



State of the Borough 23/24

Bury
Council

Statement from Council Leader Eamonn O'Brien

This is the third State of the Borough Report since I became Leader of Bury Council. I am delighted to share with you the progress and achievements we have made over the past year, despite the challenges of the cost-of-living crisis and severe inflation related funding pressures. Each section of this report is themed around our borough's community strategy, LET'S! and features a case study, achievements over the past year, and future ambitions we are working towards.

I am proud to say that we have worked tirelessly to provide essential services to our communities and support those who have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis. We have faced difficult decisions, including agreeing to savings of approximately £30 million, but we have persevered and delivered on our commitments to improve the lives of our residents.

I am also pleased to report that we are making good progress on our regeneration plans for Radcliffe and Bury, which we received Levelling-Up funding from Government last year. Our commitment to these areas is unwavering, and we are dedicated to creating vibrant and sustainable communities that are great places to live, work, and visit. These regeneration plans are crucial to the future of our communities, and we are committed to delivering them in a way that benefits everyone.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our staff, partners, and volunteers for their hard work and dedication. Without their efforts, we would not have been able to achieve so much in the face of such challenging circumstances.

The coming year will continue to be a challenging one as we have great plans and aspirations to achieve for the borough amidst a national cost of living crisis, an uncertain economy, and the outfall from the war in Ukraine. Despite this, we will continue to deliver for our residents and businesses to the best of our ability.



Cllr Eamonn O'Brien
Leader of Bury Council

Local

LET'S Case study: Local: Taking on the climate emergency with communities

The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and established a climate manifesto budget, of which £100,000 was dedicated to a community fund to empower local groups to conduct their own action to help tackle climate change.

Working with the local community was recognised as a key part of our Climate Action Strategy.

The decision to create the fund demonstrated the Council's commitment to both the Climate Action Strategy and Corporate Plan, by providing funds to empower action at the local level.

We received 18 eligible bids totalling £181,002. The Climate Action Team evaluated the bids following a scoring criterion that was agreed prior to opening the application process. The team then made recommendations to elected members responsible for climate change who made the final decision on which bids were approved

The community groups were given 12 months to spend the funds, therefore the projects will all be completed by the end March 2023. Some excellent progress has been made to date. Highlights of these results include:

Completion of the Project Unicycle 'Uniform Shop' at Greenmount Primary School (see picture below), which is now open for parents and since it was opened has sold 749 items, which will have significantly reduced the amount of new school uniform that would have been bought.

The Asian Development Association of Bury (ADAB) have conducted 12 interactive workshops which have reached 180 residents focussing on climate change, its impacts and what we can do as individuals to reduce their carbon impact. ADAB work closely with the BAME community in Bury East, helping to ensure that climate awareness reaches sections of the population that are traditionally hard to reach.

Putting our borough on track for carbon neutrality

Local Transport Strategy

In March we brought the Local Transport Strategy consultation draft to Cabinet. The Strategy sets out how the Council will meet its ambitions to develop a genuine integrated transport network that will support a healthy, green, connected and thriving Borough.

The Local Transport Strategy aligns with the Greater Manchester Transport

Strategy 2040, including the aspiration for half of all journeys to be made by active and sustainable transport modes by 2040 and the delivery of a joined-up London-style transport system - the Bee Network. This seeks to transform how people travel in and around Greater Manchester.

The transport vision set out in the draft Local Transport Strategy for Bury is to create an attractive, well-connected Borough that supports economic growth and helps to reduce deprivation. By 2040, the Borough will be connected by a modern and efficient transport network, including comprehensive, affordable, high quality and attractive sustainable transport links.

The Transport Strategy will support the ambitions for sustainable growth and development over the next 20 years as well as help to tackle issues around air quality, as the country moves away from polluting vehicles.

Public Sector Decarbonisation

During 2022 public sector decarbonation plans have progressed including adaptations to 16 Council buildings, the replacement of all windows in the Town Hall and energy efficiency improvements such as LED lighting in our leisure centres and markets. The Council has engaged wider partners in the pursuit of carbon neutrality by 2038 by formalising the role of the Climate Change Board; the engagement of community environmental forums and a dedicated session at Team Bury in February 2023.

Making our borough a safe place to live

Developing a partnership approach to community safety across public services and with the local community.

One of the key features of making our borough a safer place to live has been the coordinated effort between Bury Council, GM Police, public sector organisations, and local communities to tackle crime and illicit activities through

'Operation Avro'. In the past year three of these days of operations have taken place and it has led to the seizure of illicit goods, cracking down on traffic offenses, community safety patrols, community engagement, and environmental health crackdowns.

Building houses that are homes

More, high-quality and low-carbon homes in the borough, and more affordable homes, to get everyone on the housing ladder

Over the past year we have progressed with our 'Brownfield First' policy of building homes on brownfield land sites first. There is more detail on that later in this report.

At our Pyramid park site we are looking to bring around 135 new homes to a site next to the town centre.

In Radcliffe, housing developments are underway to address the growing need for affordable homes. Firstly, a planning application has been submitted to construct 91 family homes on the vacant grounds of the former Radcliffe High School located on School Street. This initiative aims to provide suitable housing options for families in the area.

Additionally, the former Radcliffe Pool site on Green Street is set to be transformed into a housing complex. This development will consist of a mix of 132 one-bedroom and two-bedroom homes, catering to smaller households and enabling them to enter the housing market.

Furthermore, plans are in the works to revitalize the long-abandoned East Lancs Paper Mill site. The proposal includes the construction of 400 homes, along with enhancements to the

surrounding environment. Additionally, the development aims to support the growth of the local cricket club's sporting facilities, providing recreational opportunities for residents.

These housing projects signify a significant step in meeting the demand for housing in Radcliffe while simultaneously revitalizing derelict areas and improving community amenities.

There will be approximately 100 homes primarily aimed at younger adults and young professionals, alongside circa 35 new houses for elderly people, built at Pyramid Park. Approximately 25% of units would be affordable.

A derelict site in Bury is to be transformed into specialist accommodation for older people including those with long-term conditions.

The 1.8-acre plot at Fletcher Fold used to house the old Millwood special school building which was demolished in 2018 after the school moved to Radcliffe.

The new development would offer a range of modern house types for social/affordable rent and shared ownership, and will include accommodation specifically designed for those with mobility issues such as bungalows, to help re-balance the housing stock.

All homes would be multifunctional, with hoists where necessary, wider door frames/space for wheelchair users and walk-in shower rooms, all of which can be adapted to suit needs.

The new homes will incorporate low carbon technologies such as solar panels where possible, energy efficient heating systems to reduce fuel bills, natural sustainable drainage and

nesting bricks to side elevations to encourage wildlife.

Enterprise

LET'S Case study: Enterprise: Bury Employment Support and Training

Bury Employment Support and Training (Bury EST) have been successful in securing a number of job outcomes for young people and adults with disabilities meaning that the proportion of people in Bury with a learning disability in employment has risen from 3% to 4.1%. This is a tremendous achievement from a team of dedicated staff members and the impact on customers, parents and carers has been huge.

The team develop relationships with customers, parents, carers and professionals to understand needs and in turn work closely with employers to understand these needs, break down barriers, offer support but also promote independence in the workplace. Working in a pro-active manner, the teamwork with customers to determine their aspirations and goals, and through development planning, set targets with them to secure employment.

Having strong links within Local Authority and NHS, Bury EST work collaboratively to influence and make changes to existing recruitment practices within public sector departments, but much more widely with other employers in the area.

Sitting well on various partnership groups, Bury EST feedback and offer specialised advice and guidance around employers being inclusive and therefore a diverse workforce.

Supporting our most vulnerable groups, Bury EST encourage families and carers to work closely together through their peer support networks to determine where customers feel that change is needed, and Bury EST staff then work closely with employers to talk through reasonable adjustments in the workplace from the initial recruitment stage right through to in-work support once customers have secured employment.

Staff are passionate, tenacious and 'think outside the box' to make changes and are fully supported by a strong management team who lead by example.

There are many examples of successful job outcomes that Bury EST have, but just to highlight what securing paid employment means to their customers, and the benefits to the employer, please see below a quote:

Comments from Ben:

"I feel proud and confident and know my job well. I like earning my own money and saving it. I feel confident in each job I do at the Duckworth Arms. I feel supported in my job".

Delivering an economic strategy

Work continues to develop an economic development strategy for the borough, which integrates physical and

community regeneration activity with the role and opportunity for local businesses and enables Bury to continue to contribute to the success of GMS economic development.

During 2022 partners were engaged in a co-production exercise through Team Bury and the Council joined the Co-Operative Council's network to ensure a values-based approach to the development of the local labour market

Investing in all our town centres

The regeneration of borough townships and, in particular, delivery of two Levelling Up schemes is a major focus for the Council. During 2022:

The Council has completed the land assembly required at this stage to deliver the Radcliffe Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) including taking plans for the civic hub to RIBA Stage Three and beginning the process of seeking planning approvals.

A number of major external bids have also been successfully secured to support the ambition in Radcliffe, including a £2m capital contribution from Sport England for the leisure offer within the Radcliffe Hub; £1.8m funding from the Football Foundation (the largest grant they awarded in 2022) for a full size 3G all-weather sports pitch, new changing pavilion with club room and associated car parking. UKSPF funding for a Pocket Park has also been agreed for the town centre and the site is being co-designed with local people.

The Council has made strategic acquisitions of the Prestwich mall and Millgate shopping centre and entered into Joint Venture partnerships with Muse and Bruntwood respectively for their development. Consultation on plans with local communities have been completed for both schemes.

Plans for the delivery of the Flexi Hall in Bury Town Centre, funded by DLUHC

Levelling Up, are also progressing. Land assembly work is approaching completion and a delivery partner has been appointed.

A transport strategy is under development, including a bid to the City Region Sustainable Transport (CRST) scheme for the fundamental redevelopment of Bury interchange.

The Ramsbottom town plan was approved in March 2022. This provides for transport development subject to CRSTs funding as described above; development of a car parking strategy and the redevelopment of Market Chambers and the unused, upper floor of the Civic Hall as an Enterprise Centre through Evergreen funding which has been secured.

Plans to improve the town centre of Whitefield took another step forward as part of moves to ensure that all parts of the borough are regenerated. The town is to receive support from the High Street Task Force, a national organisation supporting local authorities to bring about long-term change to towns and cities. Planit-IE will carry out consultation with the local community before the Task Force visits in June.

During 2022, nearly 100 acres of land has been identified by Bury Council which, subject to planning permission and viability, could accommodate thousands of new housing schemes. These sites, which will be delivered during 2023, include schemes at Wheatfield; Seedfield; Green St; School St; the East Lancs Paper Mill and Townside close on Pyramid Park. The number of new homes we are aiming for in Bury is 451 per annum up to 2037.

Equipping residents with the skills they need to thrive

Ongoing children's services improvement

In December 2021 the Council's children's services were judged to be inadequate by Ofsted. A comprehensive improvement plan across seven priorities was determined and a total of £9.5m additional funding has been made available (£3.7m additional revenue funding and £5.7m one-off). Particular progress has been made in:

- developing and implementing a workforce strategy, to increase capacity and diminish dependency on agency staff,
- the development of a new model of practice – the Family Safeguarding model,
- improvements in safeguarding practice with the establishment of an Executive group which represents all partners with statutory responsibilities for safeguarding children, and
- agreement of a neglect, early help strategies and a service thresholds document.

The Council has benefitted from two monitoring visits by DfE during 2022 which have validated the progress being made.

Addressing the historic deficit in the high needs block of the dedicated schools grant (DSG) has been a priority since 2020. In recognition of the scale and challenge of the deficit the Council is part of the national Project Safety Valve initiative which provides DfE support and financial contribution to closing the gap. Over the last 12

months extensive policy progress has been made including:

- More robust Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and branding.
- Creation of additional special school places within the borough.
- Implementation of a graduated approach.
- Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support.
- Reductions in special school top up values and financial clawbacks from special schools.
- Determination of new special school bandings.
- A restructure of education services which begins the process of disestablishing some services which have been funded through the DSG budget.

Improvement plans are in place and there is lots of work underway. There has been a focus on ensuring stability of the workforce, and a permanent senior leadership team is in place to drive this forward. There have been 2 DfE reviews and 3 Ofsted monitoring visits to review our progress, with the most recent Ofsted visit in February 2023. Both the DfE and Ofsted recognise progress is being made and that the building blocks are in place on which to build continued and sustained improvement. This is beginning to deliver improved outcomes for children although we acknowledge there is still lots to do.

Development of new education settings

Bury Council is continuing working with Star Academy and the Department for Education (DfE) to bring the new school to the site of the former Coney Green High School in Spring Lane.

The council has approved admission arrangements for its secondary schools for the 2024/25 academic year, setting out how parents can apply for places. Star Academy is also working with all primary schools in Radcliffe and will be providing further information to parents and pupils making plans to transfer to secondary school.

The Department for Education is in the process of identifying the contractor that will design and build the school. Construction is expected to start in late 2023 and the school will open to its first group of Year 7 pupils in September 2024.

We are also seeking proposals from trusts across the North West and nationwide to work with us to develop a special school in the borough.

The new 60-place special school, planned to open in September 2025, will serve pupils between the ages of 11-16 and cater for children and young people with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

The council also expects there to be a large degree of co-existence with other Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, such as Autistic Spectrum Condition. The school will act as a centre of excellence in the area, providing staff training and development locally, as well as multi-disciplinary outreach services.

The proposal has been given the green light by the Government, and while councils are not allowed to build and run new schools, we will play an important part in attracting and supporting potential educational providers who would do so.

Anti-Poverty

This year the Council has held two anti-poverty summits to co-design a hardship support offer including the targeted allocation of national Household Support Funds. A borough-wide publicity campaign has been delivered with leaflets, posters and social media signposting. Over the course of the year 18,000 residents have been provided with financial assistance, benefits and financial advice. Using the Household Support Fund, more than £650,000 has been allocated to families who receive free school meals to cover the schools holiday periods including the upcoming Easter holidays. A further £20,000 has been allocated to community groups to deliver a range of support including debt counselling, foodbank activities and warm spaces.

In our 2023 budget we agreed to allocate £100,000 to provide grants of £100 to 1,000 households who are financially struggling but not eligible for the current council tax support scheme. Community grants (£100,000) providing £20,000 per neighbourhood, to be decided by councillors and local neighbourhood teams to improve their localities. Support fund for children in care and care leavers (£50,000) - to support our young people with the challenges posed by the cost of living crisis.

In the past nine months, we have organized two important anti-poverty listening and engagement events in collaboration with our partners from the Voluntary, Community, and Faith Alliance (VCFA). These events aimed to address the challenges arising from the rising cost of living crisis and discuss effective ways to work together with our partners to tackle issues faced by our residents.

Recognizing our limited funding, we firmly believe that partnering with our community allies is the best approach as they have stronger connections to our communities. We are excited to announce that a third event is already in the works, further strengthening our collaboration and efforts to make a positive impact.

Delivering the housing and economic growth that Bury needs

Walshaw

A great decision we were able to make in the past year was to remove the Walshaw green-belt site from our housing and development masterplan. This is because plans to regenerate Bury and Radcliffe town centres, plus the Mill Gate centre in Bury which the council has bought, gives an opportunity to build more houses on these urban brownfield sites.

This is the direct result of our commitment to deliver brownfield first and regenerate our town centres. This requires significant effort, a commitment to intervention and a clear plan for how we can get this done, which we have been working on for several years now.

Brownfield First

Significant work has taken place across the past year to make our brownfield sites suitable for new homes. Recent key activity included:

- William Kemp Heaton – Gas main survey complete, viability/cost assessments complete. Electricity charges for street lighting to be determined by Property Services.

- Wheatfields – Onwards contractors now on-site undertaking site clearance in accordance with planning. POS advertising on adjoining piece of land completed 30.03.23 - solicitors to progress disposal.
- Willow Street – Property Services prepared the CPSEs for Legal in preparation of exchange, subject to planning.
- Fletcher Fold – This site was advertised on The Chest for disposal to a registered provider for the development of an older person's housing scheme - opportunity closes 9 May 2023.

The Pipeline of sites is in place and prioritisation of sites is in line with the updated Accelerated Land Disposal Programme (ALDP). These include:

- School Street – Supported planning issues with developer. Site promoted in Invest in Radcliffe.
- Seedfield site - Supplementary planning applications for storage made 8/2/23 and new parking provision made w/c 13/2/23 for use by the football club in response to Sport England objection. Continued to work through Sport England objection issues re: facilities and parking.
- ELPM site – Application continues to be developed. Site promoted in Invest in Radcliffe.
- Green Street – On track for submission to committee in April/May 23.
- Humphrey House – GMCA Growth Location CBRE consultancy support providing a business case

for Build to rent apartment scheme concluded at end of March 23.

- Pyramid Park – LGA/OPE Brownfield Land Release funding bid to address site constraints and remediation was progressed.
- Uplands/Whitefield Library/Pinfold – Worked with NHS to explore possibility of Whitefield Library being remodelled as health centre, subject to cash flowing the project and requirements. Land requirements discussed with NHS in light of reduced site requirements.
- Former Police Station – Following recent tender exercise report to be drafted for June Cabinet recommending sale to Cairnwell Developments/Exemplar Health for a 40-bed care home for adults with complex mental health needs. The sale price is £1.275m and is subject to planning.
- Housing Propositions for Radcliffe, Tottington and Whitefield Housing proposition continue to be drafted.

Looking forward

UKSPF

With Britain leaving the European Union, a new funding mechanism has been announced which will replace the previous EU Regional Development Funds we previously received. We have worked hard with colleagues at GMCA to ensure we have projects ready to receive funding from this new funding stream, the Shared Prosperity Fund.

We are due to receive £1.7m for a period of 2.5 years to deliver the

activity, expenditure, outcomes and outputs set out in the UKSPF Communities and Place proposal by March 2025.

Northern Gateway / ATOM Valley

A once in a lifetime opportunity to transform the economy and create jobs in the north east of Greater Manchester took a major step forward in July 2022.

This Mayoral Development Zone (MDZ) is being proposed for parts of Bury, Rochdale, Heywood, Middleton and Oldham to boost growth and help to create a more balanced economy across the city region.

To be called Atom Valley, the MDZ will include a number of sites that will have the potential to accommodate around 1.6 million sq m of new employment space, generating around 20,000 quality jobs with 7,000 homes. It is proposed that Atom Valley will be supported by significant investment in sustainable transport and other infrastructure to ensure that the new jobs are accessible to local residents.

Northern Gateway site is truly of national and international significance. It has the potential to significantly change the economic growth potential of the North East of the city region and far beyond. And, closer to home in Bury, it will complement and link together the major regeneration plans we have for our town centres of Bury, Radcliffe and Prestwich, as well as providing a focus for the emerging Economic Development Strategy and Boroughwide Transport Strategy

Skills Strategy

Production and delivery of an all-age skills strategy is linked to the development of the Economic Development strategy.. A draft Strategy

is to be presented to June Cabinet following an internal consultation process.

Together

Case Study: Shifting Employee Engagement at Pace and Scale

2022 has seen a step change in our approach to workforce engagement here at Bury Council and in partnership with NHS Greater Manchester staff in Bury. – We're investing more than ever in engaging with our people and are already seeing the positive benefits of this work.

The link between workforce engagement and performance, though complex, is irrefutable as the CIPD's 2021 evidence review shows.

Our LET'S Do It! Strategy for the borough has engagement at its core. It's about moving away from a model of public services routed in systems, processes and bureaucratic complexity to one about relationship.

So, what have we done?

Engaging with our circa. 800 frontline operational colleagues has been key to our approach. All staff, irrespective of their role, now have access to our IT systems and we've invested in providing them with training so they can take full advantage of our new online Employee Self Service functionality.

We've developed a strong rhythm of feedback from our quarterly pulse surveys, at pace, with both Council-Wide and service specific briefings and engagement discussions. Both the Executive Team and Members have committed time and effort to responding directly to staff feedback. For three of our Departments, for example, wellbeing was a real concern so whole-Department wellbeing days were quickly facilitated in direct response to provide time and space to explore this further.

Wellness

The Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) has been established to operate as a standing commission on driving health inequalities, with a focus on health and care system performance; positive community behaviours and empowerment and driving the wider determinants of health.

In this context the HWB has taken a leadership role in the development of people and communities plans in areas of greatest deprivation as described later in this paper, the antipoverty strategy and homelessness response.

Transport and digital connectivity

Improving roads

We completed the second stage of the Highways Investment Strategy (HIS2)

and proceeded with our plans to invest £10 million in HIS3. This funding will be used to repair major and minor roads alike, and will allow us to halt the deterioration of our classified highways. This funding will allow an additional 88 local roads across the borough to be improved.

Bus Service Improvement Plan

Over the past year we have made great strides towards delivering our 'London-style' bus network across Greater Manchester.

From September 2023 all buses in Wigan and Bolton (with some routes passing through Bury) will be run by Go North West and Diamond, who are the first to win contracts under the new franchising system.

All of these buses will be yellow and at least 50 will be new electric vehicles with improved disability access, audio-visual announcements and the full branding of the Bee Network – the name of the new public transport system.

By 2025, when all services across the city-region are under public control, buses, trams and rental bikes will use the same ticket system with a daily cap. Bus fares across Greater Manchester have already been capped at £2 for single journeys and £5 for day tickets with weeklies to cost £21 in January.

Better walking and cycling infrastructure

Our new Local Transport Strategy sets out how we aim to get more people to move away from motor vehicles and to more active travel modes such as walking and cycling. To achieve this we have set out plans to make it easier to walk and cycle in the borough, by

providing safer facilities for walking and cycling, and improving their integration with public transport services.

We are fortunate to be part of Greater Manchester and to have excellent connections to our neighbours in the conurbation. We have worked closely with TfGM to develop the Bee Network, a bold vision to deliver a joined-up London-style transport system.

The CRSTS programme approved by central government in July 2022 includes £15.4m of funding to improve walking, wheeling and cycling routes in Bury Town Centre, Radcliffe and Ramsbottom.

For Ramsbottom, £2.3m is available from the CRSTS fund to deliver proposals to improve walking and cycling routes into and through the town centre.

For Radcliffe, £9m is available from the CRSTS fund to deliver proposals which will provide improved walking and cycling facilities in the town centre and connecting routes linking the Metrolink Stop to the proposed Civic Hub and Secondary School Site.

For Bury Town Centre, £4.1m is available from the CRSTS fund to deliver proposals to provide improved walking and cycling facilities in the town centre improving north/south and east/west routes and linking to onward routes.

In the past year we have begun piloting bike libraries, attached to local libraries, where people can borrow a bike, a bit like borrowing a book. Bikes are free to borrow and can be borrowed for up to a week at a time and returned anytime the library is open. A bike lock is provided for the duration of the bike loan. Currently, bikes are available for

loan from Radcliffe and Bury libraries and other locations such as Clarence Park and Openshaw Park.

Giving voice to all our communities

The process of developing a People and Communities Plan for every township has begun, with a plan now agreed for Radcliffe and in final development for Bury Town Centre. These plans aim to base inclusive growth initiatives on strong data and evidence, embodying a whole system approach which starts with finding out what matters to local residents and to co-design a response to these priorities.

Every opportunity has been taken to provide financial support for local groups to participate in delivery and, during 2022/23 over £750,000 was made available in participatory budget exercises designed to drive community engagement.

Building a cultural legacy

Between 2019-21 Bury was recognised as the first GM Town of Culture. A commitment was made to develop a borough-wide culture strategy which sustains the innovation developed during this time, supports economic development and contributes to a “wellness” model of community health and wellbeing.

The development of this strategy has been led by an independent partner, Curated Place, part-funded by Arts Council England. It has been co-produced with community groups and the borough’s principal cultural partners. Implementation will be supported through the UK Shared

Prosperity Fund which has been secured for the next two years.

This strategy provides a framework to secure and maximise the outcomes of investment in culture. It is a sister document to the forthcoming Economic Development Strategy and complements our Inclusion Strategy, which describes how we will celebrate all our diverse communities of place and identity.

Strengths

Case study: Putting Inclusion at the heart of the Bury way of working

We've truly put inclusion at the heart of everything we do in Bury. A review of ways of working in the Council identified a real passion and commitment to equality from our frontline workforce, as well as Members and leaders. However, it also highlighted significant room for improvement in how we place inclusion at the heart of our systems, processes and culture.

We started by getting the basics right; putting in place a clear Inclusion Strategy, jointly with the then CCG, which included a new set of Equality Objectives. In developing the Strategy and driving our inclusion priorities we brought together a wide cross section of people, the Inclusion Working Group.

Over the past year the group's developed even further, expanding its membership and reach as part of our public service partnership, Team Bury, and working to drive forward the inclusion agenda across public service partners in the borough.

In designing our approach to inclusion we looked, not only at the law, but what's important to Bury people. That's why we give equal consideration to 13 protected characteristics. So, looked after children and care leavers, military personnel, reservists and veterans, carers and the socio-economically vulnerable as well as the 9 legally protected groups.

Bury Council's commitment to inclusion has led us to take the following actions:

Bury Council successfully bid for £65k in funding to drive inclusive public services across Bury and Rochdale with a focus on race and disability. We've launched a programme of cross-organisational reciprocal mentoring involving local government, NHS and Housing organisations in the boroughs. We've engaged with a variety of local communities and voluntary sector groups to understand perceptions of working in the public sector and to explore barriers to recruitment. Together with partners in Bury and Rochdale we're responding to the six opportunities for change that our communities identified will create more inclusive workforces.

Our Employment Support Team (BEST) support disabled residents to find paid employment in Bury. As one of the borough's biggest employers we've forged a partnership between the BEST and our catering and cleaning services to provide clear pathways into employment.

Our new recruitment and selection policy supports a more innovative and inclusive approach to recruitment. In support of this we've been proactive in attending events with VCSE groups to actively recruit into our vacancies and experimented with video and audio job adverts to engage with different communities.

We're the first Greater Manchester Council to proactively recruit Social Workers from abroad and are welcoming the arrival of 20 new South African Children's Social workers who have

Armed Forces Covenant

Bury Council was presented with a Silver award from the Ministry of Defence for actively supporting the armed forces community in its workplace.

The Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) encourages organisations which champion the armed forces and encourage others to follow suit. This includes employing serving and former members of the armed forces community, and demonstrating flexibility towards training and mobilisation commitments for Reservists and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers.

Bury Council, which already had Bronze status, had to meet a range of criteria to receive Silver, including signing the Armed Forces Covenant which pledges to give serving members, veterans and their families the support they need and deserve.

Community Wealth building

As mentioned previously in this report we are dedicated to growing our local economy through our refreshed Economic Development Strategy, our upcoming Skills Strategy, and future mayoral development zone in the borough. But our primary focus is not just on economic growth and development but also on ensuring that the benefits of that growth are shared equitably among our residents.

We firmly believe that local wealth should stay within the community and be reinvested for the betterment of all. To achieve this, we have adopted a comprehensive approach that involves various strategies and initiatives.

Building Community Capacity

We are committed to supporting the borough's 'third sector'. In March 2023 we securing funding for the Bury Voluntary and Community Faith Alliance (VCFA).

The council will provide £170,000 to help the VCFA support Bury groups in their work and build relationships between sectors and local communities.

There are an estimated 1,249 voluntary organisations in the borough, supported by 26,000 volunteers and 4,000 paid staff. Together they contribute £109 million to the local economy. Many of these organisations are small, working on budgets of less than £10,000 per year.

Bury VCFA, which has won national accreditation for its work, helps these groups with training, funding and advocacy.

Examples of its work include:

- helping create the Bury Older People's Network;
- supporting the design of the new Home from Hospital Service led by Age UK Bury;
- hosting the Violence Reduction Unit community-led pilot in East Bury;
- providing an online Volunteer Bank where individuals can register for volunteer opportunities in their community.

Bury VCFA also hosts the Beacon Social Prescribing Service, helping people to take part in activities which improve their health and wellbeing.

At a time when council and health funding is under pressure, and everybody is facing increasing demand for services, we are all working together to improve the quality of life for everyone in Bury.

This funding means we can continue to provide infrastructure and practical support for Bury's voluntary sector organisations so that they have the capacity to continue improving the lives of residents and ensuring they have a voice and influence.

Social Care Transformation

Over the past three years we have been moving forward at pace in relation to our Integrated Care Partnership and following the formation of five integrated neighbourhood teams and an integrated One Commissioning Organization we have been at the forefront of progressing and realising the benefits of unified health and social care system. We have expanded our intermediate care and rapid response service to promote a reablement approach to ensuring those in need of short-term support to maximise their long-term potential can access these services. We are a key partner in our integrated care delivery collaborative that drives improvement programmes across health and care.

Having provided services throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, our workforce continues to deal with the impact and aftermath of this period.

As we move from covid response through recovery and renewal, adult social care faces the most significant programme of reforms in its history

whilst it works to reduce some of the back logs that built up during this time.

Exceptional demands have been put on the adult social care system to support our hospital systems and the borough expanded its hospital step down and intermediate care services to nearly twice their normal size to support timely discharge from our local hospitals. Additional Occupational Therapist have been provided to reduce the numbers waiting for adaptations to help support them remain at home which had built up when carrying out such work in people's houses was not allowed under lock down.

The numbers waiting continues to fall and will return to normal levels in the first quarter of 2023, and a workforce strategy was delivered to ensure the borough could recruit and retain sufficient social workers. All of this has ensured as many people as possible have been able to benefit from support to maintain or regain their independence.

Adult Social Care are committed to delivering the Bury 'LETS' (Local, Enterprising, Together, Strengths) strategy for our citizens and our workforce. Our mission is to work in the heart of our communities providing high-quality, person-centred advice and information to prevent, reduce and delay the need for reliance on local council support.

As a result of this strategy we have seen more of our residents supported to be independent, by providing assessment and support planning with an emphasis on building on individuals strengths and promoting independence.

Strengths

And for those eligible to access social care services we are ensuring that together they have choice and control over the care and support they receive, and that they are encouraged to consider creative and innovative ways to meet their needs.

To build a health and social care system which will sustain our communities in the coming years within the funding available to us we need to look at providing support in different ways. Our journey over the next three years will be one of continued improvement and transformation, with the development of clear assurance mechanisms to enable transparency and accountability to the communities we serve. As we explore what social care delivery will look like 3 years from now, we will ensure that people who receive our support and their carers are at the heart of co-producing our social care delivery model and that their voice is central as we navigate through the financial and systemic changes we must make.