



Statement from Council Leader Eamonn O'Brien

It is almost a whole year since I was selected by the council to be Leader of Bury Council. When I became Leader, we were in a similar situation as we are now with lockdown restrictions being lifted and with a great sense of hope from our residents that we can begin to return to society as we know it. I hope that this time our emergence from lockdown will be the last, and that the heroic vaccination efforts in our borough will prove enough to end this pandemic once and for all.

But what we must not forget is what we have learned during the pandemic. We have learned who our key workers really are, and that they must not be taken for granted. We have learned how important our local communities are, from the local businesses we have found a new appreciation for, to the selfless individuals who have sacrificed their time to volunteer to help those who need it the most in their local area.

This is why as a council we have taken decisions to ensure that we build back better from this pandemic. In our budget we committed to paying all our workers and contractors a real living wage of at least £9.50 per hour. We strengthened and delivered on our plans towards achieving carbon neutrality in our borough and protecting our green spaces by improving our parks, allocating more funding to unlock brownfield land for housing, and pledged our support towards a 'brownfield first' policy.

This State of the Borough Report outlines what we have achieved in my first year as Leader of Bury Council, structured around the three 'Rs' which will continue to spell a renaissance for Bury. Response, Recovery, and Regeneration. We are hopefully coming towards the end of our response efforts now, although we will not stop until as many of our residents are vaccinated as possible, and until we see the end of Covid-19 in our country.

Our efforts towards a recovery in our borough have been underway for over a year now. We are confident that we have supported businesses to a high standard by distributing grants to those in need, including a generous support offer to our famous market and its traders. We will continue to do everything we can to ensure businesses have a smooth transition towards reopening and wish them a prosperous future in our borough.

And finally, I am incredibly proud of the progress we have made on regeneration schemes across our borough. We have already committed to raising more than £30m to transform the heart of Radcliffe, and masterplans to regenerate Bury and Prestwich town centres are well underway. We also want to produce a bespoke Town Plan for Ramsbottom and will be looking at how we can protect the future of the civic suite there as part of it. I believe our schemes will make our borough an even greater place to live, work, and socialise.



Cllr Eamonn O'Brien

Leader of Bury Council

Covid-19 response

Just over a year ago the Covid-19 pandemic dawned upon our borough and the country at large. Our number one priority was to provide help and support to our borough's residents and our businesses.

The council stepped up to do what we needed to do. We set up Community Hubs across the borough, bringing together hundreds of volunteers and redeploying council staff to help vulnerable people with shopping, prescriptions, and other support. Bury Council even worked with partners to build a mobile app to coordinate requests quickly and easily for support and volunteering in the community.

We gave our market traders a rent holiday, suspended debt chasing, eased the pressure on local businesses who rent premises from the council by waiving rent payments, gave hundreds of businesses rates relief, and provided thousands of small businesses with grants all within one week of the first lockdown.

All rough sleepers in our ABEN (A Bed Every Night) facility were moved into their own secure and safe accommodation with support and health provision.

We have continued to provide free school meals to children over half-term breaks and for pupils who are required to self-isolate.

When the chance came up for us to support the mammoth effort to end this pandemic by supporting the vaccination efforts we stepped up. We transformed the Elizabethan Suite into a vaccination

centre and supported efforts to bring Covid-19 vaccines to the Prestwich Walk-in Centre, Bealey's in Radcliffe, and Ramsbottom Civic Hall.

We also opened a 'pop-up' Covid vaccination clinic at the Jinnah Centre aimed at Bury's South Asian community. This was led by local GPs, clinical pharmacists, and the community, together with Bury Council and NHS Bury CCG. It offered vaccinations to people who were eligible for a jab but had not yet taken up the offer.

As of the 9th May 2021, our tremendous vaccination efforts meant we had given a first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine to at least 100,000 residents, with 61,000 having received a second vaccine and being fully vaccinated.

Business

We have set up town centre boards in each of our townships to bring together local firms and help co-ordinate recovery post-Covid.

We have a dedicated business support team, which has administered more than £30 million in local business grants through the various Local Restrictions Support Grants, Additional Restrictions Grants, closed business lockdown payments, and Restart Grants. The Business Rates team also paid out £40 million in small business and retail grants between April and September 2020.

We also helped market traders and others with rent holidays etc. during earlier restrictions.

We supported taxi drivers to recover from lockdown by extending vehicle licenses, extending license tests, postponing medical examinations, and issuing 12-month licence renewals.

Recovery

We are also pleased to announce that we completed our 10-point plan for recovery set last July. This includes: Summer provision for our children; No rough sleepers; The Bury opportunity guarantee; Anti-poverty strategy refresh; Year of Culture; Health and care recovery; Backing Bury businesses; Working well; Economic recovery strategy; and championing the borough's key workers.

Opportunity Guarantee

We progressed our work to ensure every resident of the Borough has the opportunity to maximise their life chances, including responding from the impact of Covid-19.

The Opportunity Guarantee is aimed at all ages, from Early Years, through education including transition, to ensure opportunities to promote work and life readiness.

The guarantee will provide a joined-up approach to skills provision, in one place, showcasing the variety of options regardless of circumstance.

We are making a guarantee that everybody in the Borough has the opportunity to develop themselves or others and to get involved in their community as a volunteer.

Apprenticeships

Earlier this year we proudly announced that we will be putting into place a policy which ensures that Bury Council apprenticeships will be ringfenced for our own residents. This will increase employment and training opportunities for people living in Bury.

Plans will be brought forward in the coming months to make the most of this opportunity with residents as they come forward.

This is on top of our work to create over 30 jobs through the government's Kickstart job creation programme. Which we are well on our way with recruiting to.

Real Living Wage

At the beginning of this pandemic, we clapped for the NHS and our key workers. The past year has proven to us how important our key workers are, and how we must not take the services they deliver for granted.

Now, the council has gone one step further and committed to paying our employees, whether directly employed by the Council or contracted out, the Real Living Wage (£9.50ph).

For people currently working full time on the minimum wage (£8.91 for over 25s) this could mean a pay increase of over £100 per month, potentially taking many people above the poverty line (21% of employees are paid below the Real Living Wage – Resolution Foundation)

This is likely to have a huge difference for the thousands of staff we employ in our

social care services and for those who clean our buildings to make them as safe as possible during the pandemic.

Environment

At Bury Council we are taking our climate emergency pledge seriously as we continue to reduce our carbon footprint and make our air cleaner for our residents. This pledge has only been strengthened during the pandemic with a shift to home-working and a greater appreciation of our green spaces and parks, proving that we need to Build Back Better out of this pandemic. All six towns should be thriving and sustainable and by 2030 we will have delivered key regeneration opportunities within our town centres. Everyone will be living in a high-quality carbon-neutral environment by 2038

Through the hard work of our council officers we were able to receive a grant of £8.5 million to cut carbon emissions from our buildings. Improvements will be made to 16 council buildings include double glazing, insulation measures, air source heat pumps, solar panels, and LED lighting. This will lead to total annual energy savings of £265,160 and reduce annual carbon emissions by 1,033 tonnes.

We have signed up to a huge range of green/climate change initiatives, from carbon neutral pledges to tree planting, solar panels and new green bin wagons.

We invested £3.5 million in a new 'fit for purpose' fuel efficient fleet of 19 waste collection vehicles to boost efficiency. Fourteen of the new vehicles are 'state of the art' Rotopress vehicles. The main noticeable difference with Faun Zoeller

Rotopress vehicles is that the main body of the vehicle is in the form of a cylindrical drum. This rotates while the vehicle is stationary and on the move, to shift the waste to the front of the vehicle.

Savings of nearly £140,000 will be made after the installation of solar panels at the council's operations HQ at Bradley Fold. Some 69 panels have been fitted to the south-facing roof of the vehicle workshop of the depot. The panels will generate around 22,000kWh of electricity annually and reduce carbon emissions by 10 tons a year.

Parks and green spaces

We agreed to spend £1.1m last year to improve our parks, which all have Green Flag status. All the borough's parks have been inspected and the first phase will be to refurbish three parks in East Bury which were considered to be most in need of investment – Manchester Road Park, Hoyles Park and Openshaw Park.

In addition, most parks will benefit: work will include improvements to paths, structures, fencing, access, drainage, bins, play areas, ball zones, access and landscaping. There will also be a contribution to enhancements to car parking at Burrs Country Park and support for a scheme led by the Friends of Nuttall Park, plus work at St Mary's, Whitefield and Close parks.

We pledged £350,000 of funding for upgrades to Clarence Park, which includes £150,000 to restore the skate park. A public consultation which attracted more than 600 responses found many users wanted to skate park to return. The park will also see refurbishment of the tennis courts, play area, ball zone, paths,

railings, signage, landscaping, benches and bins.

In the budget earlier this year we took the decision to invest a further £600,000 in green spaces in its next phase of an ongoing programme to upgrade Bury's Green Flag parks. This complements the £1.1m green spaces improvement programme approved in November 2020.

There will also be provision for further development of the Burrs Strategy as well as health and safety works and developing external funding bids towards the longer term sustainability of this well-used country park

Other key enhancements to the borough's leisure facilities include improvements to all tennis courts over 2 years, athletics track development, public rights of way works, development of 3G all-weather football pitches and improvements to play areas and ball zones.

Flood defences and preparation

Earlier this year Storm Christoph threatened to cause flood and damage to our residents and businesses, as it did across other areas of the UK. However, thanks to the tireless efforts of council staff and partner agencies, we were able to keep residents safe.

Operational teams worked flat out to respond to issues in all parts of the borough, from widescale flooding in Nuttall Park in Ramsbottom and Close Park and Jubilee Mill in Radcliffe to many instances of surface water in local streets.

Thankfully, there were no major incidents and residents did not need to be evacuated from their homes.

Infrastructure

We agreed to invest a further £10 million in road improvements. Out of the £10 million, £4.5 million was allocated to structural maintenance (e.g. resurfacing), £3 million on preventative maintenance (e.g. surface dressing), leaving £2.5 million for reactive maintenance (e.g. potholes, patching).

Town of Culture

Arts organisations in the borough creatively moved activities online to ensure culture could continue to flourish during our year as the first Greater Manchester Town of Culture. We were delighted to hear that our year of culture has been extended for another year due to the impact of Covid-19, an opportunity we could not refuse.

Bury's own The Met hosted much of the United We Stream programme in the first lockdown, featuring DJs, big name acts like Elbow and Brandon Flowers, performance, arts and food.

Earlier this year we funded six artists with £500 to celebrate Bury's cultural offer, rich heritage and diverse communities.

We are now making final preparations to develop a new Cultural Strategy for the borough. Central to the strategy is the need for strong partnership and engagement activity to develop and deliver the borough's cultural vision together. It will also explore how Town of Culture activity can be used as means for conversations with wider communities to generate future cultural initiatives.

Skills and learning

A year ago we made many of our adult learning courses available to our residents for free online, including courses such as essential English and Maths, courses relating to improving digital skills, and

courses introducing learners to health and social care.

Health and fitness

The pandemic has shown us how important leading healthy lives can be. During the first lockdown many of us took the opportunity to get outdoor for our daily exercise. As a result, we took the decision to give our council owned gyms an upgrade to encourage people to keep fit or improve their fitness in the future.

Our three gyms have had a £500k upgrade to improve the digital experience of their thousands of visitors.

The improvements at Castle Leisure Centre, Radcliffe Leisure Centre and Ramsbottom Pool & Fitness Centre were carried out in time to welcome customers back on 12 April when coronavirus lockdown restrictions were lifted.

The council partnered with Matrix Fitness to install 135 of the latest machines across the three sites, including those which focus on building strength, function fitness and cardiovascular capacity.

Regeneration

Radcliffe

We set out major short, medium and long-term regeneration plans for Radcliffe, to transform the area for generations to come.

The plans for Radcliffe include:

Civic Hub: a new public services hub in the heart of Radcliffe town centre which will bring real regenerative benefits into the core of the town and provide confidence for other owners to invest in their property/the town. Uses currently

being explored include Council offices to accommodate staff relocating from Whittaker Street; Creative workspaces; a health-related facility; a community space; and retail / active frontage on the ground floor.

Market Chambers: Refurbishment work is expected to commence in 2021. The SRF proposal is to bring the whole of the building back into active use, with potential to include flexible working space for young start-up businesses and entrepreneurs, particularly those in the technology and creative industries sectors, as well as retail and office use.

Residential Development: The development of key brownfield sites will provide much needed new homes for Radcliffe residents and help to bring forward considerable investment and confidence into the town.

East Lancashire Paper Mill (ELPM) - This site is being delivered jointly with Homes England

On the School Street site over £880,000 of funding has been secured through Greater Manchester's allocation of the Brownfield Land Fund.

Phase 2 of this project will involve identifying new opportunities for new large scale residential sites within Radcliffe.

Phase 3 of the work will look at other potential sites in and around the centre, which are likely to be longer term opportunities.

A new High School for Radcliffe:

Thanks to the work of the Council and STAR Academies to make the Coney

Green Site available for a new secondary school in Radcliffe, STAR were able to submit a successful bid to government for funding for a new secondary school.

The new school will accommodate 750 pupils, opening one year at a time, i.e. start with a Year 7 with an intake of 150 and growing over 5 years to 750 pupils.

Star Academies runs a group of 29 primary and secondary schools in Lancashire, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, the Midlands and London. The trust is one of the country's leading education providers. In 2018 and 2019, it was the top-performing trust in England for the progress pupils make at its secondary schools. Star Academies schools promote excellence in everything they do, with around half of all Star schools judged to be 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.

3G football pitch

Earlier this year we worked with the Football Foundation and Lancashire County FA on developing a funding application for a 'state of the art' 3G football facility in Radcliffe.

This would be the third of its kind in the borough, the others being at Goshen Playing Field and at Elton High School.

3G pitches are made up of synthetic grass filled with rubber cushioning as a performance infill. The surface allows for better grip, smoother play, better shock absorption and excellent ball performance.

The council has set aside a total of £500,000 funding for the project and will

seek additional funding from other partners too.

Prestwich Regeneration

Over the past year we took our regeneration proposals a step further, including our proposals to transform the heart of Prestwich. We took the decision to buy the Longfield shopping centre from its current owners in order to drive forward multi-million pound regeneration of the village.

This will be the single biggest breakthrough in a decade, removing one of the biggest roadblocks to the regeneration of Prestwich. This will mean we can finally move from the passenger seat to the driving seat in bringing a new modern town centre to Prestwich.

Masterplan for Bury Town Centre

We are also developing plans to transform Bury town centre (including the transport interchange and Bury Market). We have bid successfully, and have submitted more bids, to build affordable housing on brownfield land in the area.

We are consulting on our Housing Strategy to make sure we have the type of housing needed for the future.

Ramsbottom Town Plan

The regeneration efforts don't stop there. In November 2020, Cabinet approved proposals to engage consultants to prepare a public realm and place management plan for Ramsbottom. The plan will principally set out a series of initiatives to improve public realm, townscape and movement within the town

centre and explore opportunities to improve its visitor offer in order to help maintain its role as a quality destination for the next 10 to 15 years.

Bury Market

To support the future of our market and its traders we took the decision to install upgraded cameras on Bury Market to boost security and contribute to future development plans.

The new CCTV system will help to maintain a safe shopping environment for visitors and bring the operating system into the 21-century, giving us the ability in future to accurately count the number of people visiting the market, with a heat map to identify busy areas and shopper habits which will contribute to our strategic plans to modernise the market.

The future of our borough

Bury Futures

Towards the end of February, we began our 'Bury Futures' conversations, bringing together local, regional and national thought leaders to discuss Bury topics linking into our Bury 2030 strategy.

Our first event, 'Enterprise', hosted by Phillip Collins in conversation with Professor Diane Coyle Mike Emmerich and Heather Williams, discussed what role local government can play in creating a thriving economy, and what central government can do to help our towns rebuild after the pandemic.

Our second event, 'Strengths', hosted again by Phillip Collins in dialogue with Cllr Eamonn O'Brien, Cllr Tamoor Tariq, Cllr Andrea Simpson, Ruth Passman,

Steph Meskell-Brocken, Cllr Jane Black, and Kath Wynne-Jones. Panellists in this conversation reflected on the role health, education, and culture must play in creating a thriving community.

Our final event, 'Together', was again hosted by Phillip Collins, this time in conversation with Adam Lent, Warren Heppolette, Sajid Hashmi, Vicky Maloney, Reverend Paul Cannon, Cllr Eamonn O'Brien, Isaac Ginsbury, and Tina Harrison. In this discussion participants considered the role of community leadership and working together to achieve shared outcomes for the borough.

A common thread ran through each of them: there are huge challenges for us all, but we need to stay ambitious for our future, a future we can all play an important part in to make the most out of the opportunities that are out there.

Thousands of people tuned in for the video streams of these events, and we hope we have inspired the people of Bury about what the future might hold for them.

Bury 2030

The Bury 2030 Strategy has been developed by the 'Team Bury' partnership for everyone who has a stake in our Borough's future: local people, community groups, organisations of every sort, whether public, private or voluntary. This is not just a "public sector" strategy. It belongs to all of us and delivering it is a responsibility we all share.

This strategy is a call to action for everyone in our Borough to get behind the change we all want to see and do all we can to make it happen. It is a commitment to a decade of reform; a bold ambition to tackle deprivation and improve growth through a programme of work that covers

people; places; ideas; infrastructure and the business environment.

By 2030, no matter who you are, or where you live, our vision is for everyone in the Borough of Bury to have equal chances in life and the opportunity to be the very best they can be.