

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

Q.	Party	Question
1	Con	Can the Leader provide us with a detailed summary of costs so far in respect of the Bourne investigation and the likely further costs? <b>Councillor R.Caserta</b>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Shori</b>	<i>The latest costs in respect of the Bourne Investigation amount to £92,209.60. Work is ongoing, however, the bulk of the investigation is complete, and further costs will be kept to a minimum.</i>
2	L/D	Last week was National HIV Testing Week. Could the Leader inform members what the Council is doing to reduce the levels of undiagnosed HIV in the Borough? How does our performance for estimated undiagnosed HIV compare to other authorities? <b>Councillor Pickstone</b>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Preston</b>	<p><i>Bury has a diagnosed HIV prevalence rate of 1.83 per 1,000 population, which is below the 2 per 1000 population threshold at which the British HIV Association recommends. Bury's diagnosed prevalence rates are also lower than Greater Manchester's rates of 2.93 per 1,000 population. However, in contrast Bury has a higher diagnosed prevalence rate when compared to the majority of statistical neighbours – with some similar areas having rates as low as 0.84 per 1,000 population.</i></p> <p><i>In regards to our HIV testing performance we are aware that our rates are currently lower in Bury than the national rates with an uptake rate of 44.8% of all eligible new attendees at sexual health clinics taking up HIV testing, this compares to 67.7% in England.</i></p> <p><i>Public Health have been working with the local sexual health service provider (Virgin Health Care) to review our position and understand why our rates of HIV testing are lower than England.</i></p> <p><i>It is estimated that one in six people living with HIV in the UK is yet to be diagnosed. To address this a range of actions have already taken place - public health have recently co-commissioned an organisation called (PASH) - Passionate about Sexual Health- to deliver a sexual health improvement plan, which will include carrying out targeted work around early identification of HIV within several specific groups including men who have sex with men (MSM), Trans, BME and new and emerging communities. During National HIV Testing Week PASH offered numerous drop-in testing sites to the targeted populations across Greater Manchester, including in Bury.</i></p> <p><i>Public Health have also been working with our sexual health provider to enhance our digital offer and as a result Bury residents can now order self-testing HIV kits online. There are also plans for Public Health to work with Primary Care Teams to encourage re testing and referrals within high risk populations.</i></p> <p><i>Finally, in December there will be a Public Health England (PHE) sexual health campaign which will be amplified locally, and we will be promoting World AIDs day as well as testing and early identification.</i></p>

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

3	Lab	Could the Leader give an update on the proposed Redvales & Radcliffe Flood Defences? <b>Cllr Cathcart</b>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Quinn</b>	<i>The Environment Agency, which is leading on the flood defence scheme, has identified a preferred arrangement for the defences and these were the subject of a public consultation event in August. The Agency has since then produced cost estimates and these are currently being refined. It should be noted that availability of funding is subject to a bidding process. Discussions are also taking place with affected landowners regarding the works and potential compensation payments. It is hoped to finalise sketch proposals by the end of the year and next year detailed proposals will be drawn up to support a planning application. Subject to consents and funding being confirmed, construction work should take place between 2019 and 2021.</i>
4	Lab	Can the leader tell us how many apprentices the Council has taken on over the last month and in which service areas? <b>Cllr Skillen</b>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Shori</b>	<i>We have had 28 new apprentices joining us from October, with a further 4 vacancies still to recruit to. Three of the positions are higher level apprenticeships. We have recruited one looked after child and one supported intern to these vacancies. The service areas the apprentices are working in are varied and include legal, pest control, accountancy, catering, the art gallery, leisure and grounds maintenance.</i>
5	Con	Following the recent damning report by CQC and OFSTED which stated special educational needs children and families are being let down by Bury Council, what has been done to address these fundamental failings and how much has been spent on consultants from outside the Authority? <b>Councillor Kersh</b>
	<b>Answer: Councillor Briggs</b>	<i>The local authority, working with all stakeholders, most notably with children and young people and their families, and with key partners in Health, has carried out an extensive review of all aspects of SEND provision, beyond those areas identified in the inspection. This work was facilitated by an organisation called SEND4 Change who cost £80,500 for 115 days. This was fully funded by the DfE. From this work, there is now a clear plan for developing and improving provision, and processes and procedures, and we can be confident going forward that actions identified in the inspection can be addressed.</i>  <i>This approach has recently been endorsed by Ofsted, which gave the seal of approval to the local area action plan.</i>
6	Lab	Could the Leader give an update on the City Forest Park Initiative? <b>Councillor Black</b>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Quinn</b>	<i>You will recall that I have previously informed Council of our intention to work in partnership with the Forestry Commission, Salford City Council and the City of Trees on schemes to bring the Countryside to the community in North Manchester</i>  <i>Work behind the scenes is currently progressing, discussions at Officer level has taken place with Salford City Council to ascertain their thoughts on the</i>

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

		<p><i>project and the feasibility of a partnership approach, which was positive and a briefing is being put together at their end for their Senior Leadership Team. Legalities surrounding an agreement in principle are being explored, but early indications are positive.</i></p> <p><i>We are also talking with the Forestry Commission to agree the basis of a longer term partnership. This is to ensure the best outcomes for the local community and to ensure that the woodland, park and open spaces remain accessible to the public in the long term. Consultation and information will be available for residents regarding any proposals.</i></p>				
7	Lab	<p>Can the Leader confirm that a residents Parking scheme is under consideration for the streets around Kingswood and Dashwood Roads? How are residents being consulted ? <b>Cllr Black</b></p>				
	<b>Answer: Cllr Kelly</b>	<p><i>A consultation exercise has been carried out with local residents in the form of a parking questionnaire which sought their views on parking problems in the area. The consultation asked residents whether they supported the introduction of a residents parking zone in the area. 54% of residents feel there is a parking problem and support the introduction of a residents parking zone. Based on this, a scheme has been drawn up and approval will be sought from the Traffic Management Unit which next meets w/c 27 November 2017.</i></p>				
8	Con	<p>Can the Leader or relevant Cabinet member please provide a comprehensive list of all Council investments liquidised and all assets sold during the course of this financial year and state the exact purpose for these transactions? <b>Councillor I.Gartside</b></p>				
	<b>Answer: Councillor O'Brien</b>	<p><i>26 Property Assets have been liquidised / sold during this financial year.</i></p> <p><i>In the interests of brevity, I will provide a listing that will be uploaded to the Council website , rather than read them all out tonight.</i></p> <p><i>The reasons for disposal vary, but include regeneration initiatives, making revenue savings, and small scale disposals of garden land etc.</i></p> <p><i>All disposals are subject to an option appraisal, and we seek comparative market rates.</i></p> <p><b>** additional only – not for reading **</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="359 1686 1520 2038"> <thead> <tr> <th><b>Address</b></th> <th><b>Reason for disposal</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><i>15 Parsons Lane, Bury</i></td> <td><i>Vacant commercial premises held for investment purposes that did not meet the requirements for retention as set down in the Council's Estates Strategy 2014-2018. The aim of the Strategy is to achieve a portfolio of property interests within the</i></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Reason for disposal</b>	<i>15 Parsons Lane, Bury</i>	<i>Vacant commercial premises held for investment purposes that did not meet the requirements for retention as set down in the Council's Estates Strategy 2014-2018. The aim of the Strategy is to achieve a portfolio of property interests within the</i>
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Council Questions – 29 November 2017

			<i>Council's Let Estate that produce high yields, high growth, require low management and are relevant and well balanced.</i>
		<i>17 Parsons Lane, Bury</i>	<i>As above</i>
		<i>Land at Dale Street, Radcliffe</i>	<i>Long lease granted to Lidl to bring forward new town centre supermarket development.</i>
		<i>Land to rear of 6 Ash Grove, Tottington</i>	<i>Sale of land to remedy encroachment onto Council land by the owner of 6 Ash Grove.</i>
		<i>Land to rear of 44 Linksway, Unsworth</i>	<i>Sale of land to remedy encroachment onto Council land by the owner of 44 Linksway.</i>
		<i>Land to rear of 48 Linksway, Unsworth</i>	<i>Sale of land to remedy encroachment onto Council land by the owner of 48 Linksway.</i>
		<i>Land to rear of 50 Linksway, Unsworth</i>	<i>Sale of land to remedy encroachment by the owner of 50 Linksway.</i>
		<i>Land to rear of 52 Linksway, Unsworth</i>	<i>Sale of land to remedy encroachment by the owner of 52 Linksway.</i>
		<i>Land adjacent 44 Whitburn Drive, Bury</i>	<i>Sale of surplus land to owner of adjacent property.</i>
		<i>Land at Chapel Road, Prestwich</i>	<i>Land previously maintained by Parks and Countryside and declared surplus to operational requirements.</i>
		<i>Land between 436 &amp; 460 Walmersley Road, Bury.</i>	<i>Land previously maintained by Parks and Countryside and declared surplus to operational requirements.</i>
		<i>Land adjacent to 13 Pine Street, Bury</i>	<i>Land previously maintained by Parks and Countryside and declared surplus to operational requirements.</i>
		<i>Land at Whitefield Road, Bury</i>	<i>Land previously maintained by Parks and Countryside and declared</i>

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

			<i>surplus to operational requirements.</i>
		<i>24 How Lea Drive, Bury</i>	<i>Sale of Council's reversionary freehold interest in residential property following request from owner to purchase.</i>
		<i>7 Harris Drive, Bury</i>	<i>As above</i>
		<i>191 Sheringham Drive, Bury</i>	<i>As above</i>
		<i>270 Sunnybank Road, Bury</i>	<i>As above</i>
		<i>20 Cunningham Drive, Bury</i>	<i>As above</i>
		<i>30 Kensington Drive, Bury</i>	<i>As above</i>
		<i>2 Bloomfield Drive, Bury</i>	<i>As above</i>
		<i>11 Allendale Drive, Bury</i>	<i>As above</i>
		<i>32 Wavell Drive, Bury</i>	<i>As above</i>
		<i>6 Beech Grove Close, Bury</i>	<i>As above</i>
		<i>10 Beech Grove Close, Bury</i>	<i>As above</i>
		<i>25 Ashington Drive, Bury</i>	<i>As above</i>
		<i>7 Orpington Drive, Bury</i>	<i>As above</i>
9	Lab	Can the Leader advise if the Council is paying the Real Living Wage, in terms of what we pay our own staff and what we require providers of contracted services. <b>Councillor Preston</b>	
	<b>Answer: Cllr O'Brien</b>	<p><i>The Council's pay scales are in line with the National Living Wage. We don't pay the Real Living Wage outlined by the Living Wage Foundation, but we have been requested to look at this by the Trade Unions. We are aware that a number of councils already pay the Foundation Living Wage and are currently running scenarios/costing models for consideration. We are looking at the cost and knock on effect for positions but also looking and considering non-financial benefits for implementing this. Due to the differing pay structures across councils the impact of paying this enhanced rate will vary so it is not a one size fits all. Nor is it easy to replicate what another council does if they have different grading structures.</i></p> <p><i>We don't currently have anything in our tender documentation or standard contract terms in relation to rate of pay. Contractors are simply required to comply with their legal obligations.</i></p> <p><i>All commissioned adult social care providers are required to evidence they are compliant with paying their staff the National Living wage or above and</i></p>	

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

		<i>this is part of their contractual obligation. This is checked by our Quality Assurance processes. Payment of Living Wage in respect of social Care providers is a key element of the GM Social Care Plan in order to create a sustainable workforce.</i>
10	Lab	What arrangements is the Local Authority putting in place as part of the International 16 Days of Action against Domestic Violence and Abuse to raise awareness of the issue and encourage victims to report offences? <b>Councillor Preston</b>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Tariq</b>	<p><i>For those of you that might be unaware 16 Days is an international awareness-raising campaign aimed at galvanizing action to end violence against women and girls around the world. The decision to make the event span from 25 November to 10 December is deliberate as to include three other major events: International Human Rights Defenders Day World Aids Day and the anniversary of the Montreal École Polytechnique Massacre This is to highlight the connection between human rights and violence against women.</i></p> <p><i>This also coincides with the White Ribbon Campaign, for which I am an Ambassador. White Ribbon calls for men to stand up to violence against women and girls which I am sure you will all agree is an important and just cause.</i></p> <p><i>This year I am pleased to announce that we will be undertaking the following:</i></p> <p><i>Spanning across 16 days from 25th November to 10th December, a theme will be identified each day to explore the different stands of domestic violence and abuse through an array of workshops . These workshops will be open to partner organisations, voluntary sector and clients in the community of Bury. As well as raising its profile this should also provide them with training so that they can go on to provide the highest level of support possible to victims of abuse and their families.</i></p> <p><i>Having judged last year's I am happy to say there will be cake bake to raise money in support of the White Ribbon Campaign in the Bury Market. We will be handing out information leaflets to members of the public to raise awareness about domestic abuse and encourage its reporting.</i></p> <p><i>As part of the White Ribbon ethos about Men standing up to abuse there will also be an opportunity for people to sign pledges or become an ambassador. I hope you will all come along to support the campaign and raise some money.</i></p> <p><i>The '16 Days of Action' will help improve the visibility of domestic abuse amongst the general public, provide hope to women who are suffering, encourage the introduction of ways to bring the perpetrators of abuse to account and hopefully raise some money for a good cause.</i></p> <p><i>I will update you as this develops.</i></p>
11	Con	Despite previous requests by Ramsbottom Councillors for the reinstatement of road markings within the Town Centre, nothing has been done. Can the Leader advise when the road markings will be reinstated? <b>Councillor R.Hodkinson</b>

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

	<p><b>Answer: Cllr Quinn</b></p>	<p><i>The budget available for road marking reinstatements has suffered significant cuts and so we are forced to prioritise this type of work, taking account of safety concerns and difficulties with enforcement.</i></p> <p><i>The road markings on Kay Brow have recently been reinstated and instructions have been issued to our contractors to reinstate markings on Bolton Road West, Bridge Street and Carr Street.</i></p> <p><i>I am hopeful that these works will be completed before Christmas (weather permitting).</i></p>
12	L/D	<p>Could the Leader inform members what consideration the Council can give to further measures to reduce the use of bailiffs to collect debts? In particular what consideration can be given to the Money Advice Trust's best practice guidance about a Vulnerable Circumstances Policy and use of bailiffs for people in receipt of Council Tax Support? <b>Cllr S Wright</b></p>
	<p><b>Answer: Cllr Kelly</b></p>	<p><i>We have put many practices in place this year with the introduction of the Council Tax Support top slice of 20% to encourage customers to get in contact with us.</i></p> <p><i>Use of bailiffs is absolutely the last resort, and we would exhaust all possible remedies prior to going down this route.</i></p> <p><i>We don't believe we can exempt Council Tax Support customers from referral to the bailiffs.</i></p> <p><i>A number of other AGMA authorities use bailiffs, and have been successful at collecting these small debts.</i></p> <p><i>We do all we can to encourage vulnerable customers to contact us, when they do we are able to identify any needs, make referrals to our CAB officer and assess vulnerability.</i></p> <p><i>We will keep the use of bailiffs under constant review, and will consider the impact of using them as part of our Anti-Poverty Strategy</i></p>
13	Lab	<p>In February could the Leader announced that we would borrow £10m to fund a resurfacing and repair programme. The Conservatives accused us of mortgaging our future away. Last month the Communities Secretary, Savid Javid, stated that –</p> <p><i>The Government should borrow money to fund the building of hundreds of thousands of new homes, a Cabinet Minister says. Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid said taking advantage of record low interest rate "can be the right thing if done sensibly".</i></p>

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

		Is this mortgaging our future or realising that Keynesian economics work after all? <b>Councillor Skillen</b>
	<b>Answer: Cllr O'Brien</b>	<p><i>We saw the sense in this approach long before Mr Javid - when we set our budget back in February 2017.</i></p> <p><i>After years of derisory funding for our Highways, we recognised that the only way in invest "at scale" and begin to address the historic condition of the network was to make use of our Prudential Borrowing powers.</i></p> <p><i>It certainly isn't mortgaging our future – its investing in it, and seeing that families and Businesses continue to make Bury their destination of choice.</i></p>
14	Lab	Can the Leader tell us how much affordable housing has been provided in Bury in recent years? <b>Councillor James</b>
	<b>Answer: Cllr O'Brien</b>	<p><i>The Council fully recognises the challenges of households securing affordable housing in the borough. In 2004, the Council introduced a planning policy where 25% of units on larger developments have to be made available at affordable levels. In most cases this means at a discounted sale price and in other cases as Shared Ownership, providing a minimum 25% discount. Over 250 affordable dwellings have been identified as completed as a result of this planning policy and in the past 3 years, 78 affordable dwellings were completed as a result of planning policy.</i></p> <p><i>This policy also allows the affordable housing units to be sold on the open market in certain circumstances, subject to 25% of the sale proceeds being given to the Council to spend on affordable housing elsewhere. We have received around £1.9m in this way, £867,000 of which has been allocated for bringing private sector empty properties back into use for affordable rent.</i></p> <p><i>In addition, the Council works with partners to influence their investment of new affordable housing in the borough; typically Housing Associations and usually supported by Homes and Communities Agency Funding. As part of its programme for 2015 to 2018, HCA funding for just over 150 new affordable rent or shared ownership properties was brought into Bury and funding has and continues to be secured under its new affordable housing programme. Overall between 2010/11 and 2016/17, Housing Associations delivered 325 affordable housing units in Bury.</i></p> <p><i>The Council is also directly delivering a number of schemes, supported by funding from the HCA, for properties it will own. This includes a 60 unit extra care, a 10 unit Affordable Rent Scheme and an 8 unit Shared Ownership Scheme.</i></p> <p><i>We have also secured over £1m HCA funding to bring private sector empty properties back into use as affordable rent, with 38 already delivered and 10 to be completed, some of which has been in partnership with Six Town Housing, with ownership now being with either STH or the Council.</i></p> <p><i>More generally, the Council works with GMCA and the Homes and</i></p>

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

		<p><i>Communities Agency to secure funding for and drive additional affordable housing across the borough, with a number of schemes underway or in development.</i></p> <p><i>The council will also utilise its own land which is suitable for residential development to deliver affordable housing where this is appropriate.</i></p> <p><i>Thus over the coming years, we will see an increased number of new affordable properties being built within the borough.</i></p>
15	Con	<p>Can the Leader please give an update on the status of the Activity Centre at Burrs Country Park and explain why the authority are no longer prepared to support this valuable and popular local amenity? <b>Councillor Hankey</b></p>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Quinn</b>	<p><i>Burrs Activity Centre has operated from Burrs for the past 20 years. The 'not for profit' company has taken the decision to close at the end of the year and any bookings already made will be honoured. Thousands of children have enjoyed Burrs Activity Centre, and the Council would like to formally thank the staff, volunteers and directors for their hard work, dedication and commitment over the past 20 years and wish them well in the future.</i></p> <p><i>We are proud to have retained the Green Flag status for more than a decade as well as opened the new East Lancs Railway Station at Burrs following investment of £140,000, extended the Caravan Club site and installing a new sculpture.</i></p> <p><i>The Council is fully committed to creating a fully sustainable activity centre which will benefit Burrs Green Flag Country Park well into the future. We have a bright and exciting vision supported by the Burrs Strategy adopted in 2015 which outlines the Council's vision to create a regional destination park in Bury. To this end a number of expressions of interest have been received in relation to running the centre, these will be asked to provide an outline proposal based on the Burrs Strategy and the need to make it sustainable. Plans are afoot to support the remaining activity based at the centre, such as the canoe and kayak club.</i></p>
16	Lab	<p>Can the Leader confirm that the Council will be introducing Council Tax Exemptions for Care Leavers? <b>Councillor Leach</b></p>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Briggs</b>	<p><i>We will be introducing a scheme to exempt care leavers up until their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday from Council Tax where they have a liability to pay.</i></p> <p><i>There will be reciprocal arrangements across Greater Manchester where an exemption will apply in Bury if the care leaver is from another GM council but who now resides in Bury. These arrangements and how the scheme will operate including how claims for exemption will work are still being drawn up.</i></p>
17	<b>Lab</b>	<p>Can the Leader confirm what action has the Council's Trading Standards service undertaken this year to protect the Bury public during fireworks season? <b>Councillor Haroon</b></p>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Kelly</b>	<p><i>The Trading standards has carried out multi agency visits to all registered firework sellers in the borough on the run up to Bonfire Night, Fireworks have been inspected to ensure they are legal and safe.</i></p>

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

		<p><i>100% of registered premises have been visited. Statutory Notices were checked and advice on under age sales given, together with warnings on the consequences of non-compliance.</i></p> <p><i>In addition an Inspection was carried out by Authorised Officers at the fireworks importer based in Dumers Lane Bury. This was to ensure that all fireworks distributed nationally from this site were fully compliant with the latest standards and Regulations.</i></p> <p><i>Trading standards again participated with partners from GMFRS, GMP and Gm Local authorities in Operation Treacle sharing information highlighting the dangers and consequences of antisocial behaviour, criminal damage and the misuse of fireworks.</i></p>
18	Con	<p>In view of the fact that the Government has begun the formal process of considering intervention into 15 local authorities that have failed to produce a local plan, could the Leader advise the current status of the Council's preparation for the publication of a draft Bury Local Plan in 2018? <b>Councillor I.Bevan</b></p>
	<p><b>Answer:</b> <b>Cllr</b> <b>O'Brien</b></p>	<p><i>It is fully recognised that there is a need to have an up-to-date Local Plan in place and there has been two previous attempts to replace the current Unitary Development Plan in 2011 and 2014. In both cases, the new plans were progressed to examination stage but, on both occasions, Government-appointed Inspectors were minded to find the plans unsound - largely on the basis that they both adopted an approach that sought to maintain current Green Belt boundaries and, because of this, were unable to identify sufficient land elsewhere to meet needs for future housing development.</i></p> <p><i>On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February this year, a Council Motion was carried that included an instruction from the Leader for officers to immediately begin work on a new Local Plan for Bury and to establish an All-Party Working Group to oversee this work.</i></p> <p><i>Members will be aware that, in March this year, we started the process of preparing the new Local Plan by asking stakeholders to submit comments over a six-week period on what they felt the Local Plan should contain.</i></p> <p><i>This was followed by an eight-week consultation on the Key Issues for Local Plan in August of this year. Alongside this, we also undertook a 'Call for Sites' asking interested parties to submit suggestions for sites that they consider suitable for development or for protection.</i></p> <p><i>This consultation ended in October and Officers are currently in the process of considering the comments that were received alongside current and emerging national planning policy to produce a draft Local Plan. The intention is to progress the Local Plan alongside the GMSF as the two documents will have to complement one another and be consistent. As a result, we are intending to undertake further public consultation on a draft Local Plan in the summer of next year to coincide with the intended publication of a revised draft of the</i></p>

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

		<p><i>GMSF.</i></p> <p><i>I would add that without either a Local Plan, or GMSF, there is a risk of intervention and ultimately a loss of planning autonomy.</i></p> <p><i>In line with the Motion, we have established an All-Party Working Group for the Local Plan that includes the Leaders of each Group. The Working Group has already met twice – in April and June - to discuss progress on the Local Plan, its intended content and to ensure that this is in line with national planning guidance. We are intending to convene a further meeting of the Group in January</i></p>
19	Lab	<p>Can the Leader tell us why smoking prevalence rates in Bury are higher than the national average? <b>Councillor Adams</b></p>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Preston</b>	<p><i>Smoking prevalence in Bury is 19.1% compared to the national average of 15.5%. Smoking rates in Bury have always been worse than England and this is not surprising as smoking rates are associated with deprivation and Bury has higher than the national average levels of deprivation. In particular higher smoking rates are observed in routine and manual groups, offenders, some BME groups, those with mental health issues, and those in poorer households.</i></p> <p><i>Smoking prevalence is reducing but not at the same rate as the national average. Encouragingly, smoking rates amongst young people have seen a sharp decline. 8.7% of 15 years olds in Bury are current smokers, a drop from 21% in 2004.</i></p> <p><i>Reducing smoking prevalence requires a comprehensive programme around tobacco control, beyond the offer of stop smoking support and needs to also include action on smoke free places, addressing illegal and illicit tobacco and pricing. Our existing tobacco control plan expires in April 2018 and a new plan is under development. This will align to the new ambitious GM Tobacco Control Plan and specifically consider how we can reduce smoking prevalence faster.</i></p>
20	Lab	<p>Sky lanterns are a risk to our environment. Birds and wildlife can become entangled in the wire or bamboo frames leading to injury or death and livestock can accidentally eat fallen lantern parts which can cause internal bleeding, leading to a slow painful death. There is also a risk to sea life as many of fallen lanterns end up in the sea.</p> <p>The fallen sky lanterns also pose a significant fire hazard with a number of reported incidents. One fire caused by a sky lantern at a recycling plant cause £6 million worth of damage.</p> <p>The RSPCA and many other organisations including the Marine Conservation Society, Women’s Food &amp; Farming Union (WFU), Soil Association and</p>

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

		<p>National Farmers Union (NFU) all support a ban on sky lanterns.</p> <p>Could the Leader inform the Council of what we can do to mitigate the dangers caused by the release of Sky Lanterns? <b>Cllr Fitzgerald</b></p>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Quinn</b>	<p><i>A number of Councils in the UK have banned sky lanterns on Council land. Others have decided that having considered all the available evidence relating to their use, including a 2013 DEFRA report, there are more effective ways to manage the use of sky lanterns across the entire borough than by adopting a policy to ban their use on council land. In order to mitigate the dangers of sky lanterns the Council should make it clear to event organisers that the Council does not support the use of sky lanterns at events taking place in the borough because of the risk to the environment and wildlife.</i></p> <p><i>There was an Industry Code of Practice released in 2014 in relation to the manufacture, sale and use of sky lanterns. The code details responsible sale and use of sky lanterns and this should be followed and adhered to ensure there are used safely. Contact should be made with GMFRS to assess the location of the proposed launch, check weather conditions ensuring there is little wind speed, check the proximity to airfields and contact the Civil aviation authority if required, limit the number to be launched to a small number and launch them singly.</i></p>
21	Con	<p>Can the Leader confirm that all health and safety risk assessments are up to date, and in particular fire safety checks in all Council owned buildings? <b>Councillor I.Gartside</b></p>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Kelly</b>	<p><i>The review and revision of risk assessments is a local management issue. We use auditing arrangements to provide periodic independent assessments of health and safety management standards, including risk assessments, although, out of necessity, this is a sampling process which requires departmental follow up across all services where any potential weaknesses are identified.</i></p> <p><i>With regard to fire risk assessments, a review of Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) coverage within Bury Council owned, leased, managed and/or occupied properties is being undertaken in light of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. Copies of completed FRAs have been requested from services/those with responsibility for the management of the relevant establishments. Once received, these are entered onto a central fire risk assessment registry. Although local knowledge is required to fully assess the suitability of individual FRAs, the registry will be used to assist in making independent judgements on the quality and suitability of the processes that have been applied to their creation. All relevant managers have been provided with details of the requirements, fire risk assessment templates and guidance, and competency requirements for any external fire safety specialists that they may choose to use.</i></p>
22	L/D	<p>Could the Leader inform members what consideration has the Council given to ways it can support residents with future dealings with Universal Credit, who cannot afford to phone the Government’s costly helpline (up to 55p a</p>

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

		minute from a mobile)? <b>Cllr D'Albert</b>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Kelly</b>	<p><i>The Government announced on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017 that Full service Universal Credit in Bury was being delayed from May 2018 to the end of July 2018 and that as part of the announced budget changes all new claims for Universal Credit will end from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2018 and claims made direct to the Council for Housing Benefit until the roll out of full service Universal Credit in July 2018.</i></p> <p><i>Under full service Universal Credit the Council will continue to provide support to residents as part of a partnership agreement with the DWP.</i></p> <p><i>As part of the current agreement the Council is able to offer support in making a claim for Universal credit and for help with budgeting by referrals being made to the Council from the local Jobcentre offices.</i></p>
23	Lab	Can the Leader as agreed at the last full Council give us an update on the pot hole repair programme? <b>Cllr Mallon</b>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Quinn</b>	<p><i>Here are details regarding the first batch of works...</i></p> <p><i>6 sites are being resurfaced;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>• Longsight Road</i></li> <li><i>• Hilton Lane</i></li> <li><i>• Bury New Road (Rams)</i></li> <li><i>• Manchester Road (Blackford Bridge)</i></li> <li><i>• Parkhills Road</i></li> <li><i>• Tottington Road</i></li> </ul> <p><i>The combined Expression of Interest (EoI) and Invitation to Tender (ITT) will be placed on The Chest procurement portal at the beginning of December with a return date of the beginning of January as the moratorium on roadworks comes into place in December and, traditionally, contractors shut down for two weeks over the Christmas period. This will allow works to commence at the beginning of February.</i></p> <p><i>Virgin Media have yet to inform the Council of its recently announced programme of works for Prestwich. Consequently, Hilton Lane may have to be withdrawn if it conflicts with Virgin Media's aspirations for the area.</i></p>
24	Lab	For nearly 20 yrs three properties on Heys Road in Prestwich have been a blot on the landscape. Can the Leader give an update on what is happening to the one property still standing and on the land where the two other houses used to stand and is now vacant? <b>Councillor James</b>
	<b>Answer: Cllr O'Brien</b>	<p><i>The properties in question are 131-133 and 137 Heys Road, Prestwich.</i></p> <p><i>Whilst it is recognised that these properties have remained empty, creating a significant negative impact in the area; the ownership and legal complexity</i></p>

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

		<p><i>associated with these properties should not be underestimated. It is positive therefore that I can report that after many years of hard work, tenacity and a sustained input from staff in various sections across the Council, a solution for these properties has been found and is progressing.</i></p> <p><i>The complex legal issues for instance have provided significant challenge in taking action against the appropriate persons, so much so that the properties/land eventually became the responsibility of the Crown.</i></p> <p><i>In the case of 131-133 the Council took formal action for the properties to be demolished. The Crown became owners of the land and have instructed its sale at Auction on the 5<sup>th</sup> December. Through a charge on the property/land we have secured the costs of our formal action. As far as possible officers will also engage with the subsequent owners and influence the end use of this land.</i></p> <p><i>In the case of 137, through our liaison and negotiation with the Crown, this property has now been sold. Officers are engaging with the new owner who is exploring their options and requesting quotes/schedules of work. The last conversation with the owner confirmed that they intend to keep the existing property and carry out a full renovation including underpinning. Officers will continue to engage with the new owner and will monitor and support the progress.</i></p>
25	Con	<p>Could the Leader please give an update on the programme to replace Bury's street lighting with modern "white" lights and also confirm that the power of the existing sodium lighting has not been reduced in recent years?  <b>Councillor M.Hankey</b></p>
	<b>Answer:</b>	<p><i>The current street lighting invest to save programme, involving swapping lanterns on the side roads, is in its final stage and is currently on track.</i></p> <p><i>Main road lighting will be updated, as appropriate, as part of the Highway Asset Management Plan, and other initiatives which are currently being formulated.</i></p> <p><i>138 lights on some main roads did have dimmable control gear fitted, which dims for part of the night, as part of the initial invest to save proposal. However, this was not continued as it was felt this process was not cost effective in the long term. The remaining lighting throughout the Borough has not be subjected to reduced power.</i></p>
26	Lab	<p>Can the Leader update the Council on the progress of the GMSF process?  <b>Councillor J Walker</b></p>
	<b>Answer: Cllr O'Brien</b>	<p><i>Members will be aware that consultation on the draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework ran over a 12-week period ending in January this year. The plan generated a large amount of interest and around 27,000 responses were received.</i></p> <p><i>A significant number of responses raised objection to the plan's proposal to</i></p>

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

		<p><i>release areas of Green Belt to meet development needs. Objections were also raised in relation to the perceived lack of information on supporting infrastructure, such as transport and health care, as well as the impact that the proposals would have on the environment and air quality. Whilst there were many objections, there was some acknowledgement of the need for more housing and general support for the plan's ambitions for job creation across Greater Manchester.</i></p> <p><i>Officers are now working on a revised draft GMSF that will take into account the comments received on the first draft with the intention that this is subject to a further 12-week consultation next summer.</i></p> <p><i>This revised draft will also take into account the Government's proposals for a revised standard methodology for determining needs for new housing. Whilst the levels of housing need used in the draft GMSF faced heavy criticism from some quarters, it is interesting to note that the use of the Government's proposed methodology results in a need for just 13 less homes per year in Bury than what was proposed in the draft GMSF.</i></p>
27	Lab	<p>There have been press reports regarding a Bury private hire driver being prosecuted by the licensing service for refusing to carry blind passengers with a guide dog. What is the legal position regarding this? <b>Councillor Mallon</b></p>
	<p><b>Answer:</b> <b>Cllr Kelly</b></p>	<p><i>On 1 November 2017 the defendant, Mohammed Ibrar who is the holder of a private hire vehicle drivers licence issued by Bury Council, appeared before Manchester City Magistrates court where he pleaded guilty to an offence committed on the 20th April 2017 that whilst driving his private hire vehicle, he refused to carry out a booking accepted by the operator that had been made by a disabled person and the reason for the refusal was that the disabled person was accompanied by an assistance dog. This was contrary to Section 170 (3) of the Equality act 2010. As a result he was ordered to pay a fine £250.00, costs £250.00 and a victim surcharge of £30.00.</i></p> <p><i>The Equality Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against a disabled person including refusing access to a disabled person accompanied by an assistance dog except in the most exceptional circumstances. Private Hire Drivers must have and display a valid medical exemption certificate supplied by the Council should they be unable to carry assistance dogs on medical grounds.</i></p> <p><i>Thousands of disabled people rely on an assistance dog to help them with day-to-day activities, which many people take for granted, Assistance dogs carry out a variety of practical tasks for people as well as supporting their independence and confidence. Bury Council is committed to an accessible public transport system in which disabled people have the same opportunities to travel as other members of society. Hackney Carriages and Private Hire Vehicles are a vital link in the accessible transport chain and it is important that people who use wheelchairs or assistance dogs can have confidence that drivers will accept them and their wheelchair or assistance dog and carry them at no extra charge. It will therefore continue to consider taking action against any licence holder who breaches the legislation.</i></p>

28	Con	<p>The Electoral Commission, in its recent report 'Elections for everyone' has stated that some voters with learning and physical disabilities as well as people living with mental illness have reported being left unable to cast their vote at election time due to not understanding wording on election forms, not knowing they could ask for a tactile voting device and problems inside the polling station such as poor lighting and lack of space. Could the Leader confirm that the Council and Bury's returning officer will consider the report and implement it's recommendations? <b>Councillor I.Bevan</b></p>						
	<b>Answer: Cllr Kelly</b>	<p><i>The Council and its Returning Officer already routinely make provision for people with a disability who wish to register and those who vote. This includes tactile devices, large print and braille ballot papers for the visually impaired, pictures in postal vote packs on how to complete them, disabled access in stations, as well as training of staff to assist and give advice to voters and their carers. Regular reviews of polling stations are also undertaken.</i></p> <p><i>The Electoral Commission report 'Elections for Everyone' makes a number of recommendations, not just for those who run elections, but includes care and support workers, the government and candidates and their parties.</i></p> <p><i>The Council and its returning officer take their duties and responsibilities to all who are entitled to vote very seriously and the recommendations contained in the 'Elections for Everyone' will be considered and where required, implemented.</i></p>						
29	<b>L/D</b>	<p>Could the Leader outline to members the levels of uncollected debt by the Council for the last three years for: council tax and business rates and the current totals of uncollected debt in these areas? <b>Cllr S Wright</b></p>						
	<b>Answer: Councillor O'Brien</b>	<p><i>We strive to collect all debts that are due, however it must be recognised that 100% is never achievable.</i></p> <p><i>People die, people abscond, or people declare themselves bankrupt.</i></p> <p><i>Nevertheless, we perform strongly when compared to GM neighbours, and achieved collection rates of 96.84% for Council Tax, and 94.78% for Business rates in 2016/17</i></p> <p><b>The figures below are as at 31/10/17</b></p> <p><b>Business Rates</b></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="360 1697 916 1975"> <tr> <td>2014 - 2015</td> <td>£734,438</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2015 - 2016</td> <td>£1,083,101</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016 - 2017</td> <td>£1,688,036</td> </tr> </table>	2014 - 2015	£734,438	2015 - 2016	£1,083,101	2016 - 2017	£1,688,036
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Council Questions – 29 November 2017

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30	<b>Lab</b>	<p>The Council passed the Neighbourhood Engagement Framework last April, could the leader please give us an update on the progress of implementation thus far. <b>Councillor Cathcart</b></p>						
	<b>Answer: Cllr Tariq</b>	<p><i>Following sign off of the implementation plan for the new 'Neighbourhood Engagement Framework', a series of Neighbourhood Engagement Events were scheduled across the month of November. The events were designed to provide an opportunity for residents, community groups, businesses and anyone who lives, works or has an interest in each of our 6 Townships to get together and help shape our new approaches to engagement and delivering outcomes on the issues that matter most to our communities.</i></p> <p><i>Because local people in our Townships are uniquely positioned to identify what they need and want in their areas, the events offered members of the community the opportunity to share thoughts and ideas about how Bury Council and key partners such as the Police, health services and the VCFA can work with our communities to support and drive forward their ideas. The events were an opportunity for people to find out what is available for them in their community and learn how they can get involved and work together to make a difference in their local area. There was information about how to pitch for funding for projects, as well as the chance to help inform planning for future initiatives. The message at each event was that we want people to feel empowered to take charge of their own lives.</i></p> <p><i>The engagement events were delivered in an informal setting with a 'Market Place' style networking format and all six were very well attended. Each event had in excess of 20 information stands featuring community groups, partner agencies, third sector groups and various community initiatives. Many residents came to talk to us and find out what was happening in their areas. Attendees were given the chance to learn more about how we will engage with them going forward and help shape our approach in each area to ensure it works for that locality.</i></p> <p><i>Alongside our engagement events we have also undertaken six 'The Pitch' funding events in November, where we have put the community at the heart of the decision making process when investing grant funding. Through an innovative new Participatory Budgeting model, local people have heard all about potential new projects aimed at improving health &amp; wellbeing and they have decided which projects will make the biggest difference in their local area. The events were extremely well attended with standing room only as local people came out en masse to hear details of the projects available to them and register their vote.</i></p> <p><i>The next stages of implementation will involve a full evaluation of the impact</i></p>						

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

		<i>of our November Engagement and Pitch events and the set up of Ward based 'Action Groups', which will be the vehicle for driving forward the solutions to the local issues identified during each of our engagement events.</i>
31	<b>Lab</b>	What percentage of pupils attends a good or outstanding school in your area? What are you doing to address this? <b>Councillor Leach</b>
	<b>Answer: Cllr Briggs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>85.6% of Primary Age children attend a Good or Outstanding School in Bury. 91% of secondary pupils are in good or outstanding schools.</i></li> <li>- <i>87.3% of Bury primary schools are judged Good or Outstanding which is in line with the national figure of 88.0%. 86.7% of Bury secondary schools are judged Good or Outstanding, which is above the national average of 74.6%.</i></li> <li>- <i>We continue to focus on Schools Causing Concern both in terms of those judged either requires improvement or to be inadequate and those whose performance data suggests that that are no longer likely to be judged good.</i></li> <li>- <i>More recently one primary has moved from good to outstanding and other primary schools are looking at this; our Health Checks provide recommendations which support the improvement journey.</i></li> </ul>
32	Con	It was recently reported in the press that Bury New Road in Ramsbottom would be resurfaced by the end of the financial year. Can the Leader give more detail regarding the planned commencement date, the extent and the expected duration of the work? <b>Councillor R.Hodkinson</b>
	<b>Answer: Councillor Quinn</b>	<p><i>The works to Bury New Road, Ramsbottom are due to commence February/March 2018 with an anticipated duration of 4 weeks.</i></p> <p><i>The extents of resurfacing works shall include Bridge Street from the ELR Level Crossing, Peel Brow and Bury New Road up to the bridge crossing the M66.</i></p>
33	<b>Lab</b>	How are we supporting some of our most vulnerable young people such as care leavers? <b>Councillor J Walker</b>
	<b>Answer Cllr Briggs</b>	<p><i>We are in touch with over 96% of are care leavers aged between 17 – 21 years and the Through Care Service maintains a good relationship with Bury's Care Leavers who now have a dedicated Leaving Care Hub at the New Kershaw Centre. Nearly 90% of care leavers are assessed as being in suitable accommodation. We are also working as part of a Greater Manchester initiative and the Children's Society to exempt care leavers from Council Tax.</i></p> <p><i>There is an active care leavers forum who regularly meet as well as several care leavers attending the Children in Care Council. Bury was well represented at Octobers Greater Manchester Care Leavers Awards held at The Royal Northern College of Music winning 2 out of the 11 categories.</i></p>
34	<b>L/D</b>	Could the Leader inform members what proportion of meat served in Council

Council Questions – 29 November 2017

		establishments (including schools) is 'humanely' slaughtered (stunned before slaughter)? <b>Cllr Pickstone</b>
	<b>Answer</b>	<i>Approximately 10% of the meat products used in the preparation of meals, which is predominantly in schools, is Halal in order to meet the cultural needs of service users. The product is sourced from a Halal Monitoring Committee (HMC) certified supplier.</i>
35	<b>Con</b>	Can the Leader confirm the process by which local communities in the Borough can request that speed cameras be erected on certain roads where there is clear evidence of speeding and dangerous driving posing a risk to the safety of residents. Can the Leader confirm what funding is available at a GM level to support such action? <b>Councillor J.Daly</b>
	<b>Answer Cllr Quinn</b>	<p><i>In order for a fixed site speed camera to be introduced on the highway in Greater Manchester, certain criteria have to be met before such a unit can be considered. The body that decides whether a location is suitable for a fixed site speed camera is not actually Bury Council but an organisation called the Greater Manchester Casualty Reduction Partnership (GMCRP) also known as 'Drivesafe'. GMCRP is a multi-agency partnership committed to improving road safety in Manchester - including the introduction of fixed site speed cameras where the criteria to do so are met. GMCRP must demonstrate that any fixed site speed enforcement is being undertaken in areas where there is a history of injury collisions taking place over a particular length of road where there is a history of speeding traffic. The Safety Camera Criteria laid down at GMCRP states that there must be a history of 3 KSI (killed or serious) injury collisions over a baseline period (usually the most recent 36 months) over a 0.4km-1.5km length of road and where there is evidence of significant speeding of vehicles. This unfortunately creates a scenario whereby the provision of such facilities on the highway is reactive rather than proactive in nature. GMCRP follow the selection criteria as laid down in the Department for Transport (Dft) Circular of 01/2007.</i></p> <p><i>To introduce a new Digital Fixed site speed camera now costs in the region of £100,000 and the majority of funding for fixed site speed cameras where the criteria is met to introduce such a scheme comes from a proportion of fees paid by offenders attending the Greater Manchester National Driver Intervention Courses. The Intervention scheme was introduced to allow those offenders who met the course criteria, the opportunity to participate in a nationally recognised and supported training programme.</i></p>
36	<b>L/D</b>	Following reports that two North West local authorities have used off-shore companies with allegations of avoidance of tax, can the Leader reassure members that Bury has no similar involvement with off-shore companies? <b>Cllr D'Albert</b>

	<p><b>Answer</b> <b>Councillor O'Brien</b></p>	<p><i>I can confirm that the Council has no involvement with off-shore companies.</i></p>																																			
<p>37</p>	<p><b>Con</b></p>	<p>Can the Council confirm the total figures spent on public highways, rights of way, pavements and public infrastructure projects in Whitefield, Radcliffe and Prestwich, providing a figure for each area? <b>Councillor O.Kersh</b></p>																																			
	<p><b>Answer:</b> <b>Councillor O'Brien</b></p>	<p><u><i>2016/17 Expenditure</i></u></p> <table border="1" data-bbox="359 589 1524 952"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Footways</th> <th>Rights of Way</th> <th>Carriageway</th> <th>Street Lighting</th> <th>Projects</th> <th><b>Total</b></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Radcliffe</td> <td>£124,214</td> <td></td> <td>£367,047</td> <td>£501,416</td> <td></td> <td>£992,677</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prestwich</td> <td>£120,825</td> <td></td> <td>£84,108</td> <td>£107,911</td> <td>£539,655</td> <td>£852,498</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Whitefield</td> <td>£168,647</td> <td>£4,000</td> <td>£31,505</td> <td>£138,096</td> <td></td> <td>£342,249</td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Total</b></td> <td><b>£413,685</b></td> <td><b>£4,000</b></td> <td><b>£482,660</b></td> <td><b>£747,424</b></td> <td><b>£539,655</b></td> <td><b>£2,187,424</b></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><u><i>Notes:</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The project for Prestwich is the A56 Prestwich High Street Scheme.</i></li> <li>• <i>Arthur Lane, Radcliffe – works were started in 16/17 but straddled into 17/18. All costs shown here.</i></li> <li>• <i>Public Rights of Way – approx. £4K repairing Dove House Close Steps.</i></li> <li>• <i>Street lighting includes for maintenance and LED replacements.</i></li> <li>• <i>Carriageways and Footways includes for reactive and planned works.</i></li> </ul>		Footways	Rights of Way	Carriageway	Street Lighting	Projects	<b>Total</b>	Radcliffe	£124,214		£367,047	£501,416		£992,677	Prestwich	£120,825		£84,108	£107,911	£539,655	£852,498	Whitefield	£168,647	£4,000	£31,505	£138,096		£342,249	<b>Total</b>	<b>£413,685</b>	<b>£4,000</b>	<b>£482,660</b>	<b>£747,424</b>	<b>£539,655</b>	<b>£2,187,424</b>
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