

## **Leader's Keynote Address – 4<sup>th</sup> December**

*3,149 words/24.2 minutes.*

Members and officers of the Council. As 2018 comes to a close, I think it's appropriate to look back on what has been a momentous year for Tameside.

When I assumed the role of Leader of the Council, I laid out what I saw as our priorities for the borough; giving our children and young people the best start in life, continuing our pioneering work in health and care, protecting our shared environment, improving our economy and skills base, and making Tameside a better place to live.

Ten months later, we are delivering on each and every one of these. Where others may have stuck with words, here in Tameside we have backed our words up with concrete action and achievements.

What's more, we have done all this in the face of all the challenges that this year has thrown at us. We have plotted a sure course through national uncertainty. We stood together as the fires raged on Saddleworth Moor, a natural disaster unlike any we have seen in our lifetimes.

Despite this adversity, we did not waver from our belief in Tameside, and our belief in our core principles. Over the year, we have developed an approach that delivers on the vision, aims and priorities of the Council.

That approach, as laid out in the new Corporate Plan, seeks nothing less than to transform the relationship between public services and our residents, communities and businesses. It embeds the importance of well-being, prevention and early intervention to identify and resolve potential issues at the earliest possible stage. And it supports the development of new investment and resourcing models to make this a reality despite the continuing financial difficulties faced by all local authorities.

None of this would have been possible without the dedication and efforts of an uncounted number of individuals, both in this room and in the wider borough. We have shown beyond a doubt what can be done when we all work towards a common goal.

All of us are aware of the importance of what we do, and the responsibility that we bear towards our fellow residents. Whether they're rich or poor, old or young, decisions made in the town hall often affect Tameside's residents far more than the decisions made in Whitehall.

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There is one person in this room that has realised that truth longer than most. As many of you will be aware, tonight is the last Full Council meeting before Cllr Bell moves on to a well-deserved retirement.

I know many of us have warm words and best wishes to share with him, and I'm absolutely positive Cllr Bell will have things to say before his departure. For the moment however, I'd ask you to wait until later in the evening so that we can give his send-off the attention it deserves.

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One of our goals for 2018 has been making sure that Tameside is a place where children and young people can grow up as part of a safe and nurturing community.

Making it a reality goes beyond making sure they are protected from harm, important as that is. Through organisations like the Tameside Youth Council we are making sure that they are also given every opportunity possible to have a voice and engage with the world around them. In Tameside, we think young people should be seen, heard and listened to.

We combined both of these during the Greater Manchester-wide "It's Not Okay" Week of Action in June.

As well as teaching parents about the dangers of child sexual exploitation more generally, we also made sure that the real experts – teenagers who have grown up with the internet – were on hand to teach us how to make sure our children are safe in the online world.

Further child safety programmes, including the "Look out for ABC" campaign raising awareness of child abuse, are also ongoing at this very moment.

In the summer months we built upon our long-running range of family activities. With events like Theatre in the Park, living history at Portland Basin Museum and the Summer Reading Challenges in our libraries, we made sure that every family in Tameside, regardless of their background or income, had the chance to have fun, learn and get involved.

I would also be remiss if I didn't highlight the great work being done in our schools. Their effort to encourage an active lifestyle has led to more young people engaging in physical activity and a number of successes for Tameside in the Greater Manchester School games.

Many of our schools and Youth Council members have also gotten involved in delivering on our other priorities for Tameside. Russell Scott and Gorse Hall Primary Schools organised events through the year where children have

campaigned against the dangers of air pollution, especially from idling vehicles at school gates.

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2018 will also be remembered as the year where our ambitions for health and social care in Tameside and Glossop started bearing fruit. As we promised at the start of the journey, we have made sure that we have brought our residents along with us every step of the way.

Our plans for Intermediate Care services have gone forward, with appropriate changes made to address the concerns raised by some residents during the consultation process. This improved Intermediate Care model has been backed up by Home First services that will support more people to stay at or return to their homes. Put together, they are nothing short of a game-changer for this sector of care in Tameside and Glossop.

Key to the success of our plans for Tameside and Glossop is empowering our residents, giving them the tools to take control of their own health and wellbeing. Our health neighbourhoods, bringing together all the services and agencies into five defined geographical areas, have become an example of good practice that other Greater Manchester boroughs are looking very closely at when designing their own models.

In April at Ryecroft Hall in Audenshaw, we complemented this by launching the Life in Tameside and Glossop website. A comprehensive directory of services and an index of datasets from birth to death, Life in Tameside and Glossop is a one-stop shop of health and social care information for residents, service providers and charities. Users can search for detailed statistics and proactively find services in their local area.

It's a pioneering example of how digital technology can be harnessed to drive integration and improve quality of care.

Another example of this is our Digital Health Centre, which has brought together Tameside Hospital, care homes across the borough and the council's Community Response Service to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and keep elderly and vulnerable residents as comfortable and healthy as possible in their own familiar surroundings.

I was also delighted in October to receive news that our plans for mental health provision will be bolstered by National Lottery Funding. Tameside and Glossop, along with Salford, Edinburgh and Luton, have been selected by the national Innovation Unit to join the ground-breaking Living Well UK programme.

Over the next three years, we will work closely with colleagues from Tameside and Glossop Strategic Commission and other partners to develop a world-leading model of mental health care, supporting early intervention and allowing users to have a say on how their care is designed.

That's an ambitious goal, but it has to be. Approximately one in four people in England will suffer a mental health issue each year, but funding and access to treatment remains woefully inadequate. Change needs to come, and Tameside and Glossop will be at the forefront of that change.

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Another area where we have put ourselves at the forefront of change is on defending our shared environment. The GM Green Summit in March was a powerful call to action, and at the beginning of November we decided how we should answer that call by holding the first ever Tameside Green Summit.

Over the course of the day in Dukinfield Town Hall, we heard from a number of prominent experts and academics, including Kevin Anderson from Manchester University, Brian Deegan from Urban Design, representatives from IKEA and the Greater Manchester Environment Portfolio Lead, Cllr Alex Ganotis.

I was especially moved by the powerful cases made by our children and young people, including the video presentation from Millbrook Primary School and the round-ups of the day's events by Jacob and Emily from the Tameside Youth Council.

These were the voices of the next generation. The ones who will live with the consequences of what we do, or fail to do. In their name, council officers, residents and businesses in attendance pledged to do their part in protecting our environment and climate.

But the Tameside Green Summit was just the first step in the process of generating real collective action and meaningful change on this most important of issues. It falls to all of us to take the next steps, and the message remains as clear now as it was then.

Do what you can, do it in a way that best suits you, but do something. If you've already pledged something, keep doing it and use your example to convince others to join you.

One of the council's own pledges at the Green Summit was to continue with tree planting in the borough. On top of our annual tree planting and maintenance programmes, we will find space for an additional 3,500 trees in Tameside by the end of next year.

A greener borough is a more pleasant borough, but there are a number of other environmental benefits of tree planting that cannot be overstated. They soak up rainwater, provide a home for wildlife, provide a buffer to noise and wind and improve the quality of our air.

And tackling air pollution, which contributes to the death of almost 1,200 people in Greater Manchester a year, is the other pillar of our environmental priorities. Over the year, we have worked closely with the Combined Authority and Tameside residents of all ages on a number of awareness raising events, such as Clean Air Day and Recycle Week.

We have also contributed to the Greater Manchester-wide Clean Air Plan, the details of which are due to be released early in the New Year.

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Our other long-term aim for 2018 has been creating a skills base fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century by improving the digital literacy of our residents, and growing our space for creative and technology companies to make Tameside the first and only choice for entrepreneurs looking to set up in those industries in Greater Manchester.

Key to this has been the continuing success of our Tameside Hack events. Over the course of two days, young people aged 12-18 are given the chance to develop their digital and technology skills in a fun and relaxed environment, teaming up with others to create products with real life applications.

In November we held the fifth Hack, cementing the event as a permanent fixture on the borough's calendar. In every single Hack to date our young people have found new ways to raise the bar, creating everything from number plate recognition programmes to relaxation apps and a "Smart Room" home sensor.

Early on in the New Year, these young people will have the opportunity to develop these skills further in the classroom, as Tameside College's Advanced Skills Centre nears completion. Upon its opening, the Centre will provide state-of-the-art learning spaces for students to study and hone a wide range of vocational and technical skills.

It will stand in the same building as Tameside One, the council's modern, smaller and more-energy efficient administrative centre. Construction is due to be finalised early in the new year, after which the process of outfitting the new building and moving people in can start in earnest. Neither have we forgotten about Ashton Town Hall, as we are currently in discussions about how to give the historic building the refurbishment it deserves.

But teaching our young people digital literacy will not by itself fulfil our ambitions. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, knowing your way around computers is as important as reading, writing and arithmetic. Regardless of their age, background or previous experience with technology, every resident in Tameside deserves a chance to develop this essential skill.

That's why, at the beginning of September, we signed Tameside up to the new Inspiring Digital Enterprise Award, or IDEA for short. Accessible from a mobile phone, tablet or computer at [www.idea.org.uk](http://www.idea.org.uk), their series of digital challenges allow people to learn at a pace and style that suits them.

And once our residents have acquired those skills, Tameside needs jobs that will allow them to use them to the fullest. Over a year after the reopening of the Ashton Old Baths, the tenant businesses housed in the historic landmark have created over 70 jobs in event management, graphic design and a number of other sectors.

Supported by a dark fibre network unlike anything else currently running in Greater Manchester, the Ashton Old Bath redevelopment has been such a success that the council has recently approved funding for both a redevelopment of the building's annex, creating space for even more businesses and entrepreneurs and a new state-of-the-art data centre, which will eventually host the council and NHS IT systems.

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Back in February, when I presented my first Budget as Leader of Tameside Council, I pledged that we would use all the powers at our disposal to make a real difference to our resident's lives.

The continued harsh grip of austerity, which has seen our budget slashed by over 70% since 2010, means that we have had to find new ways to drive investment in our town centres and local infrastructure. Through working closely with Greater Manchester, most notably on the Mayor's Town Centre Challenge and the campaign to encourage cycling and walking, we have made significant progress on achieving this in 2018.

Since it was announced that Stalybridge would be Tameside's nomination for the Town Centre Challenge, we've been hard at work getting the views of residents and businesses on what making their town a better place means to them. This culminated in October with a drop-in event in Stalybridge Market Hall, which was attended by more than 170 local residents and business owners.

Popular ideas raised during the consultation including providing more support for small businesses and developing a cultural offer around the canal. All the views

and opinions we've received will carefully be analysed and reflected upon before further work is undertaken in the New Year.

We've also submitted Tameside's proposals for our part of the Greater Manchester Cycling and Walking network. This includes the creation of "filtered" neighbourhoods where foot and cycling traffic is prioritised over cars, upgrades to existing traffic-free routes and segregated facilities for bikes on major roads.

While the final plans for the cycling and walking network will not be released until later in 2019, we got a taster of what it will bring to Tameside back in April, where funding through the City Cycle Ambition grant allowed for the development of cycling infrastructure in Ashton, Hyde, Stalybridge and Denton.

We will continue to work with partners within and outside Tameside to unlock the potential of our towns. Not only will we secure our future, but we will create better places to live and work in the here and now.

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All these are just the highlights of what I have no doubt will be remembered as a year of transformation for Tameside.

But as we look back, we must remember to look forward as well. There are significant projects and challenges to come, but I have no doubt that continuing in the spirit of cooperation and collaboration, pooling our diverse expertise to achieve a common goal, will make 2019 an even more successful year for our borough.

And the work towards making that success a reality will begin tomorrow. From then until the end of January, all of Tameside will be invited to have their say on what they think our priorities should be for next year; giving a voice to our citizens, communities and businesses, and making sure that anything that happens on our watch is done with them, and never to them.

We will combine their voices with our own learning and the results of the next Local Government Finance Settlement to draft the council's Budget in February, setting up the solid framework that will allow us achieve our common goals in the next financial year.

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But that will by no means be the end of the conversation. Over the course of the rest of next year, we will keep in close touch with our residents about what we want to deliver for Tameside.

We will talk with them about the commitments we made at the Green Summit on tree planting and energy efficiency, as well as working closely with others who attended the summit; helping them to achieve their own pledges and highlighting their successes.

We will talk with them about the construction element of Vision Tameside, and how we will move on to the next stage of the project, using the new resources and infrastructure at our disposal to further develop our local economy and our resident's skills base.

We will talk with them about the progress on our plans for Care Together, working with residents and communities to design new services, particularly in regards to mental health, and transforming the way we deliver them in Tameside and Glossop.

We will talk with them about the building work on the Denton Wellness Centre and look at options to take forward our plans for Hyde Pool, setting up both of these buildings in their rightful places as the centrepieces of our long-term strategy of investment in leisure and health in Tameside.

As I've said in the past, our most valuable assets in Tameside are not measured in money and buildings, they are measured in individuals, the communities they build, and the collective power of the actions that we choose to take together.

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to everybody who helped make our successes this year possible.

Particular thanks must go out, as always, to those residents, officers, members and partners who contributed their skills, their efforts and their support in ways that often go unnoticed.

We know that big things are coming, both locally and nationally. To give just one example; we do not yet have a clear idea of how Brexit, in whatever form it takes, will impact the borough. But no matter what we have to face, let us make sure that we continue to be at the cutting edge of change, becoming active shapers and makers of our own shared future.

But, for today at least, there's nothing left but to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Let's enjoy the holiday and come back recharged and ready to deliver for Tameside once more.

