

NORTH STRATEGIC NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

28 March 2023

Commenced: 6.30 pm

Terminated: 8.00 pm

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

In Attendance:

Julian Jackson	Director of Place
Ali Stathers-Tracey	Director of Children's Services
Simon Brunet	Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence
Damien Cutting	Economic Growth Lead
Emma Lewis	Service Manager Early Help
Chief Superintendent	Greater Manchester Police
Phil Davies	

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Choksi

13. MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the North Strategic Neighbourhood Forum held on 31 January 2023 were approved as a correct record.

14. GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE - NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING MODEL

The Chair welcomed Chief Superintendent Phil Davies, Greater Manchester Police (GMP), who attended the Forum to deliver a presentation on the Neighbourhood Policing Model.

He began by stating that neighbourhood policing was the bedrock of British policing and provided a vital link for communities to have a trusted connection to the Police who had the power to keep them safe. It had been acknowledged that this link had not been effectively maintained with Neighbourhood Officers often being pulled away from their role in order to respond to major incidents or carry out investigations, and shift patterns left gaps particularly at weekends. PCSOs had performed an admirable job of providing visibility but had limited powers to tackle crime.

In September 2021, the new Chief Constable made a series of public promises, setting out a plan to build a better GMP and establish a way forward to effectively reduce crime, harm and anti-social behaviour through neighbourhood policing. Nearly 8000 people participated in a major public consultation expressing the following expectations for GMP:-

- Be visible and accessible
- Listen
- Deal with crime and anti-social behaviour
- Communicate better

The new GMP model would deliver on these aspects and focus on the basics of neighbourhood policing with 35 neighbourhood areas serviced by 89 dedicated teams working across a 3-week shift pattern providing coverage 7 days a week across the neighbourhood area. Once fully staffed, there would be a committed neighbourhood resource of 1,148 Officers and staff and a re-mapped resource model and shift pattern to maintain availability. Each neighbourhood would have a ring fenced dedicated team of Sergeants, Police Constables and PCSOs led by a Neighbourhood Inspector in every District.

In terms of the composition for Tameside, there would be two designated neighbourhood teams (North and South) with each team having 1 Inspector, 3 Sergeants and 16 Neighbourhood Officers. Each of the 19 Wards would have a dedicated PCSO.

The features of the Neighbourhood Policing Model were outlined as follows:-

- Strong leadership and accountability for a clearly defined geographical area – 1 Inspector covering 3 teams. Dedicated named teams of local Police Officers working together with PCSOs, recognising that an effective model required a heavier weighting of Police Officers – giving teams the powers to deal with the issues the communities were identifying.
- Aligned to partner boundaries / service delivery footprints to support partnership problem solving and place-based working.
- Resourcing formula applied to determine resourcing levels based on demand / need: neighbourhood teams need more people with policing powers.
- Revised shift patterns to supply better coverage and increased visibility. A new three-week shift pattern already in use by other forces provided full seven-day cover in each neighbourhood footprint ensuring weekends – which were often uncovered – had the same focus for Neighbourhood Policing.
- Teams were visible and could be contacted by local communities. They listened to issues that concern communities and worked with public and partners. Provide feedback on action that had been taken.
- Engagement plans included new information on the website for every team – photos, contacts, dates of meetings, feedback on activity and priorities. A new community alert system called ‘Bee in the Loop’ where people could sign up to receive dynamic information from their neighbourhood team and use it to communicate two-ways.
- Neighbourhood teams would also benefit from the restoration of support functions, which included a dedicated Neighbourhood Prevention Hub consisting of an Inspector and specialist neighbourhood officers working with partners in every district.
- The Hubs had already been set up and would help drive prevention and problem solving with communities and partners by supporting neighbourhood teams to plan their interventions and would lead on force wide reduction of repeat demand, which reduced pressure on neighbourhood policing to focus on identified problems. Neighbourhood Prevention Hubs were further supported by a Prevention Hub working at HQ with partners to support local initiatives and develop Greater Manchester wide prevention plans.
- A new Neighbourhood Crime Team would be created in every district to lead the delivery of force operations targeting neighbourhood crimes such as burglary, car crime and theft. This specialist capability would provide neighbourhood policing teams with the resources needed to effectively connect intelligence to target offenders in the district and conduct high profile action to help the neighbourhood policing teams drive down crimes and formed a key part of the delivery strategy for neighbourhood crime.
- There will be closer management of abstractions and, whilst it could not always be guaranteed, the policy of non-abstraction would be re-emphasised and more closely monitored as part of a new neighbourhood policing performance management regime.
- The need for neighbourhood beat officers to perform response duties would also be reduced through investments being made in other parts of the force, which were driving down demand: a new grading policy, investment in response policing and the investment into desk-based investigators would all come together to reduce the potential for neighbourhood policing abstraction.
- Improved training: Accredited Neighbourhood Management Training began in October 2022, to skill up officers and professionalise neighbourhood policing. To date, 324 officers had been trained up and were putting their skills into practice.

The Forum were informed that planned PACT meetings would resume, the website “local area” had been overhauled and a new messaging service “Bee in the Loop” had been introduced, which people could sign up to in order to receive real time updates and provide feedback.

Chief Superintendent Davies acknowledged the tremendous hard work of PCSOs who would continue to form a valued and essential part of Neighbourhood Teams, particularly focusing on community visibility and engagement. However, to be able to deal more effectively with the issues that communities wanted GMP to prioritise, neighbourhood teams needed more people with policing powers. As a result:

- PCSOs would reduce, through natural attrition, by 333 from 518 currently filled posts to 215.
- Every ward would have one named PCSO.
- Savings made by reducing PCSO numbers would be invested in a further 264 warranted neighbourhood policing police officers.
- No jobs would be lost, and any PCSO who wanted to transfer to become a Police Officer or take up another role in the force, would be supported.

Members welcomed the reorganisation and advised that they had received positive feedback from local residents on the “Bee in the Loop” system. Further information was sought and provided on the system. It was explained that it worked via postcode data and could send residents information on significant and critical incidents in their local area and allowed residents to send information back to GMP. Members were advised that it was available on all devices and could be easily downloaded from app stores.

Members commended the PACT meetings that were held with PCSOs as they provided a valuable opportunity for sharing useful information and expressed their wish for them to continue as part of the new Neighbourhood Policing Model. Concern was expressed that this engagement could potentially be diluted with the reduction in the numbers of PCSOs. Chief Superintendent Davies stressed the importance of engagement and Police involvement in events and meetings as part of the new model. He stated that Neighbourhood Officers would be instructed that they needed to continue the duties that PCSOs had undertaken and carry out tasks that were important to the community they were serving.

Members also voiced their concern with the reduction of PCSOs especially in light of the recent abstraction of Police Officers from their Neighbourhood duties. They were advised that there would still be a dedicated PCSO for each of the 19 Wards in Tameside and Neighbourhood Officers would be ring fenced in their community. In addition, there would be a three-pronged tracking system in the unlikely event that an Officer was extracted in order to hold senior staff accountable.

Members requested information on 101 response times. Chief Superintendent Davies was pleased to announce that GMP had recently been recognised as the best Force in the country for answering grade 1 (999 calls) and grade 2 (101 calls) with a response time of under 2 seconds for 999 calls and under one minute for 101 calls.

Information was sought and provided on burglaries. Chief Superintendent Davies explained that there had been a significant amount of work undertaken in this area and Tameside had established a reputation for having a “ring of steel” on its road networks. As a result of this prolonged campaign, he was pleased to announce that the burglary rate in Tameside was the lowest it had been for several years and despite some isolated spates across the district, was happy with the trajectory.

The Chair thanked the Chief Superintendent Davies for an excellent presentation and the work that had gone into the development of the Neighbourhood Policing Model.

RESOLVED

That the update and the Neighbourhood Policing Model be noted.

15. ASHTON PUBLIC REALM

The Chair welcomed Damien Cutting, Economic Growth Lead, who attended the Forum to present “A Public Realm Strategy for Ashton-under-Lyne: Phase 1 – Market Square” that had been developed by an independent company on behalf of Tameside Council. The first phase of the strategy would focus on the Market Square, Market Hall and connecting spaces.

Following on from the initial presentation delivered on Ashton public realm at the North Strategic Neighbourhood Forum in November 2022 (Minute 3 refers), an update was provided. The Forum were reminded that the draft proposal for the redevelopment of Market Square (including Ashton outdoor market) had been subject to a public consultation for a 4-week period in November / December 2022. Alongside the draft proposals, a survey was issued and a consultation strategy set out the detail of who would be consulted, how people could have their say and included a series of meetings with key stakeholders including market traders in Ashton. Other engagement included the Love Ashton event in March 2022 and a public event held in Ashton Market Hall on Saturday 26 November 2022, which was attended by 100 people. A number of consistent themes and important considerations emerged, which had been incorporated within the design principles.

A number of sessions and workshops were held specifically with market traders, kiosk operators and Council officers. It was essential that market traders were engaged in the process of preparing the strategy and had been identified as a key stakeholder going forward into the detailed design stage for Market Square and the outdoor market. Some traders and kiosk operators requested a need to retain a kiosk facility on Market Square as it was considered that the facilities suited the requirements of their business operation. Some kiosk operators also felt that the facilities were well positioned to attract trade through Market Square. Other concerns noted were linked to accessibility for deliveries and own cars to stalls could be impacted. Traders were concerned over the disruption and any adverse impacts that the redevelopment would have on their ability to trade as normal.

The future vision for Ashton town centre was outlined and the aim was to breathe new life into the town centre, to make it a friendly and welcoming place for future generations to enjoy and attract investment and prosperity for years to come. The centre was a compact, well-connected, sustainable place whose unique heritage needed to be celebrated. The Market Square was the beating heart of the town and deserved to have a modern market and public space enlivened by events and a vibrant evening economy that was a destination for people to socialise and relax.

The key design elements for a modern market vision were highlighted to Members as follows:

- A flexible space to support a programme of entertainment and cultural events to attract visitors into the town centre.
- Accessible. A robust and durable single unified surface to meet modern accessibility standards. Incorporate access and servicing requirements with a layout to encourage permeability of visitors through the space, considering connections to the surrounding streets.
- Increased outdoor informal seating, and dedicated seating areas for eating and drinking to support and enhance spill out from the market hall.
- Inclusive and welcomes everyone. Uses to meet the needs of all ages and incorporating interactive play elements.
- A new canopy to provide a designated undercover area for markets to include flexible, durable market stalls and kiosks.
- New trees and planting to create an attractive environment and improve air quality and carbon sequestration.
- Improved way-finding, street furniture and lighting to encourage safety and reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Public art to be incorporated to celebrate the heritage and story of Ashton.
- An improved waste management system, improved public toilet facilities, and designated storage for stallholders.

A series of illustrative design proposals including the canopy, kiosks and public realm spaces were shown to Members. Future phases were emphasised, which were excluded from the Levelling Up Fund, to be delivered at a later date subject to future funding opportunities. The ambition was for the first phase of improvement in the Market Square to act as a catalyst for the future regeneration of Ashton town centre, attracting investment to deliver the Ashton town centre vision.

The next steps were listed. Timescales for delivery were very tight in order to comply with the Levelling Up Funding agreement of works to be completed in full by March 2025. The key milestones were:

- Approved Public Realm Strategy – March 2023
- Detailed design stage – April 2023
- Planning application process – May - August 2023
- Detailed design approval – November 2023
- Main construction phase – Winter 2023 - March 2025

A wide ranging discussion ensued and Members enquired about the cleanliness issues of the canopy, whether the stalls would be removable and the need for CCTV. It was confirmed that there would be a maintenance strategy for the canopy, the kiosks could be removed and a task force had been established that included the Police and security whose ideas would be incorporated.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that market traders had been consulted both on a collective and individual basis through a range of forums and this key engagement would continue throughout the project. There would be a relocation and decanting strategy in order to reduce disruption as much as possible throughout the construction work.

Members suggested that a newsletter be created and circulated in order to update residents on the different phases of construction to include anticipated timescales. Mr Cutting advised that there had been extensive social media coverage, which would continue, and information hoardings would be erected in the town centre.

The Chair thanked Mr Cutting for an informative presentation and looked forward to receiving future updates on the development.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation and the Public Realm Strategy for Ashton-under-Lyne, be noted.

16. EQUALITY STRATEGY

The Chair welcomed Simon Brunet, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence, who delivered a presentation in respect of the Equality Strategy 2023-27, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda.

The Forum were informed that under the Equality Act 2010, the Local Authority had a statutory duty to publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives at intervals of no more than four years. The strategy had been developed using a Local Government Association self-assessment tool, advice from an independent review of the approach to equalities in Tameside Council, engagement with the Partnership Engagement Network, reports delivered through the Inequalities Reference Group, Community Champions, benchmarking exercises and a review of equalities data.

Members were advised that, in identifying the objectives for the next five years, a variety of public engagement, consultation, and self-assessment methodologies had been undertaken. This had helped the authority to understand where the priorities were, the gaps in work with more diverse communities, and what must be done to address this.

From the engagement, consultation, and self-assessments, six Equality Objectives had been identified, as follows:

1. Continuous Effective Monitoring: Improve our approach to monitoring performance in terms of equalities to enable transparency, accountability, and rigour.
2. Embedding Equalities in Service Change: Embed equalities in service changes, strategy and policy development, and decision-making processes across the organisation through robust and rigorous Equality Analysis and Impact Assessments.
3. Cultivate Seldom Heard Voices in Engagement: Expand and adapt our engagement and consultation approaches to increase the involvement of “seldom-heard groups” and ensure that their perspectives are central to strategy, policy, and service development.
4. Addressing Barriers to Information and Services: Address and alleviate barriers to accessing Council information and services that protected groups encountered.
5. An Accepting Organisational Culture: Instil an organisational culture and practice of acceptance of different staff needs and requirements to ensure that all staff, particularly those from protected groups, were valued.
6. Celebrating Diversity: Promote and celebrate the value of diversity in Tameside, so that as an anchor institution, the Council could be a positive exemplar to the broader community.

Through those objectives, it was aimed to embed an approach and ethos throughout the organisation that would centralise equality, ensuring that equalities concerns would orient and permeate through all strategies, policies, and services. Under each of the Equality Objectives defined, a series of actions had been identified that would enable the organisation to achieve each objective, details of which were set out in the Strategy.

The Chair thanked Mr Brunet for an interesting presentation.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation and the Equality Strategy, be noted.

17. ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

Simon Brunet, Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence, delivered a presentation that provided an overview of the new borough-wide strategy to tackle poverty in Tameside. It introduced the key areas of priority for the whole system to tackle the challenges in the coming years.

The Forum were notified that the work undertaken had been informed by the strategy “Building Resilience: Tackling Poverty in Tameside 2023-27” in addition to the Poverty Needs Assessment, both of which were available on the Council’s website. Evidence was also provided via focus groups, client feedback, public surveys, the Partnership Engagement Network, Poverty Truth Commission, the Inequalities Reference Group and benchmarking.

It was reported that the “Building Resilience: Tackling Poverty in Tameside 2023-27” strategy had been recently launched, and subsequently published, at the Health and Wellbeing Board with commitment from all partners, not just the Council, to take action to tackle poverty over the next 5 years across Tameside.

The strategy set out some of the context of what poverty looked like in Tameside and contained a lot of data and information that set out the challenge that communities faced both in the longer term challenges around poverty, as well as the more recent and immediate challenges in light of the current cost of living crisis.

Key statistics from the strategy were displayed, which articulated some of the impact of poverty in Tameside with high rates of debt and insolvency; high rates of food insecurity; lots of people qualifying for council tax support and free school meals; and relatively lower numbers of jobs paying the living wage in Tameside. The measures all indicated that there were particular challenges around poverty in the borough.

It was further reported that, at the end of February 2023, Greater Manchester Poverty Action (GMPA) published their report “Local anti-poverty strategies – Good practice and effective approaches”. GMPA had made twelve advisory recommendations for those areas embarking on the development of an anti-poverty strategy. Current work put Tameside in a strong position against GMPA’s recommendations. Examples of work that met the recommendations included:

- Poverty Needs Assessment
- Programme of engagement and lived experience listening
- Poverty Truth Commission
- Adoption of the socio-economic duty in 2022
- Partnership approach through the Health and Wellbeing Board
- Clear leadership with named Executive Member (Cllr Wills)
- Development of a detailed and tracked action plan (in development now)
- Poverty dashboard (in development now building on the needs assessment)
- Pilot and implementation of Money Advice Referral Tool

In order to showcase some of the existing good work in the borough, a range of case studies had also been included in the strategy of work already happening. Details were provided of two case studies, one of which highlighted the success of the ‘Tameside In Work’ programme, which had supported many people into better paid work by developing new skills and increasing confidence. The other case study showed the work that was happening across partners such as Onward Homes, who held a ‘Helping Hands Winter Warmer’ event to provide support and advice for residents.

Reference was made to the “Helping Hands” campaign from the Council, which was another example of the approach taken to try to bring services and support to residents to better enable them to access the information, help and support that was available to them and in many cases, increasing the uptake of many of the entitlements that people should receive that they may not be claiming.

The strategy identified 10 key priorities that required action, in order to tackle poverty and build resilience across the borough, as follows:

- Raising incomes – supporting residents to maximise income and access all benefits they are entitled to.
- Making Tameside work for everyone – securing high quality and high-wage employment for all residents.
- Poverty was everybody’s business – supporting residents, communities and partners to identify signs of poverty and sign post to support.
- Climbing out of the debt trap – understanding why Tameside residents had relatively high levels of debt, high insolvencies and poor access to good credit to help alleviate the issue.
- Breaking the cycle – specific focus on providing the best start in childhood and education.
- Laying the foundations – ensuring residents had access to what they needed in order to live in comfort and dignity and support those in poverty.
- Putting people first – making sure that working practices (both customer facing and internal) were best placed to identify and support those in poverty.
- One size doesn’t fit all – additional support for residents identified as being at particular risk of poverty.
- Advocating for change – highlighting the need for action on poverty-related issues where responsibility was with national government.

The next steps were outlined and Members were advised that a dedicated working group had been established to ensure progress was made, which would report to the Health and Wellbeing Board, and a draft action plan for delivery of the 10 key priorities was already in development.

Members made reference to food banks, the loss of Sure Start centres and the need for safe homes in addition to better health outcomes and increased wages for residents.

The Chair thanked Mr Brunet for a very informative presentation and requested that the Strategy, as published on the Council's website, be circulated to Members after the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation be noted.

18. EARLY HELP STRATEGY

The Chair welcomed Emma Lewis, Service Manager Early Help, who attended the Forum to deliver a presentation in respect of the updated Early Help Strategy, a copy of which had been circulated with the agenda.

The reasons for updating the strategy were detailed and included:

- Alignment with the refreshed Threshold document [Tameside Framework for Help and Support](#) to clarify what type of support was available at each level of need.
- To incorporate the recommendations from recent Ofsted inspections and the change on Ofsted inspection criteria, McAlister review and the latest national Children's Social Care [Strategy Stable Homes Built on Love](#).
- To respond to the launch of Family Hubs and Start for Life programme, recognising the enhanced opportunities for early intervention they offer.
- To acknowledge the impacts of recent national crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis on children and families and the need for multiagency, holistic support.

Ms Lewis explained that Early Help meant providing extra support to families to prevent problems from occurring or getting worse, which included:

- Young people struggling at school, nursery or education setting
- Mental health problems within the family
- A young person or child missing healthcare appointments or leading an unhealthy lifestyle
- A young person, parents or their family members using drugs or alcohol
- A young person, parents or their family members getting involved with crime
- Parents struggling financially

In Tameside, this support came from practitioners, usually in nurseries, schools or health settings. Early Help Advisers from the Local Authority were there to help support practitioners to coordinate this help, which included the earliest possible intervention for those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The key principles of the Strategy, including Tameside's approach, were outlined as follows:

- Supporting and helping children and families at the earliest opportunity - the right help, at the right time, from the right place.
- Actively listening to the voices of children and families in line with the [Listening Framework](#).
- Holistic support was provided with families, bespoke to their needs.
- Proactively utilising Signs of Safety to help assess risks, concerns and identify solutions in partnership with children and families.
- Support and help was delivered with children and families, building on their strengths and supporting them to come up with solutions with the help of their network.
- Understanding that safeguarding was everyone's business. Everyone working with children, young people and their families understood that they were responsible for keeping children safe and promoting the welfare of children.
- Acknowledging that many situations needed a multiagency, trauma informed response, all agencies would work collaboratively to offer a coordinated response and avoid duplication.
- Everybody was confident with data protection principles and would proactively share information to help recognise, assess and act to provide a coordinated response to the needs of the child and the family.

- No one should assume that someone else would pass on information, which may be vital to keeping a child or young person safe.

To create the initial draft of the strategy, two interactive workshops were held with representatives from VCSFE sector, Health, the Council and Police. These established what participants felt was working well and what needed improvement within the borough and led to the creation of the priorities of the strategy. Further feedback would be sought from a variety of groups including the Youth Council, Starting Well partnership, Cared for Children Council, the Health and Wellbeing Board, Tameside Community Safety partnership, Tameside Provider partnership and Tameside Safeguarding Children partnership. An [online survey](#) was being promoted on social media and had been circulated within the Council and also to partners (including schools) and families.

Members were advised that, following the end of the online consultation in May 2023 and the governance procedure through to Executive Cabinet in June 2023, the new Strategy would be launched in July 2023 with work across the partnership to develop the implementation.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the service worked with Cascade in addition to many other groups. A number of support options were available including face to face support, a professional helpline, a one to one clinic to support families in addition to the online offer, that had proved so popular during the pandemic.

Discussion ensued and Members sought further clarity in respect of the location of the family hubs and the communication of the content of the Strategy.

The Chair thanked Ms Lewis for the thought provoking presentation.

RESOLVED

That the content of the presentation and the Early Help Strategy, be noted.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED

That the date of the next meeting of the North Strategic Neighbourhood Forum, scheduled for 27 June 2023, be noted.

CHAIR