

Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

20 September 2022

Commenced: 6.00pm

Terminated: 7.20pm

Present: Councillors Cartey (Chair), Alam (Deputy), Glover, Gwynne, A Holland, Robinson, Roderick

Apologies: Councillors Chadwick, Mills

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted by members of the Scrutiny Panel.

10. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel held on 26 July 2022 were approved as a correct record.

11. TAMESIDE TOWN CENTRES

The Panel welcomed Councillor Vimal Choksi, Executive Member (Town Centres, Communities, Corporate Land & Community Assets); Julian Jackson, Director of Place; and Gregg Stott, Assistant Director, to receive a strategic overview and proposals on next steps for Tameside's town centres.

At a national level, town centres are facing a number of significant challenges. Notwithstanding, Tameside's town centres are a crucial component to the future economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the borough.

A draft Town Centre Framework will act as a strategic umbrella to coordinate future development and regeneration activity. This will provide context on a coordinated strategic approach for each individual town centre, to realise the opportunities that exist over the next 15 years. Priorities set within the framework include:

- Heritage and culture
- Environment
- Transport, accessibility and movement
- Retail including markets and leisure
- Employment and skills
- Commercial opportunities

Part of the presentation focused on Ashton Town Centre, with a recap on the improvement works to date and the progress of agreed projects and development. The Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bid for Ashton has secured £19.87m to support continued regeneration and improvement works. Part of this is crucial to completing the final phase to Vision Tameside.

Members received a breakdown of proposals specific to the funding allocated to land remediation works, public realm improvements and the restoration of Ashton Town Hall. This included proposals, planned consultation and a breakdown for delivery.

Mr Stott updated members on the parameters of LUF bids for Stalybridge and Denton, with decisions anticipated at the end of 2022. Detail was provided on aspirations and specific projects that aim to improve existing buildings and infrastructure while seeking to unlock future potential and development opportunities. Members received a further breakdown on:

- High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) - £2.55m of investment for buildings, environmental improvements, cultural and community projects
- Stalybridge West opportunities – regeneration and development catalyst
- Hyde town centre, High Street Task Force and masterplan
- Funding already secured and work to date
- Partnerships within and across each town

The identified interventions aim to help town centres reach their full potential and funding bids have been prepared to provide a robust benefit cost ratio. Projects are planned across a number of phases that tie in with objectives set within the overarching framework and the funding available.

Cllr Choksi advised members that the link between strategy and delivery is important and increased focus is now placed on deliverables in the short to medium term. The initial phase will include a formal public consultation on Ashton public realm and market square, to take place in November 2022.

The Executive Member and officers responded to a number of questions from the Panel on:

- The renovation works for Ashton Town Hall.
- Identifying common themes and direction for Tameside across all town centres.
- Projects that require immediate attention and progress, where delivery is now a priority.
- Opportunities, sustainability, costings and budget responsibility beyond one-off investment and funding.
- Understanding the complexity of town centres and generating a diverse offer for retail, housing and leisure.
- Wider role of the Council, partnerships, influence and local barriers.
- Input of ward councillors and consideration of Strategic Neighbourhood Forums to support wider public engagement.
- Outcomes from previous engagement activity and future consultations, to identify suitable opportunities for Scrutiny involvement and oversight.

Cllr Choksi, Mr Jackson and Mr Stott thanked for attending the meeting.

12. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair updated members on the following matters.

- All Scrutiny members were invited to attend a training session on 5 September, delivered by Ian Parry from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny.
- All Scrutiny members have received an invitation to attend a mid-year budget session on 3 October. Two sessions are available 3.30pm and 5.45 pm.
- The next meeting of Overview Panel is on 26 September at which recent Scrutiny activity will be reported.
- A working group of the Panel to progress activity, oversight and input to consultation and delivery phases for town centres. Membership and priorities to be confirmed at the next meeting.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel will take place on Tuesday 1 November 2022.

14. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no urgent items for consideration at this meeting.

CHAIR