

COUNCIL

18 July 2023

Commenced: 5.00pm

Terminated: 6.45pm

Present:

Councillors Affleck, Alam, Axford, Beardmore, Billington, Bowden, Bowerman, Boyle, Bray, Chadwick, Choksi, Colbourne, Cooney, Costello, Dickinson, Drennan, Fairfoull, Feeley, Ferguson, Fitzpatrick, Glover, Gwynne, A Holland, B Holland, J Homer, Howarth, Jackson, Jones, Karim, Kitchen (Chair), Martin, McLaren, McNally, Mills, Naylor, Newton, North, Patel, Pearce, Reid, Ricci, Robinson, Roderick, N Sharif, T Sharif, M Smith, T Smith, Sweeton, Taylor, Tilbrook, Ward, Warrington and Wills

Apologies for Absence: Councillors S Homer, Lane, Owen and Quinn

Councillor Kitchen, Chair of Council Business, in the Chair

19 CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Civic Mayor began by welcoming all the new and returning Members to the meeting of Full Council and wished each well in their role.

The Mayor reflected on the recent celebrations for the King's Coronation, the first Coronation that the country and the Commonwealth had witnessed for 70 years. The momentous and historic occasion was marked by the burial of a time capsule at Houghton Green Playing Fields. This was put together by school and community groups, with the support of local councillors, and would be unearthed in 100 years' time.

The Mayor congratulated those from Tameside who had been recognised in the King's recent birthday honour's list. Graham Quinn, Chief Executive of New Bridge Multi-Academy Trust, which supported seven schools including Hawthorns, Audenshaw and Samuel Laycock, was appointed an OBE for services to children and young people with special educational needs. Petro Rewko from Ashton-under-Lyne was awarded an MBE for services to the Ukrainian community and British Empire Medals were issued to Henry Finney from Hyde, for his work as a voluntary boxing coach, and Mohammed Mirza from Stalybridge, for services to mental health. The Mayor also attended the investiture of Chris Ashworth from Ashton Sixth Form College who received the British Empire Medal for services to education.

The Mayor commended the Council in taking a lead on some of the projects in the community such as arts awards to schools, community safety funding for voluntary organisations across Tameside, and much more.

Reflecting on events that had taken place in spring and early summer, the Mayor had attended the Whitsuntide Walks of Witness in Dukinfield and Newton, and the very popular Armed Forces Day celebration in Victoria Park, Denton. To mark the 75th birthday of the NHS, the Mayor and Consort attended a garden party at Tameside Hospital and an associated health festival at Ashton Market. The Mayor took the opportunity to thank all of the NHS staff and volunteers for their dedicated service.

Other mayoral visits had included Ashton Sixth Form College to view students' designs of how the complex might look in 2050, Tameside College's public services passing-out parade and education awards, the Willow Wood Hospice butterfly release, several Arts Awards presentations, the open art exhibition at the Astley Cheetham Gallery and the Gee Cross well dressings. In addition, the Mayor met Robert and Cynthia Shaw who were celebrating their diamond wedding anniversary and presented them with flowers and a card.

To celebrate Ashton Mosque Open Day, the Executive Leader, the MP for Stalybridge and Hyde, the Vice Lord Lieutenant and many other Members, had joined the Mayor. The Mayor had also participated in the Diversity Network celebration in Tameside where people from all backgrounds came together to celebrate Tameside's diversity.

A number of guests had visited the Mayor's parlour, including the Umeed Community Group and Mossley Cancer Committee.

The Mayor concluded by thanking her consort and the Deputy Mayor for their ongoing support.

20 MINUTES

RESOLVED

It was moved by Councillor Cooney and seconded by Councillor Fairfoull that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 23 May 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted by Members of the Council.

22 COMMUNICATIONS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Member (Education, Achievement and Equalities) began by highlighting that schools in the borough had 40 Ofsted inspections in the past year with some positive feedback received.

It was highlighted that St Damian's RC College had been rated as an 'Outstanding' school and had remained outstanding after routine inspections. The school continued to deliver excellent outcomes for its children and inspectors had been unable to identify any points for improvement. Ofsted found that lessons were an oasis of calm with purposeful learning. Pupils were grateful for the support and encouragement that the teachers provided with an exceptionally ambitious curriculum. It was highlighted that thanks to strong leadership, pupils at the school thrived. The Executive Member thanked the school's Head Teacher and staff for their hard work and commitment to Tameside children and families.

Thanks were also extended to all teachers and staff at Tameside schools as well as the Director of Children's Services and the Interim Assistant Director of Education who led on the work on behalf of Tameside Council.

The Executive Leader began by highlighting the Council's plans to drive sustainable investment and inclusive growth in Tameside, particularly in the borough's town centres.

The Executive Leader reflected on the challenging economic circumstances and the difficulty the Council faced in trying to deliver vital services to residents and businesses.

Referring to a recent press release from SIGOMA, the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities, representing 47 urban authorities in the northern, midlands and south coast regions of England, it was announced that just over half of Chief Executive respondents (55 per cent) were no longer certain they would be able to meet their 2023-24 budget needs. The survey also found that 60 per cent of SIGOMA members had been forced to take cost-cutting measures to reduce their capital budget. Forty-five per cent said this meant delaying projects and a further 35 per cent had to go further and cancel projects that they could no longer afford or were forced to reduce the overall number of projects for this year.

In response to these statistics, the Executive Leader believed that this was the opposite of the

government's levelling up ambition. The impact on Tameside was apparent and it had been announced by the borough's leisure provider, Active Tameside, that they had no choice but to close three of their four sites; Active Ashton, Adventure Longdendale and Active Etherow.

The increased cost of energy and insurance had a particularly devastating impact upon the leisure sector nationwide. Energy bills had increased between 150 and 200 per cent compared to 2021. Active Tameside's utility spend had increased to up to £2 million per year. It was explained that the Council had done everything possible to support the organisation but had reached the limit of what it was able to do with its financial resources. Over the coming weeks, it was hoped that all affected service users, clubs and staff could be relocated.

The Executive Leader was pleased to announce that, after listening to residents and businesses, the Executive Cabinet had approved a Shoppers Charter. The first phase of this was plans to revamp the borough's town centre parking charges to encourage short stay use by charging a reasonable fee for one to three hours and a flat rate of just one pound for evenings and Sundays. Commuters, workers and business owners who had a clear need for all-day parking would still be able to use long-stay car parks, which would be charged at a lower rate.

The proposed changes would bring Tameside into line with other Greater Manchester boroughs, improve customer footfall and increase turnover in the most sought after parking locations. Revenue increases from the changes would be used to fund highway improvements in the borough, such as pothole repairs. Towards the end of the summer, payment machines would be upgraded to accept both cash and card. There would also be the agreement of a long-term parking strategy, which would complement the wider strategic projects for Tameside's town centres, including the redevelopment of Ashton town hall, the Market Square, Ashton Moss St Petersfield, the Mayoral development zones, Stalybridge Civic Hall, and the Droylsden and Hyde Growth Triangle.

This would be levelling up in action, not that espoused by the government which involved austerity, high interest rates and local communities being forced to compete against each other for an ever shrinking pot of funds.

Concluding his announcements, the Executive Leader called on the government to do more, not just in terms of funding for local authorities, but for longer-term financial settlements so that Councils did not have to live month by month and year after year. This would give the Council the confidence to make and commit to investment decisions that would have a real impact in the borough. A call was also made to end the process of competitive bidding for funding that saw cash strapped councils spend money on bids that could be better used elsewhere. Additional funding would be used to deliver more, both better and faster, for Tameside's communities.

Whilst it was acknowledged that times were hard, this could not be an excuse for inaction and in Tameside decisions would be made that could make a difference.

23 COUNCIL BIG CONVERSATION

The Chair formally recorded the receipt of a petition from, Denise Moss, in respect of car parking charges. This would be passed to the Executive Member to respond in writing.

24 MEETING OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of Executive Cabinet held on 28 June 2023. It was moved by Councillor Cooney and seconded by Councillor Fairfoull that the minutes of the Executive Cabinet held on 28 June 2023 be received.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 28 June 2023 be received.

25 DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES WORKING GROUP

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Processes Working Group held on 3 July 2023.

It was moved by Councillor Cooney and seconded by Councillor Fairfoull that the minutes of the Democratic Processes Working Group held on 3 July 2023 be received.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Processes Working Group be received.

26 BEE NETWORK

Members considered a report of the Director of Place in relation to the Bee Network, which was aimed at improving Greater Manchester's transport governance. The creation of an integrated transport system across the city region, including bus franchising, would change the type and number of decisions being made. Consequently, Greater Manchester needed to change the make-up of its decision-making bodies to ensure that the new responsibilities were discharged in an effective and transparent way.

Currently, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), the Mayor and the 10 GM constituent councils had delegated some of their functions to the GM Transport Committee (GMTC). The functions delegated provided limited opportunities for the GMTC to influence strategic decision-making and therefore transport policy. Its role combined elements of both decision-making around relatively minor issues and performance monitoring which was usually considered to be a scrutiny committee function. This had led to a lack of clarity both within and outside of the GM system.

Council was informed that to help shape future governance, seven principles that set out the requirements of any structures had been identified. These should:

- Support shared ownership of the transport agenda across GM, informed by local priorities and driven by consensus.
- Support an integrated approach to policy development to support the delivery of an integrated network.
- Separate decision-making and policy development from oversight and scrutiny.
- Strengthen decision-making, scrutiny and local involvement.
- Be simplified and transparent.
- Support enhanced member and public engagement.
- Ensure delegation to officers to enable operational flexibility, as appropriate.

In order to meet these objectives, it was proposed that:

- A new, smaller and more strategically focussed 'Bee Network Committee' (BNC), which would lead transport decision making at a regional level, taking greater ownership and responsibility for the GM integrated transport network.
- Strengthened local engagement by increasing opportunities for local councillors and members of the public to contribute to and influence transport policy and services in their area.
- Formal scrutiny of the Bee Network Committee being part of the work programme of the newly strengthened GM Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

It was explained that whilst the new committee would have greater delegated powers, no additional constituent Council functions were to be transferred or delegated to the GMCA. The GMCA would delegate additional functions that were already conferred on or delegated to it, by TfGM. Such functions would be of a day-to-day operational nature, for example, local bus information, consultation procedures, transport and road safety studies.

Council was informed that as part of the Bee Network, a Bee Network Committee (BNC) would be created to exercise decision-making powers and develop policy on behalf of the GMCA, the Mayor and constituent councils. It was anticipated that the committee would have no more than 15 members and constituent councils would be expected to nominate their cabinet member with transport responsibility to the committee, or another councillor with decision-making responsibility where more appropriate. By bringing together Executive Members from across the city-region, it was anticipated the new committee would be able to take a holistic and integrated view of transport in Greater Manchester, better supporting and co-ordinating across local authority boundaries.

Details of the functions of the new committee were highlighted to Members:

- Decision-making – approving significant changes to transport network operations, and the drawdown of funding to invest in transport infrastructure and operations.
- Performance monitoring – oversight of the performance and financial sustainability of the transport network, holding transport operators and TfGM to account.
- Policy development – developing transport policy to support the delivery of the Local Transport Plan (Greater Manchester 2040 Transport Strategy).
- Local coordination – facilitating coordination between the constituent councils to support effective highways management and infrastructure delivery.

At the same time, it was explained that the GMCA would continue to approve transport budgets, the Local Transport Plan and any sub-strategies, Metrolink and bus franchise contract awards, and TfGM Executive and Non-Executive appointments. Meanwhile, TfGM would continue to make day-to-day operational decisions within agreed parameters and policies.

It was highlighted that a key part of the new governance arrangements would be an increased opportunity for local councillors and members of the public to influence transport policy and services in their locality. In addition, there would be enhanced opportunities to hold TfGM and other agencies to account for the operational performance of the network. This would include virtual and in-person drop-ins for local Members to raise issues/concerns directly with TfGM officers and opportunities for constituent councils to refer petitions regarding the transport network to the Bee Network Committee.

As the city region took on new responsibilities and functions, Members were informed of the importance of ensuring that scrutiny arrangements were appropriately strong. Under the proposals, the GMCA's single, integrated Overview & Scrutiny Committee would consider transport matters in one place, alongside other policy areas, allowing for integrated consideration of issues. The GMCA would scrutinise the decisions of the BNC and would be able to call in decisions, as it felt appropriate. It could also initiate task and finish groups to focus on particular issues.

Concerning implementation, Council was advised that if agreed by the GMCA and the Mayor, each constituent Council would need to agree the establishment of the Bee Network Committee, approve the proposed terms of reference and rules of procedure, and appoint an appropriate representative and substitute to the committee.

It was the intention to hold the first meeting of the new Bee Network Committee in July 2023, prior to the first franchised bus service entering operation in September 2023.

RESOLVED

- (i) **That Council agree to the establishment of a new joint transport committee (the Bee Network Committee) of the GMCA, the Mayor and the ten Greater Manchester constituent councils;**
- (ii) **That Council approve the appointment of members to the Bee Network Committee as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and nominate Councillor Bray as the Tameside Council representative and Councillor Jackson as the substitute;**
- (iii) **That Council approves the Terms of Reference of the Bee Network Committee as set out at Appendix 2 to the report;**

- (iv) That Council agree to delegate the functions of the GMCA as set out in the Terms of Reference to the Bee Network Committee and note the delegation of Mayoral functions as set out in the Terms of Reference, attached at Appendix 2 to the report; and
- (v) That Council approve the Rules of Procedure for the Bee Network Committee as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

27 APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER

It was moved by Councillor Cooney and seconded by Councillor Fairfoull and

RESOLVED

That pursuant to Section 5 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989, David Wilcock, Interim Borough Solicitor / Assistant Director Legal Services, be appointed as the Monitoring Officer with immediate effect until a permanent appointment is made to exercise the delegated functions and responsibilities in the Council's Constitution.

28 MEMBERSHIP OF COUNCIL BODIES

It was moved by Councillor Cooney, seconded by Councillor Fairfoull and:-

RESOLVED

- (i) That Councillor Karim replace Councillor Patel on Children's Services Scrutiny Panel;
- (ii) That Councillor Patel replace Councillor Karim on Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel;
- (iii) That Councillor Ferguson replace Councillor Bowerman on Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel;
- (iv) That Councillor B Holland replace Councillor Pearce on Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel;
- (v) That Councillor Patel replace Councillor Newton on Speakers Panel (Licensing);
- (vi) That Councillor Quinn replace Councillor Bowerman on Speakers Panel (Liquor Licensing);
- (vii) That Councillors Jones and Pearce replace Councillors B Holland and Martin on Environment and Climate Emergency Working Group; and
- (viii) Councillor Warrington replace Councillor Reid on Democratic Processes Working Group.

29 QUESTIONS

Councillor Billington raised two questions under Standing Order 17.2 as follows:-

Given the continued failure and mismanagement that has been demonstrated by Active Tameside, would it be more appropriate to cut the middleman out and bring back this service in-house.

In response, Councillor North stated:-

The Council tries to support all of its providers across the district, however, we cannot support an individual provider, when so many other businesses are also suffering with the high cost of energy. The Council's finances mean that it is not in a position to pay more for the services, and sadly like other sports trusts, Active have not been able to access any government support to deal with the excessive energy costs. In addition, the Ashton facility is past its end of life and requires significant investment.

Councillor Billington asked a second question as follows:-

Following the tragic and avoidable death of Karen McBride, what conversation has the Executive

Leader, who until recently sat on the board of Jigsaw Homes, had with their Chief Executive to ensure that homes are handed to tenants in a suitable state, proactively maintained, and that landlords do not abuse their position with Managed Payments to Landlord out of Universal Credit payments when there is an ongoing dispute?

In response, Councillor Cooney stated:

I would reiterate the condolences of myself, my colleagues and the Council to the family and friends of Karen.

Karen's commitment to helping others is evidenced in the work she did with the Tameside Poverty Truth Commission led by the Greater Manchester Poverty Action Group.

She brought insight and experience that was invaluable to them in developing their recommendations – all of which have been included in the Poverty Strategy adopted by all partners across Tameside at the Health and Wellbeing Board in March this year.

It would not be appropriate for me to comment here on the specifics around Karen's housing situation and her interactions with Jigsaw Homes.

The councillors and the Council – as the strategic housing authority for Tameside – work with all registered social landlords in a collaborative way to ensure housing needs are met and tenants are supported appropriately.

This is done in a number of ways. Councillors often support tenants with queries or complaints to their landlord. Similarly, using their position as community leader, councillors challenge landlords on issues that affect a group of tenants.

The Council as an organisation has a clear Housing Strategy for the borough and works directly with the registered social landlords on long term issues through forums like the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Registered Provider Partnership.

It is also not my job nor the Council's to regulate providers as there is the Housing Ombudsman and regulation by DLUCH to do just that.

At the inquest into Karen's death, the coroner found that no systemic failings by any organisation contributed to her death.

However, reviews are being undertaken in all such cases to see if any learning can be gained and improvements be made.

However, what has had the biggest impact on councillors ability to have traction on Registered Social Landlords and have a voice that is heard is the loss of tenant's right to have a third of the Directors and the Council's right to have a third of the Directors of the Board.

In 2016, Section 93 of the Housing and Planning Act was enacted to deregularise housing and I quote "reduce local authority influence over private registered providers".

Following the death of, Awaab Ishak, the baby at the centre of the Rochdale mould case, I and others have been raising this issue with, Michael Gove, Secretary of State with responsibility for Housing, as to why the over professionalised housing boards do not work effectively as no one is required to listen to tenants. So I and the rest of the Council would support you in raising this with your government to prevent such matters ever arising again.

The Chair reported that there was one urgent item for consideration which had been circulated to Members. The item was a motion received in accordance with Standing Order 16.1 concerning the proposed closure of railway station ticket offices, which was proposed by Councillor Roderick:

That this Council notes:

- On 5 July the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) announced plans for the closure of nearly all ticket offices in the country.

The Council further notes that:

- Railway station ticket offices in Tameside that will be affected include Hattersley, Broadbottom, Newton for Hyde, Guide Bridge, Ashton-under-Lyne and Mossley. Out of the 1,007 ticket offices in the UK stations, 974 are expected to be closed within the next three years.
- The closure of these ticket offices is an unnecessary move that will have severe consequences for our rail network, including job losses, increases in anti-social behaviour, and making it more difficult for residents to access public transport.
- In particular, the Royal National Institute of Blind People has said that the proposed closures would have a “hugely detrimental impact on blind and partially sighted people’s ability to buy tickets, arrange assistance and, critically, travel independently”. Their research also indicates that only 3% of blind and partially sighted people could use an automated vending machine without problems.
- The exact impact on jobs is currently unknown, but documents leaked to the media suggest that the planned closures could lead to the loss of up to 2,000 staff. It is also understood that Section 188 letters, informing unions and staff that posts are at risk, and a legal requirement for possible widespread redundancies – have already been sent.

This Council resolves to:

Call on the Government to intervene to get rail companies to change their decision on all the railway stations in Tameside.

RESOLVED

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CHAIR