

Third Sector Review



Resources and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel

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Introduction by the Chair

I am very pleased to present this report of a review undertaken by the Resources and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel into the third sector in Tameside.

The voluntary, community and faith groups which make up Tameside's vibrant third sector make an invaluable contribution to the borough. They provide crucial services, training, job opportunities and support to individuals in all sections of our community.

Third sector organisations face an unprecedented challenge as a result of the current economic climate. The Coalition Government's 'Big Society' agenda has raised the profile of the work of voluntary and community groups, but there is still much uncertainty around what it will mean in practice.

This review focuses on current activity in Tameside's third sector and the prospects for the sector in the future. The Panel is encouraged by the dedication and passion of volunteers, employees and leaders within the sector to meet the challenges they face.

The Council and partner organisations have a pivotal role to play to support our community groups through these difficult times. We hope that this review will provide a strong foundation for future work to support the third sector in Tameside.

On behalf of the Resources and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel, I would like to thank all those who have participated in this review.



Councillor Margaret Sidebottom
Chair of the Resources and Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Panel

2. Summary

The Coalition Government has made the 'Big Society' a central theme of its policy platform. The Localism Bill and Open Public Services White Paper are expected to offer clarification on specific elements of the Big Society and the role of the public, private and third sector in delivering it.

Third sector groups also face considerable funding challenges as a result of the economic downturn, financial crisis and public sector funding cuts. This review considers the impact of these policy and economic themes on the voluntary, community and faith sector in Tameside.

Tameside has a small voluntary, community and faith sector compared to some of our neighbouring boroughs, but it is vibrant and diverse. Supported by the Council and its partner agencies, large organisations such as T3SC, Volunteer Centre Tameside and St Peter's Partnerships play a pivotal role in coordinating volunteer activity, training residents and increasing the capacity of the local third sector.

Tameside has a history of innovative and collaborative working between the public, private and third sectors, and this experience will be invaluable to develop solutions to the challenges faced by community groups in Tameside.

3. Membership of the Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Margaret Sidebottom (Chair), Councillor Jean Brazil (Deputy Chair)
Councillors Maria Bailey, Basil Beeley, Joyce Bowerman, David Buckley, Yvonne Cartey, David McNally, Idu Miah, Michael Whitley.

4. Terms of Reference

Aim of the Review:

To review the current state of play and challenges faced by the voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) in Tameside, and to consider what methods are in place to support the sector.

Objectives:

- To examine the current size and scope of the VCFS in Tameside.
- To assess the impact of challenges faced by the VCFS in the current financial climate.

- To examine the strategies and mechanisms in place amongst the council and its partners to support the VCFS through these challenges.
- To produce workable recommendations for the Council and partners to support the work of the VCFS.

Value for Money/use of Resources:

A vibrant and diverse third sector is important in supporting the delivery of public services in the current financial climate. Investment in the VCFS will support work towards Community Strategy aims.

Equalities issues:

The VCFS plays a pivotal role in supporting vulnerable communities and individuals, providing networks for and representing the interests of sectors of Tameside's community who may otherwise be marginalised. The review will consider strategies and policies employed by relevant authorities to protect and represent the interests of vulnerable groups and individuals.

Tameside Area Agreements:

The following targets from the new Tameside Area Agreement relate to the voluntary, community and faith sector.

Key Quality of Life Measures		
People get on well together		Volunteering
Supporting Measures		
Worklessness	Enterprise/business	NEET

'Volunteering' and 'people get on well together' are overarching measures in the new Tameside Area Agreement, supporting all areas of the Community Strategy.

5. Methodology

The Scrutiny Panel met with the Assistant Executive Director, Cultural and Customer Services, Tameside MBC to give an insight into the Council's work with the third sector and inform the direction of the review.

The Panel met with the Chief Executive, Tameside Third Sector Coalition (T3SC), to give an overview of the challenges faced by the third sector in Tameside, specific challenges for T3SC and future opportunities and development for organisations.

The Panel met with the Chief Executive and the Chair of St Peter's Partnerships, to discuss the role of the organisation, its current schemes of work and wider benefits for the borough as a whole.

The Panel met with the Manager, Volunteer Centre Tameside, to discuss how levels of volunteering have been affected by the economic downturn and the composition of Tameside's volunteer sector.

The Panel met with the Policy and Participation Manager, T3SC and the Partnerships Manager, Tameside MBC, to give an overview of the first year of the You Choose participatory budgeting scheme.

In addition to specific enquiries about the work of their organisations, each of the contributors to the review were asked a core set of questions about their organisation's perspective on the challenges faced by Tameside's third sector.

6. Background of the Review

- 6.1 The concept of a 'Big Society' is central facet of the Coalition Government agreement. No legislation currently exists in Parliament to specifically clarify the concept, but it has been associated with elements of the Localism Bill and the Open Public Services White Paper.
- 6.2 The Localism Bill includes a number of measures with direct relevance to the third sector, including the 'community right to challenge', which affords community groups the right to challenge if they believe they can deliver certain public services better than the current provider. While only community groups would be able to challenge, any competitive tendering process would also be open to private companies.
- 6.3 The Open Public Services White Paper establishes five key principles, including choice, decentralisation, diversity, fairness and accountability, implying an enhanced role for the third sector in the delivery of public services. Best Value guidance released by the Department for Communities and Local Government in September maintains a 'Duty to Consult' representatives of the community when making local authorities make funding decisions.
- 6.4 As such, the national policy environment is very fluid, with funding for the public and third sectors uncertain and relevant legislation at an embryonic stage.
- 6.5 According to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, 80% of third sector organisations receive no funding from the state. 37% of funding for the charity sector comes from donations, membership fees and fundraising, with 36% from the state.
- 6.6 The current economic climate has created a strain on the sector in terms of both finance and demand. While charitable giving nationally fell by approximately £1 billion in 2008-09, demand for services delivered by charities increased by over 17% over the same period.

7. Review Findings

7.1 The Third Sector in Tameside

- 7.1.1 There are over 800 voluntary and community organisations in Tameside, from very large charities to small community groups. As of January 2011, 337 of these were registered, with the rest being smaller community groups under the threshold for Charity Commission registration.

- 7.1.2 Volunteering levels are also monitored annually through the Citizens' Panel. The most recent survey to include questions on volunteering was in Summer 2011. It showed that 35.1% of residents had given unpaid help to any group, club or organisation in the previous 12 months, up slightly from 33.8% in Summer 2010. Of those who had given unpaid help in the previous 12 months, 48.5% had done so at least once a week, with 28.5% doing so less than once a week but at least once a month.
- 7.1.3 For the period of 2009-2010, 23% of volunteers in Tameside were in some form of employment, 29% were unemployed and 24% were students. Only 3% of volunteers were retired. Volunteering is a valuable source of experience and opportunity for young people and those out of work to build skills. 20% of Tameside's volunteers are from a BME background, a higher proportion than the general population.
- 7.1.4 Tameside's third sector employs 700 people. This represents a ratio of 3.4 third sector employees per 1,000 population. Tameside has the lowest per capita figure in Greater Manchester. The national average is 12.69 third sector employees per 1,000 population.
- 7.1.5 Tameside has 1.56 registered organisations per 1,000 population, placing 9th among the 10 Greater Manchester boroughs. The national average is 3.38 organisations per 1,000 population.
- 7.1.6 T3SC has reported low levels of confidence among the sector as a result of service closures and funding restrictions.

Conclusions

1. Tameside has a diverse third sector with a wide variety of groups operating in the borough.
2. Volunteers in Tameside come from a range of backgrounds. The largest groups by economic status are the unemployed, students and employed. A large proportion are from a BME background.
3. Tameside does however have a low number of third sector employees and registered groups per 1,000 population compared to other Greater Manchester.
4. According to the Citizens' Panel, over one-third of Tameside residents have given unpaid help to a group, club and organisation in the last 12 months. Of those who had given unpaid help, half did so at least once a week.
5. Financial and policy uncertainty has damaged confidence about the future among groups and individuals in the third sector.

Recommendations

1. That residents' involvement with community groups, organisations and clubs continues to be monitored annually through the Citizens' Panel.
2. That work continues to increase volunteering generally and among those groups who do not currently make up a large proportion of Tameside's volunteers.

7.2 The role of Tameside Council

- 7.2.1 The Panel met with Adam Allen, Assistant Executive Director, Cultural and Customer Services, Tameside MBC to discuss how the Council interacts with the third sector in Tameside.

- 7.2.2 The Council engages with Tameside's third sector in a number of ways. Council services work directly with 'Friends Of' groups, support and run some volunteering projects and work with groups such as the Hyde Initiative, Mosques Forum, sports and arts groups. Projects such as DRIVE, Active Dialogue and Meet The Buyer are pivotal to engaging with the third sector and increasing its capacity.
- 7.2.3 Tameside Council is a major funder of T3SC, with interaction between the organisations taking place on a daily basis with the full range of Council service areas. The Council also contributes to Volunteer Centre Tameside, though it is not the main contributor. Funding for the participatory budgeting scheme You Choose provides smaller community groups the opportunity to bid for funding sources from savings made via improved recycling rates.
- 7.2.4 Tameside Council's direct funding to large third sector organisations such as T3SC, Volunteer Centre Tameside or Victim Support was protected in 2011-12. This protection cannot be guaranteed at this stage for 2012-13, but the Council has a long-term objective to support the third sector as far as possible to mitigate the impact of spending cuts.
- 7.2.5 Many public services delivered by the Council and partners are increasingly being redesigned on a locality-based, integrated basis. The third sector has an important role as a facilitator or deliverer of such services, with community groups possessing a wealth of expertise and networking capability in our neighbourhoods.
- 7.2.6 The Council's priority with respect to increasing the capacity of the third sector will not be to replace lost or reduced funding. The Council will work closely with the sector to redesign and rationalise the projects and services it currently delivers. The Council has a 3-year plan in place to manage the impact of the cuts on the sector.

Conclusions

6. Tameside Council engages with Tameside's third sector in a wide variety of ways, involving all service areas and a range of voluntary, community and faith groups.
7. Many council services are being designed on an integrated or neighbourhood basis. The third sector has an important role to play in this process.
8. The Council is aiming to protect direct funding to large third sector organisations in Tameside as far as possible. There is a long-term intention to mitigate the impact of public sector spending cuts on the sector in general.

Recommendations

4. That the Council continues to engage with the third sector and helps to increase its capacity.
5. That the Council continues to work closely with the third sector in the development of local integrated services, utilising the local knowledge and skills to community groups.
6. That the Council monitors performance to ensure that its long-term plan to support the third sector is having a positive impact.

7.3 Tameside Third Sector Coalition (T3SC)

- 7.3.1 The Panel met with Tony Okotie, Chief Executive of Tameside Third Sector Coalition (T3SC) to discuss the implications of the current policy environment on his organisation and the sector more generally.
- 7.3.2 T3SC is the lead support and development agency for voluntary, community and faith groups and organisations in Tameside. Founded in 2002, it has a specific mission to 'build and support strong, clear and independent voluntary and community action in Tameside'.
- 7.3.3 This is expressed in terms of 'increasing, improving and influencing'. T3SC aims to increase and improve the levels of funding, capacity and skills of the third sector and the services delivered through community and voluntary action in Tameside. It aims to influence partners around the needs of the sector and our local communities.
- 7.3.4 The work undertaken by T3SC is varied. In 2010-11:
- T3SC provided one to one support to 104 different, voluntary community and faith organisations
 - 34 local groups were supported to identify and apply for funding, 26 of whom secured £218,342 of funding.
 - Intensive support was provided to 17 VCOs with business planning, risk management, health checks, and facilitation of away days.
 - Organisations had assistance with legal structures and strengthening their governance arrangements
 - 12 organisations received bespoke marketing and publicity support to help raise their profile including the production of case studies, marketing leaflets and websites.
 - 17 organisations were supported to improve their skills and knowledge of demonstrating their impact via a Social Return on Investment (SROI) model.
 - 34 VCOs were supported to understand local commissioning working, improving their knowledge and understanding of forthcoming contract opportunities
- 7.3.6 In January 2011, T3SC produced a report entitled 'Taking The Temperature of the Third Sector in Tameside', providing a snapshot of the state of the local third sector and the impact of the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010.
- 7.3.7 T3SC is concerned that the Big Society agenda remains poorly defined in practice. There appear to be some misconceptions about the work of the third sector among national policy-makers, including a misplaced assumption that volunteers can deliver public services for free. Well-organised services and volunteering schemes require sustained investment and commitment from policy makers.
- 7.3.8 The third sector already delivers invaluable work which is not conventionally described as 'public services' but ought to be, including luncheon clubs and youth clubs, which provide a sense of community and belonging for vulnerable residents. The capacity of the sector to deliver such schemes will be limited by funding cuts and the expectation that the sector supports the delivery of other services.
- 7.3.9 It is important to acknowledge that not all voluntary, community and faith groups are willing or able to deliver public services.
- 7.3.10 The needs of third sector groups are varied and there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to support and funding. Small grant funding schemes such as You Choose (see section 7.6) have made a significant difference to the smaller groups T3SC work with, enabling them to

undertake specific projects which residents have decided through a transparent and open process, will have a benefit to the community. Larger groups who employ staff may need access to larger funding sources including private investments or lottery funding. They may need support to effectively secure work through competitive tendering processes.

- 7.3.11 Work is ongoing to develop a Tameside People First Fund, which will use dormant endowments and charity funds in the borough to support community groups.
- 7.3.12 The current economic climate will result in more mergers, collaborations and clustering of third sector organisations in order to make efficiency savings. T3SC has adopted an increasingly close relationship with its sister organisation in Oldham and has saved 30% of its property costs by sharing office space in Ashton-under-Lyne with Age Concern. Details of T3SC's merger with Volunteer Centre Tameside are included in Section 7.4 of this report.
- 7.3.13 The development of a single hub, gathering together Tameside's leading third sector organisations in one location remains a long-term aspiration. In Warrington, over 20 organisations are housed effectively in an old printworks, but Tameside currently has no similar vacant building which could be utilised. The development of cohabitation on this scale would require substantial investment which may not be possible in the current climate.
- 7.3.14 T3SC values its positive working relationship with Tameside Council. Acknowledging the funding restraints on local authorities, T3SC believes that a number of mechanisms can be adopted by the Council to support the sector in other ways. For example, the relaxing of tendering requirements which disadvantage third sector groups would increase such groups' access to funding opportunities, while the adoption of a Council employer-supported volunteering scheme would bring important skills to the sector. The cost of hiring public buildings is often prohibitive for community groups with limited resources.

Conclusions

9. T3SC has a role to build and support strong, clear and independent voluntary and community action in Tameside.
10. T3SC's work is extremely varied and essential to the vibrancy and effectiveness of voluntary, community and faith groups in the borough.
11. The third sector delivers a wide range of activities, including luncheon clubs and youth clubs, which are not conventionally described as public services, but perform an essential role in our communities.
12. Tameside's voluntary, community and faith sector groups span a wide range of sizes and functions. As such, they have diverse support needs and funding requirements.
13. Cohabitation and collaboration between third sector groups can enable them to make savings on property costs and work more efficiently.
14. T3SC has a strong, positive, working relationship with Tameside Council.

Recommendations

6. That work continues to access dormant charity funds to develop the Tameside People First Fund.
7. That T3SC undertakes a further 'Taking The Temperature' report into the state of the third sector at an appropriate timescale.
8. That, in light of the funding challenges both organisations face, T3SC and the Council work together to consider new methods to support community groups, including relaxing some tendering regulations and ensuring community groups can access public buildings.

7.4 Volunteering and the function of Volunteer Centre Tameside

- 7.4.1 The Panel met with Sue Vickers, Manager, Volunteer Centre Tameside, to discuss levels of volunteering in Tameside and the specific role of Volunteer Centre Tameside.
- 7.4.2 Volunteering is defined by the national and local Compact Code on Volunteering as ‘an activity that involved spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or individuals or groups other than close relatives’.
- 7.4.3 The strategic direction for volunteering in Tameside is set by the ‘Vision for Volunteering – Tameside Volunteering Strategy 2010-15. This document was devised in consultation with volunteer groups and individuals, developed by a steering group consisting of Volunteer Centre Tameside, Tameside Vinvolved team, T3SC, Tameside MBC and NHS Tameside and Glossop. The strategy acknowledges the climate of reduced public sector spending and the economic slowdown, committing to respond to these challenges through collaboration and innovation.
- 7.4.4 Volunteering is a cross-cutting theme for the Tameside Strategic Partnership and is central to the delivery of each of the aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Volunteering is a key quality of life measure in the Tameside Area Agreement.
- 7.4.5 The organisation which is now Volunteer Centre Tameside was established in 1975. Its primary focus is to match prospective volunteers with organisations and projects. It is also an umbrella body for carrying out Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks for volunteer employers.
- 7.4.6 Volunteer Centre Tameside organises the Annual Volunteering Summit, which brings together local people in the volunteering sector to share ideas and develop solutions to shared challenges.
- 7.4.7 Volunteer Centre Tameside delivers a range of programmes in Tameside. The Brighter Futures scheme promotes volunteering as a route to employment for young people, to enable them to build skills and experience to become ready for the job market. It follows a recent study by the government-sponsored volunteering initiative Timebank which found that 73% of employers would employ a candidate with volunteering experience over one without. Participants create a personal development plan and portfolio, identify their own goals in a one-to-one consultation and are supported to develop a high quality CV, interview skills and transferable work-based skills.
- 7.4.8 Building on a successful bid to the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Breaking The Record programme offers training and support to volunteer-recruiting organisations to work with ex-offenders, providing them with the opportunity to develop themselves and contribute to the community.
- 7.4.9 The community transport scheme Miles of Smiles involves volunteer drivers and their vehicles. It takes patients, who would not be able to use public transport, to and from medical appointments.
- 7.4.10 Volunteer Centre Tameside administers Tameside’s Time Banking scheme, which is currently being piloted very successfully in Smallshaw Hurst, Denton South and Hyde Newton, aimed at increasing low levels of volunteering in these areas. Volunteers offer their time and skills in exchange for credits which they can use for the time and skills of others. It is intended that the scheme will be rolled out across Tameside.
- 7.4.11 Volunteer Centre Tameside has experienced an increase in the volume of volunteer enquiries it receives since the economic slowdown began. This has stretched the capacity of the sector. While it is positive that increasing numbers of people are volunteering, waiting lists for certain placements are building up.

- 7.4.12 There has been an increase in the numbers of unemployed individuals making enquiries to the Volunteer Centre, to undertake volunteer work as a route into paid employment. The public image of volunteering has shifted towards being seen as an excellent means to develop work-related skills and experience.
- 7.4.13 Volunteer Centre Tameside is currently developing a trading arm to respond to a key challenge for third sector organisations that they remain sustainable. This development will increase the capacity of the organisation, support the work currently being undertaken to up-skill volunteers, and keep them motivated with engaging projects.
- 7.4.14 The organisation is also developing new partnerships with organisations such as New Charter to develop an employer-supported volunteering scheme as part of their commitment to corporate social responsibility.
- 7.4.15 It is the view of those in Tameside's volunteering sector that the Government's 'Big Society' agenda is a double-edge sword. While the initiative has generated good publicity for the sector and raised the profile of volunteering, it is also viewed negatively by some as a government-sponsored programme, which may contribute to a reluctance among potential volunteers. There is a long and vibrant history of voluntary and community action in Tameside. The Big Society agenda does not impact upon volunteers on a day-to-day basis; volunteers remain focused on making a valuable contribution to their community.
- 7.4.16 Volunteers should not be viewed as an alternative to paid staff. Volunteers perform an invaluable role in many organisations but they have needs, skills and legal requirements distinct from those of paid employees. Effective volunteering schemes require sustained investment and attention from specialist staff.
- 7.4.17 Aside from work experience and schemes specifically targeted at sections of the community, a number of incentives exist to encourage people to volunteer. Volunteering provides opportunities to network, build confidence and contribute positively to a person's local neighbourhood.
- 7.4.18 In addition, the Work Programme will compel participants to take-up volunteer work in order to continue to receive out of work benefits. A challenge for the sector will be to ensure that these volunteers are well managed, motivated and assigned to relevant, engaging projects.

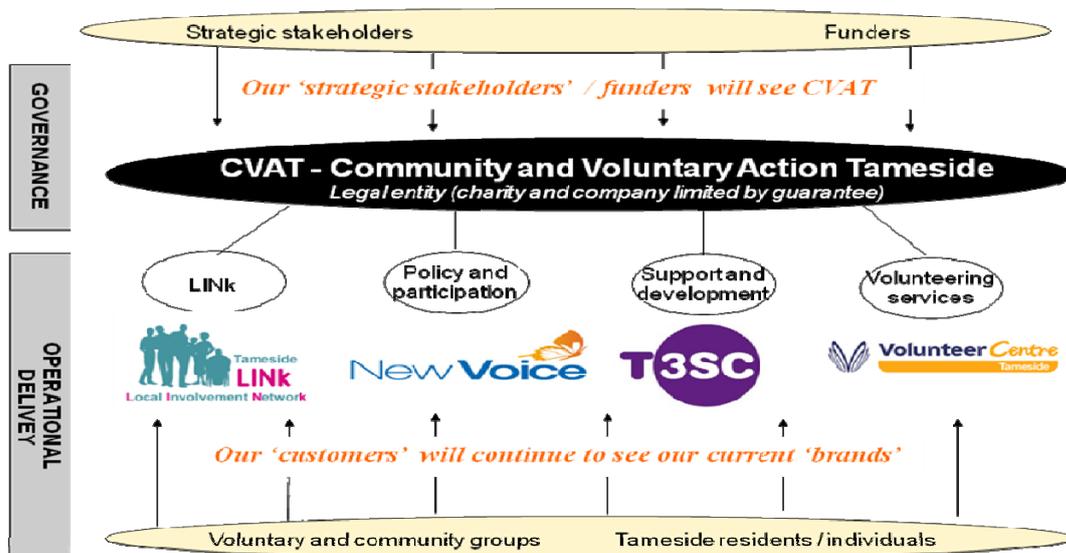
Conclusions

15. The hard work, commitment and passion of staff and volunteers working through Volunteer Centre Tameside makes a strong positive contribution to our communities.
16. Tameside's Volunteering Strategy 'Vision for Volunteering' sets clear priorities and aims to maximise the potential for volunteering to deliver positive outcomes for volunteers and the local community.
17. Volunteering is a priority for organisations across the Tameside Strategic Partnership.
18. The Annual Volunteering Summit is a valuable event to bring Tameside's volunteering sector together to share ideas and work on mutual challenges.
19. Schemes such as Brighter Futures, Miles for Smiles, Time Banking and Breaking The Record provide important opportunities for individuals to participate in volunteering and build skills required for the job market.
20. Volunteering is increasingly being viewed as a means to prepare for paid employment, as unemployment in the wider economy increases.

21. Volunteer Centre Tameside is taking positive steps to ensure the sustainability of its activities and increase its capacity, including developing a trading arm.
22. Volunteering should not be viewed as an alternative to paid staff, nor should it be considered as 'free labour'. Effective volunteering schemes require sustainable investment and management.
23. Volunteering has a wide range of personal, social, economic and community benefits for individuals and groups.

- Recommendations**
9. That actions within the Volunteering Strategy continue to be worked towards and progress monitored.
 10. That Volunteer Centre Tameside continues to build partnerships with major public service organisations in Tameside to develop employer-supported volunteer schemes.
 11. That the successful Time Banking pilot scheme is rolled-out across the borough.
 12. That the Tameside Strategic Partnership works to increase volunteering in deprived neighbourhoods.
 13. That schemes such as Brighter Futures, Miles Of Smiles and Breaking The Record are well publicised and that partner organisations signpost potential candidates to the projects.
 14. That supporting unemployed individuals to volunteer to develop skills and experience to re-enter the job market remains a focus for Volunteer Centre Tameside.

7.5.1 The Panel has been informed about the merger of T3SC and Volunteer Centre Tameside as a single legal entity named Community and Voluntary Action Tameside (CAVAT). The new organisation will be a charity and a company limited by guarantee. The diagram below illustrates its structure.



7.5.2

- 7.5.3 The structure of CAVAT acknowledges the distinct functions and brands of T3SC, Volunteer Centre Tameside, New Voice and Tameside LINK, but also their shared areas of work. The customer-facing brands will remain in place, ensuring that there will be a continuity with current arrangements. There will be a shared board, with a shared structure of strategic stakeholders and funders.
- 7.5.4 The changes aim to ensure the long-term sustainability of both organisations, enabling them to share resources and expertise, strengthen support to community groups, and to work more efficiently.
- 7.5.5 A joint Annual General Meeting for members of both organisations was held in December 2011 to agree to the proposal.

Conclusions

24. The merger of T3SC and Volunteer Centre Tameside will enable the organisations to work more efficiently, while maintaining continuity for residents using their services.

Recommendations

15. That residents and community groups are fully engaged in the finalisation of the merger between T3SC and Volunteer Centre Tameside.
16. That the services of each of the brands within Community and Voluntary Action Tameside continue to be delivered to a high standard throughout the transition.

7.6 St Peter's Partnerships

- 7.6.1 The Panel met with Karen Butigan, Chief Executive, and Roger Farnworth, Chair, St Peter's Partnerships to discuss the function and future of the organisation.
- 7.6.2 St Peter's Partnerships emerged from a local community association established in 1990. Since 2001, it has been a registered charity, with the core function of providing support and services to residents of St Peter's ward.
- 7.6.3 St Peter's Partnerships has 4 stated aims:
- Making St Peter's ward a safer place for people to live in.
 - Ensuring residents have appropriate access to skills for life and employment.
 - Giving local residents the opportunity to influence key decisions which affect them.
 - Ensuring residents feel the area is a healthier and happier place to live in.
- 7.6.4 St Peter's Partnerships is split into two halves: charitable activities and community enterprises (its trading arm). Each section has a turnover of approximately £1m per year. Surplus in trading arm is used to fund the organisation's charitable activities.
- 7.6.5 The charitable arm of St Peter's Partnerships has 3 main priorities:
- Strengthening communities
 - Children, young people and families
 - Employment and training.

- 7.6.6 A strategic and governance review is currently in progress to ensure that the organisation is well-equipped to meet financial and policy challenges in the long term. 20-30% of St Peter's Partnerships' funding originates in the private sector, and the organisation intends to increase this figure in future.
- 7.6.7 St Peter's Youth is a central strand of the organisation's work. 800 young people are members. They have democratically elected a 13-strong leadership group, who manage a £5,000 budget and produce a regular community newspaper. 400 local young people attended the last St Peter's Youth annual general meeting. The Panel agrees that St Peter's Youth provides excellent opportunities for young people to become involved in the community. A Social Return on Investment analysis has suggested that for every £1 of investment in St Peter's Youth £77 worth of return is generated.
- 7.6.8 Enterprise Plus, based at Cavendish Mill, focuses on developing employment skills, enterprise and training for all age groups across Tameside. Individuals are supported to acquire relevant qualifications and training, build confidence and gain work experience. A recruitment service is also offered to local employers to market job opportunities to participants.
- 7.6.9 Safeguard It provides safety and security services for local residents in partnership with police and fire services. The service has a particular focus on the delivery of home fire risk assessments by and to local people.
- 7.6.10 Greenscape is a professional landscaping, gardening and project management service, which offers on-the-job training opportunities to local unemployed people. Its work focuses on those furthest away from the job market. An important principle for Greenscape and St Peter's Partnerships as a whole is 'Grow Your Own', focusing on work and training opportunities for St Peter's residents, who will develop into ambassadors for their local community.
- 7.6.11 St Peter's Partnerships has recently launched the Can Do (Community Solutions) Group within its structure. The Panel was informed that St Peter's Partnerships now owns three properties. The vicarage at St Peter's Church is to be refurbished and re-opened as a managed workspace for the community to use, under the Can-Do branding. Members of St Peter's Youth have been involved in the design process.

Conclusions

25. St Peter's Partnerships provides a number of valuable services to residents in St Peter's ward and across the borough, with a high Social Return on Investment.
26. St Peter's Partnerships is able to use its commercial arm to supplement its charitable activities.
27. St Peter's Partnerships has a clear vision and sense of purpose. It is undertaking a governance review to ensure that it is well placed to meet future challenges.
28. Engagement with residents in St Peter's ward is strong. Local residents who may have faced personal difficulties are supported to make a valuable contribution in their community and promote the work of St Peter's Partnerships.

Recommendations

17. That the Council continues to give appropriate support to St Peter's Partnerships to achieve its objectives in St Peter's ward and Tameside as a whole.
18. That learning from the best practice exhibited by St Peter's Partnerships is applied across Tameside.

7.7 You Choose

- 7.7.1 The Panel met with Ben Gilchrist, Policy and Participation Manager, Tameside Third Sector Coalition (T3SC), and David Berry, Partnerships Manager, Tameside MBC to discuss the introduction of the You Choose participatory budgeting scheme.
- 7.7.2 You Choose is a new Tameside Council initiative, delivered in partnership with T3SC, giving local residents the opportunity to vote on the projects they want to see go ahead in their communities. Eight You Choose events took place across the borough in 2011 (one for each District Assembly area).
- 7.7.3 Funding for You Choose comes from the recycling efforts of residents. Money saved by avoiding landfill costs is allocated to the scheme. The recycling message was emphasised throughout the process, in event advertising and on the day.
- 7.7.4 You Choose is a participatory budgeting scheme. Participatory budgeting directly involves local people in making decisions on the allocation of a set amount of money. This means engaging residents and community groups to discuss local priorities, make spending proposals, and vote on them.
- 7.7.5 You Choose gives local community groups the opportunity to apply for funding (up to £3,000 in some areas and £4,000 in others dependent on population) to deliver a project which will benefit a District Assembly area. Local residents then have the opportunity to decide which projects to fund.
- 7.7.6 The branding of the scheme was clear and consistent, with advertising being conducted via the Council website, local press and radio. The Council's existing 'Have You Say' branding was utilised, grouping the scheme with other aspects of the Council's consultation and engagement activity.
- 7.7.7 You Choose has been welcomed by T3SC and the wider third sector in Tameside as a genuinely participatory model of funding, making an important contribution to the work of smaller groups. The scheme also provides an incentive to informal groups to develop governance arrangements and strengthen their position to access future funding opportunities. T3SC provided support to all groups in advance of their bids and also arrange meeting with unsuccessful groups to help them to access other funding arrangements.
- 7.7.8 Elected members have been engaged throughout the process, promoting the scheme to groups in their wards and sitting on relevant District Assembly assessment panels to filter ineligible bids. Elected members have a very important role to play as advocates for the scheme and in terms of mobilising local groups.
- 7.7.9 In total, £400,021 of funding has been allocated via You Choose. Groups have provided or will provide £95,485 of match funding to their projects that would not otherwise have been spent. This figure excludes the value of pro bono work from group members or local labourers and skilled workers.
- 7.7.10 211 bids were received, for £613,000. 149 groups were successful. It is best practice for some bids to lose in the participatory budgeting process, giving voters a genuine opportunity to influence funding decisions.
- 7.7.11 You Choose has been very positively received by residents. 97% of attendees were satisfied with the event they attended, and 87% agreed that You Choose is a good way of allocating funding. Attendees were asked to fill in evaluation forms before the announcement of results, so the outcome of any bids they may have been involved in did not influence their opinion.

- 7.7.12 You Choose events were attended by a wide cross-section of Tameside's population. For example, 15% of attendees identified themselves as disabled and 13% were over-75. Many groups for young people also made bids, demonstrating a strong enthusiasm in Tameside's communities.
- 7.7.13 As the Council's budget for 2012-13 has yet to be determined, the plans for future You Choose events There is already strong interest in next year's scheme from the community. 60-70 enquiries have been received from potential bidders.
- 7.7.14 A number of factors have contributed to the success of the scheme. The voting events have demonstrated important social benefits for participants and attendees. They have brought the local community together, even though groups were in competition. The events provided a networking opportunity for participants and a chance to showcase their work to the public. 94% of participants made new contacts or received new information relevant to their activities.
- 7.7.15 The first year of the project has been a learning process. The scheme has developed since the first pilot events based on feedback from residents, bidding groups and local councillors. This learning will be applied to future events.
- 7.7.16 The hard work and enthusiasm of those working on the scheme and bidding groups was critical to the success of the first You Choose events.
- 7.7.17 You Choose has received national recognition as an excellent example of participatory budgeting from the Participatory Budgeting Unit.

Conclusions

29. The You Choose scheme enables small community groups to bids for funding for specific projects to benefit the community.
30. The public are directly involved in funding decisions via You Choose and residents have provided strong positive feedback for the voting events.
31. The You Choose process also provides an important opportunity for small groups to develop new governance arrangements and network with similar groups across the borough.
32. Learning from the first You Choose events has been applied well to events in other District Assembly areas.
33. Non-successful groups are well supported by T3SC to access alternative funding options.
34. The hard-work of staff at Tameside MBC and T3SC, and the enthusiasm of bidding groups has been essential to the early success of the scheme.
35. Elected members play an important role in the process, promoting the scheme local groups, supporting them to make bids and approving their progression to the voting events, based on the eligibility criteria.
36. The scheme's links to improved recycling rates are important to meeting the Council's aims in this area.

Recommendations

19. That the Council continues to deliver You Choose in the next financial year, taking forward the same model which takes into account public sector spending cuts.
20. That learning from the first year of You Choose is applied next year and to other participatory budgeting events across Tameside.
21. That elected members continue to be engaged in the You Choose process.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 Tameside has a diverse third sector with a wide variety of groups operating in the borough.
- 8.2 Volunteers in Tameside come from a range of backgrounds. The largest groups by economic status are the unemployed, students and employed. A large proportion are from a BME background.
- 8.3 Tameside does however have a low number of third sector employees and registered groups per 1,000 population compared to other Greater Manchester.
- 8.4 According to the Citizens' Panel, over one-third of Tameside residents have given unpaid help to a group, club and organisation in the last 12 months. Of those who had given unpaid help, half did so at least once a week.
- 8.5 Financial and policy uncertainty has damaged confidence about the future among groups and individuals in the third sector.
- 8.6 Tameside Council engages with Tameside's third sector in a wide variety of ways, involving all service areas and a range of voluntary, community and faith groups.
- 8.7 Many council services are being designed on an integrated or neighbourhood basis. The third sector has an important role to play in this process.
- 8.8 The Council is aiming to protect direct funding to large third sector organisations in Tameside as far as possible. There is a long-term intention to mitigate the impact of public sector spending cuts on the sector in general.
- 8.9 T3SC has a role to build and support strong, clear and independent voluntary and community action in Tameside.
- 8.10 T3SC's work is extremely varied and essential to the vibrancy and effectiveness of voluntary, community and faith groups in the borough.
- 8.11 The third sector delivers a wide range of activities, including luncheon clubs and youth clubs, which are not conventionally described as public services, but perform an essential role in our communities.
- 8.12 Tameside's voluntary, community and faith sector groups span a wide range of sizes and functions. As such, they have diverse support needs and funding requirements.
- 8.13 Cohabitation and collaboration between third sector groups can enable them to make savings on property costs and work more efficiently.

- 8.14 T3SC has a strong, positive, working relationship with Tameside Council.
- 8.15 The hard work, commitment and passion of staff and volunteers working through Volunteer Centre Tameside makes a strong positive contribution to our communities.
- 8.16 Tameside's Volunteering Strategy 'Vision for Volunteering' sets clear priorities and aims to maximise the potential for volunteering to deliver positive outcomes for volunteers and the local community.
- 8.17 Volunteering is a priority for organisations across the Tameside Strategic Partnership.
- 8.18 The Annual Volunteering Summit is a valuable event to bring Tameside's volunteering sector together to share ideas and work on mutual challenges.
- 8.19 Schemes such as Brighter Futures, Miles for Smiles, Time Banking and Breaking The Record provide important opportunities for individuals to participate in volunteering and build skills required for the job market.
- 8.20 Volunteering is increasingly being viewed as a means to prepare for paid employment, as unemployment in the wider economy increases.
- 8.21 Volunteer Centre Tameside is taking positive steps to ensure the sustainability of its activities and increase its capacity, including developing a trading arm.
- 8.22 Volunteering should not be viewed as an alternative to paid staff, nor should it be considered as 'free labour'. Effective volunteering schemes require sustainable investment and management.
- 8.23 Volunteering has a wide range of personal, social, economic and community benefits for individuals and groups.
- 8.24 The merger of T3SC and Volunteer Centre Tameside will enable the organisations to work more efficiently, while maintaining continuity for residents using their services.
- 8.25 St Peter's Partnerships provides a number of valuable services to residents in St Peter's ward and across the borough, with a high Social Return on Investment.
- 8.26 St Peter's Partnerships is able to use its commercial arm to supplement its charitable activities.
- 8.27 St Peter's Partnerships has a clear vision and sense of purpose. It is undertaking a governance review to ensure that it is well placed to meet future challenges.
- 8.28 Engagement with residents in St Peter's ward is strong. Local residents who may have faced personal difficulties are supported to make a valuable contribution in their community and promote the work of St Peter's Partnerships.
- 8.29 The You Choose scheme enables small community groups to bids for funding for specific projects to benefit the community.
- 8.30 The public are directly involved in funding decisions via You Choose and residents have provided strong positive feedback for the voting events.
- 8.31 The You Choose process also provides an important opportunity for small groups to develop new governance arrangements and network with similar groups across the borough.

- 8.32 Learning from the first You Choose events has been applied well to events in other District Assembly areas.
- 8.33 Non-successful groups are well supported by T3SC to access alternative funding options.
- 8.34 The hard-work of staff at Tameside MBC and T3SC, and the enthusiasm of bidding groups has been essential to the early success of the scheme.
- 8.35 Elected members play an important role in the process, promoting the scheme local groups, supporting them to make bids and approving their progression to the voting events, based on the eligibility criteria.
- 8.36 The scheme's links to improved recycling rates are important to meeting the Council's aims in this area.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 That residents' involvement with community groups, organisations and clubs continues to be monitored annually through the Citizens' Panel.
- 9.2 That work continues to increase volunteering generally and among those groups who do not currently make up a large proportion of Tameside's volunteers.
- 9.3 That the Council continues to engage with the third sector and helps to increase its capacity.
- 9.4 That the Council continues to work closely with the third sector in the development of local integrated services, utilising the local knowledge and skills to community groups.
- 9.5 That the Council monitors performance to ensure that its long-term plan to support the third sector is having a positive impact.
- 9.6 That work continues to access dormant charity funds to develop the Tameside People First Fund.
- 9.7 That T3SC undertakes a further 'Taking The Temperature' report into the state of the third sector at an appropriate timescale.
- 9.8 That, in light of the funding challenges both organisations face, T3SC and the Council work together to consider new methods to support community groups, including relaxing some tendering regulations and ensuring community groups can access public buildings.
- 9.9 That actions within the Volunteering Strategy continue to be worked towards and progress monitored.
- 9.10 That Volunteer Centre Tameside continues to build partnerships with major public service organisations in Tameside to develop employer-supported volunteer schemes.
- 9.11 That the successful Time Banking pilot scheme is rolled-out across the borough.
- 9.12 That the Tameside Strategic Partnership works to increase volunteering in deprived neighbourhoods.

- 9.13 That schemes such as Brighter Futures, Miles Of Smiles and Breaking The Record are well publicised and that partner organisations signpost potential candidates to the projects.
- 9.14 That supporting unemployed individuals to volunteer to develop skills and experience to re-enter the job market remains a focus for Volunteer Centre Tameside.
- 9.15 That residents and community groups are fully engaged in the finalisation of the merger between T3SC and Volunteer Centre Tameside.
- 9.16 That the services of each of the brands within Community and Voluntary Action Tameside continue to be delivered to a high standard throughout the transition.
- 9.17 That the Council continues to deliver You Choose in the next financial year, taking forward the same model which takes into account public sector spending cuts.
- 9.18 That learning from the first year of You Choose is applied next year and to other participatory budgeting events across Tameside.
- 9.19 That elected members continue to be engaged in the You Choose process.

10. Borough Treasurer's comments

No direct financial implications as a result of this report. Any expenditure incurred in supporting the Third Sector will be met from existing resources.

11. Borough Solicitor's comments

This report sets out the Council's review of the third sector and how it can deliver the aims of the sustainable community strategy.

The creation of the Tameside People First Fund continues to be progressed and discussions with the Charity Commission are continuing.