

Present: The Mayor – Councillor Ur-Rehman (Chair)

Councillors Ahmad, Akhtar, A. Alexander, G. Alexander, Ali, Ames, Azad, Ball, M Bashforth, S Bashforth, Bates, Blyth, Brownridge, A Chadderton, Chauhan, Cosgrove, Dawson, Dean, Fielding, Garry, Gloster, Harkness, Heffernan (Vice-Chair), Hibbert, Hudson, Hussain, Iqbal, Jabbar, Judge, Kirkham, Klonowski, Larkin, Malik, McCann, McLaren, McMahan, Moores, Murphy, Mushtaq, Price, Qumer, Rehman, Roberts, Sedgwick, Shah, Shuttleworth, Stretton, Sykes, Toor, Turner, Williamson, Williams and Wrigglesworth

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QUESTIONS TO CABINET MEMBERS FROM THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS ON WARD OR DISTRICT ISSUES

The Mayor advised the meeting that the first item on the agenda in Open Council was Public Question Time. The questions had been received from members of the public and would be taken in the order in which they had been received. Council was advised that if the questioner was not present, then the question would appear on the screen in the Council Chamber. The following public questions had been submitted: (15 mins)

1. Question from Ian Manners via email

“Can the Cabinet Member for Transport say what improvements are being made for the provision of transport between the Saddleworth villages?”

Councillor David Hibbert, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Highways responded that, following deregulation of the bus market in 1985, the majority of bus services within Greater Manchester (around 80%) had been delivered by commercial operators and, as a result Oldham Council and TfGM were very limited in terms of what they could do. TfGM had a responsibility for funding services where there was a social need, which the market did not consider commercially viable. At the current time, TfGM were facing budget cuts whilst trying to maintain and improve existing subsidised services. Their subsidised network included the popular Saddleworth and Mossley Local Link.

The Council was committed to working with TfGM and other operators to get the best service for Saddleworth and the rest of the borough. We were the only authority in Greater Manchester to work with TfGM and put forward a bid to the Government’s Total Transport Pilot Fund. We secured a grant through this Fund which will allow us to explore how existing bus and minibus services can be brought together to deliver more joined-up and efficient services in the Saddleworth area. This study will take place over the next couple of years, led by TfGM and, if

successful, the new approach could be rolled out to benefit Saddleworth and other areas of Greater Manchester.



In the longer term, the proposal included in the Greater Manchester Devolution Agreement for the Mayor to have responsibility for franchised bus services, will, if adopted, provide an opportunity to overcome the barriers we face with the current deregulated system and allow us to provide a fully integrated transport system.

2. Question from Simon@S_C_W via Twitter

“@OldhamCouncil when is something going to be done about the dangerous zebra crossing in Royton? (We then asked what crossing it was) Hi, thanks for getting back to me. The one outside Royton town hall, Rochdale Road near the pound bakery. Market day in particular is awful with pedestrians walking out in front of traffic.”

Councillor David Hibbert, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Highways responded that some time ago the Council made a commitment to review all the Zebra crossings in the borough and carry out any improvements deemed necessary. The majority of the zebras had now had their road markings refreshed and shortly new belisha beacons will be installed to make the sites more visible.

The zebra crossing outside the Town Hall had been prioritised and the belisha beacons and posts had already been replaced. The road had been resurfaced and the road markings will be installed very shortly (they were delayed to avoid the new road surfacing material bleeding through the white markings). This will be a big improvement on the previous position and certainly make the crossing more visible to both pedestrians and motorists.

In the longer term we will look at traffic movement generally as part of the regeneration of Royton District Centre and this will include whether the zebra could be upgraded a different facility for example a Pelican Crossing (now called a PUFFIN crossing).

The description of the crossing as dangerous was rejected as, when used properly, it was safe for everyone.

3. Question from Sarah Riley via email

“In Oldham we have 2 streets which are full of takeaways (Union Street and Yorkshire Street). As a mother of 2 children who attend Oldham Six Form College I am worried about the potential impact this is having on my children and other children as they are encouraged to have takeaways at lunchtime. In Oldham we have got major investment going on to improve the town centre and increase foot fall. When people visit Oldham they have the impression we are a "Takeaway Town". This is affecting people's health when they are always eating junk food on a daily basis. Why can't the council establish a licensing

process which governs the takeaways like how you have done it with the selective landlord licensing scheme.”



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Councillor David Hibbert, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Highways responded, thanking the member of the public for this question. As part of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Council was working closely with schools, colleges, residents and businesses to promote healthy eating in the borough.

In terms of enforcement of takeaways, as part of the Local Plan, the Council had a Supplementary Planning Document called ‘Vibrant Centres’, which provided guidance to be read alongside other relevant planning policies. It aimed to provide clear and consistent guidance for promoting and maintaining the vitality and viability of Oldham Town Centre and the borough’s other allocated ‘Centres’. This included guidance for food and drink uses (including hot food takeaways) and sought to manage the concentration and clustering of such uses. However, whilst this guidance was a positive start to controlling such uses, it could only be used when assessing future planning applications for new hot food takeaway uses and could not be applied retrospectively to existing uses which were already established.

In terms of Environmental Health, officers regularly visited food establishments to ensure that food was stored, prepared and sold appropriately.

The Council was working to support a range of new businesses in the Town Centre and actively encourage a choice of alternative places to eat.

4. Question from Gary Millward via email

“Kava Coffee - can anyone explain the decision why this building has escaped the jaws of the demolition team. The demolition of its neighbouring slums has really highlighted the deterioration of the building it appears to have no aesthetic beauty especially from the rear. The upper storeys are very dilapidated. The cost to bring it into the 21st century would be financially unviable and also compromise a possible future development. Just because it's old doesn't make it worthy of preservation.”

Councillor McMahon, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Enterprise Region responded with thanks for this question. Simply because the building was old did not mean it should be demolished. Those buildings that had been demolished were those that the Council had bought with consent and had led to ongoing development.

The Council do not own this building and are working with its owner to bring about improvements to its external appearance. The building could be restored to looking good and making a positive contribution to the area.

5. Question from Jonny_Chaos via Twitter

“Why is there constant work being done on the bungalows on Mabel Road playing field? Literally every single week day.”



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Councillor David Hibbert, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Highways responded that people would be happy to know that Oldham looks after its vulnerable residents in their old age. As part of a long-term partnership with the Council, Housing & Care 21 managed and maintained over 1400 sheltered homes across the borough, including 819 bungalows.

The bungalows on Limeditch Road and Recreation Road had been subject to some external maintenance work by Housing & Care 21. From time to time, programmes of works were undertaken which may involve items such as new roofs, windows, doors, pointing etc. Keeping the bungalows in a good state of repair ensured quality affordable sheltered housing was provided for the older people of the borough.

The Council's officers who oversee the partnership ensured that tenants were kept fully informed about any planned works and made sure that suitable tenant welfare arrangements were in place.

6. Question from Hardacre1900 via Twitter

“Bloom and Grow – who came up with the rubbish taxi idea? How much did that mess cost Oldham tax payers?”

Councillor Barbara Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Co-operatives responded that this was a view of a small minority. Bloom and Grow was about co-operation and community involvement, and about the community and businesses working together. Oldham had successfully won the national award for the past two years and the regional award for the last four, and the judges this year had been very impressed with the quality of planting. The taxi centrepiece had cost Oldham tax payers nothing, as the taxi had been donated and the work done by volunteers.

7. Question from Kimberley Leach via email

“Having seen your post on Facebook, I thought I would take the opportunity to enquire about something which me and my husband have questioned ourselves the last few years.

We are a forces family who live married unaccompanied in Royton. My husband who has served in the Royal Engineers for nearly nine years travels each week from a variety of camps back to our home. I live at home with our seven month old daughter and work for the local authority.

Having spoken to many other forces families in the same position, we are aware that other authorities provide alone what of a benefits package. For example, those who are married unaccompanied pay a single occupancy rate on the council tax for their home. I have enquired about this each year and have

been told it is not something which Oldham Council do for forces families.

We are also aware that other authorities, the nearest Rochdale being one of them provide free/reduced rate fee on local authority sports centres membership (due to reduced time at home to benefit from a full membership).



There are probably many benefits which Oldham Council do provide which we as a family are unaware of. But I am aware that Oldham council have signed the Armed Forces Covenant however, the evidence of the support and benefit is very limited in particular for those which it is supposed to help the most. The extension and promotion of this would be beneficial for many other forces families who live in the same position as I do in the Oldham area.

I would be very grateful for you to put forward my question at this evenings council.”

Councillor Shah, Cabinet Member for Performance and Corporate Governance responded that Oldham Council, as a member of the Oldham Co-operative Commission, signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant in October 2013. We were proud to sign up as we recognised the importance of our Armed Forces and their families as well as the moral obligation between the nation, the government and the Armed Forces which the covenant embodies. The Covenant encouraged local communities to support Armed Forces personnel, and their families in their area and promote understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community.

The Council knew that actions spoke louder than words and had:

- worked with local businesses, through the town centre partnership, to introduce a range of special offers and discounts for armed forces and reserve personnel in over 60 local stores in Oldham.
- worked with the Royal British Legion to provide an outreach desk in Access Oldham every Tuesday from 10-12 especially to provide support and guidance.
- introduced a Reservist Policy to support currently serving personnel and provide fair terms and conditions of employment.
- begun exploring whether there were more opportunities to introduce discounts for Armed Forces personnel and their families.

There was an Armed Forces page on the council website giving lots of advice and information about support agencies. There was also the Oldham Remembers website which, in this

centenary year, celebrated and remembered the significant contribution Oldham people made during the First World War as well as providing information about upcoming events.



In respect of the specific question around Council tax discounts, this was not something this Council currently offered and Councillor Shah committed to looking into it. She suggested that this was done with with the Greater Manchester partners with whom the Council was working closely on other Armed Forces issues.

If Mrs. Leach would like to discuss any of these issues with Councillor Shah, she would be very happy to meet with her.

The following questions were submitted by Councillors on Ward or District Matters: (25 mins)

1. Councillor Fielding to Councillor Hibbert

“I am in receipt of dozens of queries from local residents regarding the condition of Hulmes Road and Lord Lane in Failsworth. After Oldham Road, these roads are arguably the busiest in Failsworth acting as one of the main thoroughfares through the town. Could Council please confirm if and when these roads will come up for resurfacing under the priority routes re-surfacing programme?”

Councillor David Hibbert, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Highways responded that Hulmes Road (Boundary to Lord Lane) and Lord Lane (full length) had been allocated a budget for the 2015-16 Capital Programme and work will be carried out this financial year.

Due to the Lord Lane / Hulmes Road carriageway requiring different levels of intervention, the work will be carried out in two phases. Phase 1 which includes the section of Ashton Rd West to Clive Road will commence on 3rd August 2015 for approximately 5 days. Phase 2 which includes the section of Lord Lane and Hulmes Road between Clive Road and the boundary will commence within the next 6 weeks and will take approximately 2 weeks.

2. Councillor Shuttleworth to Councillor Hibbert

“With the metrolink service now well established and being well supported by residents throughout Oldham including Chadderton, may I seek clarification from our representative on TfGM or relevant Cabinet Member as to:

1. when the service frequency will increase to every 6 minutes as previously indicated;
2. and when can we expect to see double units becoming the norm as all too often, especially at peak times, many passengers are unable to be seated for reasons as stated in my opening comments.”

Councillor David Hibbert, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Highways responded that TfGM currently deployed as many doubles as possible, catering to the highest levels of demand they saw on the network. When they launch the 6-minute service, they will have fewer trams available to comprise double units, however the carrying capacity overall will be increased, enabling Metrolink to carry more passengers. TfGM will continue to monitor demand and will add doubles where they are most needed, subject to the availability of trams. The Council will be pushing for more trams, in the best interests of the people of Oldham, as this is an exceptionally well-used service.

3. Councillor Roberts to Councillor Brownridge

“Please can the relevant Cabinet Member confirm when action will be taken to improve the paths in Royton Cemetery which are uneven and in need of repair and maintenance and when Cemetery Road (as the name suggests the road used to enter the cemetery) will be resurfaced?”

Councillor Barbara Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Co-operatives responded that the Council undertook a periodic review of its building assets over a five year rolling programme of quinquennial surveys that informed the capital maintenance programme. Unfortunately, at the moment the Council had identified circa £35m of priority works that were required at various premises, which included cemeteries, but had a £3-4m fund to address such priority issues, so this budget had already been committed to works that were deemed as an essential priority, to maintain the operational use of buildings and to address health and safety matters.

The Councillor will request that the cemetery is inspected by Unity Partnership to review and update the condition of the footpaths and road surfaces, and will respond to any priority items reported thereafter both from a responsive maintenance and planned maintenance perspective.

4. Councillor Harkness to Councillors Hibbert and Akhtar

“On 28th July, a public meeting will be held with local residents from Dobcross and Diggle about their traffic concerns relating to the new Saddleworth School.

Residents are particularly concerned that Dobcross could become a rat-run and that access to Diggle could become unsafe.

I welcome the highways consultation events that have already taken place (albeit a little belatedly) and appreciate that the planning application will permit a public consultation on these issues.

However it is a little unfortunate that the planning applications and highways applications will be submitted before the public meeting takes place in Dobcross.

My fear is that this will lead to more accusations that the council does not listen to the public.

I know that over the new Saddleworth School that this is not so, so can I have please ask the Cabinet Member for assurances that the council will continue to listen openly to public concerns, will consider options such as parking options or enforceable access only through Dobcross centre, and will leave no stone unturned in a bid to address the real concerns of local residents?"

Councillor David Hibbert, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Highways responded that the residents of Dobcross could be reassured that their views and ideas suggested at the meeting on the 28th July will be taken into account and considered before any highways works that would impact upon Dobcross are finalised. The Councillor had already met with Councillor McCann and Harkness on this issue.

The works that could have a direct impact upon Dobcross do not require planning consent and would be achieved using Highways Acts powers.

The Council was committed to continuing further informal consultation during the coming months in addition to the statutory consultation requirements so that it could design a final highways scheme that achieved the right balance in terms of pupil and highway safety, traffic flows and value for money.

5. Councillor Toor to Councillor Brownridge

"After a spate of Arson attacks on the Fitton Arms pub in Fitton Hill, I am extremely concerned at the Health & Safety situation on the site. The pub poses a serious threat to the safety of local residents. Can I ask the executive member responsible to provide an update on actions taken so far to secure the site, in the short term and what steps will be taken to secure a long term permanent solution?"

Councillor Barbara Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Co-operatives responded that she shared the ward members' concerns as to the state of the old Fitton Arms building and surrounding land. Officers had been dealing with the condition of the building ever since it was purchased by the present private owner in early 2012. The owner did secure the building once, when it initially became open to access in June 2012, however the owner had faced a constant battle to secure the building and remove rubbish from its surroundings. The Council had met with the owner and had served numerous legal notices to secure the building and remove flytipping from the land. The works then had to be carried out by the Council contractors and recharged because the owner had not complied.

Recently officers had been informed that the owner was in advanced discussions as to the sale of the dilapidated building and land and the Councillor would ensure that any perspective new owner had a plan for the building and land and that local residents were consulted on any future use, if this came to pass. Officers would continue to put pressure on the present owner to act on his responsibilities in the short term.

6. Councillor Alexander to Councillor Hibbert

“My question relates to the Northgate Estate and roundabout in the St James Ward. We are faced with the problem that the original builder Westbury homes, was bought out by Persimmon. Now after 10 years despite assurances from Persimmon earlier this year, they have not moved any further forward to complete the work which includes disabled access not aligned, top road surfacing, traffic signs, double yellow lines and kerb edgings needing resetting. Can the relevant cabinet member clarify what steps the council can and will take to ensure that this work is completed so the estate can be formally adopted?”

Councillor David Hibbert, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Highways responded that he would like to thank Councillor Alexander for raising this issue regarding the condition of roads on the Northgate estate and her role in seeking to resolve this matter.

He fully appreciated the concerns of residents and members about the delay in these works being completed and could reassure Members that the Council was progressing this issue. A drawing submission to finalise the works was received from Persimmon Homes on 9th July and officers in Unity Partnership were in discussion with them on details, so that a Section 38 agreement could be finalised to complete the remaining works.

As there were some changes required and this was a complicated scheme, officers anticipated that it would take up to 8 weeks to sign the agreement. The Councillor will ensure that officers keep ward members up to date on progress in negotiations, and projected timescales for completion of all the works and adoption.

7. Councillor Ames to Councillor McMahon

“Being that is some time since the residents of Hollinwood were informed of any development at the Hollinwood Junction. Could the cabinet member for Regeneration update them on progress so far?”

Councillor McMahon, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Enterprise Region responded that it had taken some time to remove the former gas holder and he was delighted to report that, in principle, terms had been agreed with National Grid. The delay had allowed for a more comprehensive development.

He was hopeful that funding for this activity would be obtained via the Greater Manchester Investment Fund and it would not fall on the Council to meeting funding.

8. Councillor Sykes to Councillor McMahon

“Shaw and Crompton Councillors have been hearing recently from Market Traders that Oldham Council has had another change of heart about the relocation of Shaw Market.

Like its namesake, the children’s party game Musical Chairs, this seems to becoming a tale of Musical Markets.

At first this Administration wanted to move the Market onto the South side of Market Street that joins High Street, then the North side of Market Street adjoining Rochdale Road.

Now there are rumours that the Market will after all remain on its historic site until some un- specified time next year (2016).

Will the Leader confirm or deny whether Shaw Market is to move?

And if so where and when?

Or will he hold his hands up and admit – as I hope he will – that the Market can remain at its current location as per the wishes of local Councillors, the local community, market traders, high street shop keepers, the Police, and two of the largest employers in the Borough (Littlewoods and JD Williams).

And will he also agree to invest the money that that has clearly been budgeted for this year (2015/16) to revitalise Shaw Market by replacing the fixed market stalls with pop-up stalls.”

This solution will not only remove the shelter that attracts youths intent on anti-social behaviour but also provide more car-parking on non-Market Days, therefore contributing to the general vitality of Shaw’s District Centre.

After all the above solution is what local Councillors along with key agencies like the Police have been asking and campaigning for more years than I care to remember.”

Councillor McMahon, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Enterprise Region responded that the Council was committed to the development of vibrant town centres, however Shaw market was not in a convenient location for shoppers and it would be a false economy to invest in the current site. There may be minor investment to attract traders and keep the market vibrant, but there was a strong business case for change. If the Council wanted to retain the market, it needed to support the change.

At this point in the meeting the Mayor advised that the time limit for this item had expired.



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RESOLVED that the questions and the responses provided be noted.

2 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Briggs, Dearden, Haque, Harrison, Salamat and Sheldon

3 **TO ORDER THAT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 20TH MAY 2015 BE SIGNED AS A CORRECT RECORD**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 20th May 2015 be AGREED as a correct record.

4 **TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ANY MATTER TO BE DETERMINED AT THE MEETING**

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Councillors Gloster and Garry declared a pecuniary interest in Item 12, Notice of Administration Business, Motion1 and Item 14, Police and Crime Panel Minutes, 30th January 2015. Councillor Wrigglesworth declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 12, Notice of Administration Business, Motion 3.

Councillor McCann declared a personal interest in Item 14b – Minutes of the Oldham Care and Support Company by virtue of his appointment to the Board.

5 **TO DEAL WITH MATTERS WHICH THE MAYOR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT BUSINESS**

The Mayor informed the meeting that no items of urgent business had been received.

6 **TO RECEIVE COMMUNICATIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL**

The Mayor advised the meeting that no items had been received related to the business of the Council.

The Mayor took the opportunity to congratulate Councillor McMahon on receiving the OBE award.

7 **TO RECEIVE AND NOTE PETITIONS RECEIVED RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL**

The Mayor advised that five petitions had been received for noting by Council:

Health and Wellbeing

Abuse of Child Protection Powers (received 14 April 2015)
(1049 signatures) (Ref 2015-06)

Planned Closure of Glodwick Pool from Glodwick Infant and Nursery School (received 2 June 2015) (666 signatures) (Ref 2015-12)

Planned Closure of Glodwick Pool from Horton Primary School (received 11 June 2015) (172 signatures) (Ref 2015-15)



Neighbourhoods and Cooperatives

St. Paul's Methodist Church – Church Fencing (received 6 May 2015) (120 Signatures) (Ref 2015-09)

Economy & Skills and Neighbourhoods and Cooperatives

Clarksfield Pitch and Arundel Street Public Space (received 1 June 2015) (147 signatures) (Ref 2015-11)

RESOLVED that the petitions received since the last meeting of the Council be noted.

8 **OUTSTANDING BUSINESS FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Mayor advised the meeting that there were no items of outstanding business.

9 **YOUTH COUNCIL**

The Mayor advised the meeting that there were no items of business received from the Youth Council.

10 **LEADER AND CABINET QUESTION TIME**

The Leader of the Opposition raised the following questions:

1. Oldham's Education Deficit

“Schools in Oldham have recently received public attention, but regrettably for all of the wrong reasons.

If Oldham were itself a pupil, there is no doubt that the Borough's Annual School report would read: 'once again failed to reach its potential and could do much better if it just applied itself'.

Oldham has the third worst record in the country for the number of infant pupils taught in classes of more than 30.

More than 2,300 children (nearly one in three) of five to seven year olds

In junior schools more than 2,900 children are in classes over 30 in size.

In fact the average class size in Junior School in Oldham Borough is 28.9 pupils, the seventh highest in the country.

In addition nearly a fifth (20%) of Oldham pupils will not be able to attend their first choice Secondary School as places at the most popular schools do not meet demand.

This is understandable as demand at popular schools will continue to rise as Oldham's Secondary Schools overall are judged poorly with only 36.5% of our pupils in 'good or excellent' Secondary Schools which is less than half the UK national average of 73.5%.

I am sure that the Leader will agree with me that much more needs to be done.

We are currently failing to give thousands of our children the opportunities they deserve.

Our Borough's children deserve an excellent education to help reach further and higher education, set them up to become productive and well remunerated in the workplace, active citizens and positive parents and role models for their own children.

Let me be clear the Liberal Democrat Group will do all in its power to assist in changing the current state of affairs.

Labour has promised much for the Oldham Education Commission – indeed it would appear to have its work cut out – so can the Leader tell us all what this Administration is doing and will do to address the clear educational deficit in Oldham and when we might expect to have sight of the Commission's final report, remembering its interim report in January was never published?"

Councillor McMahon, Leader of the Council responded that solutions were not simple and, where the school was a free school or an academy, the Council had no input. The Council was however positive about improvements to education and the Education and Skills Commission would be very important in finding solutions that worked for all in the community. This was due to report at the end of summer and the Council would then need to assess what it could do, involving both parents and the community.

2. Sunday Trading

"The Chancellor proposed in last weeks' Budget that areas such as Greater Manchester should be permitted to extend Sunday trading hours if we wish to do so.

Extended Sunday trading hours could provide additional jobs and additional business as a stimulant to the retail economy of our Borough, and may lead to the Borough becoming a 'destination' of choice for weekend shoppers accessing our retail offer by Metrolink, particularly if the Princes Gate development is the 'game-changer' the Leader has promised it will be. It could also be used to build upon the cultural offer town centre.

However it can also encroach on quality time and family life.

I would therefore like to ask the Leader whether within the new Combined Authority he would support the proposal for extended Sunday opening hours within Greater Manchester and specifically on Oldham, or not?

In essence would he echo the view that: "Sunday was the most miserable day of the week" before retail laws were relaxed, or support the view that limited opening hours on Sunday are sacrosanct as it is the only day that shop workers and their families can "bank on some time with their kids?" "

Councillor McMahon, Leader of the Council responded that there were other higher priorities and pressures for the Council. He currently had no view on the issue and would consider the evidence and form a view at the appropriate time. He would expect the issue to be decided by the people of Oldham.

The Mayor reminded Members that the Council had previously agreed that, following the Leaders' allocated questions, further questions would be taken in an order which reflected the political balance of the Council.

Members raised the following questions:

1. Councillor Shuttleworth to Councillor McMahon

"STOP THE MADNESS was the headline on a political leaflet, which was more about talking Oldham down than political, doing the rounds in parts of Oldham during the recent local and general election campaign.

Taking into account the Old Town Hall development, Princes Gate with its proposed store and residential accommodation, M&S, the much welcomed return of T J Hughes, to name but a few, could the Leader of the Council tell the good people of Oldham when they can expect some more MADNESS!"

Councillor McMahon, Leader of the Council, responded that he had been indifferent about the leaflet, except when it had been talking down the town. Oldham was now in a very different place and people were behind what the Council was doing, especially where it was investing growth, for example the leisure centre.

2. Councillor Ball to Councillor Brownridge

“Last October and November the Royal British Legion and our Cadets worked hard raising money on the poppy campaign. Could the cabinet member give an indication as to the amount of money raised by Oldhamers, and what is being done to encourage our cadets to continue this good work?”

Councillor Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Co-operatives, responded that Oldham raised over £149,273.41 in 2014/15 for the Royal British Legion Poppy Award.

The money was used by the Royal British Legion to give financial and emotional support to people who have served or are currently serving in the armed forces and their dependents.

The Royal British Legion Oldham Branch were again awarded The Norman Webster Shield for the most money raised in one year, for the 4th year running. The shield was proudly on display in the civic silverware to showcase Oldham’s dedication to raising money.

The Royal British Legion Oldham Branch also worked very closely with the cadets helping to raise huge amounts of money. The poppy is an enduring symbol of remembrance, and last year was particularly important as we commemorated the centenary of the start of the First World War.

Each year, the Lord Lieutenant of Greater Manchester held a presentation evening to recognise the achievements of the cadets from across the County, and Oldham 2200 Air Training Cadets were awarded as Greater Manchester’s overall winning unit after they raised a tremendous £15,014.30. The squadron had now won the trophy for the third year running.

3. Councillor Malik to Councillor Akhtar

“The increase in the Primary age population is placing great pressure for places on the Boroughs Schools Can the Cabinet Member concerned confirm that OMBC has plans to deal with this demand to ensure all the Borough’s infants find places in local schools.”

Councillor Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills responded that Oldham was aware of the current pressure. There was a robust forecasting method in place taking in to account births, housing and new arrivals. The Local Authority had expanded schools in many areas of the borough to ensure there was sufficient additional capacity to meet the increased demand. Since 2013 the Council had created 1,050 additional primary school places, with a further 840 places planned to be available by September 2016.

The additional capacity had created more choice for parents applying for reception places for September 2015. 90% of

parents received places in their first choice of school, with 95% getting a place at one of their preferred schools. Although the pressure on primary places remained in the Year 1 to Year 5 cohort, the Council was working closely with Primary colleagues to look at creative solutions to ease this pressure, including a possible increase in schools planned admission numbers in the areas with most demand and least capacity. Councillor Malik would be aware there was a new three-form entry school being planned in his ward.

4. Councillor Gloster to Councillor Stretton

“Crompton Health Centre is outdated and no longer fit for purpose. The people of Shaw and Crompton rightly compare the current shoddy condition of their local facility with the excellent, modern health centres available to the people of Royton and Werneth, and wonder when they too can expect something new.

Under the proposals for devolution in Greater Manchester, the health care budget will be devolved to come under the control of the new Mayor and combined authority.

Can the relevant Cabinet Member assure me that this Administration will back Ward Councillors in fighting for the money to replace outmoded health centres in this borough as the local Lib Dem Councillors in Shaw and Crompton are keen to take up this fight for a modern facility fit for the patients of our district?”

Councillor Stretton, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing, responded that the Council had been working with the NHS Oldham over many years and this had included joint work to improve the estate from which primary and community health services are commissioned and delivered.

Responsibility for such developments previously resided with Oldham PCT and the LIFT programme (Local Improvement Finance Trust) saw the development of excellent new buildings in Oldham from which health and occasionally leisure services are now delivered.

That responsibility moved to NHS England under the Health and Social Care Act and was currently less subject to local control. As Councillor Gloster stated, the devolution of health and social care to Greater Manchester would bring this responsibility under the new Mayor and combined authority with the opportunity for more local influence. The detail of how this would be done had yet to be determined.

The Council was continuing to work with Oldham CCG to commission and deliver first rate health and social care services and plans for the future would include the development of buildings and facilities wherever in the Borough that was required. The Council would ensure that Oldham got the best possible benefit from the devolution deal.



5. Councillor Bashford to Councillor Hibbert

There had recently been travellers on Clayton Playing Fields, who had left no mess and there had been a co-ordinated response. Had there been risk assessments and checks made on open spaces?

Councillor Hibbert, Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Highways, responded that everything had been done to protect residents from unwelcome visitors. This group had moved on within twenty-four hours and officers were constantly reviewing their procedures to ensure there was a swift response.

6. Councillor Rehman to Councillor Akhtar

What was the Council doing to assist families who could not support their children in education, for example where parents were unable to help their children with homework?

Councillor Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills responded that there were a number of initiatives including homework clubs and youth clubs. The Education and Skills Commission would produce recommendations to assist all children across the borough.

7. Councillor Harkness to Councillor Akhtar

“A former Council employee was recently found guilty of stealing a sizable quantity of shopping vouchers with a value of £17,000 intended to reward Oldham students for excelling in their academic performance.

Rather than the students enjoying the benefit of these vouchers, they were instead spent by the guilty party for her own benefit.

Now that the court case has been concluded, can the Cabinet Member for Education please tell me what administrative safeguards have now been put in place to ensure that this situation cannot arise again?”

Councillor Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills responded that, following this incident, an audit of the administration of all vouchers within the Council was undertaken as a priority. The objective of the audit was to ensure our systems in this area were as secure as possible.

The overall opinion by Internal Audit of the operation of the controls for the cash incentive scheme was that they were adequate based on the work carried out. A number of recommendations were made and implemented in order for the service areas to improve past processes. The implementation of these recommendations had been followed up and this work had made the Council's systems more secure.

8. Councillor Chauhan to Councillor McMahon

Had Oldham seen any investment from Greater Manchester to assist with the Borough's regeneration?

Councillor McMahon, Leader of the Council, responded that there was a continual process to get grants and loans to Oldham businesses. A number of them had benefitted and the Council had also had benefits. Oldham was getting its fair share, as it had good plans and it delivered them.

9. Councillor Williams to Councillor McMahon

What would devolution mean for Oldham?

Councillor McMahon, Leader of the Council, responded that it was hard to be specific at this point as the devolution debate had happened very quickly. There was a need to ensure proper checks and balances, especially with regard to police, fire and transport. He would expect strong Oldham representation and for these representatives to be properly heard.

At this point in the meeting the Mayor advised that the time limit for this item had expired.

RESOLVED that the questions asked and responses provided be noted.

11

TO NOTE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE CABINET HELD ON THE UNDERMENTIONED DATES, INCLUDING THE ATTACHED LIST OF URGENT KEY DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE COUNCIL, AND TO RECEIVE ANY QUESTIONS OR OBSERVATIONS ON ANY ITEMS WITHIN THE MINUTES FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL WHO ARE NOT MEMBERS OF THE CABINET, AND RECEIVE RESPONSES FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Cabinet Minutes for the meetings held on 30th March 2015 and 27th April 2015 were submitted.

Questions and observations were raised by the following Councillors on the Cabinet Minutes as detailed below:

Councillor Blyth – Cabinet meeting – 30th March, Item 10, page 19, Local Welfare Provision Scheme 2015/16, in relation to the projected underspend, was the council advertising adequately and correctly in regard to access to funding? The Council had put money into "Our House"

Councillor McMahon advised that "Our House" was not part of the welfare provision considered in this Item, however it provided a facility for people to purchase white goods they would not have the cash to buy outright. Our house covered the cost, it was not for profit and everyone benefitted. It was an

example of what co-operation and the community could achieve and was a much better alternative for Oldham.



Councillor McCann – Cabinet meeting – 30th March, Item 10, page 19, Local Welfare Provision Scheme 2015/16, the underspend was a substantial amount of money that could be used to make a difference. Could it be used to, for example, provide a basic funeral service, be put towards relief from food poverty, expand the fuel poverty scheme or have a welfare team to expand this provision?

Councillor Jabbar responded that this fund was limited and time-limited. The underspend would be ring-fenced to welfare activities, however once this money was spent, there would be no more. It was difficult to see how the Council could offer, for example, a funeral service when the fund was very limited and would soon be gone.

Members made the following observations:

1. Councillor Murphy – Cabinet meeting – 30th March, Item 14, page 23, Contract with Age UK Oldham 2015-2017 – Older people were not well served, though some parts of the Borough were better than others. A community shop was proposed, where excess food could be sold at lower prices. There was also a need to explore other options, and have a strategic vision and Borough plan. A Food Commission was needed.
2. Councillor Harkness – Cabinet meeting – 30th March, Item 8, page 17 Saddleworth School: Site Selection – welcomed the decision to ensure a new school was built. There was much to be done, but the Council cannot do nothing.
3. Councillor McCann – Cabinet meeting – 30th March, Item 10, page 19, Local Welfare Provision Scheme 2015/16 – there was no criticism of the underspend and he understood there could be no overspend. He welcomed the commitment to spend on welfare.
4. Councillor Jabbar responded – there will be a need to support residents affected by welfare cuts and the fund will be ring-fenced to welfare provision.
5. Councillor McMahon responded – the Overview and Scrutiny Board have set up a working group to look at the value for money of a community shop and a Food Commission

RESOLVED that:

1. The minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 26th January 2015 and 23rd February 2015 be noted.
2. The questions and observations on the Cabinet Minutes be noted.

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION BUSINESSMotion 1

Councillor McMahon MOVED and Councillor Stretton
SECONDED :

“This Council recognises the newly created Office of the Mayor of Greater Manchester and congratulates its newly appointed holder Tony Lloyd. The Office of the Mayor presents a good opportunity for Oldham, through the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to present itself to central government as well as helping to forge stronger connections with neighboring boroughs, towns, cities and communities.

The Council stresses the need for the Mayor and indeed the Combined Authority to be publically accountable, through direct elections, emphasising the need for greater public engagement with communities, ensuring towns like Oldham are heard across Greater Manchester.

The Council notes that Greater Manchester generates £48 billion per annum in GVA, 4% of the national economy, but that there is room to grow through the innovation opportunity devolution provides. Through greater flexibility, engagement and communication with central government, Greater Manchester and we in Oldham can get the fair devolution deal we deserve. The Council Resolves:

- To instruct the Chief Executive to write to the new Mayor of Greater Manchester on behalf of the council welcoming him to his post.
- To Instruct the Chief Executive to write to Oldham’s three Members of Parliament updating them on the Devolution deal to date.”

Councillors S Bashforth, Rehman, McCann, Roberts, Dean, Hudson, Sykes and Bates all spoke in support of the motion.

Councillor McMahon exercised his right of reply.

On being put to the VOTE, the meeting UNANIMOUSLY voted IN FAVOUR of the MOTION, which was therefore CARRIED.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Chief Executive be instructed to write to the new Mayor of Greater Manchester on behalf of the council welcoming him to his post.
2. The Chief Executive be instructed to write to Oldham’s three Members of Parliament updating them on the Devolution deal to date.

At this point in the meeting the Mayor advised that the time limit for this item had expired.

Motion 2

Councillor Jabbar MOVED and Councillor Wrigglesworth
SECONDED :

“This Council notes that Oldham Council was the fastest public body to close its final accounts last year and has this year beaten its own target by a further seven days. Ensuring both quality and accuracy is vital to future financial planning for the council and the tax payers of Oldham.

The council recognises and is pleased with the report given by the external auditors, who have again granted Oldham Council a clean bill of financial health, especially in regard to the auditors ‘Value for Money’ assessment for which Oldham received its best ever ‘Green’ rating including – for the first time – on borrowing.

The council notes remarks made by the external auditors Grant Thornton who said:

“The draft accounts and working papers were of a high quality. The prompt production of the draft financial statements enabled the members of the Audit Committee sufficient time to review the statements and ask challenging and pertinent questions. Finance staff responded promptly to all audit queries, in line with agreed protocols, contributing to the prompt completion of the audit”.

On being put to the VOTE, the meeting UNANIMOUSLY voted IN FAVOUR of the MOTION, which was therefore CARRIED.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Chief Executive be instructed to write to the Director of Finance (interim) on behalf of the council, thanking the department for its efforts.
2. The progress made in account finalisation by Oldham Council and the positive remarks made by the auditors in regards to the speed and accuracy of Oldham Councils accounts be noted.
3. That Oldham Council has been given a clean bill of financial health by the auditors be noted.

Motion 3

Motion 3 was carried over to the next meeting

13

NOTICE OF OPPOSITION BUSINESS

The Mayor RULED that submitted Motions (1) and (3) were outside the scope of motions that could be considered by the Council, as they did not relate to matters over which the Council had a direct influence (Council Procedure Rule 8.2)

Motion 2

Councillor Murphy MOVED and Councillor Williamson
SECONDED :

“This Council notes that:

- For customers on low incomes, water bills can represent a real financial challenge.
- The water industry, water regulator, consumer groups, academics and government deem that paying for water consumption becomes problematic for households is when they spend more than 3 per cent of their household income on water costs. This threshold is taken as a measure of ‘water poverty’.
- Studies have found that households who spend at least 3 to 5 per cent of household income on water consumption often struggle to pay their bill.

However, Council further notes that:

- Regional water provider United Utilities has several schemes to support customers struggling to pay a bill or settle arrears. These include a trust fund, a debt matching and write-off scheme, and a new social tariff. Government also endorses schemes to promote direct payment from benefits and provide a capped bill for larger families or customers with certain medical conditions.
- Many low-income households are unaware of the support available to them.

Council believes that:

- More action is needed from central Government to address ‘water poverty’.
- More should be done in Oldham to promote awareness of, and access to, the support schemes available to customers facing ‘water poverty’.

Council therefore resolves to:

- Promote the availability of these support schemes on-line, in our publications, in our public buildings, and at public events, as part of the ‘Make the Most of Your Money’ and ‘Warm Homes’ campaigns.
- Work with United Utilities and the United Utilities Trust to offer training to elected members and front-line staff so they can actively promote them.
- Offer this training to staff and volunteers from social landlords and other partners.
- Support the research being undertaken by United Utilities to establish greater public acceptance for the social tariff and to

identify the most effective ways to engage and support 'harder-to-reach' customers.

- Support an application to the United Utilities Trust for funding to deliver, through partner agencies, money advice and financial literacy services targeted at 'water poor' customers.
- Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment, The Rt, Hon. Liz Truss MP, requesting that:
 - 'Water poverty' be defined in law and that it be measured
 - The Government establish an action plan and make a definite commitment to eliminate 'water poverty' within the lifetime of this Parliament."

Councillor Heffernan spoke in support of the motion.

Councillor Hudson spoke against the motion.

Councillor Harkness spoke in support of the motion.

A move to vote was MOVED and SECONDED

Councillor Murphy exercised his right of reply.

On being put to the VOTE, FIFTY THREE VOTES were cast IN FAVOUR of the MOTION with ONE cast AGAINST. The MOTION was therefore CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

1. To promote the availability of these support schemes on-line, in our publications, in our public buildings, and at public events, as part of the 'Make the Most of Your Money' and 'Warm Homes' campaigns.
2. To work with United Utilities and the United Utilities Trust to offer training to elected members and front-line staff so they can actively promote them.
3. To offer this training to staff and volunteers from social landlords and other partners.
4. To support the research being undertaken by United Utilities to establish greater public acceptance for the social tariff and to identify the most effective ways to engage and support 'harder-to-reach' customers.
5. To support an application to the United Utilities Trust for funding to deliver, through partner agencies, money advice and financial literacy services targeted at 'water poor' customers.
6. To instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment, The Rt, Hon. Liz Truss MP, requesting that:

‘Water poverty’ be defined in law and that it be measured
The Government establish an action plan and make a
definite commitment to eliminate ‘water poverty’ within the
lifetime of this Parliament”



- (a) To note the Minutes of the following Joint Authority meetings and the relevant spokespersons to respond to questions from Members

Minutes of the Joint Authorities were submitted as follows:

Police and Crime Panel	30 th January 2015
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	27 th February 2015 27 th March 2015 24 th April 2015 29 th May 2015
Joint GMCA/AGMA Executive	27 th February 2015 27 th March 2015 24 th April 2015 29 th May 2015
National Park Authority	6 th February 2015 27 th March 2015 5 th June 2015
Transport for Greater Manchester	13 th March 2015
Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority	12 th February 2015 23 rd April 2015
Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority	13 th February 2015 20 th March 2015

There were no questions.

Members made the following observations:

Councillor Heffernan - Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 27th March 2015, Item 41/15, page 52, Alliance Textiles Project Update – this had not had much publicity. The textile industry should be brought back to Greater Manchester and the council should support it coming back to this area. Councillor McMahon observed that the Textile Project was very important for Oldham as a textile town. There was a value to the British brand and the Council would wish to bring this to Oldham to build on existing skills.

Councillor Sykes - Transport for Greater Manchester, 13th March 2015, Item 14/77, page 102, The Carriage of Non-Assistance Dogs

on Metrolink: Feedback from Consultation – there was no report back to the next meeting, however there was a report to a later meeting and the decision was deferred for six months. Councillor Hibbert was at the later meeting and observed he was not sure of the benefit of delaying the decision. Having travelled on the trams, he would not support being able to travel with a dog on one.

Councillor Williams - Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority, 23rd April 2015, Item 99, page 121, Wigan Community Fire and Ambulance Station – this combined station was the first in the country . The services would be encouraged to share and collaborate on resources.

RESOLVED that:

1. the minutes of the Joint Authorities as detailed in the report be noted.
2. The questions raised and observations made, along with the responses, given be noted.

(b) To note the Minutes of the following Partnership meetings and the relevant spokespersons to respond to questions from Members

Minutes of the Partnership Meetings were submitted as follows:

Oldham Leadership Board	23 rd March 2015
Oldham Care and Support Company	30 th January 2015
Health and Wellbeing Board	17 th March 2015
Unity Partnership Board	8 th January 2015 12 th February 2015 23 rd March 2015

There were no questions or observations.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Partnership meetings as detailed in report be noted.

WELFARE REFORM UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report that included the periodic Welfare Reform Dashboard, and a deeper analysis of Food Poverty and Food Banks within Oldham.

The Welfare Reform Dashboard highlighted in particular the levelling-off of unemployment after a period of consistent falls.

The Food Poverty Deep Dive highlighted the wide-ranging nature of food poverty, estimated to affect over 10% of Oldham’s

population, and the actions which could be taken to mitigate it. Food banks were one such action, but only addressed the immediate crisis, rather than building individual and community resilience.

Councillor Jabbar MOVED the report, which was SECONDED by Councillor Chadderton.

Councillor McCann made an observation on the report.

RESOLVED that:

The report be NOTED

15

REVIEW OF LAND AND PROPERTY PROTOCOLS

Consideration was given to a report that sought approval to amend the Land and Property Protocols in order to improve the Council's decision making process and more accurately reflect the Council's recently reviewed organisational structures.

Councillor McMahon MOVED the report and Councillor Sykes SECONDED.

RESOLVED that:

The revised Land and Property Protocols be APPROVED.

16

UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM COUNCIL

Consideration was given to a report which informed Members of actions that had been taken following previous Council meetings and provided feedback on other issues raised at the meeting.

A letter from E.on had been circulated at the meeting, which reflected progress made and agreed a follow-up meeting in four to six months.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 9.00 pm