

Council Meeting – 29 January 2014

Questions:-

The Leader of the Council

Question running order:

1st: Liberal Democrat

2nd: Conservative

3rd: Labour

1. Councillor Pickstone

Could the Leader please update members on what the Authority is doing to promote volunteering within the borough?

A. Volunteers play a vital role in supporting the delivery of a wide range of public services and contribute enormously to the quality of life of many Bury residents.

The Council actively encourages volunteering through its support of the Bury Volunteering Centre where volunteers are interviewed and followed up 6 weeks later to assess their progress.

484 volunteers were supported by the volunteering centre in the 6 months April to September.

The Volunteer Centre has worked with Bury Adult Learning Service to improve the way in which we work together to promote volunteering related courses. As a result, in October 2013 the VC will deliver two 'Introduction to Volunteering' workshops at Adult Learning Centres in Bury and Whitefield.

The Volunteer Centre's 'Time to say thank you' scheme during Volunteer's Week (1-7 June) recognised the valuable contribution that volunteers make in Bury by awarding a Certificate of Recognition for 50 or 100 plus hours of volunteering , signed by the Mayor of Bury, to over 400 volunteers from a diverse range of local groups As part of our 'Made in Bury' campaign we want to recognise the good work of many of our residents and community groups throughout the borough.

This years Made in Bury Community Awards had three main categories. These were:

- Outstanding contribution to a township won by Mr and Mrs D.Moore of Whitefield**
- Young person or young persons' group - outstanding community contribution won by Young People from Streetwise 2000**
- Volunteer of the year award won by Linda Freeman of Bury Street Pastors**

2. Councillor Bevan

Could the leader inform the Council how much is the by-election in Ramsbottom on March 6th going to cost the Council?

A. The by-election itself will cost in the order of £12,850 less savings of £1,242 from allowances giving a net cost of £11,608.

I trust that no-one will attempt to make political capital out of an individual's private family circumstances. These costs are the price of giving voters a choice when a person is no longer able to fulfil their duties on the terms under which they were originally elected.

3. Councillor Jones

The people of Bury have for a long time enjoyed living in one of the safest Boroughs in Greater Manchester. Last year for example, I note there wasn't a single homicide for the year ending 31 December 2013. Have we been rewarded with this 'success' by having our Divisional Commander removed to join a task force at Headquarters and does this in effect mean that Bury's voice at GMP's top table has now been diluted at a time when we need to protect our resources here in Bury?

A.

- **Due to unprecedented cuts to public expenditure being experienced across all our public services, driven by this conservative led coalition government, colleagues in GMP are faced with having to make significant savings over the next few years.**
- **Like us, they are having to make challenging decisions in order to ensure they can continue to deliver effective services to the people of Bury and across Greater Manchester as a whole.**
- **In order to create the capacity to design and implement the changes necessary, they have advised partners across Greater Manchester that there are to be some imminent changes to the local senior management structures across GMP. A Superintendent post will be removed from each division in the next few weeks, and the number of Divisional Commanders will be reduced by four.**
- **From 3rd March 2014 Chief Superintendent Annette Anderson, the current Rochdale Divisional Commander, will**

be in overall charge of Bury and Rochdale. Similar pairing arrangements will be implemented in Bolton/Wigan, Salford/Trafford, and Oldham/Tameside.

- **Superintendent Mark Granby and Divisional Commander Forber will be leaving the Bury division between now and 3rd March. Karan Lee will remain as the sole Superintendent**
- **We are advised by our colleagues in GMP that this is an interim position which will remain in place while a full review of the current structure of GMP is undertaken.**
- **We have sought assurances from GMP that they remain committed to a Neighbourhood Policing Structure in Bury and that they will continue to provide representation and input into Bury’s key strategic partnerships and priorities. Collectively, partners on the Bury Community Safety Partnership will seek to ensure Bury’s needs and interests are met.**
- **We continue to have an excellent relationship with the Greater Manchester Police and Crime Commissioner. The CSP is already undertaking work to ensure Bury is in the best possible position to influence his commissioning priorities over the next year and beyond.**

4. Councillor O’Hanlon

Could the Leader please inform members how much money has been spent so far in the current financial year and in each of the last two years has been spent on compensation for claims for damages as a result of poor road or pavements, and how much has been spent in staffing and legal costs of defending or contesting such claims?

A.	Compensation Payments	Legal Costs
2011/12	£ 969,984	£ 155,840
2012/13	£ 830,451	£ 31,269
2013/14	£ 1,040,787	£ 20,212

Claims Handling used to be undertaken by an external insurance company, however the service was brought in-house in April 2011.

This created 2 jobs and delivers an annual saving of around £90,000 compared to fees charged by our insurers.

5. Councillor Daly

What is the Council's view of the concerns recently outlined by the Inspector, regarding certain elements of the Bury Core Strategy?

A. The Council is of the view that the Core Strategy that was approved at Council and subsequently submitted to the Secretary of State on the 6th of December last year is a robust and credible strategy for future growth and development in the Borough.

It will be up to the Planning Inspector to determine whether the Core Strategy's vision of safeguarding Bury's Green Belt is appropriate in the context of national planning guidance. The Council will endeavour to argue this position at an Exploratory Meeting scheduled with the Inspector for 25 February.

6. Councillor Ann Audin

Can the Leader tell us how the Recycling Programme in Bury is progressing?

A. In 2012/13 Bury Council achieved a household recycling rate of 46.4%, a fantastic improvement on the dismal 24.3% rate that we inherited from the previous administration.

However we are determined to go further and Members will know that we intend to undertake a 2 year trial of more intensive promotional, educational and regulatory activity with the objective of taking household recycling performance beyond 50%.

All new staff have been appointed and are now in post, with effect from 20 January. All posts have been filled internally and I can assure Members that the staff are now busy familiarising themselves with the requirements of their posts with the aim of 'hitting the ground running' and beginning to make an impact on the Council's recycling rate.

7. Councillor Pickstone

Could the Leader please provide members with an update on the maintenance and monitoring provided by the authority of our roadside gulleys and grids. Has there been a reduction in the service in recent years and has this resulted in an increase in complaints from residents?

A. There has been no reduction in the level of service provided, but the Council has taken on additional obligations in relation to flood relief. This, in conjunction with increased public awareness of flooding and worsening weather patterns can lead to a general increase in complaints of this type. There is no evidence of any significant change in recent years. Since 2006/07 there has been an average of 524 complaints per annum. There was a slight increase to 632 in 2012/13, but this was a particularly bad year for flooding and resources were consequently diverted more than normal to deal with flooding issues.

So far in 2013/14, there have been 384 complaints, which is more in line with the average.

8. Councillor Gunther

Can the leader confirm which or whose cars are allowed to park in the undercroft of the Town Hall and are these cars subject to the same pricing regime as those in the ceremonial car park or other car parks?

A. The Mayor's car is kept in the underground car park and other spaces are allocated to Council officers. I can confirm that all of those officers who have been allocated a full time space in the underground car park are required to pay for a parking permit at the same rate as everyone else.

9. Councillor Southworth

Can the Leader tell me how many families in Bury have benefitted from the 'Supporting Families Improving Lives' initiative and what, if anything, has proved to be the barrier to its successful implementation?

A. The Supporting Communities, Improving Lives project (or SCIL as we know it), is Bury's response to the national Troubled Families initiative. Since the project team became operational six months ago, performance has risen steadily and at the moment 75 families have shown sufficient improvement to no longer be labelled 'troubled', with a further 23 families currently in receipt of intensive support from the team.

In addition to the outstanding work that the project workers have done to accelerate the project in recent months, I would also like to pay tribute to the contribution of other Council services and of our partners who have contributed hugely.

In terms of challenges, there are three areas where we have faced particular issues.

Firstly there have been problems obtaining reliable data in a timely fashion to help us understand the scale of the issue, family profiles and underlying reasons for current behaviour.

Secondly we have found it hard to gain acceptance by families to work with the project.

Thirdly there is the issue of dealing with, and obtaining support for families who fall through the gaps because their needs are outside mainstream services or fall below the threshold for statutory provision. Efforts are being focussed on understanding and overcoming these issues and a number of supporting projects have been commissioned recently to improve employment chances, family support and capacity building in the community.

10. Councillor O’Hanlon

Could the Leader please tell members how much money has the authority spent on using taxis in the last two financial years and so far this financial year?

A. Can I thank Cllr O’Hanlon for his question, and for the challenge he set us by asking for such detailed figures covering such a widespread area of spend.

The figures he asked for are as follows:

2011/12	£1,516,064
2012/13	£1,344,938
2013/13	£1,033,885

The vast majority of this spend is incurred on home to school transport and the vast majority of that is for children with special educational needs.

I can assure Members that Taxi costs are subject to rigorous control and are procured on a contract basis through regular, detailed tendering exercises.

Not only have we risen to Cllr O’Hanlon’s challenge but I thought it might be helpful to go further and to look at taxi costs for 2010/11 when the Members opposite were in control of the Council and these came to £1,623,381.

The figures show what Members will already know, that this Labour administration has not been afraid to tackle home-to-school transport costs and that we have successfully made considerable savings.

11. Councillor Walker

How many miles of bus lane have now been completed since 2005 on the A58 orbital from Bolton to Littleborough outside of Church Ward ?

A. TfGM have been unable to provide a breakdown for this length of the A58. We do know that 0.3 miles lies within the boundaries of Church Ward.

12. Councillor FitzGerald

International Women’s Day is Saturday 8 March and the slogan for this year is ‘Inspiring Change’. What is Bury doing to inspire women to make a change for themselves?

A. Thank you for asking this question as it helps to remind us all of the positive gains made in relation to women’s equality over the years. At the same time, we cannot be complacent and need to recognise that

across the world, there are still major in-equalities that exist that need to be addressed.

- ***The 'Inspiring Change' theme encourages advocacy for women's advancement everywhere in every way. It calls for challenging the status quo for women's equality and vigilance to inspire positive change for women. Everyone can be an advocate for women's advancement.***
- **What better way to inspire women to make positive changes for themselves than through the 'I Will if You will' initiative – a major initiative where our Council has been successful in obtaining external funding through Sport England to help women help themselves.**
- **I'd call on the women and young girls of Bury to visit the 'I Will If You Will' website (<http://www.iwillifyouwill.co.uk/>) where they can find all the information they need about a movement to get us ladies of Bury moving and help us to be healthier. Its about getting together, trying something new and having fun.**
- **In addition to the above, we continue to support voluntary and community sector groups across our Borough to help achieve positive changes for women through a range of our funding schemes. This includes work through the Bury Asian Womens Centre and Prestwich & Whitefield Townswomen Guild.**
- **Under the Local Government Association's 'Be a Councillor' campaign, arrangements are also in hand to encourage more women to become involved, including plans to talk to Asian women on local government decision-making and the electoral process.**

13. Councillor Wright

Has the relevant Cabinet member considered my request of December and again repeated in January, to allow Councillors to be involved in the decision making process in allocating 106 monies in their respective Wards, that is before any decisions are made and not merely informed later?

A. All Section 106 contributions are secured against specific planning policy or site specific requirements and must be spent in accordance with the terms of each individual Section 106 agreement. Spending plans are drawn up in line with Council plans and strategies with member involvement as appropriate.

Most commuted sums come via the recreation policy and these monies are spent on a short strategic list of schemes that is drawn up based on the Green Space Strategy, local priorities, the play area strategy and opportunities for attracting external funding. Ward Councillors are consulted to seek their views before the strategic list of suggested recreation schemes is finalised. Given the number of play, leisure and recreational areas that exist across the Borough, it would be very difficult to consult councillors on individual projects outside of the strategic priorities.

Affordable Housing contributions are normally secured on site but some commuted sums have been secured in lieu of on-site provision. These monies will be spent in line with the Affordable Housing Strategy, which was formally approved by Cabinet on 24th August 2011.

Likewise, Public Art contributions are normally secured on site but where monies are received, the Council's Principal Arts Officer will draw up proposals in line with the s106 in consultation with Ward Members.

Commutated sum payments for Employment Land will be used to bring forward employment opportunities in line with the approved Framework that was signed off by the Executive in September 2007.

Therefore, it is clear that commuted sums are being spent in line with strategic proposals and visions for each area that the sums are ring-fenced for. These strategies have been formally approved and involve further Member involvement where appropriate. This strategic approach ensures that spending is in line with stringent legal tests and in line with the relevant s106.

Also, it is often the case that commuted sums need to be accumulated from a number of different sites in order accrue sufficient monies to deliver a specific project. As such, it is not necessarily the case that the commuted sums that are secured in a particular ward are actually spent in that ward.

14. Councillor Parnell

Could the Leader please explain why Gorsefield Primary School, which achieved a 'good' in its last OFSTED Inspection and was given a clean bill of health by the Authority only a few months ago, could now be deemed 'inadequate'?

A. Like Councillor Parnell the Authority is very disappointed with the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection of Gorsefield Primary School in November 2013. Our own view of the School's performance during 2013 was that it was "Requiring Improvement" because the progress of the children was lower than the national expectation. This was

confirmed by an LA Health Check of the school prior to the inspection which judged the school to Require Improvement.

The Head and Chair of Governors of Gorsefield did not agree with the judgement of the LA about the school and in the self-evaluation presented to Ofsted judged the school to be "good." This was unfortunate and when the Ofsted team visited the school and saw poorer practice than expected this made the position of the school more difficult to defend.

The LA stands by the view that this is a "Requiring Improvement" school rather than an "Inadequate" school but Ofsted has taken a different view. The LA is drawing up a support plan for the school and will work hard with the Head and leadership to move the school forward in the next few months. The DfE has indicated that they will expect the school to become a Sponsored Academy and the LA will seek to identify an appropriate local sponsor for the school as it has done for Radcliffe Primary and Elton Primary.

15. Councillor Gartside

To what extent does the Leader or relevant Cabinet member feel that ward members and/or the planning control committee should be consulted on planning applications that are to be determined by neighbouring authorities but still have a significant effect upon the residents of Bury?

A. Consultations from adjacent authorities on planning applications in their area are carried out under Article 16 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 as amended.

They are only required to consult us as the Local Planning Authority when the proposed development affects 'land' in our authorities area. However, in many cases the adjoining local authority consult us under Article 16, even when the development is not affecting our 'land'.

In responding to an Article 16 Consultations representations should be restricted to the impact development will have on land, which normally means allocations of land that we have for development such as retail, residential or industrial uses which have been approved by the authority.

As such the role of the Council is to ensure that developments do not impact adversely on 'land' and as such it is a technical assessment that needs to take place.

When we receive any consultation under Article 16 (whether or not it has been correctly determined by the adjacent authority) we automatically notify the Ward Members of the constituencies adjacent and supply details of the Bury residents, close to the boundary so that the authority considering the application can notify them directly and ask for representations under Article 13 of the Regulations.

Given that the ward councillors are notified of the application and that the adjacent authority also notify our residents as appropriate, of the application, representations should be made directly to the determining authority and this is not a process that should involve the Council where 'land' is not affected by the development.

16. Councillor Simpson

Could the Leader confirm what is being done across the different townships to address the rise in anti-social behaviour incidents which is being experienced across the whole of Greater Manchester?

A.

- **Anti-Social behaviour figures in Bury have been decreasing since pre-2011, but we have seen a rise again in December 2012 (compared to previous years).**
- **Bury had 1851 incidents of ASB for the last quarter of 2012. This had increased to 1957 for the last quarter of 2013.**
- **It is important to note that ASB levels have increased across Greater Manchester overall during this time with all local authority areas experiencing increases.**
- **Indeed, Bury continues to remain one of the best performing areas across Greater Manchester in relation to ASB.**
- **A number of initiatives are in place to tackle ASB including:**
 - **Strong Multi-agency working arrangements at both strategic and operational level**
 - **A range of initiatives to support prevention, early intervention and diversion including 'Be Safe Be Cool' (operates in all our High Schools), 'Safe 4 Summer' and 'Operation Treacle'.**
 - **The ASB team are working closely with the 'Supporting Communities, Improving Lives' initiative to help identify and address the root causes and challenge the ASB and other risky behaviour in some of our most vulnerable families**
 - **Access to independent mediation services, regardless of housing tenure.**
 - **Use of Restorative Justice Programme through 'ROC Restore'.**

Use of Enforcement tools including joint visits, warnings, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and Anti-Social Behaviour Orders

17. Councillor Nuttall

Can the Cabinet member for Finance and Corporate Affairs consider providing non-Cabinet members of the Council with a full list of which services are statutory or non-statutory before the Budget is decided upon on the 19th February?

A. I would be delighted to let Members have a list of the 1,294 duties that are placed on local authorities and an e mail will be sent to Members tomorrow.

However I really must remind Members that as far as setting a budget is concerned, the list will be of only limited assistance. The Council's spending is influenced not just by the duties placed on us but also by the level of demand that we face under specific duties, the way in which we discharge those duties, the quality and extent to which we provide services to discharge particular duties and also by our own local priorities.

Indeed the report of the LGA Peer Review team went as far as to say, and I quote... "The grey area around the definition of statutory and non-statutory services should not prevent the council from determining its own priorities. The majority of statutory requirements leave considerable scope for local decisions on the scale and means by which the statutory duty is discharged, and this in turn should allow the council to determine its own priorities first rather than feeling bound to continue with current services in their current form because of statutes."

18. Councillor Black

Can the Leader please tell us how many families in Bury who have at least one parent in work, are living in poverty in Bury?

A. It is not possible to find out this information on a local authority level. The government's preferred measure is the Households Below Average Income survey, which only goes down to regional level. Nationally, 17% fall below the relative poverty line before housing costs are taken into consideration, and 27% after. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/households-below-average-income-hbai--2>

The main data source on local wages is the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. The two key shortcomings here are that it does not take into account benefits payments and that it refers to individuals not families/households. Tax credits and other benefits will lift some workers over the poverty line.

A very rough calculation can be made by taking 60% of median income (the standard poverty line measure - £311 gross per week) and applying it to the Bury labour market. This shows that between 25 and 30% of households in Bury would fall below this level.

19. Councillor Walker

Can we be advised when the LED street lighting project will be completed and will the public be consulted on these unpopular lights with their narrow downward focus before the report is published ?

A. The LED replacement programme will take an estimated 4 years to complete, 2013/14 to 2016/17. Approximately 11,000 lanterns will be replaced during this period.

The LED replacement programme was approved by Cabinet on 7th November 2012 and accepted following a call in by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel chaired by Cllr Hankey on the 29th November 2012. The LED lighting has a much longer lifespan, requires a lot less maintenance and energy efficient returning at least 50% saving over traditional sodium lights at a cost saving of £200,000 per year. There will also be £16,000 saving per year on the purchase of carbon allowances.

The public are informed before work is undertaken in their area. An explanatory leaflet is delivered to each household approximately four weeks before work is carried out.

The light is focused downwards rather than spilling into surrounding gardens, driveways or front gardens of properties. This makes sure the footpaths and roads are lit to the correct standard.

A leaflet has been distributed to households.

20. Councillor Haroon

Can the Leader confirm the work that has been carried out with partners to ensure the success of Hate Crime Awareness Week?

A.

- Hate Crime Awareness Week took place between 20/01/14 and 26/01/14.**
- The aim is to help raise awareness and confidence in the reporting of hate crime. It is recognised that many incidents are under reported and it is essential that we work to understand the reasons for this and support victims in coming forward.**
- Hate crime is an act committed against any person or group who are seen to be different or vulnerable.**
- It is often motivated by the individual or group offender's prejudice which can be based on race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and anyone who belongs to**

an 'alternative sub culture' (the latter definition was included by Greater Manchester Police following the tragic death of Sophie Lancaster. Sophie died in 2007 at the age of 20 after she and her boy friend were brutally attacked in East Lancashire just for being Goths).

- **Hate Crime can have a debilitating effect on its victims with many likely to suffer depression and other emotional side effects.**
- **It is essential that victims of hate crime are confident enough to report it so that authorities are able to deal with it and help improve support for victims and prevent further occurrences.**
- **In Bury, the Council have worked closely with GMP colleagues to help promote hate crime awareness week including:**
 - **Promotion through each of our ten hate crime reporting centres, which are venues where incidents can be reported anonymously if victims would rather not visit a Police Station. Details of these are available on the Bury Council website - www.bury.gov.uk/hate-crime-reporting-centres**
 - **Bury Hate Crime Forum have disseminated posters to raise awareness, including to each of the borough's hate crime reporting centres.**
 - **A hash tag #HCAW2014, has been set up by Greater Manchester Police and a series of tweets have been tweeted to help promote awareness.**

This Council remains committed to helping to challenge and prevent hate crime; work continues throughout the year through our Hate Crime Forum and not just during hate crime awareness week.

21. Councillor Daly

Will the British Telecom Planning and Survey Review of implementing faster broadband speeds for rural areas across the Borough include Hawkshaw? Will Councillors be informed of the outcome?

A. The next step for the Greater Manchester Project is for the successful bidder (BT) to undertake a planning and survey phase. It is during this phase that Council officers will be able to discuss in greater detail the roll out of faster Broadband speeds across the Borough within the wider context of economic benefit to the entire borough.

Only then will we be able to assess which, if any, parts of Hawkshaw could be enabled through the process.

Overall Bury will benefit at the end of the project by witnessing 94% coverage of our priority areas. This is the highest potential coverage across the 8 districts of GM that are involved in the project.

I am happy to confirm that Councillors will be informed of the outcome.

22. Councillor Rothwell

Will the Council undertake to write to all Owners of 'Park Homes' in the Borough to advise them of their 'Rights' and what to do and who to contact if these Rights appear in danger of being infringed?"

A. Our records and further checks reveal that there are no 'Park Homes' in the Borough, therefore, there we are not aware of any owners to contact about this matter.

If such homes were to emerge in the Borough we would pro-actively inform those concerned about their rights and responsibilities, especially in the light of recent changes. This is consistent with our general approach to landlords and tenants as we work to improve standards in the private rented sector – building on initiatives such as the Bury Landlord Accreditation Scheme and the Bury Landlords' Forum.

23. Councillor Gartside

Can the leader or relevant Cabinet member report what percentage of staff in the authority have regular "One to One" discussions with their line managers?

I'd like to thank Councillor Gartside for his question.

Although we do not routinely collect data on the frequency of 1-1 discussions and employee reviews this administration is firmly committed to the principles of employee engagement. These principles were agreed as part of the Employee Engagement Strategy agreed by the cabinet in March 2012.

In order to establish a baseline for engagement a mini survey was conducted in 2012 and a full employee survey was undertaken in late 2013. In the 2013 survey, specific questions were asked in relation to one to one discussions, line management support and employee reviews.

I am pleased to report that 78% of employees agreed that their line manager recognizes and acknowledges that they have done their job well. 76% of employees agreed that they received appropriate support from their line manager and 65% receive regular and constructive feedback on their performance through 1-1's.

By comparison only 57% of employees agreed that their line manager gave regular feedback on their performance when the employee survey was conducted in 2010 when the Conservative administration was in control.

These responses are very encouraging and demonstrate the progress made by this administration in engaging with employees and our efforts seem to be bearing fruit because the LGA Peer Review team said in their report that "Despite the significant changes in the council over the past three years the commitment and loyalty of council staff was amazing."

I couldn't agree more Madam Mayor.