

Oldham Borough Council



Council Meeting
Wednesday 6th November 2024
Public Questions (item 8)

OLDHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
Supplementary Agenda – Item 8 (Public Questions)

- 8 Public Questions (Pages 1 - 18)
Public questions received for agenda item 8 and answers.

Public Questions - Full Council 6th November 2024

	From / Date	To	Question	Response
1	Imran Ghaffar 14/09/2024 16:33	Councillor Mohon Ali / Cabinet Member for Education & Skills	<p>Like many residents in Oldham I am excited to learn more about the 480-space sixth form college, a collaboration between Eton College and Star Academies, being built on the site of the outdoor market and car park.</p> <p>As both of us are practicing Muslims, will the leader of the Council confirm that the School will have an Islamic ethos and educate our young children according to the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH)? Will it be for just boys and those of Islamic faith only as some have suggested?</p>	<p>Following various announcements from the Government, we understand the financial challenges they are facing and we support the need to review projects and their costs, particularly in light of the improvements that are needed to existing school buildings.</p> <p>Every Oldham child, no matter where they live or whatever their background, is entitled to the opportunities which can help them fulfil their potential. The Eton Star Oldham proposal supports us in achieving this ambition. We're confident in the difference this project will make to the lives of children and young people in Oldham and we'll continue to make this case to the government.</p> <p>Eton Star Oldham would focus on admitting bright young students who aspire to attend top universities, regardless of their background. My goal is for the school to welcome many students on free school meals, looked-after children, those from disadvantaged areas, and those who would be the first in</p>

				<p>their families to attend university. This will give more children in Oldham the chance to achieve great outcomes, and I'm incredibly proud we've been able to secure this for our community.</p> <p>The college would offer a focused curriculum with academically demanding subjects. Students will start with four A-levels, with some choosing to focus on three A-levels later to fit their personal progression paths. Alongside A-levels, all students will study for a 'diploma.' They will also have access to Eton College's extensive network of teachers, alumni, scholars, partners, and educational experts.</p> <p>Eton Star Oldham would be open to both girls and boys from all faiths, as well as those with no faith.</p> <p>Whilst we await the outcome of the free school review we will continue to do all we can to ensure all children and young people in Oldham have the best start in life.</p>
2	Peter Webb 16/09/2024	Councillor Peter Dean / Cabinet Member for	We live in a Christian country with an established Church and the	Oldham is proud to celebrate our diverse communities, and we recognise festivals, important dates in different faiths, and

	<p>12:06</p> <p>Peter Webb</p> <p>16/09/2024</p> <p>12:50</p>	<p>Thriving Communities & Culture</p>	<p>Sovereign as the head of that Church.</p> <p>We are a tolerant nation with many faiths. Sadly, the personal is becoming the political.</p> <p>Whilst the Council promotes the lighting up of the Civic Centre for those of the Islamic faith, like was done on the 15th September 2024, it does feel like others are conspicuous by their absence, due in part perhaps to the Leader of the Council conflating personal religious beliefs with those Civic duties that treat all equally.</p> <p>So will the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, Christian celebration of Christmas & Easter, and Hindu festival of Divali be lit up in lights?</p>	<p>other significant events throughout the year.</p> <p>For example, we raise the England flag for St George’s Day, hold a rainbow parade to celebrate our LGBTQ+ communities, and mark occasions like Bonfire Night with a fireworks display. This weekend, we’ll honour Remembrance Sunday with a Festival of Remembrance, including poppy projections on our civic tower. And of course, we’ll have festive lights around the town as we approach Christmas.</p> <p>Our approach is to celebrate, remember, and reflect together on the things that make Oldham a wonderful place. We work to bring people together, ensuring that all our communities – of every faith and none – feel respected and valued.</p>
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3	Hannah Roberts 07/10/2024 19:45	Councillor Barbara Brownridge	Covid and flu vaccinations are now available for people over 65 & in target groups. I have heard that take up is lower this year. Can the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health & Social Care give us any information about progress in Oldham? What can the Council do to promote these vaccinations that protect against what can be a serious disease & also save valuable NHS resources by keeping people out of hospital?	<p>Thank you for your question Hannah, as we enter flu season, Oldham Council staff are working with the NHS and other partners to provide clear messages about the importance of all vaccinations, including the flu and Covid-19 vaccines. Flu is highly contagious and can be very serious. Getting the flu vaccine doesn't just protect you; it also helps prevent the flu from spreading to others who may be more vulnerable. By reducing the spread of illnesses like flu, we can help reduce hospital admissions and ease pressure on health services.</p> <p>To support this, we're making every contact count in our work with care home staff and other adult social care providers to raise awareness of vaccinations. We're also sharing information through newsletters, poster campaigns, and opportunities to talk directly with the community, such as wellbeing talks at leisure centres. Health practitioners delivering vaccines in Oldham have access to workshops on how to discuss</p>

				<p>vaccine hesitancy positively with residents.</p> <p>In addition, we're working closely with schools and our immunisation partners to ensure consistent messaging, so every parent in Oldham has the chance to consider flu vaccination for their children.</p> <p>As of 17th October, Greater Manchester figures show that around 20% of those eligible had received their winter booster.</p>
4	<p>Brian Kelly 08/10/2024 16:05</p>	<p>Councillor Abdul Jabbar</p>	<p>The Saddleworth Community Hydro Project recently celebrated its 10th Anniversary and generates enough sustainable electricity to power about 100 homes via the national grid, with an annual saving of 170 tonnes of CO2. Oldham has a good track record of delivering and supporting green projects and pioneering action to move towards net zero carbon production. Could the Cabinet Member responsible summarise progress on implementing the</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Brian, and for recognising Oldham's strong track record in supporting green technologies and initiatives.</p> <p>Oldham's pioneering Green New Deal Strategy was adopted in March 2020. Since then, the Council has been working hard, despite challenges, to put in place a delivery programme that will guide the borough to Net Zero.</p> <p>Although the Council has limited internal resources for this important work due to ongoing financial pressures, we've still managed to secure over £12 million in</p>

			<p>Council's Green New Deal Strategy?</p>	<p>grant funding for various projects. This funding supports initiatives like decarbonising public buildings, installing LED lighting at Oldham Leisure Centre, creating Oldham's Low Carbon Heat Network, and participating in the GMCA/DESNZ Local Net Zero Accelerator programme to form an Oldham Green New Deal Delivery Partnership.</p> <p>This new partnership is expected to bring in the investment and resources needed to achieve Net Zero. Once we have our Strategic Energy Partner on board, there will be a focus on Community-Led Energy Planning, ensuring that residents have a say in how low-carbon initiatives benefit their neighbourhoods. The partnership should be fully operational by spring 2026, with key projects like the heat network following soon after.</p> <p>Another exciting project is the Wrigley Head Solar Farm, which the Council is funding. This project will reduce carbon emissions, generate revenue for the Council, and bring ecological benefits to a former industrial landfill site. Construction is set to begin before Christmas 2024 and</p>
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				should be completed by spring/summer 2025.
5	Jenny Harrison 08/10/2024 18:57	Councillor Peter Dean	<p>Oldham Council has done a really good job renovating Royton Town Hall and Library which have just reopened. On a recent visit, I was very impressed with the sympathetic renovation.</p> <p>Could the responsible Cabinet Member explain what services will be available from the town hall and how local people can make best use of the building.</p> <p>The library is free to join and borrow books from - what else is on offer.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, I can confirm that the following services will be available from Royton Town Hall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mind – offering appointments for mental health support • Citizens Advice – offering drop-in sessions, as well as appointments for more in-depth support • Early Help – drop-in support for local families • Your Health Oldham – appointments for Stop Smoking • Guinness Housing drop-in surgeries <p>A number of other partners are currently confirming arrangements, and we will be announcing these elements of support in the near future.</p> <p>In addition to book borrowing, residents can access IT services including online basics course to support with digital skills.</p>

				<p>Other regular activities include Bounce and Rhyme sessions for families with children under 5, Baby Art Studio and the Royton Readers Groups.</p> <p>Programme of events (author events, family activities and local history talks etc) will be scheduled throughout the year to tie in with local, regional and national campaigns.</p>
6	<p>Dominic Wall</p> <p>11/10/2024</p> <p>15:43</p>	<p>Councillor</p> <p>Arooj Shah</p>	<p>The work at the Old Library has been underway for a while. Could the Leader of the Council confirm what the building will be used for and when it will be open for use? Does Cllr Shah know what social value – for example Apprenticeships and local jobs – has been added because of the project?</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Dominic. I was pleased to visit the building yesterday with my Cabinet colleagues to see the progress and to hear directly about the benefits for Oldham’s residents and communities through our partnership with Tilbury Douglas.</p> <p>We expect the Old Library building to open next summer. It will offer a great mix of creative, cultural, and community spaces along with civic and public services. This includes improved facilities for community groups to work together and for those needing more space for their activities. There will be extra gallery space on the top floor, connected by a bridge to the existing gallery, as well as a new Council Chamber, Mayoral chamber,</p>

				<p>rooms for elected members, and committee meeting rooms.</p> <p>The Old Library project has provided £9.2m in opportunities for local suppliers and trades, and it has generated £7.7m in social value. This includes 67% of the contracted workforce being local, 612 weeks of apprenticeship training, and 19 new jobs created.</p> <p>Tilbury Douglas has also contributed 263 hours of educational activities, attended career events at Oldham College, supported St Mary's Primary School's safety poster campaign, and helped at Oldham's job fair with Job Centre Plus, as well as Positive Steps.</p> <p>In addition, £9,926 has been donated to charities, including the Wall of Kindness, Oldham Working Wardrobe, and the Community Wardrobe. They've also supported Easter and Christmas donation drives for Oldham Council's Christmas toy appeal for children in social care.</p>
7	Paul Scoltock 14/10/2024 18:17	Councillor Chris Goodwin	Can the cabinet member give an update on the work being done by the Council and TGFM to	<p>Thank you for your question, Paul. I completely agree – it's a real issue.</p> <p>We're currently developing plans to introduce Oldham's first Red Route</p>

			<p>reduce antisocial parking on Union Street.</p>	<p>Corridor (a “no stopping” zone), and Union Street has been chosen as one of the first areas to benefit. On Red Routes, stopping is only allowed for emergency services vehicles. Blue Badge holders and taxis (Hackney Carriages) can also stop briefly to let passengers get in or out but are not allowed to wait.</p> <p>Unlike traditional yellow line restrictions, Red Routes can be monitored and enforced with camera technology, which serves as a stronger deterrent against illegal parking.</p> <p>Over the next few months, we’ll consult on this plan and advertise the Traffic Regulation Orders, with the goal of implementing the scheme early in the next financial year, once funding from TfGM is secured.</p>
8	<p>Candida Garvey</p> <p>16/10/2024 11:24</p>	<p>Councillor Abdul Jabbar</p>	<p>In regard to our council tax payments - is part of this money Residents of Oldham pay (apart from those who use their home as a place of worship?) Maintaining roads, pavements and street lighting, and cleaning your streets? This is a simple yes or no answer.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Candida. First, I’d like to clarify that the idea that people who use their home as a place of worship don’t pay council tax is simply not true. There are exemptions that may reduce council tax – for example, for those on a low income – but religion is not a factor.</p>

			<p>The answer is quite clearly NO. Our villages. Side street have never ever looked so tired and scruffy.</p> <p>Next question.... Where is our public money going? Why have we no weed contract? Sending out workers with a bit of weed spray once in several years is not cutting it.</p> <p>We want answers and we want the pride putting back into our villages. Lees/Springhead/Grotton totally neglected.</p>	<p>To address the substance of your question: council tax funds a vast range of services. According to the Local Government Association, councils provide over 800 services to residents, from maintaining roads, pavements, and street lighting to much more.</p> <p>Council tax also supports critical services, such as social care for older adults, support for looked-after children, and emergency and temporary accommodation for those in need. While these services are under immense pressure, we remain committed to essential services like street cleaning, road maintenance, and preserving our wonderful green spaces.</p> <p>We know a cleaner and greener borough is important to residents, that's why this Labour administration launched our Don't Trash Oldham campaign a number of years ago. Our staff are out across the borough every day, in all weathers, cleaning up and making environmental improvements.</p> <p>But they are a small team and we can't be everywhere at once.</p>
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9	<p>John Fay 16/10/2024 18:26</p>	<p>Cllr Peter Dean</p>	<p>1. The flood lights at Radcliffe running track are not working. Oldham community leisure deliver two running sessions on a Tuesday and Thursday.</p> <p>These are we'll attended and provide a safe traffic free running facility during the winter months.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question John.</p> <p>The Leisure Buildings Capital Requirements report went to Cabinet on the 14th of October, which included funding for repairs and maintenance at Radclyffe Running track.</p> <p>The works at Radclyffe have been listed as a top priority, after the call in period ended officers began working with OCL</p>

			<p>OCL have advised me that they are editing for confirmation for when a contractor will fix the lights.</p> <p>Can you advise when this will take place</p>	<p>and the contractor identified to carry out the work.</p> <p>The exact scheme is and timings are under development and will be finalised as soon as possible, because we're all keen to get it all sorted.</p>
10	<p>Dawn Bardsley</p> <p>24/10/2024</p> <p>19:32</p>	<p>Councillor E Taylor</p>	<p>'I would like to ask why criminal proceedings were stopped and a deal reached with The Masjid in Shaw Oldham and Oldham Council, instead of upholding the laws and taking action for criminal activity in regard to a Grade 2 listed building. This will open the gates for much more criminal activity where Grade 2 listed buildings are concerned'?</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Dawn.</p> <p>The Council decided to withdraw the prosecution because the building owners formally confirmed in writing that they are now fully committed to meeting all legal obligations to repair and protect the building. This includes fully cooperating with the Council on any investigations and submitting new plans for approval, including details about the building's materials as they were when the current owners took over.</p> <p>With this commitment in place, the Council didn't have grounds to continue the prosecution, as the owners agreed to meet all requirements.</p>

				<p>However, due to the serious concerns raised by the local community, the Council has made it clear that if there is any further non-compliance, we won't hesitate to restart prosecution proceedings.</p>
11	<p>Kelly Jones 24/10/2024 21:16</p>	<p>Councillor Peter Dean</p>	<p>I've lived here all my life and enjoyed the Santa parade every year with the Reindeer. My children enjoy it... It's the one thing we look forward to each year. we meet up with friends watch the parade, shop and eat in Oldham it brings us together.</p> <p>It's a tradition that's been enjoyed by thousands of people of all nationalities together and brought much joy to each child attending.</p> <p>Why and who decided to stop this beautiful tradition in Oldham... We the community was not consulted on this decision! shouldn't we as residents be asked what WE want!!</p> <p>It's so disappointing that not even a statement has been put to the</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Kelly</p> <p>The traditional reindeer parade was cancelled after the 2022 event following concerns about real reindeers being used in Christmas events in the UK. In 2023, it was changed to a Santa parade and merged with the Christmas Light Switch-On.</p> <p>Feedback from town centre businesses was that attendance had continued to decline over recent years and it did not attract the shoppers and spend they need.</p> <p>Working with town centre businesses, the events programme has been refreshed and we have already held the very</p>

			<p>public about this decision and asking US WHAT WE WANT</p> <p>This is a Christmas tradition for OLDHAM, stopping this will be a mistake for Oldham at a time when you need to bring in the shoppers in your now stopping them....</p> <p>Please re think this badly decided decision?</p>	<p>successful Nostalgic Oldham event in September, the Halloween trail, and last night's town centre family firework event all of which have brought in increased shopper numbers and feedback from the businesses and those attending has been extremely positive.</p> <p>Plans are now in the final stages for the Christmas Switch-On on 16 November and whilst the format may be different, we do expect that the event will be popular with residents, as well with the town centre businesses.</p> <p>We appreciate that when things change there is always some disappointment however it is important to make sure that what we deliver is fresh and exciting, and that it makes the impact we need for the town centre.</p>
12	<p>Lisa Parry</p> <p>28/10/2024</p> <p>16:22</p>	<p>Councillor E Taylor</p>	<p>What time frame have the Majid agreed to have St Paul's, Shaw put back to how it was prior to the unauthorised demolition?</p> <p>Why was no one from the community invited to the meetings, as to what was discussed and agreed regarding</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Lisa</p> <p>The agreement with the owners of St Paul's is that they would submit revised plans for planning and listed building consent applications as soon as possible. We expect to receive those plans within the next two weeks. Should planning permission and listed building consent be granted for the updated proposals, the</p>

			<p>a much loved building of St Paul's, Shaw so that the communities points of view were heard and negotiated upon and their feelings on this matter represented???</p>	<p>owners are required to start on site as soon as reasonably possible.</p> <p>Meetings held with the owners of St Paul's have been in relation to the prosecution: these are not public meetings, as it is not appropriate to involve the wider community in such legal and regulatory cases.</p> <p>However, the concerns raised by the community have been heard and used to inform the proactive nature of discussions by the Council to confirm all legal obligations now being met by the owners.</p> <p>Notwithstanding all of the above, the council still holds the right to recommence a prosecution if sufficient progress is not made by the owners.</p>
13	<p>Candida Garvey (second question)</p>	<p>Councillor Chris Goodwin</p>	<p>Where have our street cleaners gone?? Lees is awash with leaves, which is a slip hazard, especially to our elderly residents. I want to know what</p>	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>Street Cleaning teams play a crucial role in maintaining public health and safety, and environmental quality under the</p>

	22/10/2024 10:41		<p>has happened to the one that we had many years ago. I've been told that one can still be seen in Clarksfield? Our pavements are not safe. Our villages are scruffy. Get our money spent where it's needed. Clean our damn streets. You leave Oldham and nowhere is as scruffy and tired looking. Why is that?</p>	<p>banner of 'Don't Trash Oldham.' Staff continue to operate seven days a week in all weathers removing litter, debris, hazards and fly tipping from streets, alleys, and public spaces.</p> <p>The Autumn months place additional pressures on services and our sweeper fleet to meet the demands of leaf fall, and our focus will always be to support areas at risk of flooding.</p> <p>We fully appreciate the problems associated with leaf fall on pavements for those with wheelchairs or pushchairs and especially for our elderly residents, however when the leaves fall, we quickly change our normal sweeping and cleansing schedules to meet the prioritised needs of our local communities. This also applies when snow or ice are present.</p> <p>After checking work programmes, the Lees area continues to be covered by a mobile team who litter pick daily and the area is serviced by our sweepers on routine cyclic schedules.</p> <p>Please be patient if teams are not as visible in the usual areas at this time, they</p>
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				<p>continue to work really hard clearing leaves from areas known to be prone to flooding. However, I just want to take this opportunity to thank members of the community who voluntarily take part in the Don't Trash Oldham community events, and at this time of year help with leaf blowing and clearing debris from footpaths where is it safe to do so, and they put grit down and clear the snow on key routes when there is snow and ice on the ground to support our vulnerable residents and help them get about. Thank you</p>
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