

Oldham Borough Council



Council Meeting
Wednesday 13th December
2023

Supplementary Agenda

- 8 Public Questions (Pages 1 - 10)
(Public questions received and answers)

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Public Questions - Full Council 13th December 2023

	From / Date	To	Question	Response
1	Pat Highley 10/10/23 22:58	Councillor Brownridge	<p>Please could the council give serious thought to the siting and funding, including maintenance of two AEDs (Automotive External Defibrillator) in two of the boroughs largest parks, Tandle Hill Park Royton and Alexandra Park Oldham.</p> <p>Both of these parks have a heavy footfall and are used for sporting events as well as walking, running and cycling.</p> <p>If only one life is saved then they will be worth every penny. The longer a person goes without effective CPR and defibrillation, the less likely they are to survive.</p> <p>You can make a difference, please help to save lives.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. I can confirm that there is a defibrillator in Alexandra Park within the main office, which was donated to the park by a local family. At present, this is only accessible while the office is open, Monday to Friday 7:30 to 17:00, however we will ensure events and groups using the park outside these hours are aware of the defibrillator and have access to it in an emergency.</p> <p>We don't currently have a defibrillator at Tandle Hill Park, but I've asked Council teams to explore options for how one can be available in alignment with the Council's Community Defibrillator Policy.</p> <p>We would welcome support from any private sector partners, local businesses or families if they wish to come forward to help supply and maintain community defibrillators. This can be through charitable contributions or social value commitments.</p>
2	Megan Birchall 2/11/23 09:26	Councillor Fida Hussain	<p>What are we doing to support our businesses across the borough to ensure our people and economy thrive?"</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Megan.</p> <p>There are a range of things that we are doing to support businesses in the Borough. This ranges from direct business support aimed at helping businesses to start-up, grow and invest in the Borough through to a series of physical</p>

				<p>regeneration projects that will provide the foundations for businesses, people and our economy to thrive.</p> <p>The direct support includes a general business advice and guidance, sector specific support, workforce development, access to finance, digital and low carbon support. All of this support is underpinned by a variety of engagement events and comms activity to ensure that businesses know how to access the support on offer.</p> <p>The Council also works in close partnership with GMCA Growth Company to broker in support available at a regional level for businesses where applicable.</p> <p>In addition to this, there are a series of physical projects aimed at supporting our businesses, people and economy to thrive. These include plans for a renewed purpose for Oldham Town Centre as a creative place with a vibrant night-time and cultural economy, more jobs and homes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redevelopment of the Spindles to include a new market, retail space, office and events space • A new performance and theatre space for Oldham • development of the Green Shoots business centre to support business growth in the emerging Green Tech sector. <p>In addition to the above we are also trying to support our businesses, our people and the economy by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the amount the council spends with local companies and suppliers
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3	Conor Green 2/11/23 09:27	Councillor Mohon Ali	What are we doing to ensure our children and young people are getting the best possible education and employment opportunities?	<p>2023 saw significant system-wide improvements to the early years, education, and skills landscape in Oldham. 2024 will be an exciting year; we are in a strong position to deliver our ambitious plans to further improve outcomes for children and young people.</p> <p>We supported the opening of the Brian Clarke Academy as part of a Trust which has the best secondary attainment outcomes in the borough, and from the early data, the progression of the children at year 7 and Year 8 I am very hopeful that it will produce some of the best results in Oldham. The approval of the Eton-Star sixth form college will add 240 high-quality places each year from 2026.</p> <p>We have prioritised attendance as the foundation of positive outcomes. All Oldham's schools work in collaboration with the Council to target system resource where it can improve attendance the most. The impact can be seen in the improvement in our absence rates across the system.</p>

				<p>We have improved outcomes for children and young people at all stages of their education journey (KS4, KS2 writing/maths and in early years), setting the stage on further improvements over the coming years. Whilst our improving outcomes for free school meal children show that we are helping to improve social mobility, we are ambitious for all our most vulnerable children and young people.</p> <p>The second part of Mr Green's question is about employment. As Chair of the Employment and Skills Board, I have identified young people's employment as a priority area, and there are lots of plans in place. Just few months, on behalf of the administration I tasked the Council to organise young people's career event, bringing young people and employers under roof, which was a successful event, attended by 450 people. Delighted to be linking young people with opportunities.</p>
4	Shahdab Qumer 2/11/23 09:34	Councillor Shah	I can see all the work taking place in the town centre can I ask the cabinet member when we will see it starting to make a difference to people's lives? When will the homes be ready and the new cultural offer be used?	<p>Thank you for your question. Our communities, residents and businesses are at the heart of everything we do. Our town centre regeneration scheme is not just about creating a better place, we're determined to create opportunities for our residents, our communities and for future generations.</p> <p>Regenerating Oldham is of course about improving our town, making it a great place to live, work, and get on in life. But there's another hugely important aspect to what we're doing.</p> <p>We're creating decent well-paid jobs and apprenticeships for people when they need them most. Because of our regeneration activity, 72 Oldhamers now have new jobs created as a direct result of the projects being delivered. And that's only the beginning.</p>

				<p>We're keeping money in the borough too, with over £24m spent with local suppliers and businesses – everything from plants to pipes.</p> <p>Oldham is facing one of the biggest housing crisis'. This project, along with others we're working on is starting to deal with this, ensuring local people have access to decent, quality homes.</p> <p>We are delighted to have entered a long-term delivery partnership with award winning developer Muse Places who have a strong track record of delivery and share a joint ambition to build up to 2,000 much needed new homes in the Town Centre over the course of the initial 15 years of the agreement. We had our first partnership board meeting a couple of weeks ago, it was really productive and I'm glad to see that lots of hard work has already progressed. Work is already underway in drawing up proposals for the first three sites, the former sports centre, former magistrates court and Civic centre, which will also involve extensive public consultation next year.</p> <p>The outcome of the public consultation will then feed into the proposals ahead of formal planning applications being submitted.</p> <p>In parallel with this process, site preparation works will also be taking place next year so that building new homes can commence in 2025.</p>
5	Dhanyall Rashid 2/11/23	Councillor Goodwin	The impact of the Don't Trash Oldham campaign is evident in the area I live in it's much cleaner and the back alleys are so much	<p>Thank you for your question and for the feedback about the successes of the Don't Trash Oldham campaign.</p> <p>We recognise that the challenge around keeping the borough clean is continuous and we are working closely with residents</p>

	10:33		<p>better, what will be done to make sure it stays this way and doesn't go backwards? Also, some areas keep getting bad again and what will be done about this please? Regarding putting cameras in alleyways</p>	<p>and ward members to ensure that our communities are proud of where they live and actively take part in helping to ensure the areas stay clean and tidy to ensure the success achieved through the Don't Trash Oldham campaign over the last 2 years is maintained.</p> <p>Moving forward, engagement with local communities remains a priority and our resources focus on persistent and criminal fly tippers – taking legal action where appropriate. To help with this process, we are bidding for additional funding, which, if successful, will support the purchase of additional cameras which we will place at suitable locations to deter fly tipping and to catch those responsible.</p>
6	<p>Ghazala Rana 3/11/23 05:44</p>	Councillor Brownridge	<p>Having worked in the care sector for most of my life and knowing the challenges faced by the sector because of the lack of funding can the cabinet member please tell me how Oldham Council are managing to provide the care needed under these circumstances?</p>	<p>Thanks Ghazala for your question, and for all your hard-work in the care sector over the years.</p> <p>You are absolutely right about the challenges facing social care and particularly funding.</p> <p>Adult's social care is one of the biggest spending departments in this Council exactly because we have a duty under the Care Act to ensure the quality of services meet the needs of the residents in the locality.</p> <p>In order to meet this duty in Oldham we annually review the fees we pay to providers regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).</p> <p>The review considers the annual increases faced by employers, including in Oldham, the Living Wage Foundation rate which we as a Council has committed to pay all suppliers, including social care providers.</p>

The review also factors in any cost-of-living increases linked to prices for fuel and food. Prior to setting the fees for the forthcoming financial year we consult with providers ensuring that they have an opportunity to provide any feedback and things for further consideration.

In order to verify that services are of good quality and are meeting peoples' needs we contract and quality assure commissioned provision through a combination of monitoring reports and visits, which can be both announced and unannounced. Regular meetings are held with other key stakeholders such as the NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board, the Northern Care Alliance and Healthwatch to share information, monitor and manage any risks identified. Where concerns arise with a care provider, we work with them to support them with the improvement required.

In addition Oldham's Adult Social Care Market Position Statement, helps the service when working in partnership with the provider market, to advise of the areas where there is a need for either more or less care provision. An area where the service has identified further work is required is complex nursing care provision, the service are working closely with partners to address this.

I'm sure I speak for Social Care portfolio holders up and down the Country when I say we really need the Government to do their bit here and fix social care. For a long time Council's have been a sticking plaster but before long we won't be able to hold back the tide.

We've made a number of changes to how we operate in Oldham – and I want to publicly thank our staff for the way they've changed their working behaviour, quite radically in

				<p>some instances – because we’re trying to deliver the best possible services for as little money as possible.</p> <p>And in some cases that’s really difficult to do, we want everyone in Oldham who comes into contact with our adults social care team, no matter what age or ailment, to be independent, healthy, safe and well.</p> <p>This is no easy task but I think we’re making really good progress towards this.</p>
7	<p>Karl Bardsley</p> <p>5/11/23</p> <p>10:13</p>	<p>Councillor Jabbar</p>	<p>In light of recent concerns about the accuracy of financial information provided to Oldham residents by Cllr Abdul Jabbar, Oldham’s finance lead regarding the total debt and debt interest.</p> <p>I would like to request that the finance lead addresses this matter in the next council meeting.</p> <p>Can the finance lead clarify the discrepancies and reassure residents about the accuracy of future financial reporting? Furthermore, does the finance lead plan to resign in light of these concerns?</p>	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>It’s hard for me to respond properly because I do not know what Mr Bardsley is referring to.</p> <p>In fact I was quite alarmed that I might’ve misspoke and given incorrect information regarding this council’s finances.</p> <p>As a result I asked the finance team to check back against anything I said at the last full Council meeting and have been assured that there are no inaccuracies, and that the information I provided is the same information which was submitted to Audit Committee on 31st October 2023.</p> <p>So I remain satisfied that I have fulfilled my responsibilities regarding accurate financial reporting, and as much as it would bring Mr Bardsley and the Oldham Conservatives pleasure I shall not be resigning.</p>
8	<p>Lynne Kovacs</p> <p>9/11/23</p>	<p>Councillor Fida Hussain</p>	<p>There was a business networking event hosted by Oldham Council at Mazzo’s in Royton on 6th</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Lynne.</p> <p>The Council is committed to making the Economy work for Oldhammers. We recognise that in order to grow our economy</p>

	06:21		<p>November 2023. Can the relevant council member please confirm:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. how much money Oldham Council paid towards this event? 2. How many people in total attended this event? And how many of these were either councillors or OMBC employees? 3. Please explain why there were Labour Party councillors from other wards of Oldham who have no connection with repressing Royton in attendance? 4. Lastly, would the Council also like to comment how it looks when Oldham politicians are feasting at fancy restaurants whilst local families are living off handouts from food banks? 	<p>we need to engage with our business community so that we know how to help them to grow. This includes hosting a number of events a year. To date we have hosted 4 events this financial year, which have engaged with 2,650 business representatives at a cost of c. £4.95 per head.</p> <p>We have not had the final bill for the event at Mazzo's but it is within budget, and I am proud that the Council has supported a local business with this event.</p> <p>The Royton event had 71 attendees of which 59 were business representatives. There were 6 Councillors in attendance. These included 3 from Royton, the Leader of the Council, Cllr Islam and Cllr Taylor from Chadderton Central. Cllr Islam attended on my behalf as Deputy Cabinet Member for Business Enterprise and Employment. Cllr Taylor attended as Deputy Leader and with her Cabinet portfolio including Licensing which is a key issue for some businesses across Oldham.</p> <p>Finally, The Council is very acutely aware as to the impact on 13 years of austerity, the lack of economic vision and the increasing dependence on support from food banks. We continue to provide support to families in crisis facing issues in relation to the Cost-of-Living crisis. The engagement with the business community helps us shape how we can create jobs and grow the economy which is vital if we want to support our families.</p>
9	Dr Wolfgang Kohl 28/11/2023	Councillor Mushtaq	Andy Burnham's CSE assurance review found that statutory safeguarding procedures were regularly not followed by council employees, resulting in children	<p>Thank you for your question Dr Kohl.</p> <p>The Independent Assurance Review into historic safeguarding practice made clear that historic social care practice in relation to the CSE cases they looked at was not acceptable and that</p>

11:44			<p>being subjected to violent rapes, often by several men in succession with “relative impunity”, due to the “failure to disrupt and target their activities”. A recent reply to a Freedom of Information Request confirms that not a single council officer has been subject to disciplinary action.</p> <p>Does the council agree with MP Debbie Abrahams, who in a parliamentary debate on the 30th June 2022, called for council workers who had been negligent in their responsibility to protect these vulnerable children to go through a disciplinary process?</p> <p>Does the council believe that those former employees responsible should be investigated for criminal negligence?</p>	<p>opportunities to tackle the issue and to support victims were missed as a result.</p> <p>Since that time practice and understanding around the issue of child sexual exploitation – how to prevent it, how to tackle it and how to support survivors - has improved significantly. Reviews elsewhere have supported this practice improvement and locally this improvement has been tested through inspections and peer reviews of our safeguarding practice.</p> <p>In the years since those terrible events staff have undergone a huge amount of training to improve practice so today’s practice is thankfully not comparable with that being delivered in the past.</p> <p>Most recently we used the findings of the assurance review to provide additional training and instruction to staff from across children’s social care.</p> <p>The findings were reviewed internally to determine if any action needed to be taken in regards to specific practice and specific staff.</p> <p>While nobody has specifically been disciplined as a result of the findings of the independent review, where social care practice is found to be deficient the council does take disciplinary action and does refer social workers to the industry body, Social Work England.</p>
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