

Councillor Oliver Ryan
Executive Member
Finance and Economic Growth

Jayne Traverse
Director of Growth

Chair of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

Councillor Mike Glover

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Ask for: Paul Radcliffe
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Dear Councillor Ryan,

Inclusive Growth Strategy Consultation

I write on behalf of the Council's Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel. At a meeting on 28 July 2020, the Scrutiny Panel received a comprehensive update on the 'Impact of Covid-19 and Lockdown on the Local Economy'. Members expressed a keen interest to remain suitably informed of key developments and the evolving landscape, with a view to improving outcomes for residents and businesses.

Soon after the July meeting I invited members to join a working group to progress activity in this area. It was important to ensure our efforts remain timely and best placed to support key work strands; to fulfil the role of scrutiny in providing a suitable level of challenge; and to remain focused on future strategy that will aim to generate the required levels of growth and economic stimulus.

With a wide range of local growth projects and priorities underway, the working group made a decision to review the overarching strategy for Tameside. The strategy will aim to drive and direct both growth and recovery for the borough and therefore present a vision at a local, regional and national level. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, in your role as Executive Member for Finance and Economic Growth, in supporting a positive and transparent platform in which Scrutiny can operate as a 'critical friend' and suitable consultee to future projects and decisions.

The working group, made up of eight councillors from the Scrutiny Panel, met on 9 November 2020 to receive the draft Inclusive Growth Strategy and report, as tabled at the meeting of Cabinet on 2 November 2020. The purpose of the meeting was to incorporate Scrutiny within the formal engagement process, providing an opportunity to record direct feedback on a range of areas and questions outlined within the planned consultation. David Berry, Head of Employment and Skills attended the meeting and I am pleased to report that the session was extremely timely and productive.

On behalf of the Scrutiny Panel, the working group seeks to submit a formal response to the Inclusive Growth Strategy consultation. This letter therefore aims to provide a summary of collective discussion points and to express any issues and concerns raised by members. I

would be extremely grateful if on receiving this letter you are able to take the appropriate action to ensure submission of the response prior to the deadline of 16 December 2020. I do also hope the response can be referenced in future reports and may support wider governance requirements in terms of Scrutiny engagement and feedback used to inform decision making in this area.

Scrutiny notes that inclusive growth is key not just to outcomes for the community but also to the financial sustainability of public services. A strong economy ultimately brings in more funding and income, while delivering a wide range of sustainable benefits that reduce overall demand for services.

Members welcome the strategy and acknowledge that delivering an inclusive framework for growth in Tameside is very important. The strategy will need to connect a range of regional priorities as well as concentrating on local challenges and the strength of partnerships across all sectors. It is important that Tameside, as a place, takes centre stage and that our future vision, direction and opportunities remain both present and clear.

I have listed some of the main points below, which are to be viewed as individual responses from members, under the collective of the Council's Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel.

- Members are supportive of the strategy and acknowledge a need to ensure the overarching ambition for growth in Tameside remains linked with the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy.
- There are significant growth opportunities in Greater Manchester and the emerging eastern growth corridor. The strategy will strengthen the borough's position and aims to increase our share of regional developments. The strategy will also help to support future funding opportunities for key projects.
- There is a direct connection between health, employment, housing and the economic prosperity of residents. Members therefore recognise that inclusive growth requires a coordinated plan and delivery across Council directorates and wider partnerships.
- Achieving inclusive and accessible elements of the strategy requires communities and businesses to interpret and absorb the strategy. Discussion took place on the need to develop a practical and responsive offer that enables wider participation in future growth opportunities.
- Success of the strategy will rely heavily on engagement and buy-in across all sectors. This may require ongoing support in order to achieve a cooperative awareness of shared roles and responsibilities needed to drive key projects. Members feel that capturing regular feedback from the business community will be most helpful to identify challenges and barriers.
- The strategy successfully presents a reflective self-assessment and future ambition in order to market the borough. Members agree with the strategic aims and priorities and provided feedback on a possible lack of clarity regarding the target audience, key stakeholders and sectors the strategy wants to concentrate on and push.
- When considering accessibility and the differences between a broad and targeted audience, members think the strategy could benefit from an additional shorter digital version that delivers the headline vision, aim and priorities, possibly with links to the background information.

- Members agree that digital growth is a priority and work should aim to strengthen and diversify our well-established areas such as manufacturing. There is a reliance on generating private and inward investment above levels previously achieved.
- The strategy aims to provide oversight and direction for a range of work streams and emerging plans, with detail sitting beneath each of the 24 priorities. Members questioned whether strategic outcomes will rely on the success of individual projects and if the strategy can present more targeted improvement from 2021 to 2026.
- Comments included a possible lack of definitive success measures within terminology of 'increase in'. Members want the borough to be as ambitious as possible which means there is a lot to achieve in the next 5 years. It would be encouraging to see a list of minimum expectations for improvement in key areas, with tangible measures. This may form part of an action plan developed alongside the overarching strategy.
- Members are encouraged that the strategy is cross-cutting and borough-wide, therefore seeking to generate growth opportunities across all areas. While detailed with the priorities, members feel growth opportunities will differ by area, which may require a separate strategic plan to be drafted with key stakeholder in each area. To include existing challenges linked to regeneration and the range of issues that impact residents on a daily basis.
- While detailed within the achievements and opportunities, there will be an ongoing need to appraise each town centre for future opportunities, diversification, renovation and ways to attract a new mix of business and dwellings. The strategy to complement wider plans to deliver a diverse and sustainable offer.
- Recent achievements and case studies can be utilised to promote and inform future initiatives e.g, Ashton Old Baths. In addition to new businesses, members are keen to ensure that the Council and partners work closely with businesses related to their growth potential, opportunities and solutions that will allow them to remain in Tameside.
- There will be an ongoing need to acknowledge and reflect on Covid-19 and external pressures. It is likely that a number of businesses will not survive. At the same time, there will be opportunities for new start-ups that may need nurturing.
- To consider a range indirect impacts of Covid-19, such a more people working from home. As an example, this has potential to impact on projections and may reduce the need for new office space.
- That where appropriate, the Executive involve scrutiny in future development stages.

If further clarity is needed on any of the above points, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Mike Glover
Chair – Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel