

# Oldham Borough Council



**Council Meeting**  
**Wednesday 15 March 2023**

# OLDHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

- a Public Questions (Pages 1 - 30)

Public Questions Full Council 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023

	From / Date	To	Question	Response
1	Karl Bardsley	Councillor Chadderton	I would like to ask the relevant cabinet member, how much of the £3 million cost of living package announced by the council leader on 21 <sup>st</sup> September 2022 has gone towards the heating of the town's libraries/warm banks?	<p>In Oldham we have 37 warm banks across the borough, including 11 council-owned libraries. No additional funding has been allocated to Oldham's libraries as the warm banks have been run during normal opening hours, which include evening and weekends.</p> <p>In addition to the 11 library warm banks, we have also helped 26 community groups to establish warm banks, making support much more accessible for our residents. Approximately £40k has been allocated to support the running costs of these community facilities, paying for heating, lighting, staffing and refreshments. The support of our voluntary and community sector has been fantastic, with many warm banks put in place quickly to support Oldham's response</p>
2	Tia Henderson	Councillor Chadderton	As an Oldham care-leaver and ex youth mayor of Oldham, I recently found myself classed as "intentionally homeless" due to a rat infestation in my home and not accepting the emergency accommodation as it didn't take	Great Places and Wates, who are responsible for providing housing management services to Tia, have fully accepted that they failed to provide an immediate response to the rat infestation which resulted in Tia being unable to

			<p>pets and I have a dog and a ferret. My circumstances led to me being homeless for 6 months so I would like to know what is being done in Oldham to ensure that pets are not a barrier to anyone needing emergency accommodation due to being homeless as a result of unsuitable accommodation, domestic violence, mental health or anyone who is struggling financially.</p>	<p>continue to live in her home. Great Places and Wates have apologised to Tia and have implemented measures to ensure tenants do not suffer similar circumstances in the future.</p> <p>The majority of Oldham Council's emergency accommodation is supplied via contracts between Oldham Council and hotels or third party providers. It is for the owners of the hotels or third party providers to agree if pets can be accommodated, in accordance with providers' own policies regarding pets. We have tried to source accommodation providers who will take pets however to date have been unsuccessful. We continue to seek accommodation providers that will take pets and also meet the specified accommodation requirements.</p> <p>Oldham Council gives careful consideration to the Homelessness Code of Guidance and looks to direct households, to pet boarding charities and where they are unable to help, support households to arrange kennelling where needed</p>
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3	Janet Hargreaves	Councillor Chadderton	<p>I understand that Mulberry Homes has gone into administration.</p> <p>Can you tell me what therefore is happening to the construction of these homes in Shaw? There has been no building here for at least 12 months. We are in desperate need of housing.</p> <p>This abandoned site is adding to the general scruffiness of the area. What is now planned for this part of Shaw and for these partly built houses?</p>	<p>Great Places Housing Association own the site. Great Places are aware of the sites condition and are working expediently to get things moving again. They have been updating the Council regularly and we supported them to secure Brownfield Funding from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to accelerate their endeavours.</p> <p>Great Places are now in the advanced stages of negotiation with a new contractor to enable them to deliver much needed Shared Ownership and Affordable Rented Homes. We are expecting announcements at any time with the new contractor starting on site before the end of March, and expectations that the first new homes will be ready later in 2023</p>
4	Joshua Charters	Councillor Chadderton	<p>I attended the consultation for the proposed new homes in Derker which was held in December by Hive Homes, and I wanted to ask the relevant cabinet member when we will see these new affordable homes delivered in Derker. Can they also provide an update on the accessible homes being built on Flint Street and when they will be available for</p>	<p>Hive Homes have already started pre-construction works in preparing the area for building works, and the legal contracts between Hive and the Council have been exchanged. We anticipate that the main construction works will start within the next two months.</p> <p>The Wheelchair Accessible homes proposed for Flint Street form part of a</p>

			those in need of these vitally important homes"	programme on small sites across the borough. We are working closely with partners to access how best to deliver these much-needed homes and expect to make an announcement in the near future.
5	Michael Harwood	Councillor Taylor	Please could I ask for an update on the position at the Coliseum following withdrawal of Arts Council England funding and what can the council do to help?	<p>Like many people across Oldham, I was devastated by the news that the Coliseum decided to close its doors at the end of March.</p> <p>It is clear that their financial situation since they lost Arts Council funding is incredibly challenging and that they are having to make some tough decisions about their future. As an independent organisation we cannot control their decisions or speak for them but we can, and have, supported them during their difficulties.</p> <p>The Coliseum have recently appointed new Board members who are leading work on the organisations' future. We are in discussion with these Board members about their future plans, as well as plans for investment in arts and culture in the borough.</p> <p>Oldham has such a rich cultural heritage and we recognise the value this brings to the town.</p>

				That's why we have committed to building a new theatre on Union Street. Plans for this new building are being finalised ahead of planning application being submitted in Summer. We continue to work with the Coliseum Board to shape what their role might be in that new theatre and hope a way forward can be found that protects the artistic legacy of the Coliseum company.
6	Vikki White	Councillor Roberts	<p>Parking around schools at the start and end of the school day is a problem in Chadderton – residents complain about people parking across driveways, on corners making it hard to see oncoming traffic and ignoring requests to move their cars causing obstruction and preventing residents getting to their homes.</p> <p>Are there any plans to find ways of improving the situation, making it safe for children to walk to school and bearable for residents?</p>	<p>As more and more children are now driven to school, parking concerns in local communities have increased significantly at school drop off times, and particularly at pick up times.</p> <p>Communities are reporting that parents and guardians continue to park as close as possible to the school gates and increasingly have little or no regard for other motorists, residents and pedestrians, never mind the residents who live near schools. Unfortunately, the issues described in Vikki's question are not uncommon on streets located within the vicinity of most schools across the borough.</p> <p>I am aware that there are two camera enforcement cars who visit every school frontage on rotation, but they can only</p>

				<p>enforce the <i>School-Keep-Clear</i> Markings and bus stop clearways. Any other parking restrictions have to be enforced by an officer on foot. What we find is often the case with patrol officers, is that parents wait in their cars and then when Enforcement Officers are seen, they simply drive away for a short period of time, making enforcement very difficult.</p> <p>The legislation is complicated when it comes to issues and concerns outside schools, which doesn't help – for example, if there are vehicles causing an obstruction, blocking a driveway for example, where there are no parking restrictions in place, this can only be enforced by the Police.</p> <p>We understand the frustrations and increasing concerns from local communities and from schools themselves, given the increased levels of road rage and safety concerns outside their gates, therefore the Council is supporting a School Streets programme. With these projects, the Council works with communities, partners, schools and local business to explore a range of initiatives which might help to encourage children to choose to walk or cycle to school (active travel initiatives) and in turn</p>
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				reduce the dependency on the car for what are often very local school journeys.
7	Jayson Pape-Jones	Councillor Chadderton	The Egyptian Room at the old Town Hall is unique. I'm a bit anxious about the work just starting even though it will be good to have the space used and more food choices in Oldham Town Centre – can the Leader assure me that the refit will preserve the historic features that give the room its name? And how long will the work take?	<p>The fitout of the Egyptian Room has been granted with full Listed Building Consent which involved architects working closely with the Council's conservation officers. This work has been developed to specifically ensure the fit-out works preserve and do not adversely affect any heritage or historic features.</p> <p>The plans for the food hall fitout can be viewed online on the Council's planning portal.</p> <p>The contract was awarded to the Hub Contractors and with works already started, they are scheduled for completion later this year, subject to everything proceeding as planned.</p>
8	Jodie Entwistle	Councillor Jabbar	Can the Cabinet Member for Finance explain how Council Tax works and why a house in Band D has a much lower Council tax in the City of Westminster?	Council Tax is a property-based tax and one of the ways in which local authorities raise funds to pay for the services it provides to its residents. It also helps to fund our two Parish Councils; the Mayoral Police and Crime Commissioner and the Mayoral General Precept (including Fire Services). How much you pay in council

				<p>tax depends on several things, such as the council tax band set for your home, (based on its value on 1 April 1991 and set by the Valuation Office Agency); your personal circumstances and how much money the council, and the other bodies mentioned, need to raise for their budget requirements, considering income from all other sources.</p> <p>Although places like Westminster have some of the most expensive properties in the UK, they have some of the lowest levels of council tax primarily due to a large proportion of properties being in the higher Council Tax Bands (in Oldham, the highest proportion are in the lower Bands) but also through gaining more revenue from other sources such as parking charges</p>
9	Thomas Yarwood	Councillor Chadderton	How will we be able to tell if Oldham has levelled up?	<p>A simple question with a potentially complicated answer – but Oldham will have levelled up when our residents are able to access better paid jobs, having accessed good education and skills provision, leading to a better quality of life for all. This will require numerous changes across the system and will take time to embed.</p>

				<p>By working collaboratively with partners on a resident first methodology we can drive up the all the key drivers, that were set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, but we need to be clear about the routes to funding.</p>
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Our Regeneration programme is delivering new education, health, employment and housing sites. Successes include the new diagnostics centre in Royton, new schools in Saddleworth and in the town centre, and the successful Levelling Up bid for Green Tech. We are excited to be working with Rochdale and Bury to deliver the Atom Valley Development Zone which will boost jobs and business opportunities for our residents but this needs investment in transport and skills capital.

The Oldham Economic Review set out recommendations which will help us grow the right skills for the new opportunities which include roles in the Green Tech sector, Health and Social care.

Working with Innovation GM the Council is supporting innovation companies to thrive and new ones to invest e.g. JD

				<p>Harrison, Innovative Technologies and the ambition to develop jobs in sustainable materials linked to Electric Vehicles.</p> <p>Oldham has huge social capital, but it is disconnected from financial capital following 13 years of austerity. The borough needs proper investment. We have a strong sense of identity and will grab the opportunity, but this Government insists on short term funding, being competitively won in an ad hoc manner. We were one of just 3 local councils to win anything in the second round of levelling up funding. This meant we were competing with our neighbours when we should be collaborating like we are with Bury and Rochdale with Atom Valley.</p>
10	Megan Birchall	Councillor Chadderton	<p>“Oldham’s Cabinet has approved a new Transport Strategy for Oldham which aims to increase active travel and get more people walking and cycling. How is the Council going to convince people to agree to the changes in the way roads are used and to reduce car journeys to be able to make this work? And what difference will the Strategy make for people living in Saddleworth?”</p>	<p>The recently approved Transport Strategy aligns with both national and regional policy and unlocks funding streams which aim to move journeys away from the private car to walking, cycling or public transport, where possible.</p> <p>At a local level, the ambitions in the Transport Strategy look to make the borough a healthier place where people want to live, work and visit.</p>

				<p>However a pipeline of schemes is in development across the borough, so all areas can benefit, that help make walking and cycling an easy, safe, and appealing option. Schemes will vary in their size and nature, and some may look to change the way our roads are used.</p> <p>The Transport Strategy is just as much about changing people's behaviour as it is about physical works on the ground and we welcome involvement from all our communities to make Oldham safer, less congested and better connected.</p>
11	Usman Latif	Councillor Chadderton	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can you please explain as the council of Oldham. How are you supporting the local area with the cost of living?</li> <li>2. Once the price cap runs out in April. Can you confirm if people will still have the support of the council in regard to gas and electricity payments?</li> </ol>	<p>To help those who need it most, we have invested more than £3 million to provide funding for energy, food and childcare, as well as extending the range of existing support available such as the Citizens' Advice service and community engagement teams, who go door-to-door checking on people's welfare and helping them access the support they are entitled to. We have also put in place 'warm banks' in every District, open to anyone who needs a warm, inviting space through the colder months.</p> <p>As part of the £3 million invested to support our residents, we are currently</p>

				extending the Warm Homes Team to provide additional support to residents of Oldham, providing telephone advice and home visits to support residents in understanding how to reduce energy usage and therefore their utility bills.
12	Junaid Hussain	Councillor Akhtar	<p>With central Manchester booming in the technology sector, it would be good to see the tech startups and smaller tech businesses locate into Oldham. Its an opportunity to attract businesses who may not want to be the higher operating costs in central Manchester but still want to stay close. Not discounting the excellent transport links Oldham has to offer.</p> <p>This would not only help Oldham grow economically but also create opportunities for Oldham residents and local entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Does the council have any future prospects for such investments.</p> <p>Can Oldham Council request funding through the Northern Powerhouse initiative.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question</p> <p>Oldham is already home to a number of brilliant tech businesses such as Koderly, Sudlows, Innovative Technology and Needi and we want to build on this.</p> <p>Encouraging businesses to start-up, grow and relocate to the Borough is a key priority for the Council and as such we do have several prospects in development.</p> <p>Through the Levelling-up Fund the Council secured £20m, £8.8m of which will be used to create a green tech enterprise centre helping to support the start-up and growth of businesses in that sector. The Green Shoots Enterprise Centre will be located in Oldham town centre at Rhodes Bank. It will provide managed workspace as well as a location for green tech businesses. It will also provide a space for businesses to collaborate, innovate and support to help them grow. We are expecting the centre to be operational by March 2025.</p>

				<p>Money has also been secured via the Future High Street Fund to transform the derelict Prudential building on Union St, Oldham to create an incubator facility for start-up businesses focussing on the digital, media and creative sectors. The aim is to turn the 19<sup>th</sup> century building into a vibrant and modern workplace that will attract young and upcoming tech businesses. The building will be refurbished to create private and open co-working spaces, an event space a café and a lounge. We are hoping that the “Pru” will be operational by March 2025.</p> <p>Finally, a new enterprise space known as the Hive is also being created as part of refurbishing the upper mall areas of the Spindles Shopping Centre. Building on a legacy of excellent enterprising businesses here in Oldham, the Hive will provide a focus of activity for new and budding entrepreneurs - it will be a hub to link together different resources and social enterprises with other entrepreneurial activities, as well as creating opportunities for collaboration and co-working by providing a space for businesses to meet, hot-desk and co-locate. The Hive is expected to be open in later this year to kick start the ambitions for new business</p>
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				growth and social enterprise here in Oldham.
13	Bibi Khan	Councillor Roberts	What will happen when the current Don't Trash Oldham campaign comes to an end? What will the Council be doing to tackle the fly tipping issues we face daily? And how will not only the hotspots, but the whole borough kept clean and tidy please?	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>Dealing with environmental crimes and fly tipping will remain a priority for Oldham Council once the current Don't Trash Oldham campaign comes to an end later this year – following two years of dedicated activity in every ward across Oldham.</p> <p>Looking ahead, we will need to re-focus resources to deal with persistent offenders and those who are illegally collecting and disposing of waste. In addition, we will continue to engage with residents and communities, we will continue to provide advice and education on how to dispose of waste, and we will continue to ensure strict legal action is taken where evidence is available.</p>
14	Pat Highley	Councillor Brownridge	I wish to ask the council if there are any plans to respond to the Government's advice that more CPADs(Community Public Access Defibrillators)should be made available throughout the town. Defibrillators could be placed in areas where they are most needed, such as places with high	<p>Thank you for the question on defibrillators.</p> <p>We know how important and life-saving it is for communities to have access to a defibrillator when experiencing cardiac arrest.</p>



			<p>footfall, vulnerable people, rural areas or due to the nature of activity at the site.</p> <p>Examples could include community buildings, local shopping centres, post offices and local parks, to ensure defibrillators are evenly spread throughout communities and easily accessible if someone is experiencing an unexpected cardiac arrest. A cardiac arrest can happen to anyone regardless of age. It is not a heart attack.</p> <p>I also want to ask the Council if there are any grants towards buying defibrillators and if bought by fundraising in public areas owned by the council will they be responsible for the maintenance of these. Oldham is sadly lacking in CPADs.</p>	<p>We are already in the process of reviewing the process in place to make sure we have a consistent and equitable policy across the borough.</p>
15	Charlotte Watson/Lister	Councillor Taylor	<p>I would like to ask the following questions of the full council on the 15th March please-</p> <p>Can you retract the comment that the current Coliseum building is dangerous, as mentioned by Councillor Mushtaq at the last meeting?</p>	<p>Many thanks for your questions Charlotte – let me take each one in turn.</p> <p>In regard to the building being dangerous - there are a number of matters which the Coliseum Management team are aware of that need addressing urgently to ensure the property remains safe for members of the public. The Coliseum</p>

			<p>If it is dangerous why have audiences been allowed in? (I gather the level of asbestos that remains is small, and the building is safe for audiences and will remain so going forward, if repaired and maintained correctly.)</p> <p>What evidence have you got that the theatre is 'at the end of its lifespan', is "no longer fit for purpose" as mentioned by Councillor Chadderton at the same meeting?</p> <p>Can we please see the 2 building surveys the council has had done on the Oldham Coliseum theatre please, one from around 2012 I believe, and one in January 2023? to see evidence of the above.</p> <p>Have you had repairs for the Coliseum, to future proof it, costed? (Surely this would be cheaper than the £24.5 m you are planning to spend on a new Coliseum?)</p> <p>Are the plans for the new Coliseum final?</p>	<p>team themselves have flagged issues including water pipe bursts, damp and mould, and wall instability. All of which are currently in hand with no risk to staff, performers or audiences.</p> <p>With regards to the asbestos – I can confirm that this remains an issue throughout the building, and while it is safe while undisturbed, it would cause additional issues and costs should we look to refurbish or renovate the current building.</p> <p>In regard to the future of the current building both the Coliseum and the council have long acknowledged the need for a new theatre building. It has a long list of maintenance issues but outside of those the site itself – its size and location – isn't ideal for the type of theatre the Coliseum, or any producing theatre, needs for the future. All parties have long agreed that a new build theatre was the best solution – and those views haven't changed, despite recent speculation and discussion.</p> <p>The costs associated with rebuilding, repairing and reinvesting in the existing site are significant and would be more than a new theatre but also would make it</p>
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			<p>Can you promise that the new Coliseum is actually going to be built, and you are aiming for completion 2026?</p> <p>There is £1.845m available from the Arts Council, can you confirm that you have been banned by the Arts Council from using this to fund the Oldham Coliseum theatre company, to allow them to carry on performing, in whatever venue?</p> <p>If so, can you give any other funds to the Oldham Coliseum theatre company please, to allow them to survive? They will probably need a lot less money than £1.845m to survive.</p> <p>You mentioned at the last meeting the Coliseum has been offered a new events space in Spindles which will have a capacity of 750. When will this be ready, and will it be capable of being used as a theatre? And will it be free?</p> <p>Are there any other venues you could please offer to the Coliseum</p>	<p>difficult to meet the needs of a modern theatre.</p> <p>In terms of whether the plans for a new theatre are final, no, the plans for the new theatre building were discussed at the recent Cabinet meeting on 27 February, where it was agreed that continued consultation and engagement with theatre specialists would help to finalise the plans ahead of a planning application being submitted later this year with the theatre due to open in 2026.</p> <p>With regard to the £1.8 million of Arts Council funding for the borough – we don't have the ability to transfer this wholly to the Coliseum to replace their lost funding but we are continuing conversations with a range of arts organisations including the Coliseum about how we might use that money to ensure we have continued performance in Oldham.</p> <p>In regard to other venues available to the Coliseum earlier conversations about capacity at the new theatre did include an offer for the Coliseum to use the larger event space where needed, for example, for the pantomime. This would have been available from 2025.</p>
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			<p>to use for free, e.g. the Queen Elizabeth Hall?</p> <p>I look forward to having the above questions addressed at the meeting.</p>	<p>The unfortunate and sad facts are that the Coliseum, as an independent organisation, have decided to close their doors in March and have taken steps to do so. We have not removed any council funding, nor have we refused any asks for funding or access to other venues. We continue to have conversations with their Board to see how we can best support them at this challenging time but questions about their future as a business are best answered by that Board.</p>
16	Jonathan Ford	Councillor Roberts	<p>I pay my council tax and keep what small garden space I have clean and tidy. Sadly, some neighbours do not keep their gardens tidy and as a result blight our area.</p> <p>I am not talking about landlords or renters as I do not live in an area where homes are rented, they are majority owner occupied.</p> <p>So, when I see a home with discarded white goods in the garden, overhanging trees and walls which are at risk of falling onto public footpaths/roads it makes where I live look shabby.</p>	<p>Dealing with environmental crimes and fly tipping will remain a priority for Oldham Council once the current Don't Trash Oldham campaign comes to an end later this year – following two years of dedicated activity in every ward across Oldham.</p> <p>Looking ahead, we will need to re-focus resources to deal with persistent offenders and those who are illegally collecting and disposing of waste. In addition, we will continue to engage with residents and communities, we will continue to provide advice and education on how to dispose of waste, and we will continue to ensure strict legal action is taken where evidence is available.</p>

			<p>I am not talking about those people who may be struggling to keep their properties in good order due to ill health or a change in circumstances. Many neighbours help each other where I live.</p> <p>So does the Leader of the Council agree with me that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The council should not have to write to homeowners, who are fit and financially able to keep their properties tidy and free from rubbish and blight?</li> <li>• That homeowners should not allow garden walls to fall into such a state of disrepair that they become a danger to the public?</li> <li>• How much it costs the council to deal with homeowners who blight where we live?</li> <li>• Confirm what action the council will take against individuals who fail to fix the problems I have mentioned?</li> </ul>	
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17	Joanne Potts	Councillor Taylor	<p>I am a resident of Failsworth and a volunteer who has arranged the Failsworth Lights Switch On for three years. We have a turnout of 1,000+ residents of Failsworth and other areas with the Oldham Borough every year.</p> <p>I am extremely disappointed to read in the Oldham Times that it was a cost of £60,286 to tax payers for the Oldham Lights Switch On, yet when we asked for road closure signs we were told it would cost us £130, which we couldn't afford so one of our local councillors paid. The barriers were dropped off on the morning of the event, myself and another volunteer ( both of us 66 years old) then had to drag the barriers and road closure signs to Thornley Rd and Oldham Road and close Pole Lane to allow for the market stalls to be erected. Then drag them back after the event, this is not acceptable at such a ridiculous cost. Yet OMBC can spend £60,268 of tax payers money of which was revealed at 25p per head of our borough residents which I and many</p>	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>In every case where there are District Christmas lights events (Failsworth, Royton, Shaw, Chadderton, plus multiple in Saddleworth around the various villages), these events are organised by the community. These are funded using a mix of Councillor funding and local fundraising. Whichever local groups are organising the events, they receive support from the District Teams, as appropriate (as some are now self-sufficient after running events successfully for a number of years).</p> <p>With respect to road signs and barriers, these are provided by the Highways team at all sites boroughwide when needed. The charge for this service includes an agreement for road closures and use of Council signage / barriers, which is agreed in advance with the event co-ordinators. The agreement includes the correct signage and barriers being delivered to the event coordinators for installation, correct placement, and removal for collection after the event. This approach and is consistent across the borough.</p>
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			<p>others feel could have been given to our event.</p> <p>Well I'm sorry but Failsworth residents deserve a lot more consideration and input into our event by our council. It appears our local councillors also had to pay for lights on the lamp posts to be repaired/replaced from their annual budget which we were grateful for, however again surely this should be paid by OMBC.</p> <p>I would like to know WHY the cost of the barriers/road closure signs did not include them to be erected by highways, I'm sure members of the public are not authorised to carry this out (health and safety) however we had no choice as highways was not available.</p> <p>I await the favour of your reply and look forward to more support from OMBC in the future to an event that Failsworth residents look forward to annually.</p>	
18	Dominic Wall	Councillor Roberts	Does the council have a view about, or an ability to control, the over-population of game birds, namely Pheasants, which are being introduced by shooting	Thank you for your question and sorry to hear about the activities affecting the natural wildlife populations around the Dovestones area.

			businesses in the Dovestones area, which have an impact on other natural wildlife by out-competing natural populations of native species for food and territory?	Unfortunately, the Council does not have the ability to control or regulate pheasant shooting. The issuing of certificates and permissions for this sort of activity is managed by Natural England and the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).
19	Tina Stafford	Councillor Brownridge	<p>Contribution to social care....financial assessment and the minimum income guarantee</p> <p>1. The utility bill's that are disregarded from the financial contribution to care are the council tax and water rates.</p> <p>The gas, electricity, phone and internet which are all essential utilities are NOT included. Why aren't they included as disregarded income?</p> <p>2. This is included in the minimum income guarantee which is regarded as disposable income.</p> <p>Can these utilities such as gas and electric where costs have tripled and the phone line and internet which are essential</p>	<p>Contribution to social care....financial assessment and the minimum income guarantee</p> <p>1. The utility bill's that are disregarded from the financial contribution to care are the council tax and water rates. The gas, electricity, phone and internet which are all essential utilities are NOT included. Why aren't they included as disregarded income?</p> <p>The minimum income guarantee set by the Department of Health and Social Care is applied to all financial assessments and covers the cost of expenses for Oldham residents. It would not be correct to apply a personal allowance and allow for the expenditure that the minimum income guarantee covers, as this would be a duplication of the same allowance.</p>



			<p>utilities be disregarded and not included in the MIG?</p> <p>2. The MIG will increase with the rate of inflation. However, benefit increases will be around a 200-pound increase. Will the benefit increase meant to meet the cost-of-living increases in prices for goods and services be taken as disposable income by the council and be taken to pay for care?</p> <p>3. The minimum wage for carers will increase in April. Will Oldham council then increase the cost towards care substantially and expect residents who receive care to pay for these increases?</p> <p>The issue of the MIG and utility Bill's exclusion need to be assessed.</p> <p>The increase in carers wages and who will pay needs to be addressed.</p> <p>The issue of the benefit increase and the MIG increasing disproportionately needs to be addressed.</p>	<p>2. This is included in the minimum income guarantee which is regarded as disposable income. Can these utilities such as gas and electric where costs have tripled and the phone line and internet which are essential utilities be disregarded and not included in the MIG? The MIG will increase with the rate of inflation. However, benefit increases will be around a 200-pound increase. Will the benefit increase meant to meet the cost-of-living increases in prices for goods and services be taken as disposable income by the council and be taken to pay for care?</p> <p>The minimum income guarantee will be increasing again for the next financial year, this is set by the Department of Health and Social Care and the Client Finance Team will be undertaking the annual financial assessment uplift over the coming weeks. A copy of all financial assessment reviews will be shared with Oldham residents eligible for social care support once completed and will take into consideration any changes in benefit payments.</p> <p>3. The minimum wage for carers will increase in April. Will Oldham council</p>
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				<p>then increase the cost towards care substantially and expect residents who receive care to pay for these increases?</p> <p>Oldham Council is committed to paying the foundation living wage, which is higher than the national living wage. From April 2023 all social care commissioned service providers will receive an uplift in payments to support them to pay frontline staff the foundation living wage at £10.90 per hour. This will not have a direct impact on what a Oldham resident is assessed as contributing towards their care and support. The contribution will remain a means tested financial assessment in accordance with legislation.</p>
20	Karl Bardsley	Councillor Jabbar	<p>Question 2</p> <p>What has the council done to find out which of our pensioners are entitled to pension credits and how much of the unclaimed £6 pension credits is now being claimed for?</p>	<p>To coincide with the new council tax bills being issued over the next few weeks, the Revenues and Benefits team are identifying from information held, those pensioners who may be entitled to pension credits and not currently claiming. A letter will be issued to explain what it is and to encourage them to apply. It also advises on how to obtain assistance from the Council to make an application if they need it.</p>

				The cases identified will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to monitor the resultant uptake.
21	Tia Henderson	Councillor Moores	<p>2. I have been made aware that there is £15M being invested into Oldham's children's social care. What is the breakdown of this investment and what proportion is being put into the recruitment and retainment of Oldham's Personal Advisors who support care-leavers until they are 25? Recruiting and retaining PA's is important in providing continuous stability and consistency for Oldham's care-leavers as they leave care and navigate society as young adults.</p>	<p>Children and Young People are a top priority for this Administration.</p> <p>We owe it the next generation to give them the best possible start in life. That means nurturing their early years whilst protecting those who are vulnerable.</p> <p>This investment means we can look after the vulnerable children in our borough and help them to have a safe and fulfilling upbringing.</p> <p>In the approved investment programme it has been agreed to increase the establishment of Personal Advisors to 11 permanent full time equivalents.</p> <p>We are also going further:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We're paying our foster carers more – equating to around £2,000 in extra payments each year.</li> <li>• We're recruiting five new specialist foster carers to support our most vulnerable children.</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We're recruiting 50 extra social workers to enable these teams to have more time to spend with families and reduce dependencies on much more expensive agency staff.</li> <li>• Better pay and conditions for our social workers including a new loyalty payment for £2k for those social workers who work in Oldham for at least the new two years.</li> </ul> <p>This funding will have a real impact on young people in our borough, and it's on top of the excellent work our safeguarding and social work teams already do in protecting children and young people from abuse and harm.</p> <p>But we know that we need to do more than just protect young people, we need to nurture them as they grow. That's why this year we're also developing a new Family Hubs model, which will see a transformation of family and Start for Life services.</p> <p>We know that all families need support from time to time to help their babies and children thrive, whether that's from friends,</p>
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				<p>family, volunteers, or practitioners. This new ambitious model will aim to see every family receive the support they need, when they need it. Families will be able to access the information and tools they need to care for and interact positively with their babies and children, and to look after their own wellbeing.</p> <p>All of this is fantastic news for our children and young people, as we put in place real changes that will make a difference to the lives of families right here in Oldham.</p>
22	Karl Bardsley	Councillor Roberts	<p>I would like to ask the relevant councillor or council officer, What is the procurement process for buying outdoor gym equipment for our children's parks? I see that from recent announcements made by the council that they are going to be paying the best part of £5000 per piece of equipment plus £3400 for ongoing maintenance. I have researched the prices for this sort of equipment that meets all the safety requirements for between £500 and £1200.</p> <p>Are the peoples in charge of procuring such equipment getting best value for money for the tax paying public</p>	<p>The supply and installation of equipment follows the Council's procurement procedures to ensure best value is achieved.</p> <p>The £5k figure is an approximation of what can be achieved and is based on recent purchase and installation schemes across Oldham. Prices of items vary, but the estimates also include the supply &amp; delivery of the item, installation costs, associated landscaping and access works (where appropriate), and excavation and site preparation.</p> <p>Where excavation is needed, the estimate also includes disposal costs, and where site preparation is needed this</p>

				<p>includes base materials, drainage, edging and resurfacing.</p> <p>Finally, the estimate also takes account of site welfare facilities for those undertaking the works, as required and in accordance with standard procedures.</p>
23	Karl Bardsley	Councillor Chadderton	<p>I would like to ask the relevant cabinet member or council officer, who and why have the council allowed a 5G mast to be erected outside Chadderton parks children's play area on Chadderton hall road plus it is a visual discordant unsympathetic and of an intrusive scale and design That has resulted in excessive clutter in the street.</p> <p>The equipment has resulted in an imposing and overbearing impact on the amenity of nearby residents and will impact the quality of the local play area. Will the council please consider asking for this mast to be removed and placed in a more suitable area.</p>	<p>Certain types of equipment required by telecommunication operators can be installed under what are known as 'Permitted Development Rights'. However, where a mast is proposed up to 30m in height, the operator must first apply to the Local Planning Authority for what is called Prior Approval. This enables the Local Planning Authority to consider certain matters such as the siting and appearance of the proposals – but this is all that is permitted.</p> <p>I can confirm that an application for Prior Approval for the installation of a freestanding 15m monopole mast on Chadderton Hall Road was considered and approved by the Local Planning Authority on 1 September 2022.</p>

				<p>Whilst I appreciate the concerns raised by Mr. Bardsley regarding its appearance and location, it must be recognised that such a structure, wherever it is located, will have an impact and there are often technical constraints and limitations as to where such apparatus can be sited.</p> <p>In this case, having regard to trees and other tall structures in the vicinity such as lampposts and buildings, the proposal was not considered to result in such significant harm that could have reasonably justified a refusal of permission. As such it was approved, and that decision cannot now be reconsidered.</p>
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