

# Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

1 November 2022

**Commenced:** 6.00pm

**Terminated:** 7.15pm

**Present:** Councillors Cartey (Chair), Chadwick, Glover, Gwynne, Robinson, Roderick

**Apologies:** Councillor A Holland

## 15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

## 16. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel held on 20 September 2022 were approved as a correct record.

## 17. FOLLOW UP ON HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING

The Panel welcomed Councillor John Taylor, Executive Member (Adult Social Care, Homelessness and Inclusivity); and Emma Varnam, Assistant Director, to receive an update on past scrutiny activity and recommendations on homelessness and housing.

Members received an update and current position statement for each of the eight recommendations and responses detailed in the previous review of homelessness and housing.

With the council and many organisations facing an increasingly difficult financial environment, this can affect the strategic and operational approaches to meeting statutory responsibilities to homelessness prevention and support. A series of new and emerging pressures are facing homelessness services in Tameside, these include:

- Increases in the numbers of people presenting as homeless
- Availability of suitable move-on accommodation
- The complexity of need for individuals and families
- Lasting impacts of the pandemic and developing pressures in the cost of living
- Ongoing challenges and access to mental health and associated services
- Increased service demands arising due to conflict abroad

Detail on recent progress and achievements included the transfer of homelessness and housing advice services back to the council in June 2022. A renewed focus placed on improving partnerships and collaborative arrangements with housing providers and the private rented sector. Ms Varnam advised members of a successful application for funding from the DLUHC to support various initiatives such as Next Steps.

Since June 2022, managers have routinely evaluated the effectiveness of interventions via key performance indicators (KPI). A series of weekly KPIs help to highlight areas of pressure and success. A comprehensive review and redesign of the service is underway and due to complete in April 2023.

At 1 June 2022, more than 230 households were supported in temporary accommodation (TA), this reduced to 198 in October 2022. The next potential pressure is the predicted cost-of-living crisis, which may bring additional demand to the service.

Councillor Taylor advised that the service recognise that temporary accommodation is not ideal, especially for families, and brings significant financial pressures. Work to address this has taken place in the following areas:

- Preventing people from being placed in TA in the first place
- Reducing the cost of TA
- Moving households on to permanent accommodation more effectively.

A draft homelessness strategy for 2023-2028 is ready for public consultation prior to formal adoption by the council. The updated version reflects new working practices and changes to both the service and legislation. The strategy will include three key priorities:

- To further develop housing options to ensure early prevention and relief of homelessness
- To improve availability of a range of sustainable housing options for households who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
- To end Rough Sleeping and Promote Recovery

Options include a policy that would allow the discharge of a homelessness duty into the private rented sector (PRS). This would allow more people in TA to be accommodated and the service has had considerable success in moving rough sleepers into the PRS, with improved relationships.

Councillor Taylor and Ms Varnam responded to a number of questions from the Panel on:

- Reviewing the overall success, impact and effectiveness of homeless interventions, with learning available to improve services.
- Establishing a local allocations and nominations policy with RSLs.
- Emerging pressures, including cost of living and lack of suitable accommodation
- Numbers in temporary accommodation.

Councillor Taylor and Ms Varnam thanked for attending the meeting.

## **18. RESPONSE TO MID-YEAR BUDGET UPDATE**

The Panel received for information, a letter of the Scrutiny Chairs to Councillor Jacqueline North, First Deputy (Finance, Resources and Transformation), in response to the mid-year budget update sessions held on 3 October 2022.

## **19. CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair updated members on plans for a working group of panel to undertake more focused activity on Town Centres for the remainder of the municipal year. This will include oversight of delivery phases and input to consultation. The Chair and Deputy Chair to join the group along with Councillors Chadwick, Glover, Robinson and Roderick.

A meeting will take place in the coming weeks, with formal consultation opening on Phase 1 – Ashton public Realm and Market Square.

## **20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the next meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel will take place on Tuesday 10 January 2023.

## **21. URGENT ITEMS**

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

**CHAIR**