

Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

9 January 2018

Commenced: 6.00pm

Terminated: 7.15pm

Present: Councillors K Welsh (Chair), Bailey (Deputy Chair), Affleck, Bowden, Bowerman, Feeley, Fowler, Glover, A Holland, Homer, Newton, Patrick, Pearce, Piddington, Reid, Sharif, Sidebottom, F Travis, Whitehead.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Beeley.

The Chair opened the meeting and received apologies.

The Panel observed a one minute silence as a gesture of respect, following the recent death of the Executive Leader, Cllr Kieran Quinn.

24. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel held on 7 November 2017 were approved as a correct record.

25. TAMESIDE ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

The Panel welcomed David Berry, Head of Employment and Skills; and Jean Quinn, Head of Adult and Community Education (ACE), to receive an update on the development of services.

The Panel received a presentation with information on the improvement journey of the service and the self-assessment work which has been undertaken to promote personalised learning and to ensure that provision is community driven. Since the previous Ofsted inspection in April 2016, the service has worked to improve its leadership and governance, review a number of procedures and enhance the learning environment through the consolidation of facilities to create a single town centre location.

It has been important for the service to acknowledge and accept all findings from the previous inspection. This has allowed for business and self-assessment plans to be created which introduce a heightened level of expectation and challenge. Stronger governing body arrangements have allowed for improved accountability and enabled ambitious and achievable targets to be set, with outcomes for learners being monitored.

The service now links more closely with the Council and NHS Tameside & Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group corporate priorities, with objectives to deliver a vibrant economy by supporting residents to succeed, developing stronger communities and improving Tameside's digital platform.

The Panel heard that each learning need is unique to the individual and staff carry out comprehensive assessments to identify any barriers to learning, suitability of courses and preferred delivery methods. The service has a commitment to encourage and enable every learner by ensuring a course or qualification is fully achievable, to promote good attendance and to provide personalised support.

It was reported that 73% of the people ACE work with are from the most deprived areas in Tameside, with some of the non-accredited courses aimed to build confidence and hopefully

lead to future accredited qualification. Performance data also showed that the service has good retention levels and pass rates.

The presentation detailed much of the assessment work undertaken which follows key Ofsted areas. There is a need to increase attendance further to reach 90% or above for all courses and to ensure that clear pathways are developed for learners to move towards employment, with a further need to improve methods of progression monitoring.

The Panel asked about local challenges, the positive impact that the ACE workforce has on learners and for the service to be continually mindful of national pressures and the wider impact on vulnerable residents such as Universal Credit.

Ms Quinn explained that the service works with many individuals who are hard to reach and often present a wide range of learning needs. The first stage of a learning journey can often include the need to make individuals feel comfortable and confident to learn. The service also works with individuals who may have bad experiences of education and feel disenfranchised.

Mr Berry informed members that the need for service improvement has coincided with budgetary pressures and savings targets for the service. Tameside ACE workforce has reduced during recent years, with a need to restructure the way parts of the work is undertaken. ACE has a committed workforce which can be seen from the positive approach to change and by placing the learners at the forefront of their work. The recent Learner Awards is an example of the positive impact that ACE is having within Tameside's communities.

The service is acutely aware of challenges faced by some of the most vulnerable residents in Tameside. The service pays close attention to all external pressures to ensure that learners receive the necessary support and are signposted to a range of services for advice and guidance where needed.

The Panel asked if partnerships need to improve in order to ensure learning and employment pathways become more effective and for more individuals introduced to employment opportunities.

Mr Berry explained that partnership working is a key element to ensure that learners are able to progress to the most appropriate setting. Many learners are at a stage where non-accredited and entry level qualifications are considered most appropriate and it would be unsuitable for the service to introduce employment outcomes at this stage. Where learners have progressed and are confident to consider employment options, the service will work in partnership with local colleges, Routes to Work and the Job Centre Plus.

RESOLVED: That Mr Berry and Ms Quinn be thanked for attending the meeting.

26. UPDATE ON CURRENT REVIEW

Panel members received an update on the recent meeting for the Business Growth working group. The Chair reported that members had recently visited the Advanced Technologies Centre at Tameside College and met with the Principal, Jackie Moores to receive information on the connections with local enterprise and businesses in Tameside.

Plans will now be made for the working group to meet with officers from the Council's Investment and Development Team to discuss their role in supporting business growth and employment.

RESOLVED: Members of the Business Growth working group to be notified of working group meetings by email and as a calendar invitation.

27. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel will take place on Thursday 13 March 2018.

28. URGENT ITEMS

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

CHAIR