

Minutes of: RAMSBOTTOM, TOTTINGTON AND NORTH MANOR TOWNSHIP FORUM

Date of Meeting: 13 November 2014

Present: Councillor Y Wright (in the Chair)
Councillors I Bevan, S Carter, J Daly, L Fitzwalter, D Gunther and K Hussain

Also in attendance: Mr K Conley – Ramsbottom Rotary Club
Reverend S Openshaw – Ramsbottom and Edenfield Team Ministry
Mr A Waddell – Greenmount Village

Public Attendance: There were 23 members of the public present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor I Gartside and Councillor R Hodgkinson

RTNM.431 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

RTNM.432 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was agreed:

That the Minutes of the last meeting of the Township Forum held on 17 September 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

RTNM.433 MATTERS ARISING

Mr Waddell explained that for the past six months he had been requesting information relating to the implementation of the 20mph speed limits in Holcombe Brook and Greenmount. He had yet to receive any response on this issue, particularly who authorised the limits and why.

Councillor Fitzwalter referred to the issue raised by Mr Booth concerning the lights at Peel Tower and reported that as she had left the last meeting of the Township Forum in September she had noticed that all of the lights were working.

RTNM.434 2015/2016 BUDGET

Councillor Mike Connolly, Leader of the Council and Mike Owen, Director of Resources and Regulation gave a presentation detailing the key financial issues facing the Authority and subsequent draft budget cuts programme for Bury Council's 2015/16 budget.

The following key facts were presented:-

- For 2015/16, £16 million will be cut from budgets. This equates to a loss of £54 m (50%) of the budget in 5 years.
- This means the Council will need to prioritise key services at a time when residents' needs and expectations are changing and demand for services is increasing.
- In order to do this the Council are exploring alternative ways of delivering services and reviewing organisational structures.
- For 2015/16 the Council has received only 1 year's funding settlement information from the Government, which has yet to be confirmed.
- The Council's core funding from Government is likely to be cut by 13% in 2015/2016(to be confirmed).
- The Council will also face cuts to a number of other grants received from the Government, for example Early Intervention and Education Services grants. This is in addition to pressures from levies from other bodies, increasing demand and uncertainty following the localisation of Business Rates.

The meeting was informed of the following key measures to address the cuts:-

Alternative Service Delivery Models - £3.420m
Third Sector - £0.200m
Income Generations - £2.012m
Better use of External Funding - £3.376m
Savings from the way the Council buys things - £1.320m
Managing Assets - £0.726m
T & C's, Restructuring and vacant posts - £3.229m
Improved Recycling - £0.862m
Reduction in provision of services - £0.662m

Bury Residents were being informed of the financial issues facing the Authority as part of a consultation process for the 2015/16 budget and were being asked to consider changing their expectations about service delivery; working more closely with individuals and communities to deliver services ie. volunteering/self management; a stronger focus on demand reduction such as self care/early intervention/personal responsibility; examining alternative ways of delivering remaining Council services and changing the way residents access services – "digital by default".

In terms of the next steps, it was reported that from 6 November 2014 to 9 January 2015 the Council will be consulting residents and stakeholders on the package of cuts needed for 2015/16. This will be followed by a review of the consultation feedback which will be fed into the budget setting process for 2015/16. The Council will debate the 2015/16 budget and formally approve a package of cuts on 25 February 2015. Residents were informed of the various ways they can contact the consultation team and leave comments by 9 January 2015.

The Chair invited questions/comments from the audience:-

A member of the public explained that she had looked at the proposals on the Council website but they had seemed very vague with no real detail set out. The information relating to adult care services was not set out and she felt that it wasn't very informative.

Councillor Connolly explained that the decision had been made to go forward with an alternative service delivery model for Adult Care Services and detailed information had been provided which was currently being consulted on.

Mr Booth referred to the sculpture centre that had been installed in Bury Central Library and asked how this could be justified as half of the library had been removed to allow for its installation.

Councillor Connolly explained that the Council had seen a massive reduction in the grant provided to support library services which had meant that the provision in Bury Central Library would have been reduced anyway which would have left the space empty. The successful application for the Lottery Grant to provide the sculpture centre had meant that the space could be utilised in a way which would attract tourism to the town.

Mr Booth asked if public viewing figures were available.

Councillor Connolly stated that he would make sure that Mr Booth received this information.

Mr Green referred to the savings around procurement that were set out in the presentation and asked how these would be achieved.

Mike Owen explained that all contracts relating to procurement across the Council were being revisited and renegotiated and it was anticipated that this would realise the figures stated. Mike explained that the way in the Council purchased goods and services had changed significantly which had already led to significant savings being made and this would continue.

Councillor Bevan referred to the income generation mentioned and asked for clarification that parking charges would not be introduced in Ramsbottom.

Councillor Connolly confirmed that the Council would not be introducing parking charges in Ramsbottom.

Councillor Bevan referred to fact that the Council now received 50% of business rates collected across the borough and asked what the Council were doing to attract new businesses into the town.

Mike Owen explained incentives were being considered to offer to new businesses coming into the town as well as support for businesses looking for grants and funding.

Councillor Connolly explained that one of the Council's key priorities was a stronger local economy and this was something that they were working hard towards achieving.

Mr Waddell asked what the term 'Income Generation' meant.

Mike explained that the Council would be looking to generate more income over and above what they generated currently.

Dr Binns referred to the fact that the Council were looking to deliver services more smartly by utilising web technology. Dr Binns asked the Council to recognise that not all areas of the borough were able to receive a broadband connection.

Councillor Connolly reported that this issue was known and the Council were working to support those areas that Dr Binns was referring to.

Councillor Gunther asked how much of the Council reserves would be used to help achieve the required savings

Councillor Connolly explained that the 'Golden Rules' relating to the spending of Council reserves would be followed to the letter and the reserves would not be used in this way.

Councillor Daly asked whether the Council had an estimate for the number of compulsory redundancy which may be necessary.

Councillor Connolly explained that no such figures were available; the Council were hoping to avoid compulsory redundancies through a programme of voluntary redundancies, flexible retirement and redeployment.

Mr Green asked whether the Council would be willing to cut the number of higher paid senior officer posts as part of cuts.

It was explained that the number of Directorships had been considered and reduced and the Council had already streamlined the departments and reduced the number of middle management across all directorships.

A member of the public referred to the dividend received from Manchester airport and asked whether this had been included in the savings proposals.

This was confirmed to be the case.

A member of the public asked whether the demolition of Castle Leisure Centre was still going to happen and if so, when?

It was explained that the site of the leisure centre as well as the adjoining site of the old Police Station were both owned by the Council and earmarked for supermarket development which would be at no cost to the Council. However the current financial climate means that supermarkets were not in the process of building new stores and so the plan would be on hold until this situation changed.

The Chair concluded the debate and asked that all those present read the proposals and to get involved in the consultation process.

It was agreed:

That the information provided be noted and Councillor Connolly and Mike Owen be thanked for their contribution to the meeting.

RTNM.435 CHILDREN'S CENTRES

Councillor Gill Campbell, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People and Ian Chambers, Assistant Director (Learning) gave a presentation on the proposed new delivery model for Children Centres in Bury.

The meeting was informed of the key objectives for Bury Children Centres:-

- To improve health for under 5's – measured by higher rates of breast feeding, reduced obesity and improved dental hygiene.
- To improve child development – measured by improved school readiness and an increasing proportion of children achieving a good level of development.
- Reducing the risk of mistreatment or abuse of under 5's – measured by reductions in the rate of family needs escalating to a level requiring family intervention.
- Improving families' economic prospects measured by reduced numbers of under 5's in households on benefits.

It was reported that these objectives will be used to drive resource allocation to specific centre activities. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) rankings will be used to directly allocate overall resources – funding being directly linked to deprivation. The driver will be the number of children within a reach area for a Children Centre who are under 5 and living in a Lower Super Output Area. These are among the 40% most deprived nationally.

The presentation provided detailed information of the targeted support on offer as part of the objectives in relation to health, school readiness, early help and job readiness. Specific detail was also provided in relation to the proposed Children Centre Hubs across Bury. In Bury North, the Woodbank site would cover the reach areas of the current Ramsbottom, Tottington and North Manor cluster. The meeting was informed as to how each Hub would work, the staffing changes involved, outreach deployment and of the necessary steps required in order to convert the other sites in order to deliver the 2 year old offer in Bury. It was reported that from September 2014, 40% of 2 year olds should have access to free nursery places (a total of 1177 children in Bury). There was a current forecast of a shortage of 638 places (October 2014). The Council propose that Children Centres which are no longer required as Hubs will be offered as centres for the 2 year old offer.

In relation to service costs it was reported that total expenditure on Children's Centres in 2013/14 was £2.875m. The Council had seen a reduction of the Government's Early Intervention Grant of over £2.8m since 2012/13 and that the

new proposed model of delivery will cost £1.949m which will deliver a proposed savings target for the service of £820k. The consultation period had been extended to 15 December, 2014 and, following an analysis of feedback received and subsequent consideration by Cabinet, implementation of the proposals would begin from 1 April, 2015.

Those present were invited to ask questions and make comments and the following points were raised:-

- Councillor Wright referred to the presentation and the proposal that the north of the borough would have one children's centre hub with just 4 outreach workers and asked whether this would be the case.

Councillor Campbell confirmed that that was the proposal and had come about due to the funding being directly linked to deprivation and the need to direct resources to areas of greater need.

- Councillor Fitzwalter stated that concerns had been raised in relation to the distances involved in travelling to Woodbank from Ramsbottom and the numbers of families accessing services from the one site.

It was explained that outreach work would be carried out in locations closer to the communities being served such as libraries and community centres and some work would be done on 1:1 basis in the families' homes. The services provided from the hubs would not be the same as what the Children's centres currently offered and as such there would be fewer people attending the hubs.

- A member of the public asked where the services such as breastfeeding support, dental hygiene classes and health and safety would be provided.

It was explained that around 40 extra health visitors would be funded and they would carry out some of the work mentioned. The council would also be looking to other partners and volunteer groups to assist with some provision. The hubs will also still have a role for these areas and would be able to signpost to different services.

- It was asked how many places for 2 yr olds would be created at the hubs.

It was explained that the current projection was around 130 places but other providers were also being sought to take up the shortfall. Some schools had expressed an interest as had smaller community groups.

It was agreed:

That the information provided be noted and Cllr Campbell and Ian Chambers be thanked for their contribution to the meeting.

RTNM.436 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- Mr Conley, representing the 5 Rotary Clubs across Bury reported that he had recently attended a meeting with Bury Hospice which had taken place

in order to answer some questions that had been raised into how the Hospice was being run and other financial concerns.

Mr Conley talked about the relationship between the Hospice and Grace's Place and concerns that had been raised regarding the Chief Executive and her past involvement with other businesses.

Mr Conley stated that he had received a letter from the Hospice that answered all of the concerns raised and this was due to be published in the local press in the coming weeks.

Mr Conley explained that following the answers received the 5 Rotary Clubs across the Borough were happy to continue in supporting the Hospice and Grace's Place.

- Councillor Wright stated that she had been attempting to contact the Chairman of the Hospice to arrange a meeting but had been unable to and asked if Mr Conley could pass the contact details to her to enable this to happen.
- Mr Booth explained that he has previously raised concerns regarding the future of health provision at Fairfield Hospital and had been told that services would remain at the site. He had since received information contrary to this.
- Councillor Bevan referred to the 273 bus service which had been greatly reduced due to a lack of funding from TfGM and asked if something could be done to request the service be reinstated.
- Mr Booth explained that there had been a number of errors published in the Bury Times over the past few weeks.

Newsquest had held a number of consultation events 18 months previously to look at the paper and its content. Since then the standard of the paper had seemed to deteriorate.

Tui Benjamin from the Bury Times explained that there had been some issues recently due to a changeover of systems which had caused some errors. She also stated that she would highlight the concerns raised.

RTNM.437 FUNDRAISING EVENT - SUNDAY 16 NOVEMBER

Councillor Wright reported that there was a Craft and Gift show being held in Ramsbottom on Sunday 16 November between 10am and 4pm.

Councillor Wright would be helping with the tea and cakes stall and invited all those present to come along. The event was being held to raise money for the Blind Society.

RTNM.438 NEXT MEETING - DATE, TIME AND VENUE

It was reported that the next meeting of the Township Forum would be held on 15 January 2015 at Holcombe Brook Primary School at 7pm.

COUNCILLOR Y WRIGHT
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00pm and ended at 9.20pm)