

## EXECUTIVE CABINET

23 June 2021

Commenced: 2.25pm

Terminated: 3.25pm

**Present:** Councillors Warrington (Chair), Bray, Cooney, Fairfoull, Feeley, Gwynne, Kitchen, Ryan and Wills

**In Attendance:**

Dr Ashwin Ramachandra	Co-Chair, Tameside & Glossop CCG
Steven Pleasant	Chief Executive & Accountable Officer
Sandra Stewart	Director of Governance & Pensions
Kathy Roe	Director of Finance
Steph Butterworth	Director of Adults Services
Richard Hancock	Director of Children's Services
Ian Saxon	Director of Operations and Neighbourhoods
Jayne Traverse	Director of Growth
Jess Williams	Director of Commissioning
Caroline Barlow	Assistant Director of Finance
Sarah Threlfall	Assistant Director, Policy, Performance and Communication

### 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted by Members.

### 2. MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

#### RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet meeting held on 28 April 2021 be approved as a correct record.

### 3. MINUTES OF STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING BOARD

#### RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Commissioning Board held on 28 April 2021 be noted.

### 4. MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE BOARD

#### RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meetings of Executive Board held on: 14 April, 19 May, 2 June 2021 be noted.

### 5. 2020/21 FINANCE OUTTURN REPORT

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member of Finance and Economic Growth / Lead Clinical GP / Director of Finance. The report was the final report for the 2020/21 financial year which detailed actual expenditure to 31 March 2021.

It was reported that, at the end of an unusual and challenging financial year for the Strategic

Commission and ICFT, the final outturn position on 2020/21 budgets presented a broadly balanced position, with a small underspend on Council Budgets. CCG budgets had achieved a balanced position with nil variance. The ICFT were reporting a small deficit. Given the significant pressures and challenges that had been faced over the last 12 months, this position was a significant achievement.

It was explained that COVID continued to place a significant operational strain on the system, while the longer term financial outlook was a cause for concern as the Council contended with the aftermath of the pandemic at the same time as addressing an underlying financial deficit. The financial impacts of COVID had been addressed with significant one-off funding during 2020/21 and, whilst some further additional funding was available to the Council in 2021/22 for ongoing COVID pressures, this was one-off in nature. The longer term impacts of COVID, uncertainty over future local government funding, and a lack of clarity over future operational arrangements for the CCG, present significant barriers to sustainable financial planning.

Members were advised that **Appendix 1** summarised the integrated financial position on revenue budgets as at 31 March 2021. The final outturn position on 2020/21 budgets presented a broadly balanced position, with a small underspend of £102k on Council Budgets. CCG budgets had achieved a balanced position with nil variance against budget. The final outturn position was net of a range of significant under and over spends across a number of service areas. Further detail on budget variances, savings and pressures, COVID grants and expenditure was included in **Appendix 2**.

There was an in year deficit on the Collection Fund for both Council Tax and Business Rates due to the impact of the COVID pandemic, although the Council Tax deficit was less than previously forecast due to significantly improved collection rates in the final quarter of the year. The deficits would need to be funded in over the three financial years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 and this was reflected in the 2021/22 budget and MTFP approved by Full Council on 23 February 2021. **Appendix 3** provided an update on Council Tax and Business Rates collection performance and the year end position on the Collection Fund.

With regard to the Capital Programme, the approved budget for 2020/21 was £47.448m (after re-profiling approved at P10 monitoring) and outturn for the financial year was £43.593m. There had been delays on a number of schemes throughout the year due to COVID, and scheme budgets had been re-profiled into the 2021/22 financial year. The final capital monitoring report for 2020/21 was appended to the report.

An update was provided on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). It was explained that the Council was facing significant pressures on High Needs funding and started the 2020/21 financial year with an overall deficit on the DSG reserve of £0.557m. The 2020/21 deficit on DSG was £1.686m, mainly as a result of a continued pressure on High Needs but partly offset by surpluses on the other funding blocks. Under DfE regulations the authority had produced a deficit recovery plan which had been submitted to the DfE outlining how the Council expected to recover this deficit and manage spending over the next 3 years.

## **RESOLVED**

- (i) That the outturn position as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be noted;**
- (ii) That the significant variations and pressures facing Budgets as set out in Appendix 2 to the report be noted;**
- (iii) That the budget virements and reserve transfers set out on pages 36 and 37 of Appendix 2 to the report, be approved;**
- (iv) That the Collection Fund position for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix 3 to the report be noted;**
- (v) That the Capital Programme 2020/21 outturn be noted and the re-profiling of capital budgets as set out in Appendix 4 to the report be approved;**
- (vi) That the outturn position in respect of Dedicated Schools Grant as set out in Appendix 5 to the report, be noted.**
- (vii) That a Budget turnaround team be created from the Invest to Save ring-fenced allocation**

**to reduce the budget gap and avoid the need to rely on reserves with the detail being set out in an Executive Decision to be brought forward by the Executive Member for Finance & Growth.**

## **6. ONE EQUALITY SCHEME ANNUAL UPDATE 2021**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member, Lifelong Learning, Equalities, Culture and Heritage / CCG Co-Chairs / Assistant Director, Policy, Performance and Communications, providing an update on the annual review for 2021 which had been informed by practical examples and related projects from the past 12 months. The report also provided an update on some key equality and diversity related projects that the Strategic Commission had delivered or been part of during the last 12 months.

Members were advised that the report outlined an update on developments of the One Equality Scheme, as part of the annual review for 2021. It remained important that the case study of projects and examples of best practice were able to provide evidence in line with the schemes agreed and measurable objectives. Annual updates to the One Equality Scheme acted as an ongoing position statement and the approach to equalities. The annual review built upon work outlined in the One Equality Scheme (2018-22) and previous One Equality Scheme Annual Reviews (2019 and 2020); as well as providing new examples and evidence sources of achievements in respect of equality and diversity.

Members were advised of key equality and diversity related projects that the Strategic Commission had delivered or been part of during the last 12 months. These were most notably:

- Covid-19 Equality Impact Assessments;
- Inequalities Reference Group (IRG);
- All Equals Charter;
- Race Equality Change Agents Programme (RECAP) Cohort 2;
- Independent Advisory Group;
- North West Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Strategic Advisory Committee;
- Workforce Race Equality Standards (WRES); and
- Supporting our workforce through Covid-19.

### **RESOLVED**

- (i) That the content of the report be noted;**
- (ii) That the One Equality Scheme Annual Review 2021, as appended to the report, be approved for publication; and**
- (iii) That the content of the equalities update be noted.**

## **7. OFSTED FOCUSED VISIT TO TAMESIDE CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND RESPONSE**

The Deputy Executive Leader (Children and Families) / Director of Children's Services submitted a report setting out a brief update on the improvement journey of Tameside's Children's Social Care services, with particular reference to the progress on delivery of the 7 Sustainability Projects, the impact of Covid on the children's systems and the findings of the recent our Ofsted Focused Visit and our proposed response to this and plans to drive further improvement for the children of Tameside.

The report detailed the approach to improvement and specifically outlined the planned refocusing of existing capacity and the additional focussed capacity/investment required to address the issues identified through the Ofsted Focused Visit.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills was leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system had delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. The

report was in part to respond to a letter, which was embargoed until the 25 June 2021 when it would be published on the Ofsted website at: [Ofsted | Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council](#) and therefore was exempt from publication with the report. The letter summarised the findings of a focused visit to Tameside children's services on 12 and 13 May 2021. The methodology for this visit was in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. However, the delivery model was adapted to reflect the COVID-19 context. This visit was carried out fully by remote means. Inspectors used video calls for discussions with local authority staff, carers, key stakeholders and children. They also looked at local authority performance management and quality assurance information and children's case records.

The report concluded that there was a clear understanding of the issues which faced children's services, the improvements that were needed and plans in place to address these. In order though to deliver these at the pace which children deserve and require, the pace that the Inspectorate will expect and the Local Authority needs, the realignment of existing resources and investment of additional capacity as detailed in the report would be required along with the support of the Budget Turnaround Team.

## **RESOLVED**

- (i) That the Ofsted letter published at Appendix 1 (which is embargoed until the 25 June 2021) and summarises the findings of a focused visit to Tameside children's services on 12 and 13 May 2021 be acknowledged and the delivery of the proposals outlined in the report be approved including the Rapid Improvement Plan proposal and fruition of 7 Sustainability projects by way of response to this and to drive further improvement for the children of Tameside; and**
- (ii) That Council be RECOMMENDED to approve the provision of additional budget of £461,410 in year 1 (2021/22) and £504,538 in year 2 (2022/23) and virement of the existing budget of £1,537,224 over two years (2021/23) to deliver the plans set out in the report and more specifically the budget requirements as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.**

## **8. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER POLICY**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member for Finance and Growth / Director of Growth / Assistant Director of Strategic Property. The report detailed the proposed policy for the implementation of a community Asset Transfer Policy and sought approval to formally implement this Policy.

It was explained the Community Asset Transfer presented local communities with the opportunity to breathe new life into public buildings, to preserve valuable community resources or develop exciting new services for local communities. It provided options for the future use of these assets to enable the continuation of services, which had been challenged because of cuts to funding.

It was stated that the Council currently provided property used for direct community use along with office accommodation for partner VCS organisations. In addition to occupied properties, the Council had a number of land holdings used for community purposes throughout the Borough. A number of these existing leases had or were reaching lease expiry and required a formal lease renewal with tenants in some cases requesting leases of over 25 years to enable them to secure external capital funding.

It was further explained that the lack of a formal policy presented a risk to the Council as it lacked governance, transparency and brought uncertainty to officers and community groups when negotiation lease terms and rentals. In adopting a formal approach, approval to transactions could be obtained and concluded without unnecessary delay.

Members were advised that the proposal to transfer a property to the VCS sector would in most cases be prompted by the Council identifying a property asset that it deemed surplus to its operational requirements, which it could then be offered for CAT. The Council would review its

portfolio to identify assets suitable for transfer under the CAT policy.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) That the Policy for the Community Asset Transfer of Council owned Land and Property Assets, as attached in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;**
- (ii) It be noted that any Community Asset Transfer that does not strictly adhere to the Policy attached to be referred for further consideration via an Executive Decision; and**
- (iii) It be noted that all proposed Community Asset Transfers have been subject to a Ward Member Consultation process in conjunction with the Executive Member for Finance and Growth.**

#### **9. GODLEY GREEN – RESOLUTION IN PRINCIPLE TO USE COMPULSORY PURCHASE POWERS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member for Housing Planning and Employment / Director of Growth / Assistant Director of Investment, Development and Housing. The report detailed the work necessary for the preparation of a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO).

It was explained that whilst it was hoped that the Council would be able to acquire land by option agreements, the Council must consider using compulsory powers to provide certainty of delivery and to overcome any rights, encumbrances or ownerships that could not be dealt with via private treaty negotiations. The project milestones required that the Council develop a site wide CPO strategy to provide confirmation that all development land could be secured. Should the authority be unable to secure an interest in land by way of private treaty through options agreements, it would need to ensure that the ability to acquire all of the land within the development redline could be achieved through CPO.

It was further explained if the Council did not carry out any preparatory work on the CPO until after planning consent had been granted) this could cause delays to the project milestones and requirements. The Project Team had sought advice from our appointed CPO experts on the options available. Their recommendation were that the Council progress work on the CPO at this point to run in parallel with the planning application, giving the Council the best chance to secure the Order and meet the project milestones.

Members were advised that, in order facilitate the implementation of the masterplan, achieve the project milestones and aid site assembly the Council were seeking a resolution to enable them to carry out all the work necessary to make a CPO. The CPO process now needed to progress to run in parallel with the planning application. This would provide the best chance to secure the successful making and confirmation of the order.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) That express resolution be given to authorise the progress of any preparatory work required prior to the making of a CPO as necessary to progress the Godley Green project;**
- (ii) It be agreed that all necessary preparatory work be undertaken so as to make a CPO to deliver the project, subject to the final decision to make a CPO being agreed at a later date by Executive Cabinet;**
- (iii) Approval be given to enter into such legal agreements as deemed appropriate, in preparing for a CPO, and prior to the actual making of a CPO; and**
- (iv) It be noted that a resolution is required for the actual making of CPO at the relevant stage if it is considered necessary.**

#### **10. EDUCATION SPECIALIST AND BASIC NEED CAPITAL PROJECTS**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member for Lifelong Learning, Equalities,

Culture and Heritage / Director of Children's Services, providing an update on the Education specialist and Basic Need Capital projects and sought approval to move a number of schemes forward to ensure work can take place over the summer holidays.

It was reported that plans were in place to add an additional 30 school places per year at Rayner Stephens High School from September 2021. The cost of the work was estimated to be £1.3m and a budget of £473,000 had previously been agreed through Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel. It was recommended that an additional £835,000 be allocated to the project from Basic Need Funding. This was to cover the cost of the work and estimated project management costs.

Further, it was explained that the works would be commissioned by the Stamford Park Trust with oversight within the Council from the Capital Projects Team and a grant agreement would be put in place to fund the project. It was recommended that a grant agreement of £1.3m be agreed with the Stamford Park Trust to support this work. Ongoing monitoring of the project would be through the grant agreement and reported to the Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel.

In regards to the year 12 to 14 provision at Cromwell High School and establishing a sixth form provision. Phase one of the plan involved classrooms that the Schools Library Service had rented from Rayner Stephens being identified as suitable for sixth form accommodation as they were next to existing Cromwell School classrooms. A lease agreement was agreed with Rayner Stephens High School for these rooms and they had been remodelled to allow a pilot sixth form scheme to operate since September 2019. Phase one of the plan had now been completed.

It was anticipated that Phase Two would be completed by September 2021. The High Level Programme of Works and the High Level Cost Plan Summary had been devised by the LEP for Phase Two could be found at Appendix 2 and Appendix 3. It was recommended that a budget of £396,000 should be agreed for this work and that it should be commissioned through the LEP. A budget of £655,000 has previously been recommended by the Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel, £154,658 would be used for Phase One of the work, the remaining budget would be £99,342 after the spend incurred for phase one and costs estimated at phase two. Ongoing monitoring of the project would be through the grant agreement and reported to the Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel.

Members were advised that Oakfield Primary school had been identified as a site where the current resource base provision could be expanded for September 2021. Outline budget costs for the expansion were shown at Appendix 4. It was recommended that budget of £153,000 be agreed for the scheme and a grant agreement be agreed with the Enquire Learning Trust for £150,000. Ongoing monitoring of the project would be through the grant agreement and reported to the Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel.

It was reported that Greenfield Primary School already operated an unofficial resource base which had space for 10 children. The school had expressed an interest in expanding the current base which would mean they could increase up to 20 children. The school had obtained a quote for £22,080 plus VAT to carry out some remodelling work to expand the resource base. The works would be commissioned by the Victorious Academies Trust with oversight within the Council from the Capital Projects Team. It was recommended that budget of £28,000 be agreed for the scheme and a grant agreement be agreed with Victorious Academies Trust for £26,500.

## **RESOLVED**

**It be approved that:**

- (i) An additional £835,000 of Basic Need Funding is allocated to the Rayner Stephens High School scheme;**
- (ii) A grant agreement for £1.3m is agreed with Stamford Park Trust to enable Rayner Stephens High School to relocate the science classrooms and laboratories back into the main school building, create a fit for purpose drama space and reconfigure the dining hall and kitchen space to enable 30 additional pupil places per year for at least three years from September 2021;**

- (iii) **The Council instruct the LEP to commence works at Cromwell High School as outlined in the high level cost plan dated 5 May 2021 to remodel accommodation for use by the sixth form students and the garage is converted to a workshop to a value of £395,850;**
- (iv) **An allocation of £153,000 of Basic Need Funding is allocated to the Oakfield Primary School scheme;**
- (v) **A grant agreement for £150,000 is agreed with The Enquire Learning Trust to add a modular extension onto the current building at Oakfield Primary School to provide 8 additional resourced pupil places for at least 10 years from September 2021;**
- (vi) **An allocation of £28,000 of Basic Need Funding is allocated to the Greenside Primary School scheme; and**
- (vii) **A grant agreement for £26,500 is agreed with Victorious Academies Trust to remodel existing internal space to provide 10 resourced pupil places at Greenside Primary School for at least 10 years from September 2021.**

## **11. ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION GRANT FUNDING – FUTURE PROVISION**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member, Lifelong Learning, Equalities, Culture and Heritage / Director of Growth, which set out a proposed consultation to transfer the Adult Education Service to Tameside College.

Members were advised that Tameside Adult Community Education (ACE) provided skills provision for adults aged 19+. The Provision was based primarily from Stamford Chambers in Ashton Town Centre. The Service was funded with Adult Education Budget (AEB) by Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). ACE normally enrolled 600 individual learners on an annual basis. The impact of COVID19 had meant that learner numbers had fallen as social distancing measures had been introduced in line with health and safety risk assessments. ACE was an Ofsted 'Grade 2 Good provider' and was Matrix accredited. ACE operated on an academic funding year of 1 August -31 July.

ACE had a contract with GMCA until 31 July 2022 and had recently successfully applied to the GMCA Education, Work and Skills Flexible Procurement System enabling the service to bid for future contracts. ACE was well placed to continue to deliver good quality services to Tameside residents.

The proposal for the service would be to begin a consultation process on integrating ACE into Tameside College to enable the service to bid for future contracts from a strengthened position. Tameside College currently deliver over £2m of AEB services and an Ofsted 'good, grade 2' provider. The timeframe for the process was set out further below in next steps with an expectation that any change be completed by January 2022.

### **RESOLVED**

**That the proposal for Tameside Council to begin consultation on the transfer of the Adult Community Education Service to Tameside College be approved.**

## **12. HATTERSLEY DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT DEED OF VARIATION 2021**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member for Finance and Economic Growth / Director of Growth, which sought approval for a supplemental agreement to the Deed of Variation July 2015 to allow for deferral of the final Public Realm payment of £1m until 31 December 2021 and to extend the longstop date for Site 28 until 31 December 2022.

Members were advised that BASE Hattersley LLP (Barratt Homes) had requested to defer the final Public Realm payment of £1m from 31 December 2020 until 31 December 2021 and to extend the drawdown longstop date for Site 28 from 31 December 2021 until 31 December 2022. It was explained the reasons for the request to defer the payment were twofold. There was approximately £2.7m in the Public Realm fund, which was sufficient for the schemes needs. Secondly, it would

assist BASE (Hattersley) LLP in managing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on delivery and cash flow.

In respect of the request to extend the longstop date for Site 28 this was due to an issue with the planning application / decision for this site. It was in the process of being resolved but this would take additional time, so a request to extend the drawdown longstop date had been made. Barratts submitted a planning application (Ref. 19/01090/REM) on 17.12.2019, issues arose with this application which would require a revised application to be submitted. This would go through the planning process. These issues had required Barratts to request an extension to the longstop date to allow them time to be able to request the drawdown of the land.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) That a Supplemental Agreement to the Deed of Variation July 2015 be authorised, to allow for an extension of the draw down longstop date for Site 28 to 31 December 2022; and**
- (ii) That a Supplemental Agreement to the Deed of variation July 2015 be authorised, to allow for the final Public Realm payment to be deferred until 31 December 2021.**

### **13. LOCK KEEPERS SITE, DROYLSDEN**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member for Finance and Economic Growth / Director of Growth / Assistant Director for Investment Development and Housing, providing recommendations as to the future direction of travel to unlock the development potential of the Lock Keepers Site (The Site) in Droylsden town centre.

Members were advised that the site occupied land of approximately 2 acres in a highly accessible prominent location fronting Manchester Road in close proximity to the Town centre and presented an attractive development opportunity for a high quality/density residential development scheme. The site was immediately adjacent to the existing library, which was shown edged brown on the plan included in Appendix 1 to the report. Following the proposed relocation of the library, the two sites could be combined which would present an enhanced development opportunity, which was likely to be of interest to a wide range of potential development partners.

It was reported the site was planned for commercial development under the Development Agreement, however despite extensive marketing no suitable commercial use had been identified for the site. Negotiations had taken place with Watkins Jones regarding the potential for residential development on the site. Watkins Jones had offered to pay £400,000 for the site based on a residential layout. The Council commissioned an independent Red Book valuation against this scheme, which indicated a headline value of £1m for the land.

It was explained that road access to the site was owned freehold by Watkins Jones and was subject to a S278 Agreement. The Road was constructed several years ago and although it had not yet been formally adopted by the Council, rights of access were reserved at the time of the transfer. Watkins Jones owned two small parcels of land adjoining the Marina which would be desirable, but not essential, to be joined to the main development site. Despite obligations in the Development Agreement, Watkins Jones had not landscaped these areas and it was recommended that following the removal of the Lock Keepers site from the Development Agreement that negotiations were undertaken with Watkins Jones to ensure they fulfilled their obligations to landscape or transfer the land at nil cost to the Council.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) That the site be withdrawn from the Watkin Jones Development Agreement;**
- (ii) Negotiations be undertaken with Watkin Jones regarding the two parcels of land referred to in Appendix 1 to the report; and**
- (iii) That the subject site be formally declared surplus so that a future sale, including the library, which is shortly due to be demolished, can be considered in accordance with the**

## **Council's disposal policy**

### **14. HIGH STREET TASK FORCE**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member, Finance and Economic Growth / Director of Growth, providing details of the High Street Taskforce programme recently announced by government as part of a package of support to help communities and local government to transform their high streets.

It was explained that, on 19 March 2021, the High Street Task Force (HSTF) was announced by government and would run until 2024. The HSTF provided support to local leaders in town centres and high streets in England. Funded by government, this support included expert advice, training, and data delivered directly to local stakeholders in towns and cities, and a range of resources online that were available to all.

The first 70 local authorities had been selected to enable support to be delivered where it was needed most. Regional indicators of deprivation and inequality had been used, alongside research on the impact of COVID-19 on high street retail, to produce the list of areas that would most benefit from support for their local place making capacity. Hyde Town Centre had been identified as one of the 70 local authority areas. The programme was part of a wider package of proposals declared by the government to support town centres in the wake of the recent pandemic and was linked to the Build Back Better initiative including funding schemes such as the Levelling Up Fund (LUF).

Members were advised that establishing long term partnerships would be a focus for the support and the Task Force would deliver a range of services that were aligned to four objectives and would provide practical support to people and places. These were:

- Boosting Local Authority capacity;
- Building place making skills;
- Coordination; and
- Intelligence and data.

Benefits of being part of the programme included:

- Expert advice on local plans, enabling local authorities to create the best strategies for transformation and investment,
- Facilitation of a local leadership and stakeholder sessions to help build consensus, good will, and momentum behind authorities' plans,
- Training for place leaders and development staff, as well as local stakeholders, based on the latest research on high streets, which could help build capacity for longer-term impact,
- Resources and inspiration for local stakeholders to inform their own action and involvement in place making, and
- Boost trust and confidence in local plans and bids by evidencing adoption of Task Force support and good practice.

Following consultation, the Task Force team had nominated Hyde Town Centre as the area of focus in Tameside. As Hyde Town Centre was identified as one of the first local authority towns to benefit from the programme of support, some initial discussions had taken place with the Task Force in relation to the type and level of support being offered to the Hyde. To help make change happen, Hyde Town Centre would receive a range of tailored support services offered by the Task Force, which may include; targeted expert consultancy, mentoring, visioning or place making workshops, access to local footfall data, and training programmes for place managers and leaders. Hyde Town Centre would benefit from the extra capacity offered as part of the programme and would ensure a joined up approach to the work already taking place including the One Public Estate. It was accepted that all of the town centres would benefit from the HSTF programme as the Council and officers would be able to learn and cascade ideas around the other centres.

Once Tameside had been appointed an advisor from the Task Force team of experts, they would

contact the Council to discuss scheduling the first 'Unlocking your Place Potential visit'. From this visit, further tailored support would be programmed in for Hyde. This work would determine the necessary intervention required for the town centre. From this, the Council would seek to prepare an action plan in order to begin to implement recommendations that were identified as a result of this programme of work. There would be a further report to Executive Cabinet outlining the findings of the diagnostic and focus for the action plan.

## **RESOLVED**

- (i) It be agreed to formally participate and engage with the programme and with government delegates responsible for delivering the support; and**
- (ii) It be agreed that the focus of the support will be Hyde Town Centre.**

## **15. NEW CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE DELIVERY MODEL**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member, Neighbourhoods, Community Safety and Environment / Assistant Director Operations and Neighbourhoods setting out what a future service offer may look like and sought permission to undertake public consultation to fully understand and consider views before implementing any changes.

It was explained that, on 26 August 2015 Executive Cabinet, following a comprehensive review of the Council's face to face Customer Service function, agreed a new model for the service. The review took into account the usage of the service at that time, the likely reduction in the need for the service in the future, the increasing cost to serve and the public's determination in consultation that this was an area where budget cuts could be made.

It was determined that the service offer would consist of Level 2 service (book, pay, request a service and verification of housing benefit documents) which would take place at all libraries in the Borough. Additionally Ashton Customer Services would be retained and continue to offer a reactive drop in Level 2 service and also in-depth housing benefit and council tax support advice (Level 1 service). The service was suspended in March 2020 due to the Covid 19 pandemic and no face to face Customer Service function had been offered since that time. During that period officers had been supporting call centre operators handling customer enquiries via the telephone, web chat or on-line. Officers had also been assisting customers to complete housing benefit/council tax support applications by telephone appointment.

It was now deemed timely to undertake a further review of the service to determine how this might be offered in the future taking into account the changes in peoples' attitudes to technology, the future need for a reactive drop in face to face service and the fact that face to face customer service had always been the highest cost channel with the lowest volume of customers.

The report gave details of the service prior to and during Covid 19. The demand in customer service was examined, which had reduced significantly over the years. The cost of the service was also scrutinised with the cost of each transaction for the face to face customer service function far outweighing the cost of other channels.

Members were advised that it was clear that, with the advent of social trends and technological advancements, the way customers accessed services had changed over recent years. The pandemic had pushed the use of technology to another level and served to create a catalyst for change in peoples' attitudes. Many who would not have previously used technology in any aspect of their lives were now turning to such platforms to order shopping, access services, keep in touch with family/friends etc. Some evidence of this change could be seen following the Council introducing a web chat function in early 2019/20. Since implementation, over 12,000 enquiries had been responded to via this channel. Residents were able to access services on the Council's website for both information and advice but also to complete applications for Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, discounts/exemptions and notify of change of circumstances etc. Applications could be completed on all devices e.g. PCs, laptops, tablets and smart phones.

It was fair to conclude that if a customer had accessed a service by an alternative channel whilst face to face customer services had been suspended, and that contact produced the required results to satisfy the enquiry, accessing by that method in the future would be preferable to making the trip to customer services and queuing up at a drop in service with no guarantee of not having a long wait time.

As protectors of public funds it was incumbent upon all Council services to review the service offer from time to time and ensure services were cost effective whilst meeting residents' needs. The Covid 19 pandemic had created a unique circumstance where change had been accelerated at pace and this change had led to many residents becoming less reliant on face to face services. These circumstances should be capitalised upon when determining future service provision rather than simply returning to the previous landscape and it was therefore now time to undertake a further review of the Customer Service provision.

It was explained that the proposed service model for the future would be based on providing the most appropriate access channel according to customers' requirements and 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 principles would be:

- not to re-open the expensive reactive drop in Customer Service centre based in Tameside One at Ashton in the previous format;
- retain Level 2 enquiries at all Tameside Libraries;
- promote, encourage and support a digital first model with the expectation that where possible, residents should self-serve utilising the Council website or other technology such as mobile applications (Apps) where available;
- where this was not possible a supported service offer over the telephone, web chat, email etc. to assist customers with their enquiries;
- where more detailed assistance was required, for example completing a housing benefit application, a telephone call back service by appointment would be available; and
- face to face appointments only for the most vulnerable to ensure that residents were able to access services and assistance without disadvantage. Appointments would be bookable by telephone.

There was no doubt that some customers may be more vulnerable and/or may need additional support to access to services or make enquiries. This could be because the enquiry was complex, there were multiple issues or there were additional health problems which affected a person's ability to manage their situation. Any new service model must take into account all residents' needs and therefore some face to face element would be retained. It was proposed that this would be by appointment only rather than drop-in and would be following a triage process to understand the nature of the enquiry and the assistance required.

If the proposed service model was implemented staff levels within the service would need to be reviewed. Sufficient staff would be required to conduct telephone appointments to support people with their enquiries and also to undertake face to face appointments where necessary. It would be necessary to consult with staff and unions to ensure they were fully aware of any new service model and staffing structure.

To determine the impact of such a customer contact model as detailed, it was proposed that public consultation was undertaken for a period of 12 weeks from 28 June 2021 – 19 September 2021 to seek views of residents and others who wish to respond. A full Equality Impact Assessment would be completed to fully understand the impact on the communities and particularly those with a protected characteristic under the Equalities Act 2010 and in particular members wanted it to address access to digital.

## **RESOLVED**

- (i) That the reasons for a review and the proposed new delivery model be considered; and**
- (ii) That the public consultation on the proposed delivery model be undertaken from the 28 June 2021 to 19 September 2021 with the results being presented at Executive Cabinet**

for further consideration at the end of the year.

## **16. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member for Housing, Planning and Employment / Director of Growth. The report detailed the proposals to update the SCI to reflect the change in narrative and terminology around joint planning of the nine boroughs and 'Places for Everyone'.

Members were advised that the current SCI was adopted 2 November 2020 following comprehensive review and a 6 week period of public consultation. Permanent changes were proposed were proposed in the 2020 update, which were reflective of the significant changes in how people are interacting physically at that time.

It was explained that this 2021 update however, represented a technical amendment and followed the decisions of Stockport Council (3 and 4 December 2020) not to approve the submission of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF), following the intended consultation period and not to publish the GMSF 2020. This in effect signalled the end of the GMSF as a joint plan of ten Greater Manchester Boroughs.

It was further explained that the updated SCI was presented for approval to be published which had been prepared to reflect changes in preparing a joint plan of nine boroughs through Places for Everyone. Due to the technical nature of the update, recent comprehensive review following consultation and no statutory or local commitment to do so, no period of public consultation was proposed. The SCI was included at **Appendix 1** and the EIA was included at **Appendix 2**.

### **RESOLVED**

**That the publication of the updated Statement of Community Involvement and accompanying EIA as set out at Appendix 1 and 2 of the report, be approved, and bring it into immediate effect.**

## **17. NEW BUILDING FOR HAWTHORNS SCHOOL**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member for Lifelong Learning, Equalities, culture and Heritage / Director for Children's Services. The report detailed the need to increase places at Hawthorns School, an outstanding school providing specialist education for primary aged children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

It was reported that Hawthorns School was an outstanding primary special school located within the Audenshaw area of Tameside and catered for pupils with a range of complex special educational needs aged between 4-11 years old. The school was an academy and part of New Bridge Multi Academy Trust. As a result of growing pupil numbers and to meet expected need for additional places, there as a need to provide additional accommodation to accommodate both the current number of pupils enrolled at the school and the increases in admissions forecast over the coming years.

The Inclusion Service had commissioned a space utilisation company, Space Solutions, to analyse the existing space in the specialist schools and to advise if the existing provision was fit for purpose. This work highlighted in particular the difficulties currently faced by Hawthorns School. The space utilisation company determined that it was very unlikely that there was scope to increase pupil numbers without significantly extending the building.

Members were advised that a RIBA stage 1 site options appraisal had been undertaken by the LEP and only one Council owned site that was not already committed to disposal or another operational use had been found that could accommodate an outline business case. This was Longdendale playing field, adjacent to the Active Longdendale facility.

The site appraisal looked at three options for the future of school places:-

- Option 1 150 Places (Keep 70 places at Existing Hawthorns School)
- Option 2 220 Places (Move all Hawthorns School to new build)
- Option 3 460 Places through School (Move all Hawthorns School to new build)

The report recommended that the Council should pursue option 2 as outlined in the options appraisal. Option 2 would provide Hawthorns School with sufficient space to accommodate current and future demand for places on one site. The school would be purpose built using the area guidelines for SEND and alternative provision as outlined in the Department for Education's Building Bulletin 104. Further, building on a new site would mean that the build would be completed without interruption for children at the school and the adjacent Aldwyn Primary School where building work is also currently underway.

It was stated option 2 presented opportunities for the school and Trust to work with the Active Longdendale provision. A consultation was underway on the future of a number of Active Tameside sites including Longdendale, the results of the consultation were being analysed and would be presented to Executive Cabinet in July. The development of a new school on the Longdendale playing fields site could present opportunities for the New Bridge Multi Academy Trust to potentially work with the provision and support the development of inclusive learning opportunities in a community environment.

Members were advised that the DfE supported the build of new special schools via the Free Special School applications proposal process. This process was open only to Multi Academy Trusts and other non-Council organisations. This route not only provided capital funding for the build but also unlocked additional revenue funding into the High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant.

Further, conversations had started with DfE to see if the revenue funding could be accessed as the Council's intention was to work with New Bridge Trust and for this school not to become a maintained special school. If these representations were unsuccessful consideration could be given for New Bridge to approach the DfE to see if it could be considered for the Special Free School proposal process, this would put a time delay into the process, which could result in students being placed out of borough whilst the process is progressed.

It was highlighted that without sufficient local provision that the only option for specialist provision would be for pupils to be placed out of borough or access independent settings which would be more costly than an in borough offer. The average cost of an out of borough placement was broadly comparable with Tameside cost, however, the average independent placement would cost approximately £34,119, the average out of borough place costing £26,484.

#### **RESOLVED**

- (i) That a budget of £13m of Basic Need funding be allocated to the expansion and relocation of Hawthorns School to 220 places on the Longdendale Playing Field site;**
- (ii) That the LEP be instructed to develop the design of the expanded / relocated Hawthorns School to RIBA Stage 3 and carry out site investigations as required to inform the development. With a target of opening in September 2023; and**
- (iii) The issue of revenue funding be pursued with DfE as a matter of urgency.**

#### **18. URGENT ITEMS**

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

**CHAIR**