

COUNCIL

3 October 2023

Commenced: 5.00pm

Terminated: 6.20pm

Present: Councillors Alam, Axford, Billington, Bowden, Bowerman, Boyle, Bray, Chadwick, Choksi, Colbourne, Cooney, Dickinson, Drennan, Fairfoull, Ferguson, Fitzpatrick, Glover, Gwynne, A Holland, B Holland, J Homer, S Homer, Howarth, Jackson, Jones, Karim, Kitchen, Lane, Martin, McLaren, McNally, Mills, Naylor, Newton, North, Owen, Patel, Quinn, Ricci, Robinson, Roderick, N Sharif, T Sharif, M Smith, T Smith, Sweeton, Taylor, Tilbrook, Ward, Warrington and Wills

Apologies for Absence: Councillors: Affleck, Costello, Beardmore, Feeley, Pearce and Reid

Councillor Kitchen, Chair of Council Business, in the Chair

31. CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Civic Mayor began by announcing, with great sadness, the recent death of former Civic Mayor, William Harrison (known to all as Bill). Bill was a well-known and highly regarded Councillor who would be greatly missed. He represented St Michael's ward and was Civic Mayor of Tameside in 2004-05. Bill was also instrumental in securing a dedicated war memorial for Cockbrook, near St Gabriel's Church, which he unveiled in 2010.

The Civic Mayor extended sympathy to his family and friends and Members stood to observe a minute's silence in his memory.

The Civic Mayor then welcomed Hari & Jacob of the Tameside Youth Council to the meeting and emphasised the importance of young people being involved and visible in a democratic forum.

The Civic Mayor commented on a very busy schedule since the last Council, meeting with many residents of the Borough. Culture had been very much at the forefront of Mayoral activities, and last month, the Civic Mayor was able to attend the Weave festival, which celebrated Stalybridge's heritage and the continuing importance of high streets.

The Civic Mayor further made reference to her attendance at the Stalybridge Street Fest and was looking forward to attending Fridays on the Square in Ashton. The Civic Mayor was also pleased to attend the Steampunk event hosted by Portland Basin Museum, which attracted almost 1,000 visitors; Tameside Festival Chorus, who performed a concert of sacred music at Albion Church, Ashton; and Tameside Voices Community Health and Wellbeing Choir's tenth anniversary at Hyde Central Methodist Church.

The Civic Mayor was keen to embrace the Borough's diversity, and the many communities it comprised, and had attended the induction of the Reverend Carol Schofield as the new parish priest at St John's, Hurst; been to the summer fair at Dukinfield Moravian Church; attended a dinner hosted by the Bishop of Manchester, the Rt Rev David Walker, who was born and brought up in Mossley; attended the Royal British Legion's annual service; been to Hyde Mela; and entertained guests from Mirpur Council, Kashmir; the Urdu Global Network; and the Association of Pakistani Physicians and Surgeons of the United Kingdom Foundation.

In terms of supporting charities, the Civic Mayor had been to a 'snookerthon' for Forget-me-Not Buddies, a dementia charity; visited Feedo Needo, a charity dedicated to eradicating hunger; met Sharon Potts, a remarkable woman who walked from Hyde to North Wales to raise funds for Francis House in memory of her nephew; and attended an Anthony Seddon Fund cycling fund-

raiser. The Civic Mayor had taken part in the Big Walk around Tameside arranged by Denton South Councillors, and was joined by Andrew Gwynne MP. All funds raised would go towards her charities.

As a Mossley Councillor, the Civic Mayor had great pleasure in helping St George's Primary School celebrate its 150th anniversary, visited the Vale on its second birthday, and played a part in the Heritage Open Days which were part of Tameside History Festival.

The Civic Mayor stated that it was a great honour to follow her predecessors in being installed as president of Tameside Scouts, and in that capacity, to chair the annual meeting of Tameside South Scouts.

The Civic Mayor had also worked in partnership with the Police, Fire & Rescue Service, St John's Ambulance and Tameside Hospital.

The Civic Mayor concluded by thanking her consort, Parvez, for his support, and the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Betty Affleck.

32. MINUTES

RESOLVED

It was moved by Councillor Cooney and seconded by Councillor Fairfoull that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 18 July 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted by Members of the Council.

34. COMMUNICATIONS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Leader began by reflecting on a challenging year for both Tameside and the country as a whole. Whilst interest rates appeared to be stabilising, there was the threat of a wider recession and further cuts to public sector funding.

He stated that his highest priority as Executive Leader was investing in the Borough and its residents, using the funding and powers available to drive the regeneration of town centres through culture.

The Executive Leader made reference to the recent 'Friday on the Square' event on Fletcher Square in Ashton, which had attracted over 1,000 people. It was great to see so many people come out to create an atmosphere at a time when the town centre would usually be deserted. Members were advised that the next Friday on the Square event would take place at the end of the week, and he encouraged everyone to take part.

Following on from 'Friday on the Square', the Weave Arts Festival had taken place in Stalybridge. The event was part of Historic England's collaborative 'Hi! Street Fest' project. Delivered in partnership with Tameside Council, the Bridge Cultural Consortium, Emergency Exit Arts and Mossley based Global Grooves. Stalybridge was just one of six towns across the entire country to be chosen to host an event, and build on the good work of the High Street Heritage Action Zone and Greater Manchester Town of Culture legacy. It further celebrated high streets and the people who loved and looked after them. The feedback from residents and businesses had been extremely positive.

The Executive Leader advised that, through talks with people on the doorsteps and shops of Tameside, one of the highest priorities was a redeveloped Ashton town centre. He was pleased to announce, therefore, that the plans for Ashton Market Square had been approved by the Local Planning Authority. Funding from Levelling Up money awarded by the government would be used to give the market square a facelift and provide public space improvements on Fletcher Square, Bow Street, Warrington Street, Market Street, Market Avenue and Wellington Road. Deterrents to anti-social behaviour had also been considered with clear sight lines, improved lighting and CCTV throughout. Another major plan in the works was the resubmission of the plans for Godley Green Garden Village, taking into account as much as possible, the concerns residents shared about the previous iteration. Further progress would be provided within the coming months.

The Executive Leader further advised of the surprise additional £20m fund for Ashton, very recently announced by the Government. It was great news for Ashton and Tameside especially since it was a long term funding scheme that included revenue. It was understood that an 'endowment style' fund would be received, worth £20m over ten years, split between 25% revenue and 75% capital. This was different to previous rounds of levelling up funding, which had provided only capital grants. He reiterated that the announcement the previous weekend had come 'out of the blue', the rationale for the process was 'to ensure funding went directly to the towns which would benefit most, without new competitions or unnecessary hurdles'. Whilst the fund was welcomed, it did not take away the financial pressures faced by the Council and on public services.

The Executive Leader extended his congratulations to Tameside students who achieved success in their recent exam results. He added that, as well as the exams themselves, the students of 2023 also had to face up to the challenges of disruption to their education caused by the coronavirus pandemic. He expressed his thanks to all students and Council officers/schools/colleges, who had supported them, for their hard work and wished all of Tameside's young people the very best for the future.

The Executive Leader welcomed the young people in attendance from the Youth Council and announced that the new Children and Young People's Plan was agreed by Executive Cabinet in August 2023. When complemented with the Early Help Strategy, Family Hubs and the new Adolescent Hubs, the plans for which had now been agreed in principle, it would provide a new approach to ensuring that children and young people received the best possible start in their lives. The final Plan had been strongly shaped by young people themselves through local organisations such as the Children in Care Council and Youth Parliament.

The Executive Leader acknowledged that the improvement journey in Children's Services had not been the smoothest and there was much work still to be done. He was confident that the refreshed plans, following the external review of processes and backed up by a new senior leadership team, would start to deliver the positive change required in Tameside. He advised that all Members and MPs had a separate meeting and that the Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services were meeting regularly with the DfE and Ofsted, who were supportive of the approach.

35. COUNCIL BIG CONVERSATION

The Chair reported that there were no questions submitted by members of the public in accordance with Standing Orders 31.12 and 31.13.

36. MEETING OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings of Executive Cabinet held on: 26 July, 30 August and 27 September 2023.

It was moved by Councillor Cooney and seconded by Councillor Fairfoull and it was

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings of the Executive Cabinet held on 26 July, 30 August and 27 September 2023 be received.

37. MEETING OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 5 September 2023.

It was moved by Councillor McNally and seconded by Councillor Kitchen and it was:

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee be received.

38. MEETING OF OVERVIEW PANEL

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meetings of the Overview Panel held on 1 August and 26 September 2023.

It was moved by Councillor Naylor and seconded by Councillor M Smith and it was:

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meetings of the Overview Panel held on 1 August and 26 September 2023 be received.

39. DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES WORKING GROUP

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Processes Working Group held on 25 September 2023

It was moved by Councillor Cooney and seconded by Councillor Fairfoull and it was:

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Processes Working Group be received.

40. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT PANEL

Consideration was given to a report of the Chair of the Audit Panel, which gave details of the Annual Report of the Audit Panel 2022/23.

It was explained that the main purpose of the report was to allow the Council to demonstrate to residents, stakeholders and partners, the significance of the Audit Panel's role and the positive contribution it had made to the Council's overall governance arrangements during 2022/23.

It was reported that the 2022/23 municipal year had been yet another year of challenge for local government in terms of the unprecedented demand on services and extremely challenging prevailing economic environment. As the Council's committee whose remit it was to provide an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of governance, risk and control arrangements, the Audit Panel played a key role in maintaining oversight of those challenges during the year.

There had been a number of examples of this, most notably, in receiving regular assurance on the

Council's corporate risks, including the mitigations in place to manage those risks; and updates from Internal Audit on their programme of planned work. The Panel had also received assurances from the External Auditor. Due to technical challenges in the audit process, there had been delays in concluding previous years' financial statements (from 2020/21). The Panel were looking forward to progressing and resolving those issues in the coming year.

Looking forward to 2023/24 the Panel would continue its important work as well as continuing to develop its own effectiveness. Highlights for the year included: oversight of the embedding of a new 'assurance model', which was best practice in integrating the disciplines of audit and risk. As part of this, the Panel would receive a refreshed internal audit plan linked to risk and oversee the implementation of the new approach to risk management by rationalising the corporate register and implementing the '3 lines' of assurance.

A new Audit Panel work plan was being introduced for 2023/24 and the Panel would also seek to further improve its own effectiveness by benchmarking itself against the latest CIPFA 2022 Position Statement for Audit Committees.

The Panel also looked forward to welcoming two new independent members in 2023/24, in Ian Duncan and Stuart Fair. Both came with a substantial amount of senior finance experience from within the sector.

Members were advised that the Audit Panel had taken significant steps to deliver the oversight necessary to strengthen the Council's governance and control arrangements. There would be continuing challenges facing the Council and the Panel, but the Panel had solid foundations on which to meet those challenges and ensure the Council's overall governance framework remained fit for purpose.

It was concluded that, through the report, the Audit Panel had been able to demonstrate that it had delivered against its terms of reference, maintained its effectiveness and added value to the Council through its oversight of the systems of governance, risk management and internal control. The Audit Panel would continue this work positively into 2023/24.

It was moved by Councillor Naylor and seconded by Councillor M Smith and it was:

RESOLVED

That the content of the report be noted.

41. QUESTIONS

The Chair reported that no questions had been received in accordance with Standing Order 17.2.

42. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no urgent items of business for consideration.

CHAIR