

**Report to:** EXECUTIVE CABINET

**Date:** 30 September 2020

**Executive Member:** Councillor Allison Gwynne – Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Community Safety and Environment)  
Councillor Gerald Cooney – Executive Member (Housing, Planning and Employment)  
Councillor Leanne Feeley – Executive Member (Lifelong Learning, Equalities, Culture and Heritage)  
Councillor Warren Bray – Executive Member (Transport and Connectivity)

**Reporting Officer:** Ian Saxon – Director (Operations and Neighbourhoods)

**Subject:** OPERATIONS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS SERVICE CHANGE DECISIONS UPDATE SEPTEMBER 2020

**Report Summary:** To provide a service change decision update across Operations and Neighbourhoods in response to the evolving Covid-19 pandemic. A review in September for Members was agreed at the 24 June 2020 Executive Cabinet meeting.

**Recommendations:** That Members note:

1. The revised opening times of the Ashton and Hyde Indoor markets: Monday – Saturday between 9am – 4pm.
2. The Outdoor Markets reopened on a reduced basis on the 22 June 2020 and returned to full operations on the 20 July 2020.
3. Organised events within parks and countryside remain suspended, with the exception of the activities organised by Youth Services as detailed in section 4.4. The volunteer led guided walks programme is being reviewed for reintroduction in January 2021 if considered safe to do so.
4. The operational service changes of the Bereavement Services in line with the Health Protection Regulations 2020 detailed in sections 3.1-11.
5. Staff will still not enter the properties of deceased persons when dealing with Public Health Funerals in order to find financial or personal details.
6. The current Guidance and Procedures for Welfare and Community Funerals continues to apply and a further review will be undertaken by 31 October 2020.
7. The Council's statutory homelessness services, provided by their commissioned partner, Jigsaw Homes, are now operating limited appointment only visits at their premises Tameside Housing Advice.
8. Youth Services have provided outdoor activities from the 3 August 2020 with social distancing and safety measures in place.
9. To consider the proposal to continue the suspension of the monthly parking deductions for all staff contract car park passes. This will be reviewed at the end of the calendar year.
10. Some low risk programmed inspections and enforcement

activity remains suspended to allow or provide additional capacity to enforce the Health Protection (Coronavirus Business Closure) Regulations 2020 as detailed in sections 5.5-6

11. The Health and Safety team continue to provide organisational wide-support on an ongoing basis, as detailed in sections 5.7-5.8
12. The operational service changes of the Licensing function detailed in sections 5.9-10
13. To confirm that the Buy with Confidence Membership Scheme is still proposed to recommence from the 1 October 2020.
14. Four of the Council's eight libraries reopened on the 6 July 2020. It is proposed that the further four libraries reopen on the 12 October 2020, dependent on local infection rates, as detailed in sections 6.1-6.4.
15. To consider the proposal to further extend library item loans and the accrual of fines to the 31 October 2020, as detailed in section 6.5.
16. To consider the proposal to reopen the Portland Basin Museum and the Astley Cheetham Art Gallery on the 14 October 2020, dependent on local infection rates, as detailed in sections 6.6-6.13.
17. To consider the proposal to reopen the Local Studies and Archive Centre on the 13 October 2020, dependent on local infection rates.
18. TMBC is advising against any organised event which would involve the gathering of more than 30 people, both indoors and outdoors until January 2020.
19. To note and consider the proposals for Christmas celebrations, as detailed in sections 6.18-6.23 and in **Appendix 1**.

**Corporate Plan:**

The proposals are aimed at supporting economic growth and providing a safe environment for the general public.

**Policy Implications:**

The proposals support the Council's response to and recovery from Covid-19 and support policies to develop economic growth and deliver a thriving retail offer.

**Financial Implications:  
(Authorised by the statutory  
Section 151 Officer & Chief  
Finance Officer)**

The proposed changes to the services per the June 2020 Executive Cabinet report continue to be reported in the monthly revenue monitoring of the Directorate.

The updated financial implications of all the service change recommendations as set out in this report will be included in the period 6 directorate revenue monitoring report.

The amended financial impact of these proposals can be summarised as follows:

**Cultural Services**

The continued suspension of Library fines until 31 October 2020 would result in a further loss of income of approximately £2.5k over the extended 2 month period to 31 October 2020 i.e. an estimated total loss of income since 1 April 2020 of £ 8.75k. There are no other direct financial implications associated with the proposals for the library service.

The suspension of events has resulted in an expected saving of £120k in 2020/21 which has been previously reported in the revenue monitoring report. This will be reviewed alongside the estimated cost of the Christmas celebrations outlined in sections 6.18 to 6.23 with an update reported in the period 6 revenue monitoring report.

The continued closure of museum and art gallery's as stated within sections 6.6. to 6.13 until 14 October 2020 results in an estimated loss of income of £13k since 1 April 2020. This includes donations, educational sessions delivered to school groups, charges for activity sessions available to families and takings in the museum shop.

Whilst there have been costs incurred in the delivery of virtual or digital customer interaction across the service, this is offset by savings on the costs that would normally be incurred on face to face delivery.

### **Parking**

On average, parking services generate £4.5k per month from staff car park passes. The continued suspension to 31 December 2020 would result an estimated total loss of income of £ 40.5k in 2020/21.

However, the spaces remain available for others to use as council staff on the whole will remain at home so are not using the spaces and their alternative is to cancel the pass and not renew.

### **Licensing**

There are currently no additional financial implications of the licensing counter remaining closed. The service is investigating the possibility of a new IT system to improve processing efficiency but the cost implication of this will be assessed as part of the associated decision.

### **Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)**

This report provides a further update on the changes to the delivery of various services within the Operations and Neighbourhoods Service as a continuing response to the Covid Pandemic.

When considering the changes, especially the reintroduction of services due regard has to be given to relevant government guidance with particular regard to social distancing and local lock down requirements.

As set out in the main body of the report some of the council's statutory duties are currently still operating in a reduced capacity. It is therefore advisable that the situation continues to be kept under regular review to ensure that the Council's response remain a reasonable and proportionate response balancing the risks of the reduction in services against the risks which continue to be posed by the pandemic.

### **Risk Management:**

Service changes have taken appropriate Covid-19 safety measures in place to reduce the transmission of the virus.

**Background Information:**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting Emma Varnam, Assistant Director (Operations and Neighbourhoods)



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus, Tameside has been working closely with partners and employees to continue to deliver vital services.
- 1.2 The Council followed a Business Continuity Plan which has identified the key services that are essential to our residents and businesses. The Council also complied with the advice and legislation enacted by the Government according to the requirements of lockdown.
- 1.3 To comply with government advice and the requirements of social distancing, service adjustments were required and many services have been delivered differently or more creatively to especially support residents who are social distancing and self-isolating.
- 1.4 During the COVID-19 outbreak, staff roles and responsibilities were adjusted in order to support the front-line key services. Staff have and continue to be redeployed into roles to ensure that business critical activity is delivered throughout the borough. In some cases council business activity have ceased either following a determination that it would be detrimental to public health, or that the function is not critical to service delivery during this exceptional time.
- 1.5 A Council-wide report detailing the effect of the COVID-19 virus and the steps Tameside Council is 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 have been approved and documented in a number of Executive Decisions and reports. The latest of these service change reports was approved at the 24 June Executive Cabinet meeting.

- 1.6 It was further agreed that the Operations and Neighbourhoods directorate would provide a review and update on service changes to Members in September 2020 given the evolving nature of the pandemic. The following sections will provide the update.

## **2 SERVICE UPDATE – OPERATIONS AND GREENSPACE (INCLUDING MARKETS)**

### **Markets**

- 2.1 Ashton Indoor Market has continued to operate throughout this pandemic by supporting the essential businesses that have been allowed to continue their trade. Hyde Indoor Market reopened on the 1 June 2020 in a decision requested by the essential traders.
- 2.2 Non-essential traders were allowed to return to both the Ashton and Hyde Market Halls from the 15 June 2020 following the national government guidance. Both Ashton and Hyde Market Halls now operate and are accessible to all at the reduced times of Monday – Saturday between 9am – 4pm. This is due to the restraints on operational resource and the need to ensure that the environments are supported adequately in view of social distancing.
- 2.3 Outdoor Markets reopened on a reduced basis from the 22 June 2020 to enable the team to monitor and manage the appropriate social distancing measures. The Outdoor Markets returned to full operations on the 20 July 2020 having reopened successfully.

### **Greenspace**

- 2.4 All Council organised events within parks and countryside remain suspended, with the exception of the activities organised by Youth Services as detailed in section 4.4.
- 2.5 Officers are reviewing this on a regular basis and are considering a plan on commencing the volunteer led guided walks programme in January if it is safe to do so.

- 2.6 Cultural Services have created a programme of self-led family trails (10 at present) which have had positive feedback and can be used throughout the year. Officers are also reviewing and updating the self-led walks leaflets available on the Council website. Video guides to these walks are being created to provide visual route information to the public and enable access to those unable to visit the enjoyment of the greenspace and countryside.

### **3 SERVICE UPDATE – BEREAVEMENT SERVICES**

- 3.1 Funeral attendances at Dukinfield Crematorium Chapel were restricted to a maximum of 10 mourners when lockdown was introduced on the 23 March 2020.
- 3.2 Following updated government guidelines on gatherings 3 July 2020, the Greater Manchester Cemeteries and Crematoria agreed to increase mourner numbers dependent on the layout of each individual building with regards to appropriate social distancing measures being in place. From the 8 July 2020 the restrictions on the number of mourners allowed at Dukinfield Crematorium Chapel increased to 20 mourners. Up to 30 mourners are allowed to attend burials outside when adhering to social distancing measures.
- 3.3 The temporary closure to the public of the crematoria reception, waiting area and crematory is to continue until work has been completed to ensure visitor and staff safety. Alterations have been made to allow Funeral Directors access at a side door for the collection of cremated remains.
- 3.4 The scattering of cremated remains or the placing of cremated remains in memorial sanctums has recommenced from the 10 August 2020 with social distancing measures and updated service risk assessments in place.
- 3.5 Following easing of some restrictions and guidance from The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (England) Regulations 2020 – 3rd July 2020 which stipulated Crematoria could now open up buildings in addition to their chapels, the Book of Remembrance was reopened on 27 July 2020 with strict social distancing measures in place. It is only open on Monday-Friday to allow staff to monitor numbers in the building. No cards or memorialisation can be left – only cut flowers in vases provided by the Crematorium. The Book of Remembrance has also been made available online.
- 3.6 To note that 5 additional staff members have qualified to safely operate cremators under a special measure scheme to increase the resilience of the service.
- 3.7 The demand for Bereavement Services has since reduced and so reverted back from operating a 7 day service to normal hours from the beginning of July. The team can operate a 7 day service if the need arises.
- 3.8 The service continues to use electronic paperwork as much as practically possible. The processing of memorial applications has recommenced from the 3 August 2020. Memorial applications will be available online.
- 3.9 Physical Registrar checks are essential at every burial and will continue to be undertaken while maintaining social distancing.
- 3.10 All services at Dukinfield Crematorium will continue to be recorded and the video made available to view free of charge whilst restrictions on mourner numbers remain in place.
- 3.11 From the 1 September 2020 it is now mandatory for everyone attending Dukinfield Crematorium for a service to wear a face covering. This guidance has been updated in line with the Health Protection Regulations 2020 and The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings in a Relevant Place) (England) (Amendment) Regulations

2020. This states that *“face coverings must be worn by law in indoor places of worship, crematoria and burial ground chapels unless exempt for health, disability or other reasons”*. This includes staff, funeral directors and bearers, ministers etc.

- 3.12 Staff will continue not to enter the properties of deceased persons when dealing with Public Health Funerals in order to find financial or personal details.
- 3.13 The current Guidance and Procedures for Welfare and Community Funerals continues to apply and a further review will be undertaken by 31 October 2020.

## **4 SERVICE UPDATE – COMMUNITY SAFETY AND HOMELESSNESS**

### **Community Safety and Homelessness**

- 4.1 To note that the Council’s statutory homelessness services, provided by their commissioned partner Jigsaw Homes, are now operating limited appointment only visits at their premises Tameside Housing Advice.
- 4.2 On 24 July, the Council Leader formally opened “The Town House”, a new premises designed to offer a broad range of support to people who are homeless and at risk of rough sleeping, and other vulnerable Tameside residents. Situated next to St Anne’s Church on Burlington St in Ashton, The Town House is a community hub which combines overnight emergency accommodation with a community café, counselling spaces, kitchens and meeting rooms where vulnerable service users can meet with specialists to address their needs and start to tackle the issues which have led to their homelessness.
- 4.3 The building will operate in partnership with a number of local voluntary organisations under the “Stronger Together Tameside” (STT) banner. STT will utilise the knowledge and contacts of various organisations, along with the volunteer network across the borough to strengthen our approach to tackling rough sleeping. Taking a more pro-active and diverse strategy to work on the issues impacting our service users and those who are in need.

### **Youth Services**

- 4.4 The Youth Services clubs continue to be closed until it is considered safe for them to reopen. However, due to the lower risk of transmitting the virus outdoors, the Youth Services has provided outdoor activities from the 3 August 2020 following social distancing guidelines. Additional measures include providing hand sanitation stations and the cleaning of the equipment before and after activity. There is a limit on attendance numbers and attendance has to be booked in advance.

## **5 SERVICE UPDATE – PUBLIC PROTECTION AND REGULATORY SERVICES**

### **Events**

- 5.1 Following national guidelines and rules, all events to date have been cancelled due to Covid-19 as the risk of public gatherings in indoor and outdoor settings increases the risk of contracting and spreading Covid-19.
- 5.2 Although some gatherings are now possible nationally, because Greater Manchester has entered into more stringent measures on the 30 July 2020, to stem the tide on the increase in Covid-19 positive cases across the region, TMBC is advising against any organised event which would involve the gathering of more than 30 people, both indoors and outdoors until after Christmas.

### **Parking Services**

- 5.3 Parking Services continue to operate a full range of services effective from the 1 July 2020 as approved by Executive Cabinet on the 24 June 2020.

- 5.4 It is proposed to continue the suspension of the monthly parking deductions for all staff contract car park passes whilst staff continue to predominately work from home. This will be reviewed at the end of the calendar year.

### **Business Compliance Services**

- 5.5 Some low risk programmed inspections and enforcement activity remain suspended to allow or provide additional capacity to enforce the Health Protection (Coronavirus Business Closure) Regulations 2020. This is in line with guidance issued from the Food Standards Agency. It should be noted that this is an increasing area of work both in the number of proactive visits and in responding to complaints. Please see the table below detailing the cumulative number of proactive visits and complaints responded to by the Council since the start of the lockdown period and also the information for the week 17-23 August.

TMBC led activity*		Proactive	Complaint response	Action taken (*)
Licensed premises	17- 23 August	22	3	3
	Cumulative	448	131	12
Other business premises	17-23 August	7	25	1
	Cumulative	85	521	13

\*Please note that the above figures were correct as at 27 August 2020, and do not include visits led by Greater Manchester Police (GMP). For example, GMP undertook a further 26 proactive licensed premises visits in the week 17-23 August.

- 5.6 Low risk inspections of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) continue to be deferred. Complaints received and high risk areas of concern will be dealt with appropriately

### **Health and Safety**

- 5.7 The Health and Safety Team continue to provide support to every service unit manager across the organisation to produce, review and update Covid-19 risk assessments for all workplaces and activities. Recent efforts have been focused on supporting all aspects of school openings, including transport arrangements.
- 5.8 This service will continue to provide organisational-wide support on an ongoing basis. The team continue to ensure regular dialogue with trade union representatives through the normal organisational arrangements.

### **Payments and Procedures**

- 5.9 Many of the functions associated with the Licensing Service, following the national lockdown, were transferred to online processes and these changes remain and the service will not go back to face to face provision.
- 5.10 To confirm that the issuing of invoices under the Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2016 (EPR Regs) and the Private Water Supply (England) Regulations 2016 (amended 2018) (PWS Regs) became effective from the 1 July 2020.
- 5.11 To confirm that the Buy with Confidence Membership Scheme is still proposed to recommence from the 1 October 2020.

## **6 SERVICE UPDATE – CULTURAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES**

### **6.1 Libraries**

Four of the Councils eight libraries re-opened on the 6 July 2020 following implementation of all Covid-19 safety measures and test and trace requirements.



- 6.2 Visitors to these libraries expressed appreciation that the service is operational again, albeit in a more restricted way. During the first 4 weeks of opening there were over 12,000 loans and visitor numbers were just over 50% of what would normally be expected for the time of year.
- 6.3 Using learning from the four venues currently operational, work has continued to prepare for the re-opening of the remaining four libraries with the same offer available (browsing, PC usage, printing, click and collect service). It is proposed that these sites open on the 12 October 2020 provided all relevant safety measures are in place. Monitoring of the recent local Covid-19 infection rates may have an impact on the opening date.
- 6.4 As more staff are required in each venue to manage the service safely and collect test and trace data opening hours at the remaining four libraries have had to be reviewed. It will not be possible to open Denton and Hyde libraries on Saturdays as there is insufficient staff available to cater for this across the service. The weekday staffed opening hours at the remaining four libraries will be unaffected.
- 6.5 Currently all item loans are extended to the 30 September 2020 and accrual of overdue fines is also suspended to the same date. It is proposed to further extend loans and accrual of fines to the 31 October 2020 to allow those who are unable to travel to the four open libraries time to return their books once their local library re-opens.

### **Museums and Galleries**

- 6.6 Consideration has been given to how Portland Museum can operate safely given the prevalence of Covid-19.
- 6.7 Following a Covid-19 risk assessment it has been determined that to keep people safe an appointment booking system will be required. This will in effect allow 10 people every 15 minutes to enter the museum (40 over an hour). Some elements of the Museum experience will not be available due to the risk of infection e.g. the Nuts and Bolts area which includes the children's dressing up, also the café operator has indicated that the café will not be available in its current format – although there may be a mobile café on the opposite side of the wharf where museum visitors will exit. A visit to the museum will therefore be shorter than prior to Covid 19.
- 6.8 By operating an appointment booking system and implementing a one-way system social distancing requirements can be satisfied. However, when busy it will be necessary to restrict the length of a visit to around 1 hour to enable all people wanting to attend get the opportunity to do so. People will not be asked to leave unless numbers cannot be safely managed. The number entering will be evaluated and reviewed if necessary following the initial weeks of opening.
- 6.9 The appointment booking system is being developed, along with other Covid-19 safety measures with a view to opening the museum on the 14 October 2020, although this will be dependent on the local infection rates.
- 6.10 Additional staffing levels will be required to ensure safe operation and to facilitate this reduced opening hours are proposed as follows:  
  
Wednesday – Sunday 10am – 3pm
- 6.11 This means the museum will be open for 5 days a week and for 5 hours each day. The hours prior to closure due to Covid-19 were 6 days a week (Tuesday – Sunday) and for 6 hours each day.
- 6.12 It is envisaged that the Astley Cheetham Art Gallery will re-open at the same time as the Museum again with reduced opening hours:

Wednesday 1pm – 5pm  
Saturday 10am – 3pm

- 6.13 Opening on Monday and Tuesday will not be possible due to additional staffing levels required across the whole service to safely operate.

#### **Local Studies and Archive Centre**

- 6.14 The nature of this service is research rather than a borrowing service like the public library service. In order to ensure Covid-19 safety there will be the need to operate an appointment based system to ensure social distancing and a cleaning regime between customers. A one-way entry and exit system will also be in place.
- 6.15 A Covid-19 risk assessment has been undertaken and following relevant safety measures such as Perspex screens being installed it is proposed that this service re-open on the 13 October 2020. Again this will be dependent on the current local infection rates and all relevant safety measure being in place.
- 6.16 The opening hours will be the same as prior to closure due to Covid-19:

Tuesday – Thursday 10am – 5pm  
Saturday 10am – 1pm

#### **Arts and Engagement**

- 6.17 All face to face cultural activities and events are currently suspended until the 1 October 2020 or until government guidance allows. As detailed in section 5.1-2, TMBC is advising against any organised event which would involve the gathering of more than 30 people, both indoors and outdoors until after Christmas.
- 6.18 Therefore alternative proposals have been developed for the Christmas celebrations across the borough.
- 6.19 These proposals include lit Christmas trees across the 9 towns, albeit without the traditional switch on event and Civic buildings also being lit.
- 6.20 Additionally it is proposed that the corporate Christmas celebration this year is replaced with themed activities allowing for social distance and the avoidance of gatherings. The proposal involves theming the first twelve days of December around the traditional and festive *12 Days of Christmas* carol ensuring all nine towns of Tameside are featured in the project.
- 6.21 Each day will unlock a new activity which will have been pre-filmed with opportunities specially created for Tameside residents to participate in from the comfort of their own homes or as they walk through and shop in the borough's town centres. This will involve floating swan structures in Stalybridge (pre-filmed), a turtledove trail in Ashton town centre with a final film of 12 drummers from across Tameside. A full list of the activities and opportunities for getting involved is detailed at **Appendix 1**.
- 6.22 Sitting alongside these mini pre-recorded happenings a full social media campaign will be created to encourage people to get involved digitally by decorating their windows on the theme. Printable templates and tutorials will be available to create impressive window displays and will be shared online. These displays will also be featured in the borough's libraries' where appropriate. Schools will be encouraged to take part throughout and for instance create some of the turtledoves with festive messages.
- 6.23 The festive 12 Days of Christmas builds on last year's film created by Tameside Libraries and is linked to the Tameside Loves Reading campaign whilst also giving community

groups, schools, arts organisations and artists a chance to work together. The whole twelve days will be edited into a film celebrating Christmas and the resilience and creativity of Tameside residents.

## **7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 As set out at the front of the report.