

## **Council Meeting – 1 April 2015**

### **Questions:-**

#### **The Leader of the Council**

##### **1. Councillor Gunther**

Given that Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls according to the national news has stated he would not change anything in Chancellor George Osborne's budget would the Leader join us in congratulating the Chancellor on his excellent budget especially considering the dire financial situation the Conservative led coalition inherited five years ago whereupon taking office one Labour MP famously stated Good Luck, there isn't any money?

**A. Madam Mayor I most certainly will not congratulate the Chancellor but I will congratulate Cllr Gunther for lifting the lid on her party's economic record.**

**Labour left the Tories with a recovering economy, and quarterly growth of 1% but by the end of 2010, the economy was contracting again, at -0.2%, and it has now taken four years to get almost to the level of recovery that Labour had left behind.**

**Under George Osborne's stewardship, and by own estimates, the national debt will have grown by 26% of GDP between 2010 and 2015. In the last 200 years of economic history there have only been three periods of debt accumulation worse than George Osborne's tenure as Chancellor of the Exchequer and two of those were World Wars and one was under another Tory Chancellor!**

**Not only has George Osborne added more to the national debt than any Labour government in history, he has also spectacularly missed all of his headline economic predictions. By the time the current parliament ends in 2015 Osborne will have borrowed £207 billion more than he claimed he was going to in 2010 in order to make the UK economy £128 billion smaller than he said it was going to be. He has also had the UK stripped of their AAA rating by the Credit Rating Agencies for the first time since the 1970s and overseen the longest sustained decline in wages in economic history.**

**In his latest Budget the Chancellor has revealed that thanks to the failure of his policies we now face cuts in public spending that the Office of Budget Responsibility have said will mean a "much sharper squeeze on real spending in 2016-17 and 2017-18 than anything seen over the past five years" which is economist speak for 'you ain't seen nothing yet'!**

**So I'd like to thank Cllr Gunther for coming clean and admitting that the Tories stand for broken promises, lower growth, higher borrowing and devastating cuts to public services.**

## **2. Councillor James**

Can the Leader confirm that work is underway to address traffic issues in and around Bury town centre and can he also confirm that as part of this he has already asked Officers to look into removing the bus lane on Rochdale Road?

**A. I'm very happy to confirm that I asked officers to look at this issue back in 2014. Several meetings have been held with colleagues from Transport for Greater Manchester who control the Key Route Network which includes the A58, we are talking to Manchester City Council about traffic light phasing and we are about to go to statutory consultation on the removal of the bus lane.**

**We know that many of the problems are caused by Bury being a victim of its own success but we are determined not to let this success undermine us. We have also refreshed the approach to town centre management in Bury and this will help us to take a wider look at all these issues, not just those caused by road layouts.**

## **3. Councillor Carter**

Can the Leader tell us what the current situation is with HSBB in Affetside and can residents look forward to HSBB in the near future?

**A. The Greater Manchester Get Digital Faster Programme is rolling out faster speed to businesses and residents across Greater Manchester. On completion Greater Manchester will be among the most advanced, high speed cities in Europe. This is good for Bury residents and Bury businesses.**

**The Council has contributed £312,500 towards the Get Digital Faster programme and in addition we have invested to bring Broadband Connection Vouchers to Bury businesses, registered charities and social enterprises. Eligible organisations can apply for up to £3,000 to cover the costs of connectivity.**

**Affetside was put forward as a priority area for Bury and the BT Openreach cabinet has been enabled. However premises in Affetside will not experience improvements in speeds due to their physical distance from BT Openreach Cabinets. There is nothing the Council can do to help with this although the fact that the cabinet is enabled should mean that improved speeds will ultimately follow, as improvements in technology emerge.**

## **4. Councillor Haroon**

Can the Leader give an update on the proposals to increase extra care provision in the Borough?

**A. The Council is facilitating and supporting two new extra care schemes to be provided by our partners over the next 2-3 years as follows:**

- A new Extra Care Scheme is proposed to be built by Six Town Housing on the site of former William Kemp Heaton, St Peters Road, Bury**

- **It will provide 60 units of high quality extra care accommodation of similar to the Red Bank Scheme at Radcliffe**
- **This is partly funded by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) who have provided a grant of £1,850,000 towards this scheme**
- **The programme indicates that planning permission will be sought in November 2015, with a proposed start on site in February 2016**
- **One of our other housing association partners is also proposing a 33 unit extra care scheme in Prestwich which is similarly supported by HCA grant and is likely to commence in late 2016/17**

**I welcome schemes such as these. They provide another housing option for older people who need that little bit more help and we will pursue further opportunities for extra care as appropriate so that more people can be helped to live independently.**

**The Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2011/12 identified a need for additional extra care units in the borough and there is evidence of strong demand for this type of accommodation, based upon occupancy levels at existing schemes.**

#### **5.Councillor Wright**

With most planning applications now being delegated to Officers, the duration of Planning Control Meetings has drastically shortened over the years and during the past few months meetings have lasted from just 7 minutes to 1 hour 15 minutes.

Does the Leader at last agree with me that in these difficult times of reduced budgets and with Members receiving generous allowances, this outdated perk of providing free meals for members at any meeting, can no longer be justified and should cease immediately as we should all be leading by example?

**A. Thank you for your question Councillor Wright. I fully accept that in the current climate that we should explore any opportunities to make financial savings but I really think that the use of the word "perk" in this instance is inappropriate and quite frankly insulting to those Members who dedicate themselves to what can be a particularly onerous committee. Members of the committee are expected to attend site visits, training sessions and briefing sessions which can mean that they are engaged in their duties for over 7 hours on the day of a committee meeting. We have taken steps to reduce the cost of providing meals and we have achieved this but in my view it is totally unreasonable to expect a Member to undertake their vitally important and often demanding duties for 7 hours without any sustenance.**

**I should also point out that during the recent Peer review undertaken by the Planning Advisory Service, it was highlighted that the number of applications dealt with under delegated powers within Bury was actually lower than many other Local Planning Authorities.**

**6. Councillor FitzGerald**

Please could the Council confirm how much has been made available for the improvement of play areas in the Borough?

**A. I'm delighted to say that the Budget amendment proposed by the Labour Group, and passed by Council, allocated an additional £250,000 to improve play areas and make life safer for our children. In addition we allocated £200,000 towards improvements to the environment on our housing estates and part of this will also be committed to improving play facilities.**

**7. Councillor Black**

Will the Leader join me in welcoming the news that legislation has been passed to ensure standardised plain packaging of cigarettes from May 2016. Can the Leader tell me what difference he hopes this will make to the health of residents in Bury?

**A. It is widely recognised that smoking remains the major preventable cause of premature death and disease in the UK, with half of all long term smokers dying from their addiction (ASH, 2014). Whilst significant work has been undertaken over the last decade to reduce smoking with such things as minimum pricing and prohibiting smoking in public places, there still remains 18.2% of adults in Bury who smoke (v.s. England average of 18.4%). Evidence on plain packaging by the Public Health Research Consortium found that there is strong evidence to support plain packaging in helping to reduce smoking rates. The research and evidence shows that plain packaging would reduce the attractiveness and appeal of tobacco products, increase the effectiveness of health warnings and messages, and reduce the use of design techniques that may mislead consumers about the harmfulness of tobacco products.**

**8. Councillor Simpson**

Please will the Leader confirm that the decision to provide funding of £2m to Prestwich means that the Council is serious about delivering regeneration for this important part of the Borough?

**A. When the Council provided £500,000 of funding for improvements to the A56 corridor through the centre of Prestwich Village it was made clear that this should be used as the catalyst to attract external funding and over the past 12 months the Council has worked hard to persuade Transport for Greater Manchester to contribute to the improvements. This has paid dividends and TfGM are now contributing £500,000 of their own money.**

**Various options for the road are being worked up but of course it is essential that there is a full funding package in place before going too far with the scheme. As a result of the Council's commitment to Prestwich we have now been able to identify funding from current budgets to cover the cost of the remaining £1m that would be required to improve the A56 and at it's meeting on 25 February the Council agreed to make this money available in the coming year.**

**This is fantastic news and the funding provides a real opportunity to kick start the regeneration of Prestwich Village. Work will now continue to bring together options for improving facilities along the A56 for pedestrians, shoppers and drivers that can be put before Prestwich residents and businesses.**

**However we also recognise that this funding must be used to pump-prime wider regeneration and that the A56 cannot be looked at in isolation. We therefore also intend to redouble our efforts to engage with other stakeholders and in particular the owners of the Longfield Centre, to bring forward just such a wider set of proposals for public consultation.**

#### **9. Councillor Matt Bailey**

At December's meeting, Cllr Isherwood assured myself and Radcliffe East residents that the dangerous road conditions around Top o' th' Cross and Close Park would be improved with "enhanced warning signs on the approaches to the bends" in the short term, and then provide "increased adhesion for vehicles travelling round these bends". To date nothing has been done, and there have been further accidents in the meantime. Can the Leader or Cabinet Member please explain why these promises have been broken?

**A. I can confirm that investigatory works into how the Council can best provide effective improvements to the signing, lining and carriageway surface at these locations are currently ongoing.**

#### **10. Councillor Walker**

At a recent Council Meeting, Cllr Carter asked Cllr Lewis why there was no longer cafe provision in Bury Art Gallery and she replied to her Labour colleague that it was due to stress and ill health caused to the operator by people questioning the business arrangements for this new service.

Could I therefore ask how many others tendered for the cafe provision and have we gone back to them now the chosen operator has discontinued and moreover does Cllr Lewis believe any questions posed by Internal Audit could also be contributory factors? Cllr Lewis said issues raised by Internal Audit were insignificant so does she believe "medium risks" to be insignificant?

**A. The tendering process to which Cllr Walker refers took place over 2 years ago. So the Service is seeking new up to date tenders based on the experience gained through what was always openly tested as a pilot approach. We are keen to maintain the high quality threshold of catering and the vintage aesthetic which visitors found very attractive.**

**On the second part of the question, I have no doubt that the hostility of Councillors opposite contributed more to the loss of the supplier. The Internal Audit was internal. The previous supplier had no access to the audit and no interest in it. As the supplier left, my judgement that issues raised were insignificant is vindicated since none of the risks mentioned manifest themselves.**

#### **11. Councillor O'Brien**

Improvements to parking in Prestwich are underway, along with public consultation to develop a Prestwich Parking Strategy which will set priorities for long term change. How can residents, businesses and drivers take part in this?

**A. I am very grateful to Councillors O'Brien and Quinn for raising this important issue. The Council's Vision for parking in Prestwich is to provide a balanced mix of parking to meet the needs of the community and their visitors, supporting the economic vitality of Prestwich, and the quality of life for residents. We are very keen to hear what all parts of the Prestwich the community thinks and what is important to them.**

**The consultation was launched at the recent meeting of the Prestwich Township Forum and people can make their contribution via a simple questionnaire. This will be shown on the front page of the Council's website and paper copies will be distributed around public buildings in Prestwich including the Library. A message publicising the consultation has been sent round on Twitter to active Prestwich retweeters, including the Prestwich Guide. An e mail will also be sent to our Township Forum, community and business contacts email list, which reaches a large number of local people. The consultation period ends on Friday 10 April.**

#### **12. Councillor Whitby**

Can the Leader report on the increase in demand for food caddies and bags and explain the reasons?

**A. Between 01 July 2014 and 17 March 2015 4400 brown bins were requested by residents via the Council's Contact Centre. Over the same time period 4700 black kitchen caddies were requested by residents via the Council's Contact Centre. Between 01 July 2014 and 27 March 2015 92,000 rolls of compostable food caddy liners have been booked out of Stores. There are 52 liners to a roll so this equates to 4.8m individual liners (or 58 liners per household based on 82,000 properties in the borough. The above figures can only suggest that, following the announcement of the proposal back in July of last year to introduce 3 weekly refuse collections, a great many households have made the conscious decision to start recycling their food waste when they did not do so previously.**

**This is an excellent example of how people's recycling behaviour has changed following the reduction in refuse collection frequency.**

### **13. Councillor FitzGerald**

Please will the Leader tell us whether the Government's household projection figures that were announced recently fly in the face of the Council's determination to protect the green belt?

**A. The simple answer to this is yes. The Labour Group on this Council is determined to safeguard the borough's Green belt and so the draft Core Strategy that we produced was based on a projection of 400 new houses a year because we felt that this was the maximum that the borough could sustain without impacting on the Green Belt. The projection foisted on us by the Government means that 2,363 more dwellings are needed in the Borough than were being planned for in the Core Strategy and it is absolutely clear that this level of housing growth cannot be accommodated within the urban area of the Borough.**

### **14. Councillor Hussain**

Could the Leader of the Council explain if Bury Council takes any special action for potholes in Cycling Lanes in Bury?

**A. Bury Council's current policy is to repair potholes within the carriageway including cycle lanes which are 40mm deep or over, except for pedestrian crossing points, where potholes of 25mm deep or over are repaired. Bury Council's criteria for repair is in accordance with "Well Maintained Highways – Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management". This national code of practice is currently under review. Bury Council will review its current policies, including those for the repair of potholes within cycle lanes, when the updated code of practice is published.**

### **15. Councillor Frith**

Please will the Leader confirm that at the appeal being heard by the Planning Inspector relating to the proposed anaerobic digestion facility at Fletcher Bank the Council is vigorously defending its decision that this is an inappropriate development in the green belt?

**A. I am very happy to confirm that the Council stands by its decision to refuse the original application and throughout the public Inquiry has vigorously defended its position that this is an inappropriate development in the Green Belt.**

### **16. Councillor Parnell**

Can the Leader please give us an update on the road works on Church Street West in Radcliffe?

**A. The works in Church Street West are a major £3 million project being carried out by United Utilities, driven by Environment Agency requirements to clean up the River Irwell. They are constructing a 10m long, 5m wide and 8m deep reinforced concrete chamber in Church Street West, with a new outfall structure on**

**the river bank. The project has been a challenging one technically, with a number of services to be dealt with – some of which were uncharted – existing deep sewers in a poor condition and a collapse of a section of the river bank at a crucial stage of the works.**

**UU have been working additional hours to try to recover time lost; they have also adjusted working methods to expedite progress. The Lead Member for the Environment met with UU representatives recently to discuss progress; it is currently expected that the works will be completed in June. UU have been discussing with the organisers of the Radcliffe Carnival how that important community event can be accommodated through their works.**

#### **17. Councillor Southworth**

Given that some of the most disaffected and disadvantaged children in the Borough attend the Pupil Learning Centre, can the Leader assure me that the delays and uncertainties around the move to Radcliffe have been resolved and that the move will take place as planned with the school opening in January 2016 with no further delays?

**A. Detailed plans are now being put into place to undertake the necessary works and will be considered for final sign off by Cabinet next Wednesday (8 April). Assuming that they are agreed at that time we are confident that the work will be completed in time for the PRU to move in by January 2016. Once completed the building will provide an excellent venue for the Pupil Learning Centre to work with some of our most vulnerable students.**

#### **18. Councillor Daisy Bailey**

Residents and business owners in Radcliffe Town Centre are fed up of hearing about delay after delay involved with the roadworks on Church Street West. Can the Leader state how many contacts have been made since Christmas to date from the Council to United Utilities demanding action be taken to speed up the completion date of these roadworks? If this cannot be provided, can he state the ways that the Council has advocated for residents and business owners in securing fair recompense from United Utilities?

**A. It is appreciated that the works on Church Street West are taking a significant time to complete. However, it should also be appreciated that this is a major project which is being driven by the requirements of the Environment Agency and that many of the problems encountered e.g. the loss of a substantial amount of the embankment into the river has been out of the control of the contractor but nevertheless resulted in the requirement to carry out a substantial amount of additional work with inevitable delays. Officers of the Council met with United Utilities, Transport for Greater Manchester and First Bus on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015 to discuss the project and the requirement to close Dale Street for 3 weeks (this followed a previous meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014 between officers of the Council and United Utilities). It was agreed that the road could be closed as the chamber in which the control device for the works was to be placed had been surveyed and was found to be structurally**

**unsafe and there was also a collapse within the sewer. Once again this was unforeseen additional works but the contractor confirmed that they were looking at alternative methods of working and would also, whenever practical be working longer hours to pull back time lost by the setbacks. This arrangement met with the Councils requirements to try to achieve an earlier completion date. Officers are in frequent telephone contact with United Utilities about their scheme and its impact.**

**More recently, United Utilities have met with Councillor Rishi Shori and Ivan Lewis MP and also with Councillor Isherwood in order to discuss in more detail the project, the delays encountered and the estimated completion date. United Utilities are also working closely with the Carnival Committee to ensure that if possible the Carnival will be able to take place without any revisions to the route. With regards to fair recompense from United Utilities for residents and business owners, this is a matter between them and United Utilities, as provided for by statute and is not something in which the Council should be directly involved. Further information is available on the United Utilities website.**

#### **19. Councillor Gartside**

Will the Leader join me in welcoming the recent significant falls in unemployment, the proportion of working age people on out of work benefits, percentage of households that experience fuel poverty, and the total Job Seekers Allowance claimants between the ages of 16&24 in Bury?

**A. The sad fact is that nearly 25% of Bury's working age population is economically active thanks to this Government's failed economic policies. Councillor Gartside might also do well to remember that since the roll out of Universal Credit the number of Job Seekers Allowance claimants massively underestimates the true level of unemployment. In Bury this is evidenced by the fact that there are an additional 580 individuals on Universal Credit who are not in employment and in the absence of Universal Credit they would have been on Job Seekers Allowance.**

**JSA claimants numbers are also an inaccurate measure due to the impact of the draconian and targeted sanctions regime that the Department for Work and Pensions is using to drive down claimant numbers and costs.**

**So no, I won't join Councillor Gartside in crowing about the level of unemployment being suffered by our residents.**

**What I will do is celebrate the fact that this Council is committed to doing everything it can to tackle the misery of unemployment, especially amongst our young people and we have worked extremely hard since 2012 to ensure all our young people can fulfil their potential. The work that this Council has done under our Backing Young Bury Campaign has recently been recognised nationally as good practice.**

## **20. Councillor Southworth**

Can the Leader join me and the other Labour Councillors for Elton in thanking the Officers responsible for the plans for the expansion and development of Burr's Country Park. Given that the scale of the plans demonstrate the need for a large capital investment, can the Leader outline where this is coming from, and the timescales involved?

**A. The Burrs Country Park Strategy will operate on a 15-year timescale and will be split into three 5-year phases. The strategy seeks to capitalise on the success of the Borough in developing a strong and vibrant visitor economy and will help to generate higher visitor numbers and longer stays in the Borough. This will encourage wider investment in the park and will have knock on benefits for the wider Irwell Valley. One of the key aspirations of the work will be to construct a station on the East Lancashire Railway at Burrs and an extension of the adjacent Caravan Club site in Phase 1. Once complete, this transformational project will support and enhance Bury's growing visitor offer by creating a direct link between the park and Bury town centre's key attractions including Bury Market, the Transport Museum, Fusilier Museum, The Met Theatre, Bury Art Gallery and the town's vibrant night-time economy. The Council will seek to work in partnership with relevant organisations and local volunteering groups to help deliver the strategy whilst pursuing opportunities for capital investment, inward investment and external funding streams wherever possible to help deliver individual projects.**

## **21. Councillor Whitby**

Does the Leader think that the amount of money wasted by the Government on the Universal Credit Scheme is little short of a scandal?

**A. Again, a very simple answer. Yes, it is waste on a colossal scale and it reflects a litany of broken promises and incompetence by the Government. They promised one million people would be claiming Universal Credit by April 2014. but the latest figures show only 26,940 people on the new benefit, fewer than 3% of the people that they claimed would be on it by now. At this rate it will take 1,571 years to roll out Universal Credit. The National Audit Office has reported that £344m had been invested in Universal Credit IT but that the value of the assets created was £125m – little more than a third of the sum invested. Waste on such a large scale almost beggars belief. The difference between these two figures would fund Bury Council for almost two years! In 2011, we were told by the Government that transition to Universal Credit would be complete by 2017, a date that was then six years away. Now we are told that the transition to Universal Credit will be complete by 2021 at the earliest – a date which is still six years away! Iain Duncan Smith promised Universal Credit would save taxpayers £1.7billion in reduced error and fraud but now he's admitted that the Government has cut the amount of planned savings by two thirds and so I'm sure all Members would join me in fully supporting Rachel Reeves' call for the National Audit Office to do an immediate review of this failing programme.**

## **22. Councillor Heneghan**

When the Government devolved the Social Fund to Councils it cut the funding by half. It has now cut the funding completely leaving the most vulnerable people in society at risk of severe hardship. Please will the Leader tell us how the Council is responding to this?

**A. Given all of our experiences with this Government this dreadful cut did not come as a complete surprise and as a prudent Council we have planned ahead in such a way that we have been able to safeguard sufficient resources to allow the scheme to continue albeit at a reduced level. At it's meeting on 8 April the Cabinet will be considering a report that sets out how we intend to cope with the funding cut and our starting point will be that we will be continuing with our current approach of providing support for both crisis and re-settlement claims. This will help the most vulnerable in the community without removing the existing safety nets. We also intend to safeguard payments to those fleeing domestic violence due to the vulnerability of people who have been affected by this appalling blight.**

**We will be continuing to deliver support using a very real partnership approach with agencies such as the CAB and Porchbox and we will continue to fund the provision of financial advice to customers in order to maximise their incomes and provide a better solution to debt and other financial problems. This means that the scheme remains focussed on those customers most in need whilst also making provision for those customers falling outside the scope by signposting them to alternative providers.**

## **23. Councillor Bevan**

Will the Council Leader join me in thanking the officers of the planning and legal departments of this council for their hard work during the planning inquiry into the appeal by Marshalls and Peel over the proposed AD Plant in Ramsbottom?

**A. Member thanks is noted from both Planning and Legal Services.**

## **24. Councillor Jones**

Can the Leader comment on the decision by the Chancellor to reduce and freeze in some instances the price of alcohol and comment on how this will affect the health of the population.

**A. The Government's decision to reduce and freeze duty on wine, beer, cider and spirits shows the Government has abandoned any serious efforts to tackle alcohol-related harm. During this Parliament they had an opportunity to make a real difference to people's lives and protect public services but instead they ingratiate themselves with the alcohol industry. Indeed, speaking in the House of Commons Osborne said he had dropped duty thanks to the "persistent campaigning of my honourable friends", referring to a number of Conservative MPs lobbying for cuts to alcohol duty. It is estimated that alcohol misuse costs nationally are over £21**

**billion a year, and public services are being stretched as a result. BMA board of science chair Baroness Sheila Hollins stated 'We know that minimum pricing reduces alcohol related harm among the heaviest and youngest drinkers while leaving responsible drinkers largely unaffected.**

**25. Councillor Tariq**

Over the last 15 years, it can be argued that we have medicalised social problems such as 'addiction' and as a result, the cost to public services is prohibitive. How do we ensure that we make a shift to prevention, early intervention and recovery, at a lower cost to the public purse overall?

**A. This is exactly what we are doing with our new system - One Recovery Bury is an attempt to reclaim addiction treatment and recovery as a social issue that has its solution in communities. People in long term recovery CHANGE their BEHAVIOUR. Local government should be about investing in positive behaviour change and developing asset based community support. The primary outcomes from our investment in addiction and other ancillary services should be about social integration - employment, health living, housing support and looking after children.**

**26. Councillor Tariq**

What are the proposed changes in Community Mental health teams? What difference will this make to the people of Bury?

**A. Our mental health commissioning strategy moves us toward the provision of greater recovery model of service. The Community mental Health teams are a joint service between ourselves and Pennine Care Foundation Trust. By redesigning these services, we aim to:**

- **Ensure that people have access to a broad range of interventions that meet their needs, delivered by skilled and experienced practitioners.**
- **Provide all service users with outcome-based care plans that focus on recovery and social factors such as housing, employment and finances.**
- **Ensure that the physical health needs of people with severe and complex mental health needs are effectively monitored.**
- **Give service users the skills and confidence to look after their own health and wellbeing so they can move on from the service and keep well.**
- **Ensure that the right services are provided at the right time, to effectively meet the needs of the people who require our support.**

**27. Councillor Pickstone**

Could the Leader please give members an update that on the 'streetsafe' programme? In particular what proportion of residential streets are now 20mph and what further proportion will be covered from the existing budget provision?

**A. The introduction of the StreetSafe initiative and 20mph speed limits in residential streets has been programmed with initial priority being given to areas with schools present and/or with recognised problems associated with through traffic.**

**55 sites have been included in the initial phase of the programme. Schemes for 48 sites have been the subject of local consultations with 38 of these approved for implementation. These schemes vary considerably in size and can include as few as 50 to as many as 3000 residential properties.**

**Proposals for schemes in the secondary priority areas are underway and consultations on these will follow. Whilst there are approximately 70 schemes in this second phase, the majority of these address smaller residential areas with fewer properties.**

**It is anticipated that the full programme will be delivered within the existing budget provision.**

**A full list of schemes and details of the consultations being carried out are available to members of the public on the dedicated StreetSafe webpages.**

## **28. Councillor Hodkinson**

Will the leader join me in congratulating "Ramsbottom Business Group" along with their many volunteers, for organising and running last weekend's highly successful "Chocolate Festival"?

**A. The Chocolate Festival continues to be a key event for the borough, providing an excellent quality visitor experience. It attracts a high number of visitors and their families. It is good for the local business community and helps to raise the profile of both Ramsbottom and our wider Borough.**

**So I am delighted that this year's event was such a success.**

**As a Council, we supported the event through the offer of advice in relation to event management. We also helped to promote the event via the Council website and the new VisitBury website. We worked to ensure minimal disruption around the event including rescheduling of highway maintenance works.**

**We remain committed to supporting all our town centres and business community across the borough. We continue to work with the Borough's active Business Groups via our Business Liaison Officer.**

**I am happy to congratulate, and thank, everyone who helped make the event such a great success.**

## **29. Councillor Noel Bayley**

With the East Lancs Railway now being one of the top 10 tourist attractions in Greater Manchester, and Bury Market once again being declared Britain's Best Market, will the Leader join me in welcoming the new Visit Bury Tourism Website. Can the Leader tell me what difference he hopes it will make to local business?

**A. Bury's investment in its attractions and events has played a significant part in furthering the appeal of the borough for visitors and it is a key part of Greater Manchester's visitor offer. Clearly this is evident in the recent announcements in relation to Bury Market and the East Lancs Railway. As we all know, the Borough has much more to offer and the development of the Visitbury website will support Bury's ongoing development as a visitor destination and support the local economy by helping to attract increased visitor numbers to the borough and increased spend with local businesses.**

**People are increasingly using websites and social media to gather information to plan their trips and holidays. The new visitbury.com site will enable visitors and residents to search easily for attractions, events, places to stay in the borough, as well as finding places to eat, drink and shop in Bury. Going forward the website will include advertising and sponsorship opportunities that will be available to businesses within the borough. The Visitbury website utilises the same web system that operates the official visitor website for Greater Manchester. By doing so we are able to develop and maintain close links to the visitmanchester.com site, which currently receives over 150 million visitors per year, in order to bring increased spinoffs and benefits to the borough.**

## **30. Councillor Quinn**

Is the Leader aware of the Prestwich Car Parking Strategy?

**A. I certainly am aware of this excellent initiative. We know that regeneration of our towns involves more than just physical improvements, it involves a wide ranging look at all facilities and it involves looking at issues that are important to residents, businesses and visitors. From the work being done by local Councillors we have heard that parking is causing significant issues in both Prestwich centre and surrounding areas. Of course Members will know that if we're not careful then measures to tackle parking problems can sometimes do little more than shift the problem from one place to another. This is why we have decided to look at both general and localised problems and take a high level look at the best ways to tackle the issues. Having said this, thanks to representations from ward Councillors such as Councillor Quinn and his Sedgley colleagues, some localised problems, such as difficulties around particular shops, can and will be tackled quickly in order to help make life better for local residents.**

### **31. Councillor Walker**

At a recent Council meeting I asked a Question on the cost to the taxpayer (through local expenditure or grant aid) of the displays on the TV screens next to the broken aeroplane in the new "Sculpture Centre" which has taken over two thirds of the Central Library floor space. She misread my question and said the cost was nil because the TVs were donated or loaned so could I again ask what were the costs incurred in providing the actual display of highly disturbing images created by a Chinese artist on the TV screens ?

**A. Just to correct the continued misrepresentation in Cllr Walker's preamble, the Sculpture Centre didn't take over 2/3 of the Library. Tory Government cuts took 2/3 of the Library and we put the Sculpture Centre into what would otherwise be empty or generic storage. I can also confirm that I did not misread his original question. The films on the TV Screens have not cost the taxpayer anything. They were posted from China and we have not/are not being charged the cost of postage.**

### **32. Councillor Hussain**

Could the Leader of the Council update the Council on any particular measures being introduced in our Schools to educate children on the dangers of extremism and radicalisation?

**A. The Department for Education have issued guidance to all schools on promoting British values and we have made schools aware of it. Where they buy into our School Improvement Service we provide them with a detailed review of how they are meeting the guidance as part of our annual service. There are well established processes in place to identify and address any concerns regarding particular young people through the Prevent programme, which we have been operating jointly with Greater Manchester Police for a number of years now.**

### **33. Councillor Matt Bailey**

Due to the park Rangers Service being completely removed by the Council, what assurances can the Leader give to the Friends of Close Park in Radcliffe East, as well as other hard working groups across the borough, that our parks will remain a haven for our loved ones, not a meeting place for trouble causers and those who would wilfully damage our wonderful facilities?

**A. The Council recognises that the Ranger Service has of late benefitted from the support of volunteers and friends groups. In order for this support to continue a resource and support infrastructure will be retained to provide help, advice and guidance with events, activities and external funding bids within our parks & countryside areas. Support is also retained through our Community Safety Service who actively tackle issues of anti-social behaviour and includes support from the Police Service. Any damage can be reported in the usual way through customer contact or on-line 'Report a Problem' but will also be identified through a programme of inspections by other Parks & Countryside staff.**

### **34. Councillor Pickstone**

Could the Leader please update members on what proposals have been considered for the remodelling of the A56 through Prestwich Village? What options are now being worked up with a £2 million budget?

**A. I would refer Councillor Pickstone to the answer given to Cllr Simpson's question.**

**Various options for the road are being worked up but of course it is essential that there is a full funding package in place before going too far with the scheme. As a result of the Council's commitment to Prestwich we have now been able to identify funding from current budgets to cover the cost of the remaining £1m that would be required to improve the A56 and at it's meeting on 25 February the Council agreed to make this money available in the coming year.**

**This is fantastic news and the funding provides a real opportunity to kick start the regeneration of Prestwich Village. Work will now continue to bring together options for improving facilities along the A56 for pedestrians, shoppers and drivers that can be put before Prestwich residents and businesses.**

**However we also recognise that this funding must be used to pump-prime wider regeneration and that the A56 cannot be looked at in isolation. We therefore also intend to redouble our efforts to engage with other stakeholders and in particular the owners of the Longfield Centre, to bring forward just such a wider set of proposals for public consultation.**