

## BOARD

8 July 2020

**Present:** Elected Members Councillors Warrington (In the Chair), Cooney, Fairfoull, Feeley, Gwynne, Kitchen, Ryan and Wills.  
Borough Solicitor Sandra Stewart  
Section 151 Officer Kathy Roe

**Also In Attendance:** Steph Butterworth, Ilys Cookson, Jeanelle De Gruchy, Richard Hancock, James Mallion, Dr Ashwin Ramachandra, Ian Saxon, Paul Smith, Sarah Threlfall, , Debbie Watson.

**Apologies for Absence** Steven Pleasant

### 33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 34 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of meeting on 1 July 2020 were approved as a correct record.

### 35 COVID-19 IMPACT/DAILY DASHBOARD

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Leader / Director of Governance and Pensions, which set out a series of performance and impact measured, which would help the organisation respond effectively to Covid-19 and which would inform and support the recovery process.

The COVID-19 pandemic had impacted every part of the organisation's business and would continue to do so for some time to come.

The impact dashboard reported weekly and the daily dashboards had been combined in a single view. The dashboards set out the detail of these impacts in some key areas of the organisation, including those which were likely to incur significant financial impacts.

The dashboards would be updated and reported to Board on a monthly basis, although much of the data reported within would be monitored more frequently and would be shared with Cabinet Members as part of their regular briefings with senior managers.

It was explained that the dashboard was structured by the eight Corporate Plan priorities. The impact dashboard reported weekly and the daily dashboard had been combined in a single view.

The key messages from both dashboards were summarised as follows:

- Numbers of children being referred to children's services had reduced significantly since the 23 March 2020. (start of the Lockdown)
- As of the 22 June the amount of council tax collected was £1.7m less than expected
- The number of GP referrals in April was at a 2 year low and 39% lower than the 2 year average, and remained at a similar level in May
- The number of registered deaths since 13 March 2020 to date was 849, 17% higher than the same period in 2019
- 2.5% of CCG and council employees were currently unable to work due to Covid 19
- The number of complaints regarding fly tipping was 179 since the 21 June. This was 156% higher than at any time in 2019

- Attendances to A&E were now starting to increase to average levels. There were 1624 attendances in the week to the 27 June, which was 3% higher than the one year average.
- Latest figures show that more than £42,8 million business support grants had been paid
- The cumulative number of deaths in care homes across Tameside as at 23<sup>rd</sup> June was 44% higher than the same period in 2019
- To date 1,952 residents have been supported with food parcels

Additional analysis on key areas of the data would continue to be undertaken, additional analysis would be provided at the request of Board and Cabinet Members.

## **AGREED**

**That the contents of the attached dashboard be noted.**

### **36 LOCAL OUTBREAK CONTROL PLAN AND UPDATE**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Population Health, which provided a summary of the principles of Covid19 outbreak management across Tameside including an outline of the key roles and responsibilities across the system, the mechanisms and infrastructure in place to deliver this and appropriate routes of accountability.

The Plan was a high level summary of the approach to managing and preventing the spread of Covid-19 in Tameside, which would allow residents and communities to safely live with Covid-19 during the current phase of the pandemic.

This was an iterative plan which would continue to be informed by local circumstances; intelligence; evidence; and ongoing engagement with Tameside's communities.

The key aims of the Outbreak Control Plan were to:

- Prevent spread of Covid-19 and contain and suppress outbreaks.
- Early identification of and management of outbreaks
- Define governance, roles and responsibilities and command & control arrangements relating to Covid-19 management
- Set out communications and engagement arrangements with partner organisations and residents
- Outline how the impact of outbreaks would be mitigated for residents
- Outline the approach to surveillance using data and other sources of information to monitor the extent and impact of Covid-19 infection across Tameside
- Where possible incorporate Covid-19 response into existing structures and ways of working

## **AGREED**

**That Board approve the content of this plan and note the update and recommend to Health & Wellbeing Board and Strategic Commissioning Board to approve..**

### **37 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2021 - 2022**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member (Finance and Economic Growth)/Assistant Director Exchequer Services, which detailed the procedural requirement in deciding if changes were required to the Council Tax Support scheme (CTS).

In considering setting a CTS scheme the Council would need to adhere to a number of procedural requirements which were detailed as follows:

- Set a CTS scheme no later than 11 March before the start of the financial year to which the scheme applies.

- Adopt the prescribed requirements which must apply to all schemes, which included local schemes, the prescribed scheme for persons of state pension credit age and default schemes (the same as the previous council tax benefit scheme).
- Ensure that claimants of state pension credit age continued to receive the same support under the scheme as they receive in council tax benefit.
- Consider the statutory public sector equality duty in adopting a scheme and the child poverty strategy.
- Consult all major precepting authorities.
- Consult generally on changes to the scheme.

In setting the scheme for 2021/2022 consideration had been given to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on caseload.

The actual scheme costs had reduced year on year up to April 2019. Although claimant numbers continued to fall in 2018/19 the costs of the scheme had increased, which was attributed to the 5.56% increase in Council Tax bills including the mayoral precept and the adult social care precept. The higher the Council Tax charge, the more the CTS scheme would cost, unless claimant numbers fell significantly. Council Tax increased in 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 included an adult social care precept, and mayoral precept from 2018/19. The reduction in costs from 2016 could be partly be a consequence of the CTS scheme change requiring that all claimants pay at least 25% of their Council Tax liability.

Scheme costs, claimant numbers and equalities data was monitored every quarter. This regular monitoring had highlighted an increase in claimant numbers and costs, as detailed above, however the scheme was currently operating as expected.

Hardship relief continued to be available to any person who was experiencing financial hardship as a result of the CTS scheme. This relief was an integral part of any local scheme in accordance with government scheme guidance. The purpose of the hardship relief was to mitigate the potential risk that some claimants may, in exceptional circumstances, suffer severe financial hardship as a result of the introduction of the scheme or changes to the scheme and may apply for additional monies to help pay their Council Tax. The hardship fund totalled £50k in 2020/21 and was identified from existing budgets. However, this amount would not exclude approved applications being granted should the maximum allocated funding being exceeded.

Residents could also obtain advice and assistance on the hardship fund and CTS scheme from the Council's Benefits Service, Citizens Advice Bureau, Tameside Welfare Rights Service and other local advice services such as MiNT. A total of one application for hardship relief was received in the 2019/20 financial year however the application was not eligible and no hardship monies were paid out.

All claimants had to pay at least 25% of their Council Tax liability and the Council continued to face significant financial challenges in how much the Council had to spend on services particularly in response to COVID-19. Cuts in funding from government had a significant impact on spending as government funding provided the greater proportion of the Council's finance, and the money raised from Council Tax paid by local residents makes up only one third of the Council's funding.

It was clear that given the financial challenges faced that a local CTS scheme would need to be set taking into account the finances that were available as any increase in costs of the CTS scheme was borne by Council Tax payers.

Consideration had been given to the current cost of the scheme which was £14.8m and the maximum support available to CTS claimants. The current maximum award was set at being 75% of a claimants Council Tax liability subject to income and circumstances such as the Council Tax band of the property. Should Council Tax levels increase or the caseload increase in future years then the cost of the scheme would increase.

It was clear given the financial challenges the Council continued to face that a local Council Tax Support scheme would need to be set taking into account the finances that were available, in addition to external factors as follows:

- Impact of COVID-19 and additional £150 reduction awarded by government
- Valuation Tribunal direction
- MHCLG guidance

With regards to the Impact of COVID-19 whilst the economic situation was not a procedural factor to be considered when setting a scheme as required by law, the Council had a duty to consider the impacts of the economy on financially vulnerable residents. The impact of COVID-19 had been unprecedented in terms of people being out of work due to being furloughed or losing their job. This had impacted on the numbers of claimants for both Universal Credit and Council Tax Support.

The number of new CTS claims by month in 2020 was detailed to Members, 459 in January, 403 in February, 786 in March, 506 in April, 422 in May and 536 in June. It was explained that not all that apply would meet the eligibility criteria as CTS was means tested. Claims rose sharply in March with April and June also seeing an increase in claims made which suggested that residents may have lost employment or been furloughed, however May suggested that new claims were comparable to pre lockdown numbers.

The rise in the number of CTS claimants did not correspond with the number of claimants of Universal Credit in Tameside, as the UC claimant numbers were significantly higher. This suggested that the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown had a considerable financial effect in the borough however not all claimants of Universal Credit had a Council Tax liability hence numbers of UC claimants being higher than CTS applications being received. Claimants of Universal Credit and/or Council Tax Support could be in work in low paid jobs and already claiming CTS.

Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) official labour market statistics suggested that 27,700 (29.5%) of employments of Tameside residents were furloughed. The data was based on employees residential address and some employees may have more than one job.

It was explained that should the caseload continue to rise in Q2 and Q3 when furlough scheme ends and if unemployment increased, then the costs of the scheme would rise as indicated in the graphs of caseload and costs to date. Should claimant numbers continue to rise at the same rate then scheme costs could increase by up to an additional £1m by the end of December 2020 (Quarter 3).

In response to the COVID-19 economic situation the government announced additional monies to be paid to claimants in receipt of Council Tax Support, which equated to a £150 reduction off Council Tax bills for all existing and new claimants. This would be paid in addition to any Council Tax Support awarded and would benefit the financially vulnerable in Tameside by having less Council Tax to pay in the current financial year 2020/21.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had not issued any guidance on what local authorities should consider including in their local scheme for the forthcoming financial year. Should MHCLG release guidance at a future date then this would be included in a revision to the scheme to be set in February 2021.

Due these factors, and the £150 reduction on the amount of Council Tax payable for every working age claimant awarded by central government, no revisions to the scheme had been proposed, save for the annual upratings of welfare benefit amounts and urgent changes to legislation which were not anticipated.

The last quarterly review in June 2020 revealed that there continued to be no adverse impact on any specific equalities group. Detailed equalities analysis would be included in the annual CTS reporting document which was to be considered by the Executive Cabinet when setting the scheme.

The population of Tameside was estimated at 226,493 based on the latest mid-year population (2019 stats). Trends show an ageing population. Tameside had 18,134 CTS claimants as at June 2020 and of these 7,602 had reached pension credit age and were therefore fully protected under legislation contained in the prescribed scheme and would not see any change in their benefit entitlement.

## **AGREED**

**The Council Tax Support Scheme for 2021/22 in principle remains the same scheme as that set in April 2020, subject to annual benefit uprating as detailed in the scheme and any further guidance which may be received by MHCLG or the Valuation Tribunal Service**

## **38 COVID-19 IMPACTS ON GROWTH PRIORITIES AND RESOURCE**

This report was deferred for consideration at the meeting of Board on 15 July 2020.

## **39 SAMP**

Consideration was given to a report of the Executive Member for Finance and Economic Growth / Director of Growth, which set out proposals for the integrated management of land and property assets to ensure they were best used to enable the delivery of the priorities identified in the Corporate Plan.

The Director of Growth was commissioning a review of how land and property assets across the Council and CCG could be best used to enable the delivery of the priorities identified in the Corporate Plan. This would complement the work undertaken through the GMCA's Local Asset Review (LAR) and Neighbourhood Asset Review (NAR), funded by the GM Transformational Fund and One Public Estate Programme.

The Council and CCG owned or occupied a property portfolio, which included a wide range of assets, all of which required individual consideration in terms of their management.

The CIPFA guidance for financial reporting in 2018 required that all Councils evidence an "Integrated thinking" approach to all decisions and expenditure. An integrated thinking leadership system that considered all Council land and property as a strategic asset was required. This would need to:-

- Provide a single integrated overview of all Council land and property; policy, strategy, usage, change, service strategy/need, acquisition, disposal and development.
- Integrate the strategy for the Council's assets and CCG property interests with those of the wider public sector.
- Allow senior management and elected members to oversee Asset Management activities and set priorities.

The COVID 19 pandemic had radically changed working practices and social behaviours and it was expected that this would result in an accelerated change in working patterns and service delivery model; this required an integrated re-imagining of the corporate estate alongside those new service delivery models. This integrated approach to Land and Property Asset Management could be achieved using, Integrated Governance, Corporate Landlord and a Strategic Asset Management Plan.

This report recommended a Cipfa model of governance that was generally accepted across Local Authorities as good practice for public sector property management, which had been designed to provide a framework for an integrated thinking approach to organisation wide land and property Asset Management.

The proposed Asset Management Working Group would provide a single organisational overview, senior management and Member guidance to services and decision makers, co-ordinate all land and property asset management activities and set priorities in delivering: -

- Asset Management Policy.
- Asset Management Strategy.
- Asset Management Action Plan.
- Recommendations to Executive Cabinet on the future use of all Council Land and Property Assets, and sites where the CCG had an interest, including sites that could be made available for disposal or alternative use
- Co-ordinate with and inform corporate policies that effect Council Assets, i.e. Green Spaces, Highways, parking, agile working, transportation, growth, education, leisure, adult social care, primary health care, community health care, children's social care, education, MTFs, capital programme/ strategy, disposals..
- One Public Estate.
- Agile and Flexible Working.
- Asset Management co-ordination with external organisations.
- Corporate Landlord.
- Asset Management Governance.
- Change procedures for operational land and property.
- Service/Directorate Asset Management Plans.
- Land and Property related Environmental and Energy service.
- A pipeline of surplus sites.

The proposed Asset Management Officer Group would: -

- Advise future Asset Management Policy.
- Advise future Asset Management Strategy.
- Assist in the development of an annually reviewed Asset Management Action Plan.
- Identify options for the future use of all Council Land and Property Assets.
- Review and identify surplus sites.
- Co-ordinate internally and with external organisations and integrated working programmes.
- Feedback and guidance on agile and flexible working.
- Agree and oversight the Corporate Landlord model, including change procedures.
- Identify and document service land and property needs through Service/ Directorate Asset Management Plans. (SDAMPs)
- Act as a corporate level user group to feedback on Corporate Landlord performance and issues.

Regular communication between the Strategic Property Team and users/ clients would be a key component of an integrated approach to asset management, therefore it was envisaged this new approach to integrated asset management would be rolled out at Senior Management Group. The Strategic Property Service attend all Directorates' Management Team's on a quarterly or 6 monthly basis.

The Corporate Landlord was where the ownership of all land and property was centrally held on behalf of the Council/ CCG, this included the operational, industrial, community, highways, surplus, education, drainage and green spaces. Services based in / operating the operational estate were in essence 'tenants of the Corporate Landlord'.

It was proposed that the Corporate Landlord should be based upon the following principles:

- Property was a corporate resource and would not be in the sole control of any one directorate or service.
- All property related activity and budgets should be managed centrally, under the Strategic Property Service acting, on behalf of the Corporate Landlord. Except:-

- (i) Operations and Green Spaces Service; should continue to maintain, operationally manage and hold budgets for Green Spaces land, but the land itself, the buildings on it and the building budgets should be vested in the Corporate Landlord.
- (ii) Highway and Drainage assets, including land adjacent; Engineering Services; should continue to maintain, plan, operate and hold capital and revenue budgets as they do now, but the land itself shall be vested in the Corporate Landlord.
- Any other land and property that could be identified as having a clear operational reason not to be covered by Corporate Landlord. To the satisfaction of the Asset Management Working Group.
- The Corporate Landlord should be responsible for maintaining the “condition” and “compliance” of operational buildings. Service Tenants “Suitability” issues would be subject to change control procedures.
- The relationship between the Corporate Landlord and service clients, who were Tenants of the Corporate Landlord should be clearly defined utilising a standard service level agreement which outlines roles, responsibilities, clear fee scales (if applicable) and performance measures.
- The Corporate Landlord, through the Asset Management Working Group should lead on all property transactions and reviews such as, land and property review, such as leases, acquisitions, disposals, land assignments, valuations, CPO’s and wayleaves.
- All Land and Property policy, strategy, change and usage should be considered corporately, through the governance structure as set out in the report which would include the Asset Management Working Group, Asset Management Officer Group and Strategic Property Service and as necessary, Executive Cabinet.
- No Council/ CCG services should agree or commence negotiations related to any land and property asset related plans/ co-locations/ bids, change of use or additional expenditure without it being agreed through the Corporate Landlord, the Asset Management Working Group and then, as necessary, Executive Cabinet.

With regards to the Strategic Asset Management Plan it was intended to direct how assets were managed to best effect to not only capitalise on their benefit to the Borough, its communities and residents but also to maximise efficiency and effectiveness going forward.

It was stated that the proposed timeline would be as follows:

- 29 July 2020 – Executive Cabinet would be requested to approve the Strategic Asset Management Policy and Strategy, Corporate Landlord Approach and Governance.
- 14 August 2020 – Identify Directorate and Service Leads.
- Executive Cabinet in August 2020 – Disposals Strategy and 1st Tranche of surplus sites report, subject to consultation findings.
- In September 2020 - Instigate Asset Management Working Group and Asset Management Officer Groups.
- In September 2020 - Commission “Portfolio Review” of alternative site uses and valuations across the estate.
- By 2 October 2020 – All services/ Directorates Leads to complete Service Directorate Asset Management Plan’s for all Services of the Council/ CCG.
- By 4 December 2020 – Complete review of all SDAMP’s and advise Asset Management Working Group on the proposed way of meeting the short term identified service needs. (Interim Operational Accommodation Strategy to enable service changes post Covid19)
- February 2021 – Executive Cabinet would be requested to approve the 2021-2022 Asset Management Action Plan. (Including planned reviews and surplus property).
- By 4 March 2021 - All SDAMP’s and Corporate Landlord (Land and Property) SLA’s would be signed off by Directorate Management / Leadership Teams and the Asset Management Working Group.
- March 2021 - Portfolio review would be completed.
- April 2021 - Accommodation Strategy 2021-2023 to AMWG.

## **AGREED**

**That Executive Cabinet be recommended to:**

- (i) **Note the inherent value in the effective and efficient direction and utilisation of all land and property assets in sustaining the provision of services and enabling the delivery of the Tameside and Glossop Corporate Plan.**
- (ii) **Restate that Council Policy that land and property are a corporate resource and decisions on it should not be in the sole control of any one directorate or service.**
- (iii) **Agree that the alignment of assets with organisational priorities and objectives is key to ensuring that all land and property decisions are made in the correct context and having regard to all relevant factors.**
- (iv) **Agree the Strategic Asset Management Plan - Policy and Strategy, detailed in Appendix 4 of this report.**
- (v) **Agree that the Strategic Asset Management Plan, Policy, Strategy and Action Plan are reviewed as part of an Asset Management Working Group annual service planning process.**
- (vi) **Agree with the Governance Model detailed in section 2 of this report.**
- (vii) **Agree with the Corporate Landlord approach detailed in section 3 of this report.**
- (viii) **Agree that each Directorate shall identify an appropriate Director or Assistant Director to act as Directorate lead for Asset Management and to be a Member of the Asset Management Working Group.**
- (ix) **Agree that each Directorate shall identify an appropriate relevant Assistant Director or Head(s) of Service to act as service lead for Asset Management, to attend the Asset Management Officer Group and to develop Service/ Directorate Asset Management Plans, (SDAMP) for all Council and CCG services.**

#### **40 FAMILY INTERVENTION – RELEASE OF FUNDS TO COMPLETE WORK TO FAIRFIELD CHILDREN CENTRE, DROYLSDEN**

Consideration was given to a report of the Deputy Executive Leader / Executive Member for Finance and Economic Growth / Director of Children's Services, which sought approval to the release of capital funding to complete work on Fairfield CC, Droylsden in order to progress the co-location and move from St Lawrence Rd for Edge of Care and Child Protection Family Intervention teams as part of the 7 Sustainability Projects.

In an effort to reduce the number of children becoming looked after the Edge of Care service offer an intensive, whole family response to children at the edge of care, provided over a 7 day flexible service to meet the identified needs of children and families. The service provided structured, strength-based interventions that enabled families to develop problem solving skills build resilience and achieve positive, sustainable behaviour change. The service provided practical support with strong challenge, to address complex and enduring needs. Fairfield Centre would provide a safe space for work to be undertaken with children and families and support children to return home safely.

It was explained that an existing Council owned property at Fairfield Road Children Centre in Droylsden had been identified as an appropriate location for the team and delivery of interventions. The property was in generally a good condition, however there was some remodeling work required and this included the refurbishment of kitchen, office break-out rooms and the upgrade to the security and alarm system.

The cost of the refurbishment work was £54,434 this would be commissioned via the LEP who had indicated that the refurbishment work could start in late July 2020 to take advantage of the regular unoccupied time due the summer holidays and would take 4 weeks to complete. There was a high degree of confidence that work could be completed in this timescale and to the stated costs. The work would be project managed by Robertson project team who were contracted via the LEP to carry out such works on the Councils behalf. In addition there was £2,000 of IT related work required i.e. a total cost of £56,434.

The current capital programme as recommended by SPCMP on 9 October 2017 and subsequently approved by Executive Cabinet on 18 October 2017, included a scheme for the purchase of

Children's Homes in the borough. The total Capital funding available was £950,000 and this report recommended that £56,434 was utilised to fund the refurbishment of Fairfield Children Centre.

Whilst there were no changes to the Family Intervention & Early Help workforce the refurbishment at the Fairfield Children's Centre would enable the service to deliver better outcomes including the support given to children and young people to prevent them from entering the care system and also assisting in stepping down children on child protection plans. The target for the centre was to stop 15 children each year from entering into the care system; which could generate a cost avoidance of between £0.247 m and £3.288 m per year depending on the placement type the children would have been accommodated to.

It was further explained that by helping to safely step down children on child protection plans it was estimated that centre would enable further cost avoidance. The average direct costs of a child on a child protection plan for a year was £0.006m, which included on-going support and case conference reviews. It should be noted that any avoidance of cost would be partially offset by the annual revenue costs of operating the centre.

The revenue costs associated with operating the centre would be funded by the existing placements budget within Children's Social Care. The annual estimated costs of the total budget for the Centre was £31,310 and £25,480- for 2020/21 based on being operational from 1 September 2020. The related budget would be vired to the Corporate Landlord and would be reviewed after a 6 month period of occupancy. The budget sum transferred would then be subject to adjustment.

#### **AGREED**

- (i) That approval is given to undertake the necessary work at Fairfield Children Centre, Droylsden in order to progress the colocation of Family Intervention workers from Child Protection and Edge of Care teams as previously agreed as part of the 7 projects for Looked After Children sustainability approved by the Executive Cabinet on 27 November 2019.**
- (i) To approve and release capital funding of £56,434 to complete work on Fairfield CC, Droylsden in order to progress the plan to collocate Edge of Care and Child Protection Family Intervention team. This is part of the 7 sustainability projects.**
- (ii) That approval is given to support estimated £14,000 additional annual revenue funding to finance the related costs of the centre as detailed in table 1, section 3.3 of the report. The estimated 2020/21 part year cost is £8,170. This funding will be vired from the 2020/21 Children's Social Care placements revenue budget to the Corporate Landlord and will be reviewed after a 6 month period of occupancy. The budget sum transferred will then be subject to adjustment. All staffing related costs are included within the directorate staffing budget**

#### **41 FORWARD PLAN OF ITEMS FOR BOARD**

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

**CHAIR**