

COUNCIL 9 SEPTEMBER 2015 – WORK OF THE CABINET

LEADER'S SPEECH

Thank you Madam Mayor, it gives me great pleasure to up-date Council on the work of the Cabinet since the July meeting of Council.

Madam Mayor before I begin to talk about the work of the Cabinet may I ask for your indulgence to raise three important issues that strike at the heart of what this borough of ours is all about.

Firstly, no-one can fail to have been moved by the recent dreadful pictures of refugees and their families and the disasters that have befallen people who are fleeing persecution. These photographs and the harrowing tales behind them can't fail to have brought home the sheer scale of what is a human tragedy.

The people who are suffering are not 'swarms' they are people like you and me, people who care for their families and who only put their families into a boat because the water is safer than the land.

Here in Bury we rightly pride ourselves on being a compassionate and caring borough and we have a long and proud tradition of welcoming in people from outside, and of offering shelter to those fleeing persecution. Madam Mayor, I'm sure I speak for everyone in this Chamber when I say that Bury stands ready to play our part to help people who are desperate for sanctuary.

Secondly, it is because Bury is such a welcoming and inclusive borough that the recent attack on four Prestwich teenagers at Bowker Vale tram stop is so shocking and appalling.

The fact that this appears to be an anti-Semitic hate crime makes it even more disgusting.

Madam Mayor, there is no place in society for this sort of sickening and cowardly behaviour and I'm sure that all Members will join with me in roundly condemning the attack. We also send our best wishes to those who were hurt and pray that they make a speedy and full recovery.

If anyone has any information that can bring the perpetrators to justice then I urge them to contact the Police or Crimestoppers.

Thirdly, and on a much more positive note, I would like to extend the Council's congratulations to Radcliffe's very own James Guy for his outstanding success in the recent World Championships.

James won the British Swimming Team's first medal in Kazan and started what was to be the country's most successful ever world level campaign.

He swam a well timed 400m Freestyle to secure silver and his first world medal and he then won his first gold of the competition in the 200m Freestyle when he went up against Olympic Champion Sun Yang, world record holder Paul Biedermann and multi-Olympic medalist Ryan Lochte.

James didn't stop there...he also anchored the men's 4x200m Freestyle relay to gold as they stole the title from the US who have been champions for over 10 years. This is an absolutely fabulous achievement and I will be joining the Mayor in writing to James to congratulate him on his achievements.

Turning now to the two Cabinet meetings...

Madam Mayor everyone involved with Bury Council and team Bury will know that supporting vulnerable people is right at the top of our agenda and I am truly delighted that the work of the Cabinet at the July and September meetings has shown that this commitment is much greater than words on a plan.

At these meetings we have made huge strides in improving services for people who need us and we've done it despite the enormous financial pressures that we face.

We have considered proposals to re-design the Short Breaks Services for Children and Young People with Disabilities and their families.

In August 2014 the Council engaged Bury Parent Forum Ltd to consult with families and young people with disabilities aged 0-25 on current provisions in the Borough. The messages that we got back from that consultation have helped us to take a fresh look at the way that we commission these vital services.

Our intention is to commission services that will be outcome driven with targeted services which will have the greatest impact on positive outcomes for children, young people and their families.

The changes within the new specification will deliver higher quality services with appropriately trained staff and specialist services which will meet the local needs identified in the market position statement.

We will also ensure that the allocation of resources is based on need, is targeted and is proportionate so that we achieve the best possible value for money.

We also looked at services for carers.

Madam Mayor, carers truly are this borough's unsung heroes and yet they face their own vulnerabilities and their own specific needs. This is why I am absolutely delighted to say that a pilot scheme drawn up in Bury to support working carers to retain employment has been successful in securing funding of £125,032 over a period of two years.

The pilot will have a positive impact on carers by assisting their identification, ensuring they are aware of their rights, being signposted to appropriate services and providing evidence on how assistive technology can support carers to remain in employment.

It is anticipated that the pilot will achieve better understanding of the role of carers and their needs, particularly by employers, and that this will result in more carer friendly policies and procedures.

My thanks and congratulations go to everyone involved in preparing the bid and designing this superb scheme.

Moving on to Killelea House.

Madam Mayor people will know that this is Bury's Intermediate Care facility which provides rehabilitation for Adults who are either discharged from hospital and need intensive rehab or people who are at risk of being admitted to hospital.

Whilst Killelea does a wonderful job we know that the current layout and condition is dated and not conducive to promoting people's wellbeing and independence.

As a result Cabinet were delighted to approve a proposal to completely modernise the building in response to the need to continue to develop services for the future which maximise independence and help people to stay at home for as long as possible.

The refurbishment will also support carers by providing valuable respite opportunities.

The proposal is made on the basis of invest to save and has been structured to maximise the existing available assets in a more efficient way, whilst also addressing the increasing demand for social care services which help people to remain independent and promote self care.

The estimated cost is £2,108,700 (including fees) which would be spread over 2 years and the full costs can be funded via the Communities and Well-being capital programme, Housing capital monies and the ring fenced capital receipt from the sale of Warthfield.

This is an investment for the future and I look forward to seeing the vision come to fruition...although I'm not ready for a place there yet...I hope!!!

Madam Mayor, domestic violence is nothing less than a scourge of society, a scourge which devastates families and costs public services over £20,000 per case, and so tackling DV is rightly a key priority for Bury's Community Safety Partnership.

I am proud that the Cabinet has approved a Domestic Abuse Strategy which is focussed on prevention and early intervention and which sets out a robust framework by which the Council and our partners will strive to deliver real change.

And speaking of scourges, there is no doubt that misuse and abuse of drugs and alcohol can have a dreadful impact on individuals, families and communities and can lead to increased inequalities, worklessness, poor outcomes for children and families and increased crime and disorder.

That is why I am also proud of the Drug and Alcohol Strategy that we have developed and that Cabinet has approved. The Strategy is yet another example of first class partnership working that is aimed at reducing demand, restricting supply and building recovery in communities and I look forward to it making a real difference across the borough.

Moving on, the Cabinet also took a fresh look at the way in which we provide home to school transport. The recent Children and families Act introduced significant national reforms to the way in which services for children with Special educational Needs or Disability are provided, commissioned or delivered.

In the light of this we now propose to consult on changes to home to school transport which provide greater flexibility and choice to families and which enable the use of personalised budgets where this is what families want.

Bury is a listening Council Madam Mayor and I hope that as many people as possible will respond to the consultation and help us to shape these vital services.

I have talked a lot tonight about the services we are developing and improving which provide help to people who need it most. However it is also vital that we provide services that help people to help themselves.

For that reason the Physical Activity and Sports Strategy is of critical importance and it supports our focus on wellness not illness.

The proposed strategy provides a framework to increase participation in physical activity and sport and to act as a lever for change to improve the health and wellbeing and quality of life for individuals, their families and the wider community.

The two main aims of the Strategy are to adopt a targeted approach to supporting the inactive to become active and to sustain and increase participation for those already active.

I won't be offering a prize to people who can guess which category I fall in to!

Of course, an essential job of Councils is to be a 'place' leader and to develop and improve the places in which we all live. For that reason, I am delighted that we have continued with our efforts to regenerate our wonderful borough by reporting on two great development opportunities.

Firstly we intend to work with Kennedy Wilson to bring forward development options for the former Fire Station site in Bury town centre and secondly we have accepted a bid for the site of the former bus station in Radcliffe.

The Radcliffe scheme will lead to an exciting retail development which will not only improve this part of Radcliffe but we intend that it will act as a catalyst for other exciting leisure schemes in the surrounding area.

When we launched the Radcliffe Masterplan people were sceptical and said we weren't serious about investing in Radcliffe. Well those people were wrong! We are now well on the way to delivering on our promises.

The Market Hall has had a superb up-grade, the new bus station is on target for a Christmas 2015 opening, we have worked with Dunelm to bring 200 new jobs to the town and now we are on track to deliver a new food store.

Madam Mayor, this Labour Group has truly kept its promises to the people of Radcliffe.

Madam Mayor, none of the wonderful initiatives that I have reported on tonight would be possible without the fantastic work of our staff. They are without doubt our best and most valuable asset and it is right that we continue to invest in them.

In order to achieve the Council's Vision for the next five years the organisation will need leaders of people and leaders of place and the Council itself will have to evolve as an organisation to become ever more innovative, agile, connected and transparent.

Because of this, People issues will be high on our agenda and so the Cabinet considered and approved a new People's Strategy which has been produced to support the Council's 'Our Vision, Purpose and Values'. The Strategy includes an 'Our People Charter' and an 'Our Health and Wellbeing Pledge' for all employees and we hope that it helps our staff to become the best that they can.

Finally Madam Mayor, the Cabinet devoted time to looking after our money by noting the Revenue, Capital and Treasury Management outturn reports.

It is a testament to the effectiveness of this Labour Group's management of taxpayers' money that we were able to deliver an underspending of £95,000 on the revenue budget despite the swingeing Government cuts that we have faced over the past 5 years.

This means that the Council is in the best possible shape to face the onslaught that we expect when the Government announces the results of the Comprehensive Spending Review later this year.

We know that local government is in for a battering but here in Bury we intend to stand up to the challenge, we intend to do everything we can to protect much needed public services and we will focus on the wonderful things we can do and not bow down to the Government's attempts to wipe us out.

Thank you.

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