Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel
11 January 2022

Commenced: 6.00pm

Terminated: 7.50pm

Present: Councillors Glover (Chair), Mills (Deputy Chair), Bowerman, Cartey, Chadwick, Choksi, J Fitzpatrick, A Holland, J Homer, Jones, Lewis, North, Patel.

Apologies: Councillors Billington, Gosling, T Sharif.

28. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel held on 2 November 2021 were approved as a correct record.

29. DIGITAL OFFER AND DELIVERY

The Panel welcomed Tim Rainey, Assistant Director, Digital Tameside, to receive an update on the Council's current position, wider digital strategy and offer for 2022 and beyond.

Mr Rainey informed members that the Digital Strategy sets out a five-year vision and plan regarding the use of digital technologies for the Council and NHS Tameside & Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group. Developed over a 12-month period through a series of facilitated workshops and consultation, the strategic priorities and key deliverables link to the Corporate Plan and aim to support wider areas such as the Inclusive Growth Strategy.

The Digital Strategy was approved in September 2020 and sets out the following digital priorities.
- Digital Public Services
- Digital Workforce
- Digital Economy
- Digital Foundations
- Digital Skills, Talent and Inclusion
- Digital Infrastructure

Each priority will focus on corporate themes, including methods of communication and areas specific to cyber security. Members received added detail for each priority, this included a new One Place website bringing together related public services in Tameside. The creation of a Virtual Call Centre for all services with enhanced features such as web chat and commitments to improve Council and NHS Apps enabling residents to access Council services, as well as medical records and GP appointments.

While plans were in development for digital progression across the Council and CCG, a large part of this work was fast-tracked at the start of the pandemic. Almost overnight, there was a need to ensure collective efforts addressed digital requirements of the workforce. The aim has been to establish and embed a highly skilled and agile workforce that is both fully equipped and confident in the use of technology and remote working.

Going forward it remains important that the Council continues to progress work to maximise digital opportunities for the borough, this includes support for businesses to adopt and exploit digital solutions. The strategy outlines a number of plans to promote Tameside as a prime location and a digitally enabled borough. This includes further options to extend and develop a

digital and creative quarter positioned within the area of St Petersfield and Ashton Old Baths. The Council will seek to facilitate opportunities for people and businesses to fulfil their potential and ambitions through new technology.

Investment, research and development is an essential part of the Council's ability to exploit emerging technologies. There is also a growing need to reduce the creation, processing and storage of paper, with a programme to digitalise paper records as well as secure information storage. The Council has to remain cyber safe and secure, taking account of all GDPR requirements in order to guarantee the security and privacy of our systems that hold public and personal information. Part of this work includes the adoption of a new Cyber Security Strategy for Tameside and commissioning a new data centre and disaster recovery site.

Discussion touched upon the need to create greater digital accessibility and engagement for all. Reference was made to the recent investment in Microsoft Office 365 and its roll-out, upgrades to computer and IT facilities in public libraries and to expand SWIFT free public Wi-Fi.

Mr Rainey responded to a number of questions from the Panel on:
- Delivery of strategic priorities and timescales.
- Digital solutions, exclusion and improving accessibility.
- Role of Digital services in making data more accessible and qualitative. Creating a more joined up role for digital representatives to work in partnership with all services, Finance and HR to inform decision-making, support service improvement, innovation and delivering required savings.
- Continued access to digital support and training for staff, elected members and residents.
- Digital security and emergency planning to remove and mitigate risks.
- Recent investment and roll out of Microsoft Office 365 - exploiting benefits and training.
- To remain mindful of residents and end users when considering scale of digital expansion and access to original contact methods.
- Digital services now delivering previously identified savings over a longer 4 year period and opportunities to utilise findings from the SOCITM assessment.

Resolved: That Mr Rainey be thanked for attending the meeting.

30. **REVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING**

The Panel received the final report to conclude the review of Homelessness and Housing. The Chair advised that the report is to be presented at the joint meeting of Cabinet and Overview on 9 February 2022.

31. **GREATER MANCHESTER SCRUTINY**

The Chair provided a verbal update on known activity of the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

32. **CHAIRS UPDATE**

The Chair advised members that a number of Scrutiny reports are to be tabled at the joint meeting of Cabinet and Overview Panel on 9 February 2022. Items specific to the pane include:
- Scrutiny Update (summary of activity for 2021/22)
- Final report and Executive Response to conclude activity on Housing and Homelessness

All Scrutiny members have received an invitation to attend the Scrutiny annual budget briefing on 17 January 2022.

33. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel will take place on Tuesday 8 March 2022.

34. URGENT ITEMS

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

CHAIR