

## OVERVIEW PANEL

1 August 2023

**Commenced: 16:10**

**Terminated: 17:05**

**Present:**

Councillors Naylor (Chair), Cooney, Fairfoull, North, Reid, Roderick, N Sharif and M Smith

**In Attendance:**

Sandra Stewart	Chief Executive
Ashley Hughes	Director of Resources
Emma Varnam	Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods
Simon Brunet	Head of Policy, Performance, Communications and Scrutiny

**Apologies for Absence:** Councillors Kitchen, Fitzpatrick and Billington

### 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 2. MINUTES

The minutes of the Overview Panel meeting on the 21 November 2022 were approved as a correct record.

### 3. OVERVIEW WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

Consideration was given to a report of the Chair of the Overview Panel, which detailed the annual work programme of the Council's Overview Panel.

Members were advised that there were a range of options available to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels as to how activity was planned and undertaken. Chairs would work closely with panel members in order to adopt a combination of approaches to review service and performance updates, respond to formal consultations, in-focus reports of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and areas in need of more in-depth review.

The work programme was explained to Members and highlighted that the list of topics did not reflect any order in which activity would be selected and undertaken. Discussion with the Executive and the three Scrutiny Panel chairs had informed the list of topics identified in the work programme below:

- Corporate Plan – monitoring and delivery progress.
- Supporting strategies underpinning the Corporate Plan.
- Performance and assurance framework – effectiveness.
- Performance updates on council services – corporate and thematic scorecards.
- Transformation / improvement programme – scope and progress updates.
- Financial strategy – long term financial resilience plan.
- Workforce development – recruitment & retention of staff in key services and the training & upskilling of the workforce (in particular in systems and IT).
- Key learning from external challenge – e.g. complaints (incl. LGSCO), inspections (incl. Ofsted, CQC), peer reviews (incl. LGA), new Best Value and Oflog framework.
- Systems, IT and digital – forward plan and key projects to modernise council infrastructure – e.g. data science, single customer record.

### RESOLVED

**That the content of the work programme and planned activity be noted.**

#### 4. SCRUTINY ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMMES 2023/24

Consideration was given to a report of the Chair of Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel / Chair of Children's Services Scrutiny Panel / Chair of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel / Head of Policy and Communications (Statutory Scrutiny Officer).

Members were advised that there was a range of options available to each Scrutiny Panel as to how activity was planned and undertaken. Scrutiny Chairs continued to work closely with panel members in order to adopt a combination of approaches to review service and performance updates, respond to formal consultations, focus reports of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and areas in need of more in-depth review.

Each Scrutiny Panel held a work programme session in June 2023, which provided members with the opportunity to comment and contribute to the list topics included in the annual work programme. Scrutiny activity would continue to be undertaken outside of the formal meetings and through working groups, with all findings and recommendations presented to the full panel for comment and approval. This flexibility allowed responsive and timely work to be undertaken, creating an enhanced opportunity to both influence and inform the impact of decisions.

In order to prevent delay, Scrutiny Panels had agreed the topics to be considered at the next round of public meetings in July:

- **Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel – 25 July 2023**
- Neighbourhood Enforcement  
(Invitation to the Executive Member for Climate Emergency & Environmental Services)
- **Children's Services Scrutiny Panel – 26 July 2023**  
Services for Care Leavers  
(Invitation to the Deputy Executive Leader – Children and Families)
- **Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel – 27 July 2023**  
Adult Social Care White Paper and implications for Tameside (Invitation to the Executive Member for Adult Services)

The Chair of Place and External Relations, Chair of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel and Chair of Children's Services Scrutiny Panel provided an overview of the input and discussion of panel members from meetings held in June 2023.

The Chair of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel explained scrutiny topics ranging from Neighbourhood Enforcement and Housing / Registered Provider Partnership. The Panel recognised the importance of receiving regular updates from GMP with regard to the implementation of the neighbourhood model and Community Safety Partnership. The Panel recognised that topics specific to growth, investment and regeneration may be closely linked and best considered in conjunction with others.

The Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel would undertake core assurance activity across improvement activity, to include Children's Social Care Improvement Plan, Safeguarding Partnerships and Ofsted Activity. The Panel would focus on the effectiveness of services and support to care leavers and the quality and consistency of social work practice.

The Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel would undertake core assurance activity with health partners during the municipal year and receive timely briefings to include CCG inspection framework, GMIC model, Tameside & Glossop Integrated Care Foundation Trust and Pennine Care NHS Mental Health Foundation Trust. The Panel would focus on access to GP appointments and health inequalities.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the content of the work programmes and planned activity of the Scrutiny Panels be noted.**

### **5. MORE HOME TRUTHS - LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE HOMELESSNESS REDUCTION ACT**

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods, which detailed the report published by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman regarding lessons learned from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Members were advised that whilst the LGSCO recognised the financial pressure that local authorities were facing, it was identified that common administrative mistakes, process failures and poor communication, all added to the distress of individuals at a very stressful time. The report attached at Appendix 1, provided a clear explanation of the duty and used case studies which highlighted common issues and examples of best practice. The report also provided example questions for Scrutiny Panels to ask of their local authority Homelessness Service which was provided to Members at Appendix 2.

It was explained that the LGSCO report referred to staff employed in the Housing Register specifically. In Tameside Housing Advice (THA), staff were trained to identify when Homelessness Reduction (HR) applications needed to be referred to the Homeless Prevention team. The process was intended to ensure any person who is at risk of potential homelessness would be identified as early as possible. The Council would be undertaking a service review to bolster the staffing resource in this area, turning reactive duty into a prevention approach. There were recommendations that other front line services should know when to signpost to THA. Other departments such as Children's and Adult Social Care already had relationships with the THA service. It was reported that a briefing note should be circulated to remind all services of these requirements and processes.

The Homelessness Team had continued to implement change to improve service delivery and customer outcomes. It was reported that there was no doubt that the cost of living crisis had impacted upon homelessness levels in Tameside. The Panel were assured that service delivery and Homelessness prevention was a key objective of the Council. All staff had participated in a 2 day homelessness training event. In addition, a staff training matrix had been established to deliver and monitor staff training and competences going forward. It was explained that the implementation of a dedicated staff member to focus on homeless prevention was proving successful. The two new workers would adopt this approach and all prevention staff would be moved to this model over the coming months.

Discussion ensued with regard to the demand for housing within the current climate and utilising empty properties to assist with demand. Members also highlighted the importance of engaging in regular conversations with Citizens Advice to further aid learning and improvements within the Homelessness Team.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the responses by the Homelessness Team to the questions by Scrutiny, be noted.**

### **6. SCRUTINY – REVIEW AND MONITORING OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES 2021 TO 2023**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive. The report provided a summary of activity undertaken by the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel, specific to the oversight and monitoring of Children's Services for the period 2021/22 and 2022/23 municipal year.

It was explained that scrutiny activity continued to be undertaken outside of the formal meetings, with all findings and recommendations presented to the full panel for comment and approval. The

flexibility allowed for speedier and timelier work to be undertaken, creating an enhanced opportunity to both influence and inform the impact of decisions being made. It was also necessary to monitor and evaluate outcomes from past activity and to review the implementation of recommendations.

Members were provided with a summary of activity of the Integrated Care and Wellbeing Scrutiny Panel and the Children's Working Group during 2021/22 municipal year. A summary of activity undertaken by the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel for 2022/23 municipal year was provided within the report which included details of dates, topics and any reporting that had taken place.

It was explained that Scrutiny continued to review decisions and focus reports of the LGSCO, to inform in-year work priorities. The Scrutiny Panel had completed assurance reviews for the following LGSCO reports.

- Focus report – HELP! Learning to improve council services for domestic abuse victims (published in November 2021) - Focus report and response of the Executive Member tabled at the joint meeting of Cabinet and Overview Panel on 9 February 2022.
- Focus report – Out of school, out of sight? Ensuring children out of school get a good education (published in July 2022) - Focus report and response of the Executive Member tabled at Overview Panel on 26 September 2022.

The most recent Scrutiny mid-year budget update took place on 3 October 2022. The First Deputy (Finance, Resources and Transformation), received a formal response of the Scrutiny Chairs, capturing a range of points for consideration in supporting the Council's ongoing work in this area. The letter was tabled in a report to the meeting of Overview Panel on 21 November 2022. Scrutiny annual budget meetings held on 16 January 2023, with a response letter of the Scrutiny Chairs sent to the First Deputy (Finance, Resources and Transformation); and Interim Director of Finance – Section 151 Officer. The letter was tabled in a report to the joint meeting of Executive Cabinet and Overview Panel on 8 February 2023. The First Deputy (Finance, Resource & Transformation) advised Members of the Overview Panel that a response to the letter had been received.

It was explained that there was an ongoing commitment to ensure that all scrutiny members received a suitable level of training and guidance. In addition to online resources, it was important that new and existing members had access to external provision based on scrutiny principles, national guidance and expectations. Details on training, development and benchmarking sessions delivered during the 2022/23 municipal year were provided to Members.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the content of the report and summary of scrutiny activity, be noted.**

### **7. CONSULTATION ON STATUTORY GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES ON BEST VALUE DUTY**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive. The report provided information on a consultation launched by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) regarding new statutory guidance on the Best Value duty.

The draft guidance and the consultation questions were provided at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 respectively. The guidance outlined 7 key principles of Best Value and provided a set of characteristics of well-functioning authorities and indicators of failure. It was explained that the guidance would be used by the department to gain assurance, and would identify appropriate levels of engagement or intervention where necessary.

Members were advised that it was clear from the draft guidance and the establishment of the new Office for Local Government (Oflog) that the DLUHC had taken a more proactive approach to oversight and assurance of local government – including a tighter role of the Local Government Association (LGA) and their peer challenge framework (which Tameside Council was due to have

later in the year). Members of the Panel highlighted that it also provided a clear framework from local authorities to self-check and assure, which would allow for continuous improvement.

**RESOLVED**

**That the content of the report be noted.**

**8. CORPORATE PLAN SCORECARD**

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive. The report set out the corporate plan outcomes scorecard, which provided evidence to demonstrate progress towards achievement of the Corporate Plan and improved the services provided to residents, businesses and key stakeholders within the locality.

The scorecard, which contained long term outcome measures that tracked progress to improve the quality of life for local residents, was attached to the report at Appendix 1. A glossary providing more information about the indicators included in the Corporate Outcomes Scorecard was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

Members were advised that it was proposed to develop a new scorecard linked to the council's corporate plan that focussed primarily on measures that recorded and explained the performance of council services. That was, areas and indicators the public and regulators used to judge how well the council was run and delivering for the local community. An initial outline scope of potential measures had been undertaken. Sources included (not exhaustive) Ofsted; Care Quality Commission; Local Government Association (LGA); and government department frameworks. It was proposed a conversation take place with each Directorate on which measures to take forward. The existing long-term outcomes measures would be kept under ongoing review by the council and partners as part of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

**RESOLVED**

**That the report be noted**

**7. URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items for consideration.

**CHAIR**