

## COUNCIL 20 January 2015

### MEMBER QUESTION TIME

Questions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 12

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#### 1. **Councillor Jabar**

Will the Leader, on behalf of the Council, place on record its condemnation of the appalling massacre of innocent school children in Peshawar and the recent atrocity in Paris and offer its most heartfelt condolences to the victims and their families?

#### **Answer**

I know that I speak for the whole Chamber and for the people of Bradford District when I say that our hearts go out to the victims, survivors and the families and friends affected by these truly horrific crimes against humanity.

We stand united in our unequivocal condemnation of the attacks, of the warped, extremist ideology behind them and in our resolve to continue this District's proud and long standing tradition of opposing extremism wherever it appears and in whatever form.

#### 2. **Councillor L'Amie**

As it was resolved at the 22 October 2013 full Council meeting, that "This Council commits to providing a one stop shop service for residents suffering bereavement, whereby any changes to care needs, the council tax single occupier reduction and all other services required can be accessed and organised in a single contact". Can the Leader of the Council advise colleagues of the current position?

#### **Answer**

When a death is registered, the Registrars Service also log the death using the government's Tell Us Once system which then passes the information to:

- Adult Services
- Libraries
- Electoral Services
- Council Tax
- Housing Benefits [including the Blue Badge team]
- Miscellaneous Debt

This system also notifies the following government departments:

- HMRC
- DWP
- DVLA
- Passport Office

West Yorkshire Metro are also notified.

### **Supplementary Question**

It is gratifying to know that the Registrars Service have got their act together but the motion in 2013 was quite clear, it was about what Bradford Council were going to do to make it easier for bereaved people to contact them. Relying on the internet is not necessarily the best idea so I will ask again what action does Bradford Council intend to take to bring its treatment and offer to bereaved people up to the best standards in West Yorkshire? Because my experience and that of several colleagues looking into this has been that Leeds, Calderdale and North Yorkshire may well do a better job.

### **Councillor Green**

I would point out to Councillor L'Amie that the Registrars Service is actually part of Bradford Council and what we do is we work across all the agencies. Once a death is registered the Tell Us Once kicks in. If there are lessons to be learned from any other local authority and from best practice we are certainly keen to learn from that but the experience that my constituents have had using this service is they have found it incredibly useful at a time of great stress and loss. I think that we will always seek to improve it and if any elected member has any ideas of how that might be done we will be more than happy to listen.

### **3. Councillor Middleton**

To the Portfolio Holder for Employment, Skills & Culture - When will Eccleshill Library on the Undercliffe Road site BD2 3BE be reopening to the public?

### **Answer**

Refurbishment work at Eccleshill Library, originally scheduled to be completed at the end of February 2015, will be finished by mid March.

This follows the discovery of unexpected structural damage which will take a little longer to rectify. More workforce will be available to undertake this.

From 17th November when the work began, until the re-opening, the opening hours at Idle Library have been extended from 11.5 hours to 45 hours and Eccleshill customers informed of this, as well as of locations of nearby libraries (City/ Laisterdyke)

### **Supplementary Question**

Residents will be pleased to know that Eccleshill Library will be re-opening in the middle of March but could the portfolio say why when two different Council departments made separate enquiries to the library service both the departments were told that it would not be possible to accept bookings at the beginning of May because it was not sure that the library would be re-opened at that time?

### **Councillor Hinchcliffe**

I think to be honest you can forgive officers in this climate of cuts when things have been cut and cut again by central government. Officers do sometimes think that things have been cut when they are not going to be cut. I can assure you that Eccleshill Library is going to be open again in the middle of March and all you need to do in those situations is ring me rather than go to the T&A to be quite honest. I am always happy to answer questions and will get back to you. I am quite accessible to anybody.

**4. Councillor Shabbir**

Will the Portfolio Holder tell us if there are any steps to be taken with regards to the backlog of planning enforcement cases to be investigated and indeed actioned. Does the Portfolio Holder agree to the fact that there seems to be an emergence of a culture of overstepping regulations or approval permission and then seeking retrospective planning approval. In respect of this how many developments are reported for planning infringements, how many are deemed to be so, how many are enforced after they have been completed, and how many complaints do we have from neighbours about lack of satisfaction with the response of planning enforcement?

**Answer**

The local planning authority is taking positive steps towards reducing the existing planning enforcement backlog. The backlog of outstanding cases has been reducing year on year and also the number of outstanding prosecutions has fallen [the remainder of this question is not answerable as the Council is not able to retrieve such detailed, site specific, information from its existing computer database]. It can be reported that the Council receives approx 1200 complaints a year and of those complaints/complainants the Enforcement Team receives very few complaints regarding the service from the Enforcement Team Members or the outcomes to their investigations.

It is clear that the perception regarding the number of retrospective applications is actually incorrect. Between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014 Bradford Planning Panel had considered 81 planning applications, six of which were for retrospective planning permission; two of these were granted and four were refused planning permission. For the same period, Keighley & Shipley Planning Panel determined 39 planning applications, four being for retrospective planning permission; three were granted and one was refused planning permission.

**5. Councillor Love**

Can the Leader of Council advise us of the total number of people on the 2015 Electoral Register of the district, broken down by ward, compared to the 2014 Electoral Register?

**Answer**

Please see tables at Appendix 1.

**Supplementary Question**

Thank you to the Leader of Council for the detailed response. A supplementary question. I would just like to ask if he is as concerned as I am that 5% of our population appears to have disappeared over the last year and what is being done in order to try and ensure that everyone who is entitled to be registered to vote is in fact registered?

**Councillor Green**

Thank you for the question and the supplementary. It is something that I have been pursuing with the Chief Executive, the Director of Legal Services and our Elections Unit for some time now since the new system was introduced. It is a great concern to me particularly when you look about through the wards and you can see the differences. In some cases we are a thousand electors down. What we are doing is as well as looking at the PR campaign to make sure people are registered to vote because what we are approaching is one of the most important elections that any of us have taken part in, the general and local elections in 2015. We will also through our elections unit be looking at where if you like the biggest gaps are and going out again looking to do street

canvassing, knocking on doors and encouraging people to register to vote because I think that that is the most effective way of getting people back onto the register is having somebody there to help them actually do it but also people can register on line and we will be pushing that as far as we can through the press and through social media so we are looking at every possible way of boosting the number of people registered in time to vote in May but also in future elections as well.

**6. Councillor Atkinson**

Could the Leader advise the Council of the proposed costs of maintaining bowling greens and also the cost of planting and maintaining flowerbeds in each location throughout the District and confirm that each club and/or Parish/Town Council that could be affected by the proposed budget cuts has been notified?

**Answer**

The maintenance of Bowling Greens across the district costs the Parks service in the region of £220,000 per year. There are 55 greens so the average cost per green is in the region of £4,000.

This covers a seasonal schedule of works through spring (preparation works), summer (mowing twice weekly), autumn and winter.

In addition to this there are associated buildings, peripheral maintenance issues and utility bills.

Officers have been in consultation with the bowls league secretaries with reference to the budget proposal to discuss the potential implications of clubs taking on elements of the maintenance themselves and information/advice arising from this has been cascaded down to the clubs. This dialogue will continue to inform the budget consultation.

A breakdown of costs associated to each individual flowerbed is not available however; there are around 420 flower beds throughout the district with a total of over 200,000 plants required on an annual basis to sustain the floral displays. The cost to plant and maintain flowerbeds across the district is £230K This cost also includes the provision and maintenance of hanging baskets on a district wide basis but excludes nursery costs.

**7. Councillor Lynne Smith**

Can the Leader comment on the Provisional Local Government Settlement and its implications for Bradford District?

**Answer**

Despite the Coalition Government's attempts to shroud the facts with smoke and mirrors the Provisional Local Government Settlement as expected confirmed that the Council will continue to face a significant cut in Government funding in 2015-16 and huge financial challenges.

The Settlement also confirmed that the Government will continue to expect Bradford District and the communities within it to shoulder a disproportionate share of its cuts programme.

Next year, the Council will see the general funding, Revenue Support Grant, it receives from Central Government cut from £149m in 2014-15 to £106m, a cut of £43m, 29%.

In terms of spending power, the notional measure calculated and preferred by the Government to compare changes to funding levels, Bradford's spending power will reduce by 4.1 % in 2015-16. A percentage which is over twice the national average cut of 1.8%.

By comparison, the other West Yorkshire Councils face reductions of between only 2.0% and 2.5%, with yet again the disproportionate impact on Bradford of national spending cuts being demonstrated by the fact that the average spending power of the 10 most affluent comparable authorities actually **increasing** by 1.6% according to the Government's own figures.

In fact if Bradford were to be treated in the same way as the 10 most affluent unitary authorities instead of a £19.8m cut in its spending power, it would have an increase in spending power next year of £7.8m in other words it would be £27.6m better off than it will be.

Whilst the reductions in spending power presented by the Government suggest nationally a reduction of 1.8%, the reality is that the reduction for Bradford and all other Councils is much greater. The stark difference between the Government's rhetoric and what is actually happening is due to the fact that the Government has chosen to include in its calculation both grants that are ring fenced for specific purposes and the whole of Better Care pooled budgets.

In Bradford's case, the Government's calculation includes an increase of almost £18m in our spending power as a result of the Better Care Fund. In reality the sum available to support the Council's activities is just under £6m, and this lower figure is already reflected in the Council's December Budget Report.

The Settlement also confirmed what we had feared that no extra funding would be provided in 2015-16 to support local residents in crisis. By separately identifying funding for local welfare within Council's core RSG funding, this effectively represents either a cut on existing Council services in order to maintain the local scheme or means the Council will be unable to run existing local welfare schemes.

Just because the swingeing cuts in Government funding were forecast in the Budget proposals we are currently consulting citizens of the District on, doesn't make the decisions we as a Council will have to make in February any easier.

Over the last four years the Council has saved £108m by improving efficiency, cutting management and administration and reducing support services. We will continue to make savings in these areas but there are fewer and fewer opportunities to do so and services will inevitably be affected.

### **Supplementary Question**

I hope you will forgive me for not standing. Does the Leader share my absolute incredulity and dismay to find that one of the MPs that represents this district who is actually a local government minister is maintaining even today in the local paper that there is far more scope for Councils to make further savings by merging back offices doing more joint working and a whole list of other things and one has to ask oneself why he did not do this when he was leading this Council?

## **Councillor Green**

On the second part of the supplementary I do not answer for Kris Hopkins and hope that I never will have to answer for Kris Hopkins, either his actions as a minister or his actions when he was Leader of this Council. But I do find it absolutely amazing what government ministers and MPs, particularly those who should know better because of their local government experience, keep claiming that local government can do to save money. This Council has always been willing to look at shared services and as I have said on a number of occasions in this chamber the trick about shared services is the word “shared” and that means there needs to be another partner. Where there is another willing partner as with the internal audit services that we have now with Wakefield, that you will be aware of Councillor Smith, through the joint services committee that we have had for a number of years and through other initiatives we have already got some of those shared services but sometimes shared services will cost this Council more because sometimes the service that you wish to share with elsewhere can actually be more expensive than the service we run on our own. So glib statements from government ministers might make them feel better, it might get them a press statement but actually what we need is greater financial independence for local government. If they are not willing to give us that they need to fund the services that they keep spouting on about to a level which enables us to provide a high level of service that people want in an efficient manner. Local government and Bradford Council has proved that it can do that over the years.

## **8. Councillor Akthar**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young Peoples’ services explain the progress being made on the recommendations from Professor Woods report concerning educational attainment?

### **Answer**

An action plan was developed which addresses the 17 recommendations made in the review and has now, at the request of the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee, been merged into the Members’ 15-point action on educational attainment.

Progress to date includes:

- Proposals for changes to the Education Improvement Strategic Board were drafted and will be discussed at the next meeting of the Board on 12.1.15.
- An LA Pupil Premium and Closing the Educational Gaps policy and strategy have been drafted and are being consulted on.
- Discussions have taken place within the Bradford Achievement Service and changes are being implemented as part of the review of the Prioritisation Process. Training is being undertaken (including the Bradford Achievement Service working with Professor Woods) with staff to increase challenge and impact on school outcomes.
- School Specific Monitoring Group agendas have been amended and notes are a set of actions with expected outcomes.
- Work was commissioned on the impact of support and challenge on Priority 1 schools and a draft report received. Recommendations are being acted on within the Bradford Achievement Service.
- Joint training activities have been organised between the LA/Schools and HMI.

- We have discussed the need to share and promote externally validated, best practice in schools with the school partnership leads and are working up a proposal for a process to enable this to be done systematically. Partnerships have been tasked with discussing the best vehicle for capturing and exploiting best practice; schools have been tasked with identifying 3 areas of great practice validated by internal quality assurance and/or Ofsted inspection evidence, LA/partnership reviews or other national agencies. A scheme for Excellence visits will be established so that best practice feeds into a register that can be utilised across the District.
- Peer review processes have been reviewed with the partnership leads and changes have been implemented by Bradford Partnership (BP) and Bradford Primary Improvement Partnership (BPIP). Reports and actions are now shared with governing bodies.
- BP and BPIP have met independently with David Woods and are continuing to work with him, as is the LA, via the BAS. BPIP reviewed their key activities with him and he identified the need for success measures for each activity. They have agreed immediate action on developing a Securing Good Programme for 15-20 RI schools, where attendance would be non-negotiable; they looked at which small changes could make a big impact, for example, the recent work on maths (booklet publication and use in schools to bring about improvement in maths teaching and outcomes across the primary phase by learning from Bradford's most successful schools) will be replicated for reading and writing, and *the Outstanding Teacher Programme work*.
- BP has invited David Woods to their conference in January 2015. The partnership has reviewed its priorities and its capacity and has produced 5, non-negotiable levers of school improvement for secondary schools: aspirational ethos; determined leadership; performance management; systematic marking and feedback and student progress and intervention

#### 9. **Councillor Davies**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Sport explain the policy on the provision of grit bins, as it seems to be near impossible to obtain any following requests by local residents?

#### **Answer**

There is a Winter Service Operational Plan which incorporates an Assessment form for the provision of grit bins which members of the public must complete. This assessment form has strict criteria for testing the need for a new grit bin e.g. gradient of the road. In the future, alternative ways of funding grit bin provision may need to be investigated.

#### **Supplementary Question**

Is it possible to be sent one of these forms because I have been told that there are no new grit bins being issued so perhaps if I can have a form we can at least look into if the roads in question might be possible please?

#### **Councillor Val Slater**

Yes certainly I can make sure that you do get the relevant form but I do have to say at the risk of having the pantomime behaviour from opposite again that it is true in your question, it is very unlikely that we will be in a position to fund extra grit bins. We are in a time where I am looking to cut services, not develop them. We are also embarking on a

conversation with people out there about how we do things differently and it strikes me getting together as communities and clearing the roads when it snows is something that we could do together.

**10. Councillor Greenwood**

The Secretary of State for Health has linked the growing numbers of older people with the Accident and Emergency crisis overseen by his Coalition Government. Can the Leader explain the role that Council services play in helping to keep people out of A & E wards and hospital beds and does he agree that the Coalition's failure to address the social care funding crisis and to provide local authorities with sufficient funding to meet local needs in addition to its mishandling of the Better Care Fund will inevitably lead to increasing pressure on Council and local health services?

**Answer**

The Council provides a number of services that have a significant impact on supporting people so that they do not have to attend Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments.

Social Workers are part of integrated teams based on groups of GP practices who input into and plan for people who have multiple illnesses and have been frequent attendees at hospital, the teams plan care support to reduce attendances at A&E and admissions to hospital.

Occupational therapists assess and provide equipment to enable people to remain independent and stay at home. The Bradford and Airedale Community Equipment Service (BACES) is jointly funded by the Council and local NHS to deliver and install the appropriate equipment. The Bradford Enablement Service Team (BEST) provide a homecare service to support people for six weeks free of charge, at a time of illness or crisis and to support carers. GPs and Community Nurses refer to Adult Services for this service. Social care staff, work closely with community NHS staff to support people to remain in their own homes.

The causes of the current A&E pressures are many. Nationally there has been a ten year increase in the number of A&E attendees with A&E becoming a place which people prefer rather than out of hours primary care arrangements. The college of emergency medicine indicate that 15% of people who attend A&E could have received treatment elsewhere and 40% of people who got to A&E do not receive treatment.

People are living longer but as we get older we acquire long term conditions such as strokes dementia, arthritis and heart disease. Further illness can necessitate treatment and admissions into hospital. Following illness there is then the need to arrange appropriate community health and care services for people with long term needs and as needs rise there is the challenge of the right services being available in sufficient supply.

Adult and Community Services have social workers and other social care staff, including BEST in both the District's hospitals working seven days a week alongside hospital staff. Social care staff to assess and plan support so that people can either go home or move to intermediate care. Delayed transfers of care are low in Bradford but this past few weeks we have been dealing with unprecedented demand. Nationally Social Care has had to save 26% which equates to £3.5bn over four years, as needs are rising. There is a need for more investment in health and care in the community to ensure that services are available to deal with the increasing numbers of people who need health care and support.



**11. Councillor Akthar**

Please could the Portfolio Holder for Employment, Skills and Culture provide an update on the progress of the development on East Parade in Keighley?

**Answer**

Planning permission for this development was granted on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Since approval, the developer, Leeds based Stainsby Grange, has been working to confirm tenants for the prospective shopping development. The development also has approval for a leisure use in the form of a cinema and associated food outlets. The developer has confirmed that contractual agreements are in place with Cineworld for an 8 screen 1170 seat multiplex Cinema. Frankie and Bennys are also signed up now. Other restaurant users are in solicitors hands.

Planning permission is granted until 16.5.17. Some demolition work has already been undertaken on site.

Stainsby Grange is continuing to negotiate agreement with the likely end users for the retail, who are mainly fashion based businesses, to enable construction to begin.

Progress is being made. Although a start date cannot yet be confirmed it is hoped that autumn 2015 is feasible.

**12. Councillor Miller**

In light of the recent, very serious terror attacks in France, with a Council employee being amongst those shot, the Royal United Services Institute has warned that Britain should expect and prepare for copycat attacks. Can the Leader of the Council advise colleagues of what urgent action will be taken, in the interest of staff safety, to alleviate the need for the formerly restricted access West Entrance to the building being continuously wide open, despite a notice in the same doorway informing that the threat level is considered to be "High"?

**Answer**

The risk status of buildings is determined in liaison with the Police. The current 'red high risk status' was implemented on the advice received from the Police. A process is in place and is actioned by the Facilities Managers and their teams responsible for the day to day management of our buildings.

The West Entrance was closed week commencing the 5<sup>th</sup> January, with access control via the intercom to the Key Office which is continually staffed. The entrance will only be opened when an FM Attendant and Registrar's Attendant are in position to facilitate wedding party access to the Registrars. In addition:

- The Key Office is staffed by a Key Officer, to provide security and to assist/advise the public and visitors as necessary.
- Recent investment has been made to installing additional PAC locks (Programmable Access Controller) on doors to restrict access throughout the building. Wiring has been installed and additional cctv cameras are to be installed within the next few weeks.
- A schedule has been introduced for increased regular checks by attendants 'walking the floor'.
- All committee rooms are locked when vacant.

- Communications have been made across the central admin estate to all building users to maintain staff awareness and to encourage support.

**13. Councillor Hassan Khan**

Can the Leader provide an update on negotiations with the Government for greater powers for West Yorkshire?

**Answer**

A devolution deal for West Yorkshire is being negotiated with Greg Clarke, the Treasury and other ministers. In an interview broadcast last week by Radio Leeds the Prime Minister said that he expected a deal would be reached 'early this year'.

**14. Councillor Fear**

To the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transportation - Now that Winter is here what plans are in place to ensure that road side grit bins will be promptly refilled, and decisions made on outstanding requests for new grit bins?

**Answer**

The Winter Service Operational Plan covers the issue of grit bin replenishment which will take place once all the Priority 1 and 2 routes have been completed. Across the whole district there are approximately 500 grit bins which takes a great deal of manpower from the Highways section. In severe weather extra resources can be called in from the Street Cleansing Section.

**15. Councillor Wainwright**

Can the Leader comment on allegations that the distribution of Council budget cuts as a result of Coalition Government cuts to grants is somehow politically designed to target specific wards and does he agree that people in glass houses should not throw stones?

**Answer**

I am aware that this suggestion has been made and I welcome the opportunity to refute it.

It is a well documented fact that the Coalition Government is targeting a disproportionate share of its cuts at Local Government.

It is also well documented that those cuts have been disproportionately targeted at Northern Councils like Bradford with relatively high levels need while far wealthier places have been treated more favourably. So the spending cuts are politically and ideologically motivated in the sense that the Coalition Government are imposing an unreasonable and unfair burden on Bradford District and the towns, villages and communities within it without any recognition or understanding of the impact on local people.

The scale of the cuts imposed on Bradford Council is without precedent. The Coalition Government has cut Council grants by £135m. Along with rising costs and increasing demand this has meant us having to identify budget cuts of £160m since 2011 and that figure is rising.

It is categorically not the case that, in implementing those cuts locally, there has been any targeting of particular places or communities. The Council has sought wherever possible to protect services and facilities right across the District.

It is inevitable though that Government cuts on this scale will impact on all parts of the District and it is impossible to for any one place, community or group of people to be afforded absolute immunity. The city centre, inner city, the outer estates and suburbs and the District's towns and villages have all seen changes to services, activities and facilities.

It is those people on the lowest incomes and those most reliant on public services who are bearing the brunt of the Coalition's spending cuts and the reality is that these people are largely concentrated in the most deprived parts of the District. Given the nature of the cuts the Council is increasingly being forced to target its reduced resources where they make the greatest impact.

I understand peoples' anger at the scale of cuts to public services because I share it but that anger would be best directed at Westminster and Whitehall where the responsibility for politically targeted cuts really lies.

#### 16. **Councillor Heseltine**

Can the relevant Portfolio Holder confirm the cost for refurbishing the near derelict building at the Council depot at Keighley to provide offices?

#### **Answer**

£100k was allocated to bring the redundant building at Stockbridge Keighley back into operation to provide additional accommodation thereby facilitating the move of the Highways Team from Shipley Town Hall. This move created space at Shipley Town Hall to accommodate the relocation of service teams from leased accommodation elsewhere in Shipley and provided a net saving to the Council.

#### **Supplementary Question**

It says £100,000 allocated for the refurbishment. Actually how much has been spent?

#### **Councillor Andrew Thornton**

I would imagine that seeing as there was £100,000 allocated for the refurbishment that we are doing that within the budget allocated. Nobody has told me any different.

#### 17. **Councillor Warburton**

During the statement to the House of Commons on the Local Government Financial Settlement on December 18 both the Minister for Local Government and MP for Keighley and the MP for Shipley claimed that the Labour Council in Bradford is **closing** Children's Centres in Conservative wards. Can the Portfolio Holder clarify whether the Council is physically closing down any Children's Centres in the District or were these two MPs simply engaging in a cynical misrepresentation of the facts for Party political gain?

#### **Answer**

Nine children's centres in areas with relatively low levels of disadvantage will cease to be registered with Ofsted as children's centres in their own right. However it is not the case that the centres will close, they will continue to be delivery sites for services which will be delivered through seven new children's centre clusters.

The changes have been necessary because of the Coalition Government's decision to make a 30%, £10m cut to Bradford's Early Intervention Grant which was used to fund Children's Centres. This formed part of the unfair and disproportionate £135m cuts the

Government has imposed on Council services to date.

It should be noted that the Council has ensured that the affected centres have benefitted from a minimum funding guarantee in recent years. The funding guarantee provided budget protection which has enabled the centres to continue to operate as separate centres for the past two years, while a combination of budget cuts and a move to a new formula for funding children's centres were implemented.

### **Supplementary Question**

I thank the Leader for the response however I would like him to answer the second part of the question in that are the MPs for Keighley and Shipley simply engaging in a cynical representation of the facts for party political gain?

### **Councillor Green**

Would either of those illustrious MPs make statements that were not accurate for party political gain? Yes. Yes they would. Yes they are doing. They know the situation. What they are trying to do as the coalition government often does is to actually pass the blame for decisions that they make at Whitehall and at Westminster and try and blame the local government that has to pick up the pieces. If they actually have any backbone what they would do is that they would admit what they have done. They would recognise the efforts that this Council has made to protect those services from the massive cuts that they have introduced since they have been in power in 2010 and work with us to protect those services. Instead anyone would think there was a general election coming up and they were busy washing their hands of all responsibility for the effects of the actions they have taken.

### **18. Councillor Shafiq**

Can the Portfolio Holder outline what steps are being taken to ensure that siblings are placed together wherever possible when placement plans are put in place?

### **Answer**

The social work service does everything it can to keep siblings placed together in care. The recent development of the Adoption and Fostering website, as well as marketing material, is geared to attracting adopters and foster carers who can accommodate sibling groups and children with additional needs. The assessment and preparation is to help foster carers to consider siblings where possible. When siblings come into care they generally have the same social worker and Independent Reviewing Officer and where there is a larger sibling group which necessitates more than one worker, clear communication plans are put in place. If siblings are placed in separate foster care placements plans are routinely made for informal contact which is arranged by the foster carers and monitored by social workers; and foster carers are given relevant information about the child's siblings and their carers to support this. The Council does everything it can to place children in a sibling group together in recognition of the fact that sibling relationships are likely to be the most enduring of family relationships. However we are currently seeing more very large sibling groups, also children with highly complex needs. Work is underway to understand in more depth the population of children in order to build in appropriate planning and decision making to achieve the best possible outcome for them.

### 19. **Councillor Davies**

The recent proposal to make Belle Vue Boys school co-educational will mean there are three girls only secondary schools in the district and no boys only schools. Particularly given the geographical proximity of two of these girls schools does the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services think that in solving one problem the proposal may create another, as some schools will inevitably be attended by far more boys than girls? What actions does the Council propose to take in partnership with schools, to address this issue?

#### **Answer**

Bradford has 50.2% girls and 49.8% registered in its secondary schools – this represents 159 more girls than boys. This is different to the national picture which is currently 48.8% girls / 51.2% boys.

Currently of Bradford's 33 state secondary schools – 3 are all girls, 1 is all boys, 2 have even numbers of boys and girls, 4 have more girls than boys and 23 have more boys than girls. 6 of those 23 schools have more than 10% difference in the proportion boys more than girls – they are Dixons Allerton, Dixons McMillan, Dixons Trinity, Dixons Kings, Oasis Lister Park, One in a million.

A new co-ed school replacing Belle Vue Boys is likely to affect a number of schools, in particular The Samuel Lister, Oasis Academy Lister Park and possibly Beckfoot and Bingley, where there are already more boys than girls. This is of course assuming that parents wish to apply for and place their girls in the new school. There is also the possibility that some boys from those schools close by may opt for the new academy instead of their more local usual school. Much will depend on the marketing of the new school and as always parental perception and the preferences they can state.

The data shows that Bradford's secondary schools have experience with working with different proportions of the different genders and teachers are used to teaching to meet the needs of all children in their classes. For example it is not uncommon for a top set English class to contain a high proportion of girls or a GCSE Resistant Materials Technology class to have a high proportion of boys. Bradford's secondary schools will continue to be supported by the Bradford Partnership and the Council's Achievement Service to deliver individualised learning programmes to meet the needs of all students whatever their gender.

#### **Supplementary Question**

Thanks for the comprehensive reply. Do you think in the future there will be any pressure on girls schools to become co-ed?

#### **Councillor Berry**

The thing about the situation with girls and boys schools is we used to think there was a regulation applied that you had to have equal numbers of each. When we look at the distribution of the population in Bradford and there are a higher number I believe of boys in private schools, I think that equals the balance. What we have got here is an excellent opportunity to build a school, work with the community, to get a high quality of education led by Beckfoot, I understand that working with yourself, to make sure the community is fully engaged with that. It is a very useful question to ask because on the face of it when you have got that many girls schools and no boys schools which is what we will end up with, you would think there would be a greater unevenness. What this is telling us is this is perfectly manageable and provides a degree of reassurance for all the schools in the area.

**20. Councillor Engel**

Can the Portfolio Holder comment on the prospect of the minimum funding guarantee for schools being removed?

**Answer**

The Minimum Funding Guarantee for schools, to date, has been confirmed only up to the end of the 2015/16 financial year. The Government has previously announced its intention to implement a national funding formula for primary and secondary delegated budgets. The earliest this can now be implemented is April 2016 (for the 2016/17 financial year). We expect further announcements on this, and the continuation (or otherwise) of the Minimum Funding Guarantee, over the next few months. Although this cannot be confirmed until the Government announces its intentions, it is reasonable at this time to expect that further formula funding change at a national level will be accompanied by some form of protection for individual school budgets, to avoid unmanageable levels of financial turbulence.

**21. Councillor Dodds**

Can the Portfolio Holder advise whether the new school food standards apply to every state school in Bradford?

**Answer**

The revised school food standards applicable from January 2015 apply to the food and drink provided in local authority maintained primary, secondary special and pupil referral units. They also apply to sixth form units that are part of secondary schools (even those in a different building or on a different site), but do not apply to the sixth form colleges of further education colleges.

They do apply to academies and free schools established before September 2010 or after June 2014.

They do not apply to academies or free schools established between September 2010 and June 2014. Although these schools are encouraged to voluntarily apply them.

They do not apply to independent schools or early years settings other than maintained nursery schools or nursery units within primary schools.

**Supplementary Question**

First of all I think it is utter madness to have different rules and my question is what can be done regarding the free schools and academies?

**Councillor Berry**

We are very concerned. I mean it is ridiculous isn't it that you get some academies that have to do it and some don't. Free schools don't but these are Bradford children and we have major concerns and Simon Cooke is bubbling away about childhood obesity, well if a child is obese at 7, 8 or 9 all the medical evidence is they continue to develop greater problems in life as they grow up. The quality of school food and if there is a regulation that says that the quality of diet is good for one sort of maintained state school then it should be the same for another. This is another perverse legacy of the decline and fall of Michael Gove the Chief Whip that cannot hold discipline for the Tory party now. What he has left us is a very messy legacy which if you were interested in Durham you will see the decline and fall of yet another free school that has fallen into utter disrepute. So what I

would say is we will use the healthy schools initiative, we will use our colleagues in public health and we will work with school nurses. Fortunately I believe we have a good enough relationship with most of those schools to make sure that every child in Bradford gets a good quality school meal and just because a school happens to hold a different category as a result of a historical anachronism of a discredited policy we will not allow them to suffer.

**22. Councillor Middleton**

To the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transportation - What action is being taken to address the problem of broken Street Lights in Bradford MDC that are presently taking more than four weeks to fix?

**Answer**

An additional platform vehicle has been hired, of which we are awaiting delivery. As soon as we have the vehicle we will reorganise the operatives to utilise all four vehicles for fault repairs to eradicate the backlog and keep on top of fault repairs during the winter months when there are higher numbers of fault reports. I am hopeful that this will be next week.

We are also repairing some of the busier traffic routes outside peak periods in the evening to increase productivity which is also safer as there is less traffic than during the day. Due to the number of failures of lamps earlier than expected we are now ensuring that the lamps we are provided with are of a better specification with a longer life.

**Supplementary Question**

I refer to the last sentence of the answer where there has been a problem with the lamps failing much earlier than expected. Has Bradford Council addressed the problem by going back to the supplier and asking them to supply better lamps or are we now sourcing the lamps from a different supplier?

**Councillor Val Slater**

The answer to that is yes on both counts. We have gone back to the manufacturer and we are also trying to source different lamps. It is not a problem for Bradford alone. I think I read in the press that Calderdale have had a similar problem and we are talking to colleagues there to see if there is a common factor, whether the manufacturers etc are the same and can we work together to resolve the situation.

**23. Councillor Ellis**

Does the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Sport welcome the proposals to reduce fly tipping in the district, contained within the Draft Control of Waste (Dealing with Seized Property) Regulations and can he confirm the number of vehicle seizures / fly tipping?

**Answer**

I welcome new powers that will assist the Council in dealing with waste crime.

Current powers available require that the enforcement authority to obtain a warrant from the Magistrates Court prior to seizing a vehicle used in the commission of a section 33 offence (unauthorised or harmful depositing, treatment or disposal of waste), and then only if officers are unable to ascertain the name and address of any person who can provide them with details of who was using the vehicle at the time. These current powers

are largely impractical and rarely used. Instead the Council has adopted an alternative and collaborative approach with a number of agencies.

Officers from the Environmental Enforcement Team, the Police and other agencies, such as VOSA, have in the past, carried out "Stop and Search" activities, which have included the investigation of vehicles used in waste crime. During such operations the Police have used their powers to seize vehicles, including those used in illegal waste activities. Nine vehicles have been seized in this way during the last five years.

These new powers remove the necessity to attend Magistrates Court to obtain a warrant, and allow seizure powers to be used for a wider range of offences. The Police continue to be the only organisation authorised to stop vehicles.

Whilst the new powers are welcome, the key to all enforcement rests with the ability to obtain the necessary evidence to take action against the perpetrators.

### **Supplementary Question**

Thanks to the portfolio holder for answering at least one of the questions. It was a two part question. One dealing with the number of vehicle seizures and the fly tipping incidents. There appears to be no reference in your answer to the number of fly tipping incidents. Whilst I am aware of past work with police and other agencies on stop and search there is no indication in actual fact that these will continue. Can I have confirmation that that will in fact happen and secondly at some time could you let me have the number of fly tipping incidents? I do understand that nationally these have increased and whilst in the past of course this Council has denied they have increased in Bradford we are very interested to find out the true answer.

### **Councillor Andrew Thornton**

Certainly I will get you the numbers on the incidents of fly tipping, of the amounts that we actually clear up. I can tell you that over the last five years we have done approximately 200 of those stop and search operations and as a result of that we have interviewed over 1300, in fact nearly 1400 waste carriers and taken 14 prosecutions in that time. I think one of the things that has emerged from those kind of operations is that those we have been stopping have actually got wise to it and effectively now most of them are actually compliant with the regulations.

### **24. Councillor Engel**

Is the Portfolio Holder aware that some drain covers in use in this District have holes that are the perfect dimensions for crutches to become firmly wedged in, including one directly outside the home of one of my constituents who uses crutches on a daily basis due to a degenerative medical condition? Are there any plans to alter the design/s used in order to make them more disability-friendly, and if so, what are the anticipated timescales?

### **Answer**

Across the City of Bradford MDC there are 93,000 gullies scheduled to be maintained. As regards the specific design for this gully outside this house further enquiries with a manufacturer will have to take place.



## 25. **Councillor Sykes**

The draft Core Strategy in respect of the proposed Local Development Plan has now been submitted for Inspection. Could the Leader of the Council confirm when the Council actually began the process, its total cost to date and details of who is footing the bill?

### **Answer**

The Council formally commenced the preparation of the Core Strategy in 2006 following adoption of the Replacement Unitary Development Plan. The key stages to date are as follows:

1. Commencement and evidence gathering/scoping (2006)
2. issues and options (2007)
3. Further issues and Options (2008)
4. Further Engagement Draft (2011/12)
5. Publication Draft (2014)
6. Submission (2014)

The Annual Monitoring Report's sets out the progress on the Local Plan for each respective year including the work in between each of the key consultation stages in particular on supporting evidence. Progress has been impacted upon by significant changes to the planning system specifically following the 2010 national elections with new national planning guidance, the Localism Act 2011 which abolished Regional Planning (replacing it with a new duty to cooperate) and the introduction of Neighbourhood Planning.

The total non staffing cost of producing the Core Strategy, to date, is approximately £562,000. These costs cover two main areas set out below.

1. Consultation and engagement
2. Technical specialist evidence as specified by national guidance (studies/ Appraisals and assessments)

The Non staffing costs of producing the Local Plan including the Core Strategy have been supported by one off growth funding agreed as part of the Council budget setting process. The Council allocated an initial one off growth payment of £833 towards the Local Development Framework (now known as the Local Plan) and £120K towards the waste Development Plan Document in the 2009 - 10 budget. A report was taken to Executive in October 2010 providing an update on the Local Plan in context of changes which also considered funding position. Further non recurring investment of £ 700,000 was allocated towards the Local Plan in 2013/14 budget and a further £360,000 was allocated in the 2014/15 budget. Underspend from non recurring investment has been carried forward under better use of budgets linked to the programme and any slippage.

### **Supplementary Question**

Again thank you for the brilliant answer. Thank you. Even with any stretch of imagination and creativity you have not managed to use the word cuts in there which is fantastic. The only question I would like to ask is we have talked about non staffing costs and I would like to know at some point, Val (Councillor Slater) you can write to us, the actual staffing costs all the time as well because presumably there are a lot of permanent staff associated with this project as well. Okay. Thank you.

**Councillor Val Slater**

Okay I will get you those figures. The number of staff involved has obviously decreased due to the cuts. I did not like to disappoint you all.

**26. Councillor Miller**

In light of the new grants offered by English Heritage and the Wolfson Foundation, for the repair or restoration of War Memorials, would the Leader of the Council be prepared to ensure that a survey, possibly in partnership with ex-servicemen's groups and Parish & Town Councils, can be carried out to establish the condition of War Memorials in the District in time to allow a bid to be made if required?

**Answer**

The War Memorials Trust has one-off additional funding of up to £3 million to support the repair and conservation of war memorials during 2015. This will be channelled through the current grant schemes which will allow potential grant funding of between £3000 and £30,000 and up to 75% of eligible works costs for each project.

A full structural survey on all council owned war memorials has already been completed within the last year by the Facilities Management team at the request of the Parks and Green Spaces Manager. This report has provided parks officers with up to date information and has allowed for works to be carried out to address any specific issues before the WW1 Centenary, focussing particularly on defects in stonework or deterioration to plaques and lettering.

Whilst there were no major problems identified, the Service is now considering its options to apply for grant funding to assist with further works aimed at the longer term conservation and restoration of the memorials.'

**Supplementary Question**

Thank you for the response but I did ask and I am pleased to see that the survey has been done but it obviously wasn't done with ex-service groups or Parish Councils because it does not say so. But they do contact me because I am known as an ex-military person and can I suggest that you might want to suggest a small grassed area permanently. We have had them put in our ward. We have paid for them because a lot of people like to leave poppies. When they come along and put a tuft of grass and it is thrown there, there are anti social people that do sometimes come along and throw it around. So I am pleased to see it has been started. I look forward to improvements and would you support me in that view?

**Councillor Green**

As you say we have done the survey and I will endeavour to make sure that that survey becomes public so that a service men's group will serve an ex-service personnel group, Parish Councils etc can see the survey but in terms of what to do at each memorial I think that that is an issue for the local community but your idea sounds perfectly reasonable and we will look at that and take that on board. Clearly it is a horses for courses and if the local community want to do something different that can be done within this remit we will certainly look to support that as well.

**27. Councillor Rachel Sunderland**

To the Portfolio Holder for Safer & Stronger Communities - How many parking tickets were issued to drivers during 2014 for dangerous and inappropriate parking outside each of the six Primary and two Secondary Schools in Bolton & Undercliffe ward?

**Answer**

During the period January to December 2014, twenty eight Penalty Charge Notices have been issued at school drop off and collection times along the roads upon which the primary and secondary schools are located in the Bolton and Undercliffe Ward. Twenty seven of these were issued around the primary school sites and one near to Feversham College.

**28. Councillor Davies**

In light of his responsibilities relating to regeneration and workforce skills development, arising from his position on the Combined Authority, coupled with his longstanding commitment to these issues during his service on the Council, can the Leader advise of what actions the Council will take to ensure that as many local employers as possible are aware of and encouraged to apply for the new Tech Partnership Training Fund, providing enhanced IT training for apprentices and young people?

**Answer**

Information on the Tech Training Partnership Fund will be promoted with all Apprenticeship providers working in the District offering IT apprenticeships as well as through our business networks.

**29. Councillor Dale Smith**

Given the reported outbreak of harmony among the Leaders of the Leeds City Region will the Leader confirm that discussions are taking place with regard to Bradford Council Tax Payers being able to access the **nearest** Household Waste Collection Site without let or hindrance and irrespective of boundary demarcation?

**Answer**

Restriction of the use of Leeds Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRCs) is a matter for Leeds City Council. CBMDC has maintained a network of HWRCs across the district, all within reasonable travelling distance for our council tax payers. We also provide a fortnightly residential collection of paper, glass, cans and plastic recycling, a monthly residential collection of green waste during the growing seasons and a bookable bulky waste home collection service.

**Supplementary Question**

I do note the answer. Thank you. But as the portfolio well knows this issue has been flagged up as a potential challenge for at least the last four years especially the Menston/ Burley end of the Wharfedale ward. Although I do recognise that for certain it will affect other areas and they will suffer similarly. So in the interest of genuine sustainability will the portfolio holder recharge his determination to ensure that recycling can be achieved at the nearest site rather than imposing a return trip of at least 12 miles rather than being able to use a recycling facility across the road or certainly within two miles?

**Councillor Andrew Thornton**

I will say to Councillor Smith that some conversations have already taken place with Leeds City Council around this issue particularly around the Ellar Ghyll Household Waste

Site which is in the Leeds area. However I would say that what Councillor Smith is actually advocating is going back to a position where Bradford Council taxpayers are actually ending up paying for the disposal of other Council's waste and I do not think that in these particular times that we are in a position to absorb that kind of cost.

**30. Councillor Heseltine**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning & Transportation confirm the cost of bringing the Highways teams to Shipley Town Hall and the new Keighley Office?

**Answer**

£100k was allocated to bring the redundant building at Stockbridge Keighley back into operation to provide additional accommodation capacity for staff from Shipley Town Hall. The vacant space at Shipley Town Hall provided sufficient for the relocation of teams and vacation of the leased Merchants House in Shipley.

Vacating Merchants House Shipley will save approximately £200k per year.

The approximate costs for relocating the team was £1000.

**Supplementary Question**

Apart from regurgitating my first question we get an approximate cost of relocating at £1000. Can you provide me with a breakdown to that, moving the equipment, the furniture and reconnecting the phone, reconfiguration of the IT etc, because that seems to be rather much of a bargain and I think that is going to be a lot less than we paid?

**Councillor Andrew Thornton**

We will get you the breakdown of that if that is what Councillor Heseltine wishes. I did not realise it was such a burning issue for his constituents.

**31. Councillor Davies**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Employment, Skills & Culture confirm how much revenue is collected annually from Baildon Ian Clough car park and the public car park in Esholt?

**Answer**

During the last full financial year (2013/14) £2,540 gross income was received from the car park at Esholt and £7,342 from the car park at Ian Clough Hall. It should be noted that these figures do not include costs for car park maintenance, enforcement and administration.

**Supplementary Question**

Thanks for the answer. Is it possible to have the costs? It says it does not include the maintenance, enforcement and the admin. Is it possible to have the enforcement and admin, not the maintenance please?

**Councillor Hinchcliffe**

It is difficult to do because it is aggregated across the district so you do not allocate it site by site but the costs are clear for the whole service and those are published for CLG every year so I am sure we can let you have those but it is aggregated across the district rather than just for that car park.

**32. Councillor Fear**

To the Leader of Council - How many employees does Bradford Council have under the age of 35 and how many of those employees under the age of 35 presently earn a salary in excess of £21,000?

**Answer**

There are currently 1712 staff (Headcount) employed by Bradford Council who are under the age of 35. Of these, 596 (Headcount) earn more than £21k per annum. Therefore, 1 in 3 Council staff aged under 35 earns more than £21,000 per year.

**33. Councillor Davies**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services advise colleagues why the District's schools have a problem recruiting and retaining high calibre teaching staff and what is being done to combat this problem?

**Answer**

The recruitment and retention of high calibre staff is not unique to Bradford District but also in neighbouring districts too. We have seconded a serving headteacher, Sara Rawnsley, to the part time position of Recruitment and Retention Strategy Manager for a year to address this problem.

Principally her role is to:

- Set up close links with all Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers within a 50 mile radius of the District to promote Bradford to trainee teachers as a place to live, work and establish their career.
- To establish a District wide NQT (newly qualified teachers) and RQT (recently qualified teachers) plan- same deal of training and development regardless of where a teacher works, establish networks and co-ordinated 'excellence' visits.
- To develop a District wide 'Talent Management Policy' to ensure all schools develop their own policies and spot, then harness talent within their settings, including developing support staff into teaching, as well as promoting a 'get into teaching' to the wider workforce.
- Set up a District wide succession plan, which incorporates a 'one in waiting' model – whereby teachers are given the opportunity to 'train' for key middle and senior roles within schools by the mentoring and the shadowing of talented leaders.
- Establish a core group of headteachers who are recruited and trained to become Executive Headteachers and be proactively assigned to schools facing leadership challenges
- Co-ordinate a marketing campaign to attract teachers to Bradford - 'Big up Bradford'

**Supplementary Question**

Thanks for the reply. Very comprehensive again. Will there be any specific incentives offered?

**Councillor Berry**

It is part largely a matter for schools but groups of schools are looking at that but clearly one of the answers we are not looking for is a commitment going into an election to retain and develop further the appointment of unqualified teachers to teach our children. As a parent of a school aged child I want to know that that teacher has the appropriate qualifications and skills and part of this is making sure teachers get professional development as they go through their careers. Another part of it is about the workload,

the performance management regime and the systematic denigration of the teaching profession over the last few years and what we actually need to recognise is that we are in need of retaining the brightest and the best talent and when people tell you the workloads and the pressure with a double Ofsted inspection coming, when they are actually going to have one team inspecting the other team as they inspect the school. I have to tell you, that is not going to contribute to the retention of the brightest and best teachers because at this time in the economic cycle some of those teachers who have got skills in maths or other areas are able to leave and take other jobs. We do not want that.

**34. Councillor Miller**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Sport advise colleagues of the collection schedule for the contents of the dog foul bins around Keighley Canal / Barr House Lane, Riddlesden area?

**Answer**

The dog fouling bins in question are owned and maintained by the Canals and River Trust and are not the Council's responsibility, although the Council previously had a contract to empty the bins, which is now carried out by another contractor. The Canals and River Trust have a contract for the bins to be emptied twice a week. When concerns are received by the Area Office about these bins they are reported through to the Canals and River Trust for action and response.

**Questioner's response**

Firstly I must apologise because I was not aware that the contract had been and Bradford Council were not emptying those bins any longer but they were not emptied but I suppose it is not our problem now, it is the Trust so I will get onto them. Thank you.

**35. Councillor Davies**

Can the Portfolio Holders for Children's' and Adult Services inform colleagues why the Council has a problem recruiting and retaining social workers?

**Answer**

In Adult Services we do not have a problem recruiting or retaining qualified social workers. When we advertise for permanent qualified social workers at all levels we receive significant applicants, the most recent advert for experienced social workers has received 21 applicants.

The current turnover of social workers is 7%.

There has been increased demand for children's social care services, 20% more referrals and an increase in the number of children on child protection plans. This pressure on the service will in part will have led to a reduction in the number of children's social workers in recent months; although there is always a level of natural turnover. Currently there are 170 full time equivalent Social Workers directly employed by the Council (a drop from 187 in March 2014). To meet this gap the service has 13 agency workers within the Social Work service. This now represents 7% of the workforce. Agency workers are being employed to cover statutory work whilst recruitment takes place. It keeps the service robust and reduces overall caseload levels to an acceptable level. The Council has invested in additional staff to address the rise in demand and workload for social workers. This includes three Social Workers in the assessment teams and ten Social Workers for the long-term teams. This is reflected in the increase in agency staff. In respect of

retention Bradford has an experienced workforce. 60% of Social Workers are Level 3 workers with high levels of experience and training. Team Managers have been re-graded to keep Bradford in line with the regional rates of pay and retain experienced staff. The service has moved to high quality accommodation at Sir Henry Mitchell House in the city centre. The move has been well received by staff and they feel valued and it will help with keeping morale high.

### **Supplementary Question**

If there isn't a problem recruiting social workers then why has there been an increase in agency workers?

### **Councillor Berry**

Very simple. Demand. We have reached the point where we had a spike of demand. It was reported at the scrutiny committee and discussed in some detail and when there was a spike in demand as a result of events following Rotherham, and also Hamza Khan, when your numbers go above. I actually visited the front line and saw the numbers of agency workers that had been brought in. Had we not done that the delays would have been great. Seven per cent is not a high level. We expect to get that down. But lets say across the whole country we are again as with teachers, most local authorities are struggling to retain social workers. This is in no way near a crisis but I will not hide from you. I have the objective of getting to the point where we have no agency social workers and that will be an ideal scenario but it is simply not the case that this is as a result of a crisis in recruitment and retention. It has been about the need to put more staff in to meet rising demand so that we protect children as effectively as possible and can I say there was no questioning about the releasing of that money to make sure that as the demand rose, the numbers of social workers were put in place. It was so urgent around the time of the Rotherham inquiry and every local authority faced that. If we had just recruited direct social workers that would have taken longer and we would have been waiting at times to recruit. So if you are trying to protect children you have to respond quickly. I had the full support in doing that. The department had the full support in doing that. I am proud we did it.

### **36. Councillor Leeming**

To the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Sport & Sustainability - Now that Asset Management have confirmed that the former allotments green field site on Oxford Road cannot be built on, what plans are there to bring part of the site back into use as Allotments?

### **Answer**

At present there is no funding available within the service to reinstate the site as Allotment gardens and it will remain part of the wider recreational space adjacent the park.

There are two other allotment sites within 1 mile of this site at Valley Road and Queens Road which are owned and managed by the Council and it is considered that these sites currently provide sufficient plots to cater for local demand.

### **37. Councillor Sykes**

Whilst unapproved housing development/structural alterations take place at the risk of planning refusal, the increase in such activities makes it clear that this in itself is not sufficient deterrent. Could the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Planning & Transportation

advise what further action could be taken to prevent this clear abuse of the planning process?

**Answer**

It is not a Criminal offence to carry out building works without the benefit of planning permission and as such occurrences will happen. The local planning authority cannot regulate people's actions before they take place. However, where such building works cause nuisance or harm the Council does challenge the developer, which results in a submitted planning application.

Again, It is clear that the perception re number of retrospective applications is actually incorrect, between 1st April 2013 and 31st March 2014 Bradford Planning Panel had considered 81 planning applications, six of which were for retrospective planning permission; two of these were granted and four were refused planning permission. For the same period, Keighley & Shipley Planning Panel determined 39 planning applications, four being for retrospective planning permission; three were granted and one was refused planning permission.

**38. Councillor Heseltine**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Sport confirm the refurbishment costs for Shipley Town Hall in the last 5 years and what are the scheduled costs for ongoing refurbishment works, including the provision of a new Access Point?

**Answer**

There has been £1.3m spend on Shipley Town Hall since 2009 to date. £1m has been on planned / capital works, including a re-boiler, rewire, and security upgrades. The remaining £300k has been spent on reactive maintenance and repairs.

**39. Councillor Davies**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Environment & Sport or Housing Planning & Transportation inform colleagues whether there is a Council policy on the removal of Japanese knotweed and is any assistance to residents given?

**Answer**

Japanese knotweed is a notifiable weed and is classed as controlled waste that can only be disposed of by a licensed waste operator. Removing the weed/rhizomes carries a large risk of spreading the weed to other locations.

The Council works to a standard procedure, in line with government guidance, to control knotweed on its own land. This involves a programme of chemical spraying by a specialist contractor to control and reduce any stands of knotweed with the ultimate aim of eradication. The council and its specialist contractor do not remove any of the weed/rhizomes.

Where residents contact the Council for advice on knotweed the service visits and advises them on the best form of treatment and also offers details on contractors who can carry out treatment works.