

COUNCIL

7 December 2021

Commenced: 5.00 pm

Terminated: 6.50pm

Present: Councillors Affleck, Alam, Billington, Bowden, Bowerman, Boyle, Bray, Cartey, Chadwick, Choksi, Cooney, Cooper, Costello, Dickinson, Drennan, Fairfoull, Feeley, J Fitzpatrick, P Fitzpatrick, Glover, Gosling, Gwynne, A Holland, B Holland, J Homer, S Homer, Huntbach, Jackson, Jones, Lane, Lewis, McNally, Martin, Naylor, Newton, Owen, Patel, Patrick, Pearce, Quinn, Reid, Robinson, Ryan, N Sharif, T Sharif, M Smith, T Smith, Sweeton, Taylor, Ward, Warrington, Welsh and Wills

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Kitchen, Mills, North and Ricci

Councillor Naylor in the Chair

40. MINUTES

RESOLVED

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting held on 5 October 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

41. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

42. CIVIC MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Civic Mayor commented on a very busy period in the approach to Christmas. At the end of last month the Mayor was delighted to attend the Northern Lights winter lantern parade through Hyde. It was a fantastic event and compliments were extended to the organisers who had done an excellent job. The Mayor and her Consort also attended Christmas events in Dukinfield, Denton and Hattersley.

The Mayor made reference to the recent season of remembrance and her attendance on the steps of Dukinfield Town Hall for the two minutes' silence at 11am on Armistice Day, marking 103 years since the moment fighting ended in the First World War. She was further honoured to represent the Borough at Ashton War Memorial, Hyde Werneth Memorial and in Hyde town centre on Remembrance Sunday.

The Mayor made further reference to events and engagements attended, including:

- The opening of the Tameside Armed Services Community Allotment and the "Songs we have Loved" concert marking the 50th anniversary of Dukinfield's Yew Tree Singers;
- Hallowe'en party at the Grafton Centre in Hyde, supporting the Believe and Achieve Charity Walk, and attendance at the "Forgotten Voices" concert for Black History Week. Also the official launch of School Start; and
- Attending Hyde Little Theatre's "Sleeping Beauty" pantomime and a Manchester and District Hospitals Choir charity concert at the Bridgewater Hall in support of Young Lives Versus Cancer.

More recently, the Mayor attended St Peter's Church, Ashton, for the farewell service for the Reverend Roger Farnworth, who was retiring after 20 years' service to the Borough and its people. She wished

him well in his new life in Shropshire where his wife, also a priest, had taken up a new post.

Throughout October and November, the Mayor hosted parlour visits to thank people and groups for their work, or to congratulate them on winning honours such as the Queens Award for Voluntary Service.

The Mayor concluded by thanking all medical staff and key workers for all their hard work throughout the year, particularly in respect of the fight against the pandemic and wished everyone a safe and happy festive period.

43. COMMUNICATIONS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Leader began by welcoming everyone to the final Full Council meeting of 2021. As she reflected on the past twelve months, the Executive Leader made reference to December 2020 and a critical juncture in the coronavirus pandemic. Whilst the creation of an effective vaccine promised light at the end of the tunnel, the emergence of more contagious variants and the imposition of a third national lockdown after New Year meant that the danger of widespread infection and death remained and as 2021 was drawing to a close, there was a need to remain vigilant.

The Executive Leader explained that the emergence of the new Omicron variant of coronavirus had led to the government reintroducing a number of protective measures, including the compulsory wearing of face masks in shops and on public transport, the requirement of all contacts of suspected Omicron cases to self-isolate for 10 days regardless of vaccination status and a tightening up of the rules for people arriving into the UK from abroad. Booster jabs, which were previously available for adults over 40 years of age, would also now be offered to all adults by the end of January and second vaccination doses rolled out to children aged 12 – 15 years. There were concerns amongst scientists that the new Omicron variant had the potential to be both more infectious and less responsive to vaccines than anything encountered so far. Whilst infection rates in Greater Manchester remained below the English average, they were increasing in seven out of ten local authority areas, including in Tameside.

Once an effective vaccine for the coronavirus was created, it was clear that a swift and thorough rollout throughout 2021 would be the single most important factor in fighting back against the pandemic. From the beginning, Tameside & Glossop drew on its experience of integration and co-production to launch an ambitious vaccination programme, bringing together local public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations under the banner of a 'leave no one behind' approach.

As part of this, the Hyde Primary Care Network vaccination site was designated a 'drive through' site. This gave many people, especially the elderly or vulnerable, the option of remaining in their cars whilst receiving the vaccination. Thanks to the efforts of everyone involved, by May this year Tameside had exceeded the Greater Manchester average for both first and second doses. As of the previous day, 73.3% of Tameside residents had been fully vaccinated before taking booster shots into account. In recognition of this extraordinary work, the Vaccination Rollout programme was recognised by the prestigious LGC Awards, receiving a shortlisting in the category of 'Public Health'.

The Executive Leader cautioned that the fight against coronavirus was not just about getting people vaccinated, as vital as that was. Residents and communities must be empowered to make the right choices with regard to protecting themselves and those around them. It was recognised early during the coronavirus pandemic that there were many in Tameside, who, quite understandably preferred to receive their information from people that they knew and trusted. It was for this reason that the Community Champions scheme was established. Throughout the past year more than 250 residents had signed up to be Community Champions, undertaking a variety of actions to disseminate information and seek feedback from residents.

For example, Community Champions had visited Hyde Jamia Mosque to increase the visibility of messaging and vaccine take-up amongst ethnic minority communities; designed and distributed a

newsletter for elderly residents; and created videos and a 'My Covid' activity book for young people. Such had been the success of the scheme that steps had been taken to make the Community Champions model a permanent element of the approach to community engagement, going forward, in areas as diverse as health and wellbeing, community cohesion and digital exclusion.

The Executive Leader explained that 2021 was also the year where a policy of Inclusive Growth for Tameside was committed to wholeheartedly. As recovery was sought from the economic and social damage wreaked by both the coronavirus pandemic and a decade of austerity, it was recognised that the only kind of growth worth pursuing was that which created opportunities for all and distributed the benefits of prosperity fairly across the Borough.

The single largest project to make this ambition a reality was the Godley Green Garden Village. An application for outline planning permission for the development was submitted in October, and the relevant documents were now publically available for scrutiny. Any questions or concerns could be directed through the formal Local Planning Authority route, where could be addressed in full. However, whilst Godley Green was still very much in the initial stages, 2021 saw the full completion of a number of other projects to drive inclusive growth in Tameside. This included the new Droylsden Library in Guardsman Tony Downes House; the construction of which also incorporated a tribute to the former Leader of the Council, Kieran Quinn. In addition to this, the month of July saw the opening of the new state-of-the art pool in Hyde as well as the successful execution of the second phase of the Ashton Old Baths redevelopment.

As society began to open up again after multiple lockdowns, a special effort had been made to put on a number of activities to bring communities back together and revive town centres, both economically and culturally. This had seen the introduction of regular events such as the Ashton Artisan Market and Stalybridge Street Feast, as well as seasonal celebrations like the Winter Parade held in Hyde the previous month.

In respect of key priorities for the coming year, it was announced that 2022 would be when the green transport revolution in Tameside and Greater Manchester began to grow. Following an extensive period of consultation and negotiation, May would see the introduction of the GM Clean Air Zone. This scheme would form the cornerstone of plans to tackle dangerous levels of air pollution, which were believed to contribute to the premature deaths of 1,200 people every year in the city region.

The Executive Leader stressed that this was not a congestion charge. Drivers of private cars, motorbikes and mopeds would not have to pay to travel through the Clean Air Zone, however, some commercial vehicles that did not meet the emissions standards, usually because they were older or more polluting, would be subject to a charge. Owners of such vehicles, including HGVs, coaches, vans and taxis, would be given the option of accessing government funding to purchase modern replacements. With this support it was hoped and expected that, in time, the amount of money raised from the Clean Air Zone would fall to zero.

Following extensive lobbying from the Council and local residents, sections of the A628 and A57 in Mottram and Hollingworth would now also be subject to the Clean Air Zone. This corrected the inconsistency of roads in Tameside with dangerous levels of air pollution not being included to the scheme due to them being managed by Highways England. The introduction of the Clean Air Zone, as important as it was, was only one part of the jigsaw that was Greater Manchester taking the fight to the climate crisis in 2022.

This year's Budget released a significant amount of capital funding to turbo-charge the development of the Bee Network, the comprehensive upgrade to the city region's cycling and walking infrastructure. As part of this, in principle approval for 11 potential new Bee Network schemes throughout the Borough had been secured. Two of the improvements, the first between Chadwick Dam between Ashton and Stalybridge, and the second from Hill Street to Trafalgar Square in Ashton, had already been carried out. The completion or breaking ground of many more of the schemes would be reported in throughout 2022, as the Tameside branch of the Bee Network came to fruition.

The Executive Leader reported the final stages of preparation before the submission of the Bus

Services Improvement Plan to the Government. This was Greater Manchester's blueprint for a modern, affordable and accessible bus network for the city region on a par with London and many other major cities in Europe. Improving bus services by simultaneously reducing fares and travel times, whilst increasing frequency of services and environmental efficiency, would transform not just the economic prospects of Greater Manchester, but the people who lived in it as well. If the government backed up the commitment with the necessary funding, it was hoped to see the new and improved public service up and running in Tameside by 2025.

Side-by-side with the long term ambitions for 2022, the Executive Leader reminded everyone of the obligations made to make residents' lives better, in particular with regard to efforts to ensure that everybody in Tameside could live free from crime and abuse. Many residents were concerned about the increase in anti-social behaviour in their communities. In 2022 the Council would work closely with the new Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police, Stephen Watson, to carry out a swift and clear response against those who paid no respect to Tameside or the people in it. Data released by the GMP had shown that the number of recorded noise complaints, the most highly reported type of anti-social behaviour, were four times higher in 2020/21 than in 2018-19. This did not even cover more serious forms of anti-social behaviour that may involve drugs or alcohol.

The Executive Leader made reference to the impact of austerity, which meant that local authorities, who worked with police and communities across the country to prevent anti-social behaviour, would need at least £2.5 billion in additional funding over the next financial year just to maintain existing service provision. The Executive Leader further referenced the installation of two new police posts in Ashton Market Hall and Ryecroft Hall in Audenshaw to provide touchdown points for police officers and PCSOs to help them maintain a visible public presence in the Borough.

Members were reminded of one of the highlights of the summer, with the national football team reaching the final of Euro 2020, where, despite a valiant effort, they fell short of victory. Unfortunately, this once-in-a-generation achievement was marred by the actions of a small minority, who, both on social media and in the real world, chose to indulge in the most appalling abuse. The Executive Leader reported that, next year, the Council would work ever more closely with local communities and organisations to raise awareness of and encourage victims to report incidents of hate crime in Tameside.

2022 would also see the delivery of the next phase of Inclusive Growth, leveraging competitive advantages in digital infrastructure, health innovation and advanced manufacturing to build a vibrant and productive 21st century economy in Tameside. An example of this was given and it was explained that in October 2021, the Council took over the management of the St Petersfield area. This would enable the creation of a modern and tailored employment hub that, when combined with the adjacent Ashton Old Baths development, would help attract and retain businesses and start-ups in the digital, creative and technology sectors. A budget of £20,000 had already been approved to improve the condition of the public realm within the area, including tree maintenance, grass cutting and vegetation clearance. From early next year, this would be complemented with the release of a masterplan and development prospectus laying out the full offer to tenants and investors.

No serious vision of Inclusive Growth was possible without taking into account the impact of housing on health, employment and education. Next month would see the public release of Tameside's Housing Strategy, laying out in detail how a balanced and sustainable housing market would be delivered, that met the needs of all residents. This would incorporate key priorities such as taking into account the needs of an ageing population, maximising the provision of affordable, specialist and supported housing, preventing homelessness and rough sleeping, and improving the quality of the private rented sector. Following extensive lobbying of the government, funding had been received, to take forward two projects: Almost £20 million had been received to begin a series of improvements in Ashton town centre, including the redevelopment of the former bus station site, new walking and cycling routes, building new shops, homes and offices and, after a wait of over six years, restoring and reopening the historic Ashton Town Hall. Transport for Greater Manchester had also been awarded a grant of £50,000 to explore options for a new rail service between Tameside and Stockport, finally restoring and enhancing the links between the historically connected boroughs.

In order for the plans to fulfil the pledge to foster Inclusive Growth, the Executive Leader emphasised the importance of understanding the needs and concerns of those who existed at the very margins of communities. She explained that, in November, she had joined residents, community groups and partner organisations for the official launch of the Tameside Poverty Truth Commission. The launch event invited residents with lived experience of poverty to explain their experiences. Through their honest and difficult stories, there would be work to identify the most urgent priorities to address in the fight against poverty in Tameside, and craft solutions to meet them head-on.

After two years defined and dominated by coronavirus, the gravest public health crisis in living memory, 2022 would be pivotal in determining how Tameside recovered as it emerged into the post-pandemic world. If 2021 was to be remembered as a year of recovery and renewal, there was a commitment to employing skills and resources and efforts to ensure that 2022 was remembered as a year of transformation for every resident and community in Tameside. Through a relentless focus on investing for inclusive growth, fostering safe and welcoming communities and making a difference in the climate crisis, it would be apparent that a fairer, better and greener Borough was possible.

The Executive Leader concluded by setting out a vision for Tameside for the future:

- A vision of Tameside with strong bonds in and between communities;
- A vision of Tameside where all residents felt like their voices and their lives mattered;
- A vision of Tameside that recognised that the price of inequality was too high to pay; and
- A vision of Tameside that was proud to play its part in the fight against the climate crisis

44. 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.

Consideration was given to the Minutes of the meetings of Executive Cabinet held on 27 October and 24 November 2021. It was moved by Councillor Warrington and seconded by Councillor Fairfoull that the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Cabinet held on 27 October and 24 November 2021 be received and it be agreed that Council approve the implementation of the Minimum Licensing Standards, (Minutes of Executive Cabinet held on 24 November 2021, Minute 94 refers), as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report and in the appendices.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meetings of the Executive Cabinet held on 27 October and 24 November 2021 be received and it be agreed that Council approve the implementation of the Minimum Licensing Standards, (Minutes of Executive Cabinet held on 24 November 2021, Minute 94 refers), as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report and in the appendices.

46. MEETING OF OVERVIEW PANEL

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of the Overview Panel held on 8 November 2021. It was moved by Councillor Naylor and seconded by Councillor Owen that the minutes of the Overview (Audit) Panel held on 8 November 2021 be received.

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview Panel held on 8 November 2021 be received.

47. EXTERNAL AUDIT APPOINTMENT FOR 2023/24 TO 2027/28

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Finance setting out proposals for appointing the Council's external auditor for the five-year period from 2023/24.

Members were advised that there was a requirement under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 for all local government and NHS bodies in England to locally appoint their external auditors.

There were three options open to the Council under the Act, as follows:

- Option 1 – Make a stand-alone appointment as Tameside Council;
- Option 2 – Establish local joint procurement arrangements; or
- Option 3 – Opt-in to a sector led body appointed by the Secretary of State under the Act – Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) Limited.

New appointments for auditors needed to be made by December 2022 regardless of which option was chosen.

In accordance with Regulation 19 of the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015, the decision on opt-in must be taken by Council (“full authority”).

It was explained that a review of options was presented to Executive Cabinet, Audit Panel and Council in 2017 to support the decision to opt in to the PSAA arrangements. The basis for that decision had not fundamentally changed in the intervening period and the pros and cons of the options were outlined in the report.

It was further explained that Option 3 was supported by Audit Panel at its meeting on 9 November 2021. Subject to approval from Full Council, the Director of Finance must formally notify Public Sector Audit Appointments of the Council's request to opt in to the sector led arrangements by 11 March 2022.

It was moved by Councillor Warrington and seconded by Councillor Fairfoull and:

RESOLVED

That Option 3, to opt into the sector-led option through Public Sector Auditor Appointments (PSAA) for the appointment of external auditors to principal local government and police bodies for five financial years from 1 April 2023, be approved.

48. APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

It was moved by Councillor Warrington and seconded by Councillor Fairfoull and;

RESOLVED

That further to the recommendation of Senior Staffing Panel (Councillors Warrington, Kitchen and Dickinson) held on 29 September 2021 and approved by Full Council on the 5 October 2021 that the appointment of Alison Stathers-Tracey to the permanent post of Director of Children's Services be confirmed.

49. NOTICES OF MOTION

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

To consider the following motion in the name of Councillor Gwynne:

That Members note that Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council which we serve is named after and held together by the River Tame that runs through our communities. It has allowed our towns to grow and flourish, bringing industry and prosperity to the population over the centuries. Now, it is a vital part of our green estate, providing recreation along its banks, wildlife and glimpses of our heritage. We are rightly proud of our river, and united in our desire to protect it. We call on United Utilities and the Environment Agency to work with us to prevent the ongoing polluting of the River Tame, and help to clean up this waterway.

That this Council notes:

A recent article in the Times highlighted that the River Tame has the dubious honour of having the highest microplastic concentration of any watercourse in the world and the situation is getting worse, not better. The root cause of this pollution is the often-illegal discharge of raw sewage into the river from United Utilities.

Speaking in the Times, Professor of physical geography at Manchester University Jamie Woodward states that there “is much concern that illegal discharges of sewage are now the norm across the industry in England” and that “regulation is utterly ineffective because the Environment Agency is underfunded, and their leadership has set its priorities elsewhere. The Environment Agency is failing in its duty to police the health of our rivers”.

Since 2010 United Utilities along with every water company have been allowed to self-report their discharges. United Utilities are one of the most prolific sewage dumpers, discharging the equivalent of 12-weeks continuous flow between July 2019 and June 2020, although they dispute these figures and state that it is only the equivalent of six continuous weeks.

A Private Members Bill entitled “Sewage (Inland Waters) Bill 2019-21” introduced by Philip Dunne MP on 5 February 2020 proposed to amend the “Water Industry Act 1991” and place a duty on water companies to ensure that untreated sewage is not discharged into rivers or other inland water bodies. This Bill fell away with the prorogation of Parliament but has now been introduced in an amended format to the House of Lord’s by the Duke of Wellington.

Intermittent discharging into waterways has been permitted under specific circumstances, but privatised water companies have been fined record amounts for unlawful discharges outside of these provisions.

And that this Council therefore RESOLVES:

- (i) To ask the Chief Executive to write to George Eustice, Secretary of State for the Environment and Rural Affairs expressing this Council’s support for the Duke of Wellington’s Bill and ask him to support the provisions outlined within. To further ask the Secretary of State to make the case for increased funding to The Environment Agency to allow them to effectively enforce environmental legislation.*
- (ii) Noting that the Environment and Climate Emergency Working Group have requested United Utilities appear before them to explain their current position, to urge United Utilities to make senior officers available at their earliest convenience.*
- (iii) To ask the Chief Executive to write to The Environment Agency asking for an explanation of why the regulatory framework has failed to prevent the River Tame suffering the highest level of microplastics in the world.*

RESOLVED

That Members note that Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council, which we serve is named after and held together by the River Tame that runs through our communities. It has allowed our towns to grow and flourish, bringing industry and prosperity to the population over the centuries. Now, it is a vital part of our green estate, providing recreation along its banks, wildlife and glimpses of our heritage. We are rightly proud of our river, and united in our desire to protect it. We call on United Utilities and the Environment Agency to work with us to prevent the ongoing polluting of the River Tame, and help to clean up this waterway.

That this Council notes:

A recent article in the Times highlighted that the River Tame has the dubious honour of having the highest microplastic concentration of any watercourse in the world and the situation is getting worse, not better. The root cause of this pollution is the often-illegal discharge of raw sewage into the river from United Utilities.

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- (II) Noting that the Environment and Climate Emergency Working Group have requested United Utilities appear before them to explain their current position, to urge United Utilities to make senior officers available at their earliest convenience.
- (III) To ask the Chief Executive to write to The Environment Agency asking for an explanation of why the regulatory framework has failed to prevent the River Tame suffering the highest level of microplastics in the world.

50. QUESTIONS

The Chair reported that no questions had been received in accordance with Standing Order 17.2.

51. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items of business for consideration at the meeting.

CHAIR