I am pleased to welcome you to Oldham Council’s Annual Report 2012.

In my introduction to the Annual Report 2011 I stated that we were committed to a co-operative future for Oldham; and, looking through these pages really brings home the huge amount of progress we have made in making this a reality in what feels like twelve very short months.

Over the past year, Oldham has become a co-operative pioneer on both a national and local scale. We are a founding member of the Co-operative Council’s Network and lead nationally for the group on a number of projects including the Ethical Framework, the Young Co-operator’s Network and Co-operative Trust Schools. Locally, we are developing Oldham’s own co-operative model which is attracting interest from other councils and organisations all over the country – pioneering and innovating are two words we have had to get used to in Oldham!

Another highlight for me has been the launch of our Love Where you Live campaign, which is about everybody doing their bit to make Oldham a great place to live. As a resident myself, I have been out doing my bit and recently enjoyed a day spent with a group of young people cleaning up a local beauty spot. I believe it is right that as local leaders we lead by example, and I hope that through the work we have done to strengthen local democracy, we have empowered local elected members to do just that.

Building on these foundations, I want to use our current momentum to continue the co-operative journey, establishing Oldham firmly as a co-operative borough and council and, in doing so, making Oldham an even better place to live.

Councillor Jim McMahon
Leader of the Council

It does not feel like twelve months since I was writing the introduction for the Annual Report 2011. The time has gone so quickly and, once again, we have achieved so much in the last year.

I would particularly like to take this opportunity to thank all our elected members and staff for their hard work and dedication over what has been a hectic year. As an organisation, we have maintained our focus on continued improvement in very challenging economic times for the country in general, and local government in particular. Despite these challenges we have continued to deliver for the people of Oldham. The recent recognition of Oldham as the Most Improved Council in the country is testament to the progress we have made and the excellent services we now deliver.

Despite these achievements there is still more to do. We will continue to work hard to make sure that the borough is in a strong position to meet the challenges facing us, and to maximise our opportunities to regenerate Oldham. For example, as a council we are again looking at how to balance a demanding budget, but are also prioritising investment in our borough, through innovative schemes such as Hotel Future and the redevelopment of the Old Town Hall. Furthermore, changes to the role and functions of the local authority such as the equalisation of business rates and the transfer of responsibility for public health, present us with opportunities to change what we do and how we do it.

This Annual Report will be the last one that reports our progress against the place of choice corporate objectives. Our new ambition and corporate objectives were agreed at the Annual Council meeting in May 2012. Future annual reports will be focussed on the key deliverables identified within the new Corporate Plan.

I look forward to working with you all over the next twelve months and continuing to make both the borough and the council a co-operative success story.

Charlie Parker
Chief Executive
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Our headlines for 2011/12

• Springhead Community Centre became our first community asset transfer.

• GCSE results are up for the eleventh consecutive year rising from 51.9% in 2010 to 56.1% in 2011.

• We worked with partners to create 172 apprenticeships within 100 days.

• Oldham Council was named LGC’s Most Improved Council of the Year 2012

• In November 2011, Oldham’s Children’s Services were rated as performing ‘excellently’, placing us in the top 18% of Council Children’s Services nationally

We launched the Love Where You Live campaign on the 14 February 2012 encouraging people to do their bit in their neighbourhoods.

We established Greater Manchester’s first Local Authority Mortgage scheme

We unveiled plans for the country’s first National Hospitality Training Academy (NHTA) – Hotel Future
A confident place - our achievements

- The first community initiatives to benefit from our District Investment Fund (DIF) were agreed.
- The Local Transition Grant Fund granted nine community and voluntary groups a share of £150,000.
- By March 2012, anti-social behaviour (ASB) had fallen by 7.6%.
- Domestic burglary and vehicle crime reduced by 17.6% and 21.3% respectively, from year end 2010/11.
- We established the Co-operative Commission and developed the Co-operative Charter.

We established six new town halls and district teams to bring council services closer to residents.

In June, Oldham hosted part of the Halfords Tour Series 2011.

In October 2011, we won the ‘Best City’ in the Bloom and Grow Awards for the second year running.
Building on our success

A safer place

We want to ensure that people across the borough feel safe. Throughout 2011/12 we have continued to work successfully in partnership with a range of organisations and community groups to prevent and address crime and disorder, and protect vulnerable people – and we have made real progress in a number of areas.

We have continued to tackle crime and disorder, finding innovative ways to challenge criminality. Our joint initiative tackling organised crime across the borough resulted in 118 arrests and the seizure of a significant amount of drugs. There has been a significant reduction in the number of serious violent crimes (SVC) with a 23.8% borough-wide reduction against end of year figures in 2011; and a reduction of 52% in Oldham Town Centre. A significant proportion of serious violent crime is related to domestic violence. Oldham has a well developed response to domestic violence with additional security measures being provided by the Sanctuary Scheme.

The downward trend continues with domestic burglary falling by 17.6% from 2011. A key initiative in achieving this reduction was the implementation of a darker nights partnership to target the period between October and January, which had seen a 16% increase in offending the previous year. Homeowners in areas of the borough identified as vulnerable received visits over this period from Crime Prevention Officers offering crime prevention advice and providing forensic property marking equipment, light timer switches, branded Oldham CSI window stickers and shock alarms. The alleygating scheme has also continued with around 100 schemes being implemented, another preventative measure that has been instrumental in making Oldham a safer place.

By March 2012, anti-social behaviour (ASB) had fallen by 7.6%. Despite a slight increase in the number of ASB – related complaints during the summer holidays and during the bonfire season compared to previous years, 33 ASB orders were secured targeting the most persistent offenders, with over 900 warning letters sent out to first time ASB offenders.

Protecting the vulnerable is, as always, a key priority. The development of our three year multi-agency safeguarding strategy shows the high level of commitment to safeguarding the vulnerable from both us and our partners. The online counselling tool kooth.com was launched in February 2010 and provides an on line counselling and support service to our young and vulnerable people. The service has already exceeded its targets in terms of users with figures showing continued uptake of the service with a total of 502 new users registered in the last twelve months.

A cleaner and greener place

It is important to us that the borough is a clean environment for our residents and visitors and once again we continue to make progress in a number of areas.

Our recycling rates have improved for the fifth consecutive year, rising from 15% in 2006/07 to 40.6% in 2011/12; meaning we are ranked third in the recycling league table against our AGMA neighbours. We continue to improve our food waste service to schools. The food waste programme has been rolled out to 59 of our 87 primary schools and our Food Loop campaign, an initiative to raise awareness and educate children about where food comes from, has been rolled out to 65% of primary schools.

The restructure of the street scene and parks teams has been completed, enabling the service to be delivered locally within districts. Each district now has a dedicated Environmental Manager working as part of the newly-formed district teams. This enables a collaborative approach to reducing the amount of litter, providing a clean quality environment and promoting an understanding of local environmental issues. Other achievements include retention of our seven Green Flag parks and a reduction in our detritus levels (dirt, grit, soil), currently at 2%, with graffiti currently at 1% and fly-posting at 0%.

Oldham continued its excellent track record in the Bloom and Grow Awards, winning not only the Best City award for the second year running, but also scooping the inaugural Environmental Award, which recognises the cleanliness of the local area. In addition, we have also been selected as the NW regional representative in the city category of the national Bloom and Grow contest.

1 We are considered in the Best City category due to the entry criteria being based on population.
A confident place

Strong communities

In May 2011 we set out our commitment to establish Oldham as a co-operative borough and to reconnect with residents and re-engage at a local level – and our progress in both of these areas has been swift.

The Co-operative Commission was established in June 2011 and this group oversaw the development of the Co-operative Charter which was signed in October 2011. The charter sets out Oldham’s co-operative ambition and co-operative values. Oldham’s co-operative approach is centred around everybody doing their bit, so getting residents involved is key to its success.

On 14 February 2012 we launched ‘Love Where You Live’ our biggest ever public communications campaign. The campaign is supported by online marketing and social media and features a number of ambassadors - residents who already volunteer, take part or lead something in their local community. Residents are encouraged to make pledges to do their bit in the community, from taking part in a clean-up to volunteering for victim support and from shopping for an elderly neighbour to starting a Home Watch scheme. Love Where You Live has been our most successful campaign ever with over 400 pledges collected so far and a record 2000 hits per month to the website. A second phase of the campaign is being launched later this year.

Re-engaging with communities

In terms of re-engaging with communities, we have opened a town hall in each district and new district teams have been established co-locating different council services closer to residents and improving the support offered to councillors. The last twelve months have seen the development of district working on a number of levels.

The diagram opposite shows the three broad categories of district working: dedicated (full time in the districts e.g. district co-ordinators), designated (significant amount of time in districts but covering more than one and/or a borough-wide role e.g. highways officers) and borough-wide and specialist staff (e.g. planning officers, finance officers and strategic housing officers).

This investment in neighbourhood working encourages opportunities for cross-partnership delivery of services and ensures more services contribute to the decisions made at local level; the district plans are central to the successful delivery of local priorities. As neighbourhood working progresses more Council and partner staff will be involved in district working. In addition to strengthening local service arrangements, budgets that were previously held centrally, such as Bloom and Grow, alleygating and minor highways budgets have been devolved to districts in order to deliver better outcomes locally – specifically those outcomes that residents say are important to them. A two-year District Investment Fund (DIF) of £720,000 was announced in June 2011, from which community groups can bid for grants that reflect local priorities. The first community initiatives to benefit from the fund were announced in January.

Our local approach aims to support individuals, families and neighbourhoods to achieve their full potential and raise aspirations in the most deprived communities. In recognising that each of our neighbourhoods has different needs, we work flexibly with our partners to ensure that our services are tailored to meeting them. Earlier this year the council agreed its first community asset transfer. Springhead Community Centre will be leased to Springhead Community Group for a nominal fee, in exchange for the community group providing a range of services for residents at the centre including painting and arts sessions, dance and exercise sessions and a children’s nursery.

We have a thriving voluntary and community sector providing services to meet the needs of local communities. The Local Transition Grant Fund was set up to help the organisations survive and thrive during challenging economic times and put into practice innovative business ideas while promoting co-operative ways of working. In 2012, the fund awarded grants to nine organisations from the sector.
A university town – achievements

- Our Behaviour and Attendance Partnership was shortlisted for a Local Government Chronicle Award
- The number of children in care reaching level 4 in Maths at Key Stage 2 has improved from 41% in 2008 to 55% in 2011
- Our Employee Supported Volunteering Pilot Scheme was launched in July
- We introduced the living wage for council staff
- The Green Technology Centre launched in September 2011
Building on our success
Raising educational achievement

Our GCSE results are up for the eleventh consecutive year showing our continuing commitment to raising educational attainment and achievement for all children and young people. The proportion of students attaining 5 or more GCSEs at level A*-C (including English and Maths) continues to rise, up from 51.9% in 2010 to 56.1% in 2011.

Good primary and secondary education can transform the lives of young people and we want to ensure every pupil achieves their goals and aspirations. As such we are continuing with the Accelerate and Achievement for All programmes. In addition, bespoke packages of support, including training and development with teachers and head teachers have been completed. These will help raise educational attainment by helping schools that have a satisfactory OFSTED judgement move towards a Good judgement, and also help to raise attainment in Key Stage 1 and 2 in Mathematics and English.

Schools with under-achieving ethnic minority groups and changing demographic profiles continue to be supported by the Ethnic Minority Achievement team. These schools are also supported through school to school support networks.

We are also committed to improving outcomes for helping those who are most disadvantaged, those who often emerge from school with substantially lower levels of educational attainment. We recognise that educational deficits can emerge in early childhood so it is essential to provide support in early years development. In Oldham there has been a high take up of free early education placements for disadvantaged two year olds which should enable them to start primary school with the skills they need to do well; we exceeded our target of 170 planned placements, with 192 placements being provided.

Attitudes and behaviour are also barriers to educational achievement in terms of persistent absence and school exclusions. Our Behaviour and Attendance Partnership plays a key role in reducing the levels of absence and number of exclusions. This joint working group, made up of representatives from schools, the council and partner organisations has this year received national recognition for helping young people at risk of permanent exclusion from school. They have delivered a 50% reduction in permanent exclusion and reduced the number of days lost through absence.

We also take seriously our responsibilities for ensuring that children in care have high levels of educational achievement. We will, therefore, endeavour to build on the improvement in the numbers of children in care achieving Level 4 in Maths at Key stage 2 which has risen from 41% in 2008 to 55% in 2011.

The quality of our educational provision is continually improving. For example:

- We have increased the number of primary schools judged as good or outstanding from 65.9% in 2010 to 76% in 2011
- All the schools in the Building Schools for the Future and Academy programmes are now under construction
- The Regional Science Centre opened its doors to students in September 2011. The Centre has exceeded its target of working with 20 schools, having worked with 26 and aiming to work with 29 by the end of the summer term. The number of students attending the Regional Science Centre has totalled 1404 against a target of 1000.

Improving skills and economic opportunities of residents of the Borough

There has been a continued focus on the skills agenda over the last twelve months and there has been much progress in a number of areas.

Our ‘100 in 100’ campaign, which aimed to place 100 people in apprenticeships within 100 days, far exceeded targets and we delivered 172 new apprenticeship opportunities within the public, private and voluntary sectors; with the council providing 40 of these apprenticeships. It is just one of the many initiatives in place to improve the opportunities for residents of the borough. As well as creating new opportunities, we have been supporting those who face redundancy to find alternative work. For example, we worked with Jobcentre Plus and other key partners to provide a package of support and assistance to employees being made redundant at the Warburtons bakery in Shaw.

We recognise the importance of raising awareness of the support and opportunities that are available locally for residents of all ages and of promoting the importance of gaining the appropriate skills. Positive Steps Oldham (PSO) have been operating a boroughwide Careers Service, for all ages, for some time and are well positioned for the roll out of the National Careers Service from April 2012.
Oldham’s Lifelong Learning Service maintained its ‘Outstanding’ rating in 2011, showing our commitment to people of all ages in terms of supporting skills development. To add to this support, the Oldham Library and Lifelong Learning Centre hosted the Recruitment and Careers Fair 2012. This free event allowed visitors to explore career and training opportunities across a wide range of sectors.

We set a target to create ten placements for children in care. A total of nine young people have been matched with placements which suit their aspirations. Six different organisations are now providing them with a 12 month pre-employment contract which will provide them with valuable work experience.

We believe in the importance of good early years, so we are using the Early Years Entitlement and Better Life Chances city region pilots as a platform for the Government’s Troubled Families programme and the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) / European Social Fund (ESF) Provision for Families with Multiple Problems programme. These programmes aim to get children back into the classroom and parents onto a work programme or move families with complex needs on the road towards employment.

Securing economic benefits and growth through local business support, skills and infrastructure

Our aim is to provide the infrastructure and environment that will make the borough an accessible and attractive place to invest in and for enterprises to grow.

The launch event for ‘Invest in Oldham’ took place in April 2011. This event was focused on encouraging investors and developers to “see Oldham differently” and recognise it as a viable area for economic growth.

Our support to local businesses continues. The Oldham Business Awards continues to go from strength to strength and this year, the fourth time the event has been held, it was attended by 450 people. The event recognises successful businesses and includes categories such as Business of the Year, Innovation and Design and Young Entrepreneur.

Some examples of our innovative infrastructure developments include:

- The construction of Metrolink with its underground ducting creates an important opportunity for the provision of ultrafast broadband fibre cabling direct to some of our most important regeneration locations at Hollinwood and the Town Centre. We are working with other Greater Manchester organisations to fully develop this opportunity.

- The first phase of the Green Technology Centre has been launched by The Oldham College in conjunction with leading green technology companies. The facility has been provided initially within an existing building where students will be taught the latest skills in the design, installation and maintenance of cutting edge green technology. The next phase which will see the building of a new Green Technology Centre, as part of a wider scheme for the improvement of The Oldham College campus, is well underway.

  - The potential for Green Deal to provide local procurement opportunities is being explored and the Construction Network has been widened to include green technology installers.

We understand there are many economic challenges that face local people and we will continue to address these. We have:

- introduced the living wage for council staff
- launched a partnership venture with Oldham Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) providing free legal and advice services in local settings across the Borough.
- been recognised nationally for our role in supporting disabled people into work. The Wellbeing Service won the ‘Good Practice in Employing Disabled People’ category at the National Independent Living Awards (NILA) 2011.

Increasing opportunities for employment and volunteering

Volunteering and apprenticeship schemes are important to us. They can often be the first step on the ladder to gaining experience and new skills and we aim to continue the recent progress we have made.

The Passport to Employment Programme has secured ten new job opportunities with the council’s parking services partner NSL. A total of 167 of our employees have enrolled onto the apprenticeship framework which has exceeded the target of 50 for 2011/12.

In July 2011 we launched our Employer Supported Volunteering Scheme. The pilot phase of the scheme saw up to 50 members of staff volunteering with voluntary and community organisations in Oldham. They were given an allowance of two working days by the council to undertake this activity.
An address of choice – achievements

- An Invest in Oldham launch event took place in March 2012 to showcase our investment opportunities to investors
- We signed a deal with Oldham Athletic to regenerate and retain Boundary Park
- We introduced free parking at Hobson Street car park at weekends all year round and in Oldham town centre on Saturdays in the run up to Christmas
- Work with partners has begun to regenerate key strategic sites at Hollinwood and Foxdenton
- We have seen the development of 112 affordable homes, brought 72 empty homes back into use and prevented 1338 cases of homelessness

In November 2011, a £113million contract was signed that will see 700 new homes being built or refurbished over the next three years

Failsworth Town Hall reopened following a £2.2m renovation project

We launched the ‘One Future’ initiative to maximise benefits for residents from the 2012 Olympic Games
An address of choice

Building on our success
Providing greater access to quality homes

As our last Annual Report indicated, improving our housing offer and neighbourhoods within Oldham continues to be a top priority. We need to provide high quality housing for Oldham residents through the successful delivery of major housing projects. We want people to choose to make their home here.

We continue to provide quality new homes. Over the last twelve months, 112 affordable homes have been built at St. Mary’s, Werneth, Clarksfield, Derker and Hathershaw, which exceeded the target of 98 for the year and transformed five key neighbourhoods in the borough. Furthermore, approval for 50 new homes to be built in North Werneth has been given. As part of the development, Regenda, the nominated Registered Housing Provider for the area, made a successful bid for funding from the Homes and Community Agency (HCA) to build ten affordable homes on the site.

The construction phase for the completion of the PFI sheltered housing programme is now underway, after the PFI4 Gateways to Oldham Scheme was signed in November. This will see around 700 new homes being built or refurbished over three years on the Crossley and Primrose Bank estates, and on brownfield sites at Westwood and Fitton Hill which will complete a £130m investment in 1,458 homes. This is also a significant boost to the construction industry in Oldham. The first refurbished homes are due to be completed in May 2012, and the first new homes in November 2012. This year also saw us complete the refurbishment of over 1400 sheltered homes through the PFI2 project.

We have also looked at making the best use of Oldham’s existing housing stock across all tenures, maintaining reduced levels of homelessness and temporary accommodation. The continued commitment to homelessness prevention has ensured that the number of households accepted as homeless has remained low. There were only 66 households accepted as homeless and in priority need which is within our target of less than 100. On performance to December 2011, Oldham is ranked the second best authority out of the ten AGMA authorities for preventing homelessness and this shows the increased quality of accommodation and support for vulnerable households.

As part of our wider work to improve the quality of and access to private rented housing, in partnership with OHIR, we commissioned ASKA Homes to develop a social lettings agency.

We also appointed AKSA Homes as our ‘managing agent’ to help bring empty homes back into use across the Borough. This will be done through supporting landlords by refurbishing empty homes, with AKSA managing the homes on their behalf. These initiatives will improve access to good quality housing and improve our neighbourhoods.

Encouraging healthy lifestyles

We are continuing to put steps in place in order to ensure that the health and wellbeing needs of Oldham’s citizens are understood, managed and met. This is happening in a variety of ways.

By October 2012 the transfer of the majority of public health responsibilities into the Council should be complete. In readiness for this, a Public Health Transition Steering Group has been put in place to prepare and implement a transition plan. Integration of the Public Health function with the Council’s evolving commissioning function is underway.

We are continuing to promote and improve children and young people’s health and well being. For example, Go! Oldham now has activities taking place all-year round, with seasonal campaigns rather than just a focus on the summer holidays. The range of activities has also been expanded to cover a wider age group and to include family activities. Go! Oldham now offers targeted and universal provision across sport, arts and media. A Go! Oldham website has also been developed and sees over 1000 new visitors to the site each month looking for positive activities for young people to participate in.

Linked to this, as mentioned earlier in this report, is the fact we have achieved a 7.6% reduction in anti-social behaviour in 2011/12 and this continues a year on year drop in ASB since 2009.

We have started work on improving the emotional and behavioural health of children in care through the development of a Mental Health Plan. Our Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are performing well and phase one of the CAMHS strategic review is now complete. A Young People’s Mental Health Needs Assessment is due for completion in 2012/13. It is anticipated that these activities will lead to healthier children and young people – physically, mentally and emotionally.

Following our success last year, including our Sports Development Service being rated as the fifth best nationally, we have continued to make progress in encouraging healthy lifestyles, including through leisure activity. There were an additional 519 (0.5%) visits to leisure centres than in 2010/11, with the number of visits totalling 1,069,711. Between January and March 2012, there were 298,992 visits which is the highest number recorded in any performance quarter in the last three years.

Children and young people have not been the only focus of our attention this year. The increased choice of fitness classes/sessions within the borough has had a positive impact on leisure centre membership. In particular, the numbers of members aged 55+ and the number of members from the BME community have increased to 1,157 and 1,044 respectively, their highest levels in the last three years.

In order to capitalise on this, we have developed, and are currently consulting on, a draft Active Oldham Strategy aimed at further increasing participation in sport, physical activity and the arts.
Regenerating the town centre and improving districts

Despite operating in a tough financial climate, our commitment to regenerate the borough remains strong. We have a much greater focus on securing private sector investment to achieve our objectives. We actively sought investment during 2011/12 for the regeneration of Oldham Town Centre and held a high profile launch of our Investment Prospectus – See Oldham Differently – in March.

One of the key projects showcased at the launch was the groundbreaking Hotel Future – a four star hotel with a National Training academy for the Hospitality sector which will be built in the Town Centre.

There are a number of other development projects in the pipeline. For example, we are working with a private sector partner on a new vision for the Alexandra Retail Park site. This could see the park and adjacent vacant land joined together to create a new retail and employment development.

We have appointed BDP Design to create plans to bring Oldham’s Town Hall back into use. Heritage Architects are developing designs for the Old Town Hall redevelopment with a view to achieving detailed planning permission mid 2012. Works to make the Egyptian Room useable as a function venue, pending the Old Town Hall’s redevelopment, were also completed in January 2012.

We also announced proposals for the regeneration of Royton District Centre. This includes improvement works to the precinct and pedestrian environment, plus further public realm improvements in the centre and the development of a new major food store.

The refurbishment of Oldham Coliseum began in January 2012. While this work has taken place, the Coliseum has relocated to alternative venues such as the Grange Arts Centre on Rochdale Road ensuring the public still has access to an exciting season of theatre productions.

Other developments include the launch of a new monthly Farmers Market at Tommyfield Market continuing the success of redeveloping the borough’s markets that began last year. An agreement was reached with Roughyeds Rugby Club to secure a long term lease for the Whitebank Stadium site and the council also found a buyer for the historic Greenacres Lodge in Waterhead. The sale follows a six month local and marketing campaign by the council.

We are also committed to improving the borough’s transport infrastructure alongside the delivery of a new and more attractive town centre. Our work to bring the Metrolink to the borough has continued. The testing of trams on phase 3a of the network connecting Rochdale and Oldham Mumps began in January.

Oldham’s vision is to create a town centre that will provide a distinctive place for growth that is unique, independent, connected and sustainable.
Services of choice – achievements

• 73% of service users received care via a self-directed support package during 2011/12 exceeding our target of 65%

• The number of older people requiring permanent residential care has reduced by 60% compared to 2010/11. Our new admissions rate is the third best in the North West.

• The timeliness of adoption placements resulted in 96.2% being placed within required timescales against an overall target of 68% for 2011/12

• Work to transform democratic engagement in Oldham included the introduction of a new ‘open council’ session allowing residents to submit questions to Cabinet Members and streaming of Full Council live online

• We have seen an improvement in the proportion of people receiving an individual budget to purchase their social care, currently at 69% against a target of 60%

Our Catering Service has been awarded with a Silver Catering Mark from the Food For Life Partnership Awards

Our finance team achieved national recognition being one of only three local authorities praised by the Audit Commission for the speed and accuracy of its accounts

Oldham Council’s Music Service, Lifelong Learning Service and Pupil Referral Unit were rated as outstanding in inspections.
Building on our success

Quality services that are valued

We are committed to providing Oldham’s residents with good quality services that are value for money. And, despite the challenging economic climate we have continued not only to deliver good quality services, but also improve them too. But don’t just take our word for it!

We are extremely proud to be the Local Government Chronicle’s (LGC) Most Improved Council of the Year 2012. This award is one of the most valued in local government and is judged by peers and leading figures from national bodies and organisations. The LGC said of Oldham: “...the council has achieved sector-leading performance in key areas ranging from recycling to fostering...” and is “…repositioning its business towards cutting edge forms of commissioning that generate opportunities for private enterprise and local communities alike...”

And we intend for this to continue through working collaboratively with residents, staff and partners, to redesign services, all underpinned by our co-operative ambition. Over the past twelve months this approach has produced a number of successes in delivering services of choice.

In November 2011, Oldham’s Children’s Services were rated as performing “excellently”, placing us in the top 18% of council Children’s Services nationally and making us the most improved over the last two years. Oldham is currently the only area judged to be excellent within its group of 11 comparator services.

This achievement was followed in February by our Safeguarding and Looked After Children services being judged ‘Good’ with many outstanding features, following an external inspection. This places the Council among a very small number of the highest performing authorities nationally for the delivery of children’s services. The inspection report positively highlighted several work areas including our:

• outstanding Children and Young People’s Plan
• excellent consultation arrangements with children and young people
• effective management of services and robust financial management
• commissioning process
• system of individual budgets for those with the most severe disability and complex needs, giving them more control and choice over the services they receive

Continuing with its superb track record, our Adoption Service has been hailed as best practice by the British Association for Fostering and Adoption for matching a child within 20 days. Additionally, all of our directly provided and commissioned children’s homes in the borough maintained either their ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ Ofsted judgements. Other services maintaining their levels of service quality include the council’s Music Service, Lifelong Learning Service and Pupil Referral Unit, which were all rated as outstanding in recent inspections.

In addition to the success of our children’s services, we can evidence achievements across the full range of council services.

• The Registration Service received a very positive report from Home Office inspectors including recognition of a high level of customer service, and good customer care and access.
• The high nutritional standards in our schools have been recognised and we have been presented with the Silver Catering Mark in the Food For Life Partnership Awards.
• We were joint first local authority to close off the 2010/11 accounts.
• We balanced the revenue budget, which included making savings totalling £24m.

Whilst the improvement of services is a key focus for us, we are not afraid to try new things and blaze a trail for others to follow. For example, Oldham Council is one of 30 pilot areas trialling payment by results (PbR) with our early year providers. The pilot seeks to ensure that local authorities and early years providers reach and support the most vulnerable families. It is hoped that this approach will narrow gaps in child development, raise attainment levels at the end of the foundation years, and improve family health and wellbeing. The Department for Education has reported very positive feedback on Oldham’s PbR Children’s Centre plans. It is also anticipated that the PbR approach will create savings as well as raise standards.

Another example of Oldham setting the trend is in its Provider Services, made up of a number of service areas including Wellbeing, Supported Accommodation, Residential Services and Reablement / Response. In April this year Provider Services became a Business Unit, with the intention of progressing to become a full arms length service. It is anticipated that this will allow greater flexibility in delivering an efficient service with better outcomes for service users.

We are also committed to providing services that reflect the needs of our local communities. To improve the facilities in Fitton Hill, we have completed the new £2m Fitton Hill Neighbourhood Centre which opened in February 2012. The new library and youth centre will provide excellent facilities for people to meet and be part of their community.

Services of choice
Accessible and responsive services

There is little point in having quality services if people cannot access them or they do not provide people with the service they need. In recognition of this, Customer Information Points (CIPs) have been rolled out to all libraries to improve access to Council services and support the development of customer services at a neighbourhood level. In addition to these improvements, the Oldham Council website was relaunched in February 2012. The website is a critical tool in making our services more accessible, by allowing customers to access a broader range of services on-line and making the website easier to navigate.

Our adult social care services promote the use of self directed support, providing individuals with greater choice and control over the care services they receive, helping them to live independent lives in their own home and community. Currently, 73% of our care-managed service users have chosen to receive self directed support through an Individual Budget. This exceeds our target of 65% and means we are ranked in the top three in the country for self-directed support.

Our adult social care services are committed to helping vulnerable people achieve and maintain independent living and avoid the need for admission to hospital, residential homes or temporary accommodation – and it is working. Out of the 561 who completed their short term reablement care package just less than a third required further long term support. The number of older people admitted into residential and nursing care has also reduced by over 100 in the past year. Our new admissions rate also means that we are ranked third in the North West, further evidencing our success in continuing to prevent high numbers of our residents being admitted to residential or nursing care on a permanent basis.

One of our key aims over the past twelve months has been to strengthen local democracy and reconnect with local residents. We have embraced social media and new technologies to do this, once again showing our capacity to innovate to achieve our aims.

Activities include:

- The introduction of the leaders blog where the Leader of the Council can air his views and thoughts on topical issues
- A live Cabinet ‘Question Time’ as part of Local Democracy Week. The meeting was streamed online and residents could submit questions in real time, including through use of social media
- The live streaming of Full Council meetings online has been introduced along with an ‘open council’ session allowing residents to submit questions to Cabinet members
- The Leader recording his first video blog about the budget

One place approach to service delivery

Considerable progress has been made over the past few months in delivering on the devolution agenda. The district teams have been established and each district now has a District Coordinator, a District Environment Manager, a Community Development Worker and a Caseworker in place creating a dedicated resource within the area. The next stage will be establishing district networks, bringing key local partners and council services together, and creating a wider team approach to delivering the priorities and ambitions for the districts.

The council is continuing with its commitment to devolving services, staff, budgets and decisions to a more local level. The purpose behind this is to make sure that Councillors and partners with the greatest local knowledge and experience are involved in shaping services and decisions that affect local neighbourhoods.
Our Revenue Budget and Financial Forecast

Our 2011/12 revenue budget was prepared against a continuing backdrop of significant reductions and increased constraints predicted for public sector funding and spending over future years. The financial year 2011/12 was the first year of the period covered by the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) 2010 which was announced on 20 October 2010.

Whilst the CSR provided a framework around which further detailed announcements would be made, it did not provide any detailed funding information. It did, however, set out the Government’s intention to significantly reduce public expenditure to address the national budget deficit and indicated that savings for local government would be frontloaded and would therefore have most significant impact in 2011/12 and 2012/13. The lack of certainty about the resources available to the Council meant that a definitive savings target was not available until comparatively late in the budget process, when the Local Government Finance Settlement (LGFS) was received in December 2010.

Nonetheless the council worked to an initial estimated savings target of £25m excluding the impact of any changes to Government grant funding, which was expected to be around £14m.

The theme of our 2011/12 budget round was “Investing in the Future: Building on Our Success”. The budget planning process, using well established budget review processes to consider and analyse budget proposals, began early in 2010/11. As a result of this process, proposals totalling £15.829m were approved at the council meeting on 15 December 2010.

Our 2011/12 LGFS was very complex with a range of grants being amalgamated into the general allocation of Government funding, namely, the Total Formula Grant (TFG). Some other specific grant funding was withdrawn and the ring fencing was removed from the majority of grants.

Taking all the Government funding reductions and council specific pressures into account, our total budget gap was £39.560m which was obviously a challenge for us, but one that we were able to address.

During December, January and February 2011, further budget review meetings were held and an additional £23.731m of net savings were proposed. These proposals were approved at the Council meeting on 23 February 2011 and produced a balanced budget. This level of reduction in expenditure clearly had a considerable impact on the way in which we operate.

In line with council policy and also due to the availability of Council Tax Freeze Grant from Central Government, the Council was able to maintain Council Tax for council services at the 2010/11 level. The Council Tax at Band D for council services was therefore £1,345.85 in 2011/12.

As a result of the change in the political administration of the council in May 2011, a budget revision was approved at the July 2011 council meeting to realign spending plans around the co-operative council ethos. These revisions enabled the realignment of spending plans around the co-operative ethos and reprioritised spending plans, within existing funding totals, with a particular emphasis on the devolving of budgets to neighbourhoods.

There was a further revision to the 2011/12 budget in December 2011 to reflect changes including additional Government funding, resulting in a final net revenue budget of £232,346m.

Working towards 2012/13

Our budget savings target for 2012/13 was set at £24,493m. This was another challenging amount, but once again making an early start using our established budget review process, enabled proposed savings of the full £24,493m to be presented for scrutiny in November 2011. Of these proposals, savings of £22,113m were approved at the council meeting in December 2011, with the balance of £2,380m of further proposals being approved at the 22 February 2012 council meeting.

This reduction in our resources is set to continue and when we prepared our Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2012/13 to 2015/16, the projected level of savings to be made, whilst lower than for 2012/13, are nonetheless significant: £17.7m in 2013/14, £13m in 2014/15 and £15m in 2015/16. These savings targets are subject to change as more detailed information becomes available over time. However, they do provide us with a planning base upon which we can develop our future operational arrangements.

Our Income

The table below sets out the sources of income which underpin our budgeted spending. The extent of the reduction in Central Government funding between years can be seen and illustrates the pressure on the reducing level of resources available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of Income</th>
<th>2011/12 Income £000</th>
<th>2012/13 Income £000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Formula Grant</td>
<td>122,416</td>
<td>115,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Intervention Grant</td>
<td>14,462</td>
<td>14,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax Freeze Grant</td>
<td>2,120</td>
<td>2,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Government Grants</td>
<td>8,121</td>
<td>8,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax</td>
<td>84,797</td>
<td>85,031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collection Fund Balance</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Funding for Council Services</strong></td>
<td><strong>232,346</strong></td>
<td><strong>225,354</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our Expenditure

The actual and budgeted revenue expenditure for 2011/12 and the budgeted spending for 2012/13 are shown in the following table. In order to enable there to be a meaningful comparison between the budget and final outturn for 2011/12, some technical budget changes (also set out in the table) have had to be made to reflect the different presentational requirements between the two sets of figures. We finished 2011/12 with a variance, compared to the approved budget, of only £29k. This extremely small variance, which is line with projections, demonstrates our good financial management systems and procedures and the accuracy of our in-year forecasting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Directorate</th>
<th>2012/13 Original Net Budget £’000</th>
<th>2011/12 Revised Net Budget £’000</th>
<th>Technical Budget Changes £’000</th>
<th>2011/12 Revised Net Budget (after technical changes) £’000</th>
<th>2011/12 Net Spend £’000</th>
<th>Variance £’000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Chief Executive</td>
<td>19,721</td>
<td>21,345</td>
<td>-1,670</td>
<td>19,675</td>
<td>19,493</td>
<td>-182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy, Place &amp; Skills</td>
<td>70,697</td>
<td>71,134</td>
<td>36,201</td>
<td>107,335</td>
<td>107,315</td>
<td>-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People, Communities &amp; Society</td>
<td>116,649</td>
<td>124,936</td>
<td>11,866</td>
<td>136,802</td>
<td>136,645</td>
<td>-157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance, Services &amp; Capacity</td>
<td>-1,123</td>
<td>3,302</td>
<td>1,004</td>
<td>4,306</td>
<td>4,237</td>
<td>-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Management</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>-171</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate &amp; Democratic Core</td>
<td>6,625</td>
<td>6,625</td>
<td>-342</td>
<td>6,283</td>
<td>6,283</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Treasury &amp; Technical Accounting</td>
<td>13,165</td>
<td>6,819</td>
<td>33,118</td>
<td>39,937</td>
<td>40,344</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Reserves</td>
<td>-1,081</td>
<td>-2,521</td>
<td>2,521</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in Balances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,736</td>
<td>3,736</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>225,354</td>
<td>232,346</td>
<td>86,263</td>
<td>318,609</td>
<td>318,580</td>
<td>-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parish Precepts</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>271</td>
<td></td>
<td>271</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Total</strong></td>
<td>225,642</td>
<td>232,617</td>
<td>86,263</td>
<td>318,880</td>
<td>318,851</td>
<td>-29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When compared to 2011/12, the budget by directorate for 2012/13 reflects some service movements, but as planned expenditure has to match to the funding available, it does not show the overall reduction of £24.493m that has had to be made in order to balance the budget.

Our Capital Programme 2011/15

Our Capital Programme also had the theme of “Investing in the Future: Building on Our Success” and set out our anticipated expenditure over the period 2011/12 to 2014/15. Much of the planned expenditure related to schemes approved in earlier financial years, but investment of £9.072m was approved on six priority projects. During the summer of 2011, there was a review of the programme to ensure that projects were aligned to the refocused aims and objectives and as a result there was some decommissioning of schemes and a reallocation of resources to priority areas. Also, as the financial year progressed, further capital schemes were approved to reflect, for example, the receipt of additional external grant funding.

Our major areas of expenditure in 2011/12 were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Expenditure</th>
<th>Amount £’000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building Schools for the Future programme</td>
<td>£49.835m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation programme</td>
<td>£19.162m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual Housing Market Renewal programme</td>
<td>£3.054m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools expenditure</td>
<td>£9.865m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Housing expenditure</td>
<td>£2.357m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Our Capital Programme for the period 2012/13 to 2015/16 was approved at the council meeting of 22 February 2012. Again most of the projects reflect existing spending plans, but a sum of £18m was included for investment in new priority projects.