

## **GENERAL REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 MARCH 2022**

### **RAMSBOTTOM TOWN CENTRE PLAN**

1. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which detailed the results of the draft Ramsbottom Town Centre Plan consultation and sought approval for the final Plan to become a material planning consideration, which will be used as a tool to guide investment and development in Ramsbottom Town Centre.
2. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that there was a focus on ensuring capacity was in place to ensure deliver and that the Project Management Office would be similar in scope to that of Radcliffe's, but the scale would be smaller.
3. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

### **BURY TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN**

4. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which detailed the results of the draft Bury Town Centre Masterplan consultation and sought approval for the final Bury Town Centre Masterplan to become a material planning consideration and a document that will guide and support the development and future regeneration of Bury Town Centre.
5. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that partnership working was key for Bury to ensure quality businesses were attracted to the area and also work with colleges and cultural institutions to improve the educational and cultural offer of the borough. Development of Town Centres was key in ensuring Bury remained ahead of the curve in being an attractive destination.
6. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

### **EAST LANCASHIRE PAPER MILL SITE UPDATE**

7. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which set out the progress made to de-risk the site and pursue a delivery strategy to bring the site forward for redevelopment for housing, together with open space and replacement cricket facilities. The report included the procurement and selection of a preferred development partner for comprehensive delivery of the ELPM site, details of which were contained in the Part B report later in the agenda.
8. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that a 'fabric first' building approach for homes was a part of the Housing Strategy, as passive/low energy homes would be crucial in securing future residents against rising utility prices as well as being positive for the environmental situation. It was noted that this report focussed on the development partner, but a future report would set out detail on viability of what could be built on the site and how we meet our objectives on zero carbon homes.
9. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

### **ESTABLISHING AN ONSIDE YOUTH ZONE IN BURY**

10. Councillor Tamoor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Skills, presented the report which proposed the development of a partnership with the charity Onside to develop a Youth Zone, providing facilities and programmed activities for young people.
11. This opportunity was widely welcomed as was the opportunity to link into wellbeing services and, in response to Members' questions, it was noted that case studies from similar

developments in other localities would be explored. It was also agreed that partnership working with healthcare colleagues as well as charities and volunteer bodies would be key in ensuring this opportunity was fully utilised to provide the best service to the borough's youth.

12. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

#### **BURY HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2022 TO 2025**

13. Councillor Clare Cummins, Cabinet Member for Housing Services, presented the report which set out the Homelessness strategy from 2022 to 2025, detailing how we will deliver services and meet homeless and rough sleeping demands over the next 3 years to provide the best support and accommodation within the Borough.
14. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that the website was being refreshed to be more user-friendly. In terms of Councillors' roles, this was an issue all should take ownership of. Councillor Cummins encouraged Members to reach out to rough sleepers and offered to talk with Councillors about what we were trying to achieve.
15. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

#### **UPDATE ON THE ACCELERATED LAND AND PROPERTY DISPOSALS PROGRAMME**

16. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which set out the Council's disposals successes to date, identified property assets that require withdrawal from the ALPDP following community consultation (and one that has been subject to an objection through the Public Open Space advertising process), noted that some assets will be used for short term occupation under licence, and provided an overview of the reviewed 2018 Community Asset Transfer (CAT) policy and toolkit.
17. Members were happy Rye Croft had been withdrawn and queried the revised CAT toolkit and policy. It was noted that this had been made more accessible and user-friendly to encourage engagement and be more intelligible to the average person. Members noted issues with capacity prevented officers from dealing with CAT requests as quickly as we'd like, with the process being quite involved to ensure the sustainability of sites, and that the new policy and toolkit would also empower Ward Members to support their local communities.
18. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

#### **PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT OF FLETCHER FOLD BURY TO DELIVER AFFORDABLE LOW CARBON HOMES**

19. Councillor Clare Cummins, Cabinet Member for Housing Services, presented the report which proposed arrangements for delivery of a housing scheme at Fletcher Fold, Bury in partnership with Six Town Housing. The scheme for 26 affordable homes was approved in principle by Cabinet on 11th November 2020. Since then, the Council had successfully bid for Brownfield Land Funding to undertake land remediation works at the site, which were now complete.
20. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

#### **FINANCE RESTRUCTURE**

21. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which set out a new proposed staffing structure for the

finance team. Members noted the challenges to staff, and that this proposal sought to reduce the risk of redundancy to the absolute minimum. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that there were 15 agency staff included in the restructure; some of these were 'career agency' but some would apply for permanent positions.

22. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

### **COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN 2022-25**

23. Councillor Richard Gold, Cabinet Member for Communities, presented the report which set out the new Community Safety Plan for the borough. This had been designed through extensive consultation with our communities, partners and stakeholders and had been reviewed by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

24. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

### **HIGH STREETS TASK FORCE SUPPORT FOR BURY**

25. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which advised that Bury, as one of 68 local authorities, has been selected for the newly announced support from the High Streets Task Force to provide a package of direct expert advice and support to local authorities, communities and businesses to deliver long-term transformation to towns and cities in England. It was proposed that Whitefield centre should be selected as the focus for this support but that this could be part of a wider project to support surrounding areas as well.

26. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that Ward Councillor engagement was crucial to bolster engagement with local businesses. Residents were passionate about Whitefield and lots could be done with the right strategy to address the identified issues around access etc. With regards to encompassing wider communities, it was noted that the Taskforce would be one aspect of the wider plan for Whitefield and Unsworth. The experience of the Taskforce could be used to build strategies tailored to other communities, and the next nine months would be used to identify how best to use this opportunity to regenerate the physical landscape and also improve people's quality of life and opportunities.

27. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME**

28. Geoff Little, Chief Executive of Bury Council, provided an update on the progress of the Children's Services Improvement Programme. Members noted that good progress was being made on developing the improvement plan which was due to be submitted by 31 March. The detail of this plan was currently being drafted and would be considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee at its meeting next week.

29. The plan was aligned to seven principles – listening to children and young people, supporting children to stay within their families when it's safe to do so, taking a whole family approach, building positive relationships, early intervention, taking a place-based approach, and striving to do 'with' children and families not 'to' them. The plan would also have three priorities to improve the quality of practice (improving how we identify and support children and families in need of help and protection, more purposeful and timely care planning, and better support for care leavers) and four underpinning conditions to support these: better partnership governance, more stable and effective management, skilled and experienced workforce, and improvement of performance management and quality assurance metrics.

30. With regards to the three areas identified for immediate action, it was noted that the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) had introduced monthly tracking and monitoring of cases feeding into performance monitoring meetings; a number of permanent management positions had been made to secure stability in the team and improve decision making; and the MASH steering group was working well and had started to refresh all policies.
31. With regards to quality assurance, independent auditors had been commissioned to undertake a baseline assessment of quality activity which would help us ensure quality assurance and auditing was focussed on issues raised by Ofsted. In addition, more moderation was being added into the process to lead to improvements in practice and give an evidence base for the next inspection.
32. With regards to workforce, management of initial response and safeguarding teams had been strengthened. Caseloads had reduced but this needed to go further. Rolling recruitment was being implemented to prevent vacancies, a recruitment taskforce was in place, and temporary support was being brought in to reduce caseloads in the immediate term.
33. Councillor O'Brien advised that he and Councillor Tariq had been for a walkaround with the teams to speak with them directly about the improvements and remaining challenges and advised that this had been enormously helpful in understanding the situation beyond the written reports. This experience was also being offered out to Members of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee.
34. Councillor Tariq advised the council was reaching out directly to schools and headteachers to ask for their views and to improve the relationship with the Council. He also advised that Social Work Week was coming up and advised Members to look out for communications around that.
35. Cabinet noted the update.

## **GENERAL REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 MARCH 2022**

### **APPROVAL OF TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION JV WITH BRUNTWOOD AND ACQUISITION OF THE MILL GATE ESTATE**

36. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which set out the detail for the proposed acquisition and development of the Mill Gate estate as part of the regeneration of Bury town centre. The full legal and financial details were contained in a Part B report and a number of Part B appendices.
37. Councillor O'Brien advised that this report followed on from a previous report to Cabinet in November 2021, and that this report and the accompanying Part B papers, set out the specialist advice the Council has received on the terms of the acquisition, the joint venture, and the results of due diligence on the asset and proposed commercial arrangements. Councillor O'Brien thanked the officers for their work in putting together this detailed report and commended the cross-party support for the deal.
38. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

## **GENERAL REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 APRIL 2022**

### **THE DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT DEFICIT RECOVERY AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITY (SEND) TRANSFORMATION - PROGRAMME SAFETY VALVE**

39. Councillor Tamoor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Skills, presented the report which provided an update on the deficit on the Council's Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and the revised plan and progress on Project Safety Valve, including how Bury was addressing the financial challenge of eliminating the cumulative DSG deficit by the end of the financial year 2024/25.
40. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that working with the families and carers of young people was a key part of making improvements to the Education Health and Care Plan service, and feedback and proposals would be brought back to Children and Young People Scrutiny along with progress on priorities.
41. Members expressed their thanks to officers and DfE colleagues, as well as the network of schools and parents involved in these improvements.
42. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

### **BURY MARKET AND FLEXIHALL - ACQUISITIONS TO FACILITATE DELIVERY OF LEVELLING UP PROJECT**

43. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Growth, presented the report which sought permission for the purchase of two properties as part of the Bury Market and Flexihall project. It was noted that the full financial detail was set out in the Part B report.
44. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

### **DISCRETIONARY GRANTS UPDATE REPORT**

45. Councillor Tahir Rafiq, the Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR, presented the report which provided an update in relation to the Member's Discretionary Grants scheme, guidance issued to members, internal audit review, recipients, and plans going forward. Members commended the range of groups that benefitted from these grants, and thanked officers for their reminders and suggestion of the Mayor's charity for small amounts remaining at the end of the year.
46. Cabinet noted the contents of the report.

### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME**

47. Geoff Little, Chief Executive of Bury Council, provided an update on the progress of the Children's Services Improvement Programme. Members noted that since the last meeting of Cabinet Jeanette Richards had been appointed as the permanent Executive Director for Children and Young People, a position she was filling on a fixed term basis previously. This would bring certainty and stability to the leadership of Children's Services, which was important in recruiting and retaining staff, and give confidence in the Council's capacity to improve. Regarding capacity, it was noted that recruitment was underway for the Assistant Director of Social Work.
48. The final version of the Improvement Plan had been submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) by the deadline of 31 March. Prior to submission there was widespread involvement in the drafting from young people (via the Children in Care Council), frontline staff, Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, and the Children's Improvement

- Board. It was also subject to peer challenge by other NW Local Authorities. Feedback from the DfE was now awaited. A communication process was now being prepared for April and May to explain and embed understanding of the Improvement Plan with staff and partners.
49. The DfE advisor (who was also the Independent Chair of the Improvement Board), Linda Clegg, had submitted her first progress report. The next milestone would be an in-depth review to be submitted in May. Ms Clegg also provided feedback to the Board at their meeting in March, along with an update from the Executive Director, and the Board discussed priorities on the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, quality assurance, a new approach to performance management meetings, and improvements to the data dashboard used to track progress (though this was a work in progress).
  50. Work had started on the review of the Bury Integrated Safeguarding Partnership by an external expert and a peer review had been conducted of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Team, the actions of which were being taken forward. Issues raised by frontline staff were being addressed and Bury was reaching out to other Local Authorities for their support in making improvements, including Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils. The focus of the next Improvement Board meeting will be the recruitment and retention of staff, which remained the highest priority.
  51. In response to Members' questions, it was noted that more detail on the work with other Local Authorities would be brought to the Improvement Board, Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, and to Cabinet if required. Apprenticeships would be part of the discussion regarding recruitment and retention of staff, including ensuring vacancies and incentives were in place to enable Bury-trained social workers to stay working for the borough. The Leader advised that this was being supported by wider GM work looking at reducing competition between Councils and encouraging cooperation, which would benefit councils, social workers and the young people and families involved. It was also noted that social work caseloads were reducing but work was ongoing to reduce these further. Finally, Councillor Tariq advised that work with schools around children's social care was progressing through existing primary and secondary networks to secure sustainable and long-term relationships for the future.
  52. Cabinet noted the update.

## **GENERAL REPORT OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1 JUNE 2022**

### **BURY MARKET AND FLEXIHALL - PROPERTY ACQUISITION - PART A:**

53. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth and Skills, presented the report which sought approval of several property acquisitions required to facilitate the physical development of the scheme to regenerate Bury Market and deliver a new flexible events hall. These properties have been identified as critical to deliver the redevelopment plans for the market and the surrounding area.
54. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

### **REGENERATION SCHEMES - DECISION MAKING:**

55. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth and Skills, presented the report which set out the governance arrangements of delivery of major, time limited, projects. It was noted that the paper not only set out how delivery could progress at pace, but also the checks and balances that would ensure accountability.

56. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

**ACQUISITION OF DIOCESE FINANCE BOARD PROPERTY INTERESTS WITHIN THE MILL GATE ESTATE - PART A:**

57. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth and Skills, presented the report which sought approval for the acquisition of the property interests within the Mill Gate Estate by the Council as part of the regeneration of Bury town centre.
58. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

**RADCLIFFE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES PLAN:**

59. Councillor Eamonn O'Brien, Leader and Cabinet Member for Strategic Growth and Skills, presented the report which presented the draft People and Communities Plan for Radcliffe. This set out the quality and detail behind the physical regeneration of the area, taking a people-led approach to addressing social issues. This represented a fundamental change in approach and it was hoped could provide a blueprint for other parts of the borough. In response to Members' questions it was noted that the performance measures would be developed further to ensure they were more meaningful. As changes were embedded, performance measures would grow in complexity and detail as time moved on.
60. Thanks were extended to all the people of Radcliffe for their feedback and understanding, along with community groups, officers, partner organisations, third sector bodies and everyone involved.
61. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

**BURY ADULT SOCIAL CARE HOUSING FOR ADULT WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS VISION, STRATEGY, MARKET POSITION STATEMENT AND PROGRAMME OF WORK:**

62. Councillor Tamoor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, presented the report which set out a suite of documents that defined the Bury Adult Social Care commitment to housing and the significant work programme underway to deliver our ambitious priorities, drive improvement across key outcomes and ensure the people of Bury with additional needs are supported to live as independently as possible, and when required, receive support in the right way, at the right time and in the right place.
63. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

**SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICE CONTRACT AND SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING PROPOSAL:**

64. Councillor Tamoor Tariq, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, presented the report which proposed activating the first 'plus one' extension of the substance misuse contract, commissioned through Greater Manchester Mental Health (GMMH). In response to Members' questions it was noted that discussions regarding options for the future of the contract beyond this extension would be taking place soon, with involvement from other Councils.
65. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

**EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE - ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT RECENTLY QUALIFIED EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING ACADEMY WITH SALFORD COUNCIL:**

66. Councillor Tamoor Tariq presented the report on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People, presented the report regarding a change of approach for recruitment to the Educational Psychology Service, seeking approval to build on the successful partnership

developed with Salford Council and extend this arrangement more formally to enable Salford to recruit additional staff to meet the needs of both Councils. In response to Members' questions regarding shared services, it was noted that there were lots of opportunities, particularly in Children's Services, for shared services and these would always be explored to see if better outcomes could be achieved.

67. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

#### **CHANGES TO ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS:**

68. Councillor Tamoor Tariq presented the report on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People which sought approval to consult on making changes to the admissions policy for maintained secondary schools. Members noted the proposal was to remove catchment areas and the associated oversubscription criterion giving pupils residing in a designated catchment area priority for admission to Community secondary schools in the borough. The changes, if adopted, would come into effect for applications for secondary school places for the academic year 2024/25 and would apply to all Community secondary schools in the borough.

69. In response to Members' questions it was noted that the detail of the consultation was still being developed, as it was crucial this was done right. With regards to Academy admissions, it was noted that the Council had good relationships with the Academies in the borough and an amicable position would be reached with them before consultation. It was also noted that the upcoming White Paper on schools might throw up some challenges.

70. Cabinet noted the update.

#### **DEMOLITION OF THE ELMS, WHITEFIELD:**

71. Councillor Clare Cummins, Cabinet Member for Housing Services and Skills, presented the report which sought approval for the demolition of The Elms in Whitefield, a long-term void property owned by the Council which was beyond repair at a reasonable cost. It was noted that local residents and Ward Councillors would be engaged in due course regarding potential options for the site.

72. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.

#### **BURY CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY REPORT QUARTER FOUR 2021-22:**

73. Councillor Tahir Rafiq, Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs and HR, presented the report which provided a summary of key delivery and performance that occurred during quarter four 2021-22 aligned to the 3R priorities and provided a spotlight on Bury's State of the Borough report for 2021. In response to a Member's question it was noted that missed delivery was seeing continued improvement and 98% of waste was collected each day.

74. Cabinet approved the recommendations.

#### **CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME:**

75. Geoff Little, Chief Executive of Bury Council, provided an update on the progress of the Children's Services Improvement Programme and the three key challenges identified.

76. Leadership and Management

77. Progress was being made to strengthen and stabilise leadership and management. Linda Evans had been appointed as Interim Director of Children's Social Work Practice, and there was a strong field of candidates for the permanent position. It was also noted that the role



of Principal Social Worker was out to advert. This post would enable the continuous improvement of practice and a learning culture across the service.

78. Workforce

79. The Chief Executive advised we faced significant challenges in this area, firstly in recruitment and retention, given the competitiveness of the market and the need to increase the number of case workers to reduce their caseloads. In addition, Bury had a high proportion of agency staff which, combined with high turnover, risked the stability of the service. A workforce strategy for Children's Services had now been signed off, underpinned by benchmarking analysis of pay rates for social workers which showed we offered competitive rates. Attracting and retaining staff was about more than pay, however, and feedback from staff demonstrated a strong and healthy culture which would be promoted in order to address those wider considerations and attract social workers. In addition, free car parking had been agreed for social workers along with payment of professional fees, and recruitment on a continuous basis was in place. Work was also ongoing to persuade agency workers to take permanent positions in Bury. Finally, it was noted that a proposed restructure in Children's Services would be coming to Cabinet at its next meeting.

80. Quality and Practice

81. Ongoing quality assurance of practice had been strengthened, focusing on the core components of social work practice and signs of improvement were being seen. The relocation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and Complex Safeguarding team back into Bury Police station had been completed, ensuring a fully co-located team across the Council, Health Service and GMP. Finally, the review of the Bury Integrated Safeguarding Partnership was being finalised, with an executive group combining senior leadership across GMP, Health Service and the Council now in place, as well as ongoing independent scrutiny, and cross-service events for frontline staff to improve practice as partnership.

82. Finally, the Chief Executive reported on feedback from external scrutiny, noting that quality and practice observed was generally good, staff were highly engaged and motivated, and overall there was a committed workforce. It was also noted that leadership was stronger and more visible. Over-reliance on agency staff was still a problem, and further work was needed to strengthen partnership working.

83. It was noted that the next monitoring visit was expected later in June, and communication events were being held across the department to feedback on the improvement plan and engage staff in its delivery. Thanks were extended to staff for their positive response and resilient morale and commendable work so far.

84. In response to Members' questions it was noted that the market for agency staff had grown, offering greater flexibility and pay to social workers, which had led to higher turnover. A large population of the agency staff employed in Bury were stable but this arrangement was costly to the Council, hence the drive to promote the Bury offer and recruit permanent staff. It was noted that national review of Children's Social Care was taking place, with calls for the government to intervene in the social work market owing to the negative impacts on quality and practice.

85. Cabinet approved the recommendations as set out in the report.