

COUNCIL

21 July 2020

Commenced: 5pm

Terminated: 6.50pm

Present:

Councillors Affleck, Billington, Bowden, Bowerman, Boyle, Bray, Cartey, Chadwick, Choksi, Cooney, Cooper, Dickinson, Drennan, Fairfoull, Feeley, J Fitzpatrick, P Fitzpatrick, Glover, Gosling, Gwynne, A Holland, B Holland, Hollinshead, J Homer, S Homer, Huntbach, Jackson, Jones, Kitchen (Chair), Lane, Lewis, Martin, McNally, Mills, Naylor, Newton, Owen, Patrick, Pearce, Quinn, Reid, Ricci, Robinson, Ryan, Sharif, M Smith, T Smith, Sweeton, Taylor, Ward, Warrington, R Welsh, Wild and Wills

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Alam and Sidebottom

(Councillor Kitchen, Chair of Council Business, in the Chair)

6 MINUTES

RESOLVED

It was moved by Councillor Warrington and seconded by Councillor Fairfoull that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 26 May 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

7 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted by Members of the Council.

8 CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Civic Mayor paid tribute to key workers and NHS staff who had worked tirelessly since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Special thanks was extended to staff of the Council and CCG who had gone above and beyond throughout the crisis.

The Mayor stated that she had attended a memorial service for those individuals who had lost their lives to coronavirus at Manchester Cathedral. The service honoured the almost 3,000 people across Greater Manchester who had sadly died from the disease. An online book of condolence would become a permanent tribute to all those who had passed away. Those who had lost loved ones would be able to add their name to the book of condolence along with a photograph and a personal message.

The Mayor congratulated local community groups who had been awarded the Queen's Voluntary Award. Those groups that had been presented with the award had received a letter of congratulations from the Mayor and would be invited to the Mayor's Parlour once it was possible to do so.

The Mayor announced that, despite restrictions resulting from the pandemic, it had still been possible to support local events and groups. This had included attending a virtual concert in aid of the Tameside Hospital Scanner Appeal, supporting Armed Forces Day, attending the 100th anniversary of the Godley war memorial and assisting local foodbanks.

9 COMMUNICATIONS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Leader welcomed, Councillor Janet Cooper, to her new role as the Civic Mayor of Tameside and paid tribute to the 2019/20 Civic Mayor, Councillor Leigh Drennan, for his commitment during his mayoral year.

The Executive Leader expressed her disappointment at the Government's response to the coronavirus pandemic particularly its failure to distribute adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) during the early stages of the crisis and the inadequateness of the recently launched track and trace system. There was frustration that the UK had been less effective in fighting the virus than many other countries around the world.

The Executive Leader welcomed the pay rise announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer for public sector workers, including doctors, prison officers and teachers. However, there was concern that it failed to adequately compensate those workers whose wages had been suppressed over the past decade as a result of pay freezes and below inflation pay rises. It was also noted that local government workers had not been recognised for their extraordinary hard work and dedication throughout the epidemic.

The Executive Leader reflected on the community spirit shown across Tameside and the resilience of Council staff during the unprecedented health crisis. Employees from across the Council had ensured that vital services continued to operate and also provided additional support for the most vulnerable residents within the Borough.

Whilst the Executive Leader welcomed the Government's easing of lockdown measures, there was a warning against complacency as the virus continued to circulate among the population. To support residents during the next phase of the pandemic, it was announced that the Council had launched the "It Works" campaign to remind individuals of the danger posed by the virus and how they could best protect themselves. Members were urged to continue wearing face masks in public places, avoid large crowds, maintain good personal hygiene and follow social distancing guidelines.

The COVID-19 pandemic had presented the opportunity for businesses and organisations to focus on 'building back better'. The Executive Leader, in her role as the Lead Member for Age Friendliness and Equalities on the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), announced that all the resources of the city region would be used to tackle the inequalities that had been exposed as a result of the crisis. The project would bring together representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors to identify and challenge prejudice and discrimination to ensure that all voices from across Greater Manchester would be heard.

It was highlighted that local authorities had faced unprecedented challenges as a result of the crisis suffering a double blow of reduced income and an increased demand for services. The Local Government Association (LGA) estimated that the budget shortfall across the sector was likely to be £10 billion. It was emphasised that, after a decade of austerity, there were no easy savings to be made and no cuts that would go unnoticed. Despite the Council receiving additional funding from central Government, this did not come close to covering the expenditure of the authority throughout the crisis period. The Executive Leader called upon the Government to launch a full and fair accounting of the costs that local authorities had incurred as a direct result of coronavirus and for a full reimbursement for all of these costs. As a result of the extra spending, the budget agreed at Full Council in February was now unlikely to be realistic and a careful review would now be necessary.

It was emphasised that the Council would continue to take advice from Government, Public Health England and local health officials in relation to the virus and would not hesitate to take any action necessary to protect the community.

10 COUNCIL BIG CONVERSATION

The Chair reported that there were no questions submitted by members of the public in accordance with Standing Orders 31.12 and 31.13.

11 MEETINGS OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the meeting of Executive Cabinet held on 22 April 2020, 27 May 2020 and 24 June 2020. It was moved by Councillor Warrington and seconded by Councillor Fairfoull that the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 22 April 2020, 27 May 2020 and 24 June 2020 be received.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 22 April 2020, 27 May 2020 and 24 June 2020 be received.

12 DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES WORKING GROUP

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the meeting of Democratic Processes Working Group held on 6 July 2020. It was moved by Councillor Cooney and seconded by Councillor Warrington that the Minutes of the Democratic Processes Working Group held on 6 July 2020 be received.

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Democratic Processes Working Group held on 6 July 2020 be received.

13 NOTICES OF MOTION

MOTION A

Consideration was given to the following motion received in accordance with Standing Order 16.1, which was moved by Councillor Ryan and seconded by Councillor Naylor:

That this Council notes –

- *The heroic work of the NHS and other public services in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic;*
- *In particular the astonishing commitment of Tameside Council's own key workers who have worked tirelessly since the start of the pandemic;*
- *Councils across the country have been working alongside their local communities to lead the frontline response to the crisis and support local people;*
- *At the beginning of the crisis, Tameside Council responded, at pace, to set up a new dedicated helpline for local people who needed help getting food, medicine, or financial support. The service has managed over 7,000 requests for help and supported more than 2,100 local residents in need of food or medicine so far;*
- *The commitment at the beginning of the crisis, from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak MP, was to do “whatever it takes” in response to the COVID-19 crisis;*
- *The funding received to date from central government to help deliver the Council’s response to the crisis, but also notes that this support is currently inadequate to meet the Council’s ongoing costs of COVID-19 – not only now, but for the foreseeable future.*

The Council further notes –

- *Council workers are public service heroes. They keep our communities clean, look after those in need and have kept our borough running. Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the council services our residents rely on would not be deliverable;*

- Since 2010, central government, has pursued an austerity agenda that has seen huge cuts to public services and forced Tameside to make almost £150m of savings;
- Despite central government cuts, Tameside Council has prioritised the protection of vital services that local people rely on and has tackled the issues that matter most to local people;
- The latest Local Government Association (LGA) analysis shows that local councils have lost £3.2bn in income from council tax and business rates, and from sales, fees and charges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The recent findings published by the LGA show that local councils require as much as £6bn more in central government funding to cover the costs of the COVID-19 pandemic through the course of this financial year.

This Council believes –

- The crisis has proven that local councils play a vital role in working with communities to provide services that residents rely on and the government must listen to, and consult with, local government in developing its response to the crisis;
- That the government must keep its promise to local councils to fully fund all costs related to the COVID-19 crisis. Local services cannot be expected to sustain any further cuts in funding especially following a decade of austerity, and cannot pay the price for this national crisis;
- Without additional emergency funding to make up the true losses sustained, central government will be forcing local councils to cut vital services which local people have relied on through this period.

Following consideration of the Motion it was:

RESOLVED

That this Council notes –

- The heroic work of the NHS and other public services in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic;
- In particular the astonishing commitment of Tameside Council's own key workers who have worked tirelessly since the start of the pandemic;
- Councils across the country have been working alongside their local communities to lead the frontline response to the crisis and support local people;
- At the beginning of the crisis, Tameside Council responded, at pace, to set up a new dedicated helpline for local people who needed help getting food, medicine, or financial support. The service has managed over 7,000 requests for help and supported more than 2,100 local residents in need of food or medicine so far;
- The commitment at the beginning of the crisis, from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak MP, was to do “whatever it takes” in response to the COVID-19 crisis;
- The funding received to date from central government to help deliver the Council's response to the crisis, but also notes that this support is currently inadequate to meet the Council's on-going costs of COVID-19 – not only now, but for the foreseeable future.

The Council further notes –

- Council workers are public service heroes. They keep our communities clean, look after those in need and have kept our borough running. Without the professionalism and dedication of our staff, the council services our residents rely on would not be deliverable;
- Since 2010, central government, has pursued an austerity agenda that has seen huge cuts to public services and forced Tameside to make almost £150m of savings;
- Despite central government cuts, Tameside Council has prioritised the protection of vital services that local people rely on and has tackled the issues that matter most to local people;

- The latest Local Government Association (LGA) analysis shows that local councils have lost £3.2bn in income from council tax and business rates, and from sales, fees and charges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- The recent findings published by the LGA show that local councils require as much as £6bn more in central government funding to cover the costs of the COVID-19 pandemic through the course of this financial year.

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- Without additional emergency funding to make up the true losses sustained, central government will be forcing local councils to cut vital services which local people have relied on through this period.

MOTION B

Domestic Violence

Consideration was given to the following motion received in accordance with Standing Order 16.1 which was moved by Councillor Wills and seconded by Councillor Stephen Homer:

That this Council recognises that the Domestic Abuse Bill has finally reached Parliament almost three years after it was first promised, passing its stages in the House of Commons on Monday 6 July. This legislation is welcome and urgently needed, but will only be effective if it is underpinned by sustainable funding for specialist services. The next stages of debate for this bill are crucial.

This Council notes –

- The police in England and Wales have recorded an 8% increase in domestic abuse compared with the same period last year;
- Complexity of casework and demand for help has risen significantly for national helplines and online support services;
- Services are reporting that casework is becoming increasingly complex, and digital inequality creates a significant barrier for people to access support remotely;
- According to the online project 'Counting Dead Women', since lockdown began on 23 March 2020 26 women (and two young children) have been killed by men and details about the killings of a further seven women are also expected;
- Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic Women's Aid have seen surging numbers of emergency calls to helplines – with rises of anything between 25 and 300 per cent, dramatic increases in internet searches for support for those affected by domestic violence and higher numbers of domestic homicides. These are extremely disturbing trends, which must not be ignored.

The Council further notes:

- Children who live with domestic abuse are victims too;
- The causes and effects of domestic abuse are numerous and significant. Across Tameside there are a range of organisations that work directly or indirectly with residents affected by domestic abuse;
- The Office for National Statistics states that whilst 2 million adults aged 16-59 experienced domestic abuse last year, 1.6 million of these are women. Almost one in three women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, and two women a week are killed by a current or former partner;

- *The recent changes made to the legislation, which includes the recognition that children are victims in the statutory definition of domestic abuse; access to special measures, such as separate waiting rooms and screens, to protect survivors in family and civil courts as well as the criminal court and the ban on consent to 'rough sex' being used as a defence in murder cases;*
- *However, it remains disappointed by the lack of government commitment to guarantee equal protection and support for migrant women and deliver all of the changes survivors need. The legislation currently lacks support for migrant women – who face insurmountable barriers to escaping domestic abuse and are routinely denied their rights to safety and support;*
- *The previous government/s have promised this would be a 'landmark moment' for victim-survivors of domestic abuse, and a vital piece of legislation, which would change the lives of the estimated 2 million people a year who are subjected to abuse.*

Following consideration of the Motion it was:

RESOLVED

That this Council recognises that the Domestic Abuse Bill has finally reached Parliament almost three years after it was first promised, passing its stages in the House of Commons on Monday 6 July. This legislation is welcome and urgently needed, but will only be effective if it is underpinned by sustainable funding for specialist services. The next stages of debate for this bill are crucial.

This Council notes –

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- Services are reporting that casework is becoming increasingly complex, and digital inequality creates a significant barrier for people to access support remotely;
- According to the online project 'Counting Dead Women', since lockdown began on 23 March 2020 26 women (and two young children) have been killed by men and details about the killings of a further seven women are also expected;
- Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic Women's Aid have seen surging numbers of emergency calls to helplines – with rises of anything between 25 and 300 per cent, dramatic increases in internet searches for support for those affected by domestic violence and higher numbers of domestic homicides. These are extremely disturbing trends, which must not be ignored.

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- The Office for National Statistics states that whilst 2 million adults aged 16-59 experienced domestic abuse last year, 1.6 million of these are women. Almost one in three women will experience domestic abuse in their lifetime, and two women a week are killed by a current or former partner;
- The recent changes made to the legislation, which includes the recognition that children are victims in the statutory definition of domestic abuse; access to special measures, such as separate waiting rooms and screens, to protect survivors in family and civil courts as well as the criminal court and the ban on consent to 'rough sex' being used as a defence in murder cases;
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- The previous government/s have promised this would be a ‘landmark moment’ for victim-survivors of domestic abuse, and a vital piece of legislation, which would change the lives of the estimated 2 million people a year who are subjected to abuse.

14 QUESTIONS

Councillor Billington raised a question under Standing Order 17.2 as follows:

Will the council support our market traders by offering a retrospective rent holiday in line with Bolton and Bury Councils?

What help and support is being offered to assist market traders from the council?

Will the council scrap the increased service charge to market traders in light of falling footfall on markets with a review and consultation with the market traders for the next financial year?

In response, Councillor Gwynne stated:

The Council does appreciate the scale of the challenge that faces all businesses during these unprecedented times. Financial support has been offered by the Government, which includes the Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) which has seen a £10k grant given to all traders who trade within our Market Halls and Kiosks and who are within their tenancy on 11 March 2020. This grant was provided specifically to support small and rural businesses with their business costs during coronavirus including rent and business rates where payable. Other schemes are also available such as the Self-employment Income Support Scheme, and the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme.

We are also offering additional support to those businesses who have been unable to resolve any outstanding rent and service charges by agreeing to put in place a payment plan whereby payments can be made over a longer period.

The Market Service has worked in a joined up way with businesses throughout what has been a very difficult time for everyone, and this work has been recognised by the majority of traders. The Chief Executive of the National Market Traders Federation has recently visited our markets and commended the Council on their support provided to businesses and safety measures which have been put in place across all our markets.

Occupancy rates remain high in comparison with some other markets and the market service have received a number of new enquiries for stalls as well as from tenants who want to expand their businesses. Only last week a new business opened in Ashton Indoor Market.

Regarding rent and service charges. In November 2019 rent increased by 2.1% and was the first rent increase since 2015. Service Charges are charged in arrears for the previous year and these costs can vary from year to year depending on the general upkeep of the market halls. These are influenced by factors such as cost of utilities, supplies, cleaning and maintenance services. However, service charges have been frozen for the last 2 years and are not based on full cost recovery with the Council subsidising a large proportion of these costs. Service charges relating to this financial year will not be calculated until after year end and therefore will be charged within 2021/22 financial year.

In addition, the Market Service is working across our own services and industry colleagues, the National Association British Market Authorities (NABMA) and the National Market Traders Federation (NMTF), to support businesses and have a robust communications and business support package on offer including the “Tameside is Open” and the “Welcome Back – Our Market” campaign, and initiatives such as the Tameside Business Resilience Clinic, which offers free advice and support to Micro and SME businesses across Tameside.

15 URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no urgent items of business for consideration.

CHAIR