

# Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

27 July 2021

**Commenced:** 6.00pm

**Terminated:** 7.20pm

**Present:** Councillors Glover (Chair), Mills (Deputy Chair), Cartey, Chadwick, Choksi, J Homer, Lewis, North, Patel, Robinson.

**Apologies:** Councillors Billington, Bowerman, J Fitzpatrick, P Fitzpatrick, Gosling, A Holland, Jones, T Sharif.

## 6. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel held on 8 June 2021 were approved as a correct record.

## 7. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19

The Panel welcomed Councillor Oliver Ryan, Executive Member, Finance and Economic Growth; Jayne Traverse, Director of Growth; and Damien Cutting, Economic Growth Lead; to present an update and overview of the economic impact of Covid-19, the response, recovery and future priorities.

Key messages included the grant schemes administered by the Council to support local businesses. The schemes closed in June 2021 with final Additional Restrictions Grant payments now made. Furlough support is on a reduction pathway and set to end in September 2021, with impacts unknown. Figures released in April show most severe impacts on residents under 35 for job losses.

Panel members received data from a Growth Company Situation Report and Business survey, results for Tameside at May 2021 show issues and challenges of:

- Decreased sales
- Finance and cash flow issues
- Rising cost of materials
- Accessing new domestic sales
- Developing new products and services
- Developing workforce and skills

Updated information reported on business support during Covid-19, with specific reference to government schemes for employment and job retention. This included initiatives such as the Kickstart scheme supporting employment for 16 to 24 year olds. Further outcomes discussed in association with the Business Growth Hub and regional provision.

During Covid-19 the Council has worked to implement a multi-channel communication approach to ensure a maximum reach for information and key messages to businesses and residents. This includes a dedicated business support webpage, regular emails to businesses, social media channels and a proactive approach to contacting those eligible for financial support. Regional partners relating to growth and business support further complement local efforts.

It was report that 10,900 workers in Tameside are on furlough at 30 April 2021. The Universal Credit claimant count in Tameside has also increased from 5,920 at March 2020 to 10,305 at

May 2021. Additional detail provided clarity on the number of local support mechanisms in place aimed to retain or move residents back to employment.

Tameside Council support has included the Tameside Business Resilience Clinic (BRC) launched in June 2020, with 60 micro or small businesses registering for support. Additional support enabled businesses to continue to operate in a Covid-19 secure way with the involvement of Public Health, Environmental Health and Licensing teams.

Cllr Ryan advised members of Tameside Employment Fund (TEF) that ran from 2019 to March 2021. TEF support three targeted grant schemes to help local businesses hire young people. Since March 2020 this includes a:

- Youth Employment Scheme – 36 jobs and £199,000 grant committed
- Business grant – 14 grants = £21,000
- Trade grant – 30 grants worth over £30,000

In conclusion the furlough scheme has kept the number of redundancies down and when the Job Retention Scheme comes to an end this will create a bigger unknown for future employment levels. The local plan will be to drive the use of work payments, digital inclusion and skills, transition to skills and a commitment to deliver the Inclusive Growth Strategy and growth priorities set within this.

Panel members asked the following question noted by officers for a response to be circulated outside of the meeting.

- Additional detail regarding youth employment schemes and NEETs regarding outcomes and targets. Request for wider context and ongoing work to build on Tameside Employment Fund.
- Uptake and reach across Tameside businesses receiving financial support, ongoing advice and guidance.
- The Kickstart scheme and percentage of jobs retained after 6 months, any protections in place on contracts or support when exiting the scheme.
- Procurement impacts and benefits already achieved for local economy regarding social value and environmental impacts.

**Resolved:** That Councillor Ryan and officers be thanked for attending the meeting.

## **8. FUTURE ACTIVITY AND REVIEWS**

The Chair advised that all panel members have received emails regarding the working groups, with the option to join. This includes a review of the Council's Asset Management Framework and Policy, as detailed in the annual work programme.

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.

## **9. GREATER MANCHESTER SCRUTINY**

The Chair provided a verbal update on activity of the GM Housing, Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting.

## **10. CHAIRS UPDATE**

The Chair informed panel members of Scrutiny reports and feedback received at the meeting of Overview Panel on 26 July 2021.

## **11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note that the next meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel will take place on Tuesday 7 September 2021.

## **12. URGENT ITEMS**

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

**CHAIR**