

NORTH STRATEGIC NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

15 November 2022

Commenced: 6.30 pm

Terminated: 8.25 pm

Present: Councillors Bowerman (Chair), Glover (Deputy Chair), Bray, Cartey, Choksi, Drennan, Huntbach, McNally, Patel and Turner

In Attendance:

Julian Jackson	Director of Place
Debbie Watson	Director of Population Health
Gregg Stott	Assistant Director of Investment, Development and Housing
Jordanna Rawlinson	Head of Communications
Simone Hill	Practice Manager, Cared for Children Services
Emma Lewis	Service Manager for Early Help
Emma Varnam	Assistant Director of Operations and Neighbourhoods

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Costello and Fairfoull

1. MINUTES

RESOLVED

The Minutes of the meeting of the North Strategic Neighbourhood Forum held on 22 March 2022 were approved as a correct record.

2. COVID VACCINE UPDATE

The Chair welcomed Debbie Watson, Director of Population Health, who had attended the Forum to provide an update on Seasonal Vaccinations (Covid-19 and flu).

It was explained that levels of Covid-19 infection and the impacts were lower than seen in previous waves, although there had been a recent increase with the ONS survey estimating around 1 in 30 people were currently infected (similar rate across England and Tameside). Due to national policy, there was less testing and fewer measures in place to tackle the spread of Covid-19 but vaccination remained a key way to protect the most vulnerable.

The Covid-19 booster was being offered in the Autumn/Winter to:

- People aged 50 years and older
- Residents in care homes (older people)
- Those aged 5 years and over in a clinical risk group
- Health and social care staff

Seasonal flu vaccinations were being offered in the Autumn/Winter to:

- People aged 50 years and older
- Residents in care homes (older people)
- Those aged 6 months and over in a clinical risk group
- Health and social care staff
- Children – toddlers aged 2 and 3; all primary school children; secondary school children in Years 7, 8 and 9
- Pregnant women

- Carers and those in close contact with immunocompromised people

For the highest risk groups, vaccinations had been done as a priority. There were also dedicated programmes in schools, which were delivered across Greater Manchester by Intrahealth; Community pharmacies, who were also offering flu vaccinations (and some had begun to offer Covid boosters); and Health & Social Care Staff via the hospital and the Council programme for all staff.

Progress on the vaccination programmes and work undertaken to maximise uptake, was provided, including specific progress in the Ashton Primary Care Network. Further details were also given in respect of communication activity, across social media channels, Tameside website; information at GP practices; and in the press.

The Director concluded by explaining that there was still time and lots of opportunities to have Covid-19 and flu vaccinations and further information was available:

- Residents could contact their GP / check at a local pharmacy
- Check the Tameside website for further information on bookable and walk-in sessions <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/covidvaccine>
- People could also check their eligibility at <http://gmintegratedcare.org.uk/get-my-jab/>

The Chair thanked the Director of Population Health for a very informative presentation and the excellent work that continued to be carried out on the vaccination programmes and offered their support by continuing to notify residents of the many opportunities to receive vaccinations.

In response to questions with regards to the effectiveness of the Covid-19 vaccination, it was explained that although the disease had mutated and there were new variants since the initial vaccination programme, it remained very effective and the best form of defence against Covid-19. The severity of illness, the numbers of hospital admissions and deaths were significantly reduced thanks to the vaccination programme. The benefits of the programme, which had been rigorously tested and overseen by the JCVI, far outweighed the risks.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

3. ASHTON PUBLIC REALM CONSULTATION

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member, Towns and Communities / Director of Place providing an update on the draft proposal for the redevelopment of Market Square and the outdoor market including the key findings of consultation and engagement work to date.

It was reported that on 27 October 2021, it was announced that the £19,870,000 Levelling Up Fund (LUF) bid for Ashton Town Centre had been successful. The specific interventions proposed in the LUF bid were prepared in accordance with the requirements of the LUF and were critical to unlocking the comprehensive redevelopment of the Town Centre; supporting a coherent vision and completing of the final phase of Vision Tameside.

The Council had now commenced delivery of the Ashton Town Centre LUF programme in the context of an emerging wider strategic vision for Ashton Town Centre following the decision by Executive Cabinet on 24 November 2021. A Memorandum of Understanding with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) was signed in February 2022, which had enabled the first payments of the grant to be drawn down by the Council. A further update was provided to Executive Cabinet on 9 February 2022. Progress on delivery of the Ashton Town Centre LUF programme and public realm works was reported quarterly to the Council's Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel.

Work had commenced on the preparation of a draft proposal (Phase One) for the improvement of Market Square and the outdoor market in Ashton that would be used to shape future design proposals for the key public space in the Ashton Town Centre. The draft proposal had been costed and formulated from feedback received at the Love Ashton Event in March and from discussions with Council officers, key stakeholders and market traders.

Within the wider Ashton LUF programme grant funding of £5,300,000 had been secured associated with the former interchange site. The Council was currently finalising the acquisition of the site from Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) that would be the subject of a separate report to Executive Cabinet later in 2022.

Consultation and engagement to date had identified that delivery of significant improvements to the outdoor market and Market Square in Ashton was a priority for the local community. Market Square and the market stalls continued to attract anti-social behaviour, which in turn, deterred people from visiting the area, new businesses from setting up in the centre of Ashton and a general overall negative perception of the town centre.

The Council had secured funding of £19,870,000 from LUF, of which £11,200,000 was identified for public realm works in the Town Centre for delivery by 31 March 2025. As the priority area of focus was to deliver works linked to Market Square, the public realm strategy and some of the design principles were primarily focused on this area and its immediate surrounds. However, the Public Realm Strategy included proposals, strategies and design principles for the whole of the Town Centre. It would be important that Ashton Town Centre had a clear vision and plan in place in order to respond positively to future funding initiatives as and when they emerged in order to deliver the later phases of works.

Gregg Stott, Assistant Director of Investment, Development and Housing, then delivered a presentation, which gave details of the draft proposal for Phase One - Market Square/Ashton market.

Members were advised that the proposed works for Market Square would look to improve the quality of the public realm, accessibility and mobility of the square, an improved outdoor market offer including the creation of a flexible town square to incorporate a range of uses and possibilities that would enhance the area and the town as a visitor destination in its own right. The extent of adaptations and improvements to Market Square was dependent on the future ambition and provision of the outdoor market.

The total cost of the draft proposal was £10,832,846 and would include the removal of all of kiosks and market stalls and replacing them with the construction of a large canopy or a series of canopied structures (including a canopy attached to Market Hall) that would include flexible market units to meet the needs of modern market traders. Costings for the draft proposal had been based on the Gold Standard of public realm delivery and included an annual 8.4% inflation allowance.

It was explained that there were a significant number of advantages of progressing the draft proposal, which included the opportunity to open up the views to heritage buildings in the square, shelter for traders and visitors from the elements, reduce the likelihood of ASB by removing the fixed stalls and providing modern market facilities. Ultimately, the clearance of the existing stalls and kiosks would enable the comprehensive redevelopment of Market Square that would deliver a much more flexible space for a multitude of uses in addition to a modern outdoor market, to enable small and larger scale events to take place. The main disadvantages of the draft proposal was that it would inevitably lead to disruption to market traders whilst the work took place. Measures would need to be put in place to ensure disruption caused to traders was minimised. Specialist consultants in market operations would be included in the multi-disciplinary team to support the practicalities and logistics when the scheme was to be delivered. A high-level breakdown of the costs for the draft proposal were included in the report. The costings would be subject to detailed design work due to commence imminently.

In terms of next steps, the Council were now in the period of public consultation on Phase One of the Public Realm Strategy, which included the draft proposal for the redevelopment of Market Square using funding secured from Levelling Up Fund.

Consultation material would be available online and an event would also be held at Ashton Market Hall where the local community would be able to speak with Council officers and members of the consultant team around the emerging proposals, which would be displayed on exhibition boards at various locations in the town centre. Once the consultation period had ended, comments and feedback would be collated. This would inform preparation of the final proposals for the Phase One works for Executive Cabinet approval.

Timescales for delivery of the works to Market Square were challenging and the funding agreement was clear that monies needed to be spent and works completed by March 2025. This was achievable within the current delivery programme on the assumption that the phase of consultation was completed by November 2022 to enable the first stages of the detailed design stage to progress.

A wide ranging discussion ensued and Members voiced their disappointment with the limited options of the consultation process to date and the reliance on social media. Members provided comments on the provision on offer at other markets within Greater Manchester and the need to encourage young people. In response, it was confirmed that sessions would be held with the Colleges and students as part of the 4-week consultation process. Comments were also given on the need for improvements to public transport and accessibility to the market from Wellington Road and increased seating in the market square that was adequate for the elderly and disabled. The Assistant Director advised that there was a wider infrastructure team alongside the Levelling Up programme and a multi-disciplinary team working on accessibility. Forum Members also voiced their concern on the affordability of rents for market traders once the work was completed.

RESOLVED

That the content of the report and presentation be noted.

4. HELPING HAND WARM HUBS/RESPONSE TO COST OF LIVING CRISIS

The Chair welcomed Jordanna Rawlinson, Head of Communications, who attended the Forum to provide details on the local response to the cost of living crisis.

It was explained that poverty was more than just a lack of income, other areas such as physical and mental health, education, housing and the ability to participate fully in public life must also be considered. Tameside Council, alongside partners in the public, private and voluntary sector, recognised the severity of the current crisis and was working hard to support residents, including:

- Immediate Response Action Plan
- 'Helping Hand Tameside'
- Warm Welcome Hubs
- Longer Term Response
 - Needs Assessment
 - Strategy

It was further explained that a comprehensive Needs Assessment had been created to identify the nature of poverty in Tameside and gaps in services and processes. Information for the Needs Assessment was gathered through the following exercises:

- Service mapping to understand processes, pressures and pinch-points and capture the views of service users and front-line staff on causes and potential solutions to poverty.
- Public consultation for 8 weeks, asking respondents "What do you think about poverty in Tameside?" and "What can we do about poverty in Tameside?"

- Four focus groups with people with lived experience of poverty in Tameside, with the aim of taking a more in-depth look at the key themes emerging from the survey and service-mapping work.
- Poverty was the headline focus of the July 2022 Partnership Engagement Network Conference.
- Input from the Poverty Truth Commission (PTC).
- Data, research, literature and other good practice.

Key challenges identified from the Needs Assessment included:

- Benefits
- Debt
- Food Poverty
- Fuel Poverty
- Employment
- Council Tax
- Mental Health
- Disabilities
- Life Expectancy
- Carers
- Barriers to Accessing Services
- Service User Experience
- Child Poverty
- Social Housing
- Private Rent
- Homelessness

Details were given of Helping Hand Tameside, a one-stop-shop that directed people to local support services, charities and organisations, ensuring all residents knew how to get in touch for support and what help was available.

As well as broader signposting, the campaign focussed in on more detail in specific areas and programmes of work, for example:

- Warm Welcome Hubs, which included libraries
- Food poverty
- Scam awareness
- Debt advice and risks associated with poverty and the Cost of Living Crisis
- Fuel poverty - Energy saving tips
- Accessing benefits entitled to

The long term response was also detailed and discussed with involvement of the Health and Wellbeing Board, a Poverty Strategy and various emerging themes.

A wide ranging discussion ensued in terms of the issues raised and Members thanked everyone involved for the work undertaken directing people to appropriate support services and wished them luck with the campaign over the Winter months.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

5. FOSTER CARE RECRUITMENT PRESENTATION

The Practice Manager, Cared for Children Services, attended the meeting to deliver a presentation on Tameside Council's Fostering Service.

Fostering was the support and care for a child when they could not live at home that provided a stable and caring environment. It assisted with contact with birth parents and other connected persons; getting a child to school; attendance at meetings – reviews and education; and to undertake training to develop fostering skills. Anyone could foster whether they were married, co-habiting, single, straight or gay and there was no upper age limit. All ethnic and religious backgrounds were welcome and the only requirement was a spare bedroom in the home, that did not have to be owned, and people ideally lived locally in order to transport children to school.

It was reported that, as of 4 November 2022, there were 663 cared for children in Tameside. Of these, 428 were in foster care (292 Tameside own provision). There were currently not enough foster care placements for children within Tameside to cope with demand.

Details of the different types of fostering were outlined in the presentation, the reasons why people fostered and the approval process were outlined. Ongoing fostering support and the type of carers required were also discussed. Further details could be found at fosteringenquiries@tameside.gov.uk.

The Chair thanked the Practice Manager, Cared for Children Services, for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

6. FAMILY HUBS

The Chair welcomed the Service Manager for Early Help, who attended the Forum to deliver a presentation on Family Hubs and the Best Start for Life programme.

It was explained that Family Hubs were a way of joining up locally and bringing existing family help services together to improve access to services, connections between families, professionals, services, providers, and putting relationships at the heart of family help. Family Hubs brought together services for families with children of all ages (0-19) or up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with a great Start for Life offer at their core. Family Hubs could include both a physical (using existing buildings) and virtual offers, which had proved very popular with families through the pandemic.

How services were delivered varied from place to place but the following principles were key to the family hub model:

- More accessible – through clearly branded and communicated hub buildings, virtual offers and outreach
- Better connected – family hubs drive progress on joining up professionals, services and providers through co-location, data sharing, shared outcomes and governance. Moving from services organised for under-fives, to families with children of all ages, reduced fragmentation (even though an emphasis on early years and the ‘Start for Life’ offer would remain)
- Relationship-centred – practice in a family hub builds on family strengths and looked to improve family relationships to address underlying issues
- Universal through to targeted services – providing welcoming, non-stigmatised services for families

Family Hubs were a key part of the Best Start for Life vision outlined in [The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1,001 Critical Days](#) and additional funding had been allocated to Tameside to further develop the Family Hub and Best Start for Life Offer over a 3 year period.

A map detailing Tameside’s Family Hub Area Model was shown to the Forum, which was split into four geographical locations (North, South, East and West) that aligned to the localities used by health and Police partners.

The funding with the Family Hubs Programme also included funding to expand the 0-2/0-5 services and provision, the funding was aimed at:

- Infant Feeding
- Parent Infant Mental Health
- Parenting
- Home Learning Environment
- Publishing the Best Start for Life Offer
- Building a Parent and Carer Panel.

The Family Hub would build on existing assets and expand and enhance the current provision. Tameside's progress was detailed as follows:

- Family Hubs and Best Start for Life Steering Group established
- Project Team identified
- Official 'sign up' form approved by Executive Cabinet, and submitted to the Department of Education (end of October)
- Department of Education Advisor identified for Tameside
- Sharing and Learning Networks established within Greater Manchester, and the North West
- Detailed delivery plan in development with key including co-production and consultation (due for submission by the end of December 2022)
- Strong alignment with the Programme Guidance:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme-local-authority-guide>

Forum Members enquired about the locations of the Family Hubs and the Service Manager for Early Help responded that no decision had yet been made but there were many buildings to choose from and they would need to be within walking distance and easily accessible to residents.

The Chair thanked the Service Manager for Early Help for attending the Forum and delivering an interesting presentation.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

7. LITTER CAMPAIGN

The Chair welcomed Emma Varnam, Assistant Director of Operations and Neighbourhoods, who delivered a presentation on the network of Litter Hubs in Tameside and the Our Streets campaign.

It was explained that Tameside Council's Litter Hubs Network enabled residents or groups to book free equipment, including high vis jackets, litter pickers and black bags, from community places with Council officers arranging for the rubbish to be disposed of appropriately. It was part of the 'Our Streets' campaign, with an aim of bringing people together for a cleaner and safer borough.

The Forum were informed that there were 14 live litter hubs in the Network at present across the nine towns of Tameside that were beginning to link together with one already linked to a local business. There were Tinsel Litter Picks Events and more litter hubs were planned. Further information on Litter Hubs, or to establish one at a community event, could be obtained by contacting Sharron Power on 07980 993553 or by email at sharron.power@tameside.gov.uk.

Details of enforcement action was also provided as follows:

- 'Our Streets' campaign launched
- 3 Days Of Action held in Ashton, Droylsden and Denton
- 9 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued
- 62 businesses had been visited regarding waste Duty of Care

- Illicit tobacco and drugs were seized
- 3 fly tipping prosecutions in 2022 with fines totalling £3,608.

Further planned dates for enforcement activity across the Borough were also provided as follows:

- 2 November in Denton
- 7 December in Hyde
- 11 January in Ashton (St Peters)
- 15 February in Stalybridge

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director of Operations and Neighbourhoods for the presentation and Forum Members pledged their support to the campaign.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date of the next meeting of the North Strategic Neighbourhood Forum, scheduled for 31 January 2023, be noted.

CHAIR