

## **LEADER'S STATEMENT AND CABINET QUESTION TIME**

### **Question 1 submitted by Councillor Mallon**

- Q.** Given that the Council faced cuts totaling over £10 million in the 2014/15 financial year, can the leader outline what the final outturn for the year is?
- A.** **Councillor Mallon is correct in stating that the Council was forced to make cuts of over £10 million to set a legal and balanced budget for 2014/15.**  
**This was due to a reduction in Government funding of nearly 10%, and further reductions in Specific and Rolled In grants totalling £585k.**  
**To respond to this, the Council embarked upon a bold budget programme and consulted widely with local residents, on the difficult decisions that had to be made.**  
**The budget was closely monitored throughout the year, including Cabinet Member input at Star Chamber meetings.**  
**I am pleased to report that yet again the Council has delivered on its budget – returning a slight underspend for the year of £95k (subject to audit)**  
**This is testimony to the hard work of Cabinet Members, and the leadership of Councillor Connolly who held the finance portfolio for 2014/15.**  
**Above all it is a credit to all of our staff who's diligence and hard work has been unsurpassed as yet again they have achieved "more with less" against a backdrop of these cruel cuts.**

### **Question 2 submitted by Councillor Parnell**

- Q.** Can the Leader comment on the Council's success in recruiting in-house foster carers and explain the benefits this brings?
- A.** **The Fostering Service has met the targets set in the 'invest to save' initiative in the past two years. This has meant an overall increase of 22 fostering households providing 40 placements in Bury. This benefits children and young people in a number of way. Firstly there is now a choice of placements for younger children meaning that children can be matched to a family best able to meet their needs. It also means that we are more likely to be able to place brothers and sisters together. Secondly retaining children in Bury means that they can continue to receive local services; this is particularly importance in respect of the continuity provided by remaining in the same school and the services capacity to mobilise specialist services around the child. Thirdly remaining in Bury assists children and young people to remain in contact with family and friends and helps support a return home if**

**this is in the child's interest. Finally the service is promoting opportunities for young people to remain with their carers post 18 to secure a safe transition to independence at a later age than has traditionally been the case.**

**Question 3 submitted by Councillor Noel Bayley**

**Q.** Could the Leader tell us how many additional houses would be built across Bury if developers built homes on all the land they have received planning approval for?

**A.** At the 1<sup>st</sup> April this year, there was extant planning permission for 2,250 units across the Borough. Around a third of these were on sites that had commenced development and are expected to come forward in the short term. This is a significant fall from the number of extant planning permissions the previous year, which stood at 3,000. This is largely because there has been a rise in the number of completions this year – up from 260 last year to 550 this year.

**It is expected that some of the other sites with planning permission will commence on site over the next few months.**

**There are, however, a number of large strategic housing sites that remain undeveloped in Bury, as in much of the rest of Greater Manchester and the country, despite having planning permission for a number of years. Council Officers and colleagues from the Homes and Community Agency are currently working together as part of the 'Manchester Place' initiative to identify the constraints that are preventing these from coming forward and to investigate how these constraints can be resolved.**

**Sometimes the issue can relate to the lack of affordable finance to fund a development and the Manchester Place initiative can help provide loans to developers who are unable to secure loans at a favourable rate elsewhere. Hopefully this work will help to kickstart regeneration, development and investment in the Borough over the coming months and years to help reduce further, the number of sites that have planning permission but development has yet to commence.**

#### **Question 4 submitted by Councillor Gunther**

- Q.** Why was an email forwarded to Councillors by an officer of Bury Council outlining the proposed increase in the numbers of turbines within the existing Wind Farm on Scout Moor subsequently withdrawn?

**A.** The email was withdrawn on the advice of the Monitoring Officer. The Council had made a specific response to the relevant Planning Authority (Rossendale Council) as a statutory consultee within the planning process. A consistent approach from the Council is required. Part of the Council's response was to request that any other comments from Bury residents be considered by Rossendale.

#### **Question 5 submitted by Councillor Black**

- Q.** Can the Leader please tell me what the affects will be to Bury of the recently announced £200 million in-year cut to public health budgets?

- A.** At this point in time we do not know precisely how the announced cuts to public health grants will affect Bury. We are awaiting details of a consultation exercise on exactly how the cuts will be applied. What should be noted is that we in Bury are already underfunded by £0.5m against the ACRA formula target allocation and further blanket cuts would widen existing inequalities in funding.

What we do know is that public health funding is vital to taking a preventative approach and helping to reduce demand on already over-stretched health and social care services and supporting our devolution plans to achieve the fastest improvements in health and create a sustainable system. Any cut on top of already substantial cuts in local authority budgets will severely hamper our efforts to the improve health and well-being of our communities and overcome our major public health challenges such as obesity and excess alcohol consumption.

This is particularly worrying when we are due to take on extra responsibilities for commissioning public health services for young children from October 2015.

The announcement of the cuts is surprising not only because the budget for 2015-16 was only announced 6 months ago but also because the government promised to protect spending on the NHS and has committed to the NHS Five Year Forward view of which

prevention is a key element. Many of the services commissioned via the public health grant are indeed NHS services for example school nursing, sexual health services, drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services and NHS health checks.

We are extremely concerned about these cuts which are short sighted and will cost us more in the long run.

**Question 6 submitted by Councillor O'Brien**

**Q.** Does the Lead member for Community Safety agree that domestic violence and abuse continues to be a national scandal with one in four women and one in six men affected at some point in their lives. Also, two people lose their lives each and every week because of domestic violence and abuse.

**A.** I certainly agree it is a scandal because its long term effects are devastating for both victims and their families. In Bury, over 4000 incidents are recorded each year and we know that this is just the tip of the iceberg; many more incidents go unreported.

Team Bury partners have agreed that tackling domestic violence and abuse is a priority. It is a top priority for the Community Safety Partnership and for the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

This year Bury have piloted innovative work to support standard risk (lower risk) victims of domestic violence and abuse aimed at preventing repeat incidents.

We have also worked with the Police to commission training for a wide range of agencies on domestic violence and abuse; approximately 176 people have attended this training.

We are currently finalising a new Domestic Violence strategy which puts early identification, prevention and victim support at its heart.

Finally, we are delighted to be working with colleagues from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to harness opportunities arising from the Police Innovation Fund. This will support further work with victims and their families at an earlier stage to prevent reoffending and stop violence escalating.

### **Question 7 submitted by Councillor Black**

**Q.** Can the Leader advise us on recent trends in the numbers of children we have in care and what measures have been taken to lead to this?

**A.** **At 31 March 2015 the number of children in care stood at 294. This was the first time in recent years that it had dipped below 300, having for several years been consistently at or about 320. The figure has remained below 300 in the first quarter of this year.**

**As the number of children coming into care has not significantly changed this reduction has largely been brought about by more effective care planning for children. Children who can be safely returned home are supported to do so and after a period of time sufficient to demonstrate changes in parental behaviour have been sustained care orders are revoked. An increase in the number of children placed with family members during care proceedings has led to more proceedings ending with the making of a Special Guardianship order rather than a care order and improvements in our SGO support service has meant more family carers are confident in applying for Special Guardianship of the children for whom they care.**

**In 2014/15 Adoption orders increased by 44% as a record number of adoptions of Bury children were secured.**

**This effective planning has been supported by work undertaken across Children's Social Care teams and with Legal Services and a number of specialist posts and systems that support the planning process.**

### **Question 8 submitted by Councillor Caserta**

**Q.** In view of the latest paper entitled "Healthier Together" issued in June can we be informed what representations Bury MBC have made with regards to Bury Hospice?

**A.** **Bury Hospice is not part of the Healthier Together consultations, the Healthier Together consultations are looking at the reconfiguration of the acute hospital trusts. The outcome of this will be known in July; the Council have been involved in the Consultation and have submitted views through the previous Chief Executive.**

**In relation to the Hospice that is commissioned by the CCG, however we have been in discussions with them about how we may use the hospice to provide step down care from the hospital.**

**Any changes made to what is delivered at the hospice would be subject to consultation and discussed at Health Scrutiny in the first instance.**

**Question 9 submitted by Councillor Pickstone**

**Q.** Could the Leader please give an update on the provision of midwifery services and health visitor services in Prestwich's two remaining Children's Centres

**A.** Pennine Acute Trust made a decision in May to move their Midwifery Clinics out of the Prestwich Children's Centre hub and spoke and move them into GP surgeries or North Manchester General Hospital. This followed from a request from the Council in April that the Trust should make a small financial contribution to the running costs of the centres that were hosting the clinics.

**The Council is very disappointed with this decision but because it is committed to supporting the health and well-being of our residents in Prestwich it has recently decided to waive these charges in the spirit of partnership. It is now for Pennine Acute NHS Trust to decide when they plan to return to the Prestwich Hub and Spoke Children centres.**

**In relation to Health Visitors Pennine Care have been undertaking a review of their Health Visitor Service deployment and are looking to reduce the number of clinics they provide across the Borough as many of them were undersubscribed and deploy more of their resource to targeted support and home visits. They will be using either the hub or spoke for a clinic but not both. We will not be charging Pennine Care for use of our Children's Centres for such clinics.**

**Question 10 submitted by Councillor Grimshaw**

**Q.** Can the Leader please tell us about the recent visit to Bury from Lyn Romeo, the Chief Social Worker at the Department of Health?

**A.** Lyn Romeo is the Chief Social Worker employed by the department of Health. Her role is to raise the image of social work and specifically look how the skills of social workers are used what opportunities there are for ongoing professional development.

**Lyn visited Bury on 9<sup>th</sup> June, and spent time with social Workers of all levels, including managers, Qualified social workers, newly Qualified social workers and students.**

The visit was a very informal visit which gave us the opportunity to discuss how the role of the Adult social worker is used and what plans we have in place to ensure we can support ongoing continuing Professional development for staff. Staff spoke openly about their experiences of working and being a student in Communities and Wellbeing department, and also gave Lyn food for thought about how social work training may need to change if we are to equip workers in the future with the different skills now required.

Lyn finished her day meeting the Chief Executive and discussed the opportunities and challenges devolution may bring for social work.

Lyn fed back how impressed she was with our teams approach our infra structure we have developed to ensure quality and standards in social work are maintained and how we attract social work students to the Borough, Bury being seen as a place to train by students. The fact that we have also implemented the professional standards and have a real ethos developing our own.

She is quoted as saying

*" its really good that we can see today's social workers taking responsibility for the next generation of Social workers"*

#### **Question 11 submitted by Councillor Tariq**

**Q.** Can the Leader please tell us about the recent visit by Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive of Public Health England?

**A.** **Duncan Selbie visited Bury on 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2015 and it was a tremendous success.**

He was met at the Welly Cafe, Manchester Road Park by myself, Cllr Shori, Mike Owen, Pat Jones-Greenhalgh and Lesley Jones where after a brief meeting, he spent time looking round the cafe and surrounding park and learning about the fantastic work done there by Mike Spurr and the BEST team to support people into employment. Duncan was particularly impressed by the way in which the cafe is used as a community asset, no longer at a cost to the Council for maintenance and how over the years over 1000 vulnerable people have been supported into employment.

Duncan also spent time listening directly to a wide range of staff who described the broad array of work that is going on right across the council to improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities. Whilst impressed by all the work, he highlighted our work on the 'Starting well' agenda to improve outcomes for

children, the I Will if you Will programme, our work on maintaining high quality parks and play areas and engagement with junior sports clubs as well as our visionary work to transform our social care provision in order to keep people as well and independent as possible for as long as possible.

In his feedback letter, Duncan described his visit as instructive, energising and inspiring.

He said he had been to many places over the past two years but none more motivating nor where the public health agenda is so obviously understood. Our positive outlook and determination to make things better for local people really stood out for him.

#### **Question 12 submitted by Councillor Fitzwalter**

- Q.** Could the Leader of the Council outline where the Planning Inspectorate's Inquiry is up to on the AD plant plans in Ramsbottom and what are the likely timescales for a decision being made?
- A.** **The appeal inquiry has now closed and the Planning Inspector is considering both the case for the appellant and the Council.**

**During the Inquiry, the Council and appellant received a letter from Planning Inspectorate -11 March 2015 confirming that the appeal had been recovered by the Secretary of State (i.e. wishes to make the decision himself) on the basis of the development being "significant development in the Green Belt"**

**It is understood from correspondence that the Inspector's report is to be submitted to the Secretary of State on or before 28 September 2015 and a decision to be issued by Secretary of State on or before 30 November 2015**

#### **Question 13 submitted by Councillor Nuttall\***

- Q.** Give the anticipated £150,000 short-fall in funding from the skills agency, does the Council plan to raise Adult Learning tuition fees and by how much?
- A.** **There will be a slight increase in general fees as per normal practice with the hourly rate increasing from £3.50 to £3.75 per hour this year for personal and community development learning with people in receipt of benefits paying 50% Of the cost. Targeted provision in areas of disadvantage to widen participation will continue to be free. The savings will be made principally by reducing the volume of some courses leading to accreditation as this is where the cut in funding has been made.(Adult Skills Budget)**



**\*answer not provided at the meeting due to absence of questioner**

**Question 14 submitted by Councillor Holt**

**Q.** The spectre of “Universal Credit” seems to have been hanging over Bury’s most vulnerable residents for some time now. Please could the Leader provide an update on the Government’s proposed roll-out timetable, and what are the longer term prospects for Welfare support in light of the forthcoming Chancellor’s budget ?

**A.** The rollout of “Universal Credit” has been very slow nationally, with the Government falling well behind its original schedule.

**In 2013, the National Audit Office concluded that the Department for Work and Pensions had not achieved Value for Money, and was unable to assess the value of systems it spent over £300 million developing.**

**The NAO went on to outline the project had suffered from weak programme management, over-optimistic timescales, and a lack of openness about progress.**

**The former Head of the Civil Service Sir Bob Kerslake is quoted as describing the project as “undeliverable”.**

**In Bury, as at the end of May we had 775 residents on Universal Credit – and at this stage the roll out has been restricted to non-pensioners. More vulnerable clients are not yet in scope.**

**Regarding the longer term prospects for Welfare Reform, the Chancellor’s proposed £12 billion cut has been widely reported, however is as yet uncoded.**

**We don’t know what the cut will look like, and I expect the Government don’t know either.**

**As I speak, I suspect George Osborne is sweating over his calculator trying to get his evil plans to add up.**

**We’ll have to wait until the Chancellor’s budget next week to see what is proposed, and whether we get the detail we are waiting for, however the axe is likely to fall hard on the vulnerable, the low paid, and honest hard working families.**

**In Bury, thankfully we have a very pro-active Welfare Reform Board which alongside our Partners has helped mitigate the impact of changes seen so far, and will play a crucial role going forward.**

### **Question 15 submitted by Councillor Tariq**

**Q.** Could the Leader advise us of the assessment of Bury Art Museum undertaken recently by Visit England?

**A.** The Art Museum was assessed in March as part of the VisitEngland's Accreditation for the "Quality Assured Visitor Attraction" Scheme. The Gallery achieved a 79% score which qualifies it to be formally accredited. The assessment measures eight key areas across all attractions:

- Pre-Arrival
- Arrival and Initial Impressions
- The Attraction
- Cleanliness
- Toilets
- Catering
- Retail
- Staff

The service achieved the required qualification criteria in all categories with the assessor picked out for special mention the impeccable levels of cleanliness, the unique retail offer and the friendly and engaging staff. On the basis of the latter's 'quality and enthusiasm', it was noted that the Museum could reasonably aspire to seek VisitEngland's highest accreditation the Welcome accolade in a future appraisal.

### **Question 16 submitted by Councillor Whitby**

**Q.** Can the Leader update us on the position with regards to admissions for primary schools for next academic year? Could he identify any particular areas of pressure and outline what measures we are putting in place to try to address the concerns?

**A.** All Bury residents have received an offer of a primary school place for September 2015, with the exception of a number of extremely late applicants that are waiting for appeals to be heard for places at their preferred schools. There are sufficient places to accommodate these appellants, although these may not be at a school of their preference.

Whilst there is sufficient capacity across the Borough to meet the overall demand for places, there remain some significant "hot-spots" in demand, particularly this year in the

**Prestwich/Whitefield/Unsworth/East Bury areas. This has also impacted on places at Radcliffe schools, since they have been offered as alternatives.**

**Through Basic Need Grant funding the LA is investing in new places at a number of schools, whilst also addressing building condition issues at the schools concerned.**

**Furthermore, the LA has worked with schools to address the levels of demand, through utilising the flexibilities provided in the Admissions Code. In collaboration with a number of schools, the LA has agreed to admit a small number of children above the published admission number, where this could be achieved without breaching infant class size legislation, and where there is sufficient capacity within the schools to do so.**

**A large volume of appeals have been received for Reception 2015, which is largely due to the levels of demand in the 'hotspot areas', parents stating unrealistic preferences and parents of children with siblings already at school applying very late (or not at all) leading to the possibility of them having children at different schools.**

**The LA is working with schools to consider how parental engagement can be improved, and how parental expectations can be managed effectively.**

**Current forecasts show that primary intakes are set to decrease steadily over the next few years and the LA must balance the need to provide sufficient places, and meet parental preference, whilst ensuring that there is not too much capacity and that all schools are successful and viable.**

**Forecasting methods are robust and historically have had a high level of accuracy. However, some of the demands being seen nationally are as a result of inward migration in addition to an increased birthrate, and some of the demand pressures on neighbouring authorities are from migration from other parts of the UK because of a South to North shift. Therefore, should these factors begin to impact further in Bury, it will not always be possible to predict the scale and timing of the impact accurately, therefore it is important to have contingency plans if pupil numbers begin to deviate from the LA's forecasts, and the LA is working with schools on this.**

#### **Question 17 submitted by Councillor Bevan**

- Q.** Bearing in mind that the Council's planning policy detailed in the Unitary Development Plan dates back to 1997, can the Leader of the Council update members on the progress being made towards the publication of a new Bury Local Plan: Core Strategy?

- A. Members will recall that in January of this year Council agreed to the preparation of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework. The framework will principally seek to identify the requirements for housing and employment floor-space and associated infrastructure needs and, once adopted, will form part of the statutory development plan for each of the ten districts.**

**There will be a need for consistency between the Spatial Framework and the ten local plans. Districts are therefore committed to advancing the Manchester framework and running the local plan work alongside this. Members will recall that in March of this year Cabinet agreed to adopt this approach for Bury's own Local Plan.**

**Progress on the Greater Manchester framework is moving at a fast pace and our Planning Officers are currently heavily involved in assisting their AGMA colleagues with the preparation of the evidence required to support the Greater Manchester framework. This evidence will also be used by districts to progress their own local plans.**

**Once more established objectives and policies begin to emerge in the framework, Officers will then be in a position to progress work on a new Local Plan for Bury, ensuring that it is consistent with the Greater Manchester work.**

**Question 18 submitted by Councillor D'Albert**

- Q. The Leader will be aware of recent national figures showing a reduction in sports participation in the country as a whole. Could members be given comparable figures for Bury and do we have a breakdown between man and women's participation to allow us to assess the effectiveness of "I will if You Will".**
- A. In the latest set of Sport England survey results from the 12 months prior to April 2015 there are 31.2% of women and 40.9% of men in Bury playing sport regularly which is higher than the England average and higher than the baseline measured in Bury in 2013. This means that there are 24,000 women in Bury playing sport at least once a week and 1,600 more women playing sport since the I'I Will if you Will' pilot was announced.**

**Previous surveys have showed that the gender gap narrows and whilst we do see the percentage of men playing sport in Bury falling, this is coming back to a norm and remains higher than the England average.**

**There is a strong focus on engaging partners to support a more sustainable delivery strategy and innovative opportunities are delivered to ensure the 'I Will if You Will' Phase 2 objectives are achieved.**

**Question 19 submitted by Councillor J Walker**

- Q.** I am very proud of the continuing commitment the Council has to investing in Radcliffe and to strengthening our local economy. With this we want to make sure everyone has access to the great things that are happening. In Ainsworth there is only one bus that goes in to the centre of Radcliffe which runs hourly and finishes at 5.00pm. This means that young people and adults that do not drive are unable to access the temporary pool after work or school. Will the Leader commit to working with me and the local TfGM representatives to try and strengthen the transport links between Ainsworth and Radcliffe Town Centre?
- A.** **As the question alludes to, the bus service between Ainsworth and Radcliffe is an hourly one during the day, as part of a route which runs from Bury Interchange via Ainsworth, Bradley Fold and the Turks Road Estate. The final departure is at 1810 from Bury on weekdays, and at 1710 on Saturdays. The last service back is at 1743 from Radcliffe Bus Station. Service provision is entirely a matter for TfGM, but I will be happy to raise the matter with them to see what scope there may be for improving public transport links between Ainsworth and Radcliffe Town Centre, particularly in the light of the continuing investments that we are making in Radcliffe which will mean extra potential users of these services.**

**Question 20 submitted by Councillor Preston**

- Q.** The Chancellor is delivering a Budget on 8 July. What does the Leader think this will mean for the Council's finances going forward and does the Leader expect that residents will get the "Fair Deal for Bury" that they deserve?
- A.** **The Chancellor will be delivering a budget in one week's time. We don't know the details of what will be announced; in fact I wonder if he does at this stage. We understand there will be announcements in respect of Welfare Reforms – the much publicised (although uncoded) £12 billion cut. In terms of what will be announced for wider Council budgets, it is unclear. Will there be details of any "in year" cuts for 2015/16 ? We are aware of a proposed cut of £200m nationally to Public Health Budgets**

**Will we actually get any details of the 2016/17 Settlement; given that we are legally required to set a budget in little over 6 months time – we desperately need this information.**

**Ideally we would get a multi-year settlement to allow us to develop clear strategies going forward; rather than a “stop - start” release of information on an annual basis.**

**What is clear is that Local Government (as an unprotected Government Department) will be hit hard.**

**A recent report by the Local Government Association indicates that there could be a shortfall in funding of £9.5 billion by 2019/20.**

**Coincidentally (or not ?) this is the total level of Revenue Support Grant in the current year.**

**The cynics (or realists) amongst us would suggest that the Government is seeking to pull the plug on Local Authority funding - making Councils totally reliant on Council Tax and Business Rates revenues.**

**I guess they’ll call that “Localism”.**

**As for a “Fair Deal” for Bury residents – history suggests that this will not be the case.**

**Our funding per head for 2015/16 was £331.58**

**This compares to a national figure of £386.75**

**A Greater Manchester average of £433.81**

**And, an average for our CIPFA family of like Authorities of £366.55**

**Putting it bluntly residents aren’t getting a fair deal.**

**If we were funded at the family average we would an extra £6 million funding**

**If we were funded at the national average, we’d have an extra £10 million**

**And if funded at the Greater Manchester average we’d have an extra £30 million**

**Now I know Boroughs have different make ups, circumstances and pressures – but are they really that different ?**

**You will recall that we raised these issues with Eric Pickles when he was Secretary of State, and the best he could do was offer us a telephone conference with the Minister for Coastal Communities.**

**Well I have written once again to Eric’s successor – Greg Clarke MP.**

**This Council and residents can rest assured that we will not go away; we will fight tirelessly to get the “Fair Deal” that residents deserve.**

#### **Question 21 submitted by Councillor Preston**

- Q.** Can the Leader provide an update on the Radcliffe Works initiative and explain how he sees this type of support developing in the future as more vulnerable people are affected by welfare reforms?

- A. ADAB (Asian Development Association of Bury) have been awarded the 2015/2016 Radcliffe Works contract, following an open tender process on the CHEST (procurement system).**

**This provides an excellent opportunity to refresh the Radcliffe Works offer, acknowledging that despite some improvement to the national economic position local residents with complex barriers to employment remain out of work.**

**Complimenting the unemployment support accessible within Whittaker Street, the Radcliffe Works model is proven to meet local needs by offering a holistic approach to supporting people into employment and training.**

**The service to be delivered will build on the successes of the previous Radcliffe Works contract whereby:**

- The annual footfall exceeds 2,300 centre users.**
- 40 people were supported into evidenced employment. A further 13 unverified employment outcomes were identified.**
- A host of training/awareness sessions were hosted by Radcliffe Works. These include:**
  - English certified training**
  - Maths certified training**
  - IT classes (certified and non-certified)**
  - Debt management workshops**
  - Volunteering and work experience workshop**
  - Universal Jobmatch workshops/ 1 to 1 support**
  - Universal Credit awareness sessions**

**Continued Welfare Reform will for those residents claiming in-work and out of work benefits, bring profound challenges to some of our more vulnerable communities. Radcliffe Works alongside Prestwich Works will continue to bring together new and existing services that already exist into one easily accessible location.**

**Question 22 submitted by Councillor Gartside**

- Q. Can the Leader of the Council or relevant Cabinet member please explain the plans that the local press have revealed to introduce "On-Line" Council meetings?**
- A. These proposals relate to Township Forum meetings only. They refer to the recommendations made in the Township Forum report. These are aimed at enhancing Township Forum meetings**

**by exploring the use of online tools to further engage communities.**

**It is clear to me that times are changing and that more people prefer to share their views through the use of online platforms including Facebook and Twitter. The proposals outlined in the Township Forum report seek to recognise this.**

**There will always be a place for township forum meetings as they are an important way we engage our local communities. But I am also committed to building opportunities to engage communities in other meaningful ways. During the next year I have asked officers to explore opportunities to test different approaches to seek community views and engage using electronic solutions.**

**For example, the Forums have struggled to engage young people. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has recently used Police Innovation funding to commission the development of a unique engagement platform for young people involving a web app produced by young people. This will be used to engage young people across Greater Manchester (including young people in Bury) to raise awareness of the dangers of exploitation and keep them safe. This is an example of the use of modern technology to engage young people.**

**But there will be other solutions that we can also explore within our existing resources. This includes exploring the potential of having an online community meeting around a specific theme or topic.**

**Question 23 submitted by Councillor Jones**

**Q. Central to the work we do is ensuring that we continue to build resilient and cohesive communities across our Borough? How are we responding to new legislation to help protect vulnerable people from being drawn into all forms of extremism?**

**A. As Councillors, we are united in our appreciation that Bury is a place that we can be proud of, a place where all our communities enjoy living, working, spending free time and participating in community life.**

**However – our national news is full of stories of terrible human suffering arising from hatred, intolerance and violent extremism in all its ugly forms. We will never be complacent and I am personally committed to doing all that we can to ensure our Borough remains a strong and cohesive place. Part of our strategy involves continuing our work through Bury's third party hate**



**crime reporting centres to raise awareness and encourage the reporting of hate incidents.**

**In addition to this, the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 creates a new duty on a range of agencies to prevent people being drawn into terrorism and support people who are vulnerable to violent extremism. We are building on our already existing strong partnership structures to meet this duty. We continue to work with partners to deliver training and awareness raising sessions for a wide range of agencies including schools, colleges, GP's and health professionals and to our staff within the Council.**

**Question 24 submitted by Councillor Whitby**

**Q.** Can the Leader confirm what impact the Government's approach to small scale development and pooling of S106 monies will have on the Council?

**A.** On 28 November 2014, the Government issued new advice within the Planning Practice Guidance on Section 106 Planning Obligations which provides that 'tariff style' planning contributions should not be sought from developments of 10 units or less, and which have a maximum combined gross floorspace of no more than 1,000 square metres.

**This restriction has prevented us from securing vital recreation contributions for any small scale developments granted planning permission after this date. Since the restrictions came into force 7 months ago, we have lost out on over £120,000 of potential recreation contributions from small schemes that could have contributed to improving parks, play areas and other public open spaces to support the growth in population arising from these new residential developments. Obviously, this figure will grow as time goes by.**

**The Government has also imposed new restrictions on pooling Section 106 contributions, which came into effect from 6 April 2015.**

**Previously we were able to collect financial contributions for recreation provision and had the flexibility to generically pool these monies and decide at a later date how the monies would be spent. However, since April, the Council has to identify in the s106 agreement exactly what project each contribution will be spent on, and can then sign up to a maximum of five obligations for each individual project. This presents a number of challenges and additional burdens on staff time and resources.**

**This approach is considerably less flexible than the previous system and gives no real scope to change which particular project a contribution will be spent on after the s106 Agreement has been signed.**

**There will be a time lag between identifying projects that we would like to fund through s106 contributions and the receipt of the money to fund them, making it harder to respond to urgent issues. If a development doesn't go ahead then the contribution won't be payable and the project will lose out on expected funding.**

**Changes to project costs between signing the Agreement and receiving the contribution could lead to under-spend that cannot be transferred to other schemes or overspend which can't be funded from s106 contributions.**

**These changes brought in by the Government impose additional restrictions on our ability to secure contributions necessary to support new development at a time of increasing pressure on Council resources.**

**Question 25 submitted by Councillor Gunther**

**Q.** Can the Leader of the Council or relevant Cabinet Member please give an update as to the amount of money spent by the Council on agency staffing in the last financial year?

**A.** **The total amount of spend on agency workers between April 2014 and March 2015 was £2.8 million. A significant amount of this was due to the national shortage of children's social workers. The council has now greatly reduced its dependency on agency staff by holding a number of recruitment drives and taking on permanent social workers. Bury Council has been recognised across the Greater Manchester directors of children's services as an example of good practice in this area.**

**Question 26 submitted by Councillor Gartside**

**Q.** Can the leader of the Council or relevant Cabinet member please give a full update on how "I Will If You Will" funding has been spent and future spending plans?

**A.** **In the Phase 1 pilot project the total Sport England lottery grant was £2.4m over one year. Further lottery funding for a Phase 2 has been awarded due to the success of Phase 1 of £2,000,000 to run across 2 years up until 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016, with a budget of £1m pa.**

**IWIYW Phase 1 budget was primarily spent on Direct Delivery to influence and engage women and girls within sport and physical activity, supported by a funded marketing and communications campaign to ensure wide awareness across the borough. Budget also covered human resource, community engagement,**

**monitoring & evaluation and consultancy fees as well as capital investment such as tennis court improvements and outdoor gym.**

**Phase 2 began in January 2015 with a Sport England grant of £1m pa. Phase 2 of the project has a focus on long term behaviour change to get more women, more active, more often thus bringing wider added value to reduce the demand on public service resource, by engaging with communities, supporting them to take ownership of their locality and ensuring future activities are sustainable and to realise the value of having good physical health and wellbeing.**

**Question 27 submitted by Councillor Pickstone**

**Q.** Could the Leader inform members what impact the recently announced in-year cuts to Public Health will have on the public health budget in Bury? What expenditure will be reduced, if any?

**A.** At this point in time we do not know precisely how the announced cuts to public health grants will affect Bury. We are awaiting details of a consultation exercise on exactly how the cuts will be applied. What should be noted is that we in Bury are already underfunded by £0.5m against the ACRA formula target allocation and further blanket cuts would widen existing inequalities in funding.

**What we do know is that public health funding is vital to taking a preventative approach and helping to reduce demand on already over-stretched health and social care services and supporting our devolution plans to achieve the fastest improvements in health and create a sustainable system. Any cut on top of already substantial cuts in local authority budgets will severely hamper our efforts to the improve health and well-being of our communities and overcome our major public health challenges such as obesity and excess alcohol consumption. This is particularly worrying when we are due to take on extra responsibilities for commissioning public health services for young children from October 2015.**

**The announcement of the cuts is surprising not only because the budget for 2015-16 was only announced 6 months ago but also because the government promised to protect spending on the NHS and has committed to the NHS Five Year Forward view of which prevention is a key element. Many of the services commissioned via the public health grant are indeed NHS services for example school nursing, sexual health services, drug and alcohol treatment and recovery services and NHS health checks.**

**We are extremely concerned about these cuts which are short sighted and will cost us more in the long run.**

**Question 28 submitted by Councillor Hankey**

- Q.** How will Bury LEA cope with the increase in primary school entrances this September
- A.** **I would refer Councillor Hankey to the answer i provided to the same question from Councillor Whitby**

**Question 29 submitted by Councillor D'Albert**

- Q.** Could the Leader outline how much money has been paid in compensation for claims from poor road or pavement surfaces in the last three years and the amount spent by the Council in legal costs dealing with these claims in the same period?
- A.** **Over the 3 year period in question, the Council has paid out £1.4m in insurance claims. Legal costs relating to the same period total £1.7m.**

**In the past 2 years the amount of Capital funding made available by central Government to maintain the highway network has fallen from £2.1m to around £1.6m. However, at a local level, Bury has invested in new machinery that can carry out pothole repairs more efficiently and to a higher quality.**