

COUNCIL

1 APRIL 2015

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

1. Sue Smith

The upcoming BL9 Weekender planned for the JD Stadium will undoubtedly be a great event for those who are attending.

However, taking into account local residents and in particular the number of elderly in the vicinity...

What assurance can Cllr Connolly give to those residents who may have concerns regarding possible anti-social behaviour, noise, parking problems and the general disruption this event will cause over the course of the weekend?

A. This is the first such event to be planned at the J D Stadium and I'm sure all parties hope it will be a well run and successful event and that those attending have an enjoyable time.

But, I can reassure Ms Smith and all residents living in the vicinity of the stadium that their concerns are uppermost in our minds.

The Council is proactively seeking reassurances that matters relating to crowd management, traffic arrangement, crowd dispersal, emergencies, health and safety, waste management and noise management are dealt with to our satisfaction. The premises licence granted to the club require that detailed operating plans dealing with these matters are prepared for each planned event. It is up to the club and promoter to show they can run a successful event. We are currently awaiting submission of those plans. Only when the Council and Police are 100% satisfied that appropriate controls are in place will the necessary certificates be issued. Redvales ward Councillors are also making representations to the Club on behalf of residents.

2. Geraldine Green

Would the Leader of the council agree that empty dilapidated properties in private ownership create a blight for areas affected and are a wasted resource, given the shortage of high quality and affordable social housing in Bury?

As a long term Prestwich resident I share the strong feelings of local residents that action is needed to tackle three empty and derelict properties on Heys Road that have been vacant for over ten years.

Could the leader of the council give a firm deadline for the resolution of the problem of these three houses?

A. I totally agree that dilapidated empty properties create blight and are a wasted resource at a time when we need more houses. That is why the Council has given priority to this area of work and has had significant success in cutting the number of long term empty properties by 200 (over 10% of the total) in the past couple of years.

The empty properties on Heys Road, Prestwich are recognized as a particular problem. Due to unusual circumstances of this case, including ownership, developing solutions to bring the properties back into use on a permanent basis are complex and lengthy. Significant work has been, and will continue to be, undertaken as Compulsory Purchase becomes a more likely option for these properties. How long this will take is somewhat difficult to predict as we need to follow due legal process. Timescales for CPOs depends on a number of factors and usually can take anywhere between 6-12 months, depending upon whether they are contested.

3. Sian Crosby

I attended the council meeting in January on behalf of the Save Bury Children's Centres campaign in order to present our petition protesting against the closures. We attended that meeting anticipating, in accordance with the petitions procedure stated on the council's website at the time the petition was created, signed and submitted, that a full debate would follow. This did not happen. We now understand that the council had changed its petitions procedure on 11th December, 4 days before the petition was presented, and had decided to follow this new procedure, despite the fact that no notification had been given to the petition organiser about this change in procedure and, most importantly, despite the fact that the council's website had not been updated to show this change. It was not in fact updated until 19th December, 4 days after the petition had been submitted. Will the council now acknowledge that the decision to deny council the opportunity to debate the matter was wrong, and that by failing to apply the procedure stated on the website at the time the petition was submitted an injustice was done not only to those campaigners who spent hours obtaining the signatures, but also to the 3000 Bury residents who signed the petition? In addition, what assurances can the council offer Bury residents that they are entitled to rely on the information displayed on the council's website, which is after all the main means by which the council communicates with the people it serves?

A. Thank you for your question Mrs Crosby.

I am aware that you appealed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24 March about the way in which your petition was dealt, and it was acknowledged that mistakes were made, particularly in terms of uploading information about the new

procedure on the web site. I am also aware that further recommendations were made in terms of the handling of petitions in future. This included an assurance that petition organisers would be informed immediately of changes in procedure changes in procedure.

I would like to acknowledge the excellent work that you and your fellow organisers put into the petition around children's centres and I fully understand why, after such a tremendous effort, you feel let down at the way your petition was handled at Council on 28 January. For this I apologise and would assure you that lessons have been learnt.

However, I hope that you can take great pride from the impact that the petition had in terms of the extensive consultation process and in terms of the policy relating to children's centres.

4. Pauline Minsky

In the light of Bury councils decision not to debate the recent Children's centres proposal at full council in January – despite the 3000 Bury residents signing a petition against proposals to close the children's centres – how do the council expect residents to have faith in its democratic processes?

A. I would suggest that the Council has an excellent record on listening to it's residents. In this particular instance, your comments regarding the Petitions Procedure have been listened to and taken on board; you have been given a commitment that a position statement on children's centres will feature as an item at the first Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the new Municipal Year; and finally, and most importantly, your comments have been taken on board in shaping our policy on children's centres.

In particular, I would like to focus on the extensive consultation which was carried out and which I see as a great example of democracy in action.

A 12 week consultation began on the 15th September 2014 and closed on the 15th December 2014. However, an additional extra week was added on to the planned 12 week consultation;

A wide range of consultation methods were used including to ensure that as many people as possible affected by the service were consulted. Further requests for Survey Monkey to be set up using the questions from the consultation resulted in this being arranged and the completed forms were all converted to this

format to allow for analysis. An additional public consultation meeting was arranged, advertised in the Bury Times in the Town Hall on Thursday 4th December, 3 people came but didn't stay. At the end of the consultation there were 359 completed Survey Monkey forms, as well as narrative and feedback from groups and individuals.

All this and the petition were fed into the final analysis which shaped future policy and the decision of Cabinet on 21 January. As a result of this, for instance, the Butterstile and Stepping Stones Children's Centres remain as Spokes in Prestwich and Radcliffe.