

Councillor Allison Gwynne
Executive Member
Neighbourhood Services

Ian Saxon
Director
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Chair of the Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel

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Ask for Paul Radcliffe
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Dear Councillor Gwynne,

Community Safety Strategy 2021 – 2024 consultation

I write on behalf of the Council's Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel. At the meeting on 10 November 2020, the Scrutiny Panel received a comprehensive update on the creation of a Community Safety Strategy 2021 – 2024 for Tameside. Members showed a high level of awareness of the issues raised, and expressed a keen interest to remain suitably informed of key developments with a view to improving outcomes for local residents and businesses.

The Scrutiny Panel seeks to submit a formal response to the Community Safety Strategy 2021 – 2024 consultation. This letter therefore aims to provide a summary of collective discussion points and to express any issues and concerns raised by panel members – both at the meeting and in subsequent conversations. I would be extremely grateful if on receiving this letter you are able to take the appropriate action to ensure the collective response is suitably recorded and submitted. It is also hoped that the response can be referenced within future reports and may support wider governance requirements in terms of engagement and feedback used to inform future decision making in this area.

Community safety at a local level is driven by strong and effective partnerships between the council, police, residents and other organisations. These work together to inform, influence and strengthen local knowledge, decision-making and provision. Activity is routinely planned to address emerging issues, set priorities based on the local needs of the community, and incorporate the themes of the GM Police and Crime Plan – Standing Together. There is also an ongoing need to consider how the views and experiences of residents are captured and best used to improve outcomes.

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

- Members are supportive of the strategy and acknowledge the importance of the key priorities in the draft Tameside Community Safety Strategy 2021 - 2024, including:
 - Building stronger communities
 - Preventing and reducing violent crime, knife crime and domestic abuse.
 - Preventing and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.
 - Preventing and reducing the harm caused by drugs and alcohol.
 - Protecting vulnerable people and those at risk of exploitation.

- Integration and engagement with both residents groups and other services within the council are essential to ensuring an effective and comprehensive approach to Community Safety. It is noted that the Community Safety Partnership works closely with Youth Services in Tameside to operate schemes such as Cyclops, the Youth Council and LGBT groups. Neighbourhood watch groups have been supported to take on expanded responsibilities in areas such as Community Speed Watch, and mechanisms have also been set up to react quickly to reports of anti-social behaviour during lockdown. Support to communities from the police, council and other partners for the further expansion of initiatives such as these will be essential to a successful community strategy for the whole borough and its diverse community.

- Members highlight the importance of a “cumulative impact” approach to govern how many off-licenses, pubs, takeaways and betting shops are allowed to operate within a particular area. Unlike traditional licensing approaches, where applications are usually only rejected if objections are logged, a cumulative impact assessment would take into account whether the number, type or density of licensed premises will adversely impact crime and disorder, public safety, public nuisance and the protection of children from harm. Such an approach – whether whole borough or in specific areas identified as hotspots – would be welcome.

- There are opportunities to combat anti-social behaviour by supporting community and youth centres, financially or otherwise, to work with young people. The Community Safety Partnership has helped to establish a charitable body called “Stronger Together Tameside” with the aim of getting local groups together to coordinate, share best practice and create joint bids for funding. The panel would like to have a future update on the progress of this initiative and its impact with a view to the sharing of good practice and learning.

- Reflecting on Bonfire Night this year and in previous years the panel are supportive of a community and neighbourhood based approach to ensure everyone remains safe, backed up with strong and proactive enforcement action.

- A major successes in recent years has been the significant reduction of rough sleeping within the borough, and it is commendable that this has been pretty much sustained through the period of the coronavirus pandemic. While it will be important to maintain the service post-pandemic, the key next stage should be an expansion into wider homelessness (not just rough sleeping) and a focus on upstream activity to support people earlier at the point they are at the risk of becoming homeless or having to sleep rough.

- The perpetrators of crime and anti-social behaviour do not operate to the administrative boundaries of local government or police forces. As such cross-borough collaboration is required to underpin an effective community safety strategy. The strategy for Tameside being part of a wider Greater Manchester approach is a positive, but that needs to be supported by local initiatives where appropriate. A strong example to build on is the work with Oldham Council on joint Public Space Protection Orders to prevent moorlands fires.
- Feedback from some constituents highlights concerns around the reporting of crime with regards to the likelihood of follow up action. There is a risk that this could be exacerbated following the recent report into Greater Manchester Police (GMP) by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). While acknowledging that GMP has, like all public services, seen a reduction in resources a re-invigoration of neighbourhood policing is the key to rebuilding confidence. The panel will come back to these issues in the future work programme, providing constructive challenge as a critical friend, with the shared aim of building confidence and partnerships to reduce crime and keep our communities safe from harm.

There is a recognition that the coronavirus pandemic and social distancing requirements make traditional methods of consultation and engagement difficult, if not impossible in some cases. It is to be hoped that using virtual methods has allowed sufficient input from the public to the consultation, and that the discussions with Scrutiny and elected members has assisted in that process.

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