

Leader's Speech – 9th October (1,976 words/15 minutes)

Members and officers of the council, before I begin tonight I'd like to offer a warm welcome to Tameside's newest elected representative. Pauline Hollinshead joins us after winning the by-election in Ashton Waterloo in September, following the sad death of Cath Piddington earlier in the year.

Anybody who remembers Cath knows that she'll be a hard act to follow, but having seen how Pauline has got stuck into the role I am totally confident that she's up to the task and will make her own mark on the area.

The summer months since the last meeting of Full Council are often perceived as the "silly season", the time where everybody is on holiday and very little gets done. All I can say is that the people who believe that haven't spent many summers in Tameside.

Throughout the past few months, everybody in this room has continued to do what they've done the entire year. Working together and making progress on our goals and priorities for Tameside. Other places talk about change, but here we deliver it.

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At the end of September we received our latest feedback letter from Ofsted, following their monitoring visit of our services for looked after children.

I accept in full the conclusions of the monitoring visit, and pledge that they will serve as a focus for the next steps of our improvement journey. I'm also pleased that Ofsted have recognised that we have a clear understanding of where we are at the moment, and where we need to go from here.

Make no mistake. We have come a long way, but there still remains significant work to be done to ensure that children in Tameside are supported in the best way possible.

One of the most important steps towards delivering on this is to make sure that we can recruit and retain permanent staff with the relevant skills and experiences.

This is very much a regional and national challenge, as opposed to a challenge that is unique to Tameside. However, it has been recognised that we are making every effort in this area, and that the positive results of that effort are beginning to be felt.

My sincere thanks go to everybody in Children's Service who has worked tirelessly to get us to a place where real and lasting change is possible. We are unwavering in our commitment to give them the support they need to finish the job.

Since we last met we have also welcomed two new Directors to the council, both of whom will spearhead our delivery of further improvements.

Richard Hancock joins us as our new permanent Director of Children's Services. Formerly the Deputy Director of Children's Services and Families First at Staffordshire County Council and with over 3 decades of experience in his field, I am positive that he is the right man to build on the solid foundations set by James Thomas.

I'd also like to warmly welcome Dr Jeanelle de Gruchy, who has come to Tameside as our new Director of Population Health. As the current President of the Association of Directors of Public Health, she is a tireless and proven champion in the fight against health inequalities, mental health, obesity and violence.

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As the nights start drawing in we also need to give thought to how we will support the elderly and vulnerable in Tameside through the winter.

Around 25,000 more people nationally die over the course of each winter compared to other times of the year – most of which are caused by cold weather exacerbating existing conditions such as dementia or circulatory and respiratory diseases.

For every drop of one degree centigrade below five degrees, there is more than a 10% increase in older people visiting their GP for breathing problems, a 0.8% increase in emergency hospital admissions and a 3.4% increase in deaths.

2018 has taught us that we need to prepare for just about anything. From the horrific fires in Saddleworth Moor in the summer to the ice and blizzards of the Beast from the East at the start of the year, weather conditions that we would have considered extreme in the past are becoming the new normal.

For several years now, we have teamed up with the NHS, Public Health England, the GMCA and other local groups and charities on campaigns to help all our residents, but particularly those with long-term health conditions and the over-65s, prepare for lower temperatures.

We will continue that work this year, drawing on our experience and learning to make sure that Tameside is kept informed, as well as identifying who and where we can help to stop potential issues before they arise.

Hand-in-hand with this is one of our key objectives for the next twelve months, improving the quality of care homes in Tameside. A range of teams, including the members of our Integrated Care and Wellbeing Panel, are currently spearheading this work, and I hope to provide you with an update on their progress before the end of the year.

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I want to return back to that link between health and the weather for a moment, as it also highlights one of the most important long-term challenges that we face. Tackling climate change and protecting the environment for ourselves and for future generations.

This is an issue where I feel that we can lose ourselves in the sheer vastness of the problem. "Saving the planet" is definitely not a goal that I'd disagree with, but by itself it does little to identify what we need to do in practice.

Sometimes to achieve bigger things you have to think smaller.

Instead of talking about the dangers of climate change for the Earth, let's talk about the dangers of climate change for the health and wellbeing of people right here in Tameside.

Instead of trying to come up with what we can do as a country, or even a planet, let's start by thinking what each and every one of us can do as individuals. Small but achievable changes in consumption and lifestyle can nevertheless have a massive impact if we all commit to them.

That's why Greater Manchester, along with Birmingham and Oxford, has signed up to the C40 Fossil Fuel-Free Streets Declaration. This holds us to increasing the number of zero-

emissions vehicles on our roads and increasing the rates of cycling, walking and public transport.

From 24-30th September we also joined the nine other Greater Manchester councils and Recycle4GM to support the 2018 edition of Recycle Week, raising awareness of the importance of recycling and engaging residents in fun and innovative ways to make them think about their own use and waste.

Over the next twelve months I intend for us to build further on this progress, working with members from the Place and External Relations Panel to put Tameside at the forefront of the green agenda. Not just in Greater Manchester, but in Great Britain as well.

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Speaking of Greater Manchester, I want to also take the opportunity to update you on the work taking place in the Combined Authority over the summer.

As Leader of Tameside Council I will always make sure that our voice is heard in all issues discussed by the GMCA. We've joined with them on holding the government to account for the appalling service and conditions on our public transport. We've made clear what we expect and what we will accept in terms of housing need and development requirements in our towns. Led by the first-class efforts of Cllr Adrian Pearce, we've ensured that Stalybridge is in the best position to reap the benefits of being part of the Greater Manchester Town Centre Challenge.

As the lead of Age Friendly Greater Manchester and Equalities, I also work to make our city as a whole the best place in the UK for people to grow older. In July we brought the GM Festival of Ageing to Ashton Market, and last month, with the Mayor and representatives from TfGM, I helped launch the new "Please

Offer Me a Seat” scheme to widen access to public transport for disabled or elderly residents. In close partnership with Carl Austin-Behan and the GM LGBT Advisory Panel, we are also protecting and expanding the rights of the 215,000 LGBT individuals who today call Greater Manchester their home.

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Earlier on I talked about the importance of sometimes thinking smaller to achieve bigger, and I want to finish off by returning back to that theme. It’s only natural that the focus is often concentrated on the big projects that the council undertakes; things such as Vision Tameside, the environment and housing.

The importance of these shouldn’t be understated, but we sometimes forget that these form only a fraction of what goes on in Tameside day after day. The majority of what the council and its partners do will never appear on the front pages of any newspaper, but the impact of that work for many of our residents can still be very significant indeed.

When I say that, I mean the Tameside Hack, which has brought the council, volunteer organisers and businesses together to give our young people a solid education in coding and other digital skills.

I mean the Tameside History Festival, which for the entire month of September celebrated our rich heritage and, on the centenary of some women winning the right to vote, the extraordinary women and girls from Tameside who left their mark on the borough, the country and the world.

I mean the incredible work done by council officers, charities and the Tameside Armed Services Community. Schemes such as the Veteran's Breakfast Club and Moving Forces have helped to support so many of our armed forces members throughout their time of service, and during or after their transition back into civilian life.

And I mean the council working in partnership with Public Health England and the NHS on services such as Healthy Young Minds and Be Well, positively impacting the quality of life and physical and mental wellbeing of our residents, and intervening to prevent disease or disability before it arises.

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The end of summer is a natural time to take stock of what has gone before, and I truly believe that we can look back with pride at what we've achieved over the past nine months.

Not only have we made on progress on the headline projects that will determine the future of Tameside, we've also had success with the smaller changes that will add up to a big impact as well. We have the rest of 2018 to build on this good work and make the first steps on new plans.

Perhaps most significantly, next month the country will come together to celebrate the centenary of the guns falling silent at the end of World War 1. Just as every single part of Britain was touched by the appalling slaughter of those 4 years, every single part of Britain will be organising events and festivals of remembrance 100 years later.

Tameside will play its part in this national commemoration. We have already secured the funding and organisation for a number of schemes, including 10 figures of British soldiers as part of the national "There But Not There" campaign. Working

closely with members, communities and charities, we will be able to provide a full program of remembrance events for Tameside in the very near future.

We will deliver on this, as we have delivered on many of our other goals this year, by drawing once more upon the shared values in Tameside; our respect for each other, our belief in the power of our communities, and our determination to see a job through to the successful finish.

It is these values that have carried us to the progress that we've made so far. It is these values that will continue to drive us further still.

Thank you.