

BOARD

17 June 2020

Present	Elected Members	Councillors Warrington (In the Chair) Bray, Cooney, Fairfoull, Feeley, Gwynne, Kitchen, Ryan and Wills
	Chief Executive	Steven Pleasant
	Borough Solicitor	Sandra Stewart
	Section 151 Officer	Kathy Roe
Also in attendance:	Dr Asad Ali, Ilys Cookson, Richard Hancock, Dr Ashwin Ramachandra Ian Saxon, Sarah Threlfall, Jayne Traverse, Debbie Watson, Sandra Whitehead and Jess Williams	

7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

8 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting on 16 June 2020 were accepted as a correct record.

9 MONTH 2 FINANCE REPORT

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member of Finance and Economic Growth / Lead Clinical GP / Director of Finance, which focused on Council budgets due to the 'Command and Control' regime currently operating for NHS bodies. The report included the details of the Integrated Commissioning Fund (ICF) for all Council services and the Clinical Commissioning Group. The total gross revenue budget value of the ICF for 2020/21 was £975 million.

It was stated that at Period 2, the Council was forecasting an overspend against budget of £4.041m. The gross overspend before COVID funding and other contributions was £19.054m, of which £14.297m was attributed to COVID related pressures. £4.757m of pressure was not related to COVID but reflected underlying financial issues that the Council would be facing regardless of the current pandemic. The Council was in receipt of £13.906m of COVID grant funding from Government (of which £0.027m was used in 2019/20), and the balance of this grant together with other COVID related contributions, resulted in forecast additional income in 2020/21 of £15.013m to offset COVID costs.

It was explained that the CCG continued to operate under a 'Command and Control' regime, directed by NHS England & Improvement (NHSE&I). NHSE&I had assumed responsibility for elements of commissioning and procurement and CCGs had been advised to assume a break-even financial position in 2020-21.

The COVID-19 pandemic was unprecedented and whilst its impact on local public service delivery was clearly significant, the full scale and extent of the health, socio-economic and financial impact was not yet fully understood. The immediate demands placed on local service delivery would result in significant additional costs across the economy, and the economic impact was expected to have significant repercussions, resulting in losses of income for the Council across a number of areas, potentially for a number of years. Whilst the immediate focus was to manage and minimise the impact of the virus on public health, the longer term financial implications and scenarios do need to be considered.

Members were provided with an overview of the forecast position on Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2020/21. It was explained that there were significant financial pressures on the high

needs block which represent a high risk to the Council. If the 2020/21 projections materialise, there would be a deficit of £5.311m on the DSG reserve at the end of this financial year, a deficit recovery plan would likely have to be submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) outlining how we expect to recover this deficit and manage spending over the next 3 years and would require discussions and agreement of the Schools Forum. The position would be closely monitored throughout the year and updates will be reported to Members.

AGREED

That Executive Cabinet be recommended to:

- (i) Note the forecast outturn position and associated risks for 2020/21 as set out in appendix 1e.**
- (ii) Approve the addition of £6.2m of Government funding for CCG COVID costs to the Integrated Commissioning Fund (£0.3m in respect of 2019/20 and £5.9m in respect of 2020/21), and £13.9m of Government funding for Council Covid costs.**
- (iii) Note the forecast position in respect of Dedicated Schools Grant as set out in appendix 2.**
- (iv) Approve the write off of irrecoverable debts set out in appendix 3.**

10 APPOINTEE AND DEPUTY SERVICE CONSULTATION OUTCOME

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member for Finance and Economic Growth/Assistant Director (Exchequer Services), which detailed the outcome of consultation undertaken in relation to the changes to the charging model and increase in appointee costs, investments of capital and revisited Client Finance Policy.

It was stated that the Service within the Adult Social Care Finance Service had undergone review and the outcome of the review was considered by the Executive Cabinet on 22 January 2020. The review addressed the issues of increasing caseload, policy revision and increasing operating costs in addition to market testing for alternative provision. To address these increasing issues consultation was proposed to take place in relation to a proposed change to the charging model and increase in appointee costs, investments of capital and revised Client Finance Policy.

It was reported there were 267 appointee cases and 28 deputy cases and the caseload continued to rise steadily. Consultation had taken place and the report detailed the consultation results, the equality impact assessment (EIA) and contains proposals for change. The delivery of the service remains unchanged.

Members heard that a total of even respondents took part, none of which were current service users. The consultation detailed two options for administration charges for appointees. Deputyship administration charges were set by the Office of the Public Guardian. The two options were:

- Option A Charge all appointees £10.00 per week;
- Option B Charge appointees residing in residential care £7.50 per week and charge appointees living in the community £10.00 per week.

HM Treasury NS&I savings accounts were proposed for deputies with capital in excess of £50k as being a safe investment. Appointee's capital was not managed by the Council as the Client Finance Service role for appointees was to manage income from benefits and bill payments only. The proposed Client Finance Policy was also consulted upon and was detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

Members heard a summary of responses from each of the questions presented and received the full consultation responses to all questions in Appendix 2. It was stated the consultation findings were generally positive on the overall approach with regard to increasing costs, investment of capital and policy revision, and one set charge per week for all appointees is preferred than having a two tier charging model depending on whether the appointee lived in the a residential setting or in the community.

It was reported that the outcomes in terms of the consultation were as follows:

- Increase weekly administration charge to £10 per week for all appointees with more than £1k capital.
- Invest deputies capital in excess of £50k in the NS&I direct saver account.
- Implement the revised Client Finance Policy reflecting the changes.

The increase in administration charge from £6.92 to £10.00 a week was comparable with the weekly charge in other Greater Manchester local authorities at £10.35 per week. The increase would be effective from 01 September 2020 and thereafter be subject to the corporate annual uplift in fees and charges in April each year. This would affect all 267 appointees as deputyship weekly administration fees were set by the Office of the Public Guardian. One deputy case currently had in excess of £50k capital that would be affected by the beneficial investment of monies in the NS&I account.

The equality impact assessment had identified that there was no anticipated direct or indirect impact to users of the Appointee/Deputyship Scheme on the basis of age, sex, ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnerships, carers, military veterans or anyone breast feeding.

The proposed changes would directly impact people with a disability because the provision of an Appointee and Deputyship Service was for adults who cannot manage their own finances due to a disability and/or lack of capacity and therefore require the Council to be responsible for benefits, income or assets. The proposal would directly impact on those with a disability as changes to the charges for the service would affect all appointees and the proposal to amend the investment policy would affect only those deputies with more than £50k in capital. The changes to the scheme would impact those classed as on low or no income, as the investment policy change would impact all service users of the scheme, however those with less than £1k in capital would continue to not be charged for the service, until such time that they have accrued more than £1k in capital.

Mitigating factors had been identified in the equality impact assessment as being comparisons to charges across Greater Manchester local authorities were low and no charges were applied to a service user's account where the capital held for a service user was less than £1k. The evidence sources to support the equality impact assessment were the number of appointee and deputy cases currently managed by the service and the results of the 12 week consultation as detailed in Appendix 2.

With regards to risks, although a considerable amount of work had been undertaken by way of review to address the management of the caseload and its associated risks, it was clear that the financial safety of vulnerable service users in the Borough must be considered at all times.

In order to continue to deliver a safe and effective service risk management must be considered both in the short and long term. An increasing ageing population and service users with mental health needs was unlikely to yield a reduction in cases being referred to the appointee and deputy service, therefore staffing was expected to continually increase as caseloads rose. As staffing costs increased, so too did the cost of service. This upward spiral of caseload, resources, costs and risk was likely to continue to rise indefinitely against which the increase in charges to be reviewed annually is a mitigating factor.

Careful consideration must be given not only to cost of service but to the extreme vulnerability of the service user and any unintended consequences arising from any changes to service provision, therefore the policy would be kept under continual review to ensure that should any unintended consequences arise that these are addressed immediately.

The 12 week consultation carried out between 23 January 2020 and 16 April 2020 and the full equality impact assessment had been carried out to ensure that all risks are identified, mitigated

against where possible, and taken into consideration prior to setting the administration charges, revision to policy, changes to service delivery and investments of service users capital.

AGREED:

That Executive Cabinet be recommended to agree:

- (i) **The weekly administration charge was £10 per week for all appointees with more than £1k capital with effect from 01 September 2020.**
- (ii) **The weekly charge will be subject to annual corporate uplift in fees and charges in April each year.**
- (iii) **Invest deputies capital in excess of £50k in the NS&I direct saver account.**
- (iv) **Implement the revised Client Finance Policy with effect from 01 September 2020.**

11 THE COUNCIL'S SPORT AND LEISURE FACILITIES – FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY DURING THE COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) PANDEMIC

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Community Safety and Environment) / Director of Population Health, which recommended that the Council's stock of sports and leisure facilities remain closed until restrictions controlling social contact were lifted. The report also sought approval of £0.600 million payable to Active Tameside on 1 July 2020 as an advance payment for services commissioned by the Council covering the period 1 April to 30 September 2020.

It was explained that in line with national guidance advising the UK public to avoid unnecessary social contact, all sport and leisure facilities owned by the Council and managed by Active Tameside closed at 10.30pm on Friday March 20 for an unspecified period. Active Medlock continued to provide a limited day care service to a vulnerable group of clients during the closure period. However, this continued to be subject to change based on further national and local guidance/restrictions received.

It was stated that the Council's stock of sports and leisure facilities would remain closed until restrictions controlling social contact and closure of businesses were lifted. It was explained once restrictions on social contact were lifted the centres would be opened informed by a framework of financial sustainability and phased 'safety first' approach informed by public health advice from the Director of Population Health.

Members of the Board were provided with details of an advance payment for services commissioned by the Council from Active Tameside during 2020/21. The advance payment related to services commissioned from 1 April 2020 to 30 September 2020 excluding the sum assumed in the organisation's cash flow to 30 June 2020. The sum would be payable on 1 July 2020 and would support the cash flow of Active Tameside until 31 August 2020, by which time it was expected there would be an update on the business interruption insurance issue.

Regular weekly update meetings continued to be held between Active Tameside's management team and the Council in order to react to changing circumstances. These regular updates were used to plan for recovery together with supporting the timely and efficient reopening of the facilities and associated services.

Members were advised that during the COVID-19 pandemic facility closure period, Active Tameside were providing alternative leisure, health and wellbeing services to keep the general public active, healthy and entertained from home. Members received a detailed breakdown of the services that Active Tameside continued to provide.

Active Medlock continued to operate providing essential health and social care services to vulnerable groups and individuals identified in consultation with Children's and Adult services. Active Tameside continued to provide sports coaches to primary schools in order to support activity provision for the children of key workers.

In addition, Active Tameside were committed to working in partnership with the Council and provided essential support to services where additional capacity was required due to the impact of COVID 19 across the borough. Existing furloughed employees who volunteered, and had the requisite skills to provide such support, would be made available to the Council at short notice. It was proposed to recompense Active Tameside for any related costs under such arrangement.

With regards to the financial impact, it was reported that in the final week of trading prior to closure, Active Tameside casual revenues were down 70% year on year reflecting increasing levels of public anxiety. Draft accounts for 19/20 indicated that Active Tameside achieved its budgeted year end trading surplus a manifestation of the business resilience model developed by the trust over the previous eighteen months.

However, in order to reduce the financial impact of the temporary closure following the COVID pandemic, Active Tameside had taken up the offer of financial support from central government and furloughed all staff not required to maintain/sustain the company during the period of facility closure.

In addition, Active Tameside had business resilience insurance that may be used to fund the remaining 20% of employee costs over and above direct government financial support. At this stage Active Tameside were in regular dialogue and were awaiting further guidance from their insurer's and broker's on the additional costs and forgone revenue streams that could be claimable.

The Council had supported Active Tameside's cash-flow position through this difficult period and paid the total value of the 2020/21 management fee of £1.077 million on 1 April 2020. Members were reminded that this sum, along with commissioned provision delivered within Adult Services and Children's Services directorates would only support Active Tameside's cash flow until June / July 2020 based on known revenue streams receivable at this stage.

It was further explained that the repayment of the 2019/20 prudential borrowing sum of £0.788 million had been deferred until 2021/22 at the earliest. It was envisaged that the outstanding historical prudential borrowing debt balance (which excluded new borrowing relating to the recently opened Active Denton) that was due for repayment to the Council by the end of the 2023/24 lease term (including the 2019/20 and 2020/21 values) would be re-profiled. Options would be considered that would ensure the ongoing financial sustainability of the organisation. The value of the annual management fee payable for the period 2021/22 to 2023/24 would include a repayment plan that would contribute towards the outstanding debt balance (including interest) of £ 3.8 million at 31 March 2020. This would reduce if a sum was repaid in 2020/21 which was currently unlikely. The outstanding debt related to borrowing from the Council by Active Tameside for investment in the infrastructure and equipment across the leisure estate in prior years. An option could be to remove the obligation for Active Tameside to repay the borrowing in exchange for a reduced management fee. This would then make the management fee a better reflection of the costs of operating the service on behalf of the Council.

The Council commissioned services from Active Tameside via Adult Services and Children's Services equating to a value of £1.8 million in 2020/21. The latest Government COVID procurement guidance enabled local authorities to provide supplier relief under PPN 04/20 'if appropriate' to maintain delivery of 'critical services'. This also included advance payment for services. The guidance covered the period to 31 October 2020

The existing cash flow of Active Tameside to 30 June 2020 included a value of commissioned services of £0.270 million. The value of these services for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 October 2020 equated to a sum of £0.870 million. The Council therefore could consider an advance payment of £0.600 million which would be the difference of the sum already included in the cash flow to 30 June 2020.

Payment of £0.600 million in advance on 1 July 2020 would support the cash flow of Active Tameside to 31 August 2020. At this point it was expected there would be an update on the business interruption insurance issue referenced in section 4.12 of the report.

Members were advised that Active Tameside were in regular dialogue with Council finance officers during this period and were operating on a transparent and open book policy in respect of their financial position.

With regards to commercial revenue, Active Tameside's commercial rehabilitation had been underpinned by a relentless focus on three key revenue streams; Health and Fitness memberships; Swimming lessons; and Gymnastics lessons. Early modelling suggested that the combination of capacity reductions via social distancing measures and customer anxiety could reduce these revenue streams by up to 50% for the foreseeable future.

It was explained that even before the pandemic, concerns were growing with regard to sector capacity and latent demand, notwithstanding affordability for those services procured outside Active Tameside in particular. As a consequence of the pandemic, the imbalance between demand and capacity was likely to increase, in part because of the fragility of many current providers.

Current estimates suggested that the impact of falling commercial revenues during the course of the financial year 2020/21 would be a funding shortfall of between £2.1 million and £3.3 million on top of the agreed management fee and it was highly likely that the trading position of Active Tameside would be adversely affected during the remainder of the existing contract to 2023/24.

It was further explained that an empirical review of the commissioning intentions of the Council was necessary in order to ensure that the focus remains on the delivery of health and social outcomes and reducing health inequalities. A visioning session was planned with the Council and Active Tameside on 15 July to begin to plan for recovery. Any future investment would need to align to the Council's medium term financial plan and Strategic Asset Management Plan as part of the COVID recovery approach.

With regards to current cost savings, Active Tameside had 83% of its employees on Furlough saving £0.250 million per month. They had also successfully applied for Business Support grant and rate relief. They were also negotiating with suppliers for any support they can give either as reduced rates, contract suspensions or payment holidays.

It was stated that in order to qualify for any of the Government backed business loans, a business had to be solvent and be able to repay any loan. As Active Tameside had a pension deficit, they were technically insolvent. Their balance sheet had a £1.4 m deficit. The pension deficit/balance sheet insolvency was a common position for those leisure trusts that maintained a Local Government Pension Scheme.

It was reported that in order to trade legally, any business had to have a reasonable expectation that over a 12 month period its income would exceed its liabilities. If not and it keeps trading, that was classed as "wrongful trading" and trustees become personally liable for company debts. Currently the Government had temporarily suspended that piece of legislation due to COVID but at some point it would need to be addressed

Active Tameside's financial year end was 31 March 2020 and the Audit was due to take place this summer with the final accounts presented to Board members in December 2020. At that point the Trustees would look to assure their auditors that over the next 12 months they would have sufficient funds to meet liabilities. This is onerous enough in normal circumstances and was very unlikely that any responsible Governing body (based on what we know) would be able to provide that assurance to December 2021. In the past, the Council has provided a "letter of comfort" to Active Tameside to support this requirement. In the past it was unlikely that this letter would have been activated. Under the current circumstances it would be highly likely that Active Tameside

would need additional financial support to keep trading until “normal” revenues could be re-established.

Members were informed that unlike most Companies in the UK, Active Tameside would submit a claim for business interruption under a special “resilience clause” via their business insurance policy. Most insurance policies state a disease had to have been on a specified list before the policy was taken out (impossible for COVID 19). The resilience clause allowed a new disease to be backdated to the point it became notified. Active Tameside’s insurance brokers, Marsh, had this clause in only 700 policies nationally but these companies include FTSE 100 companies and nationally recognised charities. Marsh were commissioning expert legal opinion to support the claim of Active Tameside. Whilst this did not guarantee success, in Marsh’s opinion they remained “cautiously optimistic.”

Further, there was a good chance that this might go to litigation as a “class action” because all of the policies were worded the same and the cause (COVID-19) was common. Insurance acceptance was the best outcome for both Active Tameside and the Council and this option is being pursued vigorously. This would ensure that any temporary financial support provided by the Council would be repaid.

With regards to reopening to the public, given that the ‘leisure sector’ featured in Phase 3 of the Government’s recovery plan, Active Tameside’s physical estate must remain closed to the general public until 4th July at the earliest with a formal announcement not expected from Government until 26th June. However, throughout the leisure sector, preparations are now underway to reopen within the context of a ‘new normal’.

Any proposals for re-opening would be carefully risk assessed (both operationally and financially), in line with local advice and agreed with public health to ensure we remain vigilant against the spread of COVID-19, reduce inequalities and work together to protect our communities.

Any phased opening could not commence until the point at which all requisite processes, protocols and associated training were demonstrably in place following permission to reopen by Government. At this juncture, it was not possible to predetermine the chronology of subsequent phases which will be informed by national guidelines, the emerging review and local Population Health advice and guidance.

In the first instance, Active Tameside proposed a ‘safety first’ approach focused on swim, gym and classes, all bookable and payable in advance. To ensure that 2m social distancing could be maintained and increased cleaning and infection control measures adhered to, services would be operating at significantly reduced capacity. Many centres would continue to be closed to the public.

During the course of the lockdown, Active Medlock had remained open supporting the Council to continue to provide services to adults and children with complex needs. Initially, 18 places per week were provided for both Adult and Children’s social care and these places were taken up by 6 individuals. During the course of lockdown, demand had increased and 19 individuals now occupy 28 places. Remote support had continued for all Everybody Can clients in the form of a minimum of two phone calls per week, insights from which had been fed into the social care framework.

However, risk assessments clearly indicate that reopening some buildings including Active Medlock to the general public whilst managing the COVID-19 risk to vulnerable populations was impractical. The maintenance of social distancing requirements necessitated the use of PPE in many circumstances. Further, challenges included enhanced staffing ratios, cohort ‘bubbles’ and building ‘flow’ and adequate space necessitate a different approach to the delivery of commissioned services. To this end, opening hours would reflect these challenges at both Active Medlock and other centres within the estate as below. This approach would enable Active Tameside to meet not only pre COVID- 19 levels of provision within the borough but also to meet increased post COVID-19 demand both safely and efficiently.

In the first quarter of 2020 prior to the lockdown, the Live Active referral scheme for those residents with long term conditions had 412 actively participating members and 422 'completed' members still on the 12-month pathway. During lockdown, the non-furloughed Live Active officers had continued to support those on the scheme, by phone, through social media and via hard copy. In recent times, the Active Streets trial had taken Live Active 'to the people' providing a lifeline to those suffering with both mental and physical health issues as a consequence of isolation, whilst supported health walks have been reintroduced. Active Tameside would continue to promote and deliver on the Tameside 'Active Neighbourhood' model within neighbourhoods, supporting the increased demand for outdoor exercise.

AGREED

That it be RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that :

- (i) The Council's stock of sports and leisure facilities would continue to remain closed until restrictions controlling social contact were lifted**
- (ii) Once restrictions on social contact were lifted the centres would be opened informed by a framework of financial sustainability and phased 'safety first' approach informed by public health advice from the Director of Population Health.**
- (iii) A sum of £ 0.600 million be payable to Active Tameside on 1 July 2020 as an advance payment for services commissioned by the Council covering the period 1 April to 30 September 2020. The sum represents the balance due for this period excluding the value assumed in the Active Tameside cashflow to 30 June 2020. The advance payment would support the cashflow of Active Tameside until 31 August 2020, by which time it would be expected there would be an update on the business interruption insurance issue, when further update report would be presented to Members in August 2020.**
- (iv) That the Trust Chief Officer attend a future meeting of Board to discuss future plans.**

12 REVIEW AND UPDATE OF SERVICE CHANGES ACROSS OPERATIONS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Community Safety and Environment) / Assistant Director of Operations and Neighbourhoods, which provided an update on proposed service change decisions across the service in response to the evolving national guidance and the relaxation of certain Covid19 lockdown measures.

Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, Tameside had been working closely with partners and employees to continue to deliver vital services. The Council had developed and followed a Business Continuity Plan which has identified the key services that were essential to our residents and businesses. To comply with government advice and the requirements of social distancing, service adjustments were required and many services had been delivered differently or more creatively to especially support residents who are social distancing and self-isolating.

During the COVID-19 outbreak, staff roles and responsibilities had been adjusted in order to support the front-line key services. Staff had been redeployed into roles to ensure that business critical activity was delivered throughout the borough. In some cases council business activity would be ceased either following a determination that it would detrimental to public health, or that the function is not critical to service delivery during this exceptional time.

A Council-wide report detailing the effect of the COVID-19 virus and the steps Tameside Council was taking in response of this threat was discussed at Board on the 1 April 2020. Following that service changes across the Operations and Neighbourhoods directorate had been approved and documented in a number of Executive Decisions.

With regards to service changes to markets, the Ashton Indoor Market had continued to operate throughout this pandemic by supporting the essential businesses that had been allowed to continue their trade.

As per the Government's updated guidance most non-essential businesses could reopen from 15 June 2020 with the exception of the hospitality sector. Ashton Indoor Market would therefore open for these businesses from 15 June 2020 with operating times of 9am to 4pm Monday through to Saturday. Businesses would only be granted permission to open once they had provided written confirmation that they had put in place all the necessary measures to ensure that the business were COVID-19 safe.

Due to the increase in the R number for the North West now being above the critical value of 1. As at 5 June 2020 this was at 1.01. The re-opening of the outdoor markets in Ashton and Hyde would be delayed. This position would be reviewed regularly in line with the critical 5 tests set out by the Government.

In addition to the increase in the R number, outdoor markets had the potential to attract large crowds with potentially little regard to social distancing and no means for controlling access and numbers of visitors. Whereas the control measures currently in place for indoor markets, like supermarkets could be strictly managed with restricted access that was monitored and the controls over the number of customers in the building at any one time.

Members were informed that with regard to service changes to libraries the Government had indicated in their Covid 19 Recovery Strategy that libraries would be included in step three of the roadmap to recovery. Meaning that some form of opening would take place at the earliest from 4 July 2020. Any form of re-opening would be contingent on whether this aligns with the easing of restrictions in other Council Services. Work had begun to determine how the public library service can operate safely following easing of restrictions to allow step three of the plan to be implemented.

An initial assessment had been undertaken of all 8 library venues to determine what was possible within the space available and with the required restrictions. All services offered at each library had also been considered to determine what level of service can be offered.

It was explained that a phased return to re-opening libraries would be implemented and subject to all safety measures being in place this would commence on Monday 6 July 2020. It was envisaged that the offer would include the following:

- Return of outstanding items
- Utilising one way systems where appropriate and social distancing.
- Using self-service machines as much as possible
- An order and collect service for those not wishing to browse
- Pre-booked use of PCs for 1 hour only (or walk in if there is capacity)
- Printing

In order to allow the above services safety measures would need to be implemented. These included:

- Hand sanitisers upon entry and exit from the library
- Additional cleaning
- Specified maximum number of people in each section of the library at any one time
- Invigilated queuing system to enter/exit the library
- Perspex screens round the library counter
- Directional floor markings to guide people round one way systems, signage to remind people to social distance, markings on the floor to indicate where people should queue and wait to be served, floor markings to denote 2 metre distance
- Quarantining books for 72 hours upon return before putting back on the shelves and the same after packing them into bags for the click and collect service
- Removal of all furniture which encourages people to stay longer in the library
- Removal from use specified PCs to ensure 2 metre distance between users

- Sanitising of PCs between users

Further, in order to ensure social distancing measures were adhered to it was recommended that no unaccompanied children under 12 years of age were allowed into the library at this time.

Dependent upon risk assessments it was envisaged that the offer could be available at 4 of the larger libraries initially with others possibly coming on stream in a phased approach.

The Home Library Service would also be resumed on a contactless basis for those that wish to take advantage of it and the service would be extended to include shielded people and those who are very vulnerable for health and wellbeing reasons.

It was proposed to offer a new service for those who did not feel they wished to enter the main body of the library and browse stock but would still wish to have reading material. This service would be similar to the home library service in that customers can advise of the genre of reading material they prefer and staff will make a selection from the shelves.

On fines and book renewals all items out on loan have had their loan period extended to between the 22 June to the 30 June 2020 to ensure that no fines are attracted when people were unable to return them.

Further it was proposed to extend all item loans and suspend accrual of fines to the 31 August 2020 to allow sufficient time for people to return their items following opening of libraries

It was reported that none of the libraries would be available in Open+ operating hours as it would not be possible to monitor social distancing of users or sanitise PCs between usage.

With regards to Museums and Galleries this front line service had been closed throughout lockdown and this situation would continue for the foreseeable future. Following the opening of some library venues further consideration on these services would be undertaken.

The Tameside Local Studies and Archive Centre had been closed to the public during lockdown and all scheduled events cancelled.

Arts and Engagement activities and events had to be cancelled due to the Corona pandemic as it was not currently possible to have gatherings of people.

Online resources were being made available by the museums and galleries, local studies archives and arts and engagement services.

All recommencement for Cultural venues and activities would be reviewed regularly in line with the critical 5 tests set out by the Government and will remain suspended until 1 October 2020 or until Government guidance allows.

Members were informed that the Tameside Welfare Rights & Debt Advice service remained operational via the telephone, webchat, email and letter but with no face to face appointments. The service had assisted many residents through the advice line and advised on welfare benefits and tax credits, with 349 enquiries being specifically related to Covid-19. Support continued for residents with debt issues by telephone, webchat and email. Due to the stay on possession proceedings until 23 August 2020 the service had not been required to assist with representations through the county court due to rent or mortgage arrears.

The Customer Services walk in facility continued to be suspended to public access until further notice. Services were being delivered via telephone, dedicated email addresses and webchat. This position would be reviewed regularly in line with the critical 5 tests set out by the Government.

Aligned with the lifting of lockdown restrictions for non-essential businesses and the expansion of the high-street retail offer the Council proposed to recommence parking enforcement from 1 July. The necessary controls would be put in place and full Covid risk assessments would be made and implemented before the service recommences. Parking Enforcement would be introduced with a phased approach starting with the issuing of warning notices for the first 2 weeks on both on-street and off-street parking locations..

A number of the contracted NSL Parking Enforcement Officers had been deployed to critical Council service areas that required extra resources during this period. These contracted staff would now return to their parking enforcement role to ensure customer compliance.

It was proposed to continue to suspend monthly parking deductions for all staff who had purchased contract car park passes for a further 3 months until 1 October 2020 because it was expected or intended that they would come into the office, the suspension should therefore mean that staff would not cancel the passes.

With regards to CCTV staff shift pattern was proposed to increase to a 12 hour shift, in order to build resilience and maintain public order. This longer shift pattern was not required and would now only be used in an emergency and in response to operational risks.

The public access Licensing Counter at Tame Street was closed during lockdown with all applications for licences processed through the website, via telephone and email. The service proposed that this counter remains permanently closed allowing the service to be delivered remotely.

Taxi driver licence renewal applications were processed as usual, however where an applicant was required to submit a medical certificate, the Service was currently allowing applicants to complete a self-certification form. The applicant would be required to submit the medical certificate once GP practices resume normal service.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, where taxi drivers were self-isolating, licence holders were offered the opportunity to temporarily suspend their drivers licence. It was proposed that this offer would remain in place until 1 October 2020.

It was proposed that the Service would continue to process the vehicle renewal licence application as usual and require vehicle proprietors to submit renewal application forms and relevant paperwork, including insurance via email, and continue to test vehicles to ensure that they are safe and mechanically sound.

In situations where the vehicle was not being used or the driver was self-isolating, upon request a vehicle licence may be temporarily suspended, it was proposed that vehicle licence holders would be offered this opportunity until 1 October 2020.

All private hire operator licences which are due to expire continue would be processed as usual.

With regard to fees for driver and vehicle renewal applications, licence holders had been offered the option to defer payment of the fee for a period of 3 months. It was proposed that this would be extended until 1 October 2020.

No letters had been sent out to licensed premises to remind licence holders that their annual fee was due to be paid since February 2020. These fees remained payable although many of the premises had been required to close during lockdown. It was proposed that the annual fee letters would be sent out from the 1 July 2020, providing the licence holder with an option to defer payment for a period of 3 months.

The Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 for the licensing of persons involved in England in selling animals as pets, providing or arranging for the

provision of boarding for cats or dogs, hiring out horses, breeding dogs and keeping or training animals for exhibition.

It was proposed to continue to defer all planned food hygiene, food standards and animal feed interventions - other than those for high risk establishments, or where there are specific legislative requirements on the nature or frequency of controls for 12 weeks from the 18 April 2020. This was in line with the Food Standards Agency Guidelines. This would mean that planned visits would recommence no sooner than the 11 July.

Action by local authorities when the intervention was due should initially be undertaken remotely - a telephone discussion and paper-based audit of relevant documentation. If the discussion or documentation provided suggested that there may be a serious public or animal health risk, an onsite visit should be made to assess and address these risks.

It was recommended to continue to defer proactive inspections of House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) and Inspections required under the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2016 (EPR Regs) for a further period of 3 months until 1 October 2020.

Service Requests would focus resources on urgent reactive work to address potentially serious public health or animal health risks.

Skips and scaffolding permits that remain on the highway would be enforced from the 1 July 2020.

It was proposed to further delay the issuing of invoices issued under the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2016 (EPR Regs) and the Private Water Supply (England) Regulations 2016 (amended 2018) (PWS Regs) for a further 3 months until the 1 October 2020.

Buy with Confidence Members would be offered an option to defer payment of the fee for a period of 3 months until the 1 October 2020.

AGREED;

That Executive Cabinet be recommended to agree that:

- 1. The revised opening of non-essential businesses in Ashton and Hyde Indoor Market as set out in the report at paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3.**
- 2. Delayed re-opening of Ashton and Hyde Outdoor Market as set out in the report at paragraph 2.4.**
- 3. A phased re-opening of Library Buildings and re-introduction of Home Library Service as detailed in paragraphs 3.7, 3.11.**
- 4. No unaccompanied children under 12 years of age allowed in the Libraries.**
- 5. To continue the suspension of Library fines until 31 August 2020.**
- 6. To continue the suspension of events and closure of cultural venues until 1 October 2020 or until review of guidance permits.**
- 7. To note the continuation of virtual or digital customer interaction for Cultural and Customer Services**
- 8. To recommence parking enforcement from 1 July 2020.**
- 9. To continue the suspension of monthly parking deductions for all staff contract car park passes until 1 October 2020.**
- 10. The Licensing Counter remains permanently closed.**
- 11. The adjustments to Licensing payments and procedures are agreed detailed in paragraphs 4.3-4.13**
- 12. To continue to defer proactive inspections of House in multiple Occupation (HMO) and Inspections required under the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2016 (EPR Regs) until 1 July 2020 unless there are exceptional reasons for doing so to protect life and limb.**
- 13. To recommence charging for skips and scaffolding permits remaining on the highway from the 1 July 2020.**

14. **To recommence issuing invoices under the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2016 (EPR Regs) and the Private Water Supply (England) Regulations 2016 (amended 2018) (PWS Regs)**
15. **It is proposed to recommence the Buy with Confidence Membership scheme from the 1 October 2020.**
16. **A review of the services changes and a updated report will be brought to Members in September**

13 2021 CENSUS PLANS – CENSUS SUPPORT CENTRES

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director of Policy, Performance and Communications / Assistant Director, Operations & Neighbourhoods, which sought approval for the proposed method for operating census support centres in Tameside.

It was stated that every ten years the Office for National Statistics (ONS) carried out a census to find out more about the people who live in England and Wales, and about the make-up of local neighbourhoods. The next census was proposed to take place on Sunday 21 March 2021.

The 2021 Census would predominantly be an online census with a target of achieving a 75% response rate online. In 2011, households were given the opportunity to complete the census online with 19.1% of households in Tameside doing so; compared to 19% across England.

For the majority of households initial contact for the Census would be made via an invitation to complete the questionnaire online. The invitation would provide a unique access code (UAC) and website address. Paper copies would be made available to anyone who asks for them, though the method for accessing these is yet to be determined.

It was reported that the ONS commissioned a body called the Good Things Foundation (GTF) to administer funding for the operation of census support centres across the country to assist people in completing the online questionnaire throughout the nine week period. The GTF had compiled a list of local authority areas throughout England and Wales in which these centres may be necessary; Tameside was featured on the list along with various other authorities in the North West and elsewhere throughout the country. GTF had estimated that 1,396 Tameside residents would require assistance over the 9 week period.

The GTF proposal included funding of £14 per employee hour operating census support centres in suitable places across the borough. Stipulations for a suitable location were outlined to Members. Each location must be able to be staffed by dedicated census advisors for published and advertised operating hours at different times throughout both weekdays and the census weekend. GT defined three sizes of centre to be used wherever appropriate. These base categories were not exclusive, as centres would be sized appropriately for the expected demand.

Each individual must acquire a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, a right to work check, and must attend face-to-face and online training given by GTF between October 2020 and February 2021. Each worker would also be required to sign the ONS Census Confidentiality Undertaking form. Additional funding would be provided to support the training of staff and setup of each support centre.

The census would be used by Government to determine how to allocate resources between local authorities; resident counts provided by the census were used for matters of 'per head' resource allocation and policy consideration. In the 2011 census, Tameside's online completion rate was 19.1%; this was slightly above the national average of 19.0% but still significantly below the targeted online completion rate of 75% in 2021.

A significant difference between the 2011 and 2021 censuses was the method in which residents were invited to take part; in 2011 residents were sent both a link to the online questionnaire and

also a paper copy to complete in the traditional manner, whereas in 2021 residents in most areas of the country would just be sent access information for the online form in the first instance. As a result of this change there may be an increased reliance on publically available council-owned computers in libraries throughout the borough from those residents who may not have a suitable computer and/or internet connection at home.

Tameside's population aged 65+ was proportionally smaller than for England as a whole. According to the 2018 mid-year population estimates, several of Tameside's electoral wards the 65 and over population was significantly larger.

Tameside was a significantly deprived area, ranking as the 28th most deprived of the 317 authority areas which made up the country in the Index of Multiple Deprivations (IMD) published in 2019. This was significant, as along with income and employment measures, the IMD also considered areas such as education and skills, health and disabilities, and access to services into its calculation of overall deprivation for a given area. Tameside contained pockets of more severe deprivation, which included areas like Hattersley and the town centres of Ashton, Dukinfield, and Stalybridge. Notably, in the case of Hattersley and Dukinfield, these pockets of deprivation overlapped with areas of low online completion in the 2011 census.

With regards to the proposed method for operation of census support centres in Tameside, the best locations within Tameside to hold these support centres would be the libraries, which were already equipped with internet-connected computers for public use and which were located throughout the different communities of the area- avoiding requiring those in need of help to travel to one central location. Libraries would also, in large, meet the requirements for accessibility, already being used for public access. Libraries would also provide separate areas for residents to complete the questionnaire in private, making use of reading rooms and similar spaces.

It had been noted by Libraries Connected, the national sector lead for Libraries that in order to provide these centres entirely within the library service would not be feasible within the £14 per staff hour budget. Instead, they had suggested that in order to be viable, a fee of £27 per hour would be required for each staff member. In addition, numbers of library staff would likely not be sufficient to operate these support centres.

It was for this reason that it was proposed that these census support centres be manned by a pool of volunteers from within the wider Council workforce. In the same manner as by which members of staff can elect to work to open postal votes during an election or work in a polling station or at the count, members of staff could be invited to put themselves forward for the training and to help operate the centres in exchange for additional hourly compensation.

In order to meet the requirements of requiring a lead be present in each location, it was proposed that a number of leads be appointed for each location to serve for different shifts throughout the census period. This would relieve any concerns with having one member of staff being required to work for extended periods of time, including into the evening, over many consecutive days.

The number of centres to operate throughout the borough remained to be decided but bids could be made for up to six locations. More centres distributed in different community centres would allow for easier access and potentially increased response rates, but would also require an increased number of staff to be released from their regular duties to operate the centres.

Another factor for consideration was the amount of additional compensation given to members of staff for electing to help operate the service. The £14 per staff hour was distinguished as payment for a service and not as general funding, although the council could choose to reserve some percentage of the fee to mitigate staffing costs for those who are away from their duties. Alternatively, the full £14 could be given to staff members or volunteers at cost in order to better incentivise staff to volunteer and to remain actively engaged throughout the nine week period (including periods of working over weekends) without dropping out partway through the programme.

If agreed to proceed, officers of the council would submit an application to host online census centres across the borough in our libraries. The outcome of the submissions would be determined on the 17 July 2020.

AGREED

That Executive Board:

- (i) note the content of the report.**
- (ii) agree the proposed method for operating census support centres in Tameside.**
- (iii) consider the factors for determination.**

14 BE WELL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT AND NHS COMMUNITY HEALTHCHECKS: CONTRACT EXTENSION AND SERVICE MODIFICATION

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member of Adult Social Care and Population Health / Co-Chair Tameside & Glossop CCG, Clinical Lead for Long Term Conditions / Director of Population Health, which set out a proposal to award an extension to the Health Improvement contract with Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust for Health Improvement services in Tameside.

It was stated that the current integrated wellbeing service, Be Well, was Population Health's main front line behaviour change programme. It was a community offer aimed at preventing ill health through support to individuals and communities. Be Well was provided by Pennine Care, and offers a number of services to help people living in Tameside to improve their health.

NHS Health checks were a statutory function of Population Health. In Tameside they were commissioned and delivered via two routes to maximise access and choice for residents: Be Well in the Community, and in General Practice by individual GP surgeries.

The Health Improvement service had directly contributed to a number of priorities of the Corporate Plan.

It was explained that the Health Improvement contract currently held by Pennine Care was due to come to an end on the 30 September 2020. A key decision was agreed at SCB on 22nd January 2020 to re-commission the Health Improvement services. Population Health was therefore planning to procure two new services to cover the functions, which would take over the contracts on 1 October, 2020.

With regards to contract extension, the Health Improvement functions provided by Be Well were detailed in two service specifications covering NHS Health checks and the wider Be Well service, at an indicative total value of £1,167,256 for the period 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2021. These service specifications formed part of the larger contract with Pennine Care Foundation NHS.

In light of national guidance, a national directive was covering NHS contract arrangements during COVID as per the COVID-19 NHS guidance.

The commissioner had been working with STAR procurement throughout this period, who advised that under Public Contract Regulations 2015, there was provision for extending or modifying a contract during its term where there were urgent requirements due to unforeseen circumstances, including COVID-19. STAR considers that the extension and modification of the NHS Health checks and Be Well services is justified under the above regulations.

It was explained that due to the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, investment in the long-

Be Well deliver NHS Health Checks in community locations, workplaces, and at public events, particularly focusing on communities with higher need. They involved discussion with the member of the public, as well as physical tests including a blood test. Although this was a statutory service, in order to comply with national guidelines on social distancing, NHS England and NHS

Improvement ordered a pause to NHS Health Checks in a letter dated 19 March, 2020 in place until at least 31 July 2020.

In the recent COVID-19 recovery plan, published in May 2020 the government recognised that “preventative and personalised solutions to ill health” were a key part of the national effort to improve lives following COVID-19, and named the expansion of NHS Health Checks as the major driver of this.

In addition, Health Checks had been suggested as a key method by which local areas could support individual approaches to improving the health of the frontline workforce, as part of the Strategic Commission’s approach to risk reduction for frontline workers. This was being explored by Population Health in partnership with Health & Safety.

Be Well Tameside performed well against its performance targets overall and maintained quality in the service it provided, evidenced by outcomes and positive client feedback. At a recent review of performance for 2019/20 it was noted that the majority of KPIs were met or close to being met, despite the challenges of the final few weeks of the year. During 2019/20 the service saw 3,453 clients for a range of health and wellbeing support which led to 1907 personal health plans being completed with clients and 919 clients being supported to get specialist help from other services.

The service had been extremely responsive and flexible during the COVID-19 pandemic and had adapted to continue to provide wellbeing support remotely, as well as supporting COVID-19 response services in other organisations.

It was reported that after discussion with Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust, Pennine Care indicated that they would be willing to continue to deliver the Health Improvement and NHS Health checks contract, should the proposed extension be agreed.

Due to the restrictions placed on the public and on organisations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not feasible to continue to run the Be Well service model as it was prior to the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a rapidly evolving situation, requiring changes to the delivery of most, if not all, front-line services. The commissioner had been working closely with Pennine Care since March, when restrictions on public services were first introduced, to enable services to continue as much as possible in a safe and effective way.

Specific changes which had been introduced so far consist of Face to face support, including physical activity sessions, paused for all aspects of the service as of 20 March 2020, in order to comply with government guidance on social distancing. Very rapidly, Be Well transferred all support to a telephone-based model, and Be Well were still accepting referrals for support with weight management, healthy eating and smoking cessation.

Due to the necessary reduction in some activities (such as oral health and community development), Be Well had capacity to work in other ways. Some of the staff had been redeployed to Action Together to support the humanitarian community response where their expertise and experience was highly relevant. Staff were also supporting the community response in a variety of other ways, including liaising with Mind to support the buddying programme, and supporting with homeless charities, care and food parcels, where needed. This had the added effect of using and further strengthening the existing relationships between Be Well and the voluntary and community sector.

The options for the service were outlined to Members of the Board as follows:

- Do nothing and decommission the service. This would lose a good service in Tameside. It would leave no community smoking cessation or health improvement offer, or NHS

Community Health Check offer in place in Tameside, at a time when health inequalities and poor physical and mental health were likely to increase.

- Continue with the tender process as previously planned. As providers would have to realign service delivery to meet national guidance and redirect staff to other priorities, there was a risk that in recommissioning services at this stage of the pandemic it would be highly likely that providers would not be in a position to bid for the contract. This would lead to a failure in a robust and competitive tender process and in particular TUPE where staff were carrying out different roles due to COVID-19. This would be further compounded by the unavoidable delays to the start of the process.
- Extend the contract for 12 months. This would give the best chance of recommissioning a strong service, while retaining Be Well in the interim period to continue with their community Health Improvement work. This would maximise the health benefits to Tameside, and is our preferred option.

AGREED

The Strategic Commissioning Board is recommended to:

- (i) extend the current contract by 12 months, to 30 September 2021**
- (ii) note the modified delivery model for the Health Improvement service to meet the needs of local residents while adhering to national guidance.**

15 FORWARD PLAN FOR COVID RESPONSE BOARD

Members considered the forward plan of items for future meetings of the Board.

CHAIR