

Council Meeting – 2 April 2014

Questions:-

The Leader of the Council

Question running order:

1st: Conservative

2nd: Labour

3rd: Liberal Democrat

1. Councillor Caserta

Can the Leader please inform us how many of his Council staff have entered into zero hour contracts in the last two years?

A. I would like to thank Councillor Caserta for asking this question and would point out that in response to a question from Councillor Pickstone at the September meeting, a full explanation was provided as to how the Council operates Zero Hour Contracts.

2,143 employees have entered into these contracts. In addition a further 1,662 employees work for schools on the basis of a zero hours contracts.

2. Councillor Southworth

One of the main complaints that I, and most other Councillors, have received over the last few months is about the state of the roads in Bury, in particular the huge rise in the number and severity of the potholes. Can you tell me what is being done to improve the condition of our roads and when we can expect to see an improvement in the local road infrastructure?

A. Whilst I accept that our resident are unhappy with the state of the roads, likewise we are equally unhappy that the Government fails to appreciate the huge financial challenge we are facing to keep pace with the crisis of deteriorating road surfaces. Chucking a few crumbs off the table to Councils is no meaningful solution. What is needed is a long term strategy of road repair backed up with sustainable levels of funding, but I am not holding me breadth.

Despite the government abandoning councils like Bury we are committed to doing what we can within very limited budgets.

A review of how we organise our repair teams is nearing completion. This will see the teams spending more time on the job as they complete a series of repairs rather than individual potholes in any given area. This approach is supported by the deployment of new state of the art machinery which will plane out damaged and worn surfaces and new materials to ensure a longer lifespan of repairs.

Two new machines have been ordered for this new style of operation.

In addition, looking ahead further work is being looked at as to how to improve information relating to where the repair teams are operating including the use of local signing and the Council's web site to assist residents and businesses.

3. Councillor Pickstone

Is the Leader aware of the Ethical Care Charter launched by Unison, setting our high standards of local authority care services and seeking to end practices such as zero hour contracts, pay under the living wage and 15 minute care slots. Will Bury be signing up to the Charter?

A. Thank you for your question about the adoption of Unison's Ethical Care Charter.

Safety quality and dignity for both the recipients of care and those that deliver it has to be our top priority. The two are not mutually exclusive and fit hand in glove. Give them enough time to do their job and the quality of care that they deliver will be better. Pay people a fair wage and you'll keep them in a job and build consistency.

One of the issues that the Charter focuses on is reducing the reliance on 15 minute care visits.

In last four years we have reduced the numbers of 15 minute visits to a level which is approximately 38% of the total. The vast majority of service users receive 30 minute visits.

I think we should be proud that we are doing the right thing and are moving in the right direction.

In terms of ensuring staff are paid a living wage or close to a living one, that is certainly an aspiration that we want to make a reality sooner rather than later in our role as commissioners.

Signing up to the Ethical Charter

In terms of whether we would sign up to the Charter, Unison make clear in the document that this has to be a partnership between providers - the local authority, the NHS and staff.

The first step in the Charter's implementation plan is to begin discussions with partners like the NHS - we have regular meetings and this will be on the Agenda.

The second stage in the implementation plan is to review visits under 30 Minutes - which we do regularly. In any event, we have seen a reduction in 15 minute visits which I spoke about earlier.

4. Councillor Gunther

Would the Leader agree that we need to thank the Chancellor of the Exchequer for recently allocating extra money to local authorities for the purpose of repairing pot holes in our roads and will he confirm that Bury will be bidding for a share of it?

A. While this money is welcome, it is only one off and will only go a very short way to making all the significant repairs that our roads need. Highways the length and breadth of Britain have been grossly underfunded for many years, and require much more money than this to bring them up to standard. Councils like Bury cannot be expected to make up the shortfall, especially when Government has reduced our capital grants in Bury from £2.199m in 2009/10 to £1.79m in 2013/14, a cut of £400,000.

As and when opportunities to bid for Government monies arise, we will be at the front of the queue.

5. Councillor Frith

Can the Leader update progress on Fair Deal for Bury and will he join me, Bury South's Labour MP and Bury's CCG in demanding our local NHS gets the £20 million it is owed to ensure Bury gets a fair deal for local NHS services?

A. Bury Council continues to suffer as a result of the formula based approach used by the Government to allocate resources.

This has been the case for many years.

In the 2014/15 Local Government Funding Settlement, the average funding per Bury resident was £381, compared to the average for all Metropolitan areas of £552.

This cannot be fair – we are operating within the same legislation, providing broadly the same services to our residents.

It therefore comes as no surprise that our colleagues in the Clinical Commissioning Group are experiencing the same with their Department of Health funding.

Something in these Government formulas just does not work for Bury - we need to find out what, and get it put right.

We will therefore be supporting colleagues in the CCG in their quest for a fair deal.

We would also welcome the support of both of the Borough's MPs.

6. Councillor O'Hanlon

Will the Leader be looking to address parking problems in the Bury New Road area in Prestwich? In particular will he consider 'short stay only' bays and additional off street parking?

A. A review of current parking trends on the public car parks in Prestwich has recently been carried and the results are currently being assessed. Once we have analysed the results we will be looking at what, if any proposals are feasible.

7. Councillor Gartside

Can the Leader or relevant Cabinet Member please confirm which areas of our Borough are still without access to High Speed Broadband?

A. Ensuring that the Borough has access to high speed broadband is a key strand in supporting our priority of delivering a Strong Local Economy. This administration has committed over £300,000 as part of a Greater Manchester wide commitment to ensure that our sub region competes in a globally competitive economy.

Currently, out of 4,471 post code areas in the Borough, 600 are not superfast broadband enabled. Bury along with our other GM partner districts has identified priority areas (within the 600 post codes) that would benefit economically from increased broadband speeds. These areas include Bury and Radcliffe town centres, a number of industrial locations as well as including some residential areas in rural local areas such as parts of Ainsworth and Affetside.

The provider BT has planned the superfast broadband roll out across Greater Manchester. It is planned that a large percentage of enablement across Bury will be planned for quarters 2 and 3 2014/15. There is significant work being undertaken to ensure that external European funding is maximised before June 2015. The plan is scheduled to achieve 99.1% coverage of the identified priority areas in Bury.

Colleagues from Transport for Greater Manchester have undertaken specific connectivity research in those parts of Hawkshaw identified by a local community group (BRIF) as currently not enabled.

I am happy to announce that BL8 4JS (which is actually served by the Turton exchange, located across the border in Blackburn) is listed on the BT Openreach site as 'Coming soon'; therefore enablement of that cabinet is imminent.

The other post codes submitted by BRIF to be included in Bury Council's priority areas in Hawkshaw, BL8 4LB, BL8 4LG and BL8 4LQ are enabled and served by the Tottington exchange. BL8 4LD is enabled, but speeds that properties can access do vary for several technical reasons.

Hawkshaw residents, and indeed I would encourage all the Borough's residents and businesses to contact their broadband supplier and ask if faster broadband speeds are available now.

Providing as comprehensive coverage as possible of Superfast Broadband is this administration's aim, being a crucially important stand of delivering a strong local economy.

8. Councillor Parnell

Can the Leader update me on the position of the sports facility at Radcliffe Riverside School?

A. The sports facilities at Riverside provide an excellent service to the local community. We are currently developing plans to continue to use the Coney Green site as a base for our Pupil learning Centre and a number of our teams which support young people with special educational needs.

As part of this I am very pleased to confirm that we are committed to keeping the sports facilities open for local people after the school closes down.

9. Councillor Pickstone

Is the Leader aware of the recent World Health Organisation report which found over 8 million avoidable deaths in one year from air pollution, including many in Europe. How is the Council addressing this, for example in the M60 corridor, given its public health responsibilities?

A. We continue to work with neighbouring councils and partners at Transport for Greater Manchester to reduce emissions from motor vehicles by encouraging walking, cycling and the use of public transport. Recent actions and achievements include:-

- **Improvement of the National Cycle Route 6 at Outwood and Chamberhall. We now have 64 miles of highway cycle lanes in Bury.**
- **The Cycle hub at Bury Interchange was opened in late 2012 and cycle parking facilities have been improved at our Metrolink stations.**
- **Continued expansion of the Metrolink network to take cars off our busy commuter routes**
- **Planning permission was granted to extend the Park and Ride car parks at Whitefield and Metrolink stations.**
- **Local Sustainable Transport Fund has awarded funding to Transport for Greater Manchester to promote and increase low carbon commuting.**
- **Under the Greater Manchester Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Scheme, electric vehicle charging points were installed in 7 of Bury's council car parks in 2013.**

- **109 council drivers will receive Eco Driver training as part of the Driver CPC Training requirements for drivers of vehicles over 3.5 tonnes**
- **From 2013 to 2016 the council are running a 3 year programme to introduce 20mph zones or speed limits within a majority of residential areas in Bury. This may involve up to 50 separate schemes with priority given to areas around schools or where there are "rat runs". So far 7 schemes have been introduced on site**
- **Launch of a Greater Manchester car sharing database**
<http://www.carsharegm.com>.

The M60 is a significant source of pollution in our region and assessments by DEFRA have indicated that sections of this motorway along with 16 other areas in the UK will not meet EU targets in the required timescales. Central Government are responsible for meeting these targets and it is Central government's Highways Agency who has responsibility for the M60. DEFRA have therefore made it clear that they will be working very closely with The Highways Agency with the help of Greater Manchester councils where necessary, to make sure that the EU air quality targets are met by 2020.

10. Councillor Bevan

In light of the recent controversy over planning applications in Ramsbottom, is it now time for decision making on planning matters to be devolved to the Township Forums?

A. I would say that if there was any recent controversy over the proposed planning application in Ramsbottom (and I am not acknowledging that there was); it is an excellent example of why this type of decision should not be devolved to Township Forums.

The determination of planning applications is a quasi judicial role of the Council, delegated to the Planning Control Committee. This is made up of Members from different political parties; and it is the Committee's role to moderate officers recommendations on the basis of national and local adopted planning policy.

The Councillor's role, as part of the Planning Authority, is to represent the community, seeking to reach a balanced view based on the relevant circumstances of the application and any potential impact.

There is anecdotal evidence elsewhere of members who sit on area committees (with delegated decision making powers) acting contrary to the Code of Conduct and paying little regard to advice from planning officers.

Members are often understandably unclear about the "line" between representing the best interests of residents in their wards and becoming advocates and agents, where they would be required to withdraw from subsequent debate.

At a very local level this can inhibit decision making processes, particularly if all Members on an area committee have to withdraw, either due to interests or bias/predetermination.

This way of working also ensures that our resources are used most efficiently – to support and service six area committees with planning officers, lawyers and Democratic Services officers would be more costly. It also ensures that the Council can defend any potential cost claims by the applicants for not determining the application correctly or on correct planning grounds.

11. Councillor Haroon

Can the Leader give an update on what the Council is doing to tackle the problem of dog fouling within the Borough?

A. In Bury, dog fouling is currently enforced under the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996. The fixed penalty for the offence is £50. Failure to pay a fixed penalty will result in prosecution where the fine can rise to £1000.

The Council currently uses Animal Wardens Ltd for this service. They provide a 24/7 stray dog service and we contract them separately to carry out dog fouling patrols in hotspot areas.

Although we do not have in-house street enforcement officers the following staff have been trained to issue dog fouling fixed penalty notices.

- Environmental Enforcement Officers**
- Some Environmental Health Officers**
- Pest Control Officers**
- Park Rangers**
- Some Trading Standards officers**

In addition we carry out proactive awareness raising

- Crucial Crew presentations to all 9 and 10 year olds on dog fouling, litter, this year we spoke with over 1700 children from 50 schools across the borough**
- Providing marked dog fouling bins**
- Enforcement and awareness campaigns using staff from Trading Standards, Environmental Health, Parks and Leisure**

The Council remains diligent and committed to enforcement within the limited resources available.

12. Councillor O'Hanlon

What consultation has there been of a Bury MBC by Manchester City Council on proposed year round parking charges in Heaton Park. What, if any, has been our response to this consultation?

A. Bury Council has not been formally consulted regarding the proposed Heaton Park Pay and Display, however informal consultation has taken place through the Events Advisory Group that includes officers from various departments. The group has ensured that local residents and Ward Councillors have been consulted as well as keeping me as Cabinet Member informed. Bury Council will monitor the responses from the local consultation as well as any local affects of the pay and display scheme as well as continue to liaise with Manchester City Council and Heaton Park Management.

13. Councillor Gunther

Considering that both Councillors Joan Grimshaw and Sharon Briggs were made Chair of the Standards Committee during their Mayoral Year, can the Leader please confirm if this is now to be norm and can we expect Couuncillor Michelle Wiseman to be Chair of the Standards Committee during the forthcoming Mayoral Year?

A. The short answer is YES.

Following the implementation of the Localism Act which became effective on 1 July 2012, the Council resolved to retain a Standards Committee comprising nine Elected Members and two non-voting Independent Members. Council also decided that the Mayor should be an ex-officio member of the Committee and should be appointed Chair.

14. Councillor Black

Can the Leader please update us on progress regarding the £500,000 identified by this Labour administration for the A56 Bury New Road improvements through Prestwich?

A. Members may recall that some years ago the Council adopted the Love Prestwich Village - Town Centre Development Strategy. Within this strategy one of the key priorities was the transformation of Bury New Road, as it passes through Prestwich Village, to create a thriving 'High Street'. The allocation of £500,000 will, at last, allow this key element of the Love Prestwich Village strategy to be progressed. I am pleased to be able to report that a Project Team has already been put together drawing on staff within Property Services, Engineers and Planning.

Survey work is underway and initial thoughts and ideas are being developed with a view to a presentation being given to the next meeting of the Prestwich Regeneration Group on Tuesday 15th April.

In line with the preferred option from the Love Prestwich Village strategy, proposals will be based on the concept of creating a single clear traffic lane in each direction with potential obstructions removed as far as possible so that traffic flows smoothly. This will allow for a significant improvement to the 'High Street' environment with potential for wider pavements, cycle lanes, permanent parking bays, street trees and new street furniture.

This project represents a fantastic opportunity for the people and businesses of Prestwich and, in taking the project forward, the Council will be looking to involve everyone in the Prestwich community in the design and development of this scheme, including involving the Prestwich Township Forum.

Opportunities to secure match funding are also being pursued.

15. Councillor Tariq

Due to the wet winter we have suffered, has there been an increase in blocked gullies?

A. It does appear that there is some evidence of an increase in blocked gullies.

In order to address the increase, both gully wagons have been working at weekends, in addition to the standard working week. This extra work started on Saturday the 15th of February 2014 and will continue until the end of this financial year.

During this time, the weekend crews have cleaned over 2,083 gullies, out of a possible 2,230. Parked cars and access difficulties, in some areas, have made it impossible to attend every gully.

16. Councillor Cummings

Can the Leader give an update on the situation at Radcliffe Pool, along with an idea of timescale for reopening?

A. During very high winds in December and January several windows were dislodged to the west elevation of the main swimming pool. This also caused damage to the internal cladding of the swimming pool. The windows were made safe and the main pool sealed off to enable the rest of the sports centre to operate as usual. During these repair works the contractor discovered that the concrete columns appeared to be in very poor condition with concrete breaking-up and exposing corroded steel.

This damage is due to the age of the building, long term water ingress, humid atmosphere and pool treatment chemicals. Specialist contractors are now preparing a programme to carry out a full investigation of the whole structure. The Council took prompt action to deal with and isolate damage to asbestos cladding typical of this age of building. Structural Engineers have confirmed there is no immediate concern to the structural integrity of Radcliffe Pool and all of the centre that remains open is safe to use.

Unfortunately at this stage it is too early to say what the extent of the repair works could be but this is likely to be significant. Therefore it is not possible to give an indication of time scale but we will inform people as soon as we are able.

17. Councillor Simpson

Can the Leader please give an update on the amount of litter and waste collected by the street cleaning teams in 2013-14?

- A. April12 – Jan13 (10 months) = 2064.75 tonnes
April13 – Jan14 (10 months) = 2780.56 tonnes**

There isn't one single factor responsible for the difference in tonnage, more a number of factors that collectively may have had an impact.

The biggest contributor to this tonnage figure is the mechanical sweepers. Emptying of litter bins also contributes to the tonnage total, but to a much lesser extent.

The winter of 2012/13 was more severe than this year's winter. Last year there was snow on the ground for some weeks during which time mechanical sweeping was reduced or even stopped. This year we have had absolutely no snow whatsoever, so sweeping has been able to continue uninterrupted.

From mid February 2014 two Street Cleaning teams became area based i.e. Prestwich and Ramsbottom, meaning less travelling time to the job every day. This increase in productivity would lead to an increase in tonnages.

More flexible working by teams across area boundaries, directing resources where needed, has also led to an increase in productivity and hence tonnages.

18. Councillor James

Can the Leader please give an update on the new recycling education team?

A. The Waste Enforcement team have carried out a number of area improvement initiatives. They have been identifying areas where there is a high proportion of contaminated recycling bins. The team have been door knocking and letters have been hand delivered to local residents, and wherever possible residents have been spoken to concerning these bins.

Contaminated bins have been removed from some streets (approximately 500 to date). The enforcement team are trying to intercept all requests for new bins from these areas so that they can educate residents to recycle properly before the issue of a replacement bin.

The areas visited are being regularly monitored so that individuals that continue to get it wrong can be targeted for further visits and action if necessary.

As a consequence there has been an improvement in a number of areas already, and residents are being spoken to and in general are very positive about what we are doing. Bin collection crews are also reporting improvements.

In addition 16 blocks of flats (of different sizes) either have in place or are in the process of establishing food waste recycling.

19. Councillor Parnell

Can the Leader give us an update regarding the health of the Local Government Pension Scheme? Given the massive cuts to the workforce and the removal of some historic rights, will the Pension Scheme survive for our employees?

A. A secure pension scheme is a basic right for any employee.

Even more so when the cost of living is rising, and basic pay is being eroded through poor / non-existent national pay settlements.

At least this administration saw fit to soften this by reinstating increments for our hard working employees in the 2014/15 budget.

Pension Funds have had a hard time of it – investments have declined as a result of the continually fragile state of the economy.

This has led to increased contributions from employers and employees alike.

Pension regulations are hardening up too – the pension age is being pushed back, and the entitlement for elected Members to have pensions has been quashed.

Even though, for many they are giving up paid work, or putting their own careers on hold to serve their communities.

Looking specifically at the Greater Manchester Pension Fund, the expectation is that funding levels will be amongst the best of all Local Government Schemes.

Investment returns are currently 14.5% compared to the benchmark average of 13.8%.

This places the Greater Manchester Fund in a very good position to effectively manage the challenges ahead.

20. Councillor Tariq

Can I ask the Leader, following many accidents on Radcliffe Road and adjoining Bury Road, does he agree with me that traffic calming measures need to be looked into, to prevent any more serious road traffic accidents?

A. I am aware that there have been a number of serious collisions recorded on this road in recent years. However, it is clear that Radcliffe Road/Bury Road is a key route for traffic travelling between Bury and Radcliffe and consequently the existing 30mph speed limit is appropriate and in line with guidance issued by the Department for Transport.

I am keen to ensure that motorists keep to the existing speed limit and can confirm that the Greater Manchester Safety Camera Partnership, Drivesafe, are committed to carrying out mobile camera enforcement on this road. They have recently invested in new equipment which allows camera technicians and the Police to operate outside and away from enforcement vans and this will be deployed on this road in the near future. The feedback we receive from this work will help to determine whether any further intervention by the Authority is justified.

21. Councillor Haroon

Does the Leader agree that recognising the work of individuals and groups in our communities is essential to the Borough's continued cohesion and can he tell us what plans are in place to allow for this recognition?

A. As I've often said before, Bury is a place where I am very proud to live, work as a Councillor and enjoy my free time. Community Cohesion lies at the heart of what makes us a strong, vibrant and safe community and is central to all we do. One of our priorities is to develop shared values in and a sense of belonging to communities across the Borough. Through this priority we will continue to work with partners to acknowledge the contributions of individuals and groups to our borough. This includes our work on the 'Made in Bury' campaign.

We will continue to use the branding to compliment a variety of initiatives, and in particular, the Made in Bury Community Awards. Local Councillors wished to acknowledge the contributions of

individuals and groups to the borough and so the 'Made in Bury Community Awards' were launched in April 2013 as a means of recognising the good work of many of our residents and community groups.

Now in its second year, this year's nomination process was launched on 27th March 2014 and will close on Friday 9th May 2014. We've already had significant interest in the Awards, including coverage via an interview with Councillor Walmsley on BBC Radio Manchester at the weekend. Nominations are invited via an online form on the Bury Council website and decisions will be made by a judging panel chaired by Councillor Sandra Walmsley, cabinet member for Communities and Community Safety. The winners and nominators will be invited to the awards ceremony that forms part of the annual Full Council meeting in June 2014.

22. Councillor Jones

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 received Royal Assent on 13 March 2014. How is this Council preparing for the biggest reform to anti-social behaviour legislation in the past ten years?

A. Tackling the harm caused by anti-social behaviour (ASB) continues to be a key priority for Bury's Community Safety Partnership. The new Act contains provisions around anti-social behaviour and a range of other issues including forced marriage, dangerous dogs and a wide range of other environmental health and criminal issues. The aim of the new tools and powers is to focus the response to anti-social behaviour on the needs of victims and further empower communities to get involved. This includes a 'Community Trigger' to give victims and communities the right to require agencies to deal with persistent anti-social behaviour that has previously been unresolved and a 'Community Remedy' to give victims of low-level crime and anti-social behaviour a say in the punishment of offenders out of court – building on existing restorative justice initiatives.

The Council's Communities Team have been pro-active in planning for the new tools and powers including participation in a Greater Manchester working group to develop consistent approaches and share learning. A local planning group has also been established including representation from Six Town Housing Association, Environmental Health, Police and our Communities Team. Most of the new tools and powers come into force later on in the year; however we are pro-actively working with partners to understand and prepare for them.

23. Councillor Southworth

I am pleased to note that we have recently been successful in a bid to become part of a National 'Our Place' Pilot recognising our innovative partnership work with Bury's Clinical Commissioning Group and other partners on the 'Healthier Radcliffe' Project. Please can the Leader tell us more about what this means?

A. The 'Our Place' approach comprises a package of support, including funding opportunities, to help transform local public services. The programme supports neighbourhood areas to work collaboratively to address a shared priority or local service area.

Our successful bid was led by the Director of Public Health who worked alongside local partners. It builds on the work we are doing with partners on the 'Healthier Radcliffe' Project, empowering residents to become involved and supporting them to improve their own health and wellbeing.

We have been allocated an initial grant of £3000 to support our engagement work with local residents; potentially this could lead to further funding opportunities of between £10,000 to £20,000. It also opens up wider shared learning opportunities including peer groups, coaching and networking opportunities with other 'Our Place' areas to support our work in Radcliffe.

'Our Place' status will further help raise the national profile of the excellent and ground breaking work this Council is doing in Radcliffe alongside our partners. Overall, this work will further support Radcliffe Township Forum's key priority to help improve health and wellbeing of local residents.