

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

Date of Meeting: 14 November 2013

Present: Councillor I Bevan (in the Chair)
Councillors S Carter, J Daly, I Gartside, D Gunther,
K Hussain and Y Wright

Gina Ball – Ramsbottom Traders’ Association

Also in attendance: Councillor J Smith – Deputy Leader of the Council
Mike Owen – Executive Director of Resources
Emma Newey – Bury Council
Maria Folan – Bury Council

Public Attendance: There were 17 members of the public present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor J Columbine and Councillor L Fitzwalter, Dr F Binns and A Waddell.

Dave Thomas – Township co-ordinator

RTNM.518 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

RTNM.519 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

It was agreed:

That, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Hussain being in attendance at the meeting, the Minutes of the last Meeting of the Township Forum held on 12 September 2013 be approved as a correct record.

RTNM.520 MATTERS ARISING

It was agreed:

Councillor Bevan referred to Minute RTNM.60 - Police Update and explained that following the update from Inspector Williams at the meeting, Councillor Bevan had written to Chief Superintendent Forber at Bury Division of GMP and Mr Tony Lloyd, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Greater Manchester. The letters were attached to the agenda and highlighted the concerns that had been raised at the meeting regarding policing across the three wards of the Township.

Councillor Bevan reported that he had received a response from Chief Superintendent Forber and he would circulate this, but, to date he had received no response from Mr Lloyd.

RTNM.521 PLAN FOR CHANGE 3

Councillor John Smith, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Mike Owen, Executive Director of Resources attended the meeting to update those present on the Plan for Change 3 - Additional Programme of Savings 2014/2015.

It was explained that the Plan for Change was the means by which the Council will deliver its vision for the Borough whilst recognising that the funding from central government is reducing, that residents' needs and expectations are changing and that the Council and its partners will have to work differently in the future but still be committed to deliver the best outcomes with the resources available.

The Plan for Change had first been consulted on in 2011. Since then there had been a number of different policy announcements and changes to local government funding and budgets which had seen the need to consult on more and more proposals in relation to the services provided by the Council.

The Plan for Change Programme had been approved at Council in February 2013 and outlined savings of £7.432m for 2014/2015. This had now been increased by an additional £2.2m to take account of revised figures from government.

It was also reported that the Council Tax had been raised for the 2013/2014 financial year by 3.5%. There had been no information available to date as to whether the government would impose sanctions on the Council because of this rise even though all rules were complied with when the rise was agreed. It was also too early to know what the Council Tax situation would be for 2014/2015 as no final grant figures will be available until mid January 2014.

It was explained that a package of options had been identified which included savings of £2,145,000 being made on internal efficiencies and £75,000 on a reduction in payments to external organisations.

Mike explained that this was now the time that residents and stakeholders could have an input into how the additional £2.2m could be saved by commenting on what they felt were areas to consider and what the council services should look like from 2014/2015.

Councillor Smith explained that further challenges would also be seen in 2015/2016 when the Council will have to cut £16m from its budget. The Council will have to prepare for this as early as possible and consider all of the options available by prioritising services whilst doing everything possible to ensure that all obligations are met, the vulnerable are looked after and Bury remains a decent place to live.

Cabinet Members and Directors had been asked to look at options including service changes, alternative ways of delivering services, increased waiting times and/or reduced quality, and the Council structure. As soon as any options were available they would be consulted on as the next stage in the process.

The public consultation regarding the 2014/15 budget was taking place currently and would close on 17th January 2014. All comments from the Township Forum Meetings would be fed into the consultation before any decisions were made.

Representation could be made online www.bury.gov.uk/planforchange, e-mail to planforchange@bury.gov.uk, by mail to Plan for Change, Bury Council, Knowsley Street, Bury BL9 0SW and by telephone to 0161 253 5696.

Questions, comments and representations were invited from members of the public and Councillors present at the meeting:-

- Councillor Wright referred to the savings from internal efficiencies and asked whether this meant there would be any compulsory redundancies.

Mike Owen explained that there had been and would continue to be restructuring across the Council. Within this was the 3 year rolling programme of opportunities for employees to apply for voluntary retirement, flexible retirement and voluntary severance up to three years ahead and it was anticipated that any redundancies would be through this route and therefore not compulsory. It was also explained that this allowed for workforce planning to take place in good time.

- Councillor Wright also asked where the £130,000 relating to mental health services would come from?

Mike explained that this was from procurement savings.

- Councillor Gunther referred to the £75,000 that was being used to fund the sculpture exhibits in Bury Library and asked whether this was a good time to be spending money on such things.

Councillor Smith explained that it was anticipated that the exhibition would become an income generator. An international sculpture conference was due to be held in the town and the curators from the museum were being invited to many different places to arrange exhibits.

- Mr Booth, a resident from Ramsbottom stated that he had been promised that the pot holes on the avenue where he resided would be repaired but this hadn't happened and he felt that repairs and maintenance were more important than sculptures.
- Reverend Steve Openshaw referred to the statement that there would be reductions in payments to external organisations and asked whether this would include payments to Voluntary Organisations.

It was explained that this would most likely be the case but at the present time it was difficult to know how certain organisations would be affected. There would have to be joint working to look at how things could be done differently across the board.

- Councillor Daly referred to the dividend that had been received from Manchester Airport and asked whether this had been accounted for in the budget.

Mike Owen explained the regular dividend of £1m had been budgeted for previously and that the additional £400,000 had also been included in the budget and in 2013/14 would help to offset the forecasted overspend which was currently standing at £600,00. This overspend was likely to reduce and for future years the additional dividend would be used to offset increased costs and so help to avoid additional service cuts above the levels being consulted on.

- Councillor Daly also asked whether the £85,000 to the unions in the current years' budget would be replicated in future years.

Councillor Smith stated that the budget for the coming year hadn't as yet been set but that the Council would continue to support the work of the trade unions as this was a positive mechanism for negotiation. It was also explained that it was a national requirement for Councils to support the Trade Unions.

- Councillor Hussain referred to the possibility of punishment from the government for raising the Council Tax and asked whether there were any contingencies in case this may happen. Councillor Hussain also asked why advice wasn't followed if there was a possibility of punishment.

Mike Owen explained that the Council had followed advice when considering the option and had been told that they were within the guidelines and rules relating to raising Council Tax. It has only come to light in a draft bill that was published in the summer that there may be repercussions resulting from this. Mike also stated that there were contingencies that could be considered.

- Councillor Carter asked how much money the Council will have to cut from its budget due to government cuts between 2010 and 2014

Mike reported that the Council had a controllable budget of £100m. Up to 2014 the figure lost would be £35m and after this date it was anticipated there would be a further £16m. This therefore equates to a 50% loss in 5 years.

- Mrs Warrington referred to the young and vulnerable members of the community and the fact that they needed support to ensure that nothing bad happened to them. How could this be guaranteed when services were being cut?

It was explained the Council's top priority were vulnerable people, both children and adults and this would remain the case. The consultation would show what residents of the borough and stakeholders' felt was important. There were lots of service areas that weren't statutory and this was where the tipping point would come in and issues such as nice to have versus have to have.

- Councillor Daly asked how confident the Executive Director of Resources and the Deputy Leader were that the £7.432m of savings already approved by the council would be met?

Mike Owen stated that he was confident this would happen.

- Mr Booth asked whether it was true that the illumination of Peel Tower at night would be stopped in order to save money.

Mike Owen stated that he would look into the issue of its illumination and supply a response to the Forum.

- Councillor Bevan referred to tourism being a major factor locally and asked if support for local traders would be continued.

It was explained that the Council cannot promise anything at the moment but they will always offer support where possible to local traders and tourism in general.

- Councillor Gartside referred to the figures quoted in the report relating to funding per head of the population of the borough. Councillor Gartside explained that the figure quoted was likening Bury to a large authority when, in reality it was a small, single tier authority. If the Council were judged alongside other small authorities the cuts would equate to 0.2% rather than 14.2% as quoted.

Mike Owen stated that Bury was a Metropolitan Borough and if it had been compared to other metropolitan boroughs the 'per head' funding gap would have been much larger than the figures quoted by Councillor Gartside. The English average was used in the report. In terms of the percentage loss, the key matter was that we were already starting from a very low position in terms of funding support.

- Councillor Gartside also referred to pots of money that weren't ring-fenced and could therefore be used at the Council's discretion and asked for this to be acknowledged.

It was stated that any available funding was welcomed and acknowledged.

It was agreed:

That Councillor John Smith and Mike Owen be thanked for their presentation.

RTNM.522 FOSTERING - BURY HOMES FOR BURY CHILDREN

Emma Newey from Social Care and Safeguarding attended the meeting to report on the current drive for recruitment of foster carers within Bury.

It was explained that the authority was having to use external agencies to place some children as there weren't enough foster carers in Bury for the number of children needing a placement.

It was explained that there were a number of different types of fostering:- Temporary, Short Term, Respite, Home from Home and Long Term. It was also explained that foster carers were needed for; Sibling Groups of younger children or older teenagers, Teenagers, Children with disabilities and Children of diverse cultures and ethnic groups.

It was also reported that if a placement wasn't available through the Council approved foster carers within Bury, then Social Services would have to place a child with a private agency. This could mean that they were far away from their

friends and family and would also have cost implications to the Council as the agency placements were more expensive.

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

- Councillor Gunther referred to the children requiring foster care and the type of contact they would require whilst being in their placement.

It was explained that a child in foster care would require as much consistency as possible. Therefore it was best to try and keep them in the same school and with their friends and with their siblings until a long term decision had been made.

- A member of the public asked what age groups were involved.

Emma explained that the age range was from birth to 18 and a child could require a placement at any age.

Emma stated that there was a freephone number that people could telephone to get more information relating to fostering: 08009555311.

It was agreed:

That Emma be thanked for her presentation.

RTNM.523 I WILL IF YOU WILL

Maria Folan, Community Activator attended the meeting to explain about the 'I will if you will' initiative which was being carried out across the borough.

Maria explained that In May 2013 Bury was unveiled by Sport England as the location for an intensive year-long sporting experiment to get more women and girls active and tackle the gender gap in sport. Bury had secured £2,383.778 million of National Lottery funding to support this.

It was reported that 'I will if you will' was the brand name for a campaign aimed at women and girls in Bury, the aim of which was to motivate them to be more active and a wide variety of activities would be offered to assist this. These include jog groups, led walks, buggy baby bootcamps, tea dances, burlesque, total toning, total body workout, kettlecise and Zumba.

Maria explained that there was a dedicated website for the project where you could find out what events were being held locally. It was also explained that the Community Activators would welcome suggestions from groups on other activities that could be held and these would be provided through the scheme to the groups.

Maria could be contacted on 0161 253 6664 or m.folan@bury.gov.uk

RTNM.524 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- Mr Booth referred to the new JD Sports and Bury Football Club sponsorship deal that had been announced and asked how this would affect the Council sponsorship of the club.
- A resident of Tottington referred to the local link provided by Transport for Greater Manchester and asked why Kirklees Street and Scobell Street were not included within the scheme.

It was explained that this question had been raised by BRIF at one of their meetings with TfGM but a request would be made for it to be raised again.

Councillor Bevan referred to the funding that was available through community funding and the small grants panel and asked that people think about funding that they might apply for.

RTNM.525 ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERSHIP

It was agreed:

That Mr Keith Conley, representing the Rotary Club of Ramsbottom, be approved as a Member of the Advisory Group of the Ramsbottom, Tottington and North Manor Township Forum.

COUNCILLOR I BEVAN
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.40 pm)