

Oldham Borough Council



**Council Meeting
Wednesday, 18 December 2024
(Public Questions)**

OLDHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

8 Public Questions (Pages 1 - 12)

To consider questions submitted by members of the public.

Public Questions Full Council – 20th January 2025 (was 18th December 2024)

#	From / Date	To	Question	Response
1	Shona Farnworth Thu 07/11/2024 20:19	Councillor Taylor – Cabinet Member for Decent Homes	What are the plans for accessible homes for those with visible and non-visible disabilities as we the public do not know what the plans are around the lack of accessible homes stock within the council as the Tommyfield market should become this space?	Thank you for your question. All newly constructed dwellings have to be built to the ‘accessible and adaptable’ standards by law, so new homes being built will be easier to adapt for use by those with visible and non-visible disabilities. The Council’s Local Plan is in the final stages of development and may include further planning policies to provide homes specifically for those with disabilities, and we would welcome input and suggestions on how this could be done as we progress through the final stages on consultation. I’ll email Ms Farnworth about her specific ideas and suggestions so we can review them as part of this ongoing work.
2	Lewis Farnworth Thu 07/11/2024 21:04	Councillor Brownridge – Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing	What Support for Full time unpaid carers as the government budget left out full time unpaid carers living on £81.90 for 90+ hours a week care we provide as we are struggling. We have to choose whether to pay bills or eat?	Thank you for your question Mr Farnworth. We have a strong commitment to carers to support them in their caring role. We have put together a comprehensive package of support to make sure that no Oldhamer goes hungry or cold this Winter. We have used Household Support Funding from the Government to bolster our offer. This includes funding our Warm Homes Team to provide emergency fuel vouchers for pre-paid meters and to provide advice and guidance on reducing energy consumption. We have also invested in emergency supermarket vouchers to support

				residents to purchase food and essential items as well as funding Oldham Foodbank to maintain stock levels. We will contact Mr Farnworth and offer support for schemes that he is eligible for this winter. Additional support for carers includes support from the carers service who are able to complete an updated Carers assessment. An option to contact Adult Social Care for the cared for to request or a reassessment if it is felt this appropriate It is also advisable to contact Age UK/ Citizens Advice Bureau/DWP to check you are on the right benefits and if there are any additional support services you can approach. However I reiterate our message of support this winter, please don't hesitate to call our Helpline on 0161 770 7007.
3	Phillida Shipp Fri 15/11/2024 14:13	Councillor Taylor – Cabinet Member for Decent Homes	Can the Cabinet Member for Decent Homes explain what the process would be for developing a new Local Plan if Oldham withdraws from Places for Everyone? How long would it take from starting the process again to the adoption of a Plan and how much would it cost? What restraints would there be on developers applying to build on Green Belt and Local Green Spaces while the Local Plan is being drawn up?	Thank you for your question. If Places for Everyone was revoked for Oldham, the Council would need to start a brand-new Local Plan which could need to include the new higher housing and employment targets set by Government. This new approach would involve several stages of public consultation starting with a fresh call for sites and a review of the Green Belt, because there is not enough brownfield land available to meet the new requirements. We would need to consult on the options and opportunities, then again on the draft plan, and then again on the final plan before submission for examination and adoption.

				Overall, this process would likely last a minimum of 5 years depending on the feedback and engagement from the different consultation stages. With regards to the costs for producing a new plan – this would be in the region of about £500,000 (five hundred thousand pounds / half a million pounds) for the evidence base and examination, with additional costs for officer time over this time period. In the meantime, without PfE, the council would not be able to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, and so even Green Belt and local green spaces would potentially be vulnerable to applications for housing development if they demonstrate that they are sustainable.
4	Mike Rooke Fri 15/11/2024 16:53	Councillor Taylor – Cabinet Member for Decent Homes	‘I read in the Mill that Cllr Sykes in justifying his support for withdrawing from Places for Everyone said “I’d like to think we have all these people sitting on the boundary of Oldham waiting for this to happen... But we haven’t. If we were in a place where we had plenty of developers and planning applications, I’d be a lot more worried.” Can the Cabinet Member for Decent Homes confirm which developers made representations at the Planning Enquiry seeking to get sites currently protected from development included or extended?’	Thank you for your question Mr Rooke. Be in no doubt - big developers are licking their lips at the thought of Oldham being out of PfE. There is prime greenbelt across Oldham that could be developed at the click of the fingers, with no consideration of proper infrastructure which we could be powerless to prevent. What is happening in Liberal Democrat Stockport is simply a glimmer of what could happen in Oldham where there is so much more green space that is easy to develop without the protection of PfE. The developers aren’t keeping this secret as you can see their responses to planning inquiry for Places for Everyone.

5	Hannah Roberts Sun 17/11/2024 14:23	Councillor Taylor – Cabinet Member for Decent Homes	Everyone agrees that the priorities for Oldham are to build on previously developed land – Brownfield sites – and increase the numbers of affordable and social homes. Oldham Council has increased the number of brownfield sites in the Town Centre and by adopting the Mills Strategy. Are there other brownfield sites that haven't already been identified and included in the SHLAA and Places for Everyone? And what is the projected land supply over the next 10 years compared with the revised housing targets? Where will these homes be built if brownfield sites don't exist?	Thank you for your question. Every year the council updates the following documents - the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), the Brownfield Land Register and the Housing Land Supply - to ensure that they reflect the most up to date position and feedback from landowners, developers and agents. As part of this process, new sites may be added if they are considered deliverable and developable, including those submitted through the council's open Call for Sites. Including numerous calls for brownfield sites to be put forward during the many rounds of consultation for Places for Everyone, and no sites were put forward by those who are incorrectly claiming we can meet our targets without building on the greenbelt. As of 1 April 2024, there was land to accommodate approximately 8,230 homes over the next 10 years (including greenfield sites). This figure drops to only 6,048 homes when including sites that are brownfield (or part brownfield). The Government adopted a new standard method for calculating housing requirements last week, and these would require Oldham to deliver 910 homes a year, which equates to 9,100 homes over ten years. This is significantly higher than the average annual requirement under Places for Everyone (680 homes a year). As both the adopted Places for Everyone housing requirement and the Government's new housing requirement cannot be met on deliverable and developable brownfield sites alone, Oldham has to enable development on greenfield sites as well to ensure there is enough housing for all, and there would be increased pressure on
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				our protected open spaces and Green Belt land under the new housing requirement.
6	Dominic Wall Mon 18/11/2024 21:30	Councillor Taylor – Cabinet Member for Decent Homes	Can the Cabinet Member for Decent Homes estimate the cost to Oldham of turning down planning applications for housing which are later approved at appeal? Is it possible to say, for example, what the cost to the Council would be of turning down an application to build on Hanging Chadder which was later approved at appeal?	Thank you for your question Mr Wall. It is not possible to accurately estimate what appeal costs may be, as each planning application is different and the application for costs by an appellant will vary depending on the specific matters covered in an appeal and whether the appeal is heard by a Public Inquiry or not. However, where an application involves a large housing development, and the appeal is held through a public inquiry, it would be expected that appeal costs would usually involve six figure sums (hundreds of thousands of pounds) if the appeal is upheld (and the Council decision is overturned) and the costs are awarded against the Council.
7	Kathryn Phillips Thu 21/11/2024 17:28	Councillor Taylor – Cabinet Member for Decent Homes	Can the Cabinet Member for Decent Homes confirm what would happen to the 97.5% of Oldham's Greenbelt currently protected by Places for Everyone if Oldham withdraws from the plan?	Thank you for your question. Currently 97.5% of our beautiful greenbelt land is protected under PfE. If we withdraw, all of it is under threat. We can see what is happening in Stockport - our land is so much better here in Oldham and developers are licking their lips at the chance to build build build. The protection is lost because it means we wouldn't have an up-to-date development plan and we would need to create a new one. This would take a minimum of five years. In the meantime we would be expected to deliver more homes than what is under Places for Everyone due to the protection as

				explained in an earlier question – putting even more greenbelt at risk.
8	Diane Wrall Wed 27/11/2024 08:50	Councillor Taylor – Cabinet Member for Decent Homes	Can the relevant cabinet member please tell me why even if people object to large masts being put in certain locations, the permitted developments still ride rough shod over residents' voices in this borough. Also why is it that officers of this council who apparently work for us and the borough, quite happily have weekly meetings with IX, but feel that it isn't necessary or want to meet with residents who are rightly concerned about this issue and about IX acting as has been found out in the past in contravention to Health and Safety laws?	Thank you for your question. This is a complicated area of planning law, but essentially our hands are tied as – in summary – the national rules about these permitted development rights means that there are only very specific circumstances where we can intervene. All of the details on this are on our website if you want to understand the technicalities of this. What we absolutely have done is to ensure that where IX Wireless have been doing things which are unsafe we have suspended their work until they make it right. With regards to meetings with residents, this does happen as both Officers and Councillors have met with various local residents when it has been needed. Officers and Councillors also engage extensively on email with residents. We acknowledge the local frustrations and concerns being raised, and to try explain why there is very we can do.
9	Peter Webb Thu 28/11/2024 18:39	Councillor Goodwin – Cabinet Member for Don't Oldham	I would like to ask the relevant cabinet member the following question, Back in May 2024, I voted for my local Labour councillor based on the promise made in a leaflet distributed to residents of North Chadderton. The leaflet stated that £50,000 would be allocated for road safety improvements	Thank you for your question. Taking your points in reverse order, many thanks for commending the work being undertaken by St Herbert's School, which of course the Council will endorse. I can confirm that progress is being made to review the road safety concerns around this school. Council officers have been communicating with Ward Members and St Herbert's School

			around St. Herbert's School and the cemetery on Middleton Road. It has now been six months since the councillor's re-election, and residents, including parents, have yet to hear any updates on these plans. Could you please confirm if any progress has been made or if there are concrete plans to follow through on this commitment? Or was this simply a pre-election promise with no intention of being fulfilled? Additionally, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and commend St. Herbert's School for their proactive efforts in keeping children safe in the absence of these promised improvements. Would the council join me in congratulating the school for their initiative?	directly on the various options available to tackle the concerns being raised. Officers are currently developing the details of the road safety scheme and public consultation on the proposals will commence early in the new year. We will ensure there is an update provided to parents via the school newsletter and can I ask Ward members to assist with ensuring local residents are kept informed of progress please.
10	Barbara Beeley Fri 29/11/2024 21:38	Councillor Taylor – Cabinet Member for Decent Homes	IX Wireless Installations IX Wireless - their motto on the front of their website is "Cost Effective Ultra-fast internet Achieved with minimal disruption" The first two parts may be right but don't particularly interest me. However, the statement "Achieved with minimal disruption" could be the subject	Thank you for your question As stated in a previous response to a public question on this topic - communications operators do not need the Council's permission or any form of approval, as they have a statutory right to install communications equipment, especially telegraph poles, which we know local communities are very concerned about.

		of a really serious debate. I have yet to hear from anyone who thinks that IX are doing a great job, but I acknowledge that people usually make contact when they wish to complain. The complaints don't just come from the Oldham Borough Area but across the north-west where IX have operated. It is the local complaints which concern me as: A resident came home to find that IX intended to put a pole right in the middle of his lounge window. An elderly woman discovered that IX were about to put a pole next to her house wall. Where was the notification of such a proposed event? Nowhere to be seen. A man bought a house which he was spending quite a lot of money doing up and found large green cabinets and a huge pole (not the slim ones) directly in front of it. The irony was that a grit bin had been removed from the same area as it interfered with the junction sight lines! It is even more dangerous now! Where was the notification? The latest insult – a pole has been erected in Grotton less than a foot in front of the letterbox – yes, the side with the access slit. It is going to be	As a result, the council has very little control on exactly where this equipment can be installed. The only consideration the Council has a right to respond to is the position of equipment and its installation to avoid any public safety issues, according to permitting requirements. Nationally it is the appropriate Utility Regulator who issues licences to utility companies for England and Wales, and for broadband/comms it would be OFCOM who have granted a licence for IX to be a designated utility. In relation to how individual permits are issued, permits can cover an entire street or be site-specific. It is not a one size fit all approach, and it very much depends on how the permits are submitted to us by the utility company. In all cases, each permit will clearly state the location of the works. In relation to ensuring IX carry out their permitted works safely, the Council inspects their site operations to ensure they comply with their methods, timeframes, locations, and health and safety considerations. Members may be aware that the IX Wireless works were suspended for a number of weeks due to the Council raising health and safety concerns - weekly meetings took place to ensure that IX Wireless and their subcontractors were able to demonstrate and work in a safe manner before the permit suspension was lifted. Since this time, IX Wireless have fully engaged with the council and provided all documentation and assurances requested. It has been agreed that IX Wireless can currently operate with one team
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			extremely difficult to post our Christmas cards and for the postie to open the box to collect them. If in the future cabinets are added, it will be impossible to use the box at all. All this begs certain questions, the main ones of which require clear answers: Who granted IX Wireless the licence to erect their network in Oldham Borough and is checking that the licence is adhered to? Who scrutinised their proposals and agreed to the siting of the poles?	and provide a weekly programme of works in advance for assessment and approval prior to permits being applied for. It is not the Council's responsibility, nor is there any requirement for the Council to advise residents of these works taking place – this information is already publicly available on the www.onenetwork.com website. Ward members and local communities can review this information at any time. Finally, your last point about scrutinising proposals and agreeing locations of poles - each IX Wireless site will continue to be inspected, and IX Wireless have shown that they and their contractors can work in a safe manner. Following recent inspections, the Highways Streetworks Team are satisfied with their current progress and continued communication.
11	Michael Powell Sat 30/11/2024 17:30	Councillor Goodwin – Cabinet Member for Don't Trash Oldham	What is happening with the proposals for a 20mph speed limit in Diggle? We were promised a scheme for consultation however, there has been nothing and I understand it wasn't part of the working group discussions. I understand that the council is prioritising areas outside schools. There is a secondary school and nursery on Huddersfield Road and a primary school just off the road. When will proposals be put forward?	Thank you for your question I'm advised that there is a 20mph speed limit with traffic calming cushions proposed on Huddersfield Road between Wool Road and Lower Wrigley Green which is being finalised ready for public consultation in the new year. The works will be funded by a Section 278 contribution from the developers of the land in front for the new Saddleworth School. Following the trial of 20mph speed limits in other residential areas, we may look to increase the scope in Diggle subject to consultation feedback and funding being available.

12	Tom Penketh Mon 02/12/2024 17:07	Councillor Goodwin – Cabinet Member for Don't Trash Oldham	Can the Leader or relevant cabinet member update the council as to when the road naming policy was changed in regard to either renaming our roads or having a new road name in a development. The existing and current published policy is that names used have to be deceased or not duplicated?	Thank you for your question National legislation for renaming streets changed in January 2024 Apologies if the published Council policy does not reflect the national changes – Officers have been instructed to update and correct this as soon as possible
13	Karen Jakeman Thu 05/12/2024 22:33	Councillor Goodwin – Cabinet Member for Don't Trash Oldham	I am writing to you as a concerned resident of Springhead and Chair of LSG Business Hub to bring it to your attention that we find it appalling at the lack of care/maintenance we have received in our villages and in particular with regards the weeds and fallen leaves. The weeds had taken over pavements, side streets, everywhere really but I believe that when asked you say there is no longer money to maintain the weeds due to budget cuts and I guess that applies also to the many fallen leaves on foot paths that have not been cleared away and made have therefore made it hazardous for people to walk. A good example is outside Lees Library where I myself cleared bags of leaves away from the area in front of the Library to ensure people using it where able to visit the Library without incident.	Thank you for your question The Councils Street Cleansing service work 7 days a week providing essential services across the whole borough, this covers not only mechanical sweeping, but they also empty street litter bins and we have community / mobile litter clearance teams in action. In addition to this, we have officer teams collecting and clearing the blight of fly tipping that also impacts on our neighbourhoods and local communities. The Council previously had a contractor commissioned to treat weeds across the borough, however due to contractual issues with external providers, no treatment was undertaken, and with the ideal growing conditions, weeds have flourished. Nationally many councils have withdrawn this service due to growing concerns of the use of weedkiller, however, studies have shown it remains safe and therefore Council continue with this service. Council staff have now been trained on these duties and over the last couple of months, two new specialist spraying quads have been deployed, to work alongside the one already in the service. Following weed-spraying being brought back in house, the

			We have also swept up behind the bus stop where people cut through from the car park on Warrington Street. As for the weeds, this year they were allowed to grow and grow and then were sprayed leaving unsightly dead plants, which is worse than having the weeds. So the question is why are you no longer maintaining our pavements? This is one reason why we pay our Council tax and we feel that our Community has been let down due to you neglecting the maintenance of our streets.	treatment of main roads and district centres was undertaken as a priority, with all adopted roads and pathways being treated next year. At this time of year, the sweeper fleet are inundated with requests for service about tree debris and leaf fall. As Oldham is so beautifully green, team work 7 days a week to try and keep on top of this mammoth task as we understand the impact leaves can have for mobility and access, and importantly blocking drains which lead to localised flooding. Over the course of leaf fall, the Council's dedicated team clear over 1,300 tons of leaves annually. As a reminder – all residents and ward members are encouraged to report concerns relating to leaf fall especially where there are public safety concerns.
14	Matthew Broadbent Monday, December 16, 2024 1:08 AM	Councillor Taylor – Cabinet Member for Decent Homes	In July, a motion was unanimously passed by the council to postpone a “decision” on requesting revocation of Places for Everyone until the autumn, to be informed by a report by relevant council officers. The report clarified that its purpose was to assist with the decision. Given that the July motion required council to make a decision about leaving PFE, why was council not asked to make this decision upon considering the report? When, and by what process will this decision be made?	Dear Matthew Thank you for your question. At the 6th November 2024 meeting the motion before the Council that it had to vote upon was in summary: 1. To reflect upon information provided in workshop sessions 2. To note officer recommendations to NOT write to the secretary of state to request revocation of the PFE 3. To retain PFE 4. To continue to prepare an Oldham Plan as the Part 2 Plan for Oldham under the PFE. The motion carrying the above recommendations was lost. It didn't require the Council to write to the Secretary of State to Seek

				Revocation. It was anticipated that members would submit a valid motion for the meeting on the 18th December 2024. This did not happen. Any members who approach officers about next steps have been advised that a valid motion needs to be presented seeking that the Council write to the Secretary of State to Revoke Oldham's status within the PFE and provide some Grounds as to what the proposal will be for alternative Housing Delivery.
15	Gillian Holden Monday, December 16, 2024 1:17 AM	Councillor Taylor – Cabinet Member for Decent Homes	At the November council meeting, the recommendations pertaining to revocation of Places for Everyone were rejected. Cllr Howard Sykes was assured prior to the meeting that if the report were lost a letter would be sent to the Government requesting revocation of Places for Everyone. I have read this is no longer the case. Please can you explain why the leader of the opposition was told this, when it is apparently not the case? I have also been told that for constitutional reasons the matter cannot return to council for 6 months. Can you please clarify if this is correct?	Dear Ms Holden, Thank you for your question. It is incorrect that Cllr Sykes was assured prior to the meeting that if the motion was lost a letter would be sent to the Secretary of State seeking revocation. The only brief discussion that took place with Cllr Sykes before the meeting related to why his sought amendment was not allowed. Cllr Sykes was informed about the reasons why his amendment was not suitable and that he will need to vote against the current motion. In relation to the second part of your question. It is correct that a matter cant be decided upon twice within a municipal year, however the November meeting was a continuation of the amended July meeting and so a second consideration of the PFE is permitted in the current municipal year.