

BURY COMMISSION ON LIFE CHANCES

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1. THE IDEA OF LIFE CHANCES

This report is inspired by two Bury stories. The first Bury story begins in Chamber Hall in 1788 when a son was born to the mill-owner. Young Robert is one of the lucky ones, born into a good fortune made in calico-printing, although he often suffered the mockery of his peers. He was not especially more popular when he left Bury, first to go to school at Harrow and then university at Oxford. He never lost his Bury accent and his manners caused excited attention because he liked to cut his jelly with a knife.

Today, though, Robert Peel is commemorated in the streets and institutions of Bury. He stands guard in stone over Bury Parish Church. Peel entered the House of Commons in 1809, lent his name “bobby” to the office of policeman that he created and, rising to the status of Prime Minister, split the Conservative party over free trade in 1846.

The second story is less well-known but it was once a representative story. This is the tale of a man born in 1912 in Bury, a man who lived all his life in the town, schooldays, work and retirement. This young man left school at 15 despite being easily bright enough to go on to university. He went to work in the mill, where he stayed for 50 years, retiring with a gold clock and a picture in *The Bury Times*. The name of this man was Thomas Taylor and he was my grandfather. In an era in which the school gates opened to let the leaders out and the factory gates opened to let the workers in, my grandfather’s was a common story.

It is not common any longer. In fact that kind of life has all but disappeared. Neither is Robert Peel really a model to emulate for most people. The two worlds in which Thomas Taylor and Robert Peel made their ways have gone. The Industrial Revolution gave Bury its purpose as a textile and paper town. Peel lived through the era of transition from the stage-coach to the railway. My grandfather lived through the shift from the railways to the private car, not that he ever owned one. He lived in the age of mechanisation and heavy industry, benefiting from the prosperity brought to Bury in the time of Peel.

Bury now has to make a living in a service economy, in an era in which distance has been shrunk by digital transfer of information. Manufacturing still counts but places have to adapt. The towns in Britain which have struggled have been those which have lamented the decline of their manufacturing staple. Bury is not one of those places. Never resting on the laurels of its past, Bury is good in the present and could be better still in the future. If the town is to fulfil that promise it needs to provide the best feasible opportunities for its people. This is what is meant by the idea of life chances.

The idea of life chances is a deliberate focus on *every* life. It applies not just to the least well-off, though lack of income scars life chances. It applies not just to the young, though more can be in the early years of life than at any other time. The idea of life chances also strongly implies that you are the author of your own life. Or, at least, you would be if given

the right opportunities. The purpose of the approach is not to tell people how they should live or what they should be interested in, although clearly the economic future of the town sets limits on the work that will be available. The purpose of the life chances approach is to equip people with the skills required to live a good life of their own choosing.

The word *chance* has a dual meaning. It denotes luck and good fortune. Some people, like Robert Peel, are born into good fortune, as a matter of chance. Some people, like my grandfather, have to carve out their own chance, by which is meant their opportunity. This report is designed to begin the process which improves the chance that all people in Bury can live a good life.

This report paints an impressionistic portrait of Bury. It then goes on to describe the problems that get in the way, the things that too often prevent people in Bury from exploiting the opportunities their talents should make available to them. That diagnosis then leads to 25 recommendations for action, from which the next phase of this work should begin.

2. A PORTRAIT OF BURY

This report is a diagnosis of what needs to be improved and a prognosis for what should be done about it. The spirit in which it has been approached is that of Robert Peel, in the following verdict about reducing the cost of corn, from Douglas Hurd's biography:

“He (Peel) was not alone; many others concerned themselves with poverty. The Chartists looked for an answer in radical political change. Lord Shaftesbury pressed for social legislation to improve working conditions. Marx and Engels out of their research hatched the theories of Communism. But Peel was the man who acted. He worked out a clear analysis and remedy”.

The first part of this is a clear analysis. What is Bury like today?

Like many towns across the country, Bury has undergone significant structural economic change. This has been going on for decades, but continues at pace. Since 2005 Bury's manufacturing employment has fallen by 3,200 jobs. This is a decline of 40.5 per cent which is far higher than the regional or national average. But employment in banking finance and insurance shot up by 3,800 jobs, and jobs in distribution, hotels & restaurant went up by 2,700.

The largest single sector of employment in Bury today is health and social work (20.3 per cent), followed by wholesale and retail (18.8 per cent). There is 10.9 per cent in each of education and manufacturing. These changes are the sign of a modernising economy, but they have brought significant new problems. Despite the output of the economy rising, the wages and hours of work have stagnated; incomes have become detached from growth.

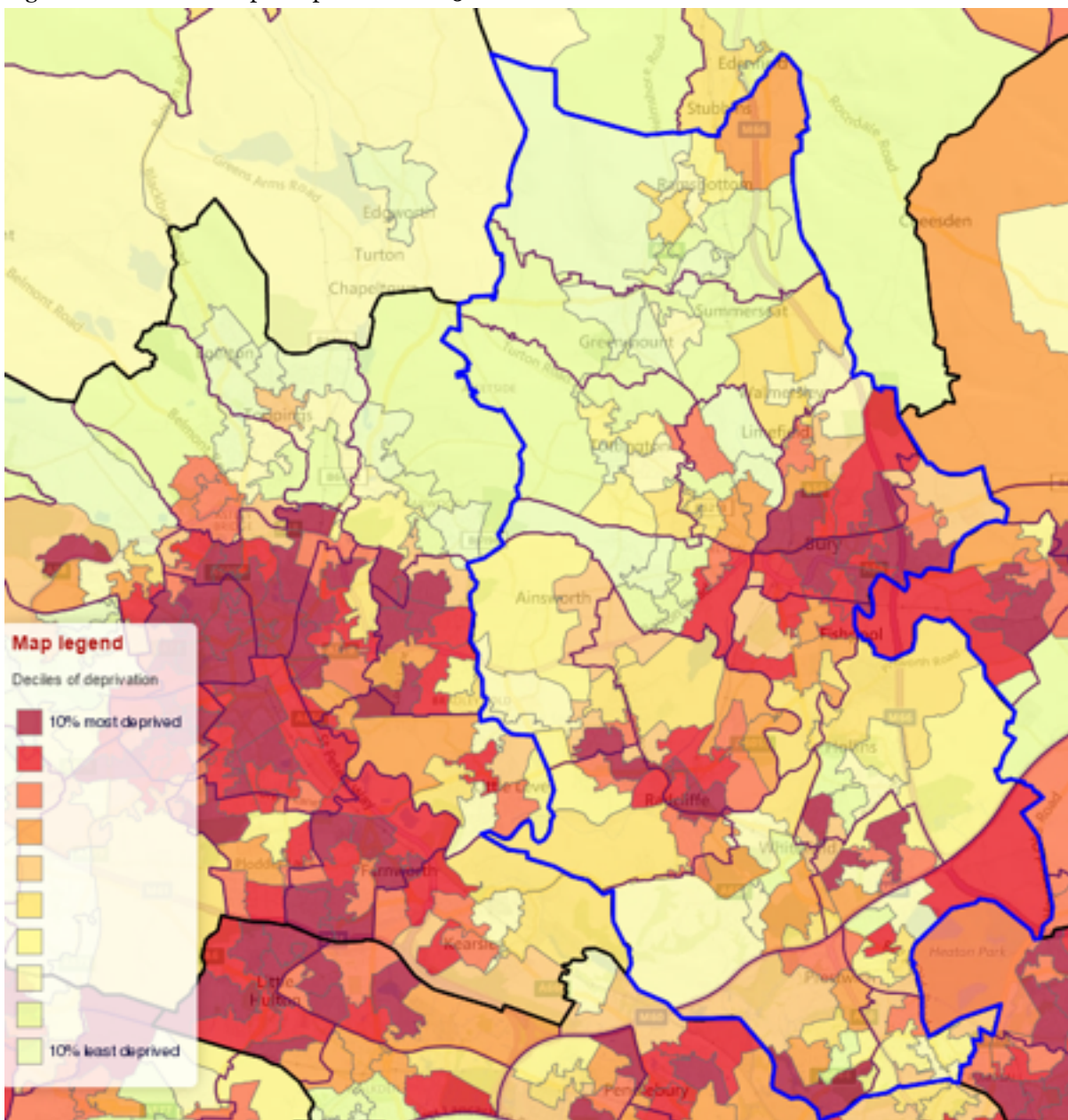
In Bury real median hourly pay has fallen by £1.32 per hour (10 per cent) since 2008; but, because the number of hours worked has also fallen, annual pay has fallen by much more: £3,800 a year (13.1 per cent). Both of these figures are far higher than nationally where real hourly pay fell by 6.8 per cent and real annual pay fell by 8.4 per cent. This has been exacerbated by significant real terms cuts in tax credits for those in work, and in benefits for those unable to work.

Bury has both a high proportion of small businesses and a large public sector but its residents do rely on the wider Greater Manchester area for work. 41,550 residents commute out, the largest share of whom work in Manchester (12,130), followed by Salford (5,689) and Bolton (4,786). Connections are generally good, which is a great economic strength. But growth in the wider city-region is not as strong as the hype suggests: the 5.1 per cent job growth since 2010 puts it amongst the middle-ranking economies of England, below the national average (6.8 per cent) and way behind London (16.5 per cent).

- Bury's labour market performs a little better than Greater Manchester but a little below the national average.
- Bury's residents have a higher level of skills than the Greater Manchester average and patterns of work have not changed a great deal over the last decade

There have long been pockets of deprivation in Bury, and unfortunately they remain. Neighbourhoods within Radcliffe, Moorside and East ward are amongst the 10 per cent most deprived in the country, and other areas fare quite badly too (see figure 1 below). In the Greater Manchester context this is less of a concentration, but research has shown how, compared to these other districts, Bury's deprived neighbourhoods changed the least (for better or worse) than almost any other district in Greater Manchester (SDRC, OISP and New Economy 2012).

Figure 1: Index of multiple deprivation 2015



In its service performance, there is much to be celebrated. In many ways Bury is doing well. Bury's schools, for example, tend to perform well. There are clearly many excellent teachers and many high-performing schools, which support many young people through to high attainment. By almost all of the standard metrics of performance Bury is above average:

- The percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard at KS2 is good, and higher than national averages
- Performance at Key Stage 4 is close to the national average
- Bury's service in the early years of life leads to better outcomes for residents than the local, regional and national averages
- Bury's residents have a better than average progression into employment. A high proportion of school leavers enter education, employment or training and the proportion of disadvantaged children doing so is also better than average

But these averages conceal at least as much as they reveal. The averages in Bury are made up of some extremes. There is a great deal of success, some grave deprivation and some places where a reasonable performance could be better:

- Local employers do not recruit enough school-leavers
- The percentage of students achieving 3 A-A* grades or better at A Level was 5.7 per cent, 10.8 per cent for the North West and 13.2 per cent for England – the figure for at least AAB is 13.1 per cent compared to 19.0 per cent for the North West and 22.1 per cent for England.

Bury is a place that is comprised of some wealthy commuter-villages in the Pennines, some extremely deprived wards in the town centre and plenty of places in between. The combination of those disparate elements produces an overall story that is good but not outstanding. Bury is often said to be a bellwether place politically and these numbers suggest the reason why.

Bury is a town with a strong heritage that has to be turned into a vibrant future. It has many advantages and performance on a range of dimensions is good. Yet within that performance lurks the danger of complacency. Bury is not a town with endemic problems. There is much to admire and much to commend. But there is still more that can be done.

A NOTE ON REMIT AND METHOD

The Bury Commission on Life Chances was instigated by Bury Council. It is designed to be useful at that level of power. Clearly, the range of powers available to public agencies in the region is, at the time of writing, in flux. There will, in due course, be a Mayor and the

settlement of where powers lie may, with luck, be subject to further devolution from central government. The structures as they stand are summarised in the diagram below.



This is the first of four caveats that need to be entered on this report. Many of the policies required for life chances in any town to be materially affected will require change at national level. A local authority is not at fault for everything in its patch even if it is responsible for it. By the same token, it would be unrealistic for a local authority to be able to turn lives around unless national policy is going with the grain of the same objective. This report tries to strike a balance between recommendations that a local authority could act on without national help and suggestions for the wider policy debate, in which local authority figures can be a leading voice. A good local authority can be a catalyst for change. Some of the recommendations are not wholly within the remit of the local authority but are important considerations for life chances in any case.

The second caveat is money. This report fell into a period of acute austerity in local government. The collapse in budgets hangs like a shadow over everything. It would be naive not to note that the axe hangs over local government. Next year is going to be especially difficult. Good services are never guaranteed by money but they are impossible without it. This report has been written, as far as possible, not to read like a list of spending demands. The demand for too much money would be unrealistic. However, it is obvious that if local government continues to take the brunt of spending cuts then statutory services will suffer, let alone discretionary services. Throughout, the drawing of this report

seeks to strike a balance between realism about the money likely to be available and realism about the amount of money required.

The third caveat is that this report is focused narrowly on suggestions for improvement. It is inevitable, in work of this kind, that it lays the stress on the least good services in the town rather than the best. It can easily leave the impression that the town is a site of major problems. It is not and it is important to register here that, in every service visited, there was a great deal of dedicated, professional and excellent work going on. The purpose of this report is, unfortunately, not to exhibit that work but it is to be hoped that this short caveat will at least show that the sterling work has not gone unnoticed.

The fourth caveat is that this is the beginning of a process of improvement, not the end. It is always a mistake to suppose that anything important has happened when a report lands. The real work now begins. The report implies a series of next steps and it will be important to maintain the momentum.

This report was possible only after extensive consultation with professionals and interested parties in Bury. Special thanks must go to all the Council officers who helped to make it possible and to everyone who came to the consultation sessions or who offered their thoughts privately. There are so many such people that it would be too lengthy to list them all but thanks are due to everyone, for their interest and dedicated work. The work of the secretariat was provided by IPPR North and thanks are due to them too.

3. THE ENEMIES OF LIFE CHANCES

There are some things we all need. Health and well-being, education, work, income, housing and safety. There is an established literature that shows deprivations tend to cluster; one leads inexorably to another. Low income tends, obviously, to be associated with poor housing, poor health and so on, ending up in the life chances of that person being impaired.

We all know the circumstances of a good and lucky life. The purpose of good politics is to try to extend that to everyone, to turn it from a privilege into a norm. That is the idea that inspires all the people who work in public service.

There are four enemies of good life chances which stand in the way of the people of Bury, people anywhere for that matter, making the most of their lives. Those four enemies, in chronological order of the life cycle, are:

- a poor start in life
- poor aspiration or narrow horizons
- poor quality education or the wrong education
- poor quality work or no work at all

I. A Poor Start

A great deal about life chances is explained by poverty. If there were a magic wand the best policy would be to wave it and abolish poverty. A lack of income is correlated so closely with so many other deprivations that it is unrealistic not to note its importance. But there is no magic wand so we have to recommend what we can while keeping up the campaign to improve incomes at the lower end of the scale.

Services for the least well-off in their earliest years is a crucial public response to poor life chances. We know that children born into poor families are more likely to be premature, to have a low birth weight and less likely to receive all their immunisations than their wealthier counterparts. Poor health is a significant cause of poor life chances, a relationship that persists throughout the life cycle.

Investing in early years is well-known to be extremely effective and, conversely, the acute cost of poor childcare is well-evidenced (see Marmot 2010; Field 2010, Kennedy 2010). There are a number of parental activities which are clearly shown to have an impact on life chances. Simple tasks such as reading to children from an early age have an enormous

bearing on their future development and career trajectories (see Richards et al 2016; SMC 2016).

But this is a task in which some appear to be failing. There is a lot of concern about children not being ready for school and the measure concerning lack of school readiness in Bury has increased. This lack of readiness may not always be cognitive. It may refer to social readiness, for example. Teachers, already stretched thin, rightly said that they cannot become substitutes for parents. Many of the problems they deal with start before school age, or originate outside of school.

Economic change and public service cuts are partly responsible. New patterns of work have arisen, meaning that working families often have to prioritise going out and earning money, often working irregular shift patterns, meaning they cannot spend as much time raising their children as they would like to. The cuts to services for children which Bury Council has had to make will have had a knock-on effect too.

II. Poor Aspiration

Poor aspiration and low horizons is the least tangible of the enemies of good life chances but might just be the most important. There is no shortage of talent in Bury. Not all of it is recognised by the national education system but the town is full of enterprise and spirit, as it always has been. However, there is a notable sense that it is easy to get stuck.

This is in part a problem of poverty. Children from families whose incomes are low are likely to have parents who lack the networks and connections to help them on. This is as much about knowing what possibilities exist as it is about exploiting them. Too many children never have their sights lifted. Schools can do this to some extent but we cannot push every social problem onto the teachers.

It is perfectly understandable that young people need help in finding their way in the world. The thing they lack most of the time is not information but confidence. They need to be mentored, to be taught that the possibilities are vast and that people like them can achieve great things. Throughout there is a sort of resigned diffidence. Bury's population needs a shot of confidence.

This is not just about young people either. High aspiration and drive is an attribute that is vital for everyone. People in the midst of the careers need it, so do those who are currently out of work and those who are nearing retirement and thinking about what they can do with the leisure time that is coming their way.

III. Poor Education

It would be quite wrong to characterise education provision in Bury as poor. It is not poor at all. Much of it is excellent and plenty is fine. That having been said, however, there are three problems in addition to the separate issue of the earliest years of life.

The first educational enemy of life chances is that there is, persistently, in Bury a group of students, mostly from deprived backgrounds, who end up achieving very little. This needs to be a priority. It is a waste of talent that people should go through the system and emerge with nothing at the end.

The second educational enemy is that good schools need the stimulus for continuous improvement. Time and again people reported their sense that, as things were fine, they did not need external stimulus to get better. But fine is not enough. Bury is better than that and some students who are doing fine could do well instead.

The third educational enemy, which is beyond the remit of the Council alone, is that too many students are receiving an inappropriate education. There is a set of students who would be better off with a high quality vocational education who are not, at the moment, getting what they need. Schools are judged against a national, academic standard so they can hardly be blamed for the emphasis they take.

IV. Poor Quality Work

Clearly, there is a problem with unemployment. One in six households in Bury are classed as workless, which is higher than the national average. Work is the best guarantor of better life chances and work creation and enterprise is vital to good life chances at all stages of the life cycle.

But it is not enough to supply just any old jobs. Work is better than no work but we do not really alter anyone's life chances in a material sense unless the work is of a certain quality.

Work has to pay properly but in-work poverty in Bury has been increasing, thereby diverting the true cost of employment onto the public purse. Work should also contain the prospect of progression. Work should not be a static state. It should be dynamic - a means of improving your lot, with the reward growing, measured both by pay and satisfaction. Learning new skills at work is vital, both for people to enjoy what they do and for them to progress. In too many jobs these opportunities do not exist.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The first thing that must be done to is to take the potency of life chances very seriously. This is an attitude and an approach that needs to be built into the thinking of the Council all the way through, all the time.

There follow some general recommendations, about the process to be followed, and then some specific recommendations which refer to each of the enemies of life chances which have been identified.

Recommendation One: That the Council establish a standing Commission on life chances

This Commission is just the first step. The Council should now convene the relevant sectors in each service to establish a common work plan. The Commission should meet quarterly, publish their minutes and produce an annual audit of life chances in Bury which sets out progress to date. Its model should be as a champion, a watchdog and a regulator, along the lines of the national Social Mobility Commission. A private budget should be sought for this venture.

Recommendation Two: That the Council should conduct a service audit on life chances

The statutory obligation of the Council is to provide certain services and that will not change. But each service should be audited for the work it does to improve life chances and audit be central to the assessment of where the marginal pound should be spent.

Recommendation Three: That the Council publishes and publicises life chances data

The publication of data is a powerful way of exerting discipline on all providers. An urgent task for the standing Commission should be to agree upon the handful of metrics which constitute life chances in Bury, and on which the Council then asks to be judged. These should be tracked and the progress published and publicised.

Recommendation Four: A Good Practice Broker

It is notoriously difficult to spread good practice through a bureaucracy or through isolated units of public service. Once the Council knows enough about what is working to enhance life chances there should be a broker charged with the task of ensuring that all agencies have the relevant information on which they can act. The presumption will be that all should follow this best practice and be asked to explain why they are not, rather than the other way round.

Recommendation Five: That Bury opens up to its own voluntary sector

The goodwill in the voluntary sector in Bury is palpable. So is the fact that it is doing less than it could. There is a sense among providers in the voluntary sector that their relationships with public authorities are not as good as they should be. The benefits of voluntary sector provision are always significant. The Council in Bury provides too much and disburses too little. The upshot of this attitude, in a time of austerity, is that councils will provide the same as they did, only less. Until there is a shift of attitude it is premature to make specific recommendations but that shift in attitude is needed.

Recommendation Six: That Bury opens up to external advice

Bury's good performance on most dimensions has led to a complacency that things are fine. Things *are* fine but they should be better. There is a great deal of expert advice and provision that could be drawn upon and one of the central tasks of the standing Commission would be to ensure that it is sought. This Commission has already secured the pledges of help from a number of prominent and relevant people. It would be a good idea, for example, to appoint a not-for-profit social enterprise to take responsibility for progress on some of the agreed life chances measures.

After these general recommendations it is crucial that we start to address each of the enemies of life chances in turn:

I. A Poor Start

Recommendation Seven: Peer-to-peer Parental Learning

So much of a child's life chances are set in the home. It is unrealistic to expect a public authority to do any more than mitigate the effects of some early lives. If there was one thing that could be done for the young people of Bury it would be to give them the best possible start and that is largely in the hands of their parents. This is a matter of parental circumstance but also of parental style regardless of income. Wherever parents struggle the costs fall on the state. Bury has a huge resource in its older generation which has been through the task of being parents. The Bury Parent's Forum is an excellent start but there is a wealth of untapped advice; further voluntary advice services could be established, online, on the phone or in person. There is also scope for self-prescribing and self-directed support through the use of the Bury Directory.

Recommendation Eight: Parenting Support

There is a minority of parents who are not really coping and would be glad of help. We can help. There has been great progress in recent years in teaching the skills of being a good parent. Classes in parenting have a good track-record of making a difference. There are several established, heavily assessed and audited programmes that work. These classes or courses are specifically intended for those parents who need a great deal of support. For

those who need less help, parenting clinics are a quicker and less costly approach, to which parents can refer themselves. The Council should seek to provide this service, although that does not necessarily mean it has to pay for it. Some work can be done *pro bono* and there is a lot that can be done with corporate budgets. One method might be to pilot a collaboration between the local authority and the health sector. This would firstly co-locate essential services related to pregnancy and early childhood. But it would also open the door for referrals to the centre from a wide range of partners: everyone from housing officers, GPs and midwives should be encouraged to refer people they come into contact with to the centre. At this point they would be assessed for how much support they will need. They would then be given additional support at each stage up to the age of five.

Recommendation Nine: The Army of the Retired

Bury has a great deal of voluntary expertise just waiting to be realised. An army of parents have lived and worked in the town and could be a source of excellent advice. There is also, as there is everywhere, a problem with loneliness among the elderly. Some progress can be made in treating both of these problems by bringing together the elderly parents with the younger parents. Again, the function that needs to be filled in is brokering and convening. Corporate budgets can again be sought for the training required.

II. Poor Aspiration

Recommendation Ten: Mentoring Students

The people of Bury need help to know what is out there and how they can reach it. Although careers advice used to be common in school this has never been done well in Britain. There are very many mentoring charities and experts who would be keen to help and there were many expressions of goodwill by Bury business people. The Council should develop a mentoring programme, provided by external agents, with the objective of ensuring that all Bury's school children have access to advice and meet people who aim to inspire them.

Recommendation Eleven: Mentoring Adults

Advice about career opportunities and direction in life should not stop when someone leaves full-time education. There are many adults in Bury who could benefit hugely from direction, some to make the most of their skills in work, some to be helped back into the labour market, some to start their own enterprises. There are excellent advice services available for adults and Bury's people would benefit greatly from them. Life chances is not an idea that begins and ends at the school gates.

Recommendation Twelve: Brokers

Public service bureaucracies can be very confusing. It can take a lot of time and effort to navigate the system and sometimes a lot of expertise to get what you want. It is well established that the wealthier get more from universal services than the poorer. They are demanding citizens whereas the poor, as a rule, tend to accept what they are given. The best way to change this is, over time, to establish a system of brokers. These would be representatives who act, on behalf of citizens to help them get the best for them from the various services with which they interact. We use brokers for all manner of goods that matter less to us than our life chances. Why not here? The same idea can work too to help children through the education system. There is, for example, a particular problem with Pupil Referral Units in Bury and a dedicated worker is a vital response.

Recommendation Thirteen: Bury Showcase

There is a panoply of organisations who would be interested in helping in Bury on questions of aspiration. Not many of them yet have any connection with the town. The Council should establish a showcase day when they should all be invited, introduced to the town and asked what they can do in Bury. This should include a programme of speakers going into schools on a regular basis to lift the horizons of students. There are versions of this already but it would be a good idea to bring them all together into a festival.

Recommendation Fourteen: Awards

The power of awards ceremonies to lift the horizons and expectations are enormous. There could be an annual awards ceremony for aspiration and achievement among Bury students with the categories selected to make the idea of aspiring to more a routine and natural thing for a Bury student to seek to do.

III. Poor Education

Recommendation Fifteen: 100 per cent Literacy

There is a tiny minority of children whose learning difficulties mean they will never be able to read properly. Aside from that small group there is no reason why every child in the town, indeed every child in the country, should not reach fictional literacy at the ages of 7 and 11. Bury should set itself the target of being the first borough in the country which reaches 100 per cent literacy. The associated benefits are enormous.

Recommendation Sixteen: Technical College

The vagaries of technical education policy are beyond the remit of the Council. However, it is clear that non-academic subjects need to be developed for the 10-15 per cent who won't ever engage in academic education. There needs to be an alternative. One possibility is a partnership between the new university campus and the University Technical College trust.

The university itself should have a strong focus on locally-relevant vocational work rather than replicate the academic work that is well done in other places.

Recommendation Seventeen: A Coding College

This new college should be in the area of high-skill manufacturing. This would refer to Bury's industrial heritage whilst also updating it. One option would be for a college dedicated to coding, to make coding a specialism of the town. Or Bolton University should be encouraged to make expertise in digital industries a major part of what it offers to local students.

Recommendation Eighteen: Teaching Development

The most vital resource in education is the quality of the teacher. There is a substantial body of research that shows this to be the case. If there are any greater incentives that can be offered to make Bury an enticing place for teachers, then it would be money well spent. In addition, the existing body of teachers must have access to the best training and development. Finally, Bury has no Teach First presence, by which first-class graduates come into teaching, usually in difficult areas. They should be actively sought.

Recommendation Nineteen: Schools Challenge

The education in London was drastically improved by a dedicated Schools Challenge. Manchester should do the same and Bury should volunteer to be its policy laboratory. The Schools Challenge brings together everything that is germane to a good education which includes new methods. The New Schools Network (NSN) would be happy to work with potential providers, either established charities or consortia of parents, to discuss the prospect of new school provision where it is wanted. Bury has a good educational performance and structural change is no panacea but there has been a lot of innovation in recent years from which Bury could benefit.

IV. Poor Quality Work

Recommendation Twenty: The public sector Living Wage

Work is the best way to improve life chances. More work, better quality work, better paid work. On the last of those, Bury should seek to be a sanctuary of the Living Wage. The leader of the Council should become a champion for the real Living Wage in Bury by setting out a leader's employers charter. This would mean, over time, seeking Living Wage accreditation, which means paying staff at least a Living Wage of £8.45 per hour and requiring contractors to do the same. This can be done as contracts come up for renewal; paying the Living Wage should be seen as a major benefit to a company seeking a contract over rivals who do not.

Recommendation Twenty One: The private sector Living Wage

Money in the public sector is tight and there is little scope for public subsidy of private wages. As part of the role as a champion for the borough as a whole, the leader should seek to sign up local employers to an employer charter, in which they commit to paying the Living Wage, ending zero hours contracts, having progression policies in place, and employing apprentices – both those who are young or older and excluded from work for long periods. The Council should host an annual awards ceremony for the best local *employers*. This is in part being picked up by the Offer to Employers which is currently being created.

Recommendation Twenty Two: A Mayoral Development Corporation for Inclusive Growth

Devolution to Greater Manchester opens up the opportunity for a Mayoral Development Corporation once the new mayor is in place. Bury should offer to be its pilot area. There is a lot known about how to develop and how not to develop. It requires simultaneous development of services and transport links to ensure that local people receive some of the economic benefit. Within this area, there would be the standard suite of measures such as compulsory purchase and streamlined planning and infrastructure. The Council would designate the pilot area a Living Wage Zone, it would pilot a ‘welfare earn back’ approach, which would see central government rewarding them for moving people from unemployment into work, based on higher tax receipts and lower benefit payments. It should use the planning system to require a minimum number of apprentices, for both development and end use. Section 106 powers could also be used to direct developer funding toward technical education and pre-apprenticeship training from 14-19, and direct Bury’s young people to benefit from the apprenticeships that are being created. Part of this programme would devise the best use of the apprenticeship levy.

Recommendation Twenty Three: Pooled Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Budgets

Companies spend a lot of money on various forms of philanthropy and social projects. Much of it is well spent and a great deal of good is done. However, it could do so much more. Both at Mayoral and at borough level, there is an opportunity to bring local companies together and seek to get them to pool their CSR budgets. They should all be focused on a single task, with a defined time horizon. There could be local publicity as the companies collectively seek to solve a defined problem in a given time. The funding may, if the finances allow, be matched by the public authority. The resultant publicity for the companies would be excellent and, more important for them and for everyone else, a lot more good would get done.

Recommendation Twenty Four: Business Support

Time and again young entrepreneurs and would-be business people expressed the desire for a dedicated place to go that would provide them with help and advice. There are such services available and they are very good but they are not always connecting with the

clientele. The task here is not to invent new provision but to help with the brokering. There is also the opportunity for the local university to develop strong business links. It should be part of its mission to offer state-of-the-art courses for business start-ups through the university. This would pull in people to the university who would not otherwise benefit and give the university itself a critical distinction.

5. WHAT BURY MIGHT BECOME

There are certain things necessary for a place to flourish. It needs talents and assets in the community. It needs a pleasant setting. It needs good transport links. It needs partners in the form of local institutions, museums, schools, arts organisations and businesses. It needs an engaged local authority. It needs friends and champions in the political structures in the tiers above the local level. It needs a culture of enterprise. Bury has all that.

It also has its proximity to Manchester which has been a major success story, not least because of the constant mantra of the council leader Richard Leese: “jobs, jobs, jobs”. Between 2001 and 2011 the population of Manchester increased by 20 per cent and the city is predicted to exceed the national average growth rate for the next decade. To be within easy traveling distance of a thriving metropolis is one of the advantages that Bury enjoys.

There is probably a future as a commuter town serving Manchester for some of the people of Bury. That will be part of the future. But it will not work for everyone and neither should that be the idea of Bury. Sir Robert Peel and my grandfather would not have been happy with the notion that Bury had become nothing more than a dormitory for the city.

Bury has a singular identity, a sense of itself as a town. That identity was once wrapped up in the innovators of the industrial revolution in which the North West led the world. Some of that spirit needs to be reclaimed as Bury continues to adapt and reinvent itself. As, indeed, it has done. There are some towns in and around the North West that are on their uppers or at least struggling to come to terms with rapid change. Bury is not really one of them. Bury has adapted well and its task is now to capitalise.

Bury could benefit from a culture of enterprise in public policy. It could be, if the spirit was willing, a laboratory for policy experiments. It could seek innovation funding on precisely that basis, as a place keen to pilot new thinking. Plenty of bright ideas would be attracted and there would be money to follow. This would be one way to put right the long-standing and justified lament that Bury loses out in funding processes, notably with respect to the schools budget.

The final thought is that this is also a matter of culture. Bury has a lovely setting, some fine building and a rich local culture and heritage in music and the arts. The last of the twenty five recommendations is to use this as a spur to improving aspiration in the town. The Council should establish a competition, in the schools, for the best idea for a cultural festival to be held in Bury every year. The festival should then be convened and organised by the students themselves, with the relevant help on hand. The date on which it is held should be the birthday either of Robert Peel or of my grandfather.

DATA ANNEXE

1. LABOUR MARKET

Labour market indicators are generally better than GM but a little worse than nationally:

- The employment rate is higher than average: 72.2 per cent, next to 70.5 per cent for GM, 71.6 per cent for the North West and 73.7 per cent nationally (ONS 2017a)
- The unemployment rate is at the regional average: 5.1 per cent, compared to Greater Manchester (6.2 per cent) the North West (5.1 per cent) and the UK (5.0 per cent) (Ibid)
- Poverty tends to be worse than average: the index of multiple deprivation puts Bury 132 of 326 local authorities (with 1 being the most deprived) (CLG 2015)
- The proportion of people on out of work benefits varies significantly by ward:¹ from 4.1 per cent in Tottington, to 18.4 per cent – four times as high – in East ward (ONS 2017b)

The skills picture is generally good but employers don't seem to train staff:

- A relatively high proportion has a degree level qualification: 37.0 per cent – more than GM (33.7 per cent) or the North West (32.6 per cent) (ONS 2017a)
- A relatively high proportion hold qualifications at or above GCSE or equivalent: 75.7 per cent, more than GM (71.6 per cent) and comparable areas (72.0 per cent) (ibid)
- Local businesses tend to train staff less than elsewhere in GM, the region or the country, with 62 per cent doing so, compared to 66 per cent in GM and nationally (UKCES 2014)

Patterns of work have changed little in the past ten years, and if anything Bury has seen less of a change than nationally:

- The proportion of unemployed households is the same as nationally: there are 1,100 households where all adults are unemployed – 1.7 per cent, lower than GM (2.1 per cent), and similar to the North West (1.6 per cent) (ONS 2016a)
- There is a smaller proportion of dependent children in working households than there was ten years ago: 51.6 per cent, down from 56.4 per cent in 2005 – nationally this proportion has stayed about the same, while it slipped slightly in GM (1.5 per cent) and the North West (1.2 per cent) (ibid)
- The share of dependent children growing up in a household where no one works has also fallen 3.3 percentage points from 12.3 per cent to 9.0 per cent; in line with national and regional trends, but less than across GM (a fall of 4.7pp) (ibid)

¹ Census area statistic ward, not electoral ward, due to data availability

- 14.2 per cent of those in work are self-employed, higher than in GM (13.5 per cent) and the North West (13.5 per cent) but lower than nationally (15.1 per cent) (ONS 2017a)

2. EDUCATION

Early Years outcomes are good, and better than local, regional and national averages:

- A higher proportion of children reach the expected level of development: 67.5 per cent, compared to GM (62.5 per cent), the North West (64.2 per cent) and the country as a whole (67.3 per cent) (DfE 2016a)
- A higher proportion achieve a good level of development too: 68.9 per cent compared to 65.7 per cent in GM, 66.7 per cent in the North West although this is higher nationally at 69.3 (ibid)
- Average total point scores are also higher: 34.7 in Bury, and 33.4 in GM, 33.9 in the North West and 34.5 in the country as a whole (ibid)

The district also has a smaller than average gap between the average and worst performers at Early Years:

- Those scoring in the bottom 20 per cent achieve better total point scores than elsewhere: in Bury they scored an average of 23.8 points on the EYFS, compared to 21.3 for GM, 22.0 for the North West and 23.3 for the country as a whole (ibid).
- There is also a smaller gap between the lowest 20 per cent of performers and the average student; this stands at 30.1 per cent – lower than in GM (37.7) regionally (35.2) and nationally (31.4) (ibid).

KS2 performance in Bury is good and above national averages:

- The percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at KS2 is higher than nationally but lower than GM: 55 per cent, compared to 57 per cent in GM, 53 per cent in the North West and 54 per cent in England (DfE 2017a)²
- A slightly less than average proportion of primary schools do not meet the floor standard: 4.8 per cent, compared to 3.1 per cent in GM, 4.7 per cent in the North West and 4.9 per cent in England (ibid)

The district also does well at KS4 but KS5 is more mixed:

- A high proportion of pupils achieve 5+ A*-C grades including English and Maths: 57.3 per cent in Bury, compared to 56.6 per cent in the North West; and 57.7 per cent in England (DfE 2017b).³

² All figures are for state-funded schools only

³ All figures are for state-funded schools only

- However, the percentage of students achieving 3 A-A* grades or better at A Level 5.7 per cent, compared to 10.5 per cent for GM, 10.8 per cent for the North West and 13.2 per cent for England (DfE 2017c)

A high proportion of school leavers enter education, employment or training

- In total, 94 per cent children entered a sustained education, employment or training destination after KS4 (GCSE level) – this compares favourably with the GM and North West averages of 93 per cent, and is the same as nationally (DfE 2017d).
- Of these, 7 per cent entered apprenticeships (compared to 7 per cent for GM and the NW, and 6 per cent nationally), with 92 per cent entering an education destination; 52 per cent go to FE providers (compared to 42 per cent in GM and in the NW) (ibid)

The proportion of disadvantaged children entering education, employment or training is also better than average:

- 88 per cent of Bury's disadvantaged pupils enter education, employment or training – similar to in GM, the North West and the country, and there is a gap of 8 percentage points between them and all other pupils – again, similar to the other areas (DfE 2017c).
- The district also performs particularly well at ensuring disadvantaged children are able to enter further education destinations, with 60 per cent doing so, compared to 50 per cent for GM and the North West and only 46 per cent for the country as a whole (ibid).

Employers don't tend to recruit school-leavers, and find them poorly prepared for work – although they rate university-leavers more favourably

- 72 per cent of employers in Bury did not recruit any education leavers – the highest of any GM district apart from Bury (UKCES 2014)
- Employers also don't rate 17/18 year old school leavers as well-prepared for work: 62 per cent said they were well or very well prepared for work, and said the same for 65 per cent of FE leavers – both are the second lowest rates in GM, and less than nationally (ibid)
- Employers did however rate university leavers more favourably: 91 per cent of employers judged students recruited from university to be well or very well prepared for work, compared to 83 per cent in GM and 83 per cent nationally (ibid)

3. ENTERPRISE

There is a high proportion of microbusinesses, and businesses survive better than in GM, the same as nationally:

- 90.2 per cent of Bury's businesses are microenterprises (enterprises with between 0 and 9 FTEs), compared with 88.1 per cent in GM, and 88.3 per cent in the North West, and 89.2 per cent nationally (ONS 2016b)

- The 3-year survival rate of business startups in Bury is 59.3 per cent, next to a GM average of 57.1 per cent, and similar to the UK rate of 59.4 per cent (ONS 2016c).

There is a high concentration of businesses in professional scientific and technical, but employment is concentrated in health, retail and manufacturing:

- Most of these businesses are in the category of professional scientific and technical (16.2 per cent) construction (11.4 per cent) and retail (10.0 per cent), but it is areas like property, retail, wholesale and motor trades where there is a higher concentration than nationally (ONS 2016b).
- The largest single sector of employment in Bury today is health and social work (20.3 per cent), followed by wholesale and retail (18.8 per cent). There is 10.9 per cent in each of education and manufacturing (ONS 2016d)⁴

The borough itself doesn't have many jobs per resident, but is part of a conurbation which does:

- Jobs density is low: it stands at 0.65 jobs per resident, compared to a 0.78 GM average, 0.79 North West average and 0.83 UK average (ONS 2016e)
- The percentage of businesses with at least one vacancy is below average: 11.0 per cent, next to a 19.0 per cent GM average and a 19.7 per cent national average (UKCES 2016)
- 42,150 people commute out, with the vast majority (81.7 per cent) going elsewhere in GM, and 39.2 per cent into Manchester (ONS 2013)

⁴ Location quotient analysis

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