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MAGAZINE

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February 2026 - Local Business & Community News - Shopping & What's On guide



**FINAL PART OF OUR INTERVIEW WITH
TAMESIDE'S EXEC LEADER & CHIEF
EXECUTIVE - SEE PAGES 16, 17 & 18**



CRIMEWATCHERS DOG SHOW
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GRAB CHARACTER CURRY TICKETS
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EAST CHESHIRE HARRIERS
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Welcome...

Pick up a copy from: Aldi, CO-OP, Active Tameside, Ashton Market Hall, Stalybridge Train Station, Droylsden Post Office, Ladysmith Shopping Centre and more!



Contributors this issue

Howard Murphy - Tameside Markets - Jan Lord - Bobby Kent - Local Studies Library - TMBC - Tameside College - Luke Mirfin - Hyde Fundraisers - Massimino Malacri - Cllr Denise Ward - Indian Plaza - Cllr Eleanor Wills - Emma Alexander - George Dalton - Ian Hopton - East Cheshire Harriers - National Highways - Crimewatchers - Colin and Christopher Campbell-Thompson - Richard Hooton - Pete Brocklehurst - Ashton Town Team

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Lending a paw to Crimewatchers

>> Droylsden's Crimewatchers organization are having another dog show to support the security work they do around the town centre during evenings and early mornings.

Taking place on Sunday February 1st the event will be hosted at The New Salisbury Club on Ashton Road in Droylsden. The show opens at 12pm with judging set to take place from 1pm with categories including Pedigree Puppy, any crossbreed puppy and classes featuring a variety of veteran dogs. There are quite a few fun classes too that include Prettiest Bitch, Wigglest Tail, Dogs Most Like Their Owner and Fancy Dress to name a few. There will be sandwiches and sweet creations provided by The Central Café and organisers would welcome raffle prize donations by

contacting Kathie on 07720 962211 or email crimewatchersdogshow@gmail.com

There might even be chance to meet the Crimewatchers dog Storm who made a visit to the last show in September last year.

Crimewatchers is a local community patrol service born out of necessity and built on dedication. Our team of trained professionals help deter crime, support vulnerable residents, and enhance public safety across Greater Manchester.


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Deadline for our March 2026 issue is February 21st

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HYDE'S ROBOT VET

It's not without reason
that Godley resident Pete
Brocklehurst has assumed
the title 'robot vet' after working
on Hyde Fundraisers replica K-9
over the past couple of years.

For those unaware, K-9 was the robot dog assistant that first appeared with The Fourth Doctor played by Tom Baker. He returned in a special one-off adventure K-9 and Company with former assistant Sarah Jane Smith. Both those characters made a return to the new Dr Who series in 2006 with the Tenth Doctor played by David Tennant in the episode School Reunion where he was somewhat rusted and damaged. At the end of that story The Doctor gifts a new K-9 to Sarah, which went on to join her in the Sarah Jane Adventures for several episodes. For some years Hyde Fundraisers have had a replica of the corroded and damaged version from the School Reunion

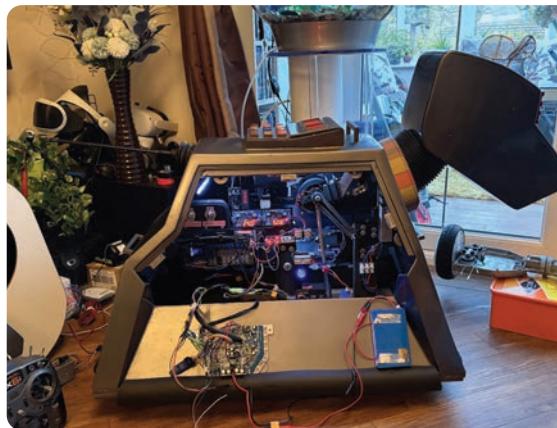
episode until taking ownership of a version that appeared on BBC Breakfast in 2023. That model was owned by Mark Dando, a great supporter of the group, and already had working eye probe, tail, ears and lights but sadly wasn't mobile.

So in December 2025 Pete began work on the replica, reworking the radio controls, replacing some lighting with LED's and adapting electric scooters to provide the motive power for this traditional styled K-9. Even though he had worked on the other version of the dog the task to introduce mobility had its challenges



but determined to succeed Pete was successful and this new K-9 is set to appear later this year at an event.

It's not just robot dogs that Pete has a talent for, he already brings out his R2D2 to many of the group's events and will be taking his BB8 droid to the Hyde Fundraisers Character Curry night at The Indian Plaza on February 17th!



TAMESIDE'S AWARD WINNING GARAGE

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Train Tameside 500: Building Local Skills, Changing Local Lives

As the Train Tameside 500 initiative continues to gather momentum, this week's spotlight turns to one of the teams at the heart of the project; Tameside College's Apprenticeships Team, led by Kerri-Anne Chadwick, Head of Work Based Learning.

Train Tameside 500 is a boroughwide initiative led by Tameside College to create 500 training and employment opportunities through a partnership between local industry, further education and Tameside Council. By working together, the project is building pathways for young people and adults, ensuring they can gain the skills, qualifications and real world experience needed to progress. This shared approach is helping to strengthen the local workforce and support growth.

Kerri-Anne has spent many years working in the apprenticeship sector and a commitment to improving opportunities for local people has always been embedded in her career. She explains: "We are driven to give our students the confidence and industry experience they need to succeed. Apprenticeships are one of the best ways to achieve that and they are a huge booster to the Tameside economy and local employers too."

Tameside College delivers a broad range of apprenticeship programmes that reflect the needs of the local economy. These include well established pathways in construction, engineering, hair and beauty, hospitality and catering, childcare, alongside specialist routes such as dental nursing, business and professional services and many more.

This variety allows students to access careers that suit their strengths and interests, while employers benefit from a pipeline of motivated employees who can grow with them.

Kerri-Anne explains: "The advantage of apprenticeships is that they work for everyone. Apprentices gain hands on experience from the beginning of their qualification and earn a wage, whilst employers get the skilled employees they need to grow their business. It's a

partnership that provides long term benefits and the college is here to support this at every stage. Many apprentices complete their qualification and move straight into a role with the same employer they have always worked with, meaning there's a path laid out for their success."

Train Tameside 500's network of employer ambassadors is proving crucial in expanding opportunities for local people. These employers champion workplace training, provide placements and employment opportunities and help shape the curriculum so it meets industry needs.

"Our TT500 ambassadors are role models for how we see the programme growing. They are demonstrating what can be achieved when employers, the college and the local authority work together to achieve positive outcomes. Their insight helps us design qualifications and training that prepare people for the world of work."

This collaborative approach is also helping to future proof the local economy. By strengthening links between education and industry, the project is supporting businesses to remain competitive while ensuring residents have access to high quality training and long-term career prospects.

The apprenticeships team at Tameside College provides dedicated support to apprentices and employers from initial enquiry to completion. This includes recruitment guidance, coaching throughout their apprenticeship, workplace reviews, skills development and progression planning.

Kerri-Anne added: "Our goal is to make those high level technical and specialist roles feel attainable. There are many



The Apprenticeship team at Tameside College aims to inspire apprentices and grow local business

examples of school leavers starting an apprenticeship in say, engineering and within four years they are leading major projects with an employer and have made a real impact on their business. Whichever career path someone wants to follow, we want them to be able to see a clear career route in front of them and know that they have the support of a whole team behind them to succeed."

With growing demand from employers and increasing interest in non-traditional training routes, apprenticeships will continue to play a major role in the development of the borough. The Train Tameside 500 project is a key part of this, strengthening the support available and creating a shared goal for those involved.

If you or your organisation would like to **#JoinTT500** and become a Train Tameside 500 ambassador, then contact the college's Apprenticeships team: apprenticeships@tameside.ac.uk or call 0161 908 6735.

Don't neglect your eyecare

Ignoring any issues or problems with our eyesight could put our vision at risk and cause further deterioration of any conditions we may be facing.

Vision loss usually occurs gradually and painlessly, and most people don't notice until after the damage has been done. Putting off eye care increases the risk for undetected or uncontrolled eye conditions, eye damage, and vision loss, especially from glaucoma.

Delayed eye care also allows other eye problems to go unchecked. The following eye conditions have few or minor symptoms at first and may only be detected by eye exams.

An eye stroke. Like the heart or brain, the eye can suffer damage from obstruction of a blood vessel. One type of eye stroke occurs when blood flow leaving the retina (the light-sensing component in the back of the eye) is disrupted. It can cause temporary or permanent vision loss. People with high blood pressure, diabetes, glaucoma, and cardiovascular disease are at greater risk for this condition.

Diabetic retinopathy. Diabetes can cause blood vessels in the retina to become "leaky," leading to temporary vision loss. "Sometimes the blood will clear on its own. If it doesn't, you may need surgery. If the old blood or new blood vessels block the drain in your eye, you can get increased eye pressure and glaucoma," Dr. Shen says.

Age-related macular degeneration. This condition gradually destroys the macula, the retina's central portion. It's the part of the eye that provides central vision needed for seeing objects clearly.

With yearly eye exams, patients

are able to get prescriptions that are up to date. Having an eye prescription suited to your eyes now and not your eyes a year ago means fewer headaches and reduced eye strain.

Your eyes are one of your most important investments in your health care so why not contact the team at Boots Opticians in Denton to see how they can help on 0161 336 6944.



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Free parking successfully supporting Tameside towns

Two hours free parking in Tameside is continuing to prove a huge success, with car park use more than doubling since the initiative was launched in June 2025.

In December 2025, Tameside Council run car parks recorded 129,898 visits, compared to 69,349 in December 2024, showing the positive impact of the scheme. The offer, which provides up to two hours free parking Monday to Saturday before 6pm, was introduced to make visiting and shopping in Tameside's town centres easier and more convenient.

The initiative covers all council-run car parks across Tameside, including Ashton, Denton, Droylsden, Dukinfield, Hyde, Mossley and Stalybridge, as well as the council-run car parks at Tameside Hospital and Denton Wellness Centre. People using the offer still need to obtain and display a ticket from the machine, even when parking for less than two hours, but there is no charge for tickets covering up to two hours.

The scheme was developed following extensive consultation with residents, businesses and stakeholders, and forms part of the council's wider plans to revitalise town centres and support local traders. It represents a significant investment from the council, but early indications suggest the



benefits are clear: footfall has increased, traders report they are busier, and car park usage has surged.

Executive Member for Towns, Transport and Connectivity Cllr Stephen Homer said: *"The success of our free parking initiative is clear. Car park use has more than doubled, and we're seeing real benefits for residents, local businesses and town centres. This scheme was designed to make visiting and shopping in Tameside easier and more affordable, and the results show it's working."*

This positive impact has already been recognised with a Business Buddy Award from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB). This is rarely given and was last awarded in 2018, but Tameside Council was recognised for the difference the initiative is making to the local economy. The award celebrates organisations that go the extra mile to support small businesses, and the free parking offer has been praised for helping high streets during one of the toughest economic climates for retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.

TAKEN IN TAMESIDE

If you have a photo you would like to include, please email us at: tamesidecommunitynews@gmail.com
We'd love to hear from you!



Sunset in Ashton – Sam Shaw



James North Clock in 2020
H Eades



Thompson Cross
Stalybridge
Howard Murphy



View over Mossley – Sam Shaw



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STREETLIFE TO RETURN TO ASHTON

In an announcement recently, Andy Kleek and Monopoly Events have advised the return of Streetlife in June to Market Avenue and beyond.

The Ashton event made its debut in July last year and then made a return for August Bank Holiday. This year it will be taking place on Saturday June 6th from 10am. Organisers promise celebrity guests, movie props, memorabilia and big screen magic, entertainers and surprises around every corner, Live music and



DJs all day long, Street food from local legends, Cocktails, craft drinks and pop-up bars. Market stalls packed with independent gems, Cosplayers, costume crews and performers, kids' entertainment and family friendly fun.

The team that puts together Yanks events and

Monopoly events have also joined forces to stage this year's official events in Ashton-under-Lyne and Stalybridge, over the weekend of 1st and 2nd August 2026.



SNOOKER UPDATE

Our season started at the end of September, with our traditional league openers, The George Fletcher and Gordon Trophy trophies.

In the George Fletcher, snooker trophy, Alexander beat Mossley B 3-2, taking the final frame in a closely fought match. In the Gordon Clay, whist trophy, St Peter's beat Staly Labour over 20 hands of cards, which was only decided over the last two hands. Trophies will be presented at next year's presentation night.

At the AGM in September, we were celebrating having a new team, taking us up to 8 teams in all. Within two weeks, however, we had lost two teams, due to shortage of players, bringing us down to six, but hopefully one or both will be ok for next season. A couple of teams may need to seek new venues in next few weeks.

In the first quarter of the league season, both leagues were very close, with all teams beating each other.

After five games in the snooker league, we had Mossley B, Alex A and Staly Labour joint top with 15 points and St Peter's just behind on 13. In the whist we had a lot of cross



wins, and after five games, Staly Labour had 10 points with Mossley B on 8 and St Peters on 6.

At the start of the second quarter the top teams were again beating each other and midway through we had three teams joint top with 23 points. This reduced to two teams at the top and then when that quarter finished St Peter's were top on 29 points with Alex A and Staly Labour joint second with 28. In the whist, we had four points separating top teams, again there was a lot of cross wins and end of second quarter St Peter's had made some ground on the leaders. Staly Labour were still top with 16 points, but St Peter's were now second on 14, and Mossley B had 12.

Because the league is now playing fewer matches over the season it was decided to have an inaugural Christmas 6 Reds, played on 50% handicaps, unlike annual 6 reds, which is played from scratch.

It was held on 11th December at Hyde Club and had a good attendance.

At end of the early rounds we were left with 4 semifinalists, D Willows from Hyde Club and Bob Carter, Kevin Dooley and Chris Edwards from

Mossley B. R Carter beat D Willows in the first semifinal and Chris Edwards won the second one. In the final Chris Edwards beat Bob Carter to win the trophy.

*Ian Hopton
League and Press Secretary*

Agent launches new office

Ashton's new Estate Agent – Thompson Estates – has opened their new modern office at 163 Stamford Street Central in Ashton-under-Lyne.

Driven with a passion for the local community this new estate agency brings over 30 years of experience in property sales, lettings, investments, energy assessments, and property management. Lee

Thompson – Co-Founder & Managing Director – said: "As an independent agent, we aren't tied to corporate red tape or national

targets. That means every decision we make is focused on what's right for our clients and our community. We can be more flexible, more personal, and more driven to get the best results for you." The office is open Monday – Friday: 9am – 5pm Saturday: 10am – 2pm but you can also arrange appointments out of these hours too. You can also call 0161 399 1630 or email info@thompsonsea.co.uk



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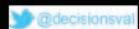
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Pride in Place funding brings exciting events to Ashton Town Centre

Ashton is set for a year of vibrant community events thanks to the first allocation of Pride in Place funding.

The Ashton Neighbourhood Board has confirmed that £8,000 will be allocated to Ashton's Town Team to deliver a programme of seasonal activities designed to boost footfall, support local businesses, and celebrate the town's unique character and will tie in with the opening of the redeveloped Market Square.

This funding forms part of a £41 million Government investment across Tameside, with nearly £20 million earmarked for Ashton over the next decade. The programme aims to create safer streets, improve public spaces, and strengthen community pride.

What's on in 2026?

- **Amazing Ashton** (March 21) – Live music, comedy entertainment, and family activities.
- **Sci-Fi Celebration** (May 2) – supporting the annual event organised by Hyde Fundraisers featuring activities and characters.
- **Independent Business Awards** (July) – Recognising and promoting Ashton's independent traders.
- **Dinosaur Show** (August 8) – Interactive dinosaur puppets and displays for families.
- **Heritage Day** (September 19) – Vintage photo exhibits and heritage panels



celebrating Ashton's history.

- **Small Business Saturday** (December 5)
 - Festive crafts, giveaways, and character appearances.

Phill Brown MBE, Chair of the Ashton Neighbourhood Board, said: *"This first allocation of Pride in Place funding represents another key moment for Ashton. We're investing in our shared future, creating safer streets, showcasing our heritage, and strengthening the heart of our community to build on the transformation already underway across the town centre. These events will be a celebration of Ashton's spirit. We're proud to create opportunities that bring people together, highlight our heritage and strengthen the sense of belonging that makes our town special. There will be more announcements of further projects in the coming weeks"*

Bill Fairfoull - Ashton Town Team Chair added:

"I would like to thank the Ashton neighbourhood board for facilitating this funding. This now allows us to bring an exciting programme of events to Ashton in 2026."

These events will support the many hundreds of small businesses who operate daily in our Town Centre and hopefully encourage more families to visit our town centre."

This is just the start. More events will be added ahead of the Market Square reopening celebrations, bringing Ashton into a new era.

For updates and ways to get involved, visit Ashton Town Team on social media.



Mando in May

Hyde Fundraisers have announced that this year's Sci-Fi Day in Ashton will be taking place on Saturday May 2nd. The event will feature a mix of character walkabouts including The Mandalorian which has its big screen film out in that month.

Hubs create hubbub

Families across Tameside are reaping the benefits at local family hubs as services and attendance numbers go from strength-to-strength. With a 500% increase in children accessing groups in only two years, the centres are demonstrating the demand for nurturing and creative sessions from birth to pre-school age, as well as support services for parents and carers.

Last Meal Served

Ashton Moss has seen the latest closure in its restaurant offerings following last year's closure of Pizza Hut at The Snipe. As part of restructuring the TGI Friday's restaurant located near Ashton's Village Hotel, closed early in January.

Rubble Scott

Russell Scott Primary School is being demolished after being selected to benefit from the School Rebuilding Programme (SRP) in December 2022. After demolition of the old site is complete, the new playing fields and multi-use games area will be built over the course of a year. The next steps of the journey for Russell Scott Primary School are to see planning permission approved by the council, so building work can finally start.

Community Chest

Local business Monopoly Properties has stepped in to purchase The Sportsman, saving it from development and ensuring it will continue to operate as a pub. After its planned closure early in January the community rallied, and a petition was launched which resulted in the rescue.

What do you want?

Residents, businesses, and stakeholders are being invited to have their say on the current phase of the Borough's Local Plan, known as 'Homes, Spaces and Places'. You can get involved in shaping Tameside's future by visiting www.tameside.gov.uk/homespacesplaces.

Send your bulletins to:
tamesidecommunitynews@gmail.com

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IN TAMESIDE

Homes, Spaces, Places is part of Tameside's Local Plan that sets out our local vision for the future of Tameside, playing an important role in shaping our towns, infrastructure, environment and the economy, for every resident and business.

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CHARACTER CURRY PLANS HOT UP!

In October last year local group Hyde Fundraisers announced they were to host another fundraising Character Curry at The Indian Plaza in Audenshaw in association with Councillor Denise Ward.

The response has been amazing with local businesses and families booking places for the event taking place on Tuesday February 17th. Hyde Fundraisers have announced that in addition to BBC Children In Need they will also be making donations to The Ricky Hatton Foundation, Tameside Young Carers, Reuben's Retreat, Willow Wood Hospice and KidsCan. KidsCan is a children's cancer research charity based in Salford that funds research into new and improved treatments for children with cancer.

Steve Haines
from Hyde

Fundraisers said: "We are hoping people will be joining us for second helping of the Character Curry which will have a special visit from Wallace & Gromit, BB8, Predator, The Joker, Laurel & Hardy and others visiting your table for great photo opportunities. There's also live music courtesy of performer Roger De Genero with some great ballads with a few numbers from young Jack Doyle and also a great prize raffle too!"

The raffle is being organised by Cllr Ward so if you would like to make a donation you can contact her via:

Denise.Ward@tameside.gov.uk

The evening starts at 6pm and will see ticket holders enjoy delicious poppadoms, chutneys and a tasty curry to support some really good causes. Not only that, but you will also have a unique character dining experience too. It's a great evening for all the family to enjoy and tickets are likely to get snapped up quickly.



To book your place for adults it will be £20 and children under 10 years for £5 each - there are still places available but hurry!

CALL 0161 371 7474.



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**About
TAMESIDE**

MARKET NEWS



Valentines is upon us and if you are seeking inspiration to treat the one you love then your local markets have some great ideas.

Shoppers at Hyde Market Hall can browse a wonderful collection of cards, gift bags, badges and banners from **Greetings Galore** on the lower ground floor at units 60,63,64 and 65. If you are searching for that romantic tune you share with someone find vintage records and cassettes at **Hyde N Seek Records** located. Featuring a wide selection of LP's covering all types of music – rock, pop, to easy listening, soundtracks and classical. Also located on the lower ground floor we have **Studio 22** offering ladies hair styling with cuts and hair colouring ready for



your special date or event.

On the first floor at Hyde Market Hall why not visit the **Homemade cake stall** where you can grab fresh baked sweet and savoury treats for your loved one along with bread and eggs too!

Ashton Market Hall provides a wide range of gift options all year round from vintage sweets to gifts for the home. At unit 73 **G. E Shaw** features artificial flowers, teddies, ornaments, lights, lampshades and other giftware. Perhaps a watch for the special person in your life would be a nice surprise from **Gems** located at unit 72?

Suzy's Sweet Memories at unit 33 have a superb range of retro sweets plus continental liquorice. They can prepare bespoke gift jars or hampers plus offer a range of sugar free items and vegetarian alternatives. Based at units 29 & 29a **Cards Galore** is a family-owned business which has been in Ashton Market Hall for over 20 years selling a wide variety of cards and gifts for all occasions. They also provide balloons and you can obtain same day personalised items through their Creation Express machine. To help



you look smart why not drop into **The Press Gang** offering a great service for all your laundry needs. Washing and Drying, Ironing, Dry Cleaning and Alterations. Whether its make up to look your best or to pick up a gift it may be time to stock up on your make up and fragrance from **Linda's Cosmetic Corner** at fantastic prices.

If you are looking to start your own business perhaps Tameside Markets can turn your dream into a reality. You can start your business with a stall at one of our markets in Hyde or Ashton. If you need further information, please contact: markets@tameside.gov.uk

Thanks for shopping at your local market and supporting small, local independent businesses.



Hyde Fundraisers - Putting the fun into Westminster

Volunteers from Hyde Fundraisers recently celebrated 40 years of raising money for Children in Need and other good causes with a visit to Downing Street in recognition for their contributions over the years.

The group was founded in 1985 by dedicated Sci-Fi fan, Kevin Taylor. Initially, the idea was to raise funds through bucket collections in the local area, but the group's success grew quickly and now volunteers from all over the country join forces to raise funds through organised events and exhibitions for many different charitable organisations.

Kevin recalls the group's early years with fondness:

"A few friends met up through the Blackpool Doctor Who Exhibition, and when it closed in 1985, we decided to carry on meeting up, and I developed the idea that we could costume and raise money for children in need."

It's estimated that Hyde Fundraisers has raised over £250,000 over the years, with the tagline, Putting the Fun into Fundraising through entertainment, including two sell-out performances of a play written by Kevin and Michael Wisher.

"It was an incredible achievement the two times we did Trial of Davros and all the hard work which raised money for Children in Need, plus in 2005, the NSPCC," says Kevin.



Pictured from left to right outside the famous door at Number 10: Peter Coleman, Cheryl Revell, Jonathan Reynolds (and Silurian), Mel Broughton, Derek Handley and S.P. Bowling.

"I'm also really proud of all the volunteers past and present - without them we wouldn't have a group!"

Amongst the volunteers that went to London from Tameside were Melanie Broughton from Gee Cross whose family have been involved over 20 years and Ashton's Cheryl Revell who has created many of the replica costumes.

Jonathan Reynolds, MP for Stalybridge and Hyde, invited representatives to visit his office in Westminster as a thank-you, and praised them for their hard work over the years.

"It was a real privilege to welcome Hyde Fundraisers to 10 Downing Street. Their creativity and commitment have made a huge difference in Tameside, from hosting the Ashton Sci-Fi Day and community events at the Indian Plaza in Audenshaw to supporting charities like BBC Children in Need, St Ann's Hospice, Willow Wood Hospice and Reuben's Retreat. These volunteers show how local fundraising can have a national impact, and I'm proud to see their work recognised at the heart of government."

Mel Broughton.

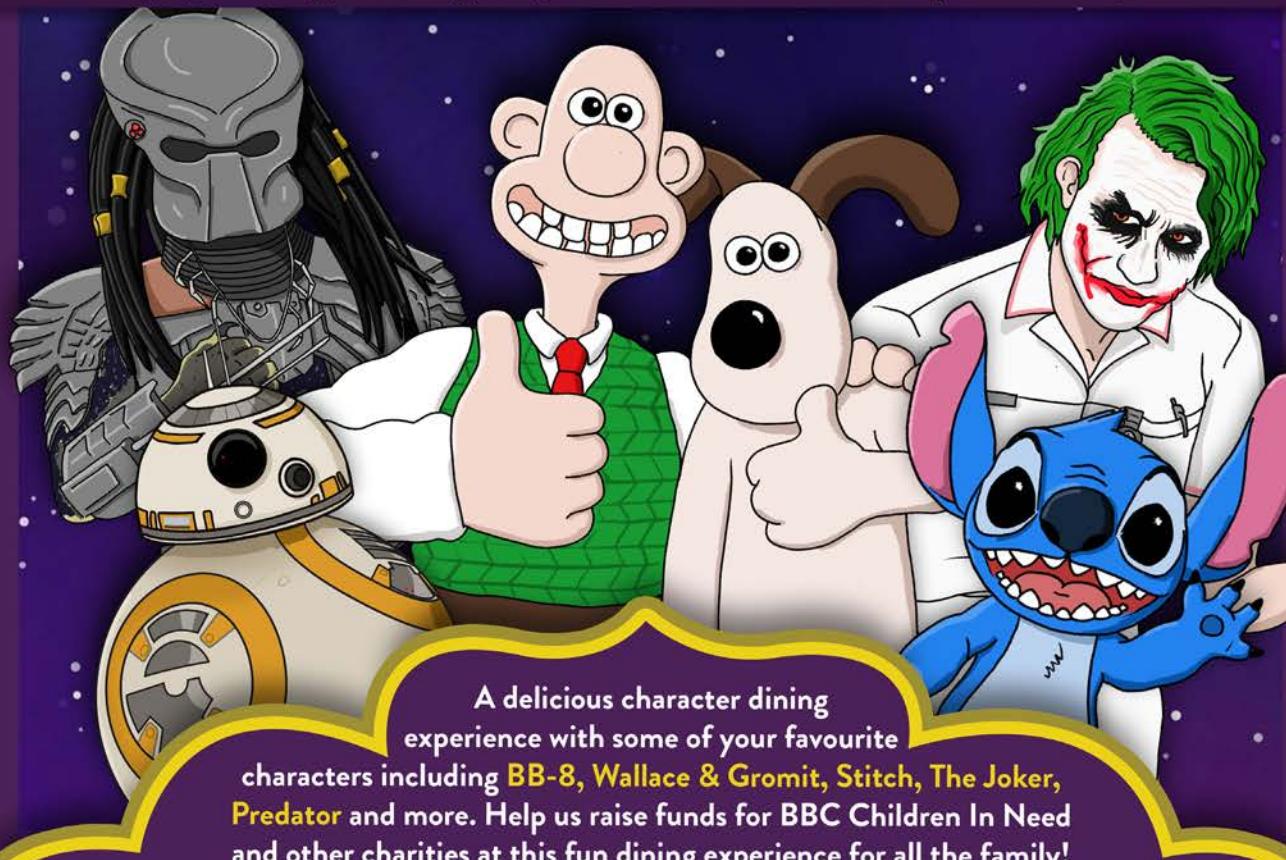


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Presented by the volunteers of Hyde Fundraisers with kind support of Cllr Denise Ward with the management of The Indian Plaza.

MEET TEAM TAMESIDE

Here is our concluding part of the interview with Eleanor Wills, Executive Leader of Tameside Council and Chief Executive Emma Alexander. From here on we will refer to Emma as CE and Eleanor as EL.

We begin by asking what Emma found rewarding about working in local government?

CE: I think for me, local government is all about making a difference in local places and what's most rewarding is seeing the improvements and benefits that are brought to the residents and businesses in the area. So much of what we do is positively supporting people, you know, for example adult social care, where we're supporting people living independent lives, and making sure they've got the right support to do that if they're older adults or people with disabilities.

Making sure that we're working effectively in terms of keeping the streets clean and making sure the potholes are filled – things like that make a difference.

But the really rewarding part is when you get the opportunity to work directly with communities and you can really feel and hear that difference you're making.

The other thing I'd mention is when you solve problems for people but they almost don't know that you've solved them. So, you know, what you want people to be able to do is to contact the council and get a problem resolved. Making things simple for people, because we all live busy lives and you don't want to be hanging on the phone for ages or having some very complicated process.

So it's rewarding to take that bureaucracy away.

I think that's one of my focuses coming in to Tameside Council is trying to make life simpler for people, not more difficult because it's hard enough.

Eleanor when you took up the Executive Leader post children's services was facing challenges...

EL: Yes, I mean, obviously Children's Services has been on an improvement journey and throughout the course of time we've seen a new senior leadership recruitment drive resulting in a permanent and stable workforce.

We've seen Jill come in as the Director and she's been here now for a year - I think it's fair to say that there have been significant changes and progress which are positively impacting the service area and support we provide to our families.

We're not unrealistic to say you're going to see something that was reflective of practice a year ago and we're not suddenly going to be outstanding a year later. But we've got the right people in situ with regards to senior leadership supporting our positive direction of travel and we have a good foundation in place now for improvement.

Our digital transformation also

supports the service area, so that staff have got easier working relationships with our digital platforms, meaning that they're then more able to do the doing as opposed to getting locked into the paperwork side of things.

We've also had quite a significant



reduction in agency staff, which means that our children have got more stable relationships with their social workers because they're permanent members of staff, which is really important. So, yeah, we're on a journey, we're still improving.

I think one of the first things that we did with regards to the additional SEND spaces across our schools is hopefully something that families and children across local authority will feel the benefit of, where they're not having to necessarily travel outside of local authority. They can go to a school close to where they live because it's got the right adequate provision for them in the right setting.

The Tameside Umbrella Parent Carer Forum has been a success in uniting that together so that they've got input into what's being delivered.

Since being appointed Chief Executive have you identified priorities that you want to approach or that you want to put more focus on?

CE: Yes, I have been busy and one of my personal priorities coming into the council was very much getting out and about as much as I can in that first period. I really wanted to be visible for the people that work for the council, because I think that's really important, that you're not just a figurehead in name only.

They know who you are and they know what you're about.

So I have made time to go and meet people and that has led to some great conversations. I've learnt a huge amount about the work that council colleagues do for residents and communities and





as I said, the people that work for the council, are really, really enthusiastic about what they do for the people of Tameside.

So that's been one of my personal priorities, just getting out there, meeting people, hearing what they've got to say and being approachable and visible.

From a council wide point of view, I think I will highlight a few things in terms of priorities. First, the budget - that has to be a priority because like many other councils money is tight and we've got lots of demand on our services.

So one of my priorities coming in to the council has absolutely been about finance.

We're in that budget setting time and are focussed on setting a balanced budget so that we can get the best out of the money, taxpayers money, that we're spending.

So that's been an immediate priority, other priorities have been around our prevention agenda, which does link to the funding that you've got available, because if we can prevent things going wrong for people, like preventing an admission into hospital because we're caring and appropriately supporting an older person, then that gives great outcomes for that individual.

So the prevention agenda is really, really important and as chief executive I am also the Tameside place-based health lead in Greater Manchester. So a role where I both focus on the council, and also work with health colleagues based in Tameside.

Then I think the other two other things I'd point to is our overall transformation

programme, so making the council more efficient and effective, getting under the skin of some of that better use of digital customer access systems.

So you know, changing how we work so it is easy to telephone the council and easy to submit an enquiry online.

Then the final thing is around our growth and regeneration agenda - we are securing money from Greater Manchester and government to invest in Tameside, and developing out parts of Tameside so, more housing for people, and more employment so we can bring jobs in and retain them as well.

People are still facing challenges financially, not to pre-empt the budget consultation, but if council tax increases what support is there for residents who struggle?

EL: We are currently out for consultation with regards to budget, so we don't want to pre-empt anything, but we are in difficult circumstances in terms of demand led services increasing and we've got to meet the demand in terms of council tax.

We will still continue as local authority and do try and meet the needs of the most vulnerable across our community. We've got things like the household support fund, council tax support scheme,, we've got people within our

libraries, within our public spaces where we try and support those most in need. But ultimately we do have statutory services, we do have vulnerable people that we've also got to meet the needs of that.

What we generate from council tax doesn't even cover

half of our budget spend.

If we look at adult social care and children's social care alone, that is around half of our annual budget spend. So, it's not an easy situation to continue to deliver all our services within a budget as prices rise, demand grows and savings have to be made.

We absolutely appreciate and understand the financial difficulties and hardships that people have across Tameside, but we also recognise for us to meet the needs of those most vulnerable within our community, we've got to reflect that in our budget conversations.

There are lots of things there to help support people where we can and we will continue to do the outreach to signpost.

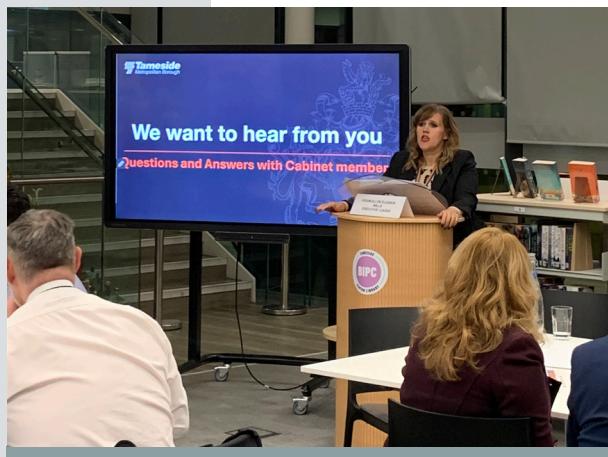
I do think as part of our budget consultation, there's a big focus on people understanding the elements of our budget and where that money is spent.

Because I think unless you're involved in any of the support services through social care, you don't necessarily know where council finances are spent.

How difficult is it to manage budgets when there's so many calls and demands?

CE: It is hard, there's no doubt about that, I look back and 10 years ago it felt hard and so you wouldn't have thought we could be delivering what we deliver now, with the service demands and pressures we have now.

So it is hard, no doubt about it and one of the real pressures for us is that increasing demand and more call on our services which is why that prevention agenda is key.



From a population point of view, again, like many places, it's great that older people are living longer, but our focus is around people living longer with healthy lives, not getting to 50 or 60 and being in poor health, which is then terrible for you as an individual, but also then expensive in terms of care and that puts a real pressure on our budget. Sometimes, sadly, we have to make really tough choices about where we spend council money. The councillors sometimes have to decide whether we do less to balance the books but we try not to do that where we possibly can. It's actually about working smarter and using our Tameside pound more effectively and how we ensure we have good systems and processes which work efficiently.

So we do know where every pound goes and we're working more effectively, also working with our partners, like health and police, so that we're complementing each other in terms of what we're doing rather than duplicating or at worst, working across each other. I've had many experiences of managing budgets and I know that if you follow a methodical way of doing it, and you are transparent around it as well, making sure you do proper consultation, then you're halfway there.

What are your messages to the residents of Tameside?

EL: I honestly genuinely think we are doing some great things, but things that



haven't necessarily had the kind of focus that they deserved previously.

We have a massive housing crisis at the moment across the country, across the Northwest, and specifically in Tameside, we've brought forward sites through to our social landlords, our registered providers, to open up opportunities for social housing provisions, something that Tameside is in desperate need of.

We've got one social landlord in particular at the moment with a waiting list of over 6000, we've got 1500 people homeless. Bringing things forward that opens up and unlocks further social housing opportunities, I think, for me is not only the right thing, but something that will build futures and opportunities for people and families across the local

authority long after I've gone.

That's 485 homes for families in this local authority under my leadership and I'm proud of that.

Social housing is the focus because there's a huge amount of need out there at the moment. So under the new housing provision that we've brought forward with these land sales, there will be a minimum requirement of 60% social housing.

CE: From me, my message to residents is: we're here.

We're here as a council, I'm here to listen, to learn from you as residents and to work together. The council has certain functions we have to deliver, but we only exist for the public. So we're here to listen, to learn, and to work together.

If I was to summarise that in a kind of, maybe into a bit of a catchphrase, it would be Transforming Tameside Together. It's very much about that togetherness that we want to be connected, we want to be representing what people want.

Obviously, we can't please everybody all of the time, but Transforming Tameside Together, I think that would be my message.

Thank you to Councillor Eleanor Wills and Chief Executive Emma Alexander for taking time to chat with About Tameside.





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DANCE HALL DAYS

Ashton Palais De Danse, a former roller skating rink, on the corner of Cotton Street East and Gas Street, opened on 28th Feb 1920 as the new premier ballroom for local dancing.

Opened by Messrs W.H. Broadhead and Sons it claimed to be the last word in comfort and luxury using highly polished rock maple on the dance floor, and is said to be have been the largest in England. Dancing was experiencing a boom and became the recognised form of indoor exercise. The programme included 16 fox-trots, 16 one-steps and 8 waltzes, the latest dances of the time. Billy Woods Ohio's played jazz, syncopation and all the latest sounds from London and the Continent. There was even a grand balloon and novelty carnival every Thursday evening.

By the 1950's the resident Broadcasting Band were entertaining the crowds under the direction of Raymond Woodhead who played four nights a week, but skating seemed to have crept back in on Wednesday's – not very good for the maple wood floor! Admission was two shillings and sixpence equivalent to about three pounds today. By 1959 Mr Woodhead became the manager and had a new floor fitted along with a Reigg Organ, which had the capacity to play ballroom, rock and roll and dinner dance music.

In Dec 1961 the Palais was closed for refurbishment and after a £25,000 face-lift reopened in Jan 1962 under the new owners Mecca. This was when bingo was introduced 3 nights a week, along with canned horse racing; however dancing remained with jiving on Monday nights with disc jockey Brian Thompson, Traditional nights on Tuesdays with guest jazz bands, Thursday's featured wrestling of all things and Saturday nights with resident band Bernie Dodds.

The interior was used for four days during the filming of *Billy Liar*, starring Tom Courtney in Nov 1962; Twenty-five local couples became full time extras for their excellent dance moves in the 'Twist', along with hundreds more employed as background extras.

In September 1968 Mecca was advertising for Ladybirds - lovely young waitresses to promenade, wearing fishnet tights, feathered tails and caps with beaks, in their new club 'The Birdcage'. They also had a real bird called 'Billie' who sat in a special window cage on the outside corner of the building. Another special feature was a central rotating band stand with music by the Ricardo's and Peppi the DJ. Over 20's could dance and dine till 2am, however 50 teenagers demonstrated outside on the opening night in protest, after their continued support whilst the club was closed during the refurbishment they were now being denied access as they were underage. Mecca bosses denied ever making promises to the teenagers and said a new discotheque is being opened nearby for their age group.

Throughout the 1960's and 70's it changed manager and its name a number of times until it reverted back to its original beginnings of roller skating – 'Wheels' - before being knocked down in the 1980's.



Quiz Challenge

1. In Disney's Beauty & The Beast what item of furniture is the character Armoire?
2. The most western point of mainland Europe lies in which country?
3. What type of creature is a Cuban Emerald?
4. The medical condition "Gilbert's Disease" affects which organ of the human body?
5. Which metallic element has the highest melting point?
6. Which Doctor Who had a cricketing motif to his costume?
7. In what year did former Stalybridge and Hyde Tom Pendry pass away?
8. For what is a HbA1c test used for?
9. Which actor's real name is David McDonald?
10. Which 2002 film stars Naome Harris, Brendan Gleeson and Christopher Eccleston?
11. In the Roger Hargreaves books what colour is Mr Happy?
12. In an alphabetical list of the planets in our solar system which comes last?
13. Which fruit is the primary ingredient in the traditional French dessert "Tarte Tatin"?
14. By what name is a pickled cucumber known in the UK?
15. Which TWO elements combine to make Common Salt?
16. Which THREE Bond movie themes were sung by Shirley Bassey?
17. In the novel "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea", what is the name of Captain Nemo's submarine?
18. In which Disney film do the characters Carrie, Paul, Charlie, Miss Price and Emilius Browne appear?
19. Which former Governor of California became the 40th President of the USA?
20. What breed of dog was Scooby Doo?
21. In which Italian city was the 1969 movie "The Italian Job" set?
22. Which is the only member of the Dog family that has retractable claws?
23. For which trophy do amateur golfers from the USA and Great Britain compete every other year?
24. Which Gilbert & Sullivan opera is set in the Tower of London?
25. What's the name of the monthly food event in Stalybridge that usually takes place on a Friday in Spring and Summer?
26. At the age of 91, which popular fashion designer passed away in 2025?
27. What movie of 1984 gave Johnny Depp his first major big screen role?
28. Saint Valentine is the patron saint of lovers, but what other group of people is he also patron saint?
29. In the Harry Potter books Which creatures guard Azkaban, the wizarding prison?
30. Opening in Florida last year, what is the name of the new composite theme park opened by Universal?
31. What vegetable can be Globe or Jerusalem?
32. In Charles Dickens' "Oliver Twist" what was the nickname of Jack Dawkins?
33. On which course is the Scottish Grand National raced?
34. What nationality was the artist Rembrandt?
35. What name is given to the young of swans?
36. In which English county is the town of Cheddar?
37. What is Purdah in local government?
38. Which speedway team rides at the ECCO Arena?
39. In a game of snooker, how many points are gained for potting the Brown ball?
40. In Greek mythology, what is the name of the one-eyed giant encountered by Odysseus?

Award-winning Mossley author becomes a paperback writer

➤ A MOSSLEY writer's debut novel will be published in paperback this month after a series of five-star reviews.

Richard Hooton's crime novel *The Margaret Code* was released in hardback, eBook and audio last April with the paperback hitting bookshelves on 29th January.

It's received hundreds of rave reviews from around the world and currently has an average of 4.1 out of 5 on Amazon where nearly half of its ratings are five-star.

The cosy crime caper has been published in the UK by Sphere, an imprint of Little Brown; in America by Union Square and Co; and in Germany by DTV – and is also available in countries as far flung as Australia and South Africa.

The voice-led whodunnit follows eighty-nine-year-old Margaret, whose failing memory holds the key to the murder investigation taking place on her street. It was inspired by the author's own relationship with his grandmother, who died with Alzheimer's when he was a teenager.

Richard, who works as a senior communications officer for Tameside Council, wrote the book in his spare time before securing an agent and a publishing deal.

He said: "I've been delighted with how well received *The Margaret Code* has been and the fantastic reviews and feedback it's had. One of the best aspects of publishing has been readers taking the time to get in touch or write a review telling me how much they've enjoyed Margaret's story and how it's moved them. I'm now looking forward to my novel being published in paperback and reaching even more readers."

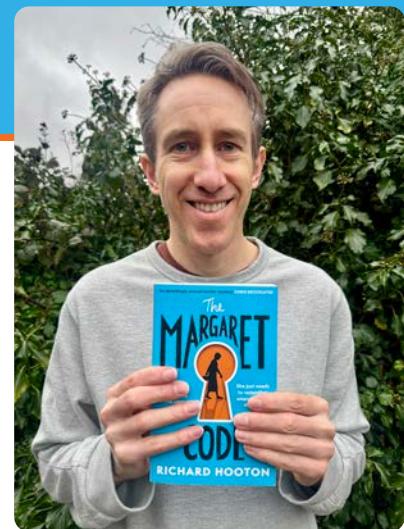
Richard studied English Literature at the University of Wolverhampton before becoming a journalist, working at the Oldham Evening Chronicle as a reporter and news editor and then going on to work in communications. Taking to creative writing, Richard

joined two writing groups and began entering short story competitions to hone his craft and validate his writing. He went on to win competitions such as the Hammond House Publishing International Literary Prize and the Evesham Festival of Words Short Story Competition, as well as being shortlisted for the prestigious Bridport Prize.

He is represented by Sam Copeland of literary agency Rogers, Coleridge and White. The audiobook is narrated by BAFTA-nominated, Manchester actress Maggie Ollerenshaw, who has starred in *Open All Hours*, *Last of the Summer Wine* and *Coronation Street*. *The Margaret Code* is described as a compulsive and charming crime novel where "*Elizabeth Is Missing*" meets "*The List Of Suspicious Things*" and "*The Marlow Murder Club*". It follows eighty-nine-year-old Margaret as she attempts to solve the murder of her best friend

and neighbour, Barbara. She is convinced Barbara entrusted her with a secret before she died, a secret now buried in Margaret's ailing memory. With the help of her grandson, James, Margaret sets out to recover her memory and investigate the crime. But soon strange things begin happening in her home. Her family are convinced Margaret's illness is getting worse, but Margaret is sure somebody wants her out of the way.

Richard will be speaking at Droylsden Library Club on Wednesday 4th



February from 10-11.30am; free, no need to book, just come along on the day. He's also giving an author talk at Oldham Library on Wednesday 18th February from 6-8pm with free tickets available from Eventbrite.

The Margaret Code is available to pre-order from Amazon or any bookshop. Richard is on Facebook, Instagram, X, and Bluesky as @RJHooton.



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KEEP ON RUNNING

One of Tameside's popular clubs, East Cheshire Harriers, was founded in 1922 with the amalgamation of Dukinfield Harriers and Tintwistle Harriers.

We caught up with Mark Ormston, the clubs Secretary, to discover more about the organization.

"Well we're 103 years old. I've been involved for about the last two and a half years. It started off as a Harriers being just a running group. Back in 2006 we added the current track and field facilities to our location on Richmond Street in Ashton.

So apart from being a running club, it's other things as well?

Yeah, we have all track-related disciplines. So, that would be anything from 100 metres upwards for the sprints moving into middle and long distance. We have hurdles and steeplechase facilities too. Going into the field, we currently have long jump, pole vault, javelin and shotput facilities. We would like to offer hammer and discus but we need a compliant throwing cage which we are actively working on. Our aim is to be able to offer a full-facilities athletics stadium. On the Harriers side of things, this is how the club originated- with long distance and cross-country runners. So, they would not necessarily train on our track, although they can, they would prefer to be out on the road because running a 10km around a track is tough as you are going round and round on yourself.

Has there been anyone famous part of the Harriers that we might know that?

Georgia Taylor Brown, she's a former East Cheshire Harrier, first club, a great Olympian. Also, Lily Murphy, who now plays for Manchester City Ladies, was a sprinter at the club up until relatively recently.

Where are you based?

We are on Richmond Street, part of the Roy Oldham Sports Village. There's us, Curzon Ashton, and the Tameside Cycle Track all within the same area.

What days do you meet or open?

The club nights have evolved. COVID changed that. Our track is open on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday. Our clubhouse, fully licensed bar is only open on Tuesday's and Thursday's. The remaining indoor facilities, which include a gym area, changing facilities and toilets are open when training sessions are on.

Do you cater for people who've got some needs?

Yes of course, we have disabled toilet facilities. We have coaches who are qualified to coach athletes with specific needs, yes. All the coaches can tailor a session to accommodate individual abilities and needs.

What about age groups?

You must be aged eight to join for insurance

purposes. So, eight upwards, we have a large waiting list for under 16s because we do need more coaches. That's the issue there. But there's no upper age limit.

What's the cost or commitment?

You can train as a guest at £3 per session, and you could train on your own for that. Annual memberships are also available. We try to make all membership levels affordable where we can.

Obviously, apart from the exercise, what other benefits do you get being a member?

The benefits of exercise are well documented along with the well-being aspects. Training can also develop discipline and focus, my youngest son is an athlete at the club and has been for eight years. It's such an inclusive environment. Everyone supports each other, athletes have a really good, strong community, you get a really good social outlet. You are surrounded with like-minded people who want to train and stay fit. And I genuinely believe it brings on social skills. Society is now seeing the negative effects COVID has had on developing social skills in younger people. Smartphones are a blessing and a curse because people now don't communicate like they used to. It's all text, Snapchat or whatever platform is used. But when you are running or you're competing, you've got to talk to each other. Then if you go to competitions, whether they be opens or league fixtures, you're generally racing against the same people, but they're all supportive of each other, they all shake hands at the end and respect each other.

Do you organise any events or activities, you know, through the club?

We need to be better at this, and this comes down to volunteers and, I suppose, person power. When the Olympics was on, we were going to have a non-traditional Olympics event at the club, welly throwing, tug-of-war and that kind of thing. But it's hard because you've got to pick a time and hope there is enough interest in the day and enough volunteers to allow it to go ahead. Sadly, we couldn't make the day happen. We have held fixtures at home, league fixtures for track and field, but we are currently restricted on that because of our cage situation. On the first Tuesday of every month we offer juniors the opportunity to run 800 metres or a mile. We have a primary schools cross county grand prix over 3 weekends in October and



secondary schools often book our track to host their sports days. Club nights we have done and we are doing more. We've held quiz nights which were well attended. We need to do more things like that because apart from generating revenue for the club, which is what we are in desperate need of, it does bring the parents and carers together in more of a social aspect rather than just passing each other as you're taking your athletes to different events.

What you want to see happen with the club?

That is a fantastic question. From day one, I've said that revenue drives the world, and what we don't have is enough revenue to make a big difference. What I'd like to see happen is that we get the membership up, we can attract more coaches, which means we can get more kids into athletics because that's where the bulk of the waiting list sits. We then are hopeful parents would get involved as I have, not necessarily in a committee capacity, but they could become officials for us, which means that we can then put our own open events on that can actually generate revenue for us. It gives these athletes an opportunity to compete. We can enter more league competitions so the people who train and have an aspiration to compete can as you're training for a purpose. Increased revenue would then allow us to do other things like reinvest in the facilities and bring everything up to date.

So, if anyone's curious, or they want to get involved, or they want to kind of see what it entails, how they get in touch, who should they contact?

Our website eastcheshireharriers.com, which was built by one of my colleagues on the committee, Damien Stewart, and it's a fantastic, evolving website. There's lots of options on there, you can enquire about joining the club or using our facilities. You can hire our clubhouse and if you have the time offer your support to help the club continue for another 103 years. We also have a Facebook presence, along with an Instagram account and an X account.

Thank you Mark for speaking to About Tameside.

CELEBRATION MARKS UNVEILING OF NEW £23M MOTORWAY BRIDGE

A new £23 million bridge has been unveiled in Greater Manchester, marking the eagerly anticipated completion of a three-year scheme.

National Highways and its partners celebrated the opening of St Anne's Road motorway bridge in Denton with a ribbon-cutting ceremony performed by four pupils from the neighbouring St Anne's Primary School, accompanied by the Reverend Philip Brierley from St Anne's Church, who also led a short blessing of the bridge.

The new structure, which crosses the M67, will provide unrestricted access for all road users and pedestrians, including improved eastbound access to the motorway.

National Highways Project Manager Mangat Bansal said:

"It has been a privilege to deliver this scheme and work with the local community. Replacing the motorway bridge is the culmination of a lot of hard work, presenting unique engineering challenges with the bridge carrying vital utility services including water, gas, electricity and telecommunications to customers across a wide part of Greater Manchester.

"We thank the local community for their patience and understanding whilst the bridge has been closed for construction."

Joining the youngsters at the official opening were the project team, civic dignitaries, school staff and invited guests. National Highways worked in partnership with Tilbury Douglas to deliver the scheme.

Carlos Garcia Ferrer, Project Director at Tilbury Douglas, said:

"This has been a great scheme to deliver. All those involved in the project, including our teams, supply chain partners and contractors have showcased a high level of technical expertise throughout and can be proud of their achievement.

"A measure of their professionalism is the attainment of 'Excellent' ratings in recent successive Considerate Constructors Scheme results, leaving a lasting positive legacy through their community engagement initiatives, working with local schools, offering learning opportunities through the national Open Doors initiative and supporting numerous organisations, charities and community groups."

These initiatives included raising thousands of pounds for blood cancer research charity DKMS, making regular



Year Six pupils from St Anne's Primary, from left, Annabella, Eva, Nathan and Joshua, join the Reverend Philip Brierley to declare the bridge open. The pupils and Reverend Philip Brierley are joined by members of the bridge team and invited guests to celebrate the opening.

donations to Hyde Morrisons' Foodbank, and sponsoring school and community events.

The project achieved an 'Excellent' rating score of 48 out of 50 at their final Considerate Constructors inspection, inspectors praising the project's "exemplary plans for community engagement" and its "effectively driven" approach to carbon reduction.

A key achievement was the project's contribution to National Highways' Net Zero Carbon Plan. Measures included recycling demolition materials, sourcing suppliers within a 30-mile radius that operate carbon reduction policies and installing a solar-powered CCTV security system on site.

Several partners supported delivery of the scheme, including HW Martin, Concrete Repairs Limited, Amey Consulting and WJ North. The team also worked closely with Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council's highways department to manage local diversions.

The decision to replace the original St Anne's Road bridge was taken after assessments showed the ageing structure required extensive repairs. Replacement was identified as the safest, most practical and cost-effective solution.

As well as meeting modern safety standards, the new bridge will improve journey reliability locally and on the M67 by reducing the need for unplanned

maintenance closures. It can also accommodate heavy vehicles, removing previous load restrictions, while new barriers and improved facilities enhance safety and accessibility for cyclists and pedestrians.

The project involved a series of significant engineering milestones, including:

- Demolition of the bridge deck, which carries vehicles across the bridge, achieved by two huge excavators with long-reach arms and fitted with hydraulic jaws operating from carriageway level, before removal and realignment of the abutment walls, which support the bridge at each end.
- Transporting and installing two steel beams weighing a combined 97 tonnes to carry essential utility services following demolition of the original bridge deck, plus lifting four pairs of braced steel beams into place, weighing more than 250 tonnes in total, to support the new bridge deck.

Mr Bansal added that the demolition and construction works were completed to programme, in line with the original planned three-year timetable.

With the opening of the new bridge, the former St Anne's Road diversion route via the road by the former Penny Farthing pub has now closed to traffic.

Family Hubs Visits at an All Time High

Families across Tameside are reaping the benefits at local family hubs as services and attendance numbers go from strength-to-strength.

With a 500% increase in children accessing groups in only two years, the centres are demonstrating the demand for nurturing and creative sessions from birth to pre-school age, as well as support services for parents and carers.

The hubs bring together provisions from Tameside Council and its partners which has improved access to early years' services, parenting, education, financial and mental health support for families with children.

Activities are designed to develop language and communication skills, social interaction, and bring fun and interactive play to children.

Tameside's family hubs are free to access and have four main locations in Ashton, Droylsden, Stalybridge and Hyde. They are open five days a week with up to 50 different sessions available from Monday to Friday,

including Baby Babble, Mini Explorers, and Storywalks. Feedback on services is actively encouraged through the Parent Carer Panels, which offer opportunities to meet others in a welcoming environment, with recent sessions including Christmas wreath making.

Tameside Council Executive Member for Children's Services, Councillor Teresa Smith said: "Tameside's family hubs are an invaluable asset in the community, and the team do an amazing job of providing a welcoming and supportive environment for families. Our sessions and groups are for all families and are not benefit-related, so I encourage all parents and carers to come along.

"We have expanded the number and variety of activities to meet the needs of parents, carers and their children, and ensure the Best Start for Life and Family Hubs Programme reaches as many people as possible."

To find out how you can access services at your local family hub, visit www.tameside.gov.uk/FamilyHubs.



A RETURN FOR BLUES

In the 1980's and 1990's Blues nightclub on Stamford Street was a keystone on the nightclub circuit. There was a devastating fire in 1989 but the club returned bigger and better adding Pinkies bar too. The business closed in 2006 and site demolished in 2014 to host new build flats and a parking area.

So in late 2025 the news came that the 'Blues' name was to be revived at the site of Olivers Bar, before that The Cavern, in Ashton Town Centre.

Behind the return is Colin and Christopher Campbell-Thompson who are known for Sykes Bar in Stalybridge.

We asked Colin why did they decide to bring the "Blues" brand back to Ashton?

Bringing the Blues name into Ashton was about more than opening another venue it was about staying inline with the all the nostalgia in the area something that genuinely means a lot to the town with the Majestic cinema, Chute bar plus others opening Blues had a strong identity and emotional connection with local people, especially after research in the lgbt sector and we felt there was a real opportunity to bring a spirit back in a modern way while respecting its roots. Ashton town centre needs reasons for people to come back, stay longer, and feel proud of what's on their doorstep. Creating the Blues cabaret & karaoke bar felt like the right way to contribute to that.

Have you worked with anyone involved in the old club?

No we've spoken to others who were regulars when Blues was at its peak. Their memories, stories, and feedback were really important

to us. While this is a new chapter and we not affiliated with the original we wanted to make sure we honoured what made Blues special in the first place, rather than just using the name. That local knowledge helped shape the atmosphere, music policy, and overall feel of the venue, it's been 20 years since blues was on the Ashton high street.

What kind of investment have you had to do to launch the business?

It has required a significant investment, both financially and personally. That includes a full refurbishment, equipment, licensing, staffing, and marketing but also a huge amount of time and energy. We've reinvested locally wherever possible, using local trades and suppliers, because we believe that if you're investing in Tameside, that money should stay in Tameside.

What are your plans to get involved in the town centre in Ashton?

We want to be an active part of Ashton, not just another business trading there. That means supporting local events, working with other businesses, and contributing to initiatives that bring footfall back into the town centre. We're keen to collaborate rather than compete, because a stronger town centre benefits everyone.

The venue is set for a Grand opening Friday 6th February.





Looking back over the past year, I feel very proud to have met so many children, parents and grandparents across Tameside to have interesting, honest and inspiring conversations.

Hearing your views, helping you access services and providing support for your family makes my role feel very special and worthwhile. It also makes me proud of all of the brilliant people that offer specialist support in many ways from early years and education, to health and social care.

Our family hubs are the perfect example of the growing range of support and activities available, and families are truly reaping the benefits as attendance numbers have risen significantly. With a 500 per cent increase in children attending groups in only two years, it shows how popular the nurturing and creative sessions are for little ones from birth to pre-school age.

Tameside Council works with its partners to help families access early years' services, parenting, education, financial and mental health support. The wide range of activities are helping children to develop language and communication skills, social interaction,



Cllr Teresa Smith

and take part in fun and interactive play. We have four main hubs in Ashton, Droylsden, Stalybridge and Hyde which are free to attend. They are open five days a week with up to 50 different sessions available from Monday to Friday, including Baby Babble, Mini Explorers, and Storywalks. It's the perfect environment to meet others in a welcoming space, and you can even help influence the services provided through our Parent Carer Panels.

They really are an invaluable asset in the community, and the team do an amazing job of providing a welcoming and supportive environment for families. Our sessions and groups are for all families and are not benefit-related, so I encourage all parents and carers to come along. To find out how you can access services at your local family hub, visit www.tameside.gov.uk/FamilyHubs.

Tameside Council Executive Member for Children and Families Cllr Teresa Smith



• ON THE DRIVER'S SIDE •

Motoring tips from Guide Bridge MOT & Service

No oil in your vehicle will certainly affect the performance along with worn brakes and these are two elements of car maintenance that should never be ignored but do you ever consider the condition of your tyres?

A customer came into our workshop with tyres on his vehicle that in the mechanics words 'Goodness gracious why are you running on slicks!' For those who don't know 'slicks' are racing tyres that have no tread.

Not only are you putting yourself and other road users in danger on the roads you are also risking the balance on your bank account.

Any driver that is caught with a tyre depth below the legal limit of 1.6mm across three quarters of the tyre is facing a fine of £2500 and three penalty points for each tyre on the vehicle... so in essence you could be banned from driving and face a £10,000 fine and it's the driver behind the wheel NOT the owner or registered keeper of the vehicle that will receive the fine from those boys in blue. In reality it may not just be the fine for the bald tyres you are paying for.

We urge our customers to change their tyres at a safe 3mm tread to preserve the handling

and steering and more importantly the stopping of the car! The increase in the stopping distance of a car with bald tyres is 40% to stop from 50mph in dry conditions which is equivalent to eight car lengths and on wet roads this increases again.

The weather in our part of the country is notoriously wet as we know and when it rains the grooves in a tyre help to channel the water away so that the tyre can keep the contact with the road and helps to prevent aquaplaning, but when the tread is too low the risk increases and could result in anything from difficulty stopping to a complete loss of vehicle control.

Many motorists will continue to wait for the MOT Tester to point out the badly worn tyres at the time of test which we find hard to take in however for those drivers who would like peace of mind we are more than willing to give your 'four corners' a quick look over and make sure you and your family are safe out there on our roads.

Guide Bridge MOT & Service Centre is an award-winning garage and we are ready to prepare your car for the winter months ahead. Call us today to discuss any aspect of motoring 0161 339 5354.

Cookery Corner

American Pancakes

Ingredients

- 135g/4³/₄oz plain flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 tbsp caster sugar
- 130ml/4¹/₂fl oz milk
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 2 tbsp melted butter (allowed to cool slightly) or olive oil, plus extra for cooking.



Each serving provides 256 kcal, 7g protein, 35g carbohydrates (of which 9g sugars), 9.5g fat (of which 5.5g saturates), 1.5g fibre and 1.2g salt.

Instructions

- Sift the flour, baking powder, salt and caster sugar into a large bowl. In a separate bowl or jug, lightly whisk together the milk and egg, then whisk in the melted butter.
- Pour the milk mixture into the flour mixture and, using a fork, beat until you have a smooth batter. Any lumps will soon disappear with a little mixing. Let the batter stand for a few minutes.
- Heat a non-stick frying pan over a medium heat and add a knob of butter. When it's melted, add a ladle of batter (or two if your frying pan is big enough to cook two pancakes at the same time). It will seem very thick, but this is how it should be. Wait until the top of the pancake begins to bubble, then turn it over and cook until both sides are golden brown, and the pancake has risen to about 1cm/1/2in thick.

Repeat until all the batter is used up. You can keep the pancakes warm in a low oven, but they taste best fresh out the pan.

Serve with lashings of real maple syrup and extra butter, if you like.

Some More Ideas

- For extra-fluffy pancakes substitute self-raising flour for plain flour and still use the baking powder. Serve the pancakes with fresh strawberries and good vanilla ice cream.
- Use half buckwheat flour and half plain flour and serve with maple syrup and bacon. You can also add one teaspoon of ground cinnamon to the buckwheat batter and serve with caramelised apple slices and thick double cream.

Follow Tameside Council at:

296 people fined as part of council crackdown on flytipping and litter

I know how much flytipping and litter is a concern to residents and I want to assure you we're doing everything in our power to tackle it. During 2025, Tameside Council's waste enforcement team issued 258 Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for flytipping, 29 for littering, 8 for non production of a waste transfer note and one for failing in household duty of care. They also achieved ten successful prosecutions for waste related offences, with six further cases listed to be heard this year and more in the court system to follow.

Latest available Government figures (for 2023-24) showed Tameside was the highest performing council in the north west for flytipping enforcement and the second highest for waste enforcement overall. At the same time, flytipping incidents had reduced on the previous year.

Our teams are out every day investigating and clearing flytipping and litter. Finding evidence of offenders, investigating further and taking effective enforcement action takes a lot of determination but



Cllr Laura Boyle

their persistence is proving worthwhile and people are being held accountable for blighting our communities with illegally dumped waste. I know there is more work to do and we will keep up these efforts while also working with the community and partners to tackle hot spot areas and listen to residents' concerns. This includes working with schools to help educate the children on disposing waste responsibly and developing a sense of community pride and a culture of contributing positively to their local areas. Thank you to everyone who works with us in helping to take care of our towns and neighbourhoods.

For further information on reporting flytipping see www.tameside.gov.uk/flytipping

Tameside Council Executive Member for Environmental Services and Neighbourhoods
Cllr Laura Boyle

 **Tameside**
Metropolitan Borough
tameside.gov.uk



Pets

Keeping your dog's teeth clean is important, as ignoring this can lead to plaque build-up and dental disease.

Dental disease is very common in dogs, second only to ear infections, and can be extremely uncomfortable - much like we would experience. Dental disease can appear quite suddenly, or progress overtime and take months. Make sure you look out for these signs:

- Deposits may build up on the teeth
- Gums will be damaged and bleed
- Mouth is infected which will give off a foul smell
- Sensitive root of the tooth may be exposed and painful
- Discoloured teeth that die and fall out
- Your dog may also refuse food, have difficulty eating or leave flecks of blood in their bowels

If your dog has any of these symptoms, please contact your vet.

It's important to regularly check the state of your cat's teeth and gums to make sure they're always looking healthy.

Teeth and gum problems occur in eight out of ten cats over the age of three. This is because cats tend to accumulate bacteria, debris and plaque from the food they eat on the outside of their teeth. Between vet visits, be sure to check your cat for these important warning signs:

- Bad breath: an unusually strong odour may suggest digestive problems or a dental condition
- Bleeding or a dark red line along the gums
- Gum inflammation: swollen



gums can lead to gum disease, tooth loss, inability to eat, and can be a sign of kidney disease or feline immunodeficiency virus

- Ulcers on the gums
- Excessive drooling or pawing at the mouth area
- Difficulty chewing food or refusal to eat

Take your cat to the vet immediately if you notice any of these.

When it comes to dental care for rabbits, a lot of problems can be avoided outright through simply giving them a diet that closely resembles what they'd eat in the wild.

Those who own cats and dogs might have to get used to regularly brushing their pets' teeth. However, a vet will never advise you to start brushing your rabbit's teeth. This is because, as rodents, rabbits have completely different kind of tooth. Because of the nature of their jaw muscles, rabbits chew both vertically and horizontally. This is enough to keep their teeth in good shape – so long as their teeth are in perfect alignment.



Time to brush away the snow and think of the spring, there's lots to get ready, it's time to assess winter losses and plan replacement plants, taking into account those that didn't survive the cold and choosing more robust species and cultivars.

Check stored fruit and vegetables and remove any damaged or mouldy produce to avoid spoiling the rest.

Seed potatoes are available now. Chit them (allow shoots to form) by placing them in a light, cool, frost-free place.

Moss will start growing on lawns before the grass, so now is the time to start killing it with ferrous sulphate.

This is your last chance to plant bare-rooted raspberries. Prune the canes of summer-fruiting types to 10in after planting, and autumn-fruiting varieties down to ground level.

Check outdoor containers are regularly watered, particularly those sheltered by house porches or eaves. Netting over brassicas may have been weakened by snow and need attention to



deter ravenous birds. Clear leaves from around snowdrops so you can see their flowers emerging. Put up bird nesting boxes this month – it's the last chance before tits start looking for a suitable residence. Ventilate your glasshouse or conservatory on mild days to help prevent fungal problems.

In exposed gardens, try lacy purple or yellow-leaved elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) instead of Japanese Maples. Plant shrubby lilac *Syringa lacinata* or *Erysimum 'Bowles's Mauve'* AGM instead of rosemary.

Dormant shrubs and perennials allow you to assess the need for structure. Trees with eye-catching bark, such as birches and maples, are beautiful all year. If flowers are your passion, choose for a succession of seasonal colour.

Measuring and drawing the garden should clarify plans; view the garden from inside the house and from different angles. Consider moving or replacing damaged, overgrown or badly placed shrubs.



Ted's fun page

Year of the Fire Horse

"Gong hei fat choy" is the most common Chinese New Year greeting in Cantonese, which is spoken in parts of southern China and Hong Kong. It directly translates to "wishing you great happiness and prosperity". It's Chinese New Year on the 17th February, the reason the new year falls at this time is because it marks the start of the lunar new year, which is when there is the start of a new moon. This is different to the 'Gregorian' calendar that we traditionally use in the UK, which always starts on 1 January.... Chinese New Year is also known as the Spring Festival.

In Chinese culture, the Horse is known for its energetic and dynamic nature. It symbolizes vitality, speed, and perseverance. People born in the Year of the Horse are believed to possess similar traits, such as being hardworking, warm-hearted, and independent.

The Horse is also associated with success and good fortune.

So, do you know your Chinese birth sign? Check the birth years below to see what your sign is

RAT – 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, 2020

OX – 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009, 2021

TIGER – 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010, 2022

RABBIT – 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011, 2023

DRAGON – 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012, 2024

SNAKE – 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013, 2025

HORSE – 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002, 2014, 2026

GOAT – 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015, 2027

MONKEY – 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016, 2028

ROOSTER – 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005, 2017, 2029

DOG – 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018, 2030

PIG – 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019, 2031

Ted's Jokes

What is a cat's favorite color?

Purrr-ple.

What are the strongest days of the week?

Saturday and Sunday. All the others are weekdays.

Did you hear about the actor who fell through the floorboards?

He was just going through a stage.

What do you call a girl who stands inside goalposts and stops the ball rolling away?

Annette.



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Can you find 5 differences ?



HOWARD'S PICTURES FROM THE PAST...



Howard Murphy has had a keen interest in photography for many years and has worked in the Ashton Town Centre Management office and as part of Tameside Markets team. Each issue he will share some gems from his collection.



The Chinese New Year falls on Tuesday February 17th this year.

It is also known as the spring festival and marks the beginning of a new year on the traditional Chinese calendar. It marks the end of winter and start of spring. 2026 will be the Year of the Horse which comes round in a 12-year cycle.

Here in Tameside the event was regularly celebrated when the council's arts and events team put on a day of far eastern cultural displays in and around the town centre of Ashton. This included the very energetic Dragon and Lion dances on the town hall steps and in front of the town hall. These energetic dances are very popular in Chinese mythology for bringing good fortune.



In Ashton Library, children were invited to a special Chinese arts and crafts event to make lanterns, accompanied by their parents/guardians they then carried the lanterns in a festive parade from the library, along Old Street, through the Ladysmith Shopping Centre and on to the town hall. A memorable highlight of the celebrations was the fast-paced performances of the Chinese dragon



dancers to beat of their drums, which attracted attention all around the town centre. Martial arts displays including karate and kung fu were also showcased along with the relaxing and unique art of Tai Chi – a form of slow moving meditation which is extremely popular in China promoting physical and mental well being.

Images and text by Howard Murphy

QUIZ CHALLENGE ANSWERS

1. Wardrobe
2. Portugal
3. A Bird
4. Liver
5. Tungsten
6. The Fifth Doctor – Peter Davison
7. 2023
8. A blood test measuring your average blood sugar (glucose) over the past 2-3 months
9. David Tennant
10. 28 days later
11. Yellow
12. Venus
13. Apple
14. Gherkin
15. Sodium and chlorine
16. "Goldfinger", "Moonraker" and "Diamonds are Forever"
17. Nautilus
18. Bedknobs & Broomsticks
19. Ronald Reagan
20. A great Dane
21. Turin
22. Fox
23. Walker Cup
24. The Yeomen of the Guard
25. Stalybridge Streetfest
26. Giorgio Armani
27. Nightmare On Elm Street
28. Bee Keepers
29. Dementors
30. Epic Universe
31. Artichokes
32. The Artful Dodger
33. Ayr
34. Dutch
35. Cygnets
36. Somerset
37. Pre-election period (Purdah): To ensure political impartiality, prevent misuse of public funds for campaigning, and stop government actions from unfairly influencing elections.
38. Redcar Bears
39. Four
40. Cyclops

WHAT'S ON

A BRIEF ROUNDUP OF SOME ACTIVITIES THIS FEBRUARY

FEBRUARY 2ND

Tameside Junior Chess Club

Flowery Field Primary School, Hyde, 6-8pm

Every Monday learn to play chess at this fun club which operates during term time. Admission £1 and includes refreshments. Open to all ages and abilities.

FEBRUARY 4TH

Time Out

King Street, Droylsden – From 10am

The first and third Wednesday each month Time Out supports carers, people who feel lonely or isolated, those who may have lost a loved one or perhaps just having a difficult time. To find out more you can call Gwen Barr on 07491 880452 or email timeout@thedreamcentre.co.uk

Droylsden Leathercraft

The Cabin on The Ash Road Allotments, Droylsden M43 6QU

The group meets every Wednesday from 1pm - 6pm, although it's a drop in and people are free to come and go as they wish. A chance to be creative with leather crafts.

FEBRUARY 4TH-7TH

NEWSIES JR

Isabel Rigby Studio @ Woodend Mill, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL5 9R

Mossley Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society Events >Next Generation production of this popular show. *Newsies* is the story of how a group of young newspaper sellers went head-to-head with one of the most powerful news magnates in the world and changed the future of workers' rights. Based on the real New York City newsboys' strike of 1899, the show follows how teenager Jack Kelly and his fellow newsboys go on strike against Joseph Pulitzer, the publisher of the New York World newspaper, after he suddenly charges them more money just to work. The newsies go on strike, and their small, unofficial union soon becomes the leaders of a citywide movement.

FEBRUARY 17TH

Character Curry

Indian Plaza, Audenshaw. From 6pm

Hyde Fundraisers present a charity curry evening in association with Cllr Denise Ward. Watch out for BB8, Wallace & Gromit, Spiderman, Laurel & Hardy plus live music too from Jack Doyle and Roger Degenero.

FEBRUARY 18TH – 21st

The Market Theatre

Stall 53, Ashton Market Bow St, Ashton-under-Lyne OL6 6BZ

Goofus Theatre CIC and Tameside Culture presents: *The Market Theatre!* There will be three family friendly puppet shows every day until Saturday February 21st! All the shows are free to attend on a first come first served basis. No pre-booking or ticket required!

The theatre space will be in stall 53, near Charchar Kitchen and the Sweet shop! The nearest market entrance is the one on the corner of Bow Street and Warrington Street. Showtimes - 11.30am, 1.15pm & 2.30pm.

FEBRUARY 26TH

Denton Luncheon Club

Victoria Park Centre, Denton from 12noon

Denton East Councillors and volunteers provide an affordable 3 course lunch offering a chance to socialise and stay warm.

Sailors Beware

Cheshire Ring, 72 Manchester Road, Hyde, Cheshire, SK14 2BJ.

From 8pm Son's Of The Desert – the Laurel & Hardy fan club - meet the last Thursday of the month making new friends and sharing the laughter with some of the duo's classic comedies screened.

FILM OF THE MONTH

COLD STORAGE

There's an outbreak. Liam Neeson's suited up in biohazard gear. A parasitic fungus escapes containment – hungry for flesh and looking grotesquely



macabre. The stakes? The end of the world, and it's pretty sick. *Stranger Things*' Joe Keery and *Barbarian*'s Georgina Campbell join the fight in this claustrophobic, gore-soaked thriller packed with tension, dark humour, and shocking twists. If you love high-stakes survival stories with a smart edge, this is one you can't miss.

GAMING - With Bobby Kent

RESIDENT EVIL REQUIEM - FEB. 27

The ninth main entry in the legendary horror series introduces FBI agent Grace Ashcroft, who's investigating mysterious deaths in Raccoon City's Wrenwood Hotel, 30 years after the events of *Resident Evil 3*. Leon Kennedy returns too, with a simultaneous story that will see players alternating between storylines and protagonists. For the first time, players will have the option to play in first or third person perspectives throughout the game, adding a new dynamic option into the classic stealth and survive gameplay the franchise is known for.



EVENT

DISCOUNT BOWLING

February Half Term and stuck with no ideas what to do? Local Bowling has the answer in Hyde town centre where a family can take advantage of half price bowling at just £15.50 for an hour by saying MAGAZINE at the



counter! This new leisure attraction is located near Hyde Town Hall on Market Street and is the perfect solution for banishing boredom. Apart from bowling there's also the indoor football and cricket facility called Sixes & Goals along with great arcade games too. Refreshments are also available so no excuse not to visit Tameside's latest attraction!

TAMESIDE COLLEGE

OPEN EVENT
2026



Tameside
College

**Monday 20th April
5pm to 8pm**

Book your appointment: www.tameside.ac.uk

#ICanBe

0161 908 6600

Clarendon Sixth Form College

Book your appointment: www.clarendon.ac.uk

**Monday 20th April
5pm to 8pm**

High Aspirations
High Expectations



OPEN EVENT
2026