

Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

28 July 2020

Commenced: 6.00pm

Terminated: 7.45pm

Present: Councillors Glover (Chair), Mills (Deputy Chair), Alam, Billington, Bowden, Bowerman, Choksi, J Fitzpatrick, P Fitzpatrick, A Holland, Hollinshead, Jones, Lewis, Naylor, Pearce, Robinson, Sharif, Sweeton.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Chadwick.

6. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel held on 9 June 2020 were approved as a correct record.

7. IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND LOCKDOWN ON THE LOCAL ECONOMY

The Panel welcomed Councillor Oliver Ryan, Executive Member, Finance and Economic Growth; Councillor Ged Cooney, Executive Member, Housing, Planning and Employment; Jayne Traverse, Director of Growth; and David Berry, Head of Employment and Skills, to present an overview of the challenges faced around Covid-19 and the economic impact and recovery plan.

Panel members received a presentation detailing the economic response to Covid-19 at a national, regional and local level. The data included recent findings and future forecasting related to a reduction in economic activity and rise in unemployment. Consultation and analysis highlights low confidence from households and businesses. Risks for Greater Manchester include long-term impacts on sectors such as education, hospitality, tourism and leisure, arts and entertainment.

It was reported that approximately 27,700 residents in Tameside had been furloughed during initial response stages to Covid-19, which equates to 25% of the workforce. Tameside has a strong manufacturing sector that generates over 11,000 jobs and it will become increasingly important to measure the future impact on this sector. Tameside's retail sector is also expected to shrink based on national projections for store closures and a reduction in town centre activity.

Research shows that Tameside remains significantly exposed to socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 across several areas based on existing factors linked with business and employment. Mr Berry informed members of the steps introduced to support job retention covering a wide range of areas. The regional strategic vision remains in place through the development of a local Industrial Strategy.

A regional response to 'Build Back Better' will consider future sustainability and link closely with challenges associated with a second wave, environmental factors and Brexit. For Tameside it remains important to ensure identified priorities for economic and social outcomes are closing linked with an emerging housing strategy, strategic asset management plan and local plan.

Ms Traverse updated members on key service developments to support business activity during Covid-19. This includes:

- Delivering Mandatory Business Grants and Reliefs to local businesses - £70m
- Delivering Discretionary Grant Fund to local businesses - £2.3m

- Establishing an Economic and Business Impacts Group to co-ordinate the response.
- Increasing the capacity of teams to deliver the grants
- External Covid-19 Business Leaders Group to shape council activity
- Telephone contacts made to 400 businesses
- Dedicated business support page added to council website
- Dedicated employment 'virtual jobs fair' webpage
- Business Resilience Clinic to provide peer-to-peer business support and signposting (business champions signed up)
- Supporting businesses to re-open safely

The wider economic growth priorities for Tameside are to be included with an emerging Inclusive Growth Strategy with the ambition and aspiration to attract inward investment to the borough, encourage business start-ups, direct local spend to SMEs, harness local transport networks and digital infrastructure. This includes seeking to create vibrant hubs within our town centres designed for living, culture, employment and services.

Emphasis is placed on the need to ensure growth priorities are delivered by effectively co-ordinating the response with key partners such as Jobcentre Plus. It will also remain important to understand and deliver national programmes.

A discussion took place regarding the impact on local businesses and options going forward for the Council and wider partnerships to consider future support and nurturing facilities for business and enterprise in Tameside.

Councillors Ryan and Cooney responded to a number of questions from the Panel on:

- The success of the grant schemes and potential barriers to the application process for businesses
- Creating opportunities for inward investment to stimulate business and employment growth
- The impact Covid-19 will have on delivering additional strategic priorities for the borough
- The projected impacts on skill levels and future employment, including apprenticeships
- Developing and investing in Tameside's town centres
- Priorities associated with asset management and infrastructure
- Identifying future opportunities for Scrutiny to support strategic priorities

Resolved:

- (1) That Councillors and officers be thanked for attending the meeting.
- (2) That the Panel consider review options to support economic response and recovery.
- (3) That data on local apprenticeships be circulated to members outside of the meeting.

8. FEEDBACK AND LEARNING FROM COMMUNITIES ON COVID-19

The Chair presented a report informed by feedback received from panel members regarding the impacts and learning from communities on Covid-19. The paper summarises the key points raised and insight from scrutiny panel members, received in June 2020. The paper includes sections on:

- Responding to Covid-19
- Health systems
- Economy
- Children and families
- Vulnerabilities (elderly/shielded, BAME, homelessness, domestic abuse)
- Future consideration

Information and data detailed within the report aims to provide a collective and clear picture on

areas of future concern, which allows comparisons to be made when taking account of:

- Health inequalities and the future demand on services
- Access to future employment and associated rise in the local claimant level
- Delivering safe environments for residents to work and travel
- Equality impacts and the mitigation of risk for outcomes associated with Covid-19

The Chair thanked all members for the time taken to provide the feedback and confirmed the report was tabled at the meeting of Overview Panel on 27 July. The paper will now be circulated to the Council's Executive and wider leadership team for information and awareness.

9. RESPONSE TO SAFE STREETS CONSULTATION

The Chair presented a formal response letter of the Panel, submitted to the Council's Safe Streets consultation on 2 July 2020.

10. GREATER MANCHESTER SCRUTINY

The Chair provided a verbal update on recent activity of the Greater Manchester Housing, Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The most recent meeting was held on 9 July 2020, with discussion on the following topics:

- Covid-19 Impact, Response and Recovery
- Everybody In / A Bed Every Night

Regular Scrutiny update emails will continue to include a link to all public papers for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Scrutiny Committees.

11. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair informed panel members of scrutiny reports presented at the meeting of Overview Panel on 27 July 2020.

- Annual Work Programmes
- Feedback and Learning from Communities on Covid-19
- Scrutiny Update

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel will take place on 15 September 2020.

13. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no urgent items for consideration at this meeting.

CHAIR