform you that Bury also won the special discretionary **Award for Environmental Responsibility** - for the way it manages and communicates its recycling messages to the community.

Madam Mayor that concludes my statement.

End