

**Councillor Warren Bray**  
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Transport and Connectivity

**Ian Saxon**  
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**Chair of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel**

**Councillor Mike Glover**

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Dear Councillor Gwynne,

**Safe Streets in Tameside**

I write on behalf of Tameside Council's Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel. Members have remained suitably informed of the proposals and future measures aimed at primarily supporting residents to maintain responsible social distancing whilst walking, cycling and using public transport throughout the borough.

The Scrutiny Panel seeks to submit a formal response to the Safe Streets consultation. This letter therefore aims to provide a summary of collective discussion points and to express any issues and concerns raised by panel members. I would be extremely grateful if on receiving this letter you are able to take the appropriate action to ensure the collective response is suitably recorded and submitted. It is also hoped that the response can be referenced within future reports and may support wider governance requirements in terms of engagement and feedback used to inform decision making in this area.

In order to address the significant and far-reaching impacts of Covid-19, scrutiny must adapt accordingly to consider appropriate matters with a keen eye on recovery, as well as community and economic resilience. Panel members have received regular feedback from residents and communities based on learning from the impacts, local response and range of challenges the Council is likely to face going forward.

It is pleasing to report that recent feedback has highlighted the positive and proactive response of the Council and partners in providing direct support and signposting to some of our most vulnerable, isolated and 'at risk' residents. Where possible the Council can aim to lead by example in making bold and innovative decisions that enable residents to feel safe and confident to explore social and economic mobility options throughout the easing of lockdown measures and beyond.

For schemes of this nature, the Scrutiny Panel would encourage services to establish and maintain a clear dialogue with communities throughout development stages. This can help to ensure learning from local knowledge is captured and also creates a platform to deliver key messages and targeted information to residents. It is also felt that active listening to what residents say allows for a set of practical and innovative solutions to remove any barriers to

daily life and the ability of individuals to regain social contact, access to employment and leisure.

There is also no doubt that work in this area is closely connected to national and regional initiatives regarding poor air quality and the development of a Greater Manchester Clean Air Zone. An opportunity has also clearly presented itself to build on the Greater Manchester Bee Network at a local level.

Having recently reviewed work priorities and finalised a work programme for 2020/21, the Scrutiny Panel has reached a consensus that the recovery from Covid-19 provides an opportunity to build on a range of initiatives. This includes developing long-term and sustainable projects that seize on the opportunity around walking and cycling.

Members are particularly aware that there is a significant need to raise general awareness and to support behaviour change. I have listed some of the main points below, which are to be viewed as individual responses from members, under the collective of the Council's Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel.

- Panel members are supportive of the positive and proactive steps being taken by the Council to safeguard residents and visitors when walking, cycling and accessing public transport within the borough. The temporary proposals detailed within the consultation aim to build confidence and ensure that safe social distancing measures can be adhered to and maintained.
- The impact of Covid-19 and associated lockdown measures has resulted in an unprecedented reduction in vehicle usage at a local, regional and national level. Whilst this has been a secondary effect in response to the health crisis, feedback has shown that communities have welcomed a reduction in air and noise pollution, traffic and congestion. It is extremely encouraging to see a rise in the number of residents walking and cycling across the borough.
- There is an opportunity for the Council and key stakeholder to build on previous clean air proposals in order to reinforce walking and cycling as a viable and long-term option. It is unlikely that such an opportunity will present itself again in the near future.
- While maintaining a high level of ambition and expectation, a scheme of this nature should be informed by resident feedback and perception. Consideration to review any existing physical and/or psychological barriers that may prevent walking and cycling as an accessible option or alternative (i.e, journeys in excess of a set distance). The importance of key messages that walking, cycling and cars are complementary travel options and not mutually exclusive. A shift from car to bike need not be ideological, but something on which support and advice can be given to encourage residents to take what may be a cautious yet positive first step.
- The Council to work cooperatively with key stakeholders, such as other public sector bodies and local businesses. No organisation should plan to work in isolation. There is an opportunity to build on local solidarity in that this is everyone's problem to solve and a collection of individual changes will have a greater impact on outcomes for all Tameside.
- It is recognised that travel improvements need to support inclusive economic growth.
- It may be that a scheme of this nature could benefit from a public spokesperson or figurehead, similar to that of the Bee Network in order to build traction and to act as a

catalyst to promote behaviour change. This may include case studies of how individuals and households have transformed the way they view and access local travel options.

- Resident perception may be that Tameside has what appears to be a relatively fixed network of roads and footpaths available for walking and cycling. Local topography may also create problems when connecting people to places. This requires a detailed level of planning and possibly an online platform to house a comprehensive tool for route options. Future proposals require an equal amount of attention and consideration across all areas, helping to build assurance that while some plans remain temporary there is a local commitment to create cost effective, long-term and sustainable solutions for our network.
- To review potential challenges associated with the introduction of temporary cycle lanes on the carriageway. Panel members are extremely keen to find viable and long-term solutions that aim to integrate a variety of travel options between a set start and finish point, which may need to connect off road and scenic routes to more integral road infrastructure and pinch points.
- That consideration be given to residents who may have reduced capability or lack confidence to walk or cycle. To explore options with health and leisure partners to develop introductory fitness courses and 'learning to cycle' classes. It may be that future consideration is given to a cycling grant or loan scheme, to be managed at a central level or in conjunction with local businesses encouraging employees to review travel options.
- That where appropriate, the Executive involve scrutiny in future consultation and development stages.

If further clarity is needed on any of the above points, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

**Councillor Mike Glover**  
**Chair – Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel**