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OVERVIEW PANEL

Day: Monday
Date: 27 September 2021
Time: 2.00 pm
Place: George Hatton Hall - Dukinfield Town Hall

Item No.	AGENDA	Page No
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE To receive any apologies for the meeting from Members of the Panel.	
2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST To receive any declarations of interest from Members of the Panel.	
3.	MINUTES The Minutes of the meeting of the Overview (Audit) Panel held on 26 July 2021 to be signed by the Chair as a correct record.	1 - 4
4.	SCRUTINY - DESKTOP REVIEW ON HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS To consider a report of the Director of Governance and Pensions / Assistant Director for Policy, Performance and Communications.	5 - 12
5.	SCRUTINY UPDATE To consider a report of the Director for Governance and Pensions / Assistant Director for Policy, Performance and Communications.	13 - 22
6.	UNDERSTANDING OUR CUSTOMER CONTACTS AND LEARNING FROM OUR COMPLAINTS, INFORMATION AND DATA REQUESTS To consider a report of the Director of Governance and Pensions / Head of Executive Support.	23 - 42
7.	URGENT ITEMS To consider any additional items the Chair is of the opinion shall be dealt with as a matter of urgency.	

From: Democratic Services Unit – any further information may be obtained from the reporting officer or from Louis Garrick, Senior Democratic Services Officer, to whom any apologies for absence should be notified.

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OVERVIEW PANEL

26 July 2021

Commenced: 2.00pm

Terminated: 2.35pm

Present: Councillors Naylor (Chair), Boyle, Costello, Glover, Kitchen, Owen, Ryan, N Sharif and Warrington

In Attendance: Sandra Stewart Director of Governance and Pensions
Simon Brunet Head of Policy and

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Fairfoull, J Fitzpatrick and T Smith

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview Panel held on the 23 November 2020 were approved as a correct record.

3. SCRUTINY UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director, Policy, Performance and Communications, which provided a summary of the work undertaken by the Council's two Scrutiny Panels for March to July 2021.

It was reported that, on 9 March 2021, the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel had met Chief Superintendent Rachael Harrison; Superintendent Rob Cousen; Councillor Allison Gwynne, Executive Member, Neighbourhood Services; and Ian Saxon, Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods and received an update on the response to the HMIC inspection of GMP. The Panel also received the formal response submitted to the consultation on the Community Safety Strategy.

Members were further advised that on 8 June 2021, the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel had met with Paul Smith, Assistant Director, Growth, Alison Lloyd-Walsh, Head of Facilities, Climate and Energy Management; and Graham Hall, Climate and Energy Manager, and received an update and overview of the Council's future vision, strategic priorities and commitments to climate change and improving the local environment. The Panel also discussed and agreed the annual work programme for 2021/22.

On 11 March 2021, the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel met with Councillor Eleanor Wills, Executive Member, Health, Social Care and Population Health; and Sarah Exall, Population Health Consultant, and received an update on the re-commissioning of the health improvement service.

On 10 June 2021, the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel met with Jessica Williams, Director of Commissioning, Tameside & Glossop Strategic Commission, and received an update on proposals set within the White Paper - Integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all. The Panel also discussed and agreed the annual work programme for 2021/22. The Chair confirmed that the fixed Children's Working Group would remain in place for 2021/22.

In terms of Consultation and Engagement, it was explained that Scrutiny would remain suitably informed of engagement activity and open consultations at a local, regional and national level. The Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel had recently submitted a formal response to the Health Improvement Service Consultation – 21 April 2021, details of which were appended to the report.

With regard to Check and Challenge, an important part of the work undertaken by Scrutiny was '*check and challenge*'. This included the review of key issues such as service changes or outcomes from inspection. Arrangements were made to ensure the appropriate Scrutiny Panel received a timely update with the option to submit a formal response based on findings.

The HMIC inspection of Greater Manchester Police took place April to June 2020. The aim of the inspection was to review the overall service provided to victims of crime in Greater Manchester. The inspection report was published in December 2020, with findings highlighting a number of areas of concern with regard to non-emergency calls unanswered, crime recording and assessing the needs and vulnerability of victims.

The Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel requested an update from GMP at the meeting on 9 March 2021. The Panel's response to Greater Manchester Police HMICFRS Inspection – 24 March 2021, was appended to the report.

Members were advised that all Scrutiny Panel Members received a monthly update email, with the purpose of raising awareness to a variety of materials to support their role, provide access to scrutiny resources and the ongoing opportunity for Councillors to contribute and share any open consultations and engagement exercises. This would continue to include a wide variety of topic areas for consideration. The update email also included links to Greater Manchester Priorities and the work of the Combined Authority Scrutiny Panels. The email provided a further opportunity to inform Members how the work of scrutiny was shared and reported within the Council. The most recent updates were sent in March and July 2021, copies of which were appended to the report.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report be noted.

4. SCRUTINY ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMMES

The Assistant Director, Policy, Performance and Communications submitted a report outlining the programmes and planned activities of the Scrutiny Panels.

It was explained that the annual work programmes had been developed to reflect priority issues across the Council, Strategic Commission and external partners. Work would continue to improve the flexibility, responsiveness and reporting methods of all scrutiny activity undertaken during 2021/22. Discussion from the panel meetings held in June 2021 had directly informed the list of topics and planned updates '*check and challenge*', for the year ahead

It was reported that in June 2021 all Scrutiny Panel Members were provided with the opportunity to comment and contribute to the list of topics to be included in the work programmes. Scrutiny activity would continue to be undertaken outside of the formal meetings and through working groups, with all findings and recommendations presented to the full panel for comment and approval. This flexibility allowed responsive and timely work to be undertaken, creating an enhanced opportunity to both influence and inform the impact of decisions. It was also necessary to monitor and evaluate outcomes from past activity and to review the implementation of recommendations. Where deemed appropriate, the wider development of scrutiny may include project support and service development work undertaken at the request of the Executive as a critical friend.

With regard to planned activity, in order to prevent delay, Scrutiny Panels received a substantive update at the June meetings, as follows:

Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel – 8 June 2021

- Climate Change and Improving the Local Environment

Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel – 10 June 2021

- Health and Care Bill

The Scrutiny Panels would carry out in-depth activity and reviews through working groups, for which Scrutiny Chairs would aim to ensure that two reviews were running concurrently for each panel with topics selected from the annual work programme.

Members received a detailed outline of the Annual Work Programme from 2021-2023 for the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel and Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel. Follow-up on past activity and Cross Panel areas were highlighted.

It was agreed at the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel meeting on 10 June 2021 that the fixed Children's Working Group would remain in place for 2021/22. The group would continue to include co-opted young people and adults.

RESOLVED

That the content of the work programmes and planned activity of the Scrutiny Panels be noted.

5. PERFORMANCE SCORECARDS

A report was submitted by the Assistant Director, Policy, Performance and Communications, giving details of the Corporate Plan scorecard, as attached to the report, which provided evidence to demonstrate progress towards the achievement of the Corporate Plan and improving the services provided to residents, businesses and key stakeholders within the locality.

It was explained that, supporting the corporate scorecards were thematic scorecards which were monitored by services to inform their ongoing delivery and improvement work. The thematic scorecards were:

- Corporate
- Health and care (incl. adult care)
- Children and family
- Inclusive economic growth (incl. planning and transport)
- Community and culture
- Environment and place

It was noted that the Corporate Plan scorecard would be reported on a regular basis to the Overview Panel and the Strategic Commissioning Board / Executive Cabinet, and then subsequently to the two Scrutiny Panels to inform their work programmes.

RESOLVED

That the content of the scorecard, as attached to the report be noted and reported on a regular basis to the Overview Panel and the two Scrutiny Panels – Place and External Relations; and Integrated Care and Wellbeing – to inform their work programmes.

6. ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director, Policy, Performance and Communications providing an update on the delivery of engagement and consultation activity in 2020/21.

It was explained that much of the Engagement work had been undertaken jointly, coordinated through the Tameside and Glossop Partnership Engagement Network (PEN) – by NHS Tameside

and Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group, Tameside Council and Tameside and Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust. Each of the three agencies undertook work individually where necessary and appropriate for the purposes of specific projects.

It was further explained that the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic had also meant that different ways to engage local communities had to be identified. The report sets out some examples of the ways in which this had been achieved, including the establishment of both the Community Champions programme and the Inequalities Reference Group.

The Assistant Director, Policy, Performance and Communications highlighted the key headlines from June 2020 to date:

- Facilitated 32 thematic Tameside and/or Glossop engagement projects
- Received 4,186 engagement contacts (excluding attendance at virtual events)
- Supported 27 engagement projects at the regional and Greater Manchester level
- Promoted 33 national consultations where the topic was of relevance to and/or could have an impact on Tameside and/or Glossop
- Established the Community Champions Network to provide residents and workforces with the coronavirus information they need to lead the way in their community, with over 250 members now registered
- Established the Tameside & Glossop Inequalities Reference Group in response to how the coronavirus pandemic, and the wider governmental and societal response to this, has brought equalities (and indeed inequalities) into sharp focus
- Delivered two virtual Partnership Engagement Network (PEN) conferences attended by over 150 delegates in total
- Delivered four virtual Partnership Engagement Network sessions focusing on the impact of COVID-19 and how we can build back better. These were attended by over 50 participants.
- Held a virtual engagement session with young people to understand the impact of the pandemic on them and how they feel things can be done differently in the future.
- Undertook the third joint budget conversation exercise for Tameside Council and NHS Tameside and Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group
- Achieved 'Green Star' top rating for public and patient engagement as part of the CCG Improvement and Assessment Framework (IAF). Tameside and Glossop CCG attained the highest score possible, one of only 40 out of 195 areas in the country to do so *

Members thanked everyone involved for all their hard work and discussion ensued in respect of the Engagement programme, particularly relating to the challenges of engagement with local communities during the Pandemic. Concerns were also raised with regard to the hostile/unhelpful nature of a number of anonymous social media communications.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report be noted and future engagement and consultation activity with the communities of Tameside and Glossop, as detailed in the report, be supported.

7. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

CHAIR

Agenda Item 4.

Report To:	OVERVIEW PANEL
Date:	27 September 2021
Reporting Officer:	Sandra Stewart, Director - Governance and Pensions Sarah Threlfall, Assistant Director – Policy, Performance and Communications
Subject:	SCRUTINY – DESKTOP REVIEW ON HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING
Report Summary:	To receive a summary and insight of existing publications and research aimed to highlight current and projected pressures for local authorities regarding access to quality housing and the impact of Covid-19 on demand for statutory homelessness support.
Recommendations:	That Overview Panel are asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Agree that subject to any further comments the report be shared with the relevant Executive Member for information and to inform future strategy and service delivery where necessary.2. That Scrutiny receives a service response to the impacts of Covid-19 to homelessness and the effects of recent changes to safeguarding measures for residents at risk of eviction.
Links to Corporate Plan:	Scrutiny activity seeks to support effective decision making and to improve outcomes for residents and service users.
Policy Implications:	Scrutiny activity seeks to check the effective implementation of the Council's policies and if appropriate make recommendations to the Executive with regards to development, performance monitoring, outcomes and value for money.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)	Whilst there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, the financial context for the provision of housing and homelessness services is significant. During the 2020/21 financial year, the Council faced significant financial pressures in respect of temporary accommodation costs, which were driven by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council receives direct grant funding to support housing and homelessness services, however costs often exceed available funding. Future decisions on housing strategy and service delivery will need to consider the financial implications and constraints of the current funding system.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	The office for National Statistics alongside the English Housing Survey results additional information was published about household resilience and changes due to COVID-19 provides data to drive evidence based change. A study from Shelter and YouGov 2020 revealed the lasting impact of homelessness and bad housing on a child's education. With over 136,000 children growing up in temporary accommodation across Britain, it is unsurprising the devastating effects homelessness and bad housing can have on a child's wellbeing and their ability to learn. All of these issues then create a level and demand and costs for the Council to attempt to manage with reducing income.

It is therefore critical that the Council has a fit for purpose strategy to deal with these issues or failing that raise them with Government in a clear and evidence way to effect change.I

Risk Management:

The Chairs and Deputy Chairs of the Scrutiny Panels will be informed of the progress in implementing the work programmes.

Access to Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Paul Radcliffe, Policy and Strategy Lead by:



Telephone:0161 342 2199



e-mail: paul.radcliffe@tameside.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council's scrutiny function remains well positioned to respond to local challenges and has an important role to provide direct insight and support to the Executive on a range of key matters. Improving outcomes for residents remains at the forefront of all work priorities and feedback of this nature aims to inform future planning in response and recovery to Covid-19 in Tameside.
- 1.2 As detailed in the Scrutiny Annual Work Programme, tabled at a meeting of Overview Panel on 26 July 2021, there is a range of options available to each Scrutiny Panel as to how activity is planned and undertaken. In order to prevent delay this will take the form of research on a particular issue as a desktop review.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This short report aims to provide a range of points for consideration regarding the emerging national picture and growing concerns highlighted for the accessibility of quality housing and risks of homelessness.
- 2.2 Research of this nature links closely with continued efforts of the Council to support residents and to safeguard against external pressures and future demand on services that have become increasingly hard to predict throughout Covid-19 and recovery. This subject also broadly connects with past Scrutiny activity and recommendations to improve quality and standards in the private rented sector.
- 2.3 The paper highlights and summarises recent publications, research and findings that are publically available from the following sources:
 - Joseph Rowntree Foundation
 - Crisis
 - Shelter
 - National Housing Federation
 - Local Government Association
 - UK Collaborative for Housing Evidence
 - Centre for Ageing Better
- 2.4 Undertaken as a desktop review to inform the Executive of key issues, Scrutiny wish to request a service response to the impacts of Covid-19 on homelessness and the effects of recent changes to safeguarding measures for residents at risk of eviction, to include updated data and insight on demand for housing support.

3. KEY MESSAGES

- 3.1 Future challenges associated with Covid-19 have potential to be profound and far-reaching for the resilience of households and communities. This relates to a range of expected and delayed external factors such as uncertainty of future employment, housing, education and timely access to healthcare and support.

Homelessness

- 3.2 Homelessness affects a wide variety of people. Some people may be more vulnerable to homelessness. They may be more at risk if they are:
 - Leaving home for the first time or leaving care
 - Pregnant with nowhere to stay when the baby is born
 - Struggling to live on benefits or low income
 - From abroad without the without the right to benefits
 - An asylum seeker or refugee

- Leaving prison

3.3 Residents can ask for help from the Council if they are homeless or under threat of becoming homeless within 8 weeks. Local authorities have a legal duty to help people, while not all will be eligible for housing, advice and guidance is available to all people in need.

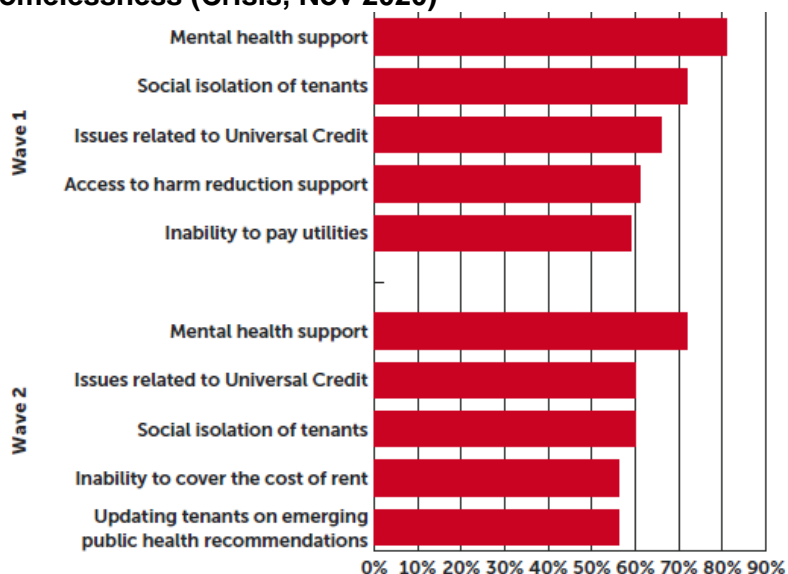
Impacts of Covid-19

3.4 The homelessness response to the pandemic has seen a range of actions taken to safeguard individuals and families, non-more so than the temporary ban of Section 21 evictions within the private rented sector. Covid-19 has also applied added pressure to people on low income and those paying disproportionately high housing costs.

3.5 In addition to existing homelessness demand there is a projected need for local authorities and partners to support a new flow of people at risk of losing their home. While data is not comprehensive, in England between April and June 2020 around 64,000 households were eligible for a homelessness duty. There has become an increasingly common view that homelessness should now be a priority factored within emergency planning.

3.6 Figure 1 below shows the challenges in supporting residents at risk of homelessness during the first two waves of the pandemic.

Figure 1: Top 5 reported challenges related to supporting people currently housed and at risk of homelessness (Crisis, Nov 2020)



3.7 In May 2021, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation warned of significant risks during recovery from the pandemic and a disproportionate concern for renters. Joseph Rowntree Foundation reported that on the day the eviction ban was lifted a survey revealed:

- Around 400,000 renting households have either been served an eviction notice or had been told they may be evicted.
- Around 1 million renting households are worried of eviction in the next 3 months.
- 1.7 million renting households are worried about paying their rent in the next 3 months.

3.8 The temporary ban on evictions provided much needed security to renters at a time of profound economic and social disruption. Warning signs now point to a spike in evictions and homelessness with the ban lifted. In addition to the 400,000 households worried of eviction, there is also around 450,000 households in rent arrears and almost 20% of this group in arrears for over four months.

3.9 Families with children, BAME households and those on lower income are disproportionately worried about paying rent and in fear of eviction in the next three months. Households with

three or more children are more than twice as likely to be worried about being evicted (21%) compared to households without children (9%). The proportion of children growing up in privately rented accommodation, the least secure tenure, has risen from 16% to 22% in the past ten years.

- 3.10 Renters from BAME backgrounds are almost twice as likely to be worried of eviction compared to white renters (18% vs 10%). Households with annual income below £25,000 are three times more likely to be worried about paying rent (24%) and are more likely to already be behind with household bills and rent payments compared to households on higher incomes.
- 3.11 Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Local Government Association has relayed a number of similar points to the Government. The view being to protect the most vulnerable and to tackle homelessness in the long-term. They include:
- Bringing forward the Governments pledge to end 'no fault evictions'
 - Improve protection through the welfare system
 - Ensuring councils have enough resources to support households at risk of homelessness
 - Support for renters in arrears by increasing the funding for Discretionary Housing Payments, and amending how they are administered
 - Protecting people from harm: re-align Local Housing Allowance rates with local rents
 - Building more homes for social/affordable rent
- 3.12 A report published by Crisis (Nov 2020) details that at the end of September 2020 over 10,000 people in England were living in emergency accommodation as a direct result of the 'Everyone In' initiative and almost 19,000 people have been moved into other forms of accommodation.
- 3.13 Families living in temporary accommodation are often in overcrowded conditions where it is difficult to self-isolate and maintain social distancing. The pause in lettings did mean they had to stay in this accommodation even longer than previously planned. The new guidance on social housing lettings will help ensure suitable accommodation for families in this position.
- 3.14 Issues such as youth homelessness, increased incidence in domestic abuse, hospital discharges, and prison releases are likely to become more problematic. Other increases in homelessness may arise, with regard to mental health and breakdown of relationships.
- 3.15 Successful partnerships, multiagency working, system changes and increased funding have all come about during the pandemic. This is something that needs to continue through Covid-19 recovery. Housing associations can be part of the recovery work and ensuring a sustainable end to homelessness, provided adequate funding and ongoing guidance is available.

Housing

- 3.16 It is vital that everyone is able to live in a home that is safe and comfortable. Unfortunately, this is not always the case and there is an urgent need to improve the quality of housing in England for the benefit of current and future generations.
- 3.17 Shelter report a housing emergency, with 17.5 million people unable to secure a safe and stable home. This includes families and individuals of all ages living in unaffordable homes of poor quality.
- 3.18 People on low incomes, in receipt of benefits, with a disability, refugees and single parents, or people with protected characteristics set within the Equality Act are more likely to be affected by the housing emergency, leading to homelessness for some.
- 3.19 The high cost of housing means the private rented sector has doubled in size over the last 20 years. Private renters have watched the cost of rent rise faster than their earnings. Priced

out of owning a home and denied social housing, people are often forced to take what they can afford even if it is of poor quality or away from jobs and support networks.

- 3.20 One in three adults in Britain do not have a safe or secure home with the high cost of housing being the main cause of homelessness. Regulation in this area has not substantially changed since 1988 and most private rentals are on tenancies of 6 to 12, often creating a permanent state of stress and instability for tenants.

Findings from past Scrutiny activity on quality and standards in the private rented Sector (Pre-Covid)

- 3.21 Tameside's housing stock is unique, with 88% of all properties located within council tax bands A, B and C. There is a high density of terraced properties within certain areas which is typical of the housing type made available for private rent.
- 3.22 The Private Rented Sector in Tameside has grown over recent years, with 14.2% of all properties (2017) being privately rented. This equates to almost 15,000 households and 40,000 residents, of which 12,000 are children. It is estimated that the number of private rentals has risen over recent years.
- 3.23 A wider range of residents are now living within the Private Rented Sector and for longer. This includes older people, families with dependent children, single parents, single occupiers and residents with a disability, poor mental health or long-term condition. For the first time, there are now a higher number of older residents living in the Private Rented Sector when compared to numbers housed with social landlords.
- 3.24 Tameside's low income households and single parents continue to be adversely affected by the impacts of welfare reform and Universal Credit. This also includes housing elements such as the Local Housing Allowance and pressures placed on single people in receipt of the shared room rate who continue to face limited housing options.
- 3.25 Tameside Housing Advice is a frontline service that provides residents with help and advice for all aspects of housing and directly supports individuals and families to resolve housing problems. The demand for advice and support is increasing, with the following data drawn from 2018/19.
- 657 households accepted as being owed a homeless relief duty or main homeless duty.
 - 276 households homeless or at risk of being made homeless as result of loss of property in Private Rented Sector.
 - 97 households became homeless as result of loss of property in Private Rented Sector (Section 21 notices).

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Economic and social recovery from Covid-19 is progressing for some, but many renters are struggling to stay afloat.
- 4.2 The Council and partners have a significant and continued role to prevent crisis demand of homelessness in the housing sector.
- 4.3 The drive to prevent homelessness and to provide safe, affordable and quality homes for all continues beyond Covid-19.
- 4.4 There is a growing need for on-going assessment and earlier identification of households at risk of eviction; and to mitigate known inequalities and range of almost predetermined outcomes for vulnerable residents.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 As set out on the front of the report.

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Agenda Item 5.

Report To:	OVERVIEW PANEL
Date:	27 September 2021
Reporting Officer:	Sandra Stewart, Director – Governance and Pensions Sarah Threlfall, Assistant Director – Policy, Performance and Communications
Subject:	SCRUTINY UPDATE
Report Summary:	To receive for information, a summary of the work undertaken by the Council's two Scrutiny Panels for July to September 2021.
Recommendations:	That Overview Panel is asked to note the content of the report and summary of scrutiny activity. All related documents can be viewed within the appendices.
Links to Corporate Plan:	Scrutiny work programmes are linked to the Council's corporate priorities. Scrutiny activity seeks to support effective decision making and priorities across Tameside.
Policy Implications:	The work programmes comprise activity that seeks to check the effective implementation of the Strategic Commission's policies and if appropriate make recommendations to the Executive with regards to development, performance monitoring, outcomes and value for money.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer)	There are no direct financial implications arising from the contents of this report. The training planned for October 2021 will be funded from existing revenue budgets.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	<p>The role that overview and scrutiny can play in holding an authority's decision-makers to account makes it fundamentally important to the successful functioning of local democracy.</p> <p>Effective scrutiny helps secure the efficient delivery of public services and drives improvements within the authority itself.</p> <p>Overview and scrutiny committees have statutory powers to scrutinise decisions the executive is planning to take, those it plans to implement, and those that have already been taken/implemented.</p> <p>Recommendations following scrutiny enable improvements to be made to policies and how they are implemented. Overview and scrutiny committees can also play a valuable role in developing policy. Effective overview and scrutiny should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge;• Amplify the voices and concerns of the public;• Be led by those independent of the decision makers who take responsibility for their role; and• Drive improvement in public services.
Risk Management:	Regular updates to Overview Panel provide assurance that scrutiny is progressing with an effective work programme, supporting good decision making and service improvement.

Access to Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Paul Radcliffe, Policy and Strategy Lead by:



Telephone:0161 342 2199



e-mail: paul.radcliffe@tameside.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Update provides a platform for appropriate insight, activity, outcomes and proposals to be relayed. This method of reporting supports the improved responsiveness of scrutiny work and also prevents any delay in the communication of key messages.
- 1.2 The report, by nature, aims to provide members with a general summary of scrutiny activity and proposals. It remains that all reports produced by scrutiny panels as a result of in-depth review will be tabled separately at the earliest opportunity.

2. SCRUTINY ACTIVITY

- 2.1 Scrutiny in practice remains mindful of the suitability and appropriateness of timings with regards to the impact and value of planned activity. This includes the selection and order of topics and updates to be received during the year. The annual work programmes and priorities were agreed at the June meetings and this coincides with consultation activity for which a valued response and input can be achieved. The tables below provide a summary and chronology of scrutiny activity.

Figure 1: Breakdown of activity at the formal Scrutiny Panel meetings

PLACE AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS	
27 July 2021	7 September 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Panel met Councillor Oliver Ryan, Executive Member, Finance and Economic Growth; Jayne Traverse, Director of Growth; and Damien Cutting, Economic Growth Lead, to receive an update and overview of the economic impact of Covid-19, the response, recovery and future priorities.• The Chair advised members of future activity. It was agreed that a working group will be established to review the Council's Asset Management Framework and Policy.• The Scrutiny Panel will continue to monitor some of the key issues and impacts that Covid-19 has had on services for homelessness, housing and accommodation. The Chair advised of initial research and a desktop review to be undertaken.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Panel met Councillor Leanne Feeley, Executive Member, Lifelong Learning, Equalities, Culture and Heritage; Emma Varnam, Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods; and Mandy Kinder, Head of Cultural and Customer Services, to receive an update regarding the Council's cultural offer and strategy.• The Panel met Councillor Oliver Ryan, Executive Member, Finance and Economic Growth; and Caroline Barlow, Assistant Director of Finance, to receive an update on the 2021/22 budget and looking ahead.• Received for information the Corporate Plan Scorecard.

INTEGRATED CARE AND WELLBEING	
29 July 2021	9 September 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Panel met Councillor Bill Fairfoull, Deputy Executive Leader (Children’s and Families); and Richard Hancock, Director of Children’s Services, to receive an update on outcomes from the recent Ofsted Focused Visit • The Chair advised members of future activity. It was agreed that a working group will be established to review mental health provision and impacts of Covid-19. To receive an update and overview of the topic at the next panel meeting on 9 September 2021. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Panel met Councillor Eleanor Wills, Adult Social Care and Health; Jessica Williams, Director of Commissioning; Lynzi Shepherd, Head of Mental Health; and Emma Richardson, Pennine Care, to receive an update regarding the accessibility of local mental health services and responding to impacts of Covid-19 with regard to demand pressures and ongoing support for residents. • The Panel met Caroline Barlow, Assistant Director of Finance, to receive an update on the 2021/22 budget and looking ahead. • Received for information the Corporate Plan Scorecard.

Mid-year Budget Update

- 2.2 The independence of scrutiny enables members to seek assurances on the Council’s financial position during 2021/22 and looking forward to budget planning, process and priorities for 2022/23. Added attention will continue to be placed on budget impacts and recovery related to Covid-19. Where appropriate, priorities will continue to inform future scrutiny activity and work programmes.
- 2.3 As detailed in figure 1 the Scrutiny Panels received a mid-year budget update at meetings held on 7 and 9 September 2021. As is customary, the Executive will receive a formal response as a letter of Scrutiny Chairs to Councillor Ryan and the Deputy Section 151 Officer. The letter aims to capture discussion points from the meetings, highlight any concerns and specific areas for consideration in supporting the Council’s ongoing work in this area.

Future Activity and Working Groups

- 2.4 A working group of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel will consider the Council’s asset management framework and policy. The initial meeting will take place on 29 September 2021.
- 2.5 A working group of the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel will consider mental health provision. Detail from the Scrutiny Panel meeting held on 9 September will inform lines of inquiry for the review and future meetings of the working group.
- 2.6 A meeting of the fixed Children’s Working Group took place on 20 September 2021. The group received an overview of foster carer marketing and recruitment.

Training and Development

- 2.7 There is an ongoing commitment to ensure all scrutiny members receive a suitable level of training and guidance. In addition to resources identified within the monthly update emails it is important that new and existing members have access to external provision based on scrutiny principles, national guidance and expectations.
- 2.8 A training session for all Scrutiny members last took place in September 2018. Dr Stephanie Snape in partnership with North West Employers delivered a session in person with content focused on fundamentals, process and shaping successful Scrutiny.

- 2.9 In order to account for the time that has passed, panel members that are new to the Council and/or Scrutiny since 2018 have received an invitation to attend a training session on 4 October 2021.
- 2.10 The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) will deliver a one-off session to cover the following:
- The role and potential impact of Scrutiny
 - Scrutiny adding value to policy shaping and performance
 - Support members to gain specific skills in essential aspects of Scrutiny
 - How Scrutiny works collaboratively and constructively with the Executive and officers

Keeping Scrutiny Members Informed

- 2.11 All Scrutiny Panel members receive a monthly update email, with the purpose of raising awareness to a variety of materials to support their role, provide access to scrutiny resources and the ongoing opportunity for councillors to contribute and share any open consultations and engagement exercises. This will continue to include a wide variety of topic areas for consideration.
- 2.12 The update email also includes links to Greater Manchester Priorities and the work of the Combined Authority Scrutiny Panels. This email provides a further opportunity to inform members how the work of scrutiny is shared and reported within the Council. The most recent update was sent in August 2021, **APPENDIX 1**.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 As set out on the front of the report.

August 2021

Welcome to the August 2021 Scrutiny Update.

The regular updates aim to keep you informed of upcoming activity, including engagement and consultation with regards to local, regional and national decision making. All of the open consultations listed below are available for you to access and complete, with the opportunity to raise greater community awareness and participation where possible. For further information and to have your say please follow the relevant links below.

I hope this is something you will continue to find useful and please let me know if you require any further information.

(Please note, the Covid-19 information section is now at the end of this update)

Things to be aware of:

Healthwatch Tameside Coronavirus (Covid-19) Report – [COVID-19 report 2021.pdf](#) ([healthwatchtameside.co.uk](#))

Healthwatch Tameside wanted to find out how the many changes were affecting people. The survey covered a wide range of topics and originally opened in May 2020. Periodic updates helped take account of changes to lockdowns and restrictions, with the survey closing in January 2021.

The Council's Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel made a formal submission to the survey in July 2020. Scrutiny's response is included within appendices of the report.

NHS 111 First posters for delivery in the community – Tameside Hospital (T&G ICFT) have stock of [NHS 111 First](#) campaign marketing posters which they are keen to get out into the community. They would like as much help as possible from organisations displaying/sharing these posters. If you are able to do so, please contact Paul.thorpe@tgh.nhs.uk to arrange.

NHS 111 First reminds people who think they need the emergency department due to an urgent but not life-threatening medical need, to make sure they contact NHS 111 first rather than going straight to the emergency department. NHS 111 can now book people in to be seen quickly and safely in the emergency department. As well as this, NHS 111 is also able to direct, or book an appointment at Urgent Treatment Centres, GP practices, pharmacies, emergency dental services and other key services. To contact NHS 111 visit their website 111.nhs.uk or call 111. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Local Engagement and Consultations

Daytime Services Consultation - Over the last twelve months, Tameside Council has reviewed its provision of daytime activities across Adults Social Care. This work has produced a high level strategy which aims to provide a clear set of principles and actions to support the continued development of daytime opportunities in the borough. The Council is keen to hear the views of service users and members of the public on the draft strategy. Closing Date: **24 August 2021**.

[Daytime Services Consultation \(tameside.gov.uk\)](#)

Customer Services Review - Tameside Council is seeking views on proposed changes to its face-to-face Customer Services. The way that customers access services has changed over recent years, due to changes in technological advancements and increasing access as well as the Covid-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic no face-to-face Customer Service function has been offered. Residents wishing to contact the Council have had to make contact via other channels, including telephone, email or Webchat via the Council website.

These circumstances of accelerated change combined with decreasing budgets have presented an opportunity to review the way we deliver services. Changes to the way that face-to-face Customer Service is provided are being proposed. The proposed service model for the future would be based on providing the most appropriate access channel according to customers' requirements. It would be very similar to the current offer but with the addition of face-to-face contact where necessary and only for those where other channels would not be suitable. The Council is seeking your views on these proposals. Closing date: **19 September 2021**.

[Customer Services Review Consultation \(tameside.gov.uk\)](https://www.tameside.gov.uk/customer-services-review-consultation)

Survey for Users of Mental Health Services - This new survey is for people who are using (or trying to use) mental health services and their carers.

Healthwatch Tameside want to hear about your experiences of mental health services at the moment. This anonymous feedback will be used to influence the care provided by local services in the future. Closing date: **24 September 2021**.

[Survey for people who are mental health service users and their carers \(smartsurvey.co.uk\)](https://smartsurvey.co.uk/survey-for-people-who-are-mental-health-service-users-and-their-carers)

Foster Care Offer Consultation - Tameside Council is proposing a new Foster Care Offer. The main aim of this is to support and retain existing foster carers and attract more foster carers so that Tameside can build its proportion of in-house local placements for cared for children. Following a review of the offer in 2020, it found possible improvements that could be made to help Tameside's ambition to deliver a good fostering offer, including bringing fees in line with competitive rates, improving the level of support to foster carers and improving the training and development model. Closing date: **27 September 2021**.

[Foster Care Offer Consultation \(tameside.gov.uk\)](https://www.tameside.gov.uk/foster-care-offer-consultation)

Waste Policy Consultation - Tameside Council are consulting with residents on proposed amendments to our Waste Policy, which highlights the responsibilities of ourselves and the public in regards to waste collection and recycling across the borough. Closing date: **20 October 2021**.

[Waste Policy Consultation 2021 \(tameside.gov.uk\)](https://www.tameside.gov.uk/waste-policy-consultation-2021)

Tameside Community Cohesion Questionnaire – A cohesive community is a diverse society where people from all backgrounds feel that they belong and are valued, enjoy similar life opportunities, and interact with other groups. A cohesive community is one that has moved beyond an “us” and “them” narrative to one where there is trust and interaction between different groups.

Tameside Council would like to hear about your thoughts and experiences of community cohesion in the borough. This will help us to better understand the topic in Tameside. Closing date: **Ongoing**.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/TMBCCoalitionCohesionSurvey>

Barriers to Accessing Information and Services - Diversity Matters North West are conducting a survey on the “Barriers to Accessing Information” that people face across Tameside and Glossop. This is particularly in relation to language barriers, and in the context of Covid-19, but barriers could also include digital access, gate-keeping, “red-tape”, difficulties identifying the correct service, slow response times by services etc.

The Tameside and Glossop Inequalities Reference Group have invited Diversity Matters North West to conduct this survey as part of a wider research and engagement process into these barriers across the locality. The responses, analysis and recommendations will inform an action report which will be

delivered through the governance processes of the Tameside and Glossop Strategic Commission. Closing date: **Ongoing**.

[Barriers to Accessing Information Questionnaire \(office.com\)](#)

Self-isolation survey – Tameside Council are conducting a survey to better understand the barriers and challenges that people may face when asked to self-isolate due to coronavirus. Self-isolation is when you do not leave your home because you have or might have coronavirus (COVID-19). You are typically asked to self-isolate for at least 10 days. This helps stop the virus spreading to other people. The reasons people are asked to self-isolate are because they have tested positive for coronavirus and been asked to self-isolate, a member of your household has tested positive for coronavirus, or you have been identified by the NHS Track and Trace as a contact of someone who tested positive. A better understanding of the barriers and challenges people face to self-isolation can help us to better support local people to self-isolate. Closing date: **Ongoing**. <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/tmbcselfisolation>

General Feedback About Health and Care Services - This new survey is about general use of health and care services. Please help Healthwatch Tameside by telling them about any services you have used recently, that you haven't included in a survey response before. What went well? What could be improved? Closing date: **Ongoing**

[Health and care feedback survey 2021 \(surveymonkey.co.uk\)](#)

Regional Engagement and Consultations

Let's talk about wildfires – Greater Manchester Fire & Rescue Service would like to find out what the public think about wildfire. They would like to find out what people think is the cause of wildfires, what should be the consequence of negative actions around wildfires, your concerns and what should be done to prevent them from happening. Closing date: **31 August 2021**. <https://www.gmconsult.org/strategy-team/public-perception-of-wildfire/>

Dementia Call for Evidence – Black African and Caribbean People In Greater Manchester – The African Caribbean Care Group (ACCG) want to understand the dementia support and information provision to Black African and Caribbean people in Greater Manchester. Questions can be answered by either carers or people living with dementia. The Dementia Call for Evidence Survey covers 4 areas of a person's Dementia journey: Diagnosing well, living well, supporting well and end of life. This consultation is **ongoing**. <https://www.accg.org.uk/dementia-surveys/>

National Engagement and Consultations

There are currently a number of pieces of work being led by government departments and agencies that you may wish to take part in. For further information and to have your say please follow the relevant links below:

Census 2021 Outputs: content, design and release phase proposals - The census is a survey that happens every 10 years and gives a picture of all the people and households in England and Wales. All kinds of organisations, from local authorities to charities, use the information to help provide the services we all need, including transport, education, and healthcare.

The census has always changed with the times to better meet users' needs, make better use of technology, introduce new questions, and change or replace existing questions. To enable us at the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to meet these changing needs, we engage with data users throughout the development cycle of the census.

This consultation is part of that engagement process. The UK Statistics Authority would like to hear your feedback on the proposals outlined throughout the questionnaire.

These proposals cover the release of census data and a proposed programme of analysis, to draw insights from that data. They welcome contributions from all census users, from those who are

experienced users of census data to those who are looking to use census data for the first time. Closing date: **5 October 2021**.

<https://consultations.ons.gov.uk/external-affairs/census-2021-outputs-consultation/>

All live and past consultations are available for viewing at the [Big Conversation](#) pages on the Council's website.

Regional Scrutiny

The links below provide you with access to the most recent meeting papers for each of the GMCA Scrutiny Panels.

[Corporate Issues & Reform Overview & Scrutiny](#)

[Economy, Business Growth & Skills Overview & Scrutiny](#)

[Housing, Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny](#)

Scrutiny Resources

I will look to share any available material to support you in your role during the course of the year.

Publications:

- [2020-21 Annual Survey of Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government \(CfGS\)](#)
- [Scoping the role of local authorities in the provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure](#)
- [Must know: Treatment and recovery for people with drug and alcohol problems](#)
- [Council's role supporting the digital skills pipeline](#)

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Update

The following are some critical sources of information from the government which are updated regularly:

- Updated figures on the number of Coronavirus cases and numbers vaccinated here: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>
- Guidance on restrictions and how to protect yourself or check if you need medical help: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- Information on self-isolation here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>
- Covid-19 advice for employees, employers and businesses here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

There is also guidance available on our own local websites as detailed below:

Tameside Council - www.tameside.gov.uk/coronavirus - includes links to service change information, how to volunteer, support for businesses, council tax recovery, mental health support, wellbeing, how to contact the Council for support and more.

NHS Tameside & Glossop CCG - www.tamesideandglossopccg.org/ link on homepage

Tameside & Glossop Integrated Care NHS Foundation Trust - www.tamesidehospital.nhs.uk/ information on homepage

Covid-19 opinion and behaviour insight:

The following are some key statistics taken from different pieces of national and regional research indicating what the impact of covid-19 has been for people including businesses. Understanding the impact of Covid-19 will be crucial to our recovery locally and how we plan to build back better.

- Those aged 18-24 are less likely to continue to follow measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 once restrictions are lifted, compared to the older age groups
- 93% of those aged 16 to 29 years reported positive vaccine sentiment this week (89% last week)

Grant Funding for VCSE organisations

There are a number of ways VCSE organisations in Greater Manchester and Derbyshire can apply for funding during the Covid-19 outbreak. 10GM, a partnership of local support and development agencies in Greater Manchester, have come together to produce a bulletin providing all the information on funding opportunities available for VCF organisations in Greater Manchester, including how to apply. You can find the latest bulletin here: <https://www.gmcvo.org.uk/news/gm-funding-ebulletin-june-2021> .

Action Together Funding Bulletin – Action Together have a wealth of experience that could help you find and secure funding. The latest funding bulletin, which is produced monthly with 10GM colleagues can be found here:

https://www.actiontogether.org.uk/sites/actiontogether.org.uk/files/10GM%20Funding%20Bulletin%20June%202021_0.pdf

Developing Trauma Responsive Communities VCSE Grants – GMCVO, with funding from GMCA, have launched a grants programme to fund work that will be part of the development of a Greater Manchester Trauma Responsive and Adverse Childhood Experience Framework. The aim being to create a coordinated approach to reduce individual and community exposure to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and trauma. <https://www.gmcvo.org.uk/news/developing-trauma-responsive-communities-vcse-grants>

Agenda Item 6.

Report to:	OVERVIEW PANEL
Date:	27 September 2021
Reporting Officer:	Sandra Stewart – Director of Governance & Pensions Julie Speakman – Head of Executive Support
Subject:	UNDERSTANDING OUR CUSTOMER CONTACTS AND LEARNING FROM OUR COMPLAINTS, INFORMATION AND DATA REQUESTS
Report Summary:	The report provides an update and strategic overview in relation to dealing with and responding to customer contacts. This report also provides a summary of complaints received by the organisation, those that escalated to a statutory panel and or Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. The report also provides a summary of information and data requests made to the local authority under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in addition to other information processes. Finally there is an outline in terms of the future work of the Information and Improvement Team and how they can help drive system improvement, working alongside the Budget Turnaround Team.
Recommendations:	Overview Panel are asked to note: <ul style="list-style-type: none">(a) the content of the update and strategic overview of complaint system/process(b) support the refreshed training offer being promoted across the organisations; and(c) receive further more detailed reports in relation to the top 5 key areas of complaints.
Corporate Plan:	Putting people at the forefront of services is a key element of the Council's Corporate Plan. An effective and robust complaints handling procedure is a necessary step to achieving this.
Policy Implications:	An effective complaint function means that residents who do not receive the best quality service can notify the Council for the purposes of redress and the improvement of services in the future. It is important for the Council to take notice of findings and guidance on complaint handling to aid best practice. As a leader for the Customer Service Excellence standard it is also important to use this as an improvement tool to inform our custom and practice for service delivery.
Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)	This report is an update on our performance in relation to complaints. The cost of complaints to the service has resulted in an overspend of £13k budget allocated for the past 2 financial years as outlined in 4.10, which was mitigated from wider service budgets. Dealing with service failure has a financial impact both in terms of the consequences of the complaint and the significant resource required to respond to the complaint process.
Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	On the 8 October 2020 in the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman issued new guidance on effective complaint handling for local authorities -

<https://www.lgo.org.uk/assets/attach/5908/Good-complaint-handling-FINAL-1.7.21.pdf>.

Based on previous documents, the new guide offers practical, real-world advice and guidance on running a complaints system to ensure it is effective and helps improve services. It runs through the steps authorities need to take to ensure complaints are properly identified, investigated and put right where necessary. It also examines statutory procedures for children's and adult social care complaints, guidance on dealing with third-party complaints, and advice on how to draw out the learning from the issues raised. Michael King, Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, said:

“We have been investigating complaints for more than 45 years, and throughout that time we have seen both good and bad practices.

“The guide we are issuing today offers practical advice, based on our vast experience, on how to run an effective complaints process.

“We urge local authority complaint handlers to take on board our guidance because we know how valuable the learning from complaints can be.

“The best authorities use complaints as a barometer of external opinion and as an early warning of problems that might otherwise stay unseen. They take that a step further and use critical feedback to drive a sophisticated culture of learning, reflection and improvement.”

The Ombudsman's jurisdiction is covered by the Local Government Act 1974 which defines the main statutory functions for the Ombudsman as:

- to investigate complaints against councils and some other authorities
- to investigate complaints about adult social care providers from people who arrange or fund their adult social care (Health Act 2009).

The Ombudsmen's jurisdiction under Part III of the Act covers all local authorities (excluding town and parish councils); police and crime bodies; and school admission appeal panels.

The LGO corporate strategy is based upon twin pillars of remedying injustice and improving local public services.


The Ombudsman is confident that the continued publication of decisions, focus reports on key themes and the data in the annual review letter is helping the sector to learn from its mistakes and support better services for citizens. Recently, Councils have been urged to scrutinise data on complaints to improve services. It is important that the Council takes even greater measures to ensure that it is able to evidence that it learns from complaints and uses this learning to improve and maintain the quality of the services it commissions and provides. Hence this is the first of many reports.

Risk Management:

Failure to understand complaints received by the Council and analyse volumes and themes overall will lead to a risk of poor service delivery.

Access to Information:

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer Julie Speakman Head of Executive Support.

 Telephone:0161 342 2142

 email: julie.speakman@tameside.gov.uk

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Tameside Council strives to deliver excellent customer service. The Council delivers a wide range of services and whilst endeavouring to provide a consistent, high quality service, with good outcomes for our customers, we also recognise that occasionally issues can occur and things can go wrong.
- 1.2 We recognise the importance of listening to any feedback we receive, as this provides a valuable source of information; it lets us know what we are doing well and equally where service improvements can possibly be made. The information that customers request is also a useful tool to understand what is important to them and what information we should be ensuring is readily available through our channels of communication including one of our main assets, our websites.
- 1.3 In recognising the ongoing pressures of the organisations, need to build in capacity and ensuring there was an overarching view of this area of work it was determined that like for like tasks would be brought together into a central function. Wholly managed under the umbrella of the Executive Support Service, under the arm of the Information and Improvement Team. The organisation also agreed investment for the procurement of a new information casework system following the withdrawal of the internal CRM system in 2016 due to security compliance.
- 1.4 The iCasework system was implemented by the Council and Tameside and Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group in June 2020. The Greater Manchester Pension Fund also use this system. Although the system has been live for over a year, the service impacts of responding to the Covid pandemic has caused some delays in bringing forward information and learning reports for which this is the first.
- 1.5 The iCasework complaints and information case management system was implemented and went live within the organisation on 15 June 2020. The system, managed and maintained by the Information & Improvement Team, records, processes and monitors contacts received by the organisation which include:-
- Corporate Complaints
 - Social care complaints (Children's & Adult's)
 - LGO & ICO Enquiries & Complaints
 - MP Enquiries
 - Freedom of Information Requests (FOI)
 - Subject Access Requests (SARs)
 - PSI – Applications for re-use
 - Compliments
 - Suggestions (customers & staff)
 - General Customer Enquiries
 - Whistleblowing concerns

Prior to going live all the front facing website pages and contact forms were refreshed and relocated so easier for customers to navigate to the right channel to log complaints, compliments, suggestions and requests for information.

- 1.6 Table 1 outlines the case work volumes per theme, grey area is where case work was primarily processed within services (with wider admin by Executive Support)) prior to June 2020, yellow as the merged team, and from 15 June 2020 logged within the new system.

Table 1

Work Areas		Case Volumes					
		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021 (up to June 21)	
A d m i n i s t r a t i o n o f :	Information & Data Team						
	Freedom of Information requests - TMBC	1287	1287	1295	1091	545	
	Freedom of Information requests - CCG	275	243	233	177	87	
	FOI Internal Reviews	9	3	7	10	3	
	ICO Investigations				1	1	
	Subject Access Requests - TMBC	45	81	227	230	118	
	Subject Access Requests - CCG	0	2	7	4	0	
	Missing Person searches	9	6	4	1	1	
	Coroners	n/a	5	24	3	0	
	Complaints & Customer Care Team						
	Childrens Complaints - Stage 1	105	152	182	102	114	12 Stat
	Childrens Complaints - Stage 2	9	19	24	41	37	3 Stat
	Childrens Complaints - Stage 3	3	2	2	4	2	2 Stat
	Adults Complaints - Stage 1	41	71	51	76	39	13 Stat
	Adults Complaints - Stage 2	15	8	13	21	13	5 Stat
	CCG Enquiries/Complaints	51	83	78	47	114	
	Corporate Complaints - Stage 1			102	457	348	
	Corporate Complaints - Stage 2			17	84	89	
	MP enquiries - TMBC	336	262	499	1130	479	
	MP enquiries - CCG	30	28	11	40	55	
	LGO enquiries / complaints		70	62	42	26	
	Whistle blowing		<10	<10	21	11	
	SAR Requests - to check complaints			82	99	47	
		2215	2322	2920	3681	2129	

1.7 In addition to the above the organisation receives general enquiries through the case management system and from 15 June 2020 – 31 December 2020 1911 were received, and from 1 January 2021 to 31 May 2021 there were 1654 , totalling 3645 since the system was introduced. Types of these enquiries will be predominantly what we will have classed as service requests previously.

2. COMPLAINTS AND CUSTOMER CARE

2.1 In most cases, before any issues are considered via the formal complaints process, they must have been highlighted to the appropriate Council service through the service request process. By raising the issue as a service request initially, it allows us the opportunity to resolve the matter quickly and efficiently, so that customers can get the service that they want.

2.2 A complaint is generally defined as any expression of dissatisfaction specifically relating to a council service, or a body acting on behalf of the council, about the actions the service has taken, or a lack of action that has occurred. If at the end of the service request process, if the customer remain dissatisfied, they can contact the Complaints & Customer Care Team to raise a formal complaint. We will provide an impartial, fair and structured process for dealing with complaints.

2.3 It is our aim to make sure customers get a response as soon as possible, and where we can resolve issues quickly we will always endeavour to do so. Where cases are more complex, customers might be asked to agree a statement of complaint to ensure that all issues are fully understood and can be investigated; in these cases resolution may take a little longer.

- 2.4 There are three distinct areas in terms of the Council's complaints process that customers can access; these are the statutory processes for a) Children's Social Care,(Stage 1, 2 and 3 process) Adults Social Care and the corporate complaints(Stage1 and 2 process) relating to issues regarding to any other council wide service.
- 2.5 For any customer that remain dissatisfied in the handling or response to their council complaint then they can escalate their concerns to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) who are independent from the council and investigate complaints and maladministration. The Customer retain the right to approach the LGSCO during any stage of the complaints process, however the Ombudsman would ordinarily expect that contact is made with the council in the first instance, so that any issues raised can be considered locally and an attempt to reach a suitable resolution can be made.
- 2.6 The Customer Service Excellence Standard that the local authority has held for over 15 years is pivotal to the way we deliver our services to high standards.
- 2.7 Through research outlined in the Customer Service Excellence standard it shows that many customers are satisfied with the outcome of their contact but fewer are satisfied with the way the service kept promises and handled any problems. Handling problems in particular often receives one of the lowest ratings out of all the different areas measured.
- 2.8 In addition research further shows that the speed of our initial contact with the customer and our ability to keep to agreed timescales are vital. However, organisations can sometimes focus on providing a speedy service while forgetting to also consider quality.
- 2.9 Other research identified that learning from mistakes is an important way to gain trust from their customers. Listening to, and asking for, comments, feedback and complaints about the service delivered can be a great way to make small adjustments to the way your organisation runs, and both formal and informal feedback can be equally important.
- 2.10 In particular there are two criterion within the Customer Service Excellence standard to highlight. These are Criterion 4 Delivery, Criterion 5 Timeliness, and Quality of Service. These are fundamental in helping drive our service improvement and learning from what customers tell us.

Criterion 4

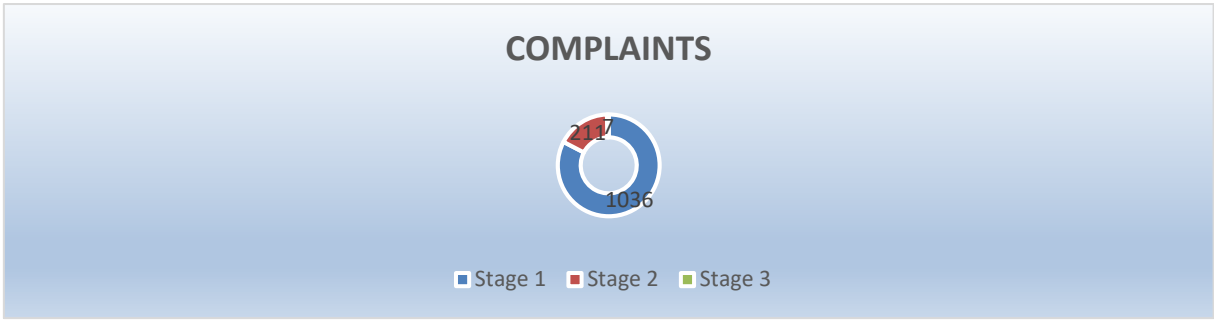
This criterion relates to how we as an organisation carry out our main business, the outcomes for our customers and how we manage problems that arise.

This criterion focuses on the outcome of our organisation's main business and whether we keep to the promises we have made to individual customers. It also relies on customers' views about the outcomes of our services, rather than just focusing on the main indicators our organisation uses to measure its performance. We should use the complaints we receive about the way we provide services and any dips in our performance to make sure customers receive the service we have promised them.

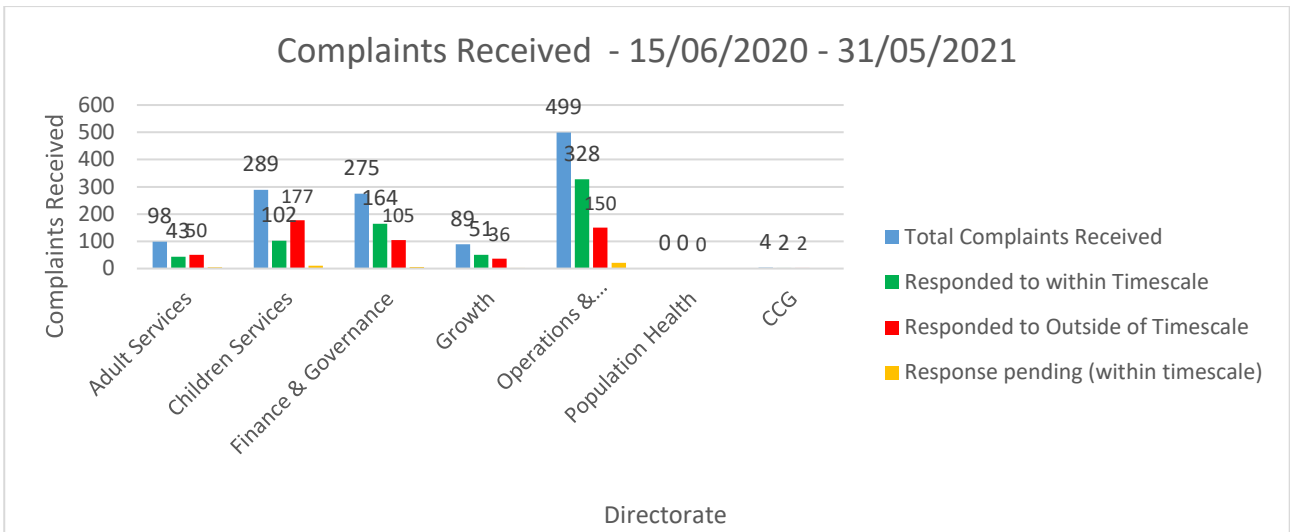
Criterion 5

This criterion looks in more detail at the standards we have relating to how we carry out our main business. It draws heavily on what users have identified as the most important factors of excellent customer service. Separating customer service standards from the main business standards makes the requirements for setting and monitoring standards in these areas much more strict. This plays a major part in developing the customer-focused culture.

- 2.11 Focusing on complaints, and from the time that the data was input /managed through the system, for the period 15 June 2020 – 31 May 2021 (quarter end), the organisation has received and processed a total of 1,254 complaints of which 1036 Stage 1, 211 Stage 2, and 7 Stage 3.

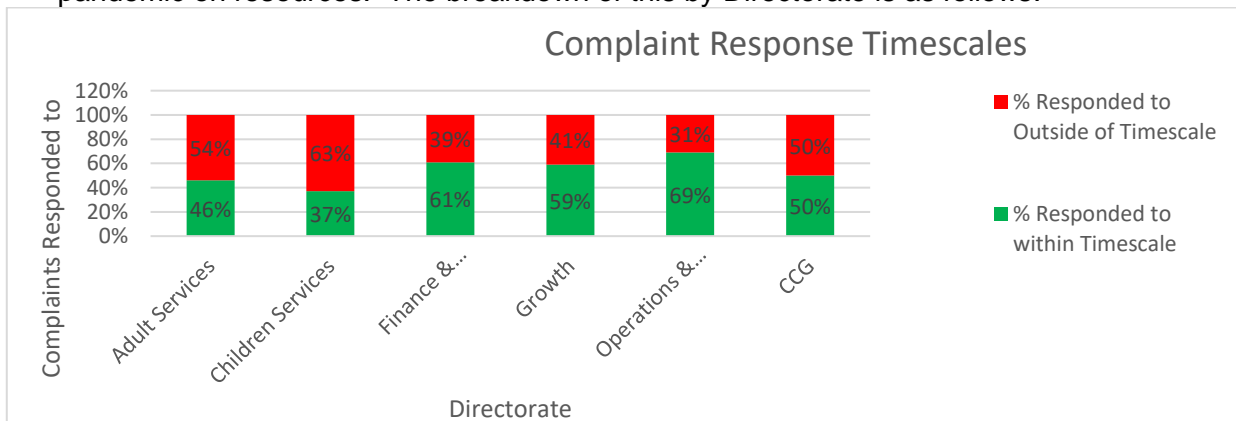


2.12 The breakdown of the complaints received and the volume per service directorate are outlined in the table below

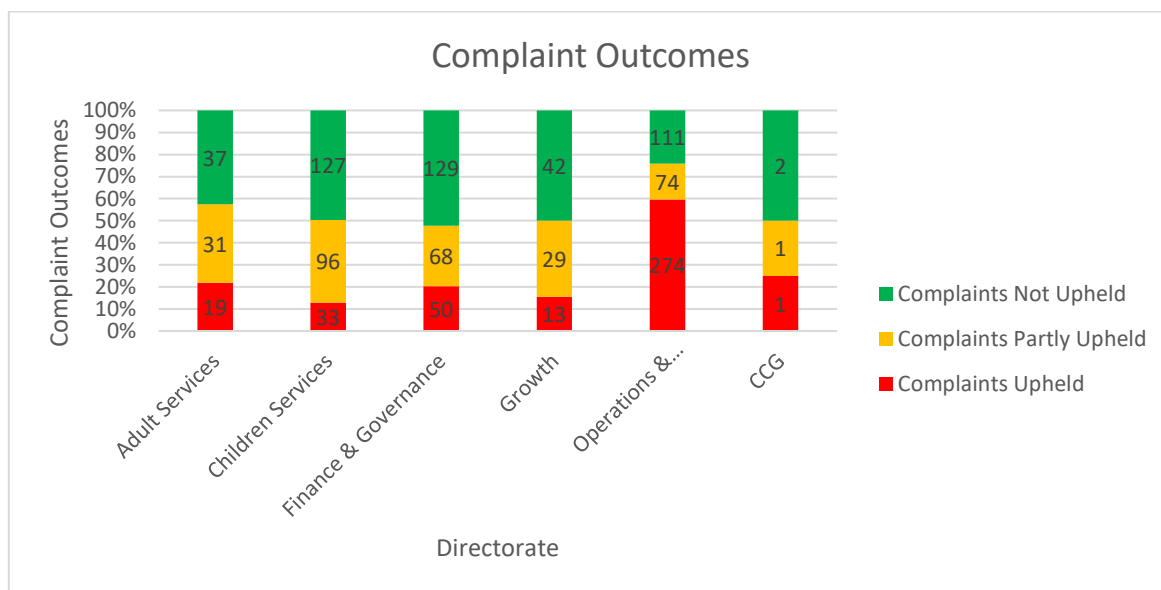


2.13 It should be noted that high volumes of complaints received, does not necessarily indicate the quality of the council's performance. High volumes of complaints can be a sign that we are an open organisation and complaints can act as an early warning of wider problems developing. Low complaint volumes, rather than always being an indicator that all is well, can be a worrying indicator that the authority is not alert to customer feedback and that service users do not believe that complaining will have an effect.

2.14 From the total complaints received during this reporting period, only 57% were responded to within the prescribed timescales. However, it is important to note that although these were outside of the prescribed timescales, active dialogue with customers will have taken place to keep them update on progress of when they would be likely to receive their responses. It should be noted that there has been a significant increase in requests for information, complaints and whistleblowing during Covid and we are still trying to manage the impact of the pandemic on resources. The breakdown of this by Directorate is as follows:



2.15 From the complaints processed and completed during the reporting period, the following complaint outcomes were recorded.



2.16 A summary of complaints currently in the system are attached to Appendix A.

2.17 It is important to note that during the last 12 months we have seen a step change in the number and type of contacts made to the organisation. Not only are staff across the organisation dealing with high volume of contacts not just in Customer Care and Complaints, but also in other areas like the Call Centre, many of these contacts can be very challenging due to the complexity of the demand and at times can be abusive in nature. It is unclear if these challenges can be part attributed because of the Covid pandemic.

2.18 We are committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially, and to making our services as accessible as possible. However, because of the nature or frequency of their contact with the Council, a few complainants behave unreasonably and hinder the consideration of their own, or other complainants', cases. The organisation has policies in place to support staff in dealing with these type of contacts that set out the contract between us and customer and the standards customers can expect when contacting the council and of us from them. Support to staff in this area is further strengthened by the refreshed customer care training which is referenced later in the report

2.19 The organisation also has a policy in place for the management of any unreasonable complainant behaviour and we will not tolerate deceitful, abusive, offensive, threatening or other forms of unacceptable behaviour from complainants. When it occurs, we will take proportionate action to protect the wellbeing of our staff and the integrity of our processes. We must use our staff time and resources to best effect and for the benefit of all residents and service users. Our staff cannot do this if someone tries to dominate our attention with frequent, lengthy contacts and repetitive information. This hinders the consideration of their or other people's, complaints. When necessary, we will take action to restrict access to our services when unreasonable behaviour of this nature persists. However, that can be difficult if service have failed to address complaints properly in the first place.

3. COMPLAINT ROOT CAUSES

3.1 Understanding why customers (service users, residents) complain, is an important factor of the complaints process. Collecting and analysing this information, allows us to identify where service failure is occurring and provides us with the opportunity to put things right. Recognising where things are going wrong and implementing changes and improvements, will in turn

reduce the number of complaints received and the improve the quality and experience that customers receive.

3.2 In relation to the top 3 issues/root causes we can see general themes coming through across the organisations namely the main three overall:-

- a) Failure or delay in doing something
- b) Failure or delay in communication
- c) Inappropriate behaviour/staff conduct

The data that is held within the system will identify the specific issues that will help to inform service improvement and where additional staff training may be required across specific areas.

4. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN

4.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is the final stage for complaints about councils and some other authorities and organisations, including education admissions appeal panels and adult social care providers (such as care homes and home care providers).

4.2 Every July the Ombudsman publishes information on the complaints and enquiries received by individual local authorities and the decisions made during that financial year as part of an Annual Letter. A copy of this can be found at **Appendix A**. This information can be valuable in helping local authorities assess their performance in handling complaints. Intrinsic to the learning from this process the annual report is reported to Overview/Scrutiny to provide further challenge and inform learning of systems and process for improved outcomes for service delivery and customer experience from these.

4.3 The Annual Letter for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 will be reported to Overview in September 2021. At this meeting, members of the panel will be provided with an update on the current performance and how this compares with other local authorities in relation to number of cases, type and learning for example and this report outlines this additional information.

4.4 The reportable period for the annual report and the comparative data contained in this report is 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021. As part of the annual report local authorities receive data in relation to the service areas, the complaints received by the LGSCO relate. For the reportable period, the LGSCO received a total of 43 compared with 70 complaints for the previous year across the service themes below. Please note to allow authorities to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, the LGSCO did not accept new complaints and stopped investigating existing cases between March and June 2020. This reduced the number of complaints received.

Authority Name	Adult Social Care	Benefits and Tax	Education and Children's Services	Environmental Services, Public Protection & Regulation	Highways and Transport	Planning & Development	Corporate & Other	Total
Tameside	5	9	12	7	4	5	1	43

4.5 Of the complaints received by the Ombudsman the following outcomes were determined. Some of those cases determined though could have been from a previous reporting year.

Outcome	Adult Social Care	Benefits and Tax	Education and Children's Services	Environmental Services, Public Protection & Regulation	Highways and Transport	Planning & Development	Corporate & Other	Total
Advice Given	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
Upheld	6	0	3	0	0	0	0	9
Not Upheld	1	0	0	0	2	3	1	7
Closed after Initial Enquiries	1	4	5	3	1	3	0	17

Referred back for local resolution	1	2	1	2	1	0	0	7
	11	6	9	5	4	6	2	43

4.6 In addition for some cases where the LGSCO upheld the complaint the service area will have been asked to remedy the situation and of the 43 cases received there were 5 requiring further action.

Remedy	Adult Social Care	Benefits & Tax	Education and Children's Services	Environmental Services, Public Protection & Regulation	Highways and Transport	Planning & Development	Corporate & Other	Total
Apology	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Apology/financial redress – Time & Trouble	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Apology/financial redress – Time & Trouble/Review policy	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
New appeal/review decision	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

4.7 56% of complaints investigated by the Ombudsman were upheld (based on 16 detailed investigations), this compares with an average of 72% of similar authorities. In 100% of cases the Ombudsman was satisfied the authority had successfully implemented their recommendations (based on 5 compliance outcomes). In 11% of upheld cases the Ombudsman found that the authority had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint had reached them (based on a total of 16 detailed investigations), this compares to an average of 11% in similar authorities. The Ombudsman thinks it is important that Council's work hard to resolve complaints before they go to Ombudsman and they now recognise that as a mark of success. This is an area that the Council needs to undertake more work in relation to. It demonstrates that there is significant room for improvement as in nearly 90% of cases Assistant Directors are failing to recognise there is an issue with service delivery and taking the necessary action to put right the wrongs caused.

4.8 The reportable period for the annual report and the comparative data contained in this report is 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021. As part of the annual report local authorities receive data in relation to the service areas, the complaints received by the LGSCO relate. Table below shows the breakdown of complaints received by local authorities by service theme in addition to the overall total number of complaints received. For the reportable period, the LGSCO received a total of 32 complaints for Tameside across the service themes below. This is compared to Manchester at the higher end with 54 and Salford at the lower end with 16 complaints.

Local Authority	Adult Social Care	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and Other Services	Education and Children's Services	Environmental Services, Public Protection and Regulation	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
Bolton MBC	2	1	1	2	2	1	1	4	3	17
Bury MBC	3	2	1	3	5	0	1	0	4	19
Manchester CC	3	10	5	13	7	3	3	4	6	54
Oldham MBC	2	0	3	5	3	2	0	11	4	30
Rochdale MBC	5	2	3	2	2	0	0	2	3	19
Salford CC	3	5	2	4	0	0	0	1	1	16
Stockport MBC	4	3	4	1	4	1	0	0	1	18
Tameside MBC	5	4	3	5	4	2	0	6	3	32
Trafford	2	7	8	4	9	2	1	1	1	35
Wigan MBC	1	4	2	3	3	1	0	1	2	17

4.9 Table below outlines the number of detail investigations carried out by the LGSCO across GM local authorities. Manchester received the highest number of investigations with 22 of which 14 were upheld, compared to Wigan with 4 investigations and 3 upheld. Tameside were at the higher end with 18 detailed investigations with 9 being upheld. All local authorities achieved 100% compliance with the LGSCO recommendations.

GMCA - Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman - Investigations 2020/2021								
Local Authority	Number of details investigations	Number upheld	% Upheld	% Compliance with LGO recommendations	Number of Satisfactory remedies provided by council prior to LGO involvement	% Satisfactory remedies provided by council prior to LGO involvement	Public Reports Published by LGO in last 5 Years	Number of service improvements agreed by Council since April 2018
Bolton MBC	13	7	54%	100%	2	29%	2	17
Bury MBC	11	7	64%	100%	1	14%	1	9
Manchester CC	22	14	64%	100%	4	29%	0	16
Oldham MBC	15	10	67%	100%	0	0%	0	8
Rochdale MBC	6	6	100%	100%	1	17%	1	10
Salford CC	5	4	80%	100%	1	25%	1	9
Stockport MBC	8	6	75%	100%	1	17%	1	15
Tameside MBC	16	9	56%	100%	1	11%	3	10
Trafford	18	12	67%	100%	3	25%	1	18
Wigan MBC	4	3	75%	100%	0	0%	0	5
Average performance rates; (%)			72%	100%		11%		

4.10 In summing up in his Annual Review letter (**Appendix A**) and as reported in the Municipal Journal (5.8.2021 below) the Ombudsman Mr Michael King stated his concerns in the way that complaints are handled by councils. In the LGSCO report it was noted there were “widening cracks in councils complaints systems”. He was also quoted in saying that “*I am concerned about the general erosion to the visibility, capacity and status of complaint functions within councils*”. The oversight we now have within our own systems we hope will strengthen our systems, process and improvement work to avoid any widening of cracks at our local level.

Ombudsman highlights ‘cracks’ in complaints system

The local government ombudsman has warned about the erosion to the way complaints are being handled by councils.

An annual review of complaints by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman highlighted the ‘widening cracks’ in council complaints systems.

In 2020-21, the ombudsman upheld 67% of investigations, a greater proportion than ever before.

As a result, it made more than 3,000 recommendations to put things right for individuals



Michael King

and 1,488 recommendations for councils to improve their services for others.

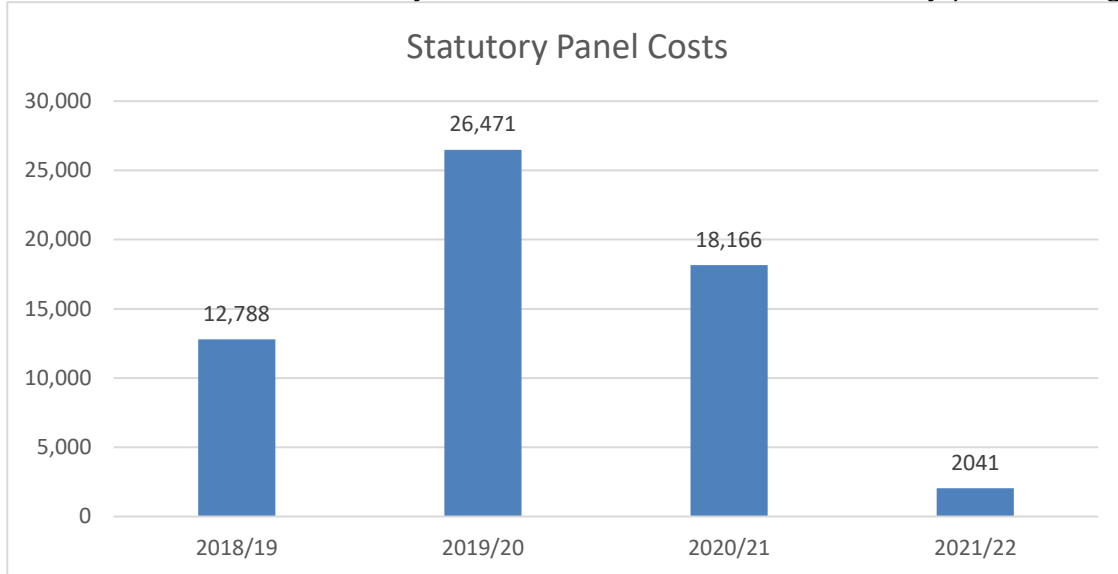
Ombudsman Michael King said: ‘While the way local authorities dealt with the pressures of COVID-19 is still being played out in our casework, early indications suggest it is only widening the cracks that were already there and has deepened our concerns about the status of complaints services within councils. These concerns are not new and cannot be wholly attributed to the trials of the pandemic.

‘I am concerned about the general erosion to the visibility, capacity and status of complaint functions within councils.’

4.11 Finally, in relation to complaints and the learning there are many costs (some hidden for example staff time) that can also be a driver for system improvement. Where complaints move either into a Statutory Stage 2 or 3 Panel and or move to the LGSCO there are in most instances additional costs incurred. Convening panels for independent reviews, report writing, holding of panels cost additional money and over the years we have seen increases in this area of work and in costs. Once panels have concluded, some recommendations could be to

make a remedy payment and this is similar to the LGSCO following some of their investigations.

4.12 There is an annual budget of £13k set aside to manage statutory Stage 2 and Stage 3 panels which sits within the Information and Improvements budget, the costs incurred for the last four years to date are noted below. The overspend on these costs for year 2019/20 and 2020/21 were absorbed within the overall Executive Support budget although it has no overall control of failure-demand in the statutory services which then result in statutory panels being held.



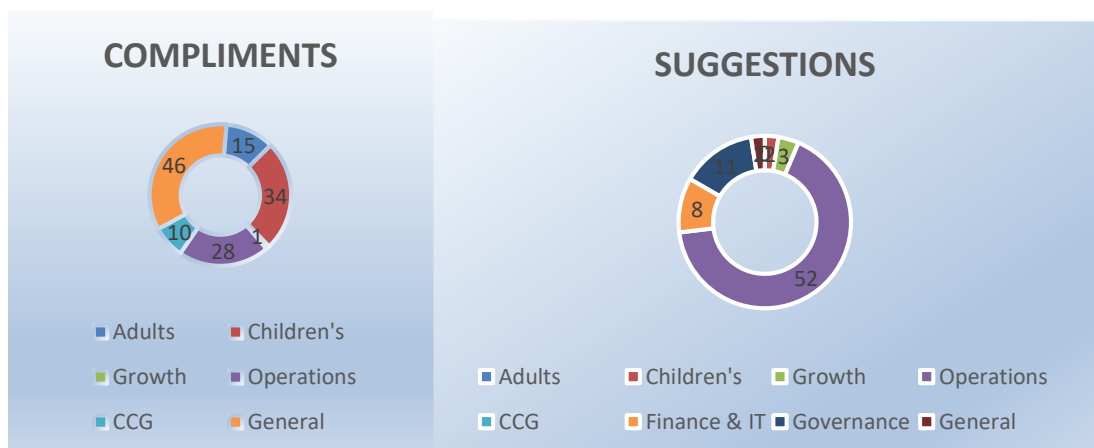
This is in addition to any “remedy costs” that might be paid out directly by the service as a result of the panel and any “remedy costs” incurred via any LGSCO involvement.

4.12 In relation to remedy costs as a result of the LGSCO involvement from June 2020 to date this totals an amount of £3500 over 7 cases. These costs are borne directly by the service area budget.

5 CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE, COMPLIMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 As challenging it can be in effectively dealing with complaints and customers reports of dissatisfaction, it is also important to note that we do now have a digital system for the central recording Compliments and Suggestions received internal and externally.

5.2 Since the system has been live from 15 June 2020 there have been 134 compliments logged and 78 suggestions.



5.3 Examples of some of the compliments and suggestions can be found at **Appendix B**.

- 5.4 In addition the organisation has held the Customer Service Excellence standard for over 15 years, each year achieving with 100% compliance and with additional areas of compliance plus (areas of best practice).
- 5.5 2021 full assessment should be a further year to celebrate the achievements of this standard with recent confirmation being received following 5 days of onsite visits, that we continue to hold the standard with 100% compliance and a reported 12 areas of compliance plus. The Lead Assessor Andrew Mackey said;-

“It is interesting that so many of them are in Criterion 2 (the culture of the organisation) which underlines the importance of the cultural approach, and the success of Tameside in embedding an appropriate culture. Partnership working and supporting local communities are also included.

I believe this is a great achievement, given what we have all been through in recent months. It would have been easy for organisations to feel overwhelmed and to operate at a lower level than usual; this is clearly not the case at Tameside and this is a great commendation for staff across the piece who have continued to step up to the mark and to do what is needed to maintain (and even improve) services.”

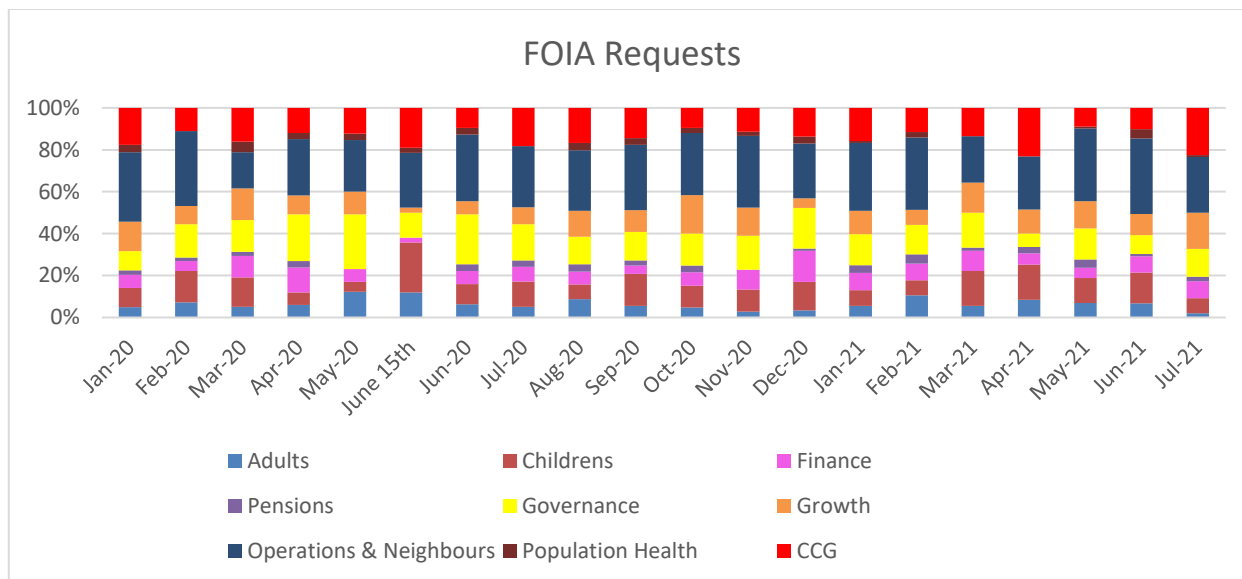
This is a remarkable achievement and one to be proud of.

- 5.6 As part of the bringing together of like for like information and data requests across the organisation, work has also taken place in the review and refreshing of the Customer Care training. This training originally developed and delivered by colleagues in Organisational Development. However in the spirit of using this training to help inform staff of the importance of good customer care reducing the chances of complaints being made, this has been further developed by colleagues in Information & Improvement.
- 5.7 This training has been trialled with some workgroups at the request of the Head of Service and initial feedback has been positive. Further work is ongoing with colleagues in OD to look at an online/interactive training to support the team training.
- 5.8 It is planned that all new staff to the organisation would be required to sign up for the Customer Care and Complaints handling training as part of their induction programme. The training would further offered to all parts of the organisation on a rolling programme, particularly to those with front line interaction with customers.
- 5.9 Another arm of training that has been delivered over the last few years has been the “Effective Complaints Handling” course delivered by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Work is in progress to acquire new training dates for the coming months.

6 INFORMATION AND DATA

- 6.1 The information and data requests that the organisation receive are valuable insight tools as to what data is important to our customers. Whether it be a Freedom of Information Request, a case enquiry via a MPs office or a Subject Access Request for personal information.
- 6.2 Similar to complaints where the LGSCO monitors and provides independent adjudication on case work , the Information Commissioner is the UK’s independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest. For FOIA requests, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides public access to information held by public authorities. It does this in two ways:
- public authorities are obliged to publish certain information about their activities; and
 - members of the public are entitled to request information from public authorities
- Under the Act we have a statutory duty to respond to FOIA requests within a 20 working day timescale.

6.3 During 2020 the organisation received 1260 Freedom of Information Requests and from 1 January 2021 to date we have received 730. Of the requests received for last year and on average 82% of requests were responded to on time within the 20 working day statutory timescales.



6.4 Since the Icaseworker system has been live we have seen an increase in the number of Whistleblowing notifications also being received. Our Whistleblowing Procedure enables employees, councillors and members of the public to express any concerns regarding illegal, dishonest, or illegitimate practice that may involve the Council. For the period 2020 there were 21 cases recorded, and currently there have been 11 received to end of May 2021. Example of cases include staff conduct, management of contracts and misuse of service money/equipment to name a few.

7 NEXT STEPS

7.1 The information contained within this report will form part of the update report the organisations Board meeting in addition to an annual update report to Overview Panel in September 2021 and furthermore the outputs from the service reports will help in informing the work programme of the Scrutiny Panels for the coming year.

7.2 The work of the team going forward is to use the information and data from within the system to work with service areas at looking at what information and data is already published in the public domain, via the organisations' Publication Scheme. Will also be looking at areas of improvement to service web pages to further enhance the publically available data published.

7.3 In relation to complaints and other service requests the outputs from the reports including root cause analysis will help identify service areas where system process reengineering support might be of assistance or where staff training in particular areas of service delivery may be warranted. This work will also dovetail that of the Budget Turnaround Team whereby we can look at failure demand in more detail to inform service and system improvement.

7.4 The analysis work will also look at how demand is presenting itself into the organisation and what it is telling us and review which channel customers are making contact in addition to the monitoring and addressing any unreasonable complainant conduct.

7.5 As part of the Children's Service Improvement Journey, data will be provided to support the programme of activity, which will be reported through to Children's Services Improvement Board.

- 7.6 Directorate and service high level case work reports are already shared on a weekly basis. This information will be further enhanced going forward with the themed and root cause data beneath to assist managers in service improvement.
- 7.7 Quarterly reports will be taken through our Board meetings which will also include deep dive project work which will also link to the Corporate Health Scorecard has just recently been refreshed. This now includes key indicators for this area of work including Data Requests and Complaints, which will help in reviewing our impact and improvements in this area of work.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 As set out on the front of the report.

Local Government & Social Care **OMBUDSMAN**

21 July 2021

By email

Mr Pleasant
Chief Executive
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Dear Mr Pleasant

Annual Review letter 2021

I write to you with our annual summary of statistics on the decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman about your authority for the year ending 31 March 2021. At the end of a challenging year, we maintain that good public administration is more important than ever and I hope this feedback provides you with both the opportunity to reflect on your Council's performance and plan for the future.

You will be aware that, at the end of March 2020 we took the unprecedented step of temporarily stopping our casework, in the wider public interest, to allow authorities to concentrate efforts on vital frontline services during the first wave of the Covid-19 outbreak. We restarted casework in late June 2020, after a three month pause.

We listened to your feedback and decided it was unnecessary to pause our casework again during further waves of the pandemic. Instead, we have encouraged authorities to talk to us on an individual basis about difficulties responding to any stage of an investigation, including implementing our recommendations. We continue this approach and urge you to maintain clear communication with us.

Complaint statistics

This year, we continue to focus on the outcomes of complaints and what can be learned from them. We want to provide you with the most insightful information we can and have focused statistics on three key areas:

Complaints upheld - We uphold complaints when we find some form of fault in an authority's actions, including where the authority accepted fault before we investigated.

Compliance with recommendations - We recommend ways for authorities to put things right when faults have caused injustice and monitor their compliance with our recommendations. Failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate below 100% is a cause for concern.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority - In these cases, the authority upheld the complaint and we agreed with how it offered to put things right. We encourage the early resolution of complaints and credit authorities that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your authority with similar types of authorities to work out an average level of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

Your annual data will be uploaded to our interactive map, [Your council's performance](#), along with a copy of this letter on 28 July 2021. This useful tool places all our data and information about councils in one place. You can find the decisions we have made about your Council, public reports we have issued, and the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

I would encourage you to share the resource with colleagues and elected members; the information can provide valuable insights into service areas, early warning signs of problems and is a key source of information for governance, audit, risk and scrutiny functions.

As you would expect, data has been impacted by the pause to casework in the first quarter of the year. This should be considered when making comparisons with previous year's data.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

I am increasingly concerned about the evidence I see of the erosion of effective complaint functions in local authorities. While no doubt the result of considerable and prolonged budget and demand pressures, the Covid-19 pandemic appears to have amplified the problems and my concerns. With much greater frequency, we find poor local complaint handling practices when investigating substantive service issues and see evidence of reductions in the overall capacity, status and visibility of local redress systems.

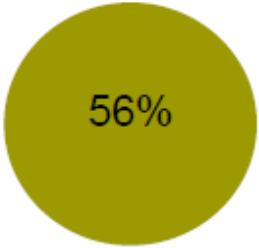
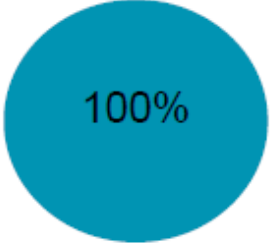
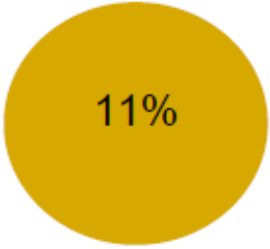
With this context in mind, we are developing a new programme of work that will utilise complaints to drive improvements in both local complaint systems and services. We want to use the rich evidence of our casework to better identify authorities that need support to improve their complaint handling and target specific support to them. We are at the start of this ambitious work and there will be opportunities for local authorities to shape it over the coming months and years.

An already established tool we have for supporting improvements in local complaint handling is our successful training programme. During the year, we successfully adapted our face-to-face courses for online delivery. We provided 79 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1,100 people. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training.

Yours sincerely,



Michael King
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Complaints upheld		
 <p>56%</p>	<p>56% of complaints we investigated were upheld.</p> <p>This compares to an average of 72% in similar authorities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">9 upheld decisions</p> <p>Statistics are based on a total of 16 detailed investigations for the period between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021</p>
Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations		
 <p>100%</p>	<p>In 100% of cases we were satisfied the authority had successfully implemented our recommendations.</p> <p>This compares to an average of 100% in similar authorities.</p>	<p>Statistics are based on a total of 5 compliance outcomes for the period between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An authority with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning. 		
Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority		
 <p>11%</p>	<p>In 11% of upheld cases we found the authority had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.</p> <p>This compares to an average of 11% in similar authorities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1 satisfactory remedy decision</p> <p>Statistics are based on a total of 16 detailed investigations for the period between 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021</p>

NOTE: To allow authorities to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, we did not accept new complaints and stopped investigating existing cases between March and June 2020. This reduced the number of complaints we received and decided in the 20-21 year. Please consider this when comparing data from previous years.

COMPLIMENTS

I wanted to take time to thank the Council for continuing to run reliable, good quality services during the pandemic. Apart from an initial wobble, refuse has been collected, recycling continued, parks and outdoor spaces maintained with the grass cut and bins emptied. These seem to be small everyday mundane issues but critically important to making life in restrictions easier and more pleasant. I live in Denton which abuts Stockport and Manchester-Tameside compares very favourably on the indicators listed above. You may not think what you do is appreciated, is it. so thank you.

I would like to thank the Urgent Care Team and Reablement Team for the support they have provided for my mum MP. The staff who have visited mum have all been so kind and compassionate, providing excellent care and reassurance when mum was really quite anxious and carers coming into her home. As a family we are grateful to the teams and also felt assured that mums care and comfort have been their priority.

I just wanted to convey my thanks and congratulations for the vaccination service you provided last Sat. My parents had appointments at 13.48 and 14.08. We were immediately greeted and given clear instructions. The process was a very slick and well organised. My other observation was how friendly and cordial the staff were. It was a cold day but they all appeared to bear it with a smile. And they all gave us a big wave as we drove off. Well done to all concerned. Thank you again.

I reported fly tipping and the lovely team came out and cleared it up beautifully. Plus while I was passing the street needed curb repairs. The two work men leapt out and got on with it. it was a miracle of speedy well done work on both counts. Please pass on my thanks
CHR

SUGGESTIONS

Parking Services – A new wellness centre in Denton, Great facility, superb car park. Yet not even one charging point for cars. None of supermarket parking in Denton nor public car parks has a single car charging point. Contradicts policies regarding reducing greenhouse gas emissions. I suggest charging points in Crown Point north or the new wellness centre

This park needs drastic improvement, the facilities that are currently there are not beneficial to all age groups! I think there is sufficient room to put a skateboard and bmx area to accommodate older ages groups (10-16 year olds). This would stop kids gathering around Tesco's and local shops. It could be made into a central hub for all age groups to meet and socialise. Please consider and

This might sound like a very trivial matter but could options please be considered for laptop desktop backgrounds. An iconic image of Tameside or even just the Council's logo would be a significant improvement on the current default (