

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Organisational Assessment

Dated 9 December 2009



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of local public services

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Overall, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council performs excellently

| | |
|------------------------|------------|
| Managing performance | 4 out of 4 |
| Use of resources | 4 out of 4 |
| Managing finances | 4 out of 4 |
| Governing the business | 4 out of 4 |
| Managing resources | 3 out of 4 |

Description of scores:

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements, Performs Poorly
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements, Performs Adequately
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Well
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Excellently

Summary

Overall Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council performs excellently. The quality of services is generally excellent, including in areas important to local people. The Council is excellent at managing its money and delivering services which meet the needs of local people.

Many services are excellent. Inspectors rated the Council as one of the best in the country in 2008. The Council provides high-quality services for older and vulnerable people, helping them to remain independent for longer. Public spaces and parks are rightly a source of pride - with many gaining national awards. The Council has responded to the recession - offering good support to local people and businesses. Schools continue to perform well, with best ever GCSE results in 2009.

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council scores 4 out of 4 for managing its performance. The Council works well with its local partners and success is clear. This includes reducing the number of people who become homeless and helping more people to quit smoking.

Local challenges and areas of under performance are tackled quickly and effectively. This includes helping to improve youth offending services, redirecting £12 million to help businesses through the recession, and responding to the recent rises in burglary.

Longer term challenges are also addressed, such as improving residents' health. The Council is not complacent and knows that more remains to be done. For instance, to influence the high numbers of teenage girls who become pregnant.

The Council listens well to local people and ensures services meet their needs. There are many examples of residents being able to influence spending in their neighbourhoods. For instance, sharing money saved from increased recycling into community improvements.

Ofsted rates that the Council's children's services perform well. Outcomes for most children are very good. The Council has taken firm action to keep children safe and can provide evidence of improvements. We will need to check this progress.

The Care Quality Commission rates the Council's adult social care as performing excellently - continuing to be one of the best in the country. Fewer people, particularly the elderly, go into long-term care. This is because the Council provides a good range of services to promote independence.

The Council scores 4 out of 4 for use of resources. It has a very strong approach to the way it manages its finances. This has sustained improvement in priority outcomes, financial stability and efficiency. It has also enabled the Council to reallocate money quickly to new areas of need.

There is an excellent understanding of costs and performance across the whole Council; this drives innovation to help save money. The Council actively involves its partners and service users in the way services are designed and delivered. It is consistently focused on ensuring all these services improve people's quality of life. It has a rigorous approach to continuously improving the performance of its services; this is achieved through very good use of data to monitor performance and make improvements where necessary.

The Council displays strong community leadership and very effective partnership working that is delivering improvements. It understands the needs of the borough's different communities very well, and it has the capacity to achieve its priorities. It manages its buildings and natural resources well.

About Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

Tameside lies to the east of Greater Manchester. It consists of 9 towns - Ashton-under-Lyne, Audenshaw, Denton, Droylsden, Dukinfield, Hyde, Longdendale, Mossley and Stalybridge. The borough has a strong manufacturing tradition, mostly in the areas of textiles and engineering, but service industries are now the largest employment sector.

Tameside is changing. Over the next 20 years, the age profile is forecast to change dramatically, with a significant rise in the number of older people. It is also becoming increasingly diverse, with rising numbers of residents from black or minority ethnic (BME) groups, of which people of Asian heritage make up the largest number.

Tameside is a borough of contrasts. It is the 56th most deprived borough in England - an improvement on its position in 2004. There are areas of wealth, but also poverty - such as in parts of Ashton, Denton and Hattersley. Unemployment is slightly higher than the national average, but lower than

Greater Manchester as a whole. Over 35% of residents aged 16-74 have no qualifications.

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council's has said the following areas are important: Supportive Tameside; Prosperous Tameside; Learning Tameside; Attractive Tameside; Safe Tameside; and a Healthy Tameside.

The Council has 57 elected councillors, with the Labour group in overall charge. The Council has a challenging programme of improvement. In 2008 it was rated as one of the best performing councils in the country, but continues to strive for 'great lives, excellent services'. This ambition will be achieved through the work of the Council's own services and through Tameside's Local Strategic Partnership.

Organisational assessment

Supportive Tameside

Residents enjoy living in Tameside. But the Council is not complacent and knows that it can do more to improve satisfaction further.

The Council listens to and understands resident concerns. It gives people plenty of opportunities to influence the services they receive. Networks such as Listen Here!, The Really Important Network and the Big Chat involve lots of local people and they help to shape the way the Council delivers services. The Council aims for, and delivers, excellent customer service - as rated by external assessors in 2009.

Support for older people and those who are most in need of support, is among the best in the Country. The Council's adult services are rated as performing excellently by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), sustaining excellent performance. These services help to support more local residents to live independently than similar areas - with 88% of vulnerable people achieving independent living, up from 81% last year.

Strengths in the Council's approach include helping more people to get the benefits that they are entitled to - 2,000 more claims for benefits in 2008/09. Also, the Council supports older people to keep a good quality of life through volunteering and taking part in initiatives such as FEAT (falls exercise assessment transport). This helps older people by promoting health, well-being and independence.

The Council works well to prevent people from losing their homes or becoming homeless. Less people live in temporary accommodation and levels of homelessness have reduced. The Council helped to prevent 584 people from becoming homeless in 2008/09 - up significantly from the previous year. A good range of services helps people who are out of work and are at risk of losing their home, including housing support. Also, good work with New Charter Housing helps to support vulnerable people escaping from domestic violence. This has not only improved outcomes for victims - helping them to find alternative accommodation - but has also led to savings of £750,000.

The Council has taken firm action to improve the way it keeps children safe

and there is evidence of improvements. Services have changed to address weaknesses and performance is now at least as good as similar areas - including outcomes for vulnerable and looked after children. The Council with partners has introduced new ways to oversee plans, priorities and decisions. It has also introduced a new children's out of hours social work service. However, there has not been an Ofsted inspection to check this progress.

Children placed for adoption experience fewer moves and are therefore have greater stability. Good progress has been made in reducing the numbers of children on the child protection register for more than 2 years. However the number is still above the national average.

The Council listens to the needs of children - as shown by the 'you said we did' programme. Children in care are asked how to improve the service. And the Council listens - making changes to its fostering services, by providing children with their favourite meal on arrival at their new home.

Too many teenage girls become pregnant in Tameside. Figures show the Council and partners are having little effect on reducing this number. Significantly more teenage girls become pregnant than the national average, and local targets for reducing this number have been missed. The Council and its partners are trying to tackle this issue, through better use of data and targeted action. But until figures improve it remains an area of concern.

Tameside needs more affordable homes. The impact of the recession is placing more pressure on the availability of affordable homes. House prices are not high in Tameside, but some people still struggle to afford a home. The Council is responding to this issue, helping to set up Three Homebuy Direct schemes in Stalybridge and Hyde. These schemes allow homebuyers to buy at below market prices with the developer owning a share of the property. This is important because affordable homes help people on lower incomes live in places that they want to.

Prosperous Tameside

The Council is working well to improve the local economy. This is an important priority as it knows that jobs are important to the growth of the area and to address inequality. And it is having an impact - Tameside moved from being the 49th to the 56th most deprived borough nationally between 2004 and 2007. Strong partnership working underpins its work - as shown by recent effort to support local people through the recession.

Local people have gained from the growth of Tameside's economy. Big developments like Ashton Moss have created over 1,700 new jobs. And the average amount residents earn has risen, although this is still the lowest in Greater Manchester. The Council knows it needs to help residents gain higher level skills so they can access well-paid jobs. And it is having some success - with more people of working age gaining higher skills.

The Council provides good support to help local people find work, particularly those from the poorest areas. A good example is the St Peter's Partnership which helps local people into jobs. The success of this and other projects is helping to reduce unemployment - with Ashton's unemployment rate falling by 6.8% over the last 12 months.

The Council has played a leading role to improve local transport. Transport access to Manchester is set to improve, with the Metrolink tram extension to Droylsden due for completion in 2012. An extension of the line into Ashton has also got the go-ahead. The Council knows that this expansion will provide a real help to those needing to travel to work outside the borough.

The Council's response to the recession was quick and vigorous. The Council and partners are working hard with local businesses to deal with the downturn. This includes offering free car parking after 3pm on Thursday, Friday and Saturday to encourage people to go shopping. The Council is leading the Tameside Works First initiative - a partnership response to the recession. The initiative includes bringing forward building programmes and paying suppliers much sooner. £12 million has been set aside specifically for the programme. It is helping to safeguard local jobs and offer opportunities for training. In 2008/09, 143 supported business start-ups were achieved, 19% above target and more than the 95 in 2007/08. This programme is helping to explore new ways of working with partners and local businesses.

Learning Tameside

Most children and young people achieve very good outcomes. School results in Tameside continue to improve, and their gap with the national average is reducing. Local schools achieved their best GCSE results in 2009, up 9% on the previous year. The number of children in care achieving five or more good GCSE's is better than similar areas. School results are improving fastest in the worst performing areas - closing the gap between the worst and best performing areas.

Most children and young people achieve good standards in Tameside. Young children do well and at the end of primary school this good performance is upheld. At this age, some children from minority ethnic backgrounds do not achieve as well as the national average or their peers in similar areas. However, this gap has closed by the end of secondary school. By the age of 16, young people achieve the same standards as those in similar areas and national averages. And standards continue to rise. The overwhelming majority of indicators show a good performance in this area.

School attendance is improving. The Council wants to do better and is targeting its efforts on those secondary school pupils who regularly don't turn up for school. Levels of persistent absence continue to fall, with a drop over the last twelve months from 7.7% to 5.7%. The Council is also aiming to reduce the number of pupils who are permanently excluded from school - as despite improvement performance remains only average.

The Council provides good support to help children move on to further education, training or employment. The Council and partners perform in line with both similar areas and national figures. Indeed the numbers of young people who are not in education, training or employment is fairly low. But, more needs to be done as targets to reduce this number have been missed. Too many young people drop out by the age of 17 which continues to be a concern.

The Council actively involves young people in the design and development of new facilities. This includes the continuing rebuilding and refurbishment of

secondary schools - as part of a £300 million investment. Developing schools which meet the needs of children and young people will encourage more to remain in education and achieve improved education levels.

Attractive Tameside

The Council is rightly proud of the quality of parks and open spaces. It invests time and money to improve the quality of the local environment - and the benefits are clear. Local people are happy with their parks and open spaces and this improves the attractiveness of Tameside. And they receive national awards - with 15 Green Flags and awards for its parks, cemeteries and community spaces in 2008/09.

Community spaces are a real asset to the borough. The Council sees public buildings as important meeting places and community facilities. Town halls are well-kept, and the recently reopened Ashton Market Hall is a source of pride. This now provides a modern high-quality environment for shoppers within a historic building. Local people have been actively involved in the design and development of new buildings and are able to benefit from better community buildings.

The Council is working well to improve the local environment. The streets are getting cleaner, with less litter and graffiti - a real success story in recent years, with cleanliness levels much better than similar areas. And recycling of household waste continues to grow - now over 35%. The money saved is being used to support local communities. The Council has given £380,000 back to local communities through the 'Cash in the Bin Initiative' - using district assemblies to let people decide how this money should be spent to improve their neighbourhoods.

The Council is reducing its own impact on the environment - often through innovative approaches. Many Council led green programmes have been set-up to reduce their environmental impact. This includes a unique glass pulverisation installation and a heat exchanger for the crematorium. Vehicles that run on alternative fuels have been introduced alongside introducing energy efficient street lighting. The Council and its partners have also set-up an energy panel chaired by the Leader of the Council. The panel looks at ways of reducing energy and water use and how to encourage recycling. This work is having a positive environmental impact - reducing gas use by 26%, water use by 16% and carbon dioxide emissions by 8%. The Council now needs to work with other partners to explore further opportunities.

Safe Tameside

The Council plays an effective leadership role in making Tameside a safer place. Its contribution to reducing crime and improving residents' perceptions of safety is good. But, crime remains too high. Certain crimes like burglary peaked in early 2009 - missing targets. The Council uses its powers effectively to make the borough safer, but, with its partners, has been tested by the recent rises in crime. The latest crime figures suggest that crime is now falling again, but violent crime remains a concern.

The recent falls in crime gives confidence the Council and partners are doing the right things, such as targeting people who commit most crime. The

Council has a track record of working well with other partners, such as the Police through the crime and disorder reduction partnership. For example, responding to the rise in burglaries in Ashton. The Council needs to work with its partners to ensure long-term improvements in crime are maintained as there are signs that it is starting to fall behind similar areas. We shall look next year whether crime levels continue to fall and also how Tameside compares with similar areas.

The Council acts quickly and uses its own resources to make Tameside safer. The impact of its work is clear. One example is spending £1.2 million to improve roads - helping to improve road safety and reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured. Others include the Sanctuary scheme to provide better support to people who suffer from domestic violence and encouraging street games to divert young people from anti-social behaviour.

The Council is also an important partner in the new integrated offender management scheme. Begun in May 2009 it aims to stop persistent offenders from committing more crimes by dealing with their various problems - such as drug and alcohol abuse, not having a home and not having the skills to get a job. The Council and partners are confident that this will help to reduce crime, but it is too early to assess its impact.

The Council has delivered good improvements to the way it manages youth offending. Few young people become involved with the youth justice system and of those that do few receive prison sentences. Partners work well together - so says a recent inspection by HMI Probation. The inspection recognises improvements in the youth offending team in the last twelve months. So prospects are good.

The Council knows that it needs to do more to ensure people from different backgrounds get on well together. This view is supported by recent surveys. In response, the Council has set-up the culture and community cohesion partnership. The partnership develops activities within local communities through which it hopes to improve understanding between different community groups and religions. Activities include celebrations of cultural differences and working with people who may have previously felt excluded. This work has had positive results, specifically reducing community tensions and decreasing levels of hate crime.

The Council is succeeding in reducing alcohol related violence. It understands the links between violent crime and alcohol and promotes sensible drinking. Initiatives such as 'safe and healthy bus' and safer Tameside against night time disorder (STAND) are having an impact. Partnership working is at the heart of this - working with the police to promote sensible drinking in town centres. Local hot spot areas are also targeted, such as Droylsden and initiatives are helping to remove alcohol from local streets. This combined work has had a positive effect and alcohol related disorder has reduced.

Healthy Tameside

Improving health and well-being is a top priority for the Council. It knows that its services like sport and recreation, schools and housing can have a big impact on peoples' health. It plays a leading role in tackling this issue - and must continue to do so.

Why is it important? People in Tameside are less healthy than the rest of England, on average. Life expectancy is increasing but is still well below the national average. If you live in the most deprived parts of Tameside you're likely to live 5 to 6 years less than those living in the wealthiest neighbourhoods.

The Council works very closely with Tameside Primary Care Trust (PCT) to help improve the health of local people. The strength of this partnership working has been acknowledged by external assessors. Examples of the Council's commitment to this include spending £7 million to provide better leisure facilities in Copley, Ashton and Hyde. And it is paying dividends - helping to increase the number of children and adults attending sport and leisure sessions by over 27,000 since 2006. The Council is also helping to deal with the growing problem of alcohol abuse - such as binge drinking. It promotes sensible drinking which also helps to make Tameside a safer place.

Too many children in Tameside are overweight. Early obesity can lead to serious health complications in life. Promoting healthy lifestyles in all schools is very good. And the Council is trying to increase children's participation in exercise. It promotes family walks, jogging clubs and back to netball activities. A pilot scheme, '4-11 years pathway' has also been set up in some schools offering information on healthy eating and increasing children's involvement in sports. These schemes are increasing the number of children who are involved in regular exercise.

The Council is doing a lot to encourage people to become healthier. It knows the strengths of the partnership's work on this issue, and where more can be done. Strengths include helping 1,837 people to quit smoking in 2008/09 - one of the best rates nationally. Also targets to increase breastfeeding have been met. But rates of breastfeeding at 6- 8 weeks remain low. There is scope for the Council and the PCT to set stretching new targets where they've already been met. And they could do more to improve healthy lifestyles for some very young children

Corporate Arrangements

The Council is an all-round high performer. Strengths include delivering many excellent services, excellent use of its finances and other resources, and a real commitment to working in partnership.

Partnership working is very effective and is helping the Council to achieve much more than it could on its own. The Council has a clear focus on delivering 'great lives and excellent services' in Tameside. A key priority for the Council is to deliver with partners the Sustainable Community Strategy - which sets out Tameside's long-term ambitions, and the three year Local Area Agreement (LAA).

The Council has made good progress in delivering the LAA targets it is directly responsible for. This includes improving school results, helping older people live independently, improving street cleanliness and reducing the number of people who smoke.

Leadership at the Council is highly effective and there is good capacity to deliver its plans. The Council encourages innovation to help address issues

which matter to local people. Staff and partners are well-supported and the Council is committed to improving the skills of staff and Councillors. Councillors and senior managers attend a development programmes to improve the way they deliver services and work with local communities. The Council is a good place to work - surveys show staff are more satisfied than ever with the Council as a place to work.

The Council is an efficient and well run organisation. It knows what it wants to deliver and will move money to where it is needed or change the way services are run. It is very good at spotting problems and reacting to fix them. The Council takes positive and often innovative action to address under performance and will take difficult decisions. For instance, to improve youth offending services, spending money to update 3 leisure centres, and to do more to make Tameside safer. The Council's innovative approach has helped to deliver £22 million worth of savings over four years.

The Council closely checks its performance and this is helping it to make progress in important areas. Plans are clear, measurable and cover the medium to long-term. The Council has good information about the outcomes of key projects, including those across the partnership. The Council has an excellent understanding of the area. It uses available data well, including across the partnership and with the Voluntary and Community Sector.

The Council has a strong understanding of the needs of residents and local businesses. Its approach is well regarded - achieving awards for its approach to getting communities involved. It uses innovative approaches so local people can influence developing services and spending decisions. Examples include Tameside TV, which provides residents with a 60-second update on local news and events every Wednesday. Tameside has 8 District Assemblies which provide local people with an opportunity to help make decisions which affect their neighbourhood. The Council has delegated over £11million to district assemblies to allow local people to decide where money should be best spent.

Financial capacity and value for money are strong. The Council has a very strong approach to financial planning, with good improvements in priority areas. Strengths include the ability to reallocate resources to specific strategic priorities - only fully possible because of the strength and extent of the financial management information. Examples include the Tameside works first initiative to respond to the recession. This has so far led to the redirection of £12 million, helping 45 local businesses so far.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

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