

**COUNCIL 21 OCTOBER 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 September meeting of Council.

Madam Mayor before I begin to talk about the work of the Cabinet I would just like to up-date Council on matters that we have recently debated.

Firstly we did, as promised, write to Iain Duncan-Smith on the matter of DWP sanctions which Councillor Parnell proposed so passionately back in July. Sadly, to date we have had no reply which seems to me to sum up this Government’s attitude towards the vulnerable and less well-off in our society.

They simply don’t care.

Secondly we did, as promised, write to Michael Gove on the subject of the proposed closure of Bury Magistrates’ and County Court asking him to pause the process.

This time we DID get a reply, not from Mr Gove but from a Parliamentary Under-secretary, which took four long paragraphs to say nothing, let alone to promise the pause that we asked for and which would have allowed a truly local solution to have been found.

Talk about a lost opportunity.

But Madam Mayor this won't stop us fighting against the Court closures and I was really pleased to see that Bury Community Safety Partnership has submitted a very robust response setting out alternative options that the Government should explore.

At the last meeting we also roundly condemned the disgusting attackers of Moshe Fuerst and his friends at Bowker Vale tram station. Since then I know that Sedgely Park councillors have been very active in supporting the family and the community and also the Police have done a wonderful job of identifying and securing a conviction of the cowards responsible.

I am sure that the whole Council will join me in sending our appreciation to everyone involved in dealing with this very sad incident.

Talking of great partnership working with the Police, Bury is working with GMP and other partners this week to support a Greater Manchester Week of Action to raise awareness of modern slavery. The aim is to highlight modern slavery crimes - such as forced labour, sham marriage, sex abuse and domestic servitude.

We know that there are an estimated 13,000 individuals being trafficked in the UK. It's seen as lucrative, has a growing pool and is all too often a hidden crime.

We also know that is a growing problem across Greater Manchester; in 2012, there were 2 crimes of modern day slavery across Greater Manchester, in 2015 this had increased to 67. We believe that focussing work through initiatives such as this Week of Action and other partnership interventions are helping to raise awareness of these dreadful issues.

Whilst I am very saddened that slavery exists in this day and age I am very pleased that the authorities are responding so robustly.

Madam Mayor, on a more positive note, I was absolutely delighted to see that the Sunday Telegraph, a paper that I always read avidly and trust for its unbiased reporting, has named Bury in its list of the top Apprenticeships.

We were one of only two local authorities included in the list and we were named alongside public service organisations such as BT, the BBC and the Army.

This is a fabulous achievement and it is richly deserved recognition of the dedication that the Council shows to improving the lives of Bury's young people.

My thanks go to Councillor Holt and to all the staff involved in making Backing Young Bury such a resounding success.

I was also very impressed by an article in the Guardian recently which commented very favourably on St Luke's C of E primary school which talked about the school changing the face of faith teaching and suggesting that it is a brilliant example of British multi-culturalism.

Madam Mayor this article confirms what we have long known...that Bury is a very special place where all people, of whatever race or religion, can live together in peace and harmony and where we respect and celebrate our differences. Long may it continue.

And even more proof that Bury is a special place comes from the national Family Hotspots report that shows that Bury is one of the best places for families to live in the country.

We were ranked 17<sup>th</sup> best in the country and we were the only town in Greater Manchester to feature in the top 20 as measured by education standards, crime figures, childcare provision, house prices and average salary.

Added to this brilliant news was the fact that the latest official well-being survey identified Bury as having the highest happiness levels of all GM districts and levels that are well above the UK average.

Oldham is the least happy and Rochdale was just averagely happy!

These things don't happen by accident and it is great to see that the work done by a whole range of people including the Council, Team Bury partners and the private sector is now paying fruit.

Of course I'm sure it goes without saying that all Members fully appreciate the importance of representing Bury positively in the national media!

One last bit of good news from me...I am thrilled to be able to report to Council that Bury was awarded a GOLD award in the 2015 Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Britain in Bloom finals 'small city' category.

Bury beat five other 'small cities' and came out on top in the category, which is blooming great news (sorry...and yes, I did nick that from the Bury Times!).

Again, I hope all Members will join with me in congratulating Cllr Isherwood and all the staff involved in this magnificent achievement.

Turning now to the work of the Cabinet since the last Council meeting...

Madam Mayor the focus of the Cabinet has been on two key issues...health and regeneration.

We considered and approved the recommendations set out in the Public health Annual report for 2014/15.

The Director of Public Health uses the annual report to focus on a different theme each year and in light of the transfer of public health responsibilities to the Council the theme for the report is the role of the council in improving health.

The report highlights the significant contribution to improving health and reducing inequalities already being made by the council. Huge challenges remain however, for example inequalities in life-expectancy, and there is clearly more that needs to be done working with partner agencies.

The emphasis in the report is the need for people to be helped to take responsibility for their own health and well-being and the report makes specific reference to the impact of things like alcohol.

If any Members feel they want help with the impact of excessive, or binge, drinking then I suggest that they have a really good look at this report.

What is clearly evident from the report is that there is a strong sense of passion and ambition for the public health agenda across the Council giving confidence that the health and well-being challenges facing our communities can be tackled.

I am pleased that the recommendations have been mapped against the Health & Well-being Strategy and the Council's vision, values and principles to ensure implementation can be aligned to existing strategies and action plans.

We also considered and approved the Health & Wellbeing Board's Annual report for 2014/15 which also included a refreshed Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

The refreshed strategy has five overarching priorities and is now a condensed version of the original strategy and is presented as a 'Plan on a page' with Team Bury branding. The priorities are:

- Starting Well
- Living Well
- Living Well with a Long Term Condition or as a Carer
- Ageing Well (something I fully intend to do!!) and
- Healthy Places

I'm sure all Members will join me in congratulating the Board on all the excellent outcomes that they have achieved over the past year.

Whilst we're talking about health I am delighted to announce that Bury has become one of the first boroughs in the country to commit to establishing a single commissioning body between the Council and the CCG.

This body will oversee a budget of around £350m and means that health and social care will be commissioned jointly, focussed around the needs of Bury people. This is an amazing achievement and my thanks go to everyone involved.

Also on health, the 1<sup>st</sup> of October saw our ground breaking social care LATCO, Persona, come into existence. Yes, we set up this organisation as a response to the Government's savage cuts to social care budgets, but we are determined that not only is it a way to save money and generate income, but it will also be a provider of first class services.

I wish them, and all the staff, all the very best and I look forward to working with them for the good of our residents.

Madam Mayor, whilst we all know that health and well-being is critical to the lives of our residents, having a thriving economy is equally important.

Not only does the Council need to look for ways to generate additional funds to make up for the Government's cuts but having good quality employment is a major factor in a person's well-being....particularly since the Government seem hell bent on creating a society of working poor thanks to its broken promises not to cut working families' tax credits.

Despite the well known cynicism of certain Members, the Cultural Economy is one of the fastest growing sectors internationally.

There are significant financial and employment benefits for areas with a thriving cultural economy; together with other vital benefits resulting from greater civic pride, community cohesion and better health and wellbeing of the population.

Bury has already achieved regional, national and international recognition in this area including:

- Bury Town Centre obtaining Purple Flag status in 2015;
- Bury Market winning 'Market of the Year' in 2015;
- The ELR being awarded Lancashire Tourism 'Large Visitor Attraction of the Year' Award in 2014
- The Met winning 'Best Entertainment Venue' at the 2014 Manchester Tourism Awards
- International acclaim for the Art Gallery programme and cultural trading practices
- Ramsbottom being runner up in the Daily Telegraph's 2014 'High Street of the Year' survey...clearly the Telegraph recognises the achievements that good old fashioned Labour policies can achieve!

This Strategy will help Bury to build on its existing assets, promoting a stronger cultural economy in the future.

With increasing pressure on resources, the Strategy will also seek to maximise the benefits to the Borough, and it will do this by encouraging greater partnership working with all involved in this sector.

We also considered a report setting out very exciting proposals that will add to the already impressive regeneration that we are undertaking in Radcliffe.

The scheme involves demolishing the Civic Hall and building 40 much needed affordable properties and provide wider regeneration outcomes for the area. In doing so, the scheme will help to deliver the Councils Housing Strategy and other objectives.

The scheme will be a high quality development, with associated high quality landscaping and it will lever in a grant of £1m and provide a capital receipt for the Council.

The closure of the existing Radcliffe Pool and Fitness Centre and now the Radcliffe Civic Hall presents an exciting opportunity to look at a brand new combined leisure/entertainment facility on the old Radcliffe Pool site in the town centre.

A new facility would need to be modern, attractive, sustainable and fit for now and future generations. It would have better and more manageable and usable event space and deliver a Radcliffe community hub that provides an oasis of activity to promote healthy lifestyles, wellbeing and support the wider regeneration of Radcliffe.

We now intend to work up a detailed business case for the proposed new facility and, as this Labour Group always does, we intend that residents of Radcliffe as well as existing users of the Civic Hall and Leisure Centre will be fully consulted on what type of facility would be needed and would be successful in Radcliffe.

Finally, Members will be aware that the Council has been marketing the Chamberhall site for the past two years and we have been in discussions with a number of developers over what may be realistically achieved on the site.

Given the strategic importance of this site we have been clear that we would not take the easy route of a simple sale, instead we have been resolute in our determination that any development is high quality and meets the specific needs of our borough.

Confidence in the strength of the office/industrial property market is now such that it is believed that there is now a realistic chance that a developer could be secured to construct a significant first phase on a speculative basis, which means that the development would take place with pre-let agreements being in place with future occupiers.

The Council Solicitor advises that this exciting development opportunity needs to be marketed in accordance with European Union commissioning rules, requiring an advert in the European Journal.

This advertising process is now underway and bids from developers are required by the end of October. I will ensure that Council is kept informed as things progress.

Madam Mayor this report shows that this wonderful borough of ours is responding superbly to the challenges set for it by the Government.

We are determined to improve the lives and the well-being of our residents and I hope that Council will support the initiatives that I have talked about tonight.

Thank you.

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