

Council Meeting –22 October 2014

Questions:-

The Leader of the Council

1. Councillor E O'Brien

Over a million men, women and children have received help from food banks between 2013-14. Does the Leader believe Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles', plan to scrap the Local Welfare Assistance Budget will help or hinder Bury Council's ability to help the poorest and most vulnerable in our Borough?

A. Local Welfare Schemes such as the Bury Support Fund provide vital support for vulnerable individuals and families in crisis, including disabled people, victims of domestic violence and pregnant mothers. They are the final safety net in our social security system and so it is absolutely clear that the Government's mean-spirited and unfair proposals to cut this budget will be disastrous for these people. In Bury the local scheme provides considerable funding to Porch Box, the local provider of Food Banks and it is also funding a project to look at food poverty within Bury to ensure provision is targeted and effective. One of the largest calls on both the food parcels and the direct grants has been customers who have been subject to the DWP's appalling sanctions regime, often incorrectly or for seemingly spurious reasons. It appears that DWP have wound down their own emergency funding which has always been in place for such customers and in many cases this has left the Bury Support Fund as the only option open to customers who have been left with nothing but pennies to their name.

The impact of closing down these schemes will be immense.

What is even more despicable is the underhand way that the Government has gone about making this cut. When the Schemes were established in 2012 the Government committed themselves to a review in 2014 "to inform future funding levels". However, in 2013 it emerged that the national grant for the schemes would cease from May 2015 and typically of this Government this decision was made without any formal announcement, consultation or consideration of the equality duty and before the proposed review had taken place.

However, thanks to a legal challenge by the Child Poverty Action Group, rather than face a judicial review, the Government has agreed to consult and are now 'committed to making a fresh decision on how the Schemes should be funded in 2015-16.

2. Councillor P Adams

It was recently highlighted that Bury is the best performing area in the North West in terms of NHS and Council provided services in relation to care for the over 65's. Can the relevant Cabinet Member explain how this was achieved and what the outcomes were for those receiving the services?

A. We are delighted with our performance regarding the support to people over 65 years of age. Its thanks to the hard work and dedication to our staff that we lead the North West performance despite the budget cuts that have been forced upon us. This has been achieved through the creation of Reablement services and intermediate care service improvements and through the integration of the discharge teams at the Fairfield hospital site which helps discharge people home safely. The creation of the Crisis response service which is a multi disciplinary team which is managed by the Council to support people who are at risk of going into hospital or residential care.

This has meant that people are supported to stay at home and we have reduced the number of people who are admitted into hospital who do not require hospital care. People have reported feeling safer and able to remain independent.

3. Councillor M Whitby

In view of the fact that the Planning Inspector suspended his Hearing into the Borough's Core Strategy can the Leader tell Council whether, in his view, there are tensions between Government policy on meeting development needs and protecting the Green Belt?

A. You will be aware that many local authorities across the country have struggled to get an up-to-date local plan in place, largely because of the ambiguity and tensions that exist within the National Planning policy Framework and the National Planning Policy Guidance.

Bury's Core Strategy seeks to provide a balanced approach to development requirements, whilst protecting the quality environments that make the Borough such an attractive location to reside – including the large swathes of Green Belt land.

However, this approach was strenuously challenged by the development industry, particularly housebuilders, who pointed to the advice in national guidance that suggests that the full identified development needs should be met through the Local Plan process. This policy approach seems at odds with other parts of the guidance which states that Green Belt should be protected. The Council has previously expressed its concerns that conceding to developer pressures for the large scale release of Green Belt land will lead to a situation whereby sustainable brownfield sites in regeneration areas will be overlooked in favour of greenfield sites that are more appealing to the house builders.

As a result of these concerns and on the back of our Core Strategy being suspended, the Leader and I sent a letter to Mr Brandon Lewis outlining our concerns, a letter that the Conservative group leader felt unable to support. This letter, in particular, asked Mr. Lewis if he could provide explicit advice as to whether the requirement to fully meet development needs would constitute the “exceptional circumstances” required to Justify amendments to the to the Green Belt through the Local Plan process. Sadly, Mr. Lewis has not taken the opportunity to respond to this.

4. Councillor R Caserta

How much has it cost this Council by replacing bin collections on the 16th October with the following Saturday and Sunday because of the day of strike action?

A. I am sure that Councillor Caserta is pleased to learn that the Council had made contingency plans to ensure that if a strike went ahead on Tuesday 14th October that bin collections would not be unduly disrupted during the initial stages of the implementation of 3 weekly bin collections.

The preparations included printing & distributing leaflets to inform residents of extra planned collections on Sunday & Monday 12th & 13th October preceding the planned strike.

This cost of this was around £4,500.

However, as soon as we were aware that the strike was to be called off the extra collections were cancelled and a normal bin collection service was operated on Tuesday 14th October.

5. Councillor S Southworth

Has any progress been made on the commitment to tackle the state of repair of our roads?

A. The Council has recently invested £100,000 to purchase 2 new state of the art highway machines called Caterpillar skid steer loaders. These have been delivered and workforce training is now complete. The productivity of the new machines means that we are able to do more pot hole repairs with a reduced workforce following previous cuts to the service. Currently, one ‘Caterpillar’ Team is working in Bury East. Over the next week we will be rolling out the next ‘Caterpillar’ team which will be working in the south area of the Borough

We are also in the process of finalising the set up of two area teams: one north and one south, which will rotate around each of the townships every fortnight. The area teams will ensure that repair work is effectively distributed around the Borough as well as work being prioritised by the Highway Inspectors.

The emphasis is now on permanent first fix repairs, which will comprise of hot lay materials - to match the existing surface type, along with an over band seal which will stop the ingress of water into the joints and ensure longevity of the repair.

To ensure we are using the most cost effective and suitable materials, the new machines were chosen following a 12 month trial of three different machines and a range of different techniques.

The DfT Local Transport Plan Grant 2014/15 for Highways Capital Maintenance is £1,241,000. In addition, £175,000 Local Maintenance Highway Funding grant was received for 2014/15 to repair and extend the life of the highway network. These monies have been used to resurface several local roads

6. Councillor A Quinn

Bury Dementia Care recently received an award for its outstanding service. Does the Leader agree with me that the £20m cut from Bury's NHS budget could affect this service to some of the most vulnerable in our community?

A. The historical underfunding of the CCG, which equates to £20m, is certainly an issue which we have to take very seriously. This, coupled with the fact that the Council is also losing significant funding in 2015/16 and beyond, means that we are one of the worst funded areas in the country in terms of public services. This is why the Leader of the Council and the MP for Bury South keep pushing for a 'Fair Deal for Bury'.

All of these cuts pose a serious threat to how we serve the most vulnerable residents in our community. However, we continue to work hard across Team Bury to argue our case and ensure that the funding we receive is spent in the best way possible to the benefit of our local people.

7. Councillor John Smith

On October 14th Barbara Keeley MP presented her "Carers Bedroom Entitlement (Social Housing Sector)" Bill which aims to exempt certain carers from the Bedroom Tax. In opposing the Bill the Bury North MP, David Nuttall, stated that the passing of such a Bill "would signal a return to the something for nothing culture" (Hansard 14th October). Could the Leader of the Council reaffirm our commitment to supporting carers in every way possible? Could he re-state our appreciation of the hard work and dedication shown in their caring for relatives? Does he agree with me that linking extra support to struggling carers with the "something for nothing society" is not only wrong but offensive and insulting to selfless carers across our Borough and the Nation?

A. I would be delighted to reaffirm our commitment to supporting carers in every way and the extent to which Bury Council and Bury CCG intend to support carers is set out in our Carers Strategy. I can also confirm that, as far as the Bedroom Tax is concerned, Bury Council is ahead of the game and we already exempt carers. Our appreciation of the hard work and dedication shown by carers is best described by the words at the front of the Strategy which say "You offer incredible support to the people you care for and for that we are truly grateful and we thank you".

In Bury alone, we currently know of 3,320 adult carers but we acknowledge that there may be many more who do not receive any support to undertake their caring role. We acknowledge that caring for another person can be a rewarding, as well as a difficult, time. Supporting carers through the difficult times is one of the main priorities within our strategy and Bury Council currently spends over £7 million pounds on services which support carers, either directly or indirectly.

Equally carers probably save the Council more than this through the support they give and so to suggest that any help that they can be given amounts to giving 'something for nothing' is little short of disgusting and insulting.

Being a carer can be very stressful and is certainly not a role that we should take for granted and so Mr. Nuttall's words embody the contempt that this Government appears to show for the most vulnerable people in our society. If I was him I would be ashamed of myself.

8. Councillor I Gartside

Can the Leader or relevant Cabinet member please give details of how the Council intends to allocate the extra 5.6 million of additional Government funding for our schools in Bury?

A. As part of the normal annual review of the Schools Funding Formula, the allocation of the additional money in 2015/16 will be considered by the Schools Forum. In addition, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors of each school and academy in the Bury area has been sent copies of what the Schools Forum is considering for them to be able to put their views forward. The Bury Governors Association will also be involved in the deliberations before the Schools Forum make their recommendations as to how the money will be provided to each school and academy in 2015/16. These recommendations will be considered by Council at the budget setting meeting on 25 February 2015.

Bury schools remain amongst the least fairly funded in England.

9. Councillor T Pickstone

Could the Leader please provide members with a breakdown of the estimated set up costs for the new three-weekly bin collection service?
Could this include:

- additional costs of communications with residents
- set up costs of the new texting service
- addition staff and related costs as a result of the additional weekend collections
- provision of additional and replacement larger bins to residents
- capital and other costs associated with the new service.

A. The costs to set up the new bin collection service were approved by Cabinet in July 2014 when it considered the Zero Waste Strategy. A budget of £213,400 was approved for the capital costs of new bins and caddies to meet estimated demand for additional bins for larger families and extra recycling bins. One-off implementation costs of £189,700 were approved to cover information packs for residents and one-off tasks such as delivering extra bins, missed bin collections, recycling promotions and extra contact centre staff to answer residents' queries.

On top of this extra collections were organised for some residents to ensure that there wasn't an excessive delay between the collections on the old and new bin rounds. This incurred a one-off cost of around £55,000 for staff, fuel, supervision and printing and distribution of leaflets. The set up of the new alert system was done in-house by staff

in our ICT section so this has not cost us any extra money. As the alerts are sent by email (not by text) there are no ongoing costs.

Whilst the implementation costs appear to be substantial the savings on payments for waste disposal from the increased recycling which we expect to achieve are estimated to be £890,000 per annum, giving a pay back period of just 6 months.

10. Councillor N Parnell

Good to see that Bury South's MP has publicly stated he supports a fair deal for Bury. Has the Leader's Office received such support from the Right Honourable Member from the North of Bury?

A. Sadly, and unsurprisingly, no I haven't received a single word of support from Mr Nuttall or from the leader of the Conservative group on Bury Council. I was delighted with the contents and tone of the letter that Mr Lewis sent to the Secretary of State asking for an urgent meeting to discuss the appalling and unfair way that Bury is treated by the Government's grant system and I am happy to confirm to Council that I followed this up with a letter of my own, in line with the recent Council resolution. Sadly, and unsurprisingly, Councillor Gartside refused to sign the letter and Mr Pickles has refused to answer it. I think this makes it very clear that the Conservative party, locally and nationally, has absolutely no interest in providing the people of Bury with the fair deal that they deserve.

11. Councillor P Bury

Can the Leader please explain how he expects the new Sculpture Gallery to have an impact on the local economy?

A. As the New Economy's analysis of Bury Cultural Sector demonstrates, culture is one of the most important sectors of the local economy. It will continue to be an area of growth over the next 10 years. One of the drivers of this has been the investment and development of our cultural facilities over a number of years – providing visitor attractions that support the infrastructure of the cultural economy. In recognition of the importance of culture to the local economy, we are currently working on a new Cultural Economy Strategy which will map out how we will develop culture to enhance the borough' economy.

The Sculpture Centre is the newest element of the Bury cultural offer. It promotes access to international contemporary art for local people and, more relevant to your question, locates Bury as a high profile visitor destination for cultural tourism. It is early days, obviously, with the Centre only open since May. It will take time to build up its profile, but I

expect the Sculpture Centre to contribute to the number of visitors to Bury, I expect it to enable us to draw in external funding for the benefit of local people, and I expect it to create a unique visitor spend which supports local jobs.

12. Councillor J Mallon

Given the ongoing massive cuts to Bury's budgets by the Con/Dem Government, we are now seeing our local care services facing a direct threat to their future. I have spoken with residents who use the day care services to help with the care of their partners and family members. Without this critical support they themselves face the risk of being over stressed as primary carers and falling ill. This can lead to partners being hospitalised and separated as a result of these budget cuts from Government. Can the Leader offer any assurance to the people of Bury who rely on these vital services that our care services will be maintained?

A. We recognise how vital our day care, short stay and supported living services are to customers and their carers. We held consultation with a wide range of people over summer 2014 and their feedback was resounding in terms of their reliance on support from these services in order to continue in their caring role. Day care and short stay provide invaluable carer respite and we cannot underestimate the impact it would have on people if these services were not sustained. The consultation events we held were well attended by both customers and carers and we received extensive feedback. We recognise the importance of these services and this was evident in the decision of Cabinet on 1 October 2014 to dismiss options to close or privatise these services, instead committing to developing an alternative model for delivering them. The reason for this is because we want to find a way to continue to ensure they are available to current and future customers and can respond to demand and be sustainable in the future.

13. Councillor S Nuttall

Can the Leader or relevant Cabinet member please give details of how much land has been ear-marked for commercial development and what is being done to actively market it?

A. The Council recognises that in this very difficult economic climate the provision and availability of land for commercial development is critical to the economic well-being of the borough and the delivery of much needed employment opportunities. As such, we are constantly looking for opportunities to generate commercial development within the Borough especially by using our own landholdings, and to help with this we have a pro-active disposal and redevelopment programme. The Council monitors the supply of commercial and employment generating land on an annual basis and the latest monitoring, in April 2014, shows that there is currently around 30 hectares of land across the borough identified as being suitable for commercial development.

Council-owned sites currently being marketed for commercial and business uses include the former Greater Manchester Police headquarters at Irwell Street, Bury; Chamberhall Business Park; and a gateway site on Rochdale Road in Bury. Similarly, the Council is currently preparing to market a development site in the centre of Radcliffe. This will comprise the site of the former Kwik Save and the land which will be made available by the imminent relocation of the bus station, a joint initiative between the Council and Transport for Greater Manchester.

In addition, discussions are progressing with developers for the redevelopment of the former fire station on The Rock. This was acquired as a medium to long term redevelopment opportunity. The Council is also actively seeking alternative funding sources, which could potentially make the difference between schemes being developed or not. These include the Department of Trade and Industry, the Homes and Communities Agency and the Greater Manchester Growth Hub. Of course the effectiveness of all this work depends on the appetite of the private sector to exploit the opportunities we present them with given the difficulties in securing occupiers and investors in what remains a very fragile market we recognise that it is important to respond positively to all opportunities that present themselves.

14. Councillor S Carter

Since the announcement to alter the refuse collection frequency, have any extra recycling bins been requested by the public?

A. From 01 July to 17 October the following extra recycling bins have been requested by residents via the Contact Centre:

Blue bins	1297
Green bins	997
Brown bins	2908 (including x23 street caddies)
Kitchen caddies	3415

The cost of these additional bins was allowed for in the approved set-up budget and as explained earlier, these costs will be more than fully recovered from the savings that we expect to achieve from additional recycling.

15. Councillor M Whitby

The changes to the Children's Centres includes an increase in the number of Outreach Workers. How will this improve the service to families in Bury?

A. The experience of Bury's Children's Centres has shown that focused and well managed support provided by outreach workers can prevent lower levels of need escalating to a level requiring statutory Social Care intervention as well as contributing to improved development and health outcomes for children.

Working with families referred by a range of professionals who have identified a need for early help, Outreach workers assess need, support families and signpost appropriately to other services including programmes delivered by the Children's Centres themselves, or delivered by partner organizations such as Health. A recently concluded pilot study in Radcliffe has provided many recommendations to guide the future development and effectiveness of this role and was well received by Ofsted. With appropriate supervision and support, it is envisaged that each outreach worker could at any one time manage a caseload of around 15 families working with them on a range of interventions.

This is the reason why the Children's Centre proposals would increase the number of outreach workers deployed across Bury from 11 to 35.

16. Councillor A Quinn

Manchester City Council has announced that Parklife Concerts will return to Heaton Park next year. Will the Leader agree to set up talks between Manchester and Bury MBC for us to propose that 50p on every ticket sold be donated to Prestwich to set up an inconvenience fund including a mechanism for local businesses to claim for losses due to the concerts? Any monies left could be bid for at the Township forum.

A. The Council is in regular contact with Manchester City Council regarding events in Heaton Park and as part of these discussions I have asked officers to approach them to explore the possibility of establishing some form of ticket levy which could be used to help offset the effects of these events on the wider Prestwich community.

17. Councillor I Gartside

Will the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People acknowledge the recent concerns expressed by service users and the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panel surrounding the format of consultation on the review of children's centres and agree to extend the period of consultation accordingly to reflect the newly amended document?

A. Any concerns that have been raised regarding the consultation format have been listened to and responded to immediately, including requests to change the wording of the consultation questionnaire, translation of questionnaire into the top three community languages and removal of the single on-line comment sheet. All meetings and parent/carer drop-ins have been appropriately recorded, questions and comments have been logged in a variety of ways to ensure parent/carer views have been heard and to increase the accessibility for responses. A full report on each drop-in will be available following the consultation.

Following discussions at Scrutiny and to show the Council's commitment to the process, it has been decided to extend the Consultation period by one week to Monday 15th December 2014. Any further extension would make it impossible to collate and publish the consultation outcomes by the New Year.

18. Councillor T Pickstone

Could the Leader please outline to members whether the Authority, under its public health role, maintains information on publicly accessible defibrillators across the borough? What plans are there to improve access to and information on publicly accessible defibrillators?

A. The location of AEDs has been mapped across Bury by North West Ambulance Service Chain of Survival Steering Group. It contains the most accurate intelligence we have, however since there is no formal requirement to register AEDs there are likely to be other devices owned by private organisations that have not been captured. The availability of AEDs is just one of the critical steps in the chain of survival (COS), which when properly in

place significantly increases survival rates from cardiac arrest. The Public Health department has previously sought the support of councillors to promote COS and would be happy to review the local position in the context of current priorities.

19. Councillor M James

Can the Leader advise how many people attended the Bury Light Night on 10 October?

A. I'm afraid I am not in a position to give you a definitive answer. Because of the size of the street area of Light Night there is not a single counting point. The attendance is calculated as an estimate based on figures supplied by the Rock and the Millgate. These are derived from footfall counters plus the visitor figures of the participating venues. We haven't got all the counts in yet. To date I can report that The Rock clocked 20,000 visitors and there was a 3.7% increase from last year in footfall at The Millgate; the Gallery/Sculpture Centre figure increased from 2,579 last year to 3,052 this year. From the ones we have so far, I think we could confidently say the visitor numbers will be around 25,000, which is very much in line with last year. When we have the final figure, I will be happy to report it to Council.

20. Councillor E Fitzgerald

In these very difficult economic conditions, may local companies tell us that prompt payment by the people they do business with is critical to their survival. Please will the Leader reassure us that the Council is playing its part to help these companies by paying bills as quickly as possible?

A. Bury Council is an organisation that truly sees the benefits and responsibilities to pay suppliers fairly. To that end we were one of the first Councils in the country to commit to a Prompt Payment Code which set out the principles we would follow in transactions with our suppliers.

This commitment was recognised last year when we received the Best Council to Do Business With award at 10 Downing Street. I am now delighted to tell Members that Bury Council has just been invited by Matthew Hancock, the Minister of State for Business, Enterprise and Energy, to be one of only two public sector organisations to join a newly established national Advisory Board on the Prompt Payment Code. This is a great honour and is testament to the Council's drive and expertise in this area and it provides further evidence of our commitment to supporting Bury businesses during these tough times.

21. Councillor P Heneghan

Can the Leader please give Council an update on the performance of the Planning Service's Development Control Team?

A. Yet again the staff of the Planning service have exceeded all expectations and delivered truly remarkable results when it comes to processing major planning applications. Government figures show that in the last 2 years leading up to the end of June 2014, 90.8% of these applications were determined within time.

These are the applications that bring investment, new homes and jobs into the borough and our team is the fastest out of all AGMA authorities and only one metropolitan Council in the country is quicker at processing these applications.

This gives people investing in our borough confidence that decisions are made quickly and professionally and demonstrates in a very real and practical way that Bury as a Council is 'open for business'.

The staff should be congratulated on their commitment and professionalism, during a time of continued attacks on the planning system by the coalition government. This is a true team success in the face of adversity and it is an achievement that helps put Bury at the forefront of running an efficient and effective Council despite our scarce resources. Just think what we could do if we got a 'Fair Deal for Bury'.

22. Councillor I Bevan

Can the Leader or relevant Cabinet member please give details of the levels of Bury town centre council car parking space occupancy and the levels of parking income and fines issued in the last and current financial year?

A. The figures are as follows, with the current year's figures reflecting the first six months of the year:

	<u>13/14</u>	<u>14/15</u>
PCNs issued	17,925	8,536
PCN income	£504,416	£222,919
P&D Income	£1,390,612	£771,771
Occupancy	75%	75%

If the current year's figures are rolled forward then allowing for Christmas peaks we are likely to considerably improve on the previous year's pay and display income which is a testament to the effectiveness of the Council's policies for the regeneration of the town centre.

As far as occupancy rates are concerned, I must point out that the figures are averages and Members are asked to remember that on market days occupancy can peak at over 90%.

23. Councillor S Kerrison

Please will the Leader set out what the Council is doing to protect taxpayers money from the scourge of Housing Benefit fraud?

A. Benefit fraud is not only wrong, but it's unfair on the taxpayer and on genuine claimants and Bury Council works extremely hard with partner agencies to make sure that we always take strong and robust action against those who abuse the system. For example we have recently obtained custodial sentences against two fraudsters who swindled £136,000 over more than five years before investigators from Bury Council and the Department of Work and Pensions finally brought them to justice. If anyone suspects benefit fraud in their neighbourhood I would ask them to call the fraud hotline in confidence on 0800 328 6340.

24. Councillor J Mallon

Can the relevant Cabinet Member outline what plans are in place if instances of infectious diseases were detected within the Borough?

A. Infection Control Plans

Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, Bury Council and the Director of Public Health (DPH) have a series of responsibilities in respect of health protection. Principally, they are required to ensure plans are in place to protect the health of the borough's population. Part of this includes protection against infectious diseases.

It is the responsibility of Public Health England (PHE) to lead on any outbreaks of infectious diseases in line with the GM Outbreak Control Plan. Bury's Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Service and Environmental Health will assist with outbreak management as required by PHE in line with national guidance and the GM Outbreak Control Plan.

Greater Manchester's Local Health Resilience Partnership have set up a network of Health Economy Resilience Groups (HERG) which provides a link between local health economies including acute trusts to ensure there is a robust communication conduit on issues related to risk, emergency preparedness, resilience and response. Bury Council is part of the North East sector HERG and is represented on that group by officers from Adult Care, Environmental Health and Emergency planning. Other members consists of representatives from Oldham and Rochdale, Pennine Acute Hospital's Trust, Pennine Care, CCG's, Greater Manchester resilience unit officers, BARDOC, ambulance service. Exercises take place regularly to test preparedness for a range of scenarios

In Greater Manchester

- Scenarios for acute trusts have been circulated**
- Scenarios for airports are now available**
- The Manchester Port Health Plan has been fully reviewed**

and updated, and they are currently working towards exercising the plan

- A desk top exercise to test the GM Outbreak plan is scheduled for 19th November

Infection Prevention and Control Service in Bury

The aim of the IPC service is to reduce the risk of infectious diseases, support their management and prevent further spread within the wider community. The role of the IPC service is to:

- Seek & gain assurance that effective IPC policies and measures are in place within high risk organisations such as care homes, nurseries and healthcare providers.
- Undertake infection control audits of GP practices and care homes
- Support organisations in the development of IPC policies
- Provide training on infection prevention & control
- monitor and provide timely surveillance of the incidence of infections
- Provide specialist IPC advice to organisations across Bury including the clinical community, care homes, schools and nurseries and other stakeholders, in the management of outbreaks.
- provide IPC advice to health and social care professionals in the management of individual cases of infectious diseases, particularly Health Care Associated Infections (HCAIs)

As a result of the recent Council restructure, responsibility for the Environmental Health function has transferred to the Director of Public Health. This coincided with the need to review future provision of the IPC service and the end of the contract with Pennine Care. This presents an opportunity to create strategic alignment between the work of the IPC Service and the Council's Environmental Health Team under the leadership of the Director of Public Health. Environmental Health Officers are already key players in Infection Prevention and Control and the Greater Manchester Outbreak Control Plan especially around gastrointestinal infections and Legionella. A single combined team will enhance the opportunities to focus on prevention whilst also ensuring a more robust, resilient and flexible response to the management and control of outbreaks within the Borough and enhance the scope for business continuity. Whilst we work towards establishing an in-house IPC service, we have commissioned a private health care provider, IntraHealth, to provide a reactive IPC Service. IntraHealth operate a number of GP practices in the North of England and provide a range of clinical services such as vaccinations and anticoagulant services. The IPC Service will be supported locally by the Environmental Health team and a Registered Public Health Specialist. The existing Public Health

administrative support provide continuity of process and procedures pending the appointment of the in house team. The IPC Service will also be a member of the GM Infection Control Collaborative established to shared expertise and practice amongst Local Authority IPC Services and staff.

25. Councillor Stella Smith

Given that we receive a good many queries and complaints about the operation of the public transport services, will it ever be possible to reinstate the meetings of a Passenger Transport Group at which operators send representatives to answer questions from Councillors and the public?

A. The Passenger Transport Forum was an initiative of Transport for Greater Manchester which has unfortunately ceased as a result of budget cuts, and TfGM have advised us that it is unlikely to be reinstated.

TfGM do have a facility on their web site, or by e-mail or telephone, where members of the public can raise questions or make complaints about bus services which are passed on to the relevant operators for a response.