Minutes of: **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 13 October 2026

Present: Councillor J Rydeheard (in the Chair)
Councillors J Southworth, M Rahimov, T Pilkington, L Ryder, N Bayley, C Birchmore, J Sheppard, J Roith, C Hunt and M Rubinstein

Also in attendance: Councillor Thorpe Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services
Lynne Ridsdale Chief Executive
Kate Waterhouse Executive Director Strategy and Transformation
Will Blandamer Executive Director Health and Adult Care
Neil Kissock Director of Finance
Jacqui Dennis Monitoring Officer
Adrian Crook Director Community Commissioning
Jon Hobday Director of Public Health
Ben Dunne Director of Education and Early Years
Linda Evans Director of Social Care and Early Help
Rob Summerfield Director of Regeneration and Project Delivery

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor A Chaudhry and Councillor S Haroon

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OSC.131 APOLOGIES

Apologies are noted above

OSC.132 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

OSC.133 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following questions were received:

Jill Budgen asked:

Given Bury Council has no money left to spend will Bury Councils Management team agree that they will not take pay rises and bonuses in the future? I have reworded slightly please advise if this is correct?

In response Councillor Thorpe stated:

There are no plans to stop senior managers receiving future pay awards. Any pay increases are considered through the Council's normal governance processes and, where relevant, national pay agreements.

The Council needs to offer competitive pay to attract and retain experienced leaders who run complex services and deliver improvements and savings. If pay falls too far behind the market, it can become harder and more expensive to recruit and retain the right people.

Senior management costs have not increased disproportionately. The proportion of senior managers in the workforce, and the share of the overall pay bill spent on senior management, have remained broadly unchanged. The Council remains committed to ensuring pay is fair, transparent, affordable and provides value for money for residents.

Jill asked a follow up supplementary question which was a personal matter which was agreed to be dealt with outside of the meeting.

OSC.134 MEMBER QUESTION TIME

The following questions were submitted in advance of the meeting by:

- Councillor Vernon
- Councillor Zaman
- Councillor Martin

Councillor Vernon Question

Councillor Vernon stated that the Council had rightly recognised the importance of paying its lowest-paid employees the Real Living Wage and that he was not questioning the principle of providing a fair wage to Council employees.

However, he noted that the Council faced a remaining 2027/28 budget gap of £9.585 million and was considering significant workforce reductions, including voluntary exits and potentially compulsory redundancies.

He further noted that the budget report identified the Real Living Wage as a significant financial pressure, with £5.329 million included in the 2027/28 budget assumptions, principally relating to commissioned Adult Social Care.
Councillor Vernon asked whether the Council had fully quantified the savings that could be achieved by temporarily suspending or deferring implementation of the 2026/27 Real Living Wage rate until the financial position had stabilised, or until the National Living Wage had substantially narrowed the gap. He also asked whether any such savings could contribute towards reducing potential redundancies.

Finally, he asked, if this option had been considered, what the annual recurring saving would be, including any impact on commissioned services and employer on-costs, and why it had not been included alongside other savings options currently under consideration.

Response

Councillor Thorpe advised that the £5.329 million pressure included within the 2027/28 budget related to Real Living Wage increases within commissioned Adult Social Care and Children's Services contracts. The cost of pay awards for directly employed Council staff was reflected separately within the Council's pay inflation assumptions. Whilst the Council was not legally required to apply the Real Living Wage, the budget assumed continuation of the Council's existing commitment.

He explained that a detailed assessment would be required to determine the exact financial impact of any change in policy. However, as a broad illustration, if the Council were to move from the Real Living Wage to the National Living Wage, the current 2027/28 budget gap could

reduce by approximately £3.7 million. The actual impact would depend on a range of factors, including contractual arrangements and associated income assumptions. He further noted that the Real Living Wage figures were currently estimates and would be updated following the annual announcement of the Real Living Wage rates.

Councillor Thorpe added that moving from the Real Living Wage to the National Living Wage would represent a significant change in the rates paid, and therefore in the annual cost of care. Any such transition could be implemented over more than one financial year to smooth the impact on care workers, meaning pay rates might either be frozen or increase more slowly than they would under continued adoption of the Real Living Wage. Approximately 3,000 Adult Social Care workers would be affected.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Vernon commented that the matter ultimately came down to affordability and what the Council could reasonably fund on behalf of Bury residents. Referring to the estimated £3.7 million cost associated with implementing the Real Living Wage, he welcomed confirmation that the issue had been examined and asked whether assurances could be given that all options would continue to be explored as part of the budget-setting process. He further asked whether the proposal could be reconsidered should resources become available in the future.

Response

Councillor Thorpe advised that he could not rule out the proposal being revisited in the future. He confirmed that all options would continue to be considered as part of the Council's budget-setting process and noted that, whilst any decision not to proceed with the Real Living Wage would be regrettable, difficult choices had to be made within the context of the Council's overall financial position.

Councillor Zaman Question

Councillor Zaman referred to the forthcoming Cabinet decision to delegate responsibility to the Director of Finance to negotiate and submit the Council's Exceptional Financial Support application to Government.

He asked whether an unelected officer would be deciding whether to seek permission for a council tax increase above the current 4.99% referendum threshold and, if not, whether the Deputy Leader would rule out such an increase.

Response

Councillor Thorpe explained that a council tax increase above the current referendum limit of 4.99% was one of the three primary mechanisms available through conditional Exceptional Financial Support. The other options were additional prudential borrowing and the use of capital receipts flexibilities.

He emphasised that council tax increases remained a matter for elected Members to determine as part of the annual Budget Council meeting and that this position had not changed. The report merely outlined the implications of each option. Additional prudential borrowing would increase the funding gap due to the associated interest and Minimum Revenue Provision costs. Capital receipts represented a non-recurrent resource and would neither increase nor reduce ongoing funding. By contrast, an additional council tax increase would increase the Council's tax base and provide a permanent reduction in the funding gap.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Zaman asked whether an increase in council tax above 4.99% was being ruled out and, if the Council was not seeking a loan, how it intended to address its financial position.

Response

Councillor Thorpe explained that the current Exceptional Financial Support framework provided three primary options. He stated that the Council intended to increase council tax only up to the standard 4.99% level. Whilst he could not completely rule out Government imposing alternative requirements, he regarded this as the least likely outcome. He noted that any higher increase would have a significant impact on residents.

Councillor Thorpe further advised that the available flexibilities were intended to support the revenue budget and that the Council had plans in place to deliver a balanced budget for the current year. Discussions with Government would commence following Cabinet consideration of the matter. He stressed that the Council was not seeking a bailout and was not proposing a council tax increase above the current limit.

Councillor Martin

Question

Councillor Martin stated that the Council was seeking Exceptional Financial Support from Government and noted that, once the current year's overspend had been addressed, approximately £6 million of usable reserves would remain against a forecast funding gap of £9.6 million.

He asked whether, if the Government refused the Council's request, the Deputy Leader would rule out the possibility of a Section 114 Notice in the following year.

Response

Councillor Thorpe advised that the reserves forecast was based on the Quarter 1 projected outturn and might not reflect the final position. Officers were continuing to work to reduce the in-year pressure and identify additional savings options. These proposals would be brought back to Cabinet and Council as part of the budget-setting process.

He stated that the position remained fluid. However, if usable reserves proved insufficient to address any remaining funding gap and a request for Exceptional Financial Support was unsuccessful, the Council would be unable to set a legal budget for 2027/28. In those circumstances, the issuing of a Section 114 Notice would be the next step. He emphasised that this was not considered a likely scenario.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Martin asked whether the possibility of a Section 114 Notice remained and whether alternative budget reductions were being prepared should the Council receive less support than requested.

Response

Councillor Thorpe stated that he could not rule out the possibility entirely but confirmed that every effort was being made to avoid such an outcome. He advised that the Council was working closely with Government to be able to develop a balanced and practical budget in the face of unprecedented pressures.

Additional Questions from members

Councillor Hill attended the meeting and asked a question regarding the proposed £145,000 saving within the Youth Service. He queried how the Council had assessed the risks associated with removing an early help provision and whether this could lead to increased demand for higher-cost or higher-risk services in the future.

Councillor Thorpe explained that, following further consideration and the development of the Families First programme, alternative funding arrangements had been identified. As a result, the proposed reduction to the Youth Service would not be going to cabinet for consideration at this stage.

Members were advised that the recommendation before the Committee no longer included a reduction to the Youth Service at this stage. And would be discussed further in the meeting at the budget item.

Councillor Zaman raised a question regarding the £144,000 figure and asked the Cabinet Member to confirm whether any council buildings, services, or services supporting vulnerable residents would be affected.

A discussion followed regarding the sale of assets/access Adrian Crook Director of Community Commissioning stated that this is not a proposal that can be ruled out at this stage.

OSC.135 MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th September 2026 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

There was a comment from Councillor Sheppard regarding ensuring names of Councillors are referred to throughout the minutes it was agreed that the minutes be signed off following this.

Matters arising from the previous meeting were discussed and ongoing actions were as follows

- The location and savings figure for the new 60 place SEND provision

Ben Dunne Director of Education and Early Years provided the following information

Willow Grove (SEMH Secondary School) – to be located at Redvales Playing Fields at the junction of Manchester Road and Radcliffe Road.

DfE Special Free Schools Programme scheme. The new 60 place school will provide specialist Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) facilities for children and young people aged 11-16 years.

Completion: Target scheme completion date is September 2028.

Savings: Not part of saving strategy but given secondary provision is limited across Bury at the current time and leaves the council vulnerable to placing CYP in costly independent specialist

provisions, the SEMH school will provide much needed capacity and will reduce pressure on SEND spending from 2028 onwards.

- The Separate HRA report on in-house savings –

For clarification this will be a standalone savings programme for the HRA and has been agreed to be brought to the November Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting

- Radcliffe Hub Cost Overrun figure

The committee was informed that the figures will be brought back to the committee when they have been fully calculated

OSC.136 COMMITTEE MEMBER PRE SUBMITTED QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Pages 11 - 46)

OSC.137 DRAFT 2027/28 BUDGET

A report was circulated ahead of the meeting by Councillor Thorpe deputy leader and cabinet member for Finance and Corporate Services, the chair invited Councillor Thorpe to present a brief overview of the report.

Councillor Thorpe outlined the key issues contained within the report, highlighting the ongoing financial challenges facing local government, the Councils budget pressures and the proposals being considered to achieve a sustainable financial position over the medium term.

The committee was reminded that question had been pre submitted in advance and the answers had been circulated, the chair advised the committee the procedure around these questions that they were to be used to prompt supplementary questions and won't be read out in the meeting.

Councillor Birchmore questioned Burys comparatively low core spending power, in response Councillor Thorpe explained that Burys position had been adversely affected by historical local government funding arrangements. He noted that previous funding and fair funding reviews had favoured areas with higher deprivation indicators and larger inner city populations. Bury had experienced lower funding growth whilst having a lower proportion of higher value Band D properties and a higher proportion of lower-banded properties reducing its ability to generate income through Council tax when compared with many other authorities.

It was further expanded that local government funding had increasingly become dependent upon Council Tax income rather than central government grants.

Neil Kissock Director of Finance advised that longer-term financial challenges facing local authorities, particularly those relating to Adult Social Care, continued to be a matter of national concern and were being actively considered by the Local Government Association.

Councillor Birchmore raised concerns regarding the subsidy provided to Ramsbottom Leisure Centre, noting that the facility currently required approximately £230,000 per annum in subsidy and that further refurbishment works of around £1 million had been identified.

In response, Members were advised that the Council remained committed to retaining Ramsbottom Leisure Centre due to its importance for health and wellbeing outcomes. It was explained that the estimated £1 million related to essential remedial and refurbishment works.

Councillor Birchmore sought clarification regarding the financial assumptions benind the business case, including whether income generated from the new Radcliffe facility was being used to offset shortfalls elsewhere and whether break-even assessments had been undertaken.

Jon Hobday Director of Public Health advised that the £1 million related primarily to remedial works that would require sequencing over the next 18 months.

Councillor Birchmore requested a detailed breakdown of the costs and sought assurance regarding what was included within the refurbishment programme.

Members also requested that consideration be given to concessionary and senior membership pricing. Councillor Thorpe advised that the Council's leisure offer differed from local competitors through the provision of facilities across three locations and that concessions would continue to be available.

Councillor Roith referred to references within the report regarding the Asset and Land Disposal Programme (ALDP), questioning what was meant by sites being listed as "under review" and noting that the publicly available information appeared not to have been updated since 2024.

Councillor Thorpe advised that a substantial programme of work remained ongoing and that engagement with partners continued.

Rob Summerfield Director of Regenation and Growth explained that the website had not yet been updated to reflect more recent activity. The ALDP had generated significant capital receipts through a number of successful property disposals and a written summary of completed transactions would be circulated to Members.

In response to further questions regarding future disposals, Members were advised that any proposed site disposals would be brought forward through the Council's established decision-making and scrutiny processes, including future Cabinet reports where appropriate.

Councillor Birchmore referred to proposals concerning school crossing patrols and the associated savings identified within the report.

Questions were raised regarding the future funding of crossing patrols, potential replacement measures and the consultation process that would be undertaken before any changes were implemented.

Councillor Thorpe noted that school crossing patrols were a non-statutory service and that a number of sites had experienced long-standing recruitment difficulties. He emphasised that no final decisions had been made and that the Council would work closely with schools and Transport for Greater Manchester to identify alternative arrangements where appropriate.

Ben Dunne Director of Education and Early Years reported that discussions were ongoing with school leaders regarding alternative staffing arrangements and recruitment options. He further advised that assessments of crossing sites were evidence-based and took into account pedestrian numbers, vehicular flows and formal crossing counts scheduled for November. The Committee was advised that six high-risk locations had been identified and that further information would be incorporated into a future report following completion of the assessments.

Councillor Rahimov queried proposals relating to street lighting dimming and expressed concern regarding public safety, particularly for women travelling at night. Councillor Rahimov suggested that motion-activated lighting could be explored as a possible alternative.

Councillor Thorpe acknowledged those concerns and confirmed that any proposals would be subject to thorough risk assessment. He agreed that officers would consider the suggestion regarding motion-activated lighting and assess whether new technologies could assist in achieving savings whilst maintaining public safety.

Councillor Birchmore sought clarification regarding income generated through parking charges and the provisions of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984.
Councillor Thorpe confirmed that any surpluses generated were subject to legislative restrictions and were effectively ring-fenced for specified transport-related purposes.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor Sheppard regarding Council Tax arrears and affordability pressures, Councillor Thorpe stated that the Council was seeking a more supportive and people-focused approach to collection. He noted that work was ongoing nationally to advocate for greater flexibility in the Council Tax system.

Neil Kissock advised that the Council's priority was to intervene at the earliest opportunity to prevent residents from falling into financial hardship and to ensure support mechanisms were available before arrears escalated.
Councillor Pilkington asked whether national reforms to Council Tax could result in a net gain or loss for Bury.

Councillor Thorpe responded that the present Council Tax system did not operate fairly for many authorities and residents. He noted that households in Bury were frequently paying higher Council Tax than comparable properties in parts of London despite significant differences in property values. He described the current system as outdated and in need of reform.

Councillor Sheppard sought assurances regarding the assumptions within the savings proposals relating to voluntary redundancy and workforce reductions.
Councillor Thorpe advised that the number of expressions of interest could not yet be disclosed.

In response to supplementary questions regarding severance costs, Neil Kissock confirmed that further details would emerge once the process had progressed and that capital receipt flexibilities could be utilised to support transformation and savings programmes where permitted.

Councillor Rydeheard asked whether assessments had been undertaken regarding the deletion of vacant posts.

Neil Kissock confirmed that the impact of vacancy deletions would continue to be assessed as proposals developed.

Councillor Rydeheard highlighted ongoing difficulties in recruiting to a number of corporate services positions.

Councillor Thorpe advised that certain professional sectors were experiencing shortages of suitably qualified and experienced candidates.

Jacqui Dennis monitoring officer explained that recruitment challenges were being experienced nationally, particularly within legal services and social care. Competition from the private sector, together with the complexity of the work involved, made recruitment and retention difficult. Members were advised that proposals had recently been developed to strengthen leadership capacity within Legal Services.

Councillor Birchmore questioned the potential impacts of charging for green waste collections, including the possibility of increased fly-tipping and reductions in recycling performance.

Councillor Thorpe advised that food waste collections would continue through the brown bin service but garden waste would become subject to a separate charge if proposals proceeded. He noted that approximately a large percentage of of councils already operated charged garden waste schemes and that the Council would need to examine all available options when considering budget reductions.

He acknowledged concerns regarding recycling performance and advised that detailed impact assessments and mitigation measures would form part of any future consultation and decision-making process.

When questioned whether the Council could ultimately lose more income than it gains through reduced recycling rates, Councillor Thorpe acknowledged that such risks existed and would need careful consideration. However, he stressed that all potential options needed to be explored as part of the budget-setting process before any final decisions were made.

Councillor Roith asked what level of capital receipts had been assumed within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Neil Kissock advised that no capital receipts had been factored into the MTFS assumptions.

Councillor Rydeheard sought clarification regarding maturing loans and refinancing assumptions.

Neil Kissock explained that the Council actively managed its debt portfolio, taking professional treasury advice and seeking to delay borrowing where appropriate. A combination of short-term borrowing and future refinancing assumptions had been incorporated into financial planning.

Councillor Birchmore asked whether future borrowing costs associated with the Oak Learning Partnership had been incorporated into the MTFS.

Neil Kissock advised that these costs had not yet been included and would be reflected in future versions of the MTFS as the position became clearer. Officers were also exploring potential Department for Education funding opportunities and the use of underspends within the capital programme.

Councillor Rydeheard sought clarification regarding earmarked reserves and the Council's longer-term financial resilience.

Members were advised that reserves remained limited resources and that discussions were continuing with Government regarding financial flexibilities available to local authorities. Officers noted that Bury's position was not unique, with many councils facing similar challenges arising from the gap between income and expenditure.

The Committee noted the withdrawal of the proposed Children's Services consultation proposal and that it would not proceed to public consultation. Members further noted that proposals relating to the Youth Service would be considered separately at a later date and would not be brought forward as part of the current consultation process.

Councillor Rydeheard proposed a recommendation with regards to the school crossing patrol to which members expressed concerns and preferred to wait until further assessments had been made.

Members requested that future updates on the Asset and Land Disposal Programme, school crossing patrol assessments, leisure centre investment proposals and revised performance reporting templates be brought back to the Committee through the appropriate scrutiny process.

It Was Agreed:

- The update be noted
- The committee agreed with the recommendations put forward within the report to cabinet

OSC.138 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

COUNCILLOR J RYDEHEARD
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 7.00 pm and ended at 8.50 pm)

Questioner	Question	Answer
	Financial Position	
Councillor Sheppard	1. How will the remaining £9.585m 2027/28 budget gap be closed, and when will Scrutiny receive a fully funded and deliverable plan for addressing it?	The £9.585m 2027/28 budget gap within the draft MTFS reflects the position after incorporating all currently identified savings proposals, totaling £17.56m. Work is continuing across all directorates to identify further savings options which may include workforce measures, service redesign opportunities and additional income generation. Whilst the Council remains focused on identifying further proposals to reduce the gap through local actions, given the current scale of the gap and reserve levels, Members are being asked to approve the exploration of Exceptional Financial Support to allow sufficient time to arrive at a conditional offer for EFS support in setting the 2027/28 budget should it be required. Any support granted would be subject to Government approval, may contain conditions in terms of decisions that the council would need to take, and could include flexibilities such as prudential borrowing or capital receipts to fund revenue expenditure or Council Tax increases above the referendum threshold. A number of councils already receiving EFS to support the 2026/27 budget have also recently received grants totaling £91m to support investment business cases targeted at delivering future years savings which is indication of an evolving approach to EFS. Further details are set out in Section 8 of the report. The Council's intention, and statutory requirement, is to present a balanced budget for 2027/28 in accordance with its statutory

		obligations. Further proposals will be developed and considered through the budget-setting process, with the final budget report considered by Scrutiny in advance of Cabinet and Council in February 2027.
Councillor Sheppard	2. What are the underlying reasons for the annual incremental budget gap changing from a £2.355m surplus in 2028/29 to a £10.278m gap in 2029/30, and what does this indicate about the Council's longer-term financial position?	The movement between the £2.355m surplus in 2028/29 and the £10.278m budget gap in 2029/30 is partly driven by the end of the current multi-year Local Government Finance Settlement, which concludes in 2028/29. As a result, funding assumptions beyond that point are subject to greater uncertainty. The MTFS currently assumes that the Recovery Grant (£2.488m) and Extended Producer Responsibility Grant (£0.645m) cease in line with the end of the settlement period. In addition, the savings programme includes £9.159m of recurring savings in 2028/29 compared with £0.533m currently identified for 2029/30, reflecting that further savings proposals will need to be developed as part of future budget-setting processes. Funding growth from Council Tax and Business Rates is expected to continue; however, expenditure pressures are forecast to increase at a faster rate, particularly in relation to demand-led services, contract inflationary pressures and Real Living Wage, as shown in Table 4 of the report. The movement highlights the ongoing structural challenge facing local government as a whole whereby expenditure growth is forecast to outpace funding growth.
Councillor Sheppard	3. The report refers to an "underlying structural budget gap". What evidence demonstrates that the proposed measures will eliminate that structural pressure rather than simply defer the	The Council has identified £27.251m of recurring savings proposals within the MTFS. The Council continues to face expenditure pressures outside of its direct control, including demand growth, inflation and increases in the Real Living Wage. These pressures are forecast to increase at a faster rate than the Council's funding and, whilst this position continues,

	need for further savings and income measures into future years?	the Council will need to continue to identify further recurring savings, efficiencies and transformation opportunities. To ensure budget gaps are not simply carried forward into future years, the Draft Budget Report does not propose the use of reserves to support ongoing expenditure. However, any use of Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) would represent a one-off measure and would not eliminate the underlying structural challenge. Whilst EFS may assist in addressing a short-term funding gap, any prudential borrowing approved through EFS would increase budget gaps in future years. It is therefore imperative that the 2027/28 budget gap is closed as far as possible through recurring measures to avoid creating further financial pressure in subsequent years. The Council recognises that there is a structural imbalance between recurring expenditure commitments and available recurring funding. Consequently, the savings programme included within the MTFS is focused on delivering recurring reductions in expenditure and recurring increases in income rather than one-off solutions.
Councillor Sheppard	4. Given that the MTFS assumes ongoing 4.99% annual Council Tax increases, what action is the Council taking to improve recovery of outstanding Council Tax debt, and what proportion of the current debt does it consider realistically recoverable through improved collection and enforcement?	The Collection and Support Service has initiated a Council Tax Collection Improvement Plan focused on increasing recovery rates, reducing debt levels and ensuring recovery action is taken earlier and more effectively. The overarching principle of the plan is to maximise recovery of collectible debt while ensuring that vulnerable residents are appropriately supported and that recovery action remains proportionate and targeted. The key measures within the plan include:

		• Earlier intervention with taxpayers showing signs of non-payment, including proactive contact and targeted communications before accounts progress to summons stage. • Segmentation of debtors so recovery activity is tailored according to individual circumstances, payment history and debt value. • Greater use of statutory recovery remedies such as Attachments of Earnings and Attachments of Benefits where appropriate. • Improved debt prioritisation to focus resources on debts with the highest likelihood of recovery and the greatest financial value. • Enhanced tracing and data-matching activity to locate debtors and improve contact rates. • Stronger performance management of enforcement activity, including regular monitoring of enforcement agent performance and recovery outcomes. • Better management information and exception reporting to identify stalled cases and to maximise collection opportunities. • The aim and expectation of the plan is to therefore improve the Council's overall Council Tax performance by increasing collection rates, reducing outstanding arrears and recovering a greater proportion of realistically collectable debt. This will be achieved through earlier intervention with customers, more

		effective use of data and debt segmentation, and a targeted recovery approach that matches enforcement activity to the circumstances and recoverability of individual cases. A key objective is to prevent debt from escalating by identifying payment difficulties earlier and providing appropriate support, while ensuring that statutory recovery and enforcement powers are used effectively where residents have the means to pay but do not engage. The improvement plan also aims to focus resources on higher-value and higher-probability debts, supported by improved tracing, debt prioritisation and performance management. Ultimately, the programme seeks to maximise income from the existing Council Tax base, reduce the level of historic debt, improve cash flow and strengthen the sustainability of the Council's financial position, whilst maintaining a supportive and proportionate approach to collection that balances revenue recovery with support for vulnerable residents.
	Savings, Reserves and Delivery	
Councillor Sheppard	5. Of the £27.251m total savings programme, what proportion has been secured, what proportion remains dependent on future management action	£17.451m of the £27.251m proposed savings programme are new savings proposals with the remainder being approved in previous budget cycles. Of the £17.451m new savings proposals the majority are for management actions as they do

	or policy decisions, and what assessment has been made of the risk of non-delivery?	not require policy decisions with the remaining £2.686m being proposed policy decision savings (detailed in Appendix 2 of the report) and are subject to consultation. It is recognised that it is unlikely that any savings programme of this scale will deliver exactly in line with what is being proposed. The savings programme comprises a mixture of proposals requiring management action, initiatives designed to reduce demand and associated costs, income generation through planned increases in fees and charges, and proposals that require further policy decisions before implementation. The programme therefore contains savings at different stages of development and delivery. All savings proposals included within the MTFS have been subject to review by the Executive Leadership Team and Strategic Finance Leads, including assessment of deliverability, achievability, implementation timescales and associated risks, but a number are necessarily based on best estimates and assumptions. To further strengthen governance and oversight, the Council is establishing a Savings Delivery Group which will meet on a monthly basis and report through to the Finance Board. The Group will allocate risk ratings, monitor progress against delivery milestones and provide challenge where delivery is at risk. Savings delivery will also be reported regularly to Cabinet through the budget monitoring process. Where delivery risks are identified, mitigating actions will be required to be developed (alternative savings options) and actioned to minimise any impact on the overall financial position. The Council recognises that delivery of the savings

		programme represents one of the key financial risks within the MTFS and this is reflected within the overall financial risk assessment.
Councillor Sheppard	6. Given the £5.691m forecast 2026/27 overspend, what additional assurance has been undertaken that the proposed 2027/28 savings are realistic, achievable and recurring?	The forecast 2026/27 overspend primarily reflects ongoing demand and cost pressures being experienced across local government, particularly within demand-led services. However, a small number of previously agreed savings have been delayed and work is continuing to both identify mitigations and a revised delivery profile. In developing the 2027/28 MTFS, expenditure budgets have been reviewed and updated to reflect the latest forecast demand, inflationary pressures and other known cost drivers. This provides confidence that savings proposals have been developed against expenditure forecasts that reflect the latest known demand and cost pressures.
Councillor Sheppard	7. With the Budget Stabilisation Reserve forecast to fall to £5.977m, what level of reserves does the Council consider prudent, and what contingency is available if savings or income assumptions are not achieved?	The adequacy of reserves is assessed and reported annually within the final budget report by the Section 151 Officer having regard to the Council's financial risks, spending commitments and overall financial resilience. The forecast reduction in the Budget Stabilisation Reserve demonstrates the importance of reducing reliance on reserves to support the revenue budget. The Council's longer-term objective remains to restore financial resilience and maintain reserves at a level adequate with the risks facing the organisation. There is no national statutory minimum level of reserves for UK councils. Each council sets its own minimum reserve balances based on local risk assessments and the advice of the s151 officer. Bury currently holds a general fund reserve of £10m

		which is c4% of the net revenue budget (some councils hold lower %'s than this) and is effectively the current minimum prudent level but will be subject to review and updated in the February budget report. Where savings delivery or income generation assumptions are not achieved, mitigations may include in-year spending controls, alternative savings measures, utilisation of any available contingencies and, as a last resort, the use of reserves where considered appropriate by the Section 151 Officer. The council is working hard to reduce the level of forecast overspend reported at Q1 and reduce the forecast impact on the budget stabilisation reserve.
	Workforce and Services	
Councillor Sheppard	8. What specifically is included within the £14.765m of "non-policy savings", and how much relates to staffing reductions, service capacity or activity?	Non-policy savings primarily comprises efficiency measures, demand control, income generation, contractual savings and other operational changes that do not require Members to make a policy decision to reduce or cease a service. Appendix 1 and Table 7 sets out the total new savings proposed for 2027/28 to 2029/30 of £17.451m, of which £14.765m relates to non-policy savings. The remaining £2.686m relates to proposed policy savings identified in Annex 2. Of the total £17.451m new savings, £5.480m relates to non-policy decision workforce measures, including £3.119m in relation to vacancy management and funding switches. A directorate breakdown of the savings programme is provided in Appendix 1.

		Any staffing implications will be subject to the Council's workforce policies, consultation requirements and equality impact assessment processes where applicable.
Councillor Sheppard	9. The Council's workplan identifies further saving proposals, including significant workforce reductions, to reduce the current £9.585m 2027/28 gap. What is the full anticipated scale and financial cost of these reductions, including redundancy and other workforce transition costs?	Further work is currently being undertaken to develop proposals required to address the remaining budget gap. As a result, the scale of any potential workforce reductions has not yet been finalised. Where workforce changes are proposed, the associated financial implications, including redundancy costs, will be fully assessed as part of the development of each proposal. The Council's approach remains to minimise compulsory redundancies wherever possible and to consider alternative measures including voluntary exit scheme and redeployment opportunities.
Councillor Sheppard	10. What assessment has been made of the cumulative impact of the proposed savings, service reductions and increased charges on vulnerable residents and those least able to absorb additional costs, and how will Equality Impact Assessments influence final decisions? Will those assessments be available to Scrutiny before Cabinet considers the final budget proposals?	The Council has established an officer group to consider the collective impact of the staffing and non-staffing-related decisions contained within this report. This group will co-ordinate the production of an overarching Equality Impact Assessment for the budget as a whole, and quality assurance of non-staffing-related EIA changes. These will be brought forward with the final budget report. Staff-related changes will follow relevant policies, which have already been assessed for impact.
	Specific Service Proposals	
Councillor Sheppard	11. Before the proposed School Crossing Patrol reductions are finalised, will Scrutiny receive the November 2026 recounts/reassessments, location-specific risk assessments and road-safety	The Council assesses crossing points against established School Crossing Patrol Service guidance. Sites are reviewed every two years, or where circumstances change, taking account of factors including pedestrian and traffic volumes,

	evidence underpinning those decisions, particularly for the three sites still requiring review?	vehicle types and speeds, visibility, lighting, road markings and the age of children using the crossing. The service has used local knowledge to RAG rate each crossing point and have determined that the high-priority points will be retained, however the medium and low-priority points are proposed to be disestablished. The current school crossing points have been categorised according to priority as follows: • 6 high priority • 6 medium priority • 26 low priority • 3 requiring further review and traffic counts before a recommendation is made. Where possible these counts will take place during November 2026. However, there is one point at The Heys which is currently out of action as there is a sinkhole adjacent to the crossing point. The whole road is closed off to vehicles, so no traffic is permitted to go down the road, although pedestrian access is still available. This site has been vacant since the patrol retired. It is proposed to retain crossing points designated as high-priority only and disestablish those assessed as medium or low priority. All points have a site specific risk assessment. Copies of these can be shared with Scrutiny. All risk assessments are reviewed for the start of the new academic year in September and at points throughout the academic year if any changes to the site arise.

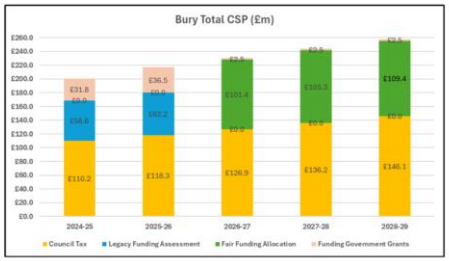
		The Council's Department for Place (Highways/Engineering Division) collate road-safety data, which can also be shared with Scrutiny
Councillor Sheppard	12. Given that the Youth Service proposal identifies a risk of losing preventative provision for vulnerable young people, what assessment has been made of whether reducing Youth Service capacity could increase demand for Early Help, Youth Justice and safeguarding services?	The template included within the budget report does not reflect the latest position. The proposed reduction in spending of £145k is aligned to our Families First Partnership proposal (which is also to be presented at Cabinet on the 14th October), which proposes the establishment of an adolescent offer, and will not impact upon the current youth offer. Scrutiny may wish to consider removing this budget template ahead of Cabinet. Any proposed changes to youth service delivery will be subject to consultation and co-production with our children and young people.
Councillor Sheppard	13. The MTFS relies on additional income from leisure price increases, including an assumption of 2,500 additional members. What evidence supports this assumption, and what contingency exists if membership growth or income falls below forecast?	SLC (a specialist Leisure Consultancy firm) were commissioned to produce a report on the business continuity plan for Leisure services, as well as different management options. They summarised the membership based on 2,220 for the gym area only, not including pool and studio areas. The additional 280 was to cover the sites for these areas over the maturity of the membership development. Based on performance since 2022 membership is stable with existing sites, and membership growth is forecasted for Radcliffe or back fill of movement across sites. Actual membership and income levels will need to be closely monitored to plan, and any under or over performance will be factored into annual MTFS refreshes.
Councillor Sheppard	14. The garden waste proposal identifies risks around participation, fly-tipping and recycling performance. What is the expected net financial benefit under different uptake scenarios, and how will	The principal risks identified relate to lower than anticipated participation levels, changes in recycling performance, increased use of Household Waste Recycling Centres,

	the financial impact of these risks be monitored?	potential impacts on future EPR funding and any increase in fly-tipping or inappropriate waste disposal. Should the proposal proceed, subscription levels, recycling performance, waste tonnages, customer demand, fly-tipping trends, disposal costs and any impacts on EPR funding would be monitored through existing performance management arrangements which are very thorough and detailed. Financial assumptions would be reviewed and updated as actual data becomes available to ensure that the ongoing financial performance of the scheme is understood and any emerging risks are appropriately managed.
	Exceptional Financial Support and long-term sustainability	
Councillor Sheppard	15. The Council is seeking approval to explore Exceptional Financial Support. What further local measures must be exhausted before EFS would be relied upon, and what would be the long-term financial consequences of any capitalisation or additional borrowing?	The report is asking permission for EFS to be explored with MHCLG – that process is intended to achieve a conditional offer of support in advance of the budget setting in February. The terms of those conditions including any local measures which may be required to be actioned are necessarily not known at this stage until we have been through the EFS assessment process. If approved by Government, EFS can take a number of forms: a) **Council Tax increases above the referendum limit** – This would generate additional recurring income for the Council and therefore provide a more sustainable solution than one-off measures. As the additional funding would continue into future years, it would help address the underlying budget gap rather than creating further pressure in subsequent years. *Note a 1%*

		increase in Council Tax is approximately £1.311m of additional funding. b) **Revenue costs to be funded through receipts** This allows qualifying revenue costs to be funded from capital receipts. Whilst this can provide one-off support in 2027/28, it does not create ongoing funding. For example, if £9.5m of capital receipts were used to support the 2027/28 budget, an equivalent pressure would remain to be addressed in 2028/29 unless recurring savings or income were identified. c) **Revenue costs to be funded from borrowing** This allows qualifying revenue expenditure to be funded through borrowing. As with the use of capital receipts, this provides one-off budget support rather than a recurring funding solution. In addition, borrowing creates ongoing financing costs, including interest and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charges, which place further pressure on future budgets. Any use of EFS, particularly where it involves either capital receipts or borrowing, would therefore need to form part of a wider financial recovery strategy focused on delivering recurring savings, increasing recurring income and restoring long-term financial sustainability.
Councillor Sheppard	16. What is the Council's credible long-term route to eliminating the underlying structural budget gap, rather than repeatedly relying on further service reductions, increased charges, reserves, asset disposals or Exceptional Financial Support? What contingency plans are in place if EFS is not forthcoming?	The Council's long-term strategy is centred on bringing recurring expenditure into line with recurring funding through a combination of demand management, service redesigns, prevention, continued review of how services are delivered, digital transformation and growing our funding taxbase. Identifying additional savings and additional income generation necessarily form part of that strategy, the objective is to

		achieve a sustainable financial position that reduces dependence on reserves, asset disposals and other one-off measures. The report sets out that officers are working to identify further budget proposals in advance of budget-setting with exploration of EFS being undertaken as a fall back position if the current forecast gap for 2027/28 cannot be closed sufficiently. In the event that the gap cannot be sufficiently closed through the identification of additional local measures and the council did not receive a conditional offer of Exceptional Financial Support, then the council would be at risk of being unable to set a legal budget with the issue of a Section 114 notice by the s151 officer a potential consequence. The risk of not being accepted for EFS is considered low at this stage informed by there being 36 councils already in receipt of that support in 2026/27 and that number is expected to increase significantly in 2027/28. Recent announcements include c£91m of EFS grants being allocated to 14 councils to help modernise high-cost services and cut emergency dependence and the council will look to develop suitable business cases as part of the EFS process.

Questioner	**Question**	**Answer**
Councillor Birchmore	1. Page 16, section 2.2.2 shows the following table with descriptor:	The reference to the figures being adjusted relates to the treatment of Government grant funding within the legacy Local Government Finance Settlement arrangements. For 2024/25 and 2025/26, legacy grant funding has been separated from the broader legacy assessment to provide a consistent basis

	2.2.2. The graph below sets out the figures for local authority CSP from 2024/25 through to 2028/29. [Note figures for 2024/25 and 2025/26 have been adjusted to ensure a consistent measure of local authority income over time]. The published CSP includes four consolidated service grants which are ringfenced for specific service delivery and have therefore been excluded from the graph below.  8 Please can you explain what is meant by "*figures for 2024/25 and 2025/26 have been adjusted to ensure a consistent measure of local authority income over time*"? The way I read this is: 2024/25 non-council tax funding is £90.40 million 2025/26 non-council tax funding is £98.70 million (9% increase on previous year) 2026/27 non-council tax funding is £103.90 million (5% increase on previous year)	for comparison with the fair funding allocation figures shown for 2026/27 onwards. Council Tax income is forecast to increase as a proportion of the Council's overall funding, meaning the Council is becoming increasingly reliant on locally raised taxation to fund services. The Council is not alone in this position and the trend is reflected across much of local government. For Bury, this challenge is compounded by relatively low growth in the Council Tax Base.

	2027/28 non-council tax funding is £107.80 million (4% increase on previous year) 2028/29 non-council tax funding is £111.90 million (4% increase on previous year) Is this correct? I assume so because you said we are increasingly becoming more reliant on council tax payments. With increasing employment costs and costs of materials, electricity and gas, is it inevitable that all councils in this position will need to make cuts?	
Councillor Birchmore	2. Page 51 (43 in the Revenue Budget Strategy) states the following: "*Ramsbottom is a well-used and substantially utilised facility, with around 1,300 members, but it still operates at an estimated net cost to the Council of around £230k per year*. *In addition to this, remedial capital works are required at Ramsbottom, that are estimated to cost c£1m*	There is a building age and capacity limit at Ramsbottom. Current income generated through memberships, swimming and other activities does not fully cover the costs of running and maintaining an ageing facility and addressing the remedial works required. The building is relatively well used and ongoing performance and reviews of the leisure centre and its membership are in place. There are limits to its potential for growth inactivity – limited pool space due to the closure of Radcliffe – which will be addressed by the new Radcliffe hub - but of course there is a pressure of inflationary costs across the whole of the leisure centre estates including new Radcliffe.

	which equates to an additional £100k revenue cost per year to cover the cost of prudential borrowing, resulting in a total ongoing estimated net cost of £330k. *The centre is valued and active, but financially unsustainable in its own right. Following an assessment of the market (see section on Impact on Fees and Charges) the preferred course of action is to retain the site but increase the charges for Leisure facilities across the estate, to cover the MTFS gap.*" Please can you explain the following: • What do you believe the causes of Ramsbottom being a loss-making facility? • Have any studies been carried out to investigate facility usage at Ramsbottom? • If usage of Ramsbottom was to increase could the facility handle the increased footfall?	Ramsbottom can accommodate additional lessons and usage within the pool area, however this may impact on the number of public swimming sessions and associated income. There is opportunity for weekend and daytime gym growth, however gym growth in peak times is limited by gym capacity. There is limited indoor dry space. A review of additional classes has been explored and being further considered to generate more income, for example chair based activities. But there is a real limitation of indoor space capacity. We have explored potential expansion of the gym areas but it would require additional upfront capital costs and would take a a number of years to be viable. We have explored padel courts but consideration concluded but would require significant upfront capital investment and would take several years before generating a positive return. A wide range of operational options have been explored as part of the leisure review, including opportunities to reduce subsidy through efficiencies, increased income and service redesign. However, the analysis undertaken indicates that the scale of the financial challenge is such that relatively modest operational changes alone would not be sufficient to address the subsidy requirement and address inflationary pressure such as energy costs across the leisure centre estates Overall in the light of the financial position of the council we believe in the need to try and keep Ramsbottom open for the positive and valued contribution it makes the town and the

	• I assume that the increase in fees will apply to fees for use on all sites, is that correct? • Have alternative uses for the facility that could operate alongside its use as a leisure centre been considered to generate funds towards running, what is currently being seen as a loss-making facility? • Have reduced hours openings to make cost savings been considered? • Does the adjoining land (also owned by the Council) have any commercial value?	borough but we need to ensure the three leisure centres operate at least breakeven and are not loss making.
Councillor Birchmore	3. Am I correct in assuming that the £1 million to be invested in Ramsbottom Leisure Centre will be needed to cover the following: • Fixing the exterior of the building, plus gym and pool roof maintenance. • System upgrades: Improving plant and mechanical systems, electrical infrastructure, and ventilation.	Yes to points: Fixing exterior, System upgrades, Interior updates. All of the essential work has been outlined in previous building reports commissioned. Equipment upgrades are not part of this scope of works. Yes - Leisure are working with Place colleagues to lead and support the capital repairs program that needs careful planning and implementation across all sites. Condition Surveys outlined that the works highlighted at both Castle and Ramsbottom are all essential - required from a compliance position. Works will need to be phased. Place Directorate are supporting procurement and programming of all essential

	• Interior updates: Replacing worn flooring, upgrading the changing village, and minor redecoration. • Equipment and commercial improvements: Replacing old equipment and supporting commercial activities to boost membership and income. Please can you provide answers to the following: • Do you have a breakdown of how much this work will cost? • Given the current situation is all this spend considered to be essential at this moment in time? • Would it be possible to postpone some of the work until a later date? • Would carrying any part of this work reduce the	works. Need to ensure that all building compliance is maintained and not deferred further. Yes the majority of the work is to do with plant and machinery improvement that will then reduce repairs and maintenance cost and support improved energy performance. However scheduling of this work required to minimise impact on members and income levels.

	running costs of this facility?	
Councillor Birchmore	4. Core improvements for £3.57 million investment for t. Castle Leisure Centre (page 54) are given in other documents as: • Core Infrastructure: Upgrading vital mechanical systems, plant equipment, and flooring. • Facilities: Improving the condition of areas such as the changing village. • Commercialization: Enhancing spaces to support increased rental offering, new programs, and overall income-generation activities. Please can you answer the following questions: • Do you have a breakdown of how much this work will cost?	Yes - Leisure are working with Place colleagues to lead and support capital the repairs program that needs careful planning and implementation across all sites. Condition Surveys outlined that the works highlighted at both Castle and Ramsbottom are all essential – and required from compliance position. Works will need to be phased. Place Directorate are supporting the procurement and programming of all essential works. Need to ensure that all building compliance is maintained and not deferred further. Yes the majority of the work is to do with plant and machinery improvement that will then reduce repairs and maintenance cost and support improved energy performance. However, scheduling of this work required to minimise impact on members and income levels.

	• Given the current situation is all this work considered to be essential at this moment in time? • Would it be possible to postpone some of the work until a later date? • Would carrying any part of this work reduce the running costs of this facility?	
Councillor Birchmore	5. Page 53 (45 in the Revenue Budget Statement) suggests the following in relation to leisure services: "*If we increase the prices by 20% per year for the next two years (additional 10%) this would incrementally increase the price of a membership from the current cost of £35.75 per month to £42.90 in 27/28, and to £51.48 Per Month in 2028/29. The 2029/30 rates would then go back to a 10% annual increase,*	The options presented in the report are not based solely on increasing prices. The wider leisure strategy is built around a combination of increasing memberships, targeted marketing, expanding swimming lessons, improving utilisation of facilities and developing additional income streams. The intention is to reduce the overall leisure subsidy whilst retaining access to leisure services across the borough. The reports also note that leisure services currently provide support to targeted and vulnerable groups, including subsidised access and concessionary arrangements. These social benefits form part of the wider consideration when decisions are being made about future pricing and service provision. This proposal meets with the LET's principle of enterprise and strengths to allow the authority to be able to maintain its level of service offering wide across the brough. The service offers discount memberships, lessons and session to qualifying residents, along side compliment memberships to serving and veteran of the armed forces. The Service undertakes

	resulting in a cost of £56.63 for 2029/30." Put another way, the cost of membership would increase from £35.75 per month to £56.63 per month in 3 years (or £429 to £679). This represents a 58% increase. The report compares the cost to other commercial facilities and ignores the obvious possibility that residents in some areas may simply stop using the gym altogether. This is a serious concern for less affluent areas and may result in poorer health outcomes, that would ultimately impact on the Council. Please answer the following: • What are the Council's plans to avoid a potential drop of in usage in less affluent areas? • How does this fit with Bury Council's "Let's Do It!"	benchmarking too with other operators in Bury and Greater Manchester. Forecasted fees and charges have been assessed around the estimated increase in members (see earlier information linked to the 2500 membership forecast), which is reflected in the MTFS to account for the incremental estimated supply and demand. Close monitoring of income and membership levels will be carried out, with over or underperformance reflected in annual MTFS refreshes.

	health and wellbeing strategy which claims to focus on community-led health improvement? • Have you analysed this with an estimated supply and demand curve to determine break even points for each price rise, given the potential reduction in usage?	
	Green Waste Subscription	
	6. On paper this may seem like a good idea but there are several significant risks that need to be considered. The report refers to the loss of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding. The following observation was made: "*Evidence from neighbouring GM authorities indicates that charging for garden waste leads to a reduction in kerbside garden waste collections. Following the introduction of charges, garden waste tonnages reduced by*	At present, the Council isunable to quantify any potential impact on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) payments arising from the introduction of a chargeable garden waste service. EPR funding is intended to reimburse local authorities for the net efficient costs of collecting, managing and disposing of household packaging waste and is not specifically allocated to garden waste collections. Whilst evidence from other authorities suggests that the introduction of a garden waste subscription service may reduce garden waste tonnages collected, the effect this may have on future EPR funding remains uncertain. The EPR scheme is still being implemented and the methodology used by PackUK to determine local authority payments will continue to develop. As a result, the Council is not currently able to identify a specific EPR funding value attributable to garden waste collections or accurately quantify any future financial impact.

	16.62% in Stockport and 10.24% in Trafford, despite both authorities providing a weekly food waste collection service." In the past all GM authorities have been beneficiaries from EPR funding, a decrease in green waste could result in a decrease in EPR funding which could potentially offset some of the income raised from subscription-based waste collection. Do we currently know how much EPR funding we get in Bury from green waste collection?	
	7. Page 62 of the agenda acknowledges the risk of "*Increased fly tipping or inappropriate disposal of garden waste*". Unfortunately, there is no real evidence of how the Council proposes to address this other than stating "*Implement proactive communications promoting legal disposal routes, home composting and Household Waste Recycling*	The potential for an increase in fly-tipping and inappropriate disposal of garden waste has been identified as a risk and is reflected within the report. The Council recognises that fly-tipping has environmental, operational and financial impacts and will continue to monitor reports and trends should a chargeable garden waste service be introduced. A range of mitigation measures would be available to residents. These include continued access to the Council's Household Waste Recycling Centre network, promotion of home composting, and clear communications regarding the legal disposal options available for garden waste. Residents would also continue to have the option of subscribing to the garden waste collection service.

	Centres". The reality is that in some areas this is an issue seen fairly regularly. Clearing up fly-tipped waste is fairly costly and time consuming. That should be balanced off against the potential income raised. What realistic plans does the Council have to address potential increased fly-tipping? Have any calculations of additional costs relating to fly-tipping of green waste been made?	It should be noted that garden waste can be disposed of free of charge at Household Waste Recycling Centres and therefore a chargeable kerbside collection service does not remove residents' ability to dispose of garden waste legally. At this stage, no specific financial provision has been included for an increase in fly-tipping related to garden waste. Whilst the risk has been recognised, it is difficult to accurately predict any potential increase in incidents or associated costs. The Council will continue to review evidence from other authorities and monitor local data should the proposal be implemented. The financial assessment contained within the report is based on projected subscription income, implementation costs and service delivery costs. Any future impacts, whether positive or negative, would be monitored as part of the ongoing management of the service.
	8. Page 60 gives an estimate of income generation in 2028/29 of £0.562m. Please answer the following: • How has that figure been arrived at? • How many sign-ups to the scheme would be needed? • What percentage of households in Bury MBC would that represent?	The estimated net income of £0.562m in 2028/29 is based on financial modelling undertaken as part of the development of the proposal. The model assumes an annual subscription charge of £50 per brown bin and a participation rate of approximately 25,000 households. This represents around 50% of the estimated 50,000 households that currently use the garden waste element of the brown bin service. Under these assumptions, the scheme would generate gross annual income of approximately £1.25m per annum (25,000 subscriptions x £50). From this income, allowance has been made for ongoing operational and administrative costs associated with delivering the service, including collection operations, permit administration, customer support,

	• What are the figures for estimated take-up based on?	communications, ICT system support, permit production and distribution, and contract management. These costs are estimated at approximately £688,000 in the first full year of operation. This results in an estimated net saving of £0.562m in 2028/29. The estimated take-up rate has not been presented as a forecast of actual resident behaviour. Rather, it is a planning assumption used for financial modelling purposes and is informed by benchmarking, comparator authority experience and scenario modelling undertaken as part of the business case development. Actual subscription levels could be higher or lower and would be influenced by the final charging structure, consultation outcomes, resident preferences and the detailed design of the scheme.
	Parking Fees 9. Is it correct to say that under Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 section 55 that any money made from council parking accounts must be reinvested into transport, road improvements, or local environmental projects?	Yes, any surplus generated after allowable expenditure, such as direct staff and civil enforcement officer salaries, premises and maintenance costs for car parks and supplies, equipment and administrative support services, should be reinvested into parking services, public transport or highway and road improvements.
	School Crossing Patrol Re-design 10. Page 65, under the heading Workforce states the following:	It is proposed to disestablish 32 crossing points. Of these 32 points, 15 are currently staffed. If this proposal is implemented, these posts would be disestablished and, further to staff consultation, there would be approximate staffing savings of £187,242, based upon an average cost of a SCP at £5,674.

	"*A total of 32 points would be disestablished if high risk only points remain operational, resulting in 15 staffed posts being deleted, 1 post would be redeployed to a vacant high-priority crossing. Points differ in the number of staff hours, based on an average cost of a SCP at £5,674 staffing savings of £187,242.*" • My reading of this is that 32 crossing would no longer be manned. Cost of manning each crossing is on average £5,674 per annum hence the £187,242, is this correct? • Please can you explain the statement regarding 15 staffed posts being deleted, and what relevance this has? • What criteria are you using to define as a "high risk" point? • How many of the 32 points you want to disestablish serve primary schools?	Of the 32 points proposed for disestablishment, 30 currently serve primary schools. The Council assesses crossing points against established School Crossing Patrol Service guidance. Sites are reviewed every two years, or where circumstances change, taking account of factors including pedestrian and traffic volumes, vehicle types and speeds, visibility, lighting, road markings and the age of children using the crossing. The service has used local knowledge to RAG rate each crossing. This is based upon low-priority points having a score less than 10 million, medium priority between 10 million and 20 million, high priority 20 million and over As a non-statutory service under sustained budget pressure, school crossing patrol provision is increasingly being reviewed. When reviewing future options, consideration of wider road safety and active travel measures must be taken into account. Common alternatives include zebra or signal-controlled crossings, traffic calming and, in some areas, school street models. This points to a move away from relying on staffed patrols towards a broader mix of engineering, traffic management and behaviour-change measures. It is ultimately a parent/carer responsibility for ensuring children are safe travelling to and from school. TfGM/Bee Network also publish guidance on safe travel and travelling independently. The current SCP service has reduced over time and has longstanding staffing/ recruitment issues which are common across the country. This coincides with significant GM

	• Although termed as "*non-statutory school crossing patrols*" with a drive to encouraging pupils to walk and cycle to school do you not believe this may be potentially counterproductive? • Does the statement "*parental responsibility for ensuring children are safe travelling to and from school*" not go against encouraging independence for children travelling to and from school? Could this simply be seen as an opt out position for the Council? • Page 65 states the following: "*Whilst school crossing patrols have been seen as an important element in meeting the Council's duties to prevent accidents, promote road safety and sustainable travel to schools, these duties can also be met in other ways*."	activity linked to the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) which includes funding for a road safety activity such as automated crossings. With regards to site prioritisation for new potential controlled crossings, Place colleagues have advised that this is based on several factors as listed below which is fed into a matrix scoring system viz: i) Existing Injury Collision Records ii) Vulnerable Road users at risk iii) Existing Speed records information iv) Existing Traffic Volumes v) Classification of Road / Road Hierarchy vi) Level of Community concern at a particular location vii) Depravation Index viii) Proximity to schools / high footfall generator locations ix) Feasibility / Deliverability to physically introduce a new controlled crossing on site. x) Estimated Costs for any proposed scheme.

	Please can you explain what those other ways are and how those will be funded?	

Questioner	Question	Answer
Councillor Roith	1. Three things were promised at the last meeting and none are in tonight's pack: the location and savings figure for the new 60-place SEND provision, the separate HRA report on in-house services, and the Radcliffe Hub cost overrun figure. When will Members receive each of them?	These questions will be picked up under Matters Arising at the meeting.
Councillor Roith	2. "The report proposes authorising the Section 151 Officer to explore Exceptional Financial Support. Can the Cabinet Member tell us precisely what level of EFS the Council is currently anticipating it may need, what form that support is likely to take, and what conditions MHCLG may impose on Bury in return?"	The report identifies a funding gap of £9.585m which is effectively the current estimate of the maximum level of EFS that would be required. As outlined in the report, however the council is looking to identify additional savings proposals in advance of 2027/28 budget-setting which would then reduce the level of any requirement for EFS support. If approved by Government, EFS can take a number of forms: a) **Council Tax increases above the referendum limit** – This would generate additional recurring income for the Council and therefore provide a more sustainable solution than one-off measures. As the additional funding would continue into future years, it would help

		address the underlying budget gap rather than creating further pressure in subsequent years. *Note a 1% increase in Council Tax is approximately £1.311m of additional funding.* b) **Revenue costs to be funded through receipts** This allows qualifying revenue costs to be funded from capital receipts. Whilst this can provide one-off support in 2027/28, it does not create ongoing funding. For example, if £9.5m of capital receipts were used to support the 2027/28 budget, an equivalent pressure would remain to be addressed in 2028/29 unless recurring savings or income were identified. c) **Revenue costs to be funded from borrowing** This allows qualifying revenue expenditure to be funded through borrowing. As with the use of capital receipts, this provides one-off budget support rather than a recurring funding solution. In addition, borrowing creates ongoing financing costs, including interest and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) charges, which place further pressure on future budgets.
Councillor Roith	3. "Can Cabinet confirm whether the EFS being explored by Bury would actually provide the Council with additional government cash, or whether it would simply give Bury permission to fund its revenue	The Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) currently being explored by Bury would not provide additional government funding/grant to support the Council's budget gap. Instead, EFS typically provides flexibilities such as the use of capital receipts, additional borrowing or council tax increases, subject to Government approval.

	shortfall through asset sales and/or additional borrowing?"	While the Government has recently provided EFS grants to some authorities, these have been limited to councils already receiving EFS and must be used to fund specific and additional transformation activity rather than to fund an in-year budget gap.
Councillor Roith	4. "The report says the Council is refreshing and expanding its Accelerated Land and Property Disposal Programme to generate capital receipts, at the same time as it is exploring Exceptional Financial Support. Can Cabinet confirm how much it expects this disposal programme to raise, and whether those capital receipts are now being relied upon to help close the £9.585 million 2027/28 funding gap?"	The potential scale and delivery profile of additional capital receipts through land and property sales is currently being reviewed. The report notes that the preference under an EFS arrangement would be to use capital receipts to support any budget gap rather than prudential borrowing, as prudential borrowing would need to be repaid and increase the forecast funding gap.
Councillor Roith	5. "The report says that EFS could involve a capitalisation direction and potentially borrowing, while also acknowledging that additional borrowing would increase the budget gap because of interest costs. Given that the Council is already forecasting higher borrowing costs as loans are refinanced at current interest rates, can Cabinet state the maximum	As per the previous response, use of capital receipts would be preferred to prudential borrowing given the revenue implications of additional borrowing. Based on the current estimated budget gap of £9.5m for 2027/28 (which officers are working on additional proposals to reduce), borrowing that amount over 20 years at an assumed interest rate of 6% would result in additional annual revenue costs of approximately £1.045m, including both interest and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). On this basis, every £1m of additional borrowing would generate ongoing annual revenue costs of around £110k.

	additional borrowing that it would be prepared to undertake under EFS, and what annual revenue cost that borrowing would impose on future budgets?"	Budget assumptions will be refreshed ahead of the Final Budget Report and, therefore, the budget gap and any associated financing requirement may increase or decrease.

Questioner	**Question**	**Answer**
Councillor Rydeheard	1. Point 4.2.8 confirms we have a number of loans which are reaching maturity. Please can you confirm what loans we have which are reaching maturity and how much is left to pay on them?	All maturity loans, mixture of lenders PWLB and other Local Authorities. 2026/27 - £50.55m 2027/28 – £37m 2028/29 – £10m 2029/30 - £40m
Councillor Rydeheard	2. Appendix 1 on page 41 of the agenda pack notes a new "*Review of discretionary payments to external organisations (The Met, Fusiliers Museum, Citizens Advice Bureau)*" to take place. Please can you confirm what this review will entail?	The review is to discuss impacts with the relevant organisations. CAB is unaffected as although the PH contribution will stop, the contract within Corporate Core is able to continue at the current levels through existing budgets. MET and Fusiliers have been contacted to start conversations around these contributions and the proposal to stop them.
Councillor Rydeheard	3. Appendix 1 on page 41 of the agenda pack notes a new "*Increase to grant income linked to additional bids and applications*" being reviewed –	It will involve monitoring what new grants are announced, and then ensuring that where possible/applicable we bid for the funding that would support existing services. So we are not able to specify which grants at this stage, as depends on what

	please may you confirm what grants to which this refers?	is announced and the conditions imposed by the granting body re additionality. The expertise in the team to support wider services with grant bids will be utilised, aiming to maximise the likelihood of successful bids and generate associated financial benefits to the councils bottom line.
Councillor Rydeheard	4. Appendix 1 on page 42 of the agenda pack notes a £53,000 saving being down to a strengthened counter fraud approach. I am concerned by this, as it implies that we have spent £53,000 at least, in previous years, on potentially fraudulent spending – is this right? Please can you clarify this?	The proposal is to expand the Fraud team on an invest to save basis with the potential financial savings being achieved across wider council budgets through fraud identification and financial recovery and pro-active fraud (and related costs) avoidance. The outcome of the work already undertaken and the financial benefits are reported regularly to the Audit Committee. The investment will help to build on the positive counter fraud work already undertaken through the annual National Fraud Initiative which, once data matches have been reviewed often results in the recovery of overpayments, prevention of future losses, and the identification of savings. Common areas at risk of fraud where the additional resource will enhance coverage includes: o Targeted audit reviews of high-value or high-risk Direct Payment expenditure. o Independent peer review of Direct Payment audits completed by the section, strengthening assurance and consistency.

		o Targeted review of duplicate or anomalous payments processed through the Unit4 financial system. o Proactive checks on purchase card expenditure. o Proactive checks on Council Tax awarded support. o Proactive checks on the Crisis and Resilience Fund (merger of Welfare Payments and Discrete Housing Payments). o Proactive checks on the current White Account Forms and C61 payments.
Councillor Rydeheard	5. Appendix 1 on page 35 of the agenda pack notes a £258,000 saving being down to catering at the Radcliffe Hub café. What is the option being explored here, exactly?	The saving reported is to be achieved through income generation. The figure reported is the net operating surplus that will contribute to the corporate overheads and hence support the council's bottom line. The introduction of a cafe at the new Radcliffe Hub would be an additional service provided to users of the new Hub and delivered by the school and commercial catering team. The business case, as reported to the Commercial Board, will deliver these savings subject to the assumptions on footfall and minimum spend being met. These were set at prudent levels to ensure the risk of non-delivery was minimized and will be reviewed through the normal monthly monitoring process. As reported in the business case there is scope to mitigate any non-delivery through variance of operating hours and services provided should the foot fall not be achieved.

Councillor Rydeheard	6. Appendix 1 on page 35 of the agenda pack notes a £75,000 saving being down to the removal of a waste collection route. Please could more details be provided by this and reassurance to residents who regularly experience missed collections?	The £75,000 saving reflects the removal of one waste collection route through operational efficiencies and revised deployment of resources across the service. The saving is based on the service's assessment that collections can continue to be delivered effectively within a revised operating model, without reducing collection frequencies for residents. Maintaining service performance remains a priority and any changes would be carefully managed to minimise disruption and ensure residents continue to receive a reliable waste collection service.

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