

### **Question 1 submitted by Councillor R Walker**

**Q.** Could we be advised of the estimated number of extra foreign tourists coming to Bury as a result of the attraction of the new "Sculpture Centre" which has taken over two thirds of the Central Library floor space and what have been the criteria used to judge such generation of promised visitors?

**A.** **The aim of the various international exhibitions at the Art Gallery/Sculpture Centre has been to attract more visitors to the Gallery full stop.**

**The Sculpture Centre is an addition to Bury's cultural offer. In the first year of opening the combined visitor figure for the Art Gallery/Sculpture Centre went up 20%, which I am happy to celebrate as an impressive uplift in its first year. With our level of resources, the targeting and attraction of foreign tourists has to be done in partnership with GM partners and Marketing Manchester.**

**The Arts Service does not record the nationality of visitors to the Art Gallery/Sculpture Centre. However I do know that the Mayor, the Leader of the Council and other Members were very honoured to welcome the Finnish ambassador to the Gallery earlier this summer.**

### **Question 2 submitted by Councillor O'Brien**

**Q.** Can the Leader tell us what further budget cuts are likely to come Bury's way in the next settlement and how this will impact on local services?

**A.** **We are expecting to hear the outcome of the Chancellor's Comprehensive Spending Review on 25<sup>th</sup> November. We expect this to be followed by draft Settlement data in December.**

**These timescales are completely unhelpful and means that the Government has left us in the ridiculous situation of having less than 8 weeks to prepare a**

**budget by the time that they tell us what our funding will be.**

**However as Members will know this Labour Council takes its financial management responsibilities very seriously and so, despite the complete absence of any data from the Government, we have been undertaking our own financial modelling.**

**This highlights that by 2020, Central Government support to Bury in the form of RSG will virtually disappear. This will leave the Council wholly reliant upon locally generated Council Tax and Business Rates. So much for a Fair Deal for Bury.**

**Initial estimates for 2016/17 (as per our Medium Term Financial Strategy) suggest cuts in excess of £15m will be required. This is on top of the £54m of cuts that we have already made in the past 5 years.**

**We can mitigate the effects of the 16/17 forecast to a degree through local initiatives such as the continued success of our recycling initiative.**

**However, despite these measures, there is no doubt that significant cuts will be required which will have a serious and detrimental impact on Council services.**

### **Question 3 submitted by Councillor Kelly**

**Q.** Was the Leader aware of the proposed withdrawal of Capita O2 work from the site in Bury resulting in 350 job losses and can he tell us what impact this will have on the Borough?

**A.** **I was most certainly not aware that Capita were planning to withdraw from the Dumers Lane site, in fact this flies in the face of what Ivan Lewis and I had been told back in 2013.**

**At that time both I and Ivan Lewis MP met Capita bosses in Westminster to seek urgent reassurances about issues that arose when O2 outsourced call centre jobs as part of a 10-year extension of its relationship with**

**Capita. One of those issues was the long-term future of the Bury site following a report in a national newspaper that Capita had drawn up documents to shut the Bury call centre and another in Glasgow within three years.**

**We were given very clear assurances by Capita that these reports were inaccurate and that Capita were committed to safeguarding the future of the Bury workforce.**

**I am now appalled to hear that we were clearly misled and that Capita are withdrawing from the O2 contract at the Bury site which will lead to the loss of around 350 jobs in October 2015.**

**I recently met again with Capita, along with our two MPs and the Mayor of Manchester, and at that meeting not only were they unable to provide satisfactory answers to our questions they also refused to rethink their proposals.**

**These proposals will have a devastating effect on the local economy and people's livelihoods and the Council stands ready to help the people who have been affected.**

**The worse thing is that had Capita been honest with us earlier then we would have been in a much better position to work with them to help the people who have been so badly let down.**

#### **Question 4 submitted by Councillor Grimshaw**

- Q.** Can the Leader assure us of the improvements planned following the CQC report into Elmhurst
- A.** Following the recent report from CQC on Elmhurst we have developed a comprehensive action plan which goes well beyond the action plan which CQC asked for. A number of the actions in the plan have already been completed and we have met with the staff team to make clear to them the outcome from the inspection and what needs to change.

**For example, the issues raised around medication are constantly being reviewed and we are applying new ways of working. We have already made many changes to improve the robustness of the process and we have a comprehensive action plan in place to continue this and monitor progress.**

**Amongst a number of actions already taken we have developed improved relationships with local pharmacists and we have increased staff resources in the area of medication administration.**

**The inspection occurred at a turbulent time within the management of the service and we are also confident that recent managerial and organisational changes have significantly improved many areas already.**

**It should be noted that as well as the areas of concern there are a number of extremely positive comments within the report and these are a credit to the hard work of the team at Elmhurst generally. I am confident that with the actions detailed in the plan well under way when we are re-inspected in 2016 we will see improvement in the areas highlighted.**

#### **Question 5 submitted by Councillor Bevan**

- Q.** Can the Leader confirm why Ramsbottom Skate Park is due to be dismantled and removed within the next few weeks and what consultation took place before this decision was made?
- A.** **It is strange that Cllr Bevan has suddenly started asking about the skate park because it has been closed for public use for 2 years.**

**The simple reason that the park closed was that the main ramp had been vandalised and this had made it unsafe. Sadly, this particular incident was the latest in a string of incidents of mindless damage at the site. Vandalism has been a constant problem since the park was opened approximately 15 years ago.**

**No public complaints have been received regarding this closure but despite that a project group was consulted that did try to engage local young people in a proposed refurbishment of the Skatepark over 12 months ago. Little interest was shown by those young people.**

**Following a recent condition survey and due to vandalism the equipment is to be removed as soon as possible for health and safety reasons and to lessen potential liabilities.**

### **Question 6 submitted by Councillor Fitzwalter**

**Q.** Could I ask the Council to endorse and commend the values and principles of Bury's multi-agency Domestic Abuse Strategy, particularly on how it seeks to raise awareness, improve local intelligence and put an end to domestic abuse.

**A.** **We fully support this excellent partnership document and believe that it will strengthen our response to domestic abuse considerably. It will raise awareness across agencies and communities which will empower victims, challenge offenders, reduce repeat victimisation and make a substantial difference to the lives of those affected by domestic abuse.**

### **Question 7 submitted by Councillor Adams**

**Q.** Can the Leader inform the Council of the funding acquired with regard to disability sports provision?

**A.** **I am delighted to inform Council that Sport England has agreed to award Bury Metropolitan Borough Council a grant of £162,486 towards a total project cost of £243,729 for the next three years.**

**The Community Sport Activation Fund is part of the Sport England 2012-17 Youth and Community Strategy which seeks to stimulate local sports delivery and help**

**increase and sustain once a week participation in sport for those aged 14 and above.**

**The Sport England Local Sport Profile Tool data suggests 65.2% of the Bury population with a limiting disability and 40.2% of the Bury population with a non limiting disability do not currently participate in sport or active recreation.**

**The Bury Sport and Physical Activity Service 'Bridging the Gap' project will address the high demand and lack of provision across disability sport in our borough.**

**The project will be delivered through a strong partnership approach with Bury Public Health, Bury Workforce Modernisation and Bury Football Community Trust.**

**In addition the project will work with Bury Carers Forum and Bury Parents Forum to ensure the project is based on the needs of the community and helping to create a sporting habit for life for more people.**

**Question 8 submitted by Councillor Black**

**Q.** Will the Leader join me in congratulating the Creative Living Centre for being granted the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, a rightly deserved tribute to the valuable work of staff and volunteers who are supporting residents' community health and wellbeing.

**A.** I would be delighted to join Leader and other Members in congratulating the Creative Living Centre, along with Communicate Bury and The Red Sea Pedestrians, on being granted The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service 2015.

**We all know that day in, day out organisations like these three are working away across this borough to improve the lives of our residents. The work goes on in difficult circumstances and the reward is to see real change and improvements within our communities.**

**These achievements are only possible because of the contribution of volunteers and the great thing about the Award is that it specifically recognises the outstanding achievement by groups of volunteers who regularly devote their time to helping others in the community, improving the quality of life and opportunity for others and providing an outstanding service.**

**Question 9 submitted by Councillor Pickstone**

**Q.** Does the Leader agree with me that refugees are always welcome in Bury? What steps can Bury make as its contribution to the appalling situation where so many people are being forced to flee from conflict and oppression risking their lives to seek sanctuary in the European Union.

**A.** Bury has a proud history of welcoming asylum seekers and refugees over many years. Since 2005, Bury has been the lead for AGMA, with Bolton, on the Gateway Protection Programme where refugees are brought from camps and settled in a number of authorities across AGMA.

**Bury was the third authority to receive refugees nationally under this Programme. The refugees receive support and accommodation from Refugee Action and the Council. The programme has been a great success and something that I am immensely proud of.**

**Since 2011 we have taken 258 individuals. Nationalities include; Iraqi, Somali, Congolese and Ethiopian.**

**Many of the refugees have moved on to have very successful lives in Bury.**

**I came into politics to change people's lives and when I met the first group of refugees and saw the support they were receiving, I knew I was making a difference.**

**In terms of the future, we are very much in the hands of central Government who seem to be making it up as we go along. We are currently working with colleagues**

**across AGMA and the Home Office to formulate our response in the light of the Prime Ministers announcement last week. I will be in a position to make a further announcement once the details are worked through.**

**Question 10 submitted by Councillor Caserta**

**Q.** In view of the proposed Government legislation to reform Union subscriptions deducted directly from wages, will this council be saving money within our payroll department. At present Bury Council charge 2% to Unite for the privilege of drawing subscriptions from staff wages and forwarding the money to the Union. Were we making a profit on these transactions or a loss?

**A** **The 2% charge has been calculated to take full account of the cost of making deductions, undertaking reconciliations, and facilitating payment across to UNITE each month.**

**We were making neither a profit nor a loss on these transactions, and the proposed change in legislation will have a neutral budgetary effect.**

**The real losers from this change will be Council staff who will now have to make alternative personal arrangements for payment of subscriptions.**

**Question 11 submitted by Councillor Mallon**

**Q.** Can the Leader confirm how many apprentices are being recruited this Autumn and in what work areas?

**A.** **We are recruiting 16 apprentices this Autumn across the council as part of our Backing Young Bury campaign.**

**These recruits will be taking up positions in a wide variety of occupational areas including Systems, Admin, HR, Teaching Assistant, Caretaking, Road worker, Leisure Attendant and Care Assistant.**

**They will be employed in a wide variety of locations and teams including Housing Assessment/ Social**



**Development/Elections/ Youth participation/ Elms Bank school/ Building Control and Castle Leisure.**

**Our apprentices include those who had some challenges entering the job market and started with us on our 'Super Six' scheme and have made the successful journey to being ready to take up an apprenticeship with the council.**

**We are extremely proud of our Backing Young Bury programme and wish this new intake of apprentices all the very best in their chosen career paths.**

**Question 12 submitted by Councillor Quinn**

**Q.** Could the Leader give us his reaction to the latest reduction in Police numbers across the Borough?

**A.** I believe this Government's continued imposed cuts to the local policing budget makes it more challenging for Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to do their job.

**With this year's budget being cut by £41m, on top of cuts totalling £134m already made, I believe the funding position for GMP is becoming more untenable. If this Government continues with its plans, GMP will have seen its budget slashed by almost half over the course of a decade.**

**The situation is being made worse by the Home Secretary who is consulting on changes to the Police funding formula without providing any figures to show the impact of her proposed changes. I have written to her to protest over this appalling situation.**

**Overall, police officer numbers across Greater Manchester have fallen by more than 1,500 from a high of 8,100 to below 6,600 since 2010, a reduction of nearly 20%. The Bury division has lost 46 officers, a reduction of 14.7%.**

**In Bury we've done a good job so far to manage these cuts in the best way we can, working together to**

**transform public services and tackle issues that place most demand on all our services.**

**Bury Council continues to work closely with the police to jointly tackle complex issues including child sexual exploitation, domestic violence and drug and alcohol misuse. GMP continue to give me their assurances that neighbourhood policing will remain central to their approach.**

**But this work is being threatened by the cuts to both police and local authority budgets.**

**I will continue to work with the Police and Crime Commissioner to demand a fairer deal for the people of Bury.**

**Question 13 submitted by Councillor James**

- Q.** Would the Leader agree with me that this year's inaugural "Made in Bury Business Fair" highlighted the tremendous diversity of our local business community and the enormous contribution they make to our Borough?
- A.** **I wholeheartedly agree that the inaugural "Made in Bury Business Fair" did indeed highlight the diversity and importance of our business community.**

**The Business Fair is part of our ongoing strategy to support our thriving business base in whatever way we can.**

**This one day event in the centre of Bury, held in one of our most historic buildings, brought over 1,000 delegates into our town centre. In addition the venue hosted 128 organisations networking on the day.**

**The format of the event was of an exceptionally high standard and is definitely up there as the major business networking event in the North West.**

**This Councils drive to support a stronger economy is key to the growth and prosperity of all our townships and so**

**I am delighted to inform Councillor James that the event will take place in 2016 and we, the Council, will once again be the headline sponsor.**

**In addition, in November this year we will be supporting the Made in Bury Business Awards for the third year running.**

**This Council wants to support the business community to thrive and grow, because that growth means more jobs and more spend in the economy. This town means Business, Bury Means Business.**

**Question 14 submitted by Councillor Hodgkinson**

**Q.** Will the Leader advise if the changes to the bin collection frequency and improved recycling rates have led to capacity issues of the collection vehicles, giving rise to more complaints from residents as their bins have not been emptied on the due date?

**A.** **The changes to the bin collection frequency and improved recycling rates have not led to capacity issues on the collection vehicles.**

**When collection frequencies changed in October 2014, all collection rounds were remodelled accordingly, to take account of the different tonnages expected to be collected each day.**

**Reports of missed collections from individual addresses reported via the Customer Contact Centre are at a lower level than before the service changes were introduced in October 2014.**

**Question 15 submitted by Councillor Jones**

**Q.** Can the Leader tell us what steps Bury is taking to tackle homelessness in the Borough and to support vulnerable residents to stay in their homes?

**A.** **I am pleased to advise that over the last few years the Council has radically transformed its services to**

**homeless people and has worked hard in breaking down barriers for residents who need housing.**

**Our first line of support is to offer a comprehensive advice and support service to people presenting as homeless to establish their housing options. By changing our approach last year to make this more of a conversation than an assessment, we remarkably quadrupled the number of homeless preventions (956) compared to average in previous years. In reality this means that we prevented families from losing their tenancies, supported vulnerable people to keep their homes and stopped people becoming street homeless.**

**For individuals where prevention is not an option, the Council commissions a number of services including housing related support, supported accommodation and specialist services such as for victims of domestic violence.**

**We have also developed a number of innovative schemes such as the Housing Employment and New Opportunities Project (HEN) which links the offer of housing for single homeless people to a commitment from tenants to access employment or training. Since 2012, 48 customers have moved on, securing employment and their own accommodation.**

**We work very closely with Children Services and undertake joint assessments of young people when they face homelessness. We also provide support for young people aged 16-17 in a project similar to HEN for young people.**

**Rough Sleepers are the most vulnerable in the homeless spectrum and a group that the Council takes very seriously. We undertaken regular counts to identify the scale of the issue and actively work with individuals to get them into services. After a robust review of service provision, Calico Enterprise was commissioned to provide support for rough sleepers on the streets and work with them to access accommodation.**

**I am proud that the Council has not used Bed and Breakfast since 2008 and no longer places homeless in**

**hostels which places Bury in a better position than most Councils nationally. There is however still work to do and I will be bringing forward a new strategy to Cabinet in the coming weeks setting out our priorities and areas for development over the next few years.**

**Question 16 submitted by Councillor Skillen**

**Q.** Can the Leader update us on new housebuilding in the Borough, both current development and future plans?

**A.** **The latest monitoring of housing land was undertaken in April and this shows that between April 2014 and April 2015, there were 543 units built in Bury and that there were a further 311 units under construction.**

**In terms of future development, the Council has granted planning permission for a further 1,934 units on 95 sites across the Borough.**

**Housing development in Bury is leading to significant regeneration benefits, particularly in terms of bringing many vacant and derelict brownfield sites back into active use.**

**99% of last year's completed units and 88% of those units that were under construction were on brownfield sites. Looking forward, this regeneration is set to continue with 80% of the units with planning permission being on brownfield sites.**

**The level of housing completions that we have seen between 2014 and 2015, and the amount of housing that is under construction, clearly shows that the house building industry is very confident in investing in Bury and that they view Bury as a place with a strong and vibrant economy and as one of the most attractive places to live within Greater Manchester.**

### **Question 17 submitted by Councillor Preston**

- Q.** Given the ongoing success of Bury's World Famous Market and the significant investment made to Radcliffe Market, can the Leader outline what other developments are planned for Markets elsewhere in the Borough?
- A.** **Bury Market continues to outshine its peers and was awarded the accolade of Best Market Attraction 2015 at the Great British Market Awards held by NABMA (National Association of British Market Authorities). It still enjoys full occupancy and draws 1000s of visitors from outside the Borough to the Town Centre.**

**A weekly programme of "fine food market" events is planned at Radcliffe market from 19<sup>th</sup> September onwards which will act as a platform for driving additional footfall which will benefit the existing Radcliffe traders. With the works to the Bus Station ongoing and the planned retail scheme gathering pace, this is an exciting time for Radcliffe.**

**A tender opportunity is currently being advertised to build on the already successful food and craft markets held on the second Sunday of the month in Ramsbottom by trialling a Saturday event in the Market Place. This will be held in addition to the current Saturday Market on Union St. It is intended to reduce the footprint of the current Saturday Market to free up much needed car parking provision. A tender exercise is currently ongoing to source an operator to hold regular food and craft markets in the Longfield Suite in Prestwich.**

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

- Q.** Could the Leader inform members of reports of illegal fly-tipping within the Borough - for the three six month period prior to 1 October 2013 and the two six month periods since?
- A.** **For the six monthly periods before October 2013 the number of fly tipping enquiries reduced from 1186 at April to September 2012 to 887 for the period ending September 2013. Over the next three six monthly periods the figure increased to 1455 by September 2014.**

**However it is important to note that the bulk of fly tipping enquiries relates to furniture, white goods and builders materials which are not be affected by the domestic waste collection service.**

**As part of the changes to waste collection we introduced a team of recycling awareness and enforcement officers as well as support from Environmental Health Officers to investigate fly tipping enquiries.**

**Question 19 submitted by Councillor Gunther**

**Q.** In addition to Bury MBC employees having their union subscriptions deducted at source in their pay packets, can they also subscribe to charities through this system?

**A.** **We have an arrangement with 'Workplace Giving' where council employees can elect to pay a monthly amount to one or various charities and we facilitate this through payroll and pass monies through to Workplace Giving each month.**

**Question 20 submitted by Councillor Fitzgerald**

**Q.** Can the Leader tell us what further steps this Council is taking to improve Electoral Registration responses in Bury now the registration forms have been sent out?

**A.** **At present 55% of all properties in Bury have responded to the canvass letter - 46,300 properties**

- 23,200 by post**
- 7,600 by telephone**
- 11,500 by internet**
- 4,000 by text**

**Canvassers will visit all those that haven't responded to the initial letter and the reminder. The canvasser will be required to visit each property on at least 3 occasions.**

**In addition we are also trialling new technology this year which will allow details to be up-dated immediately online.**

**Canvassers have also been given more time this year (4 weeks longer for the door knocking stage) to contact properties, hopefully this will increase the response rates.**

**Visits will be made to all residential homes to ensure residents are correctly registered.**

**We are checking details on Council Tax and sending registration forms to all new occupiers.**

**Letters have been sent to local letting agents to pass on information and leaflets to new residents.**

**We plan to visit colleges in the borough to give demonstrations and talks on registering to vote.**

**Alongside these activities there will be ongoing press releases and publicity from the Press Officer.**

**Question 21 submitted by Councillor Parnell**

**Q.** Would the Leader join me in congratulating the Council's Trading Standards Team for their recent successful prosecution of a shop owner in Radcliffe that has brought to an end the illegal sales of cigarettes and the risks posed to public health?

**A.** **I would be delighted to congratulate the Trading Standards team for their fantastic work in this and many other important areas.**

**Trading Standards take seriously the work to combat illicit tobacco. They lead partnership working with the police, customs, public health and regional groups to take action against illicit tobacco sellers. This work is done to protect the health of local residents, protect the local economy and provide a fair trading environment for local honest businesses.**



**Illicit tobacco sellers often target poor and disadvantaged communities where they know people have more difficulty affording genuine cigarettes.**

**Thanks to the team's work Mr Amir of Slade Lane, Longsight, Manchester, trading as Bits 'n' Bobs in Dale Street, Radcliffe, has been sentenced after counterfeit and incorrectly labelled cigarettes and tobacco were seized at his shop on six separate occasions.**

**He pleaded guilty at Bury Magistrates Court on Tuesday 25 August 2015 to 45 offences under the Trade Marks Act 1994, and Consumer Protection Act 1987.**

**The items were discovered on four separate visits by Trading Standards Officers in November 2014, January 2015, February 2015 and March 2015. During each visit Counterfeit cigarettes and tobacco were found which also didn't comply with UK Tobacco labelling laws. The retail value of the four seizures was estimated to be almost £11,000, and all items were forfeited for destruction.**

**Mr Amir was sentenced to four months imprisonment, suspended for two years, and ordered to undertake 100 hours' unpaid community work. He was instructed to pay £1,016 court costs plus a £80 victim surcharge. Mr Amir was previously convicted on 3 March 2015 for similar offences related to tobacco seizures made at his shop in July 2013 and October 2013, when he had pleaded guilty to seven offences and was given a £500 fine, plus £500 costs and a £50 victim surcharge.**

### **Question 22 submitted by Councillor Black**

- Q.** Will the Leader congratulate the Prestwich Labour Councillors for the leadership they have taken to improve parking in Prestwich and for consulting the public about changes needed?
- A.** I am very pleased to congratulate Prestwich Labour Councillors for the work they have been doing with Council Officers to address parking issues in Prestwich.

**The online consultation has provided us with a valuable insight into the public's opinion of parking in Prestwich.**

**Through the progression of the Prestwich Parking Strategy we will now do what we can to address the issues and concerns raised.**

**Question 23 submitted by Councillor Gartside**

**Q.** Further to the recent announcement by the David Cameron to start looking at levels of apprenticeship recruitment in procurement rules for awarding Government contracts, would the Leader of the Council / relevant Cabinet member, if not already done so, consider doing the same for Bury Council's corporate procurement decision making?

**A.** **The Council's Procurement Strategy – 'Buying into Bury' is already focussed on how we can maximise the wider value of our spending power and deliver best value through Council contracts.**

**A whole range of social value outcomes are considered whenever a major procurement exercise is undertaken, including the recruitment of apprentices.**

**Back in November 2014 we committed to the GMCA Social Value Policy which has objectives relating to employment, raising living standards, citizen engagement, sustainability of the voluntary and community sector, promoting equality and fairness and environmental sustainability.**

**It is important to consider which objectives are appropriate for each procurement exercise to ensure compliance with legislation and the delivery of best value, so where apprenticeship recruitment is relevant it is incorporated into our procurement decision making.**

### **Question 24 submitted by Councillor Bayley**

**Q.** Recently in the Prestwich Guide the Leader wrote of the dangers of publicising confidential discussions for short term political gain. Has he anything more to add?

**A.** **My views on this are very clear and were outlined in my letter.**

**As a Council we will get involved in confidential and sensitive matters, and elected Members should respect that.**

**In this case it was to move forward a major project for the benefit of the Borough.**

**Frankly to put this at risk for a cheap headline is reckless and irresponsible.**

**I hope that this is now understood, and do not wish to see any repeat of this behaviour.**

### **Question 25 submitted by Councillor Quinn**

**Q.** Would the Leader like to ask if the Member for Bury North will support the Government's Psychoactive Substances Bill and join in getting these life threatening chemicals off the street?

**A.** **We would very much welcome the MPs support for a campaign by the Local Government Association (LGA), which represents more than 400 Councils (including Bury) across England and Wales, to get the Home Office to follow the legislation that was introduced in Ireland more than four years ago, which bans the sale of all psychoactive drugs.**

**On a local level, the Council is currently working with partners like the police, trading standards and providers to try to build up evidence, explore legal options and establish a coordinated multi agency approach that will**

**work consistently across the whole of Bury to address the harms being caused by New Psychoactive Substance (NPSs).**

**However, due to the speed and growth of the NPS market and also how quickly substances are changing it is important in the interim, to ensure that people are aware of the risks involved if NPSs are taken.**

**In view of this, we are working to educate local people including both the public and professionals, about the side effects and consequences of selling or taking NPSs and the related harms.**

**NPSs have the same or similar effects as drugs such as cocaine or ecstasy for example, but are not controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act.**

**Side effects can include heart palpitations, vomiting, dizziness, fainting, panic attacks and psychosis although specific effects are not always known In many cases, they are designed to mimic class A drugs, but are structurally different, enough to avoid them being classified as illegal substances.**

**Partners are currently developing a communication strategy that will include several awareness raising events, staff training, literature and an increase focus on harm reduction and outreach at local festivals etc.**

### **Question 26 submitted by Councillor R Walker**

- Q.** Could we be advised of the number of weeks when the Sculpture Centre, which has taken over two thirds of the Central Library floor space, has actually been inaccessible to the general public since it displaced the Library service?
- A.** **When one exhibition finishes in the Art Gallery/ Sculpture Centre it has to be taken down and when the next exhibits arrive they require time be installed.**

**For artistic and health & safety reasons during the periods of changeover access is closed to the public, which is standard practice across all galleries.**

**The Sculpture Centre has been open for a total of 71 weeks. The number of changeover weeks during that period has been 9 weeks – including an installation currently taking place. These weeks are usually structured as one week to take down and one week to install the next show.**

**The Arts Service ensures that there are still opportunities for visitors to see exhibits in other parts of the building which remain open when the Sculpture Centre is closed.**

**Question 27 submitted by Councillor Pickstone**

**Q.** Could the Leader inform members of amounts of uncollected Council Tax for the last five years. Has there been an increase in the use of bailiffs in the collection of unpaid council tax in that period?

**A.** **A total of £4,898,000 is outstanding for the last 5 years: this is broken down as follows:**

**2014/15 £1.8m  
2013/14 £1.2m  
2012/13 £750k  
2011/12 £618k  
2010/11 £530k**

**This should be considered in context in that the actual amount of Council Tax raised over this period totalled over £365m after the award of discounts and benefits and so the outstanding amount represents 1.3% of the total due.**

**Members are reminded that overall the Council collects more than 99% of debts due.**

**We have been very pro-active in dealing with aged debt in recent years: we set up an Enforcement team to specifically target old debt and have managed to reduce debt significantly.**

**From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2015 we have reduced aged debt by a total of £4,320,364.61.**

**In the vast majority of cases, success in collection has been achieved by using methods other than bailiffs. The team have focused on pro-actively contacting customers to make arrangements, applying attachment of earnings and applying for committal to prison on appropriate cases.**

**In terms of in-year collection, our use of bailiffs - comparing this financial year up to the end of August (Apr-Aug 15) to the same period last year (Apr-Aug 14) shows a reduction of 200 in the number of cases sent to bailiffs.**

**In-year collection has improved consistently in the last five years, year on year and we have consistently been the 2<sup>nd</sup> best performer in AGMA after Trafford Council.**

**All our staff have been trained in identifying customers who may need debt advice and/or help in maximising benefits and are all pro-active in signposting customers to other agencies such as StepChange and CAB as appropriate, as well as our own in-house Bury Support Fund team.**

**Question 28 submitted by Councillor Bevan**

- Q.** Can the Leader confirm the Capital and Section 106 funds being spent this financial year on refurbishing children's play areas in the Borough, split by township?
- A.** **In February, the Council approved an additional "one off" capital allocation of £250,000 for play area improvements.**

**This was further supplemented by a £250,000 contribution from Six Town Housing to undertake work on play areas and other environmental improvements.**

**As at 31<sup>st</sup> August, a total of £19,839 has been spent from these, and s106 resources.**

**Whilst this may appear low, Members should note that where possible works have not been undertaken during the school holidays when the play areas are most used.**

**For this reason it is too early to provide a meaningful analysis between Townships.**

**Question 29 submitted by Councillor Gartside**

**Q.** Sensitive personal information has been lost or stolen from councils in thousands of cases, recent research says. According to a study by privacy campaign group Big Brother Watch, Local authorities recorded 4,236 data breaches during a three-year period from April 2011. Can the Leader of the Council please give full details of any such breaches by Bury Council over this period?

**A.** **The Council had one such breach, involving a member of staff who removed a customer's personal data from a Council building for motives known only to themselves.**

**This was an isolated and deliberate act by a member of staff and involved a wilful breach of policies and procedures which led to the termination of their employment with the Council.**

**The Information Commissioners Office does accept that when processing or handling data, human error is inevitable. However, they expect that organisations will have taken steps to minimise the risk of human error occurring or, if it does occur, causing a security breach.**

**In other words, they expect Councils to have taken all reasonable "technical and organisational" measures.**

**The Council has taken such measures - implementing physical and electronic security and having appropriate**

**policies, processes and reporting arrangements in place. Reports are audited to prevent any future errors and ensure any poor practice is addressed or good practice shared.**

**Other steps taken by the Council include:**

- **Periodic risk reviews and risk analysis**
- **Training and general awareness raising, particularly where employees are regularly dealing with personal data**
- **Only processing what the Council needs and only giving it internally to those who need to see it.**

### **Question 30 submitted by Councillor Hodkinson**

**Q.** Does the leader share my concern about the number of complaints regarding Japanese knotweed on Council owned land which is spreading to neighbouring residential properties. As this invasive weed can affect both home insurance and property prices what proactive steps are being taken by this Council to address this issue?

**A.** **Over the last few years there has been a noticeable increase in the number of enquiries relating to Japanese Knotweed growing on Council owned land. This may be attributed to the spread of the plant but also increased public awareness. The plant is not toxic to humans or animals.**

**The Council has a programme of applying herbicide which is required twice a year for about 4 years. A number of Council owned sites have been successfully treated. As the amount of invasive weeds increases across the Borough the programme will be reviewed.**

### **Question 31 submitted by Councillor D'Albert**

**Q.** Could the Leader inform members of the number of trees on Council land which have been felled or removed in the last three years. How many trees have been planted in the same period? (If possibly a division between 'street' trees on



pavements and verges, and trees in parks or woodlands would be appreciated, if available.)

- A. In the past 3 years approximately 140 trees have been removed. The majority of these trees (93%) are from the highway where the trees have become too big for the location. The Council is restricted from planting new trees in highways due to footpath width and underground utilities. Over this period 10 new street trees and 10 parks trees have been planted where resources have permitted. There will also be a significant number of self sown trees in our parks and countryside areas.**