



**LGA Corporate Peer Challenge
Bury Council**

28th November – 1st December 2023

Bury
Council

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1 Introduction

Bury Council would like to welcome the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Team to our brilliant and busy borough at a challenging time for local government and the wider public sector. We are proud of what we have achieved since the LGA were last with us for a full Corporate Peer Challenge in 2018 and the subsequent follow up visit in 2021 and are looking forward to sharing our progress with you.

In 2020 we launched our aspirational and ambitious LET'S Do It! Community Strategy, setting out a vision for the borough through to 2030: **to stand out as a place that is achieving faster economic growth than the national average, with lower than national average levels of deprivation.**

Since then, both Bury Council and the wider Team Bury Partnership have worked together to transform our collective response to public service reform and to increase our focus on the seven high level outcomes committed to within the Strategy. There is now a much stronger “golden thread” that binds our collective endeavour.

These achievements have been made in conjunction with responding to the unprecedented impact of a global pandemic and dealing with the impact of a cost-of-living crisis, which has deeply affected our communities and businesses. Instead of allowing these events to derail our commitment to the 2030 we have used the LET'S principles to redouble our efforts and remain focused on the long-term objectives:

- **Local** – Launching our Neighbourhood Model to ensure residents are at the heart our decision making and delivery.
- **Enterprise** – Working creatively to become the only local authority to be awarded two Levelling-Up Grants to regenerate our most deprived areas.
- **Together** – Continuing to build a local health and care system within the GM ICS to maintain our focus on reducing health and inequalities.
- **Strengths** – Bury has a heritage of people looking after people. Our award-winning community groups continue inspire and energise us.

During your time with us you will learn more about our new approach to staff engagement, organisational development and partnership working. Whilst acknowledging the challenges faced by our staff and our partners, we have also looked to celebrate the successes, commending those who have worked tirelessly in the support of residents and those who continue to provide high quality public service.

Much of our approach builds on the recommendations made in our previous Corporate Peer Challenge reviews and has been co-designed with our stakeholders to ensure that it meets the needs of our neighbourhoods and the diverse communities which give Bury it's own unique culture and identity.

We hope you enjoy your time in our beautiful borough and get chance to experience the passion and the pride of those who live, work and invest here.

LET'S Do It!

LET'S Do It Challenge



Between June and August 2023, over 1200 staff, elected members and partners took part in our LET'S Do It! Challenge, a fully immersive organisational development activity designed to help people understand the purpose behind the strategy and what they could do individually, and as a team, to help achieve the 2030 vision. Find out more later!

2 Local Priorities and Outcomes

Bury is nearly three years into a decade of reform and good progress has been made. The Council's priorities and delivery are managed each year through a Corporate Plan. For the last three years a framework of the "3Rs" has been used to direct activity: Response; Recovery and Renewal.

The table below sets out the Corporate Priorities for 2022/23 which were informed by the feedback from the LGA that the Council needed to be clearer on its objectives and that LET's Do It! did not mean "Let's do everything".

| Response | Recovery | Renewal and Regeneration |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update the poverty reduction strategy including an urgent response to the cost-of-living crisis, for residents & businesses Supporting the health and care system to reduce waiting times, improve access and lessen inequalities, working through the Bury Integrated Care Partnership and in the GM ICS. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened partnership working with parents and schools including reducing the Dedicated Schools Grant deficit. Beginning the development of people & communities plans for each of our neighbourhoods, including the pilot of a Family Hub. Delivery of the children's OFSTED improvement plan. Work with stakeholders to deliver the SEND improvement plan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of the Economic Development Strategy ensure delivery of our strategic regeneration sites in Prestwich, Ramsbottom, and the Radcliffe Strategic Regeneration Framework, including the Bury and Radcliffe Levelling Up Schemes Production and delivery of the all-age borough skills strategy Delivery of the brownfield housing programme. Implementation of the Climate Change programme |
| Strengthening the Basics Delivering quality, value for money services which residents can rely on | | |
| Enablers Organisation Development; Internal Transformation; Balancing the Budget; Driving Inclusion | | |

Delivery against each objective was summarised in a report to Cabinet in March 2023:

<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s34599/Bury%20Council%20Corporate%20Plan%20202324%20Strategic%20Framework.pdf>

Priorities for 2023/24 continue much of the work described above in relation to strategic economic development; the improvement of children's services; health and care reforms and internal improvements. Corporate objectives also continue to be driven by the commitments within LET'S Do It!, ensuring that we contribute to the seven core outcome measures which are explained in more detail later in this document:

1. Improved quality of life
2. Improved early years development

3. Improved educational attainment
4. Increased adult skill levels and employability
5. Inclusive economic growth
6. Carbon neutrality by 2038
7. Improved digital connectivity

In this context **local strategic priorities** for 2023/24 ahead are summarised as:

- Delivery of the £31m budget savings to balance the Council's budgets.
- Maintaining the children's improvement journey, including demonstrable reductions in the DSG deficit; improvements in SEND provision and achieving a focus on partnership and compliance in year two of the children's social care Ofsted improvement journey.
- Completion of the ICS transition and delivery of the health and care reforms.
- Continuing the delivery of our Anti-Poverty Strategy to support residents with the cost of living.
- Ongoing delivery of the physical regeneration work with the completion of all enabling works and progressing the two Levelling Up sites.
- Delivery of housing schemes and completing the options appraisal of the Council's housing management company, Six Town Housing.
- Mobilising the inclusive growth vision as a whole Council agenda, including delivery of the all-age skills strategy; a strengthened and evidence-led focus on people and community plans by neighbourhood.
- Embedding the LET'S values and behaviours across the Council workforce and continuing to drive staff engagement and high-quality leadership and management.
- Commencing delivery of the wellness strategy, including the pilot of a community-led approach in Radcliffe. A new borough culture strategy will be an implicit part of the future wellness offer.

The Council will also continue to influence and direct **local delivery of GM strategy** including:

- Clean Air reforms will continue through the leadership of the Clean Air Steering Group, including implementation of an investment-led non-charging approach,
- Implementation of GM devolution trailblazer scheme including the single block grant agreement and potential for new powers in housing,
- The Places for Everyone scheme which, if approved, would deliver over 3,500 new homes in the Borough. A planning application will be made in late 2023 with a view to potential determination mid-2024, and
- Development of Northern Gateway within the Atom Valley Mayoral Development zone.

These are priorities are summarised in our Plan on a Page overleaf.

| Priority | Key Deliverables | April – June 23 | July-Sept 23 | Oct – Dec 23 | Jan – March 24 | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|-----|----------------|-----|
| Top Three Corporate Priorities for 2023/24 | | →→→ | RESPONSE | →→→ | RECOVERY | →→→ | RENEWAL | →→→ |
| 1. Supporting residents and businesses with the cost-of-living crisis | Deliver 2023/24 Action Plan within the Anti-Poverty Strategy Launch Social Value Policy / Community Wealth | • Household Support Round Three | • Cost of Living Summit Three | • Winter support programme delivered | • Evaluation of impact | | | |
| 2. Improving Children's Lives | Childrens Social Care Ensuring services for children and young people meet the required standards for good levels of safeguarding and support Educational Improvement Radcliffe School build commences Improve the proportion of schools good or better Academiisation Strategy Improved attendance Special Education Needs Preparing for the new review of services by Ofsted through service transformation Project Safety Valve Plan Updated and Approved by Department for Education | • Mapping of existing commitment via contract register and procurement analysis • Family Safeguarding model implemented | • Framework of opportunities signed-off via Neighbourhood teams • Early Years offer resolved • Exit of Manged Service Team | • Social Value Policy launched • 23 international social work arrivals • Implement training for EH practitioners. • Student Social Worker intake | • Evaluation framework agreed and implemented • Preparation for Ofsted re-inspection by ensuring services are recognised as improving outcomes for our children and young people • Radcliffe School build begins • PRU relocates to Spurr House | | | |
| 3. Achieving Inclusive Economic Growth | Leveling-Up Sites commence construction Township Plans for Whitefield, Prestwich and Ramsbottom Economic Development Strategy Updated Accelerated Growth Programme Skills Strategy | • Develop school improvement and school cluster model with seconded headteacher • Develop training and communication for schools and governors following DfE local area commissioning statement • SEND improvement plan updated • Graduated approach launched • Revised PSV Management Plan submitted | • DfE procurement – school build • Revise Quality Assurance proforma and mechanism • Analyse schools attainment data and RAG rate • Revised local offer in place • Under 5 plans reviewed • Circa 50 RP places open | • Radcliffe leisure centre relocated to enable new schools build phase to commence • Quality assurance visits to schools • Options paper for 14-25 SEND service to be completed • Recommissioning of short break offer | • Unsworth special school open • Circa 10 RP places open | | | |
| | | • Planning secured – Radcliffe & Bury sites • High St Taskforce to Whitefield • Prestwich consultation • OBC-Ramsbottom Enterprise centre • Radcliffe pocket park • EDS launch | • Radcliffe demolition • Market operator engaged • Whitefield town plan • Ramsbottom public realm planning • Millgate masterplan • Skills Strategy launched | • Radcliffe hub construction begins • Prestwich funding strategy • Planning – Radcliffe enterprise centre • Inclusive growth strategy launched | • Bury flexi construction begins | | | |
| Other Organisational Priorities for 2023/24 | | →→→ | RESPONSE | →→→ | RECOVERY | →→→ | RENEWAL | →→→ |
| 4. Improving the Health & Care System | Intermediate Care Transformation Plan Care Quality Commission Inspection Readiness | • Training needs analysis completed • Provider and service user Physical Disabilities network established • Assistive Tech team established and operational. • Implement new Housing Assistance Policy • Deliver contract between Council and GP Fed for payment for Staying Well service | • Stand-alone Bed Base and Home base service created by merging IMC@Home with Reablement • Assistive Tech delivery | • Assistive Tech delivery | • Review Intermediate Tier and assess requirements • Assistive Tech delivery | | | |
| 5. Reducing Health Inequalities | Reducing the life expectancy gap by focusing on preventing and reducing the impact of the 3 key contributors CVD, Cancer and Liver Disease. Narrowing the school readiness gap. | • Peer Challenge improvement plan prepared • Updated self-assessment completed • ASC performance Framework designed | • ASC performance framework implementation • 'Getting the call' readiness plan | • Potential assessment window | • Potential assessment window | | | |
| 6. Tackling Climate Change | Deliver commitments to decarbonisation and household energy efficiency across the borough Launch internal climate change action plan | • GP FED plan for the delivery of the secondary prevention CVD work in General Practice. • Refine the new Wellness Model of delivery to focus work on key priorities • Complete first version of the JSNA | • Update local smoking plan • Develop and roll out alcohol licensing matrix to support licensing decisions prevention CVD work in General Practice | • Review self-care information and Tools on the Bury Directory and refine as appropriate • Support the roll out of self-care comms through VCSE sector | • Review impact of additional substance misuse service investment | | | |
| 7. Public Sector Reform | Embedding Public Sectors Leadership Teams in each neighbourhood Taking a Person and Community Centred Approach to Public Sector reform | • Phase 2 - Replace 252 street lighting columns and LEDs • Phase 3 - Carry out design work/tenders for LED replacement | • Phase 2 - Replace a further 252 street lighting columns and LEDs • Phase 3 - Upgrade 300 streetlights with LEDs • Delivery of the remaining 13 electric vans to the Council fleet | • Phase 2 - Replace a further 252 street lighting columns and LEDs • Phase 3 - Upgrade a further 510 streetlights with LEDs | • Phase 2: Replace a further 252 street lighting columns and LEDs; Phase 3: Upgrade a further 510 streetlights • Increase public EV charging infrastructure by 100% • Implement Social Housing Decarbonisation (Wave 2) • Deliver energy efficiency measures to 80 households in Bury | | | |
| 8. Delivering sustainable Housing Growth | STH Options Appraisal Housing Development to deliver 700 new homes | • Updated Neighbourhood profiles and SotB • Map models of risk stratification already in place - consistent and neighbourhood specific • Map models of strengths-based working and assess commonality of approach • Community Mental Health Hubs • Decision to in-source • Start on site: Wheatfield (30) | • People & Community plans • Develop framework for consistent and multiagency approach • Wellness strategy • Tenant engagement • Improvement plan agreed • William Kemp Heaton (18 LD units) Willow St (13 physical, sensory/LD) | • Review operation of neighbourhood teams • Pilot consistent place-based strengths-based approach • Bury East Family Hub open • Final decision made • Start on Site East Lance Papermill (400 homes) • Place for Everyone adopted (Elton) | • Assess next steps for integration • Radcliffe Family Hub open | | | |
| 9. Celebrating culture and supporting our creative sector | Launch and Implementation of new Cultural Strategy Delivery of savings in BAM Development of programme of events UKSPF monitoring | | | | | | | |
| | | • Launch event for Strategy • Identify and bid for funding opportunities including LIF 3, MEND and GMCA funding • Events Programme go live | • Develop plans for new Library in Prestwich • Develop plans to relocate library in Bury • Support plans for commercialisation of BAM • Options appraisal with Market Curators • Events Programme | • Appoint Flexihall provider • Approve BAM option • Events Programme | • Secure capital funding / MEND for BAM • Secure ACE funding to move Bury Library and Capital to refurbish • Events Programme | | | |

2.1 Performance Management

Delivery against the Corporate Plan is monitored through monthly reporting by Executive Directors to their Cabinet Member and Chief Executive. Formal reports are presented on a quarterly basis to Cabinet with additional analysis via the Performance and Finance Sub-Group of our Overview and Scrutiny Committee: <https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=126&MId=3445&Ver=4>

These reports contain a blend of business activity information and key performance indicators to track demand and impact on services. These performance dashboards are still in development in order to:

- Reflect targets and commitments within the Greater Manchester Strategy Performance Framework.
- Feed into the Seven Outcomes measures within LET'S Do It!
- Provide relevant benchmarking against appropriate comparators.
- Allow for target setting where appropriate.

Department level plans mirror the format of the Corporate Plan and are reported against quarterly at the Senior Leadership Group, made up of Executive Directors and their direct reports. These are in turn used to support the product of Service Level Plans where needed and then individual performance objectives. This “Golden Thread” is summarised in the diagram below:



The most recent performance report demonstrates the challenging context for current delivery, with economic and societal pressures contributing to increased demand for services, whilst Council capacity contains to be curtailed by budget pressures.

2.2 Workforce Development

We know that one of our biggest challenges remains staff engagement which has been focus of the Director of People and Inclusion and the newly appointed Head of Organisational Development and Culture. However, it is a collective endeavour for all of our members and senior managers.

In 2022 we launched a new quarterly 'Pulse Survey'. The first wave was responded to by 27% of the workforce and provided a baseline for us to build on. Compared to the last Staff Survey that had been conducted in 2018, 81% of staff felt encouraged to respectfully express their opinions and ideas, a significant improvement from 2018 when only 50% of council staff felt that way.

Key themes which have come through the survey have been discussed previously with the LGA, including the need for prioritisation and to be clear about what we expect from staff and what staff expect from us in terms of their wellbeing. Over the last twelve months this has led to focus on refining the Corporate Plan as outlined above, but also on being clear on the behaviours we have jointly agreed with staff as part of our LET'S Value Statements:

- **Local:** I'm proud to make a difference to people and communities in the neighbourhoods where they live.
- **Enterprising:** I strive to develop and improve; to play my part in delivering great solutions with the people of Bury.
- **Together:** My work is shaped in an inclusive way, with dignity, kindness and respect; developed together by those with lived experience.
- **Strengths:** I'm proud to build on the strengths of Bury people, my colleagues and myself to deliver.

Through a focus on promoting the survey, and it's impact, the response rates by the fourth wave had improved to 32% (just over 800 staff). Overall engagement is continuing to improve and we have seen a positive direction of travel over the year on our core measures. Despite the current financial climate and significant changes, the number of staff who would recommend the organisation to friends / family seeking employment was at its highest (66%), as was perceptions of work/life balance (69%).

The results of our most recent wave of the survey will be available to the Peer Challenge Team on arrival. The results of the surveys so far have provided the evidence for a programme of work which has included:

- In 2022 we held our first **LET'S Do It Brilliantly! Staff Awards** with over 300 nominations themed around the LET'S values. Attended by the Mayor of the Borough and the Leader of the Council, staff winners were awarded with the now much sought after "LET'S Do It!" Hoodies.
- We have reshaped our **internal staff communications** using Live Briefings with the Chief Exec and Directors as the flagship touch point, but backed up with more structured engagement routes including the launch of Workforce Wednesdays where we share advice on maximising staff wellbeing, signpost

to support to on developing skills and careers and provide more resources to be consciously inclusive. We also have monthly “Shout Out” emails to celebrate the contribution of staff.

- Clear feedback has come through the Pulse Survey that core **HR policies and procedures** needed to be easier to follow and understand stand to ensure that managers and their staff were clear on roles and responsibilities. This has now been done via a new Employee Handbook and updated policies for Recruitment, Redeployment, Pay Protection and Annual Leave.
- Whilst the Council has had a long established **Change Agent Network** we have responded to feedback that the group wished to play a more active role in improving systems and processes in the Council and as such they have taken on a key role in the Council’s Transformation Programme. Through supporting the introduction of Office 365 our Change Agents have become Digital Champions with over a hundred members of staff supporting their peers to work more productively and to use the new tools with more confidence. This has allowed us to introduce a new e-mail retention policy and improved our information governance.
- One of the early outcomes from the **Pulse Survey** was that some staff were not clear on what was expected of them at work. In addition to improving the specificity of the Corporate Plan, a new Management Development Programme has been launched which has now had over 100 participants. The programme has focused on staff development and management skills to enable this cohort to support their teams and undertake more effective business planning. However, we know that this is still a challenge for us. At the end of Quarter Two only 53% of our Employee Reviews had been completed. As this annual conversation is the cornerstone of our employee engagement we know we have more to do.

One of our proudest achievements since the last Peer Challenge has been the development of our LET’S Do It! Challenge. This has been an in-house piece of organisational development, delivered at little cost, in response to staff feedback that they still were not clear on what the vision really meant for them in the context of their day-to-day lives. The development of an immersive experience to help bring the LET’S strategy to life has been hosted at the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Training Centre and has been attended by over 1200 staff, councillors and stakeholders over the summer of 2023. Taking two hours, each tour explains the rationale for the strategy and what we mean by each of the behaviours and how they can be applied to all roles within the Council.

Structured around the four LET’S values the experience has been delivered by an internal set of Staff Guides. Nominated by their managers, and often previous Staff Award winners, these staff have been our advocates and have delivered the training on a peer-to-peer basis which has created a much greater sense of ownership of the strategy. We are continuing to evaluate the impact of the experience however evidence suggests it has been well received and has inspired many of our staff to embrace the LET’S Do It challenge and pledge their commitment to improving the life chances of the borough’s children by 2030.

LET'S Challenge ... Staff Pledges

Around 10,000 Bury children will be 18 in 2030.
What will you do to make sure Bury's next generation share in our success?'

I will promote the importance of financial prevention to young people in the aim to ensure they would reach adulthood. Teaching budgeting skills to college students to prepare them to face university life.



In the job that I carry out daily I would encourage the children to attend education for them to be able to succeed, for the children to feel safe and happy on their journey to school.

Go out into schools and talk about Bury, why its a great place to live and study etc.

Help out at recruitment events to promote Bury council and tell them how amazing we are ... Shout from the roof tops about how amazing Bury is and make all our Bury children aware.

Encourage further climate action activities within schools and among young people. Ask young people what they want to see their area doing to combat the climate crisis.

As a parent of 2 children, one who will be 16 in 2030, I want to support colleagues to develop services for children with ASD, ADHD and other SEND provision

Continue taking on as many apprentices as possible into a service which is struggling to attract the younger generation

I am in the process of becoming a corporate parent ... I intend to help her refurbish her first home and we are going charity shopping together as she loves that activity.

Go out into schools and talk about Bury, why it's a great place to live and study etc.

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2.3 Community Engagement

Post Covid-19 the Council has remained committed to supporting and facilitating our community and voluntary sector to continue to work with our residents by strengthening community assets and ensuring help is targeted where it is most needed. The Team Bury approach to **Public Service Reform** builds on the principles of the LET'S strategy and has seen a commitment to support our five neighbourhoods to develop their own, distinct Public Service Leadership Teams, focusing resource on the priorities identified within each of their People and Community Plans.

Whilst this model builds on the Community Hubs which were established during the Pandemic, the model is intended to take a sustainable approach to community development that is grounded in the principles of taking a person and community centred approach so that public services do not get in the way of communities helping themselves. The voluntary, community and faith sector in Bury has strengthened under the new leadership within our third sector infrastructure organisation and also the further development of wider grass roots community-based organisations. Below are four examples of this approach in action.

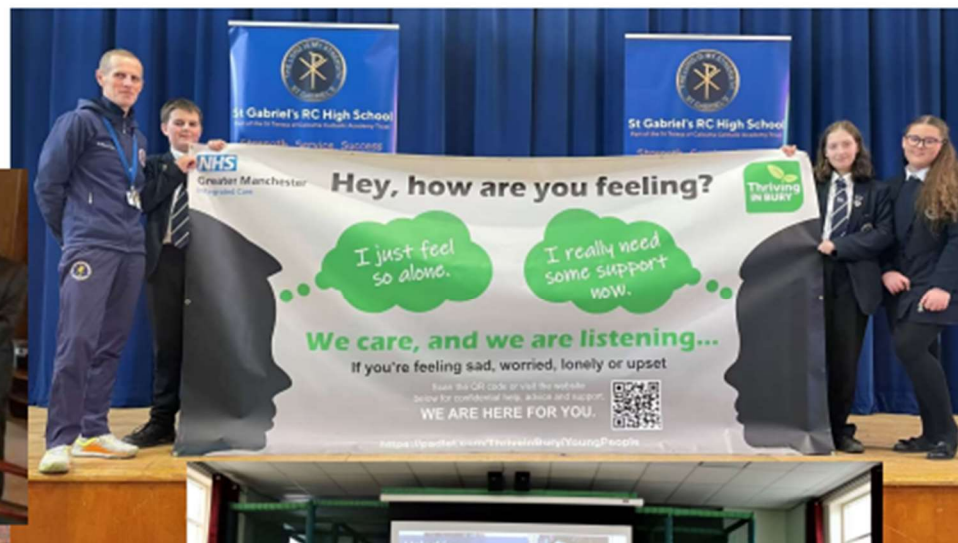
- **Cost of Living:** Since the launch of the Council's Anti-Poverty Action Plan, three Cost-of-Living summits have been held to ensure that the pledges are being delivered in conjunction with residents and communities. The Council is using around £3m from the government's Household Support Fund and money from the Council's budget on a range of support for residents and community groups to help them through the cost-of-living crisis. This has included providing food and fuel vouchers, supporting community and voluntary groups who are running food banks and pantries, and also to organisations offering crisis support. Through listening to residents it is clear that finding well paid, good jobs is seen as the longer-term solution. Working together with employers, the Department for Work & Pensions and local skills providers, residents have also been supported with their skills and employment through workshops, interview support and help with improving digital skills to be able to access opportunities and apply for work.
- **Family Hubs:** At the end of October 2023 Bury Council opened it's first family hub in one of our most deprived neighbourhoods, Bury East. Based on consultation and co-design with children and families the space will provide a physical hub, providing support for the whole family from the Council's early years team, youth services, healthcare, alongside other community services. From agreeing the priorities for services to be run from the centre, right through to selecting the colour of the rooms and the furniture, this project has been jointly designed and delivered with our community and provides a model for future community hubs. Underpinning this work is Bury's commitment to implementing the Family Safeguarding Model which is a partnership approach to working with families to help children remain safely at home. Bury Council is the first local authority in Greater Manchester to implement the new **Family Safeguarding Model**, and one of just 19 nationwide. At its heart, this model is about bringing together a wide range of professionals who will support parents to become better equipped to meet the demands of parenting and being able

to use high-quality centre like the East Bury Family Hub will provide a key resource for parents and practitioners, whilst allowing the community to come together to support each other.

- **New Mental Health Resources for Children and Young People:** Listening to our children and young people it is clear that many are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing post Covid-19. This has been one of the top issues identified by our Youth Cabinet and through our Childrens Voice Projects. In March 2023 NHS GM and Bury Council worked with our young people to launch Thriving in Bury, a new mental health campaign based on the creation of a children and young people's mental health service directory. The directory has been developed with children and young people to help them find the best ways to support their emotional health and wellbeing. The digital platform has a noticeboard format, which was designed based on feedback from young people. It provides useful information and resources about local services, youth groups, emotional concerns and issues, national helplines and digital support. As part of our Public Sector Reform work our schools, colleges and wider support services have wrapped around this service with the aim of providing early help to reduce the number of referral through to specialist care and support meaning children get support sooner and in a format that they are comfortable with.
- **Delivering Inclusive Growth:** Getting regeneration schemes right in the eyes of the general public is always a challenge. As part of the LET'S Do It vision of achieving inclusive economic growth, we are committed to ensuring residents have a voice in plans to change (and hopefully improve) their neighbourhoods. In Radcliffe, the first of our Levelling-Up projects to break ground, we used community connectors to get the conversations started, as well as hosting a regen office in the centre of the development. Every element of the scheme is co-designed, including the site hoardings. Our early conversations with residents about regenerating Prestwich Village received nearly 900 responses, leading to more community-led conversations taking place in October and November. For our redesign of the Millgate Shopping Centre in Bury Town Centre, a series of roadshows have been undertaken to inform the development of the Masterplan, including with visitors to our "World Famous" Bury Market. Meanwhile in another of our neighbourhoods, Whitefield, we have been successful in being accepted on the Government's High Streets Task Force Programme. Where possible, the short and medium term proposals will be led or delivered in partnership with the community.

As a Council we are incredible proud of our award winning voluntary sector. In 2022 five local organisations won the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service were given a mayoral reception at Bury Town Hall. Equivalent to an MBE, QAVS are the highest awards given to local voluntary groups in the UK, and they are awarded for life. Corrie Gardeners, Greater Manchester Army Cadet Force (Hawkshaw), The Attic Project, Bury2gether and Rammy Men have also won the award. At the event our Cabinet Member for Communities acknowledged: "Every day of the week, organisations like these are supporting people at neighbourhood level. A recent survey estimates that there are more than 26,000 people in our borough who volunteer a total of 130,000 hours per week, and they deserve all our thanks."

LET'S in action ... Community-Led – Building On Strengths



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2.4 Equality and Diversity

In 2021 Bury Council and NHS GM (Bury) published a new Equality Strategy that built on the commitments within LET'S Do It! and incorporated actions from an independent review of our approach to equality and diversity practices. As part of this, a new Inclusion Strategy was co-produced with staff groups, community leaders and senior champions to deliver our commitment as below:

The inclusion vision for Bury 2030 is to enable every person in the Borough to fully participate in and shape the collective, by supporting people to be themselves; to speak out about ideas and concerns and to be heard.

Building a workforce which is representative of the people it serves is a core focus of our shared inclusion commitment. This commitment relates to all nine of the protected characteristics in law as well as four additional groups which have been formally recognised by the Council and are reflected in our external as well as internal work i.e. included in our Equality Impact Assessments. These groups are: Carers; Our looked after children and care leavers; Military veterans and the socio-economically vulnerable.

The population profiles of the neighbourhoods in our borough are distinct and we celebrate the diversity that brings. In the south of the borough we are home to the largest Jewish population outside London, with significant tri-borough work being undertaken between Bury, Manchester and Salford to understand the needs of this community and its constituent groups. Around Bury Town centre we have a large Asian/Asian British population and also Black/Black British residents. We have also seen new communities settling and have strong connections with Poland and Ukraine. Whilst this diversity is a strength for us, community cohesion is something which continues to require attention and focus, especially when international issues have implications for our local communities.

We have an aging population, particularly in the North of the borough with around a fifth of our residents declaring themselves to have a disability in the Census 2021. Addressing health inequalities was already a key commitment within the LET'S Strategy but we know that Covid-19 has exacerbated the problem with more people now presenting with complex, long-term conditions requiring more support from our primary care and community services.

Since the launch of our new Inclusion Strategy we have considerably stepped up the activity of our Inclusion Working Group and associated staff groups, including broadening membership to include other public sector partners. • We now have a monthly internal Inclusion Matters communication and an annual internal and external communications and engagement plan shaped jointly with the Cohesion subgroup of the CSP which is informed by our demographics and community priorities. Together we have delivered a series of workshops focused on the different protected characteristics and celebrating the diversity of the borough. Our Employment Equality Report (2023) can be found here:

<https://www.bury.gov.uk/asset-library/employment-equality-report-2023.pdf>

The 2023 report highlighted that in order to improve the accuracy and meaningfulness of our reporting we need to focus on data collection and data quality. Currently 30% of disability, 25% for race and 77% for gender identity are unknown which weakens our ability to benchmark our data, identify trends and monitor improvements. On a more positive note:

- The number of applications received from People Experiencing Racial Inequality (PERI) has increased by 8% from last year (28% from 20%).
- Vacancies within the Council are attractive to our Black African community with 7% of applications from this ethnic group compared to a population figure of 1%. However, this group only accounted for 0.6% of those recruited.
- The levels of representation at senior levels (SM1 or above) has seen a positive increase this year in relation to ethnicity.
- Out of the total number of applications received only 7% were from disabled applicants. This is a positive improvement from last year's 5% but is still a sizable under-representation from the borough population. To support this, in 2022 we achieved re-accreditation as a Disability Confident Leader.

Examples of the work delivered by our Inclusion Group, in conjunction with our local communities, to strengthen our approach to inclusion are provided below:

- Bury Pride is always first in the calendar in GM. This year was bigger than ever with more people attending the parade, which took a longer route around the town centre, culminating with a concert hosted in the Town Hall.
- To mark Black History Month this year colleagues were invited to take part in a comms takeover day to tell colleagues about the black people who have inspired or continue to inspire them and the stories they wanted to share.
- Earlier this year, the Council's commitment to serving current and former armed forces members was nationally recognised as we were awarded Employers Recognition Scheme Gold status by the Ministry of Defence. We have a strong Military Covenant Working Group bringing together veterans with Council officers to focus on key topics such as health and wellbeing.
- For the second year running Bury hosted a Mela in Openshaw Park. Despite the weather over a thousand people attended and joined our Mayor and Leader of the Council in a community-led celebration of South Asian heritage.
- Bury Council has provided a range of help available for individuals and households struggling during the current tough times and therefore socio-economically vulnerable. Working with Bury Voluntary, Community and Faith Alliance (Bury VCFA) the Council has also launched a new Cost of Living Community Fund to support community and voluntary groups who are helping vulnerable households.

Bury has received funding from NHS GM as the lead organisation for a two year project focused on developing a more inclusive public service workforce. This project includes four GM boroughs in a cross-organisational mutual mentoring programme and work to strengthen the way organisations attract staff informed directly by community engagement. In addition, Bury is leading wider work across GM to strengthen workforce inclusion which is just commencing and has received around a £0.4M financial commitment from the GMCA to support.

LET'S ... Celebrate Strengths



Real Living Wage breakfast event

7 November 8-10.30am Bury Town Hall

Bury stands with UKRAINE

Independence day | 24 August

#StandForFreedom

"Black History Month is a brilliant time to celebrate and learn about Black history right here in Bury.

It is no secret that the contributions of our Black community have helped to shape this borough into a great place to live and work.

I am delighted to see so much celebration and so many community events taking place throughout this important month."

The Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Sandra Walmsley

Bury

Council

3 Organisational and Place Leadership

Much has changed since the last LGA Peer Challenge. A new Chief Executive has brought renewed energy and enthusiasm for partnership working and the refreshed the governance surrounding Team Bury, our strategic cross sector partnership, to provide increased purpose and focus.

Previously meeting on an ad-hoc basis, over the last twelve months Team Bury has been gathering quarterly to work through progress updates from the organisation or partnership leading each of the seven priorities. This has been symbolic in terms of the distributed leadership that the previous Peer Review suggested and has lessened the reliance on the Council for facilitation. That said, core attendance at the events has not been consistent and the results from the latest State of the Borough report have highlighted the need for attention to be paid to our shared objectives.

Let's do it in 2022!! Team Bury Refresh



Monthly Partnership Meetings (referred to as the Delivery Coordination Group) have proved useful in term of coordinating the quarterly events however there is a need to revisit these arrangements in order to provide more oversight on the work of the partnerships to deliver the LET'S Vision. The DCG will now consist of the leads for each of the boards set out below, chaired by the Leader of the Council.

| Team Bury Governance | Strategic Priorities |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Bury Business Leadership Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic Growth - Business Start-Ups and Sustainability - Skills and Employment - Inward Investment - Town Centre Regeneration - Atom Valley and Northern Gateway |
| Climate Change Board | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Energy Supply - Homes, Workplaces & Public Buildings |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Travel - Consumption & Waste - Food - Natural Environment - Green Economy, Skills & Education - Environmental Justice - Climate Resilience & Adaptation |
| Community Safety Partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reducing drug related offending - Supporting victims and tackling the cause of domestic abuse - Strengthening community cohesion - Creating and maintaining safe spaces - Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour - Reducing reoffending |
| Children's Strategic Partnership Board | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safe childhoods, protected from harm - Good education, outcomes and skills - Happy, healthy lives - Growing up confident and resilient - Active citizens |
| Health & Wellbeing Board | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Starting Well - Living Well - Living Well with a Long-Term Condition or as a Carer - Ageing Well - Healthy Places - Inclusion |
| Locality Board | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urgent Care - Elective Care and Cancer - Mental Health Transformation - Adult Social Care - Learning Disabilities and Autism - Complex Care - Diabetes - Neighbourhood Health and Care - Community Health Services - Primary Care - Palliative and End of Life Care |
| Voluntary & Community Sector Chief Officers Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership and Advocacy - Partnerships and Collaborations - Capacity Building - Volunteering |

Across the Partnership there remains a strong commitment to ensuring that the borough reduces health inequalities and delivers inclusive economic growth however it is clear we are not working effectively as a partnership to be more than the sum of our parts. The first two annual partnership performance reports, the State of the Borough, have highlighted the impact of the pandemic and subsequent economic crisis on our progress. The LET'S vision was deliberately ambitious however the challenge has become even greater since the launch of the strategy and our partnership approach needs to step up accordingly.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|--|-------------------|--|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| 1 | | Baseline: 2015 - 2019 | Males 16.7 yrs Females: 11.7 yrs | 2016 - 2020 | Males 12.3 yrs Females: 10.4yrs | ↓ | The gap between areas has been reduced but this is due overall to a decline in the best performing areas. | This is the most recent data available | | | |
| 2 | | Baseline: 2019 | All pupils 71.4% FSM Pupils 59.8% GAP 11.6% | 2022 | All pupils 63.3% FSM Pupils 50.0% GAP 13.3% | ↑ | The gap has increased and performance for both groups has got worse | 2023 provisional | All pupils 65.7% FSM Pupils 48.5% GAP 17.2% | ↑ | Inequalities have increased where performance has declined for our FSM pupils and increased for all pupils compared to the baseline. |
| 3 | | Baseline: 2019 | All pupils 43.5% FSM Pupils 34.9% GAP 8.6% | 2021 | All pupils 49.4% FSM Pupils 37.9% GAP 11.5% | ↑ | The gap has increased but performance for both groups has improved. Caution has to be taken using this data as a comparison to previous years as based on teacher assessed grades due to exams not taking place during COVID | 2022 | All pupils 46.3% FSM Pupils 37.8% GAP 8.5% | ↓ | The gap between the FSM and overall cohort has become slightly smaller following an increase during COVID. There has been improvements for both cohorts in terms of attainment achievement compared to the baseline. |
| 4 | | Baseline: 2019 | NVQ3+ 57.9% No quals 9.1% GAP 48.8% | 2020 | NVQ3+ 61.7% No quals 4.5% GAP 57.2% | ↑ | An increase in residents with NVQ3+ qualifications and a reduction of those with no qualifications so performance has improved. | 2021 | NVQ3+ 61.9% No quals 6.5% GAP 55.4% | ↓ | A small increase in residents with NVQ3+ qualifications – 0.2% however also an increase in residents with no qualifications. |
| 5 | | Baseline: 2019 | Median hourly earnings for residents £13.80 | 2020 | Median hourly earnings for residents £14.73 | ↑ | | 2022 | Median hourly earnings for residents £14.55 | ↓ | |
| 6 | | Baseline: 2018 | 4.6 co2 tonnes per capita | 2020 | 3.8 | ↓ | Likely the impact of COVID with reduced footfall which has made a significant reduction on the tonnes per capita. | 2021 | 4.2 | ↑ | Levelling out the significant reduction post COVID, still a reduction trend from baseline however no longer top 5 per km2 in GM, now ranking 6 th . |
| 7 | | Baseline: 2019 | 2.7% of premises unable to access good download speeds | 2020 | 2.1% of premises unable to access good download speeds | ↓ | | 2021 | 1.2% of premises unable to access good download speeds | ↓ | |

4 Governance and Culture

Since the last Corporate Peer Challenge, our constitution and decision making processes have both been reviewed and updated. In part prompted by the change in partnership arrangements within the NHS, and also in response to a Chief Officer Restructure undertaken by the new Chief Executive, a much tighter Executive Team has been formed with accompanying scheme of delegations.

We have strengthened our Senior Leadership Group where the Executive and their direct reports meet on a monthly basis to discuss key issues and monitor the delivery of the Corporate Plan through a rotating agenda which focuses on Workforce, Budget, Performance. This is also where shared “wicked issues” are discussed and owned.

Beneath this is a much larger Senior Management Forum consisting of staff who report directly into SLG. This group meets quarterly and has been used as a key information sharing group, but also as an opportunity to deliver consistent messaging and training around corporate activities such as our new Procurement Regulations, the importance of Risk Management and improving report writing standards for our committees. We also discuss key leadership themes such as inclusion health and safety and our commitment to corporate parenting.

With regards to member arrangements, work has been undertaken to clarify the values and behaviours expected in a member-led organisation, including the establishment of a Members Development Group. Updating the scheme of delegation has allowed for greater understanding on the use of Key and Non-Key Decisions, with standard agendas for Portfolio Meetings now capturing actions and Operational Decisions in a more structured way. The dynamic of the Council’s democratic leadership has changed over the last four local elections with the introduction of Radcliffe First, a new political party formed on the basis of geography and local priorities, to the Council Chamber. Eight of the nine available seats in Radcliffe are now occupied by Radcliffe First Councillors.

Responding to Member’s Casework has been focus for attention within the Council for last 12 months due to a lapse in adherence to agreed response times and concerns about the quality of information being shared with our ward councillors. Partly through improvements in the casework system but mainly through increased managerial oversight, the response times have improved with the exception of particularly flash points such as floods or storm damage. Further work is required to help automate this process and ensure consistent, high quality responses but this work has provided a useful reset in member/officer relationships.

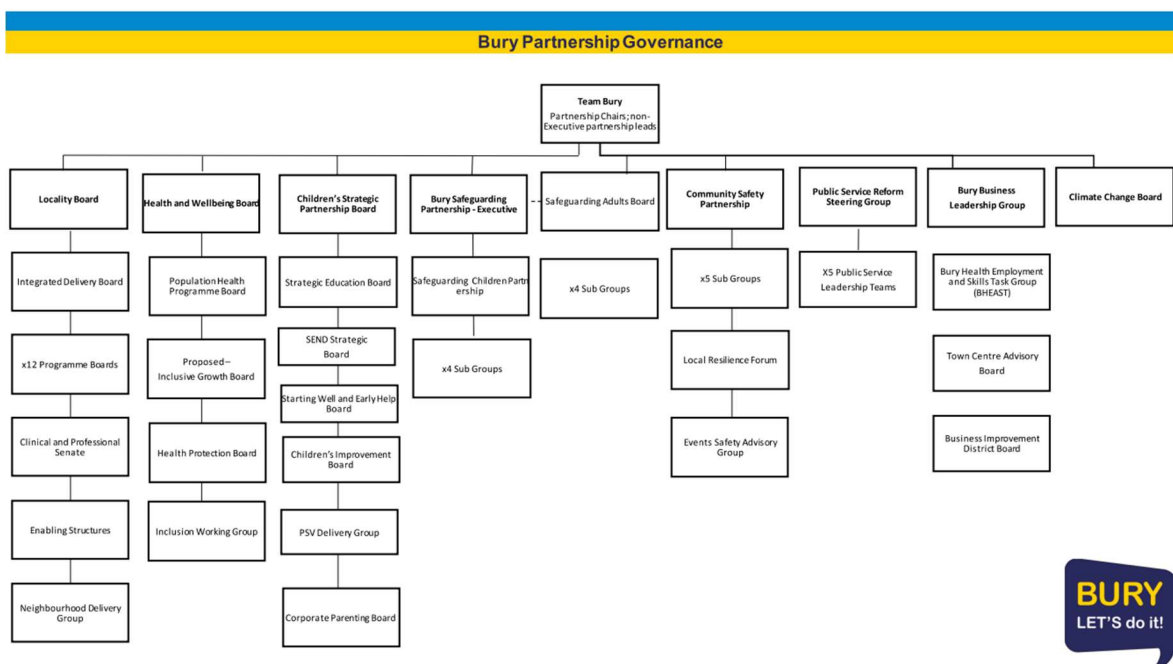
In terms of compliance within the Council, following an informal review by the Information Commissioners Office, participation in mandatory training on Data Protection and Information Security has improved significantly, as have our processes to ensure timely responses to the FOIs and SARs. By contrast our process for tracking and relying to complaints requires more work and is currently subject to a policy review and staff consultation. Following a number of public reports from the Local Government Ombudsman, being able to show progress in this area is a corporate priority, especially in advance of the responsibility for our housing stock

returning to the Council with the additional regulatory pressures that goes with them.

Scrutiny of the Council’s performance is proving valuable when dealing with potentially contentious and complex issues. One of the most high-profile decisions tracking through our governance at the moment is Places for Everyone, the long-term plan for nine Greater Manchester districts to agree a strategic policy framework to meet their local housing and employment needs. Approving this policy is a good example of the complexity of working within a devolved authority and meeting the demand for appropriate scrutiny from regional to ward level. Examples of working differently to develop stronger practice include:

- The creation of Task & Finish Groups to support the work of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee, particularly in relation to preparing for the new Ofsted Inspection Framework for Specific Educational Needs.
- The use of a Performance and Finance Subgroup reporting into Overview and Scrutiny to allow more through exploration of budget and workforce issues.
- A programme of deep dives requested by Internal Audit based on a RAG rating of the Risk Register. These are attended by the appropriate Executive Director to ensure accountability and action.
- Support from partners in attending Overview and Scrutiny to demonstrate shared commitment to key products such as the Community Safety Strategy and the Anti-Poverty Action Plan.

As outlined above, although work has been undertaken to review the Team Bury Partnership governance structures there remains more to do. For a relatively small authority we have a large and complex committee structure and would welcome feedback on what future steps could be taken to simplify and streamline our approach, especially given the demand on time of politicians, officers and partners.



5 Financial Planning and Management

Along with many other local authorities Bury Council is faced with an incredibly challenging financial planning environment. Our latest position is outlined in the Quarter Two Report presented to Cabinet on the 7th November 2023:

<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s37648/Quarter%202%20Budget%20Monitoring%20Report.pdf>

Analysis of data within a recent report from the Institute of Fiscal Studies has highlighted that Bury Council is in the bottom 20% worst-funded councils, ranking 122 out of 150 upper-tier English local authorities in terms of money to spend per resident. This, combined with calculations which show that the Council's annual real term core spending power has been reduced by 29% since 2010/11 provides the context for the difficult decisions that need to be taken in agreeing our next budget.

As at the end of Quarter Two, the Council faces a current revenue forecast overspend of £9.749m. This is a much improved position from that which was reported at Quarter One when the forecast overspend at the end of the year was projected to be £13.266m. This improvement is as a result of spending controls introduced at the end of June which have seen the whole organisation work collectively to review discretionary spend and take shared ownership of the budget challenge. Despite these improvements, the Council's reserve position means that wherever possible these overspends need to be mitigated in year. This creates additional pressures on departments already committed to delivering over £30m savings.

To support this work the Council has taken further action through the voluntary introduction of a Financial Improvement Panel in order to bring additional expertise and challenge into the Council from Cipfa, the LGA and peers from other councils. This ensures that decisions are being taken based on best practice and current analysis of the sector's broader financial situation.

Ultimately the sustainable financial model for the Council relies on the achievement of the LET'S vision which sets out a roadmap for the reduction of demand on public sector services and increased community capacity. Therefore, the Council is looking at how to make the short-term decisions required to balance budgets in year within the longer-term vision of community wealth building and delivering inclusive economic growth.

The Council has invested time and resource in understanding our demand and savings proposals relate to opportunities for transformation in high spend areas such as social care for children and adults, whilst recognising the requirements of working within a regulatory environment and the Council's current Inadequate Ofsted rating for Children's Services. In addition, we are prioritising other activity such as estates rationalisation, investing in more energy efficient operations and ensuring we maximise income where appropriate from fees, charges and other income sources.

With regards to other aspects of financial planning, the capital programme has been updated to re-phase schemes into future years. This has resulted in a reduction in the overall 2023/24 Capital Programme by £67.035m, from £144.588m to £77.553m and the savings in the revenue have been reflected in the revenue outturn position. Further reviews of the capital programme are being undertaken. A full suite of Financial Management Reports including the HRA Business Plan, Reserves Strategy, Treasury Management Plan and a new Medium Term Financial Strategy.

In the meantime, at Full Council in September a resolution was passed that the Council should:

- Launch a public campaign calling on the Government to fix the broken system of local government finance and give Bury what it needs and deserves.
- Highlight as part of this campaign what the Council and residents can do to support reducing costs and demands on local services.
- Write to our Members of Parliament, requesting they support our campaign and lobby Ministers for a fair deal for Bury.

This resolution has led to the development of our LET'S Fix It ... Together campaign, which calls for the national Fair Funding Review to undertaken as quickly as possible in order to acknowledge the unprecedented demands on local authorities budgets such as inflation, increased social care costs and the need to support vulnerable residents with the cost-of-living crisis. This campaign has been timed in conjunction with the Local Government Association's input into the Autumn Statement process. In particular, our asks for Bury include that the Government considers:

- Longer-term funding settlements to allow for confidence and surety in planning.
- Fund the roll-out of well-evidenced interventions to reduce demand for children's social care placements and retain and expand placement capacity.
- Provide additional funding to meet the year-on-year increase in demand for Education, Health and Care Plans.
- Provide a guarantee that all council Dedicated Schools Grant deficits will be written off.
- Provide substantial new investment to help tackle unmet and under-met need through an expansion of provision, including preventative services, and in new models of care, including housing, and funding for the voluntary and community sector.
- Development funding to support the use of brownfield sites for regeneration and housing.
- Pursue national distribution of asylum seekers.

This campaign is twofold. Whilst asking for fair funding, it also promotes all of the work the Council and our communities are doing to come together to protect services for those who need them and use of collective strengths to help people to help themselves. As stated above this is what our LET'S vision is all about.

6 Capacity for Improvement

The LET'S Do It! Strategy sets the commitment of Bury Council and its partners to improving public services within reducing resources, by working together on a place-based approach, with a focus on prevention, partnership working and communities. Within the Council, this commitment is being realised through the delivery of our Corporate Plan and its constituent parts, one of which is our Transformation Strategy.

Bury Council's Transformation Strategy was established in 2021/22 to deliver:

- Improved ways of working to facilitate the Council's contribution to the delivery of the borough's strategy, LET'S Do It! and the Council's Corporate Plan
- Savings of £4.937m by 2023/24 to support the delivery of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

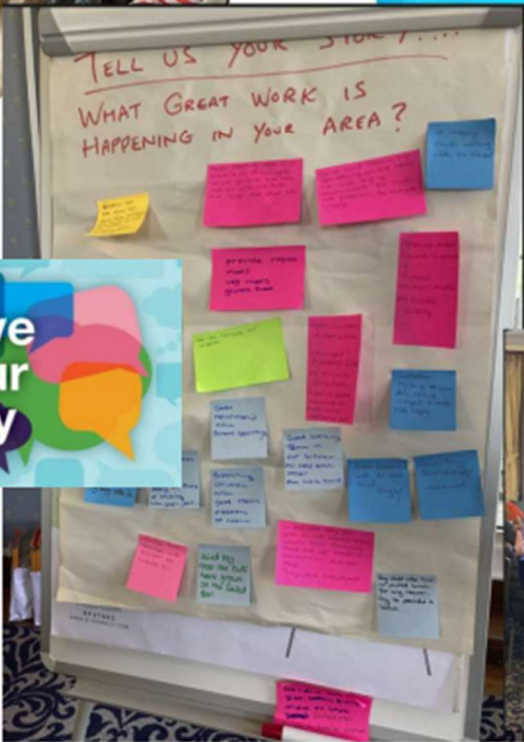
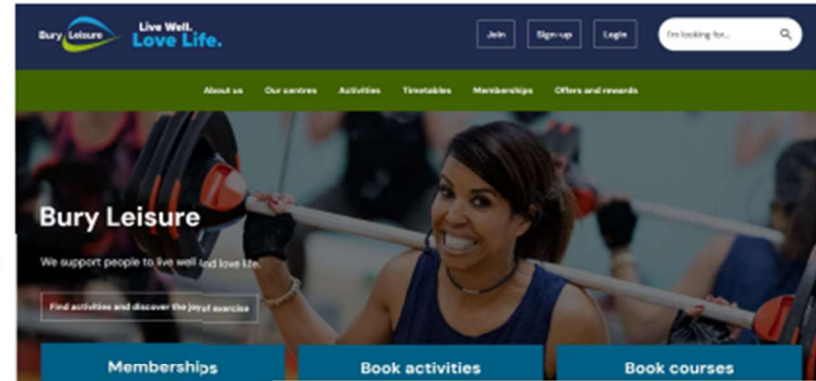
Achieving these objectives has been delivered through three programmes of work: LET'S Do It! ... Once, Well and Flexibly. In parallel a new digital strategy has been developed to enable transformation through:

- Promotion of a digital first approach to engagement
- Providing a high-quality digital workplace to underpin agile working
- Creating improved access to business intelligence
- Supporting collaboration between colleagues, partners and wider stakeholders

Whilst a number of these programmes are still in delivery, the Transformation Programme has set the tone for continuous improvement across the Council. Resourcing this is a challenge whilst also delivering business as usual and therefore the Corporate Plan has been used as a way of mainstreaming improvement projects as corporate priorities, rather than being a standalone projects.

The legacy of the work so far is being used to further improve Council services. For example, the LET'S Do It ... Well! programme invested in our HR System, itrent, allowing more self-service options for our managers and employees, reducing demand on business admin staff. There is further work that can be done here, and we continue to roll out improvements. Likewise LET'S Do It ... Once! has seen the introduction of a new website for the Council which provides a more modern platform and user friendly templates to put more of our services online. The ability to modernise our online presence is now being taken forward by other services such as Leisure and Registrars.

We continue to look beyond the council to our peers and colleagues in the wider public sector for best practice and support on making improvements to our ways of working. We required we have sought advice from external specialists, particularly within areas of high demand such as Childrens. We are open to new ideas and frequently invite organisations such as the LGA to visit, challenge our thinking and particularly provide inspiration as to how we can find capacity for ongoing improvements.



- 2,376 new registrations in 3 months
- 85% bookings made online (up from 27%)
- 65% less phone calls
- 500+ extra memberships

LET'S ... Transform



7 Sharing Successful Practice

L

All of our neighbourhoods have developed People and Communities Plans, co-designed by our PSLTs. These provide maps of community assets, names of key contacts including ward cllrs and key workers, as well as local demographic data. Importantly these profiles point to the needs of each neighbourhood and can be used when making funding decisions, applying for grants and importantly monitoring impact.

E

Encouraging staff to think differently about how to achieve outcomes has led to innovative ways of working on Bury Market. Positioning the market as a community resource has seen it become part of our Healthy Food Scheme, Youth employment work and our response to the Cost-of-Living crisis. Doing things differently to achieve shared outcomes is what the market does best. This ability to adapt has become its key strength.

T

Bury's Purple Flag status is very important to our residents so we have strengthened the partnership between the Police, Licensing and Community Safety to work with businesses and the community around key issues such as: women and girl's safety, supporting our taxi drivers and promoting our cultural offer. This has meant that local resources can be used more effectively to have a visible presence in our town centre and for our night time economy.

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We often forget the apostrophe but it is the "us" that is crucial to our shared success. On the 1st October over 1000 people came together for the Bury Running Festival to show our commitment to improving health and wellbeing. Amongst the runners were charities and community groups, partners, local politicians, our staff and leadership team all tackling the same course at the same time to show the importance of being "Us".

S

The launch of our Health Improvement Fund demonstrated our commitment to build on the strengths of our VCSE to make a difference to the health and wellbeing. In total, 114 groups supported over 12,000 people to increase physical activity levels, tackle social isolation and support people with long term health conditions. Nearly 4,000 people were supported in the most deprived areas of Bury.

8 Conclusions

We hope you have found this a useful summary of the Council progress since the last Corporate Peer Challenge and the range of activities that we are currently undertaking to strengthen our corporate approach to organisational delivery and place leadership. As we said in the introduction, Bury is a brilliant and beautiful borough which we are very proud of, but it is also a busy one, with much to do to achieve our ambitions for 2030.

We are committed to all sharing in the success of our 2030 vision but recognise we need to do more as a Council and Partnership to make that a reality. We need to guard against trying to do too much in order to stay focused on the things that will make a real difference. We must then mobilise appropriately to support the delivery of those activities through our statutory and local partnership structure.

We have previously used the descriptor of “Being our Bury Best Selves” and this is more important than ever when faced with challenging budget options and increasing demands on services. We must stay true to values and behaviours committed to within our LET’S Strategy to put our communities first and reform our public services in to a more sustainable and supportive delivery model.

We welcome this Corporate Peer Challenge as an opportunity to take stock of our progress to date, to listen to external views on what we have achieved, and to emerge refreshed with a new set of recommendations to support us with achieving our ambitions.

So, to once again use the words of one of our most famous daughters ...

LET’S Do It!