

# Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

## 11 September 2018

**Commenced:** 6.00pm

**Terminated:** 7.40pm

**Present:** Councillors Glover (Chair), Bailey (Deputy Chair), Bowerman, Chadwick, Choksi, A Holland, S Homer, Lewis, Patrick, Sharif, Sweeton.

**Apologies for absence:** Councillors Bowden, J Fitzpatrick, Gosling, J Lane, A Pearce.

### 15. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel held on 31 July 2018 were approved as a correct record.

### 16. BUSINESS GROWTH

The Panel welcomed David Moore, Interim Director of Growth; and Ade Alao, Head of Investment and Development to provide information on the approach of the Council and partners in supporting business growth and economic prosperity of the borough.

The Panel received a presentation that provided a detailed overview of Tameside's business profile, employment sectors, challenges and opportunities. Data from UK Business Counts in 2017 showed 6,165 registered businesses in Tameside, with 5440 (88%) classed as micro with nine or less employees. It was also reported that when compared with other authority areas, Tameside has a relatively low level of business start-ups.

Members were provided with a breakdown of employment by sector which provides a picture of jobs created in Tameside. The majority of local employment is within the following four sectors and accounts for 68% of all job types.

- Retail, Wholesale and Logistics (25%)
- Manufacturing (17%)
- Health and Social Care & Health Innovation (16%)
- Education (10%)

Mr Moore advised members on the sectors where development capabilities have been identified and how the local authority, local education providers and partners can support this growth. Opportunities are available through improved technologies and high speed connectivity for the digital and creative sectors, with Ashton Old Baths used as an example of the investment to aid, encourage and support entrepreneurship and new businesses.

It was reported that geographically Tameside is well positioned within regional and national transport and infrastructure networks. Local barriers do exist with lower productivity levels per job when compared with Greater Manchester (GM) and national averages; lower employment in gross value added (GVA) sectors such as financial services and digital; the 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest business density and lowest business births in GM.

Work is underway to address some of the more long-standing issues such as skill levels, attracting higher GVA businesses to the borough and maximising the potential of town centres. The Council is currently developing a new Vibrant Economy Strategy and a 20 year investment plan, to provide a more established vision for ambitious and achievable growth in Tameside.

Mr Moore discussed the importance of the combined authority and methods required to make Tameside a viable option for larger businesses and to facilitate requirements of major investments. A number of challenges and barriers were discussed, which included available land, with only six sites over two hectares in size across Tameside.

Panel members asked about previous challenges faced when trying to retain growing businesses and the impacts of them having to leave Tameside for more suitable facilities. What improvements can be made to plan ahead for growing businesses, as well as the future arrangements needed to support those businesses currently located at Ashton Old Baths that are expected to grow.

Mr Alao provided the panel with a past example of a growing business that required larger premises and wanted to stay located in Tameside. Despite the combined efforts of the Council and partners the business moved to a neighbouring authority in order for their needs to be met. Mr Moore added that this is a real example of the challenges Tameside will continue to face when businesses grow and require more space.

By creating a 20 year investment plan, this will allow such challenges to be addressed and for the Council to work with businesses at an earlier stage to provide support and to deliver viable options for them to grow, without the need to move. This will include support for those businesses currently located in Ashton Old Baths.

The Panel requested more detailed information relating to apprenticeships numbers in Tameside and business rates data. Mr Moore advised that this information will be sought and circulated at the earliest opportunity.

The Chair confirmed that time will now be taken to identify the most appropriate options and next steps to ensure the panel is able to feed into the future strategy and monitoring of required actions. Information relating to this will be circulated to the panel by email.

**Resolved:**

(1) That Mr Moore and Mr Alao be thanked for attending the meeting.

(2) That the information and data requested for apprenticeships and business rates be circulated to all panel members by email.

## **17. ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUP**

The Chair invited panel members to express interest in joining the working group to progress activity relating to Air Quality. Interest was noted and it was confirmed that detail of future meeting dates and times are to be circulated by email in the coming weeks.

It was confirmed that efforts will be made, in the first instance, to meet the availability of all working group members. If difficulties do arise, and in order to prevent delay, meetings will be arranged based on the majority of members being available.

## **18. CHAIR'S UPDATE**

The Chair provided a verbal update on recent activity and future priorities for the Panel. This included the recent training for all scrutiny members and options for best practice examples to be incorporated into the future planning and scoping of scrutiny activity.

The Panel confirmed future work priorities to include:

- Air Quality working group.
- Business Growth – next steps to be determined based on information received and opportunities to feed into future strategy and actions.
- Impact of Welfare Reform – discussion on work programme priorities with information to be brought for consideration to the next meeting on 6 November 2018.

The Panel also heard that work has started to raise awareness of recent activity of the panel and to promote public participation. Messages are to be routinely posted on the Council's social media accounts with sign posts to the meeting dates, published papers and topics.

## **19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the next meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel will take place on 6 November 2018.

## **20. URGENT ITEMS**

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

**CHAIR**