

Annual Governance Statement 2015/2016

This is a signed statement by the Executive Leader and Chief Executive certifying that governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively within the Council.

Annual Governance Statement 2015/16

1. Scope of Responsibility

Tameside MBC (the Council) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk. These arrangements are intended to make sure that we do the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in good time, and in a fair, open, honest and accountable way. The Council has approved and introduced a Code of Corporate Governance.

This governance statement explains how we have followed the code and the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015.

The Greater Manchester Pension Fund (GMPF) is administered by the Council in accordance with the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Regulations, which are written by the DCLG and passed by Parliament.

The Council delegates its function in relation to maintaining the GMPF to the following:-

- Pension Fund Management Panel
- Pension Fund Advisory Panel
- Pension Fund Working Groups
- The Executive Director of Pensions
- The Local Pensions Board

The Management Panel is chaired by the Executive Leader of the Council and all panels and working groups have elected members from the other nine GM Authorities, as the fund is accountable to its member authorities. The Local Board has an equal number of scheme employer and scheme member representatives. Whilst the GMPF has different governance arrangements to other council services (which are all detailed on its website), all officers are employees of the Council and therefore comply with the Council's Code of Corporate Governance and Constitution. Specific reference will not be made to GMPF throughout the Annual Governance Statement unless appropriate to do so as it is considered to be part of the Council.

2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values by which the Council is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of

those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2016, and up to the date of approval of the annual accounts.

3. The Governance Framework

Identifying and communicating the Council's vision of its purpose and intended outcomes for citizens and service users

The Council needs to set out a clear vision that members, employees and the public can identify with and help deliver as public services are changing rapidly due to new legislation and funding cuts. The vision detailed below is set out in the Corporate Plan 2016–21.

The Council as a representative body exists to maximise the wellbeing and health of the people within the borough:

- Supporting economic growth and opportunity;
- Increasing self-sufficiency and resilience of individuals and families; and
- Protect the most vulnerable.

Everything the Council does will aim to make this vision a reality by focusing resources on what matters. Its core purpose and values put people at the forefront of services to ensure that every decision made supports economic growth and self sufficiency. The aim is to work with residents to this by asking them to take on greater responsibility in their families, communities and area, supporting them when they need help.

No one organisation can achieve the change aimed for on its own. The Council and its partners are committed to working together along with the people of Tameside to achieve lasting change for the borough.

The landscape the Council operates in has changed significantly over the last 5 years and this has impacted significant on how the Council delivers against its objectives. The Spending Review in 2010 and 2015, the Local Government Finance Settlement and key legislation like the Localism Act and the Care Act have all had implications for the work of the Council.

The development of the Council's strategic approach through the Corporate Plan has been informed by a number of factors not least the following, (although this list is not exhaustive).

- Ongoing engagement between the Council and local people;
- Budget Consultation 2014 and 2015;
- Big Conversation – service specific consultations to inform service redesign;
- Public Service Reform;
- Greater Manchester Devolution Agreement;
- Greater Manchester Health & Social Care Devolution;
- Care Together / Integrated Care Organisation (health and social care integration);
- Medium Term Financial Strategy; and
- Vision Tameside.

The Tameside pledges are a commitment to deliver work on a number of priority areas that have been identified as being of importance to Tameside Residents. Each of the pledges is delivered through a bespoke programme of activity centring around areas that local residents tell us are important to them, such as supporting local businesses, cleaning up local grot spots and the improvement of recycling facilities. The pledges for 2016 are:

- Honour Our Fallen;
- Pothole Buster;
- Generation Savers;
- Every Child a Coder;

- Lots More Lighting;
- Big clean Up;
- Get Tameside Growing;
- Woodland for Wildlife;
- Keeping it Green;
- Refresh Tameside Works first;
- Get Connected;
- Silver Surfers;
- Healthy Lives;
- Mind Your Health;
- Dementia Friendly Tameside;
- Do more Together.

Reviewing the Council's vision and its implications for the Council's governance arrangements

Because we understand our community, the Council's goals have remained relatively constant for the last ten years that is to maximise the wellbeing and health of the people of the Borough. However giving the changing landscape reference above how the Council delivers against its priorities has evolved. There is a constant thread running from the vision in the Corporate Plan and the key service priorities. Sound corporate governance arrangements underpin the delivery of the vision. The Corporate Plan priorities are as follows:

People – Tameside residents to have the best possible opportunities to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

Place – Tameside is a great place to live and work and the Council will strive to make it even better.

Growth and Reform – Undertaking significant reforms taking demand out of the system, cutting costs while improving outcomes. Projects in this area will stimulate the economy, connect people, businesses and services, improve outcomes and provide our young people with the best opportunities in life.

Resources – The Council will use its resources such as money and people to get maximum benefit for communities in Tameside.

Grant Thornton our External Auditors in their Audit Findings (ISA260) Report for 2014/15 commented that. "The Council continues to have adequate governance arrangements in place. Through the business planning and budget setting process, the Council's financial environment and financial performance is understood by senior management and members are actively engaged in the process".

The Peer Challenge of 2014 recognised that the Council's key governance structures, including the Executive and arrangements like the Health and Wellbeing Board, are clear and appear to work well. The Peer Team heard consistently positive feedback from staff within the Council and external partner agencies on how leaders in the organisation communicate the change and aim to get staff involved.

Translating the vision into objectives for the Council and its partnerships

The Tameside Corporate Plan 2016 - 21 is the borough's plan to maximise the wellbeing and health of the people within the borough. Working with partners across public services, industry, commerce, the community and voluntary sectors the vision is translated into objectives which are detailed service plans, team plans, and individual development plans.

The Care Together Programme and the creation of an Integrated Care Organisation brings together Tameside and Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group ('the CCG'), Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council ('TMBC') and Tameside Hospital Foundation Trust ('THFT') to reform health and social care services to improve the health outcomes of our residents and reduce health inequalities.

Vision Tameside, Ashton Old Baths and Bin Swap are examples of the major projects that the Council has and is continuing to deliver with partners that demonstrate that it has translated its vision into objectives.

The A+ Trust is a new model of school improvement. Educational attainment levels in Tameside go from strength to strength. 56% of pupils achieved 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C (including English and Maths) in the 2015 results. Tameside was the most improved local authority in the North West and the eleventh most improved in England. GCSE achievement in Tameside is now above the national average and the third best in the North West.

Measuring the quality of services for users, for ensuring they are delivered in accordance with the Authority's objectives and for ensuring that they represent the best use of resources and value for money.

Effective challenge is an integral part of how the Council and its partners manage Tameside. It ensures that the partnership and constituent organisations remain focused on improvement and achievement. Challenge helps to identify areas for benchmarking and the development of best practice. Similarly, it supports individuals and teams further develop their own skills and capacity, which in turn helps to deliver better outcomes for local people.

The Tameside Challenge Framework has five main elements. They are:-

- Peer Assessment and Challenge;
- Performance Management – People and Places Scorecard;
- Big Conversation and Service Redesign;
- Scrutiny; and
- Risk Management.

In the absence of external inspection the Council commissioned a Corporate Peer Challenge via the Local Government Association and the final report was issued in June 2014. It reviewed:-

- Leadership and governance;
- Financial Viability;
- Organisational capacity;
- Economic growth; and
- Public service reform.

In the Executive Summary the review team concluded that:

“The council has a number of achievements on which it can continue to build. It has strong and stable political and managerial leadership. It has had a sound approach to financial management for a number of years which has stood it in good stead and enabled it to take early decisions to redesign services and manage the national public sector budget reductions. Frontline staff are proud, enthusiastic, energetic and a great asset to the council.”

Continual improvement has always been at the heart of the organisation and the results can be seen through our sustained record of achievement. In the External Auditor's Audit Letter dated October 2015, the Council received an unqualified value for money conclusion, which means that the Council has proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources and to ensure proper stewardship and governance. The External Auditor noted that:

“The Council has been proactive in taking difficult decisions in relation to its cost base and continues to show strong financial resilience and good financial planning and management arrangements”.

The Value for Money conclusion assessed by External Audit is based on two criteria:-

- ***The Council has proper arrangements in place for securing financial resilience*** - the Council has robust systems and processes to manage effectively financial risks and opportunities, and to secure a stable financial position that

- enables it to continue to operate for the foreseeable future.
- ***The Council has proper arrangements for challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness*** - the Council is prioritising its resources within tighter budgets, for example by achieving cost reductions and by improving efficiency and productivity.

The auditors use a red/amber/green rating to make their assessments and the definitions are as follows:

- Green – Adequate Arrangements
- Amber - Adequate arrangements with areas for development
- Red - Inadequate arrangements

All areas were assessed to be Green for 2014/15 which means that the External Auditor was satisfied that in all significant respects the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ending 31 March 2015.

Being recognised as the Local Government Chronicle Council of the Year for 2016 further demonstrates that the Council's ambition to improve the lives of Tameside residents is being achieved. Projects which particularly impressed the judges were; English Fine Cottons, Care Together, Vision Tameside, Ashton Old Baths, Tameside Investment Partnership, A+ Trust and education attainment and the Greater Manchester Pension Fund being named as Pension Fund of the Decade.

While planning for the future we remain focused on the present. The need to balance the budget focuses us on service redesign. We ensure service users are engaged and involved, and services they rely on are safeguarded wherever possible. Our Customer Service Excellence award is testament. Tameside gained 100% compliance against all criteria, and eight areas of compliance plus – a discretionary award for 'exceptional best practice'. The report stated '... continued to improve and focus on the development and delivery of customer-focussed services, despite the continuing financial challenges...'

Greater Manchester Pension Fund is leading the way in investment and pooling innovation, particularly in the areas of housing and infrastructure development. Airport City is a joint venture between GMPF, Manchester Airport Group, Carillion and Beijing Construction Engineering Group. The partners are developing over 5 million square feet of hotels, offices, manufacturing, logistics and retail space directly adjacent to Manchester Airport, an ideal gateway to carry out business throughout the UK, Europe and the world. One St. Peter's is a £40 million investment in the heart of Manchester city centre.

Defining and documenting the roles and responsibilities of the executive, non-executive, scrutiny and officer functions, with clear delegation arrangements and protocols for effective communication in respect of the council and partnership arrangements.

The Council Constitution sets out the roles and responsibilities of each Executive Member, and the responsibilities delegated to the Chief Executive, members of the Executive Team and senior managers of the Council, including the Director of Pensions. It includes the post and responsibilities of the Statutory and Proper Officers.

Protocols for effective communication are in place. Meetings have agendas and minutes published on the Council's Website and a Forward Plan is published. The Executive Leader's Annual Key Note Address, the Corporate Plan, the Citizen Newspaper, Scrutiny, Budget Consultation and the Big Conversation and increasingly the use of Social Media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) are examples of how the Council communicates with partners and residents of the Borough.

The constitution is reviewed and updated regularly and changes are disseminated across the Council via the Chief Executives Brief, The Wire and team briefings.

The Tameside Health and Wellbeing Board is a statutory partnership with health commissioners, providers and other interested parties. It is chaired by the Executive Leader of the Council and has developed the Tameside Health and Wellbeing Strategy that identifies priorities to address local health inequalities.

Developing, communicating and embedding codes of conduct, defining the standards of behaviour for members and staff.

Members and Officers are governed by Codes of Conduct, Cabinet Portfolios, contracts of employment, employment rules and procedures, Professional Codes of Conduct and bound by the Constitution and Code of Corporate Governance.

The Council is committed to leading on and maintaining the highest standards of behaviour and in support of this hosts and chairs the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN). In addition to those mentioned above, documentation to eliminate corruption includes Procurement Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Terms of Reference, Protocols for Gifts and Hospitality and Standards of Conduct and Ethics. The constitution is supplemented by the Whistleblowing Policy, Information Governance Framework and guidance on procedures relevant to individual services. Such guidance is accompanied by training and communications. The work of the Monitoring Officer, Standards Committee and the Standards Panel are fundamental in defining and achieving high standards.

Reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's decision-making framework, including delegation arrangements, decision making in partnerships and robustness of data quality.

The Council has a well-defined decision-making process and scheme of delegation, which are documented in the constitution. It publishes a forward plan and all agendas and minutes of meetings can be found on the Council's public website. The Safe and Sound Decision Making Framework was introduced during 2014/15 and a training programme was delivered for managers to ensure that good processes are in place for making and implementing decisions, which are informed by good information and data, stakeholder views and an open and honest debate which reflects the interests of the community.

The robustness of data quality is the responsibility of managers and is reviewed as part of the Internal Audit and External Audit functions. Performance indicators, which are collated centrally, are regularly reported to the Senior Management Team and Members, via the People and Places Scorecard. A Corporate Performance Group chaired by the First Deputy (Performance and Finance) meets regularly and is responsible for; performance management and improvement including the oversight of the People and Places Scorecard, the corporate plan, service planning and service redesign and review.

Reviewing the effectiveness of the framework for identifying and managing risks and demonstrating clear accountability.

The Council empowers its employees to be innovative and to find solutions to problems, but recognises that there are potential risks for the Council. Therefore, risk management is strong throughout the Council. As part of the Service Planning process, individual services develop their own risk registers and monitor controls. Significant and cross cutting service risks are amalgamated into the Corporate Risk Register. Every report presented to senior managers, panels, board and for key/executive decisions is risk assessed. The risk management process embraces best practice.

The Information Governance Framework which was introduced in November 2013 continued to be a key priority for the Council during 2015/16, ensuring that the guidance contained in the supporting documents was fully disseminated and embedded across all service areas. The Information Governance Group which was chaired by the Executive Director (Governance and Resources) ensured that the framework remained up to date and in line with the requirements of

the Information Commissioners Office, the regulatory body for enforcing the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Information Governance, Risk Management and Data Protection training is delivered via a range of media, including briefing notes, the Chief Executive's Briefing, the Wire, workshops, DVD's and E-Tutorials. Priority during 2015/16 was to ensure that all staff in appropriate roles undertook the Data Protection and Responsible for Information E-Tutorials.

Ensuring effective counter-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are developed and maintained.

The Council has an Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy: Statement of Intent as part of the constitution and all investigations are undertaken by Internal Audit. All investigations are conducted in line with the fraud response plan and operational guidance notes. The Standards Panel receives monthly reports on investigations underway to monitor progress and provide direction where appropriate. The Council continues to participate in the National Fraud Initiative, which is coordinated by Internal Audit and during a recent visit from the Cabinet Office, the work undertaken by the Council to investigate the matches identified was highly commended.

A whistleblowing policy is maintained and available on the Council's website.

Ensuring effective management of change and transformation.

Change and transformation are essential if cost effective and efficient services are to be delivered and savings targets achieved. A tried and tested service redesign process is in place to deliver a flexible workforce responsive to customer need.

The transformation agenda in health and social care as the Council moves towards an Integrated Care Organisation with the Tameside and Glossop Clinical Commissioning Group ('the CCG') and Tameside Hospital Foundation Trust ('THFT') has gathered pace during 2015/16 and we now have co-located teams working towards shared aims and objectives.

Tameside is the lead and chair of i-Network a self-sustaining local public sector improvement partnership with cross-sector membership from the North West, Yorkshire and the West Midlands. Membership has grown by 30% since 2010 with over 80 members sitting on Network Leadership Groups. In 2015 i-Network delivered 45 'What Works' events attended by nearly 2,000 delegates.

Ensuring the Council's financial management arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010) and, where they do not, explain why and how they deliver the same impact.

The financial management arrangements in place conform with the CIPFA statement and the service was managed by the Assistant Executive Director (Finance) the Council's Section 151 Officer up to 31 March 2016.

Ensuring the Council's assurance arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit and, where they do not, explain why and how they deliver the same impact.

The Council's assurance arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA statement. The Head of Risk Management and Audit Services reported directly to the Assistant Executive Director (Finance), the Section 151 Officer and reported on a quarterly basis to the Audit Panel and the Greater Manchester Pension Fund Local board.

Ensure effective arrangements are in place for the discharge of the monitoring officer function.

The Executive Director (Governance and Resources) is the Monitoring Officer for the Council and the function is detailed in the Constitution. A Monitoring Officer Protocol is in place and detailed on the website.

Ensure effective arrangements are in place for the discharge of the head of paid service function.

The Chief Executive is the head of paid service and the role and function are detailed in the Constitution.

Undertaking the core functions of an audit committee, as identified in CIPFA's Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities.

The Audit Panel does comply with the guidance issued by CIPFA and is regularly attended by our External Auditor. Training is assessed for members of the panel based on their existing skills and knowledge.

Ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures, and that expenditure is lawful.

All reports to Senior Managers, Board, Panels, Working Groups, Council and for Key/Executive Decisions are subject to review by the Executive Director (Governance and Resources), the Monitoring Officer and the Assistant Executive Director (Finance), the Section 151 Officer. Internal Audit assesses compliance with internal policies on an ongoing basis and annually all members of the Executive Team (including the Director of Pensions) complete an assurance self-assessment, which includes questions on the above issues.

Standing orders, financial regulations and the scheme of delegation are all reviewed and updated regularly and presented to the Council for approval. All decisions of the Council are minuted and available on the website. Supporting procedure notes/manuals to manage risks and ensure consistency of approach are updated regularly and checked as part of the internal audit process.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy, the Budget Report and a detailed monitoring regime for both revenue and capital expenditure, together with the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer ensures that expenditure is lawful. Officers of the Council are well trained, competent in their areas of expertise and governed by rules and procedures. Officers have regular supervision meetings to ensure that performance is satisfactory and the attendance at training seminars/courses ensures that officers are up to date with developments in their areas of expertise.

Whistle-blowing and for receiving and investigating complaints from the public.

The Council has a published Whistleblowing Policy on its public website and awareness and updates are provided in the Wire. Allegations received are investigated by either Internal Audit or the Monitoring Officer. Complaints are received and monitored via the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which includes an automatic escalation process if response targets are breached.

Identifying the development needs of members and senior officers in relation to their strategic roles, supported by appropriate training.

Training needs are assessed using Annual Development Reviews for officers. The process takes into account the needs of the service and then identifies any gaps in the skills and knowledge of its workforce to enable it to meet its objectives. All training requirements are reviewed by

management and then compiled into service training plans, which are submitted to People and Workforce Development to inform and direct the provision of future training and development opportunities. Training for members is assessed on an annual basis and a programme of events is scheduled to ensure both local and national subjects are covered.

Establishing clear channels of communication with all sections of the community and other stakeholders, ensuring accountability and encouraging open consultation.

Significant improvements in the quality of life for our residents will only be achieved through effective partnership working. Working together through a shared vision for the future of the borough, to create a prosperous economy where people learn and achieve, feel safe and healthy and take active responsibility for their environment.

The Corporate Plan is the key document that communicates the vision for Tameside, and the delivery of the vision is supported by outcome specific networks, joint teams and partnerships.

In addition to the website, the Council has embraced social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) as modern communication channels to endeavour to reach all sections of the community.

The Tameside Engagement Strategy sets out the way the Council will involve local people in shaping delivery of high quality services across the borough. It aims to help ensure that a co-ordinated and strategic approach to consultation and engagement is undertaken.

Consultation has continued using the Big Conversation which provides residents and service users the opportunity to express their views and opinions about the services they use and how they can be delivered in the future in light of the extremely challenging cuts faced by Tameside. Resident opinion surveys are also conducted to provide feedback from service users and residents.

Building on the success of the 2014 budget consultation process, the 2015 budget consultation was launched by the Executive Leader at the Full Council Meeting on 29 September 2015 and ran for 12 weeks closing on 22 December and feedback was presented to the Executive Cabinet/Overview (Audit) Panel on 10 February 2016 and built into the budget report that was presented to Full Council on 23 February 2016.

Accountability is demonstrated by the publication of the Statement of Accounts, the annual report in the Citizen Newspaper, the annual governance statement and the review of service plans and the People and Places Scorecard.

Enhancing the accountability for service delivery and effectiveness of other public service providers.

This role is performed both by the Scrutiny function and by Tameside Members who sit on outside bodies' committees. The Scrutiny function conducts reviews across Tameside which may call into account other public service providers like the NHS. Reviews conducted are reported to the scrutiny panels and the programme of reviews and reports are available on the scrutiny website together with an annual report. Members who represent the Council on outside bodies are ensuring that service delivery is effective, providing a challenge function and that the needs of Tameside are taken into account.

Incorporating good governance arrangements in respect of partnerships and other group working as identified by best practice and reflecting these in the authority's overall governance arrangements.

Good governance arrangements in respect of partnership working were established many years ago when the Tameside Strategic Partnership was created and those standards are still adopted today.

The continued successful delivery of outcomes by the various networks, joint teams and partnerships operating across Tameside to maximise the wellbeing and health of the people of the borough demonstrates that the arrangements in place are sound. Tameside has always promoted working with partners and this is recognised as 'The Tameside Way'. It is through our strong and long-standing partnerships, along with new ones that may develop in the future, that help us to produce solutions and real improvements for Tameside.

4. Review of Effectiveness

The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. This review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the executive managers within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Risk Management and Audit Service's Annual Report, and also by comments made by the external auditor and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The process that has been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance framework includes the following measures and actions:-

- The Council has adopted a planning and performance framework and carries out a programme of monitoring which runs throughout its annual cycle. This includes quarterly monitoring of all budgets, regular monitoring of Service Delivery Plans and the People and Places Scorecard.
- The Corporate Plan is refreshed regularly to take into account changes in circumstances and need. These reviews are influenced from the outcomes of the Business Days held between the Executive Cabinet and the Executive Team.
- The Capital programme is regularly monitored and reported to the Strategic Planning and Capital Monitoring Panel, Overview (Audit) Panel and the Executive Cabinet.
- The Executive Cabinet carries out its functions in accordance with responsibilities outlined in cabinet portfolios, which are detailed in the Council's Constitution. Several non-executive members are appointed to specific roles to assist Executive Members in the delivery of their particular areas of responsibility. All roles are assigned at the annual meeting of the Council.
- There is a well established Overview and Scrutiny function, which has been revised and updated in the light of experience. Scrutiny Panels review the work of the Council throughout the year; make a series of recommendations to Executive Cabinet, which then require a formal response and action as appropriate. There is a public website where the public can access completed review reports and annual plans and annual reports.
- To support delivery of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and be in a positive position to respond to the financial challenges facing the Council, a structured programme of service reviews/redesigns has continued during the year. The continuation of this work is necessary to ensure that we are in a strong position to manage and use our resources effectively to maintain good outcomes and achieve the level of savings required. Service areas are looking for new and innovative ways of doing things as well as working more closely with our partners. Given the magnitude of the tasks the Council faces, consultation via the Big Conversation has continued so that residents' views on any changes can be taken into consideration. Budget Assurance Statements were signed by all Executive Directors in February 2016 providing assurance that financial processes were in place within each directorate and that a robust set of savings plans are in place and a clear delivery plan has been drawn up.

- The Executive Directors have each reviewed the operation of key controls throughout the Council, from the perspective of their own directorates, using a detailed assurance self-assessment. They have provided a signed assurance letter and identified any areas for improvement, which will form the basis of an action plan to this governance statement.
- The Executive Director (Governance and Resources), the Monitoring Officer, carried out a continuous review of all legal and ethical matters, receiving copies of all agendas, minutes, reports and associated papers, and commented on all reports that go to members and when necessary taking appropriate action, should it be required.
- The Assistant Executive Director (Finance), the Section 151 Officer, carried out a continuous review of all financial matters, receiving copies of all agendas, minutes, reports and associated papers, and commented on all reports that go to members and when necessary taking appropriate action, should it be required.
- The Standards Committee is responsible for standards and probity, and receives regular reports from the Executive Director (Governance and Resources), the Monitoring Officer.
- The role held by the Assistant Executive Director (Finance) from 1 April 2015 conformed to the requirements of the five principles of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in Local Government.
- The Audit Panel carries out an overview of the activities of the Council's risk management, internal audit and external audit functions. Members are provided with a summary of reports issued and their associated audit opinion. They approve the annual plans for each, and receive regular progress reports throughout the year. The Head of Risk Management and Audit Services presents to them an Annual Report and Opinion, and the External Auditor submits an Annual Audit Letter along with other reports during the year.
- The Internal Audit service provides a continuous review in accordance with the Council's obligations under the Local Government Act 1972, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. It operates under the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and a self-assessment completed for 2015/16 shows that the service is fully compliant with all the standards, and the assessment was reported to the Audit Panel in May 2016.
- The Council's External Auditors review the activities of the Council and issue an annual opinion on the annual accounts and a value for money conclusion. Conclusions and significant issues arising are detailed in their report to those charged with governance.
- Progress on the further development areas identified in Section 5 are regularly reported to the Audit Panel throughout the year by the Head of Risk Management and Audit Services.

We have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by the Audit Panel, and an action plan to address further developments and ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.

5. Significant Governance Issues

No significant governance issues have been highlighted as a result of this review; however, areas for improvement arising from Internal/External Audit Reports and inspection reports have already been built into service area action plans and are monitored as part of the performance management framework.

Areas identified for further development include:-

- The ongoing level of change across the organisation, reduced resources and staff capacity to deliver the challenges faced by the Council is managed by ensuring that proper

governance procedures and risk management are in place to safeguard that the overall control environment is not adversely affected.

- As we move towards an Integrated Care Organisation it is critical that strong governance arrangements are in place to ensure that positive outcomes are achieved through robust systems and procedures, that are open and transparent and monitored accordingly.
- Vision Tameside, which is a multi-million pound project in partnership with Tameside College, is delivered in accordance with agreed milestones and that the risks to service delivery during the interim period are kept under review to minimise disruption to the people and businesses of Tameside so that together the mutual benefits of the project will be recognised and celebrated. It is also important to ensure that the benefits of the new building are realised in terms of different ways of working and reducing future running costs.
- Greater Manchester Pension Fund is working with other large metropolitan LGPS funds to create a £35 billion asset pool. Pooling of assets will provide greater scope to allow the funds to invest in major regional and national infrastructure projects such as airport expansion, major new road and rail schemes, housing developments and energy production growth, all driving economic growth and prosperity. Strong governance arrangements will need to be in place, underpinned by robust and resilient systems and procedures to ensure the desired outcomes are realised.

We propose over the coming year to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operations as part of our next annual review.

Signed:

Signed:

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Councillor Kieran Quinn
Executive Leader of Tameside MBC

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Steven Pleasant
Chief Executive of Tameside MBC

Dated: 12 September 2016

Dated: 12 September 2016