

Oldham Borough Council



Council Meeting
Wednesday 12 November 2025

OLDHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

**To: ALL MEMBERS OF OLDHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL,
CIVIC CENTRE, OLDHAM**

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Item 8. Public questions

Responses to public questions enclosed.

Public Questions - Full Council: Wednesday, 12th November 2025

	From / Date	To	Question	Response
1	Hannah Roberts Tue 23/09/2025 11:40	Councillor Barbara Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing	Can the Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care confirm NHS advice on taking paracetamol during pregnancy and why it is important that parents and carers follow NHS guidance on childhood vaccinations? Can she also outline what action the Council is taking to promote childhood vaccinations and whether there are any plans for Family Hubs to support parents and carers in making sure children get protection from dangerous diseases such as measles, rubella, polio, diphtheria, hepatitis B, tetanus and whooping cough?	<p>Paracetamol remains the recommended pain relief option for pregnant women when used as directed. Oldham GPs continue to prescribe it to our Oldham mothers and encourage its use amongst family members safe in the knowledge this advice is based on the best evidence we have. Fever and untreated pain are much more serious risks to mothers and unborn children</p> <p>Vaccinations are a safe and effective way of protecting children from serious diseases, which if contracted can lead to long term health problems and in some cases, loss of life. Vaccinations protect the individuals receiving them, as well as other people in the community who have not reached the minimum age to be vaccinated or may not be able to have vaccinations due to severe allergies, or weakened immune systems.</p> <p>Oldham Council have funded voluntary sector Community Health Champions who have taken part in VaxChat training. They have been using this learning to share vaccination messages with the communities they support. Oldham Council are working with two of our Health Champion organisations to gather insights from communities with low take up of MMR vaccination to better understand the</p>

				<p>barriers to vaccine take-up so that we can tailor our future approach.</p> <p>Oldham Council funds the integrated children's and families service that operates out of the family hubs. This includes health visitors providing clear and evidence-based information to parents and carers about the benefits and safety of vaccines. They can help address misinformation, and help our communities understand what vaccines are due and when.</p>
2	<p>Jenny Harrison</p> <p>Wed 24/09/2025 14:25</p>	Councillor Chris Goodwin, Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways	<p>It really was useful to be able to use pensioner and disabled bus passes before 09.30 on Bee Network buses during August.</p> <p>Are there any plans to put this in place permanently?</p> <p>And how is the new 28 day Bee Network bus pass for 18-24 year olds, costing £40 a month, being promoted to ensure that as many young people as possible benefit?</p>	<p>Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) is responsible for this initiative, which aligns with its broader Bee Network strategy to improve connectivity, reduce barriers to travel, and enhance public transport access for residents across Greater Manchester.</p> <p>Oldham Council actively supports these initiatives, reflecting its ongoing commitment to securing the best outcomes for local communities. Through close collaboration with TfGM and the Bee Network, the council continues to champion improved transport options that meet the needs of Oldham's residents.</p> <p>We will continue to promote these offers to our residents through our usual communication channels.</p>
3	Rosalynne Birch	Councillor Shaid Mushtaq, Cabinet	The Labour Government has increased support for parents to help with childcare costs for children from 9 months to starting	The expansion of 30 hours of free childcare for eligible working parents from September 2025 is providing significant additional support for families in Oldham.

	Wed 24/09/2025 17:46	Member for Children and Young People	school. This includes introducing 30 hours a week free childcare for eligible working parents from September 2025. Is the Cabinet Member able to say how many parents in Oldham have benefited and how much this saves in nursery fees? And what support is Oldham Council giving to childcare providers to be able to deliver this increased offer?	<p>Government data shows that at the end of the summer term, 3,054 families were already accessing the working parents entitlement, and since September, a further 906 families have taken up the extended offer.</p> <p>In terms of savings, while the Government estimates that families could save up to £7,500 per child per year, our local analysis based on average nursery fees of £6.33 per hour for 1,140 funded hours suggests a potential saving of around £7,216 annually for each child. This represents a substantial reduction in childcare costs for working parents in Oldham.</p> <p>To ensure providers can deliver this increased entitlement, Oldham Council is offering a comprehensive package of support. This includes training and networking opportunities, dedicated working groups, and access to both capital and revenue grants. These measures are designed to help providers expand capacity and maintain high-quality provision for families.</p>
4	Valerie Leach Wed 24/09/2025 19:35	Councillor Elaine Taylor, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods	Given the acknowledged importance of the Saddleworth School site in providing much needed housing, including truly affordable housing which is really difficult to find in Saddleworth, please can the Cabinet Member tell us the timetable for development and when homes will start to be built?	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>The former Saddleworth School site is earmarked for housing development as a council-owned site in our medium-term housing land supply. Officers have been addressing negotiations over the relocation of a telecoms mast on the site until recently, and the site could not come forward for development until that matter was concluded.</p>

				<p>Now that matter is resolved, the housing delivery team will be looking to bring the site to market in the near future.</p> <p>However, developing a site for housing is not a quick process, bearing in mind land deals need to be negotiated and planning permission sought before a spade can even be put in the ground. As such, it will be at least two years before we see the first home completed on the site.</p>
5	<p>Dave Barter</p> <p>Thu 25/09/2025 15:56</p>	Councillor Chris Goodwin, Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways	<p>Oldham bus users have been affected by the strikes on Stagecoach, Metrolink and First buses, and Oldham residents working on the buses have been affected by many years of low pay and poor working conditions - while all three firms have seen a rise in profits and are doing very well out of the network. Could the Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways tell us how the council is pressing operators to listen to their staff and ensure any pay offer is fair and above inflation, for the benefit of passengers and workers on our buses?</p>	<p>Thank you for raising this important issue, Mr Barter.</p> <p>The council recognises the significant disruption that recent industrial action has caused for passengers in Oldham, and we also acknowledge the concerns of bus workers who have faced years of low pay and challenging conditions.</p> <p>Although pay negotiations are a matter between the operators and their staff, the council – through the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Transport for Greater Manchester – has been actively pressing for fair treatment of workers.</p> <p>I'm firmly of the view that any pay offer should reflect the rising cost of living and be above inflation, ensuring that drivers are properly rewarded for the essential service they provide.</p> <p>Recent progress shows that this approach works: following sustained pressure and dialogue, Unite members at First Bus secured an exceptional pay deal worth up to 20%, and Stagecoach drivers have agreed improved offers of around</p>

				<p>12%, alongside better conditions such as holiday entitlement and sick pay. These agreements were only reached because we insisted that operators return to the table with realistic proposals that respect the workforce and maintain service stability for passengers.</p> <p>Looking ahead, we will continue to use every lever available under the Bee Network franchising model to hold operators to account. Our priority is to ensure that the network delivers for passengers and that those who keep it running are treated fairly. We will keep monitoring pay and conditions and work with unions, operators, and TfGM to prevent disputes escalating and to maintain a reliable, high-quality bus service for Oldham residents.</p>
6	<p>Steven Croft</p> <p>Mon 20/10/2025 19:22</p>	<p>Councillor Elaine Taylor, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods</p>	<p>'What action will the council take to secure removal of unsightly and inappropriate iX Wireless masts from residential areas in line with successes in other GMCA authority areas?'</p>	<p>Thank you for the question, Mr Croft.</p> <p>The Council can only consider taking action to secure the removal of telecoms apparatus where the apparatus is not permitted development, and an appropriate permission has not been secured.</p> <p>Whilst IX Wireless did not secure the appropriate approvals before installing some apparatus in certain other GM boroughs – and so those authorities were able to secure the removal of that unpermitted apparatus – IX Wireless have followed the correct procedure when working in Oldham and secured the appropriate planning approvals before installing their apparatus, where permission was needed.</p>

7	Nicola Walsh Thu 23/10/2025 20:55	Councillor Chris Goodwin, Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways	<p>The gullies in Lees were supposed to be cleared in May but, after they were done in August, I've noticed some which were missed and now look hazardous, a worry as the colder weather is due to hit which will cause an issue with freezing water on pavements and roads.</p> <p>One in particular on Den Lane where the bottom of Taylor Green Way meets it is completely blocked, already there is a steady flow of water onto the bad bend on Stamford Road near St John's Church.</p> <p>When are the council going to attend to these missed gullies in Lees?</p>	<p>The gully cleansing programme commenced late September 2024 to progressively work through all 47,500 gullies in the borough using two gully wagons, one being brought in additionally just for the task.</p> <p>After just over a year, out of the 20 wards in the borough, the programme has visited over half of these, currently progressing in the 11th ward, achieving an initial clearance rate of between 70 & 80% on average.</p> <p>The aim of the programme was to clear as many gullies as possible as quickly as possible. Gullies that have been found to be either more solidly blocked or inaccessible are now being dealt with, with one team currently going through the first ward on the programme again. Some gullies need digging out, others repairing, and some accessed by removal of parked cars – this process is happening in parallel. Members are helping operatives where possible ensure cars are moved in advance. Teams will inform ward members when a revisit to the ward is made.</p> <p>In accordance with the Council's stated policy on the website, ad hoc visits to clear gullies where there is a significant risk of internal flooding or highway safety will take place as part of the routine reactive highways maintenance service.</p>
8	Lynne Thompson	Councillor Arooj Shah, Leader of the	About 12 months ago there was a stage 1 assessment of Diggle clock tower and looking at options to bring it back to use. When will	In January this year, following the announcement by Government of support for five local inquiries into child sexual exploitation, Oldham Council began the process of commissioning its local inquiry, including engaging Tom

	<p>Mon 27/10/2025 15:19</p>	<p>Council & Cabinet Member for Growth</p>	<p>this move onto the next stage? I understand there was some funding allocated in a cabinet meeting some time ago. With some of the other capital projects going on, is this money still available to move things forward to the next stage?</p>	<p>Crowther KC, who had undertaken the Telford local inquiry, as its potential chair.</p> <p>However, while this work was underway, in June, Baroness Casey published the outcome of her audit on group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse which included a recommendation for a national inquiry to include targeted local investigations.</p> <p>At this point conversations with the Home Office focused on whether it might be better for a local inquiry in Oldham to form part of this statutory national inquiry with the additional legal powers available to it. Conversations were held about how this could be implemented and what it would mean for our existing plans here in Oldham. An update was provided to survivors to explain that this process was underway and was likely to take some time.</p> <p>We continue to await news from the Home Office of the proposed chair of the national inquiry and confirmation of Oldham's position in relation to that inquiry.</p> <p>Officers have requested an update on Oldham's position within the planned national inquiry and the timescales for that information to be made available.</p> <p>We will continue to seek the best outcome we can that ensures survivors have their testimony heard and get the answers they deserve.</p>
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9	<p>Syed Maruf Ali</p> <p>Tue 28/10/2025 11:27</p>	Councillor Elaine Taylor, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods	<p>Recent reports and census data suggest that thousands of homes across Oldham are currently vacant, with many classed as long-term empty properties. Some sources indicate figures ranging from around 1,100 to over 4,700 empty dwellings in recent years.</p> <p>Could the Council please provide the most up-to-date figures on the number of empty and long-term empty homes in Oldham?</p> <p>Furthermore, what action is being taken to bring these properties back into use, and how is the Council ensuring that these homes contribute towards addressing the borough's housing shortage and supporting local families in need of accommodation?</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, the number of empty homes in the Borough fluctuates, and the majority are only empty for a short period, while work is carried out, or because the property is in probate. Latest Council Tax data indicates that there are 884 empty properties in Oldham, of which 561 are classed as "long term empty", meaning they have been vacant for a period of at least 12 months. It is these long-term empty properties which have the potential to become problematic for neighbours, as well as representing a wasted opportunity, at a time when so many are struggling for secure housing.</p> <p>While the Council makes use of a variety of powers available to us around empty homes, addressing these properties can be a complex issue, often involving significant investigative work, in order to ascertain ownership, make contact with the owner, and support them to identify the best way to bring their property up to standard and back into use.</p> <p>Having looked at best practice from elsewhere, we are currently working with GMCA on options to work more closely with the owners of empty properties, to ensure that these houses are more quickly made available for people in Oldham.</p>
10	Michael Powell	Councillor Elaine Taylor, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods	Over the past two years, the council has been unable to secure a contractor to manage weeding across the borough. This year, the responsibility was transferred to existing environmental staff, despite	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>The contractor engaged to provide the service withdrew, without notice in spring 2024, leaving Environmental Services with a very short window to try and engage services of a replacement provider. Many local authorities</p>

	<p>Sun 02/11/2025 13:47</p>		<p>ongoing cuts to the team. Unfortunately, placing this extra burden on the team does not appear to have been effective, as many areas of Saddleworth remain significantly overgrown with weeds. Could the council please outline what actions or plans are in place to address this issue and ensure that weed control across the borough is properly managed moving forward?</p>	<p>across the UK have ceased the use of commercial herbicides in the public realm. This reduction has also seen a large scale decline in the number of specialist contractors offering this service. This impact led to an inability to secure a contractor through 2024, leading to the decision to bring the service back in house towards the back end of the year.</p> <p>To support this additional role, and after significant investment, specialist quad spraying bikes were purchased and staff trained to use them. Over the course of this year, a full treatment has been carried out to all 20 wards across the borough. With district centre, main corridor routes also having additional treatments.</p> <p>As this was the first full treatment since 2023, teams progress has been slow given how well some weeds have become established. The treatment uses commercial strength weedkillers. As many areas, especially the country roads in Saddleworth have large well established hardy weeds, teams have had to carry out extra treatment's using specialist herbicide design for hardy woody weeds. The need for additional spraying has slowed progress and at times has also been hampered by the weather. As we move into 2026, our teams will be out as soon as the weather permits and will again focus on a full treatment with further specialist treatments in affected areas with hardy weeds.</p> <p>As well as quads bikes, we are backing up with mobile teams delivering hand weed treatments. Additionally, 4 of</p>
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11	Lucia Rea Tue 04/11/2025 14:37	Councillor Shaid Mushtaq, Cabinet Member for Children & Young People	<p>Can the Council confirm whether it intends to move forward with the local CSE inquiry independently and if so, whether this will begin prior to the start of the national inquiry?</p> <p>What discussions have taken place to date with the Home Office regarding the establishment of this inquiry?</p> <p>What progress has been made in securing a start to the inquiry, including whether the Council has formally discussed appointing Tom Crowther KC as Chair of the inquiry?</p> <p>It was never made clear to survivors or the community that the commencement of Oldham's inquiry was reliant on the timing of the national inquiry.</p>	<p>In January this year, following the announcement by Government of support for five local inquiries into child sexual exploitation, Oldham Council began the process of commissioning its local inquiry, including engaging Tom Crowther KC, who had undertaken the Telford local inquiry, as its potential chair.</p> <p>However, while this work was underway, in June, Baroness Casey published the outcome of her audit on group-based child sexual exploitation and abuse which included a recommendation for a national inquiry to include targeted local investigations.</p> <p>At this point conversations with the Home Office focused on whether it might be better for a local inquiry in Oldham to form part of this statutory national inquiry with the additional legal powers available to it. Conversations were held about how this could be implemented and what it would mean for our existing plans here in Oldham. An update was provided to survivors to explain that this process was underway and was likely to take some time.</p> <p>We continue to await news from the Home Office of the proposed chair of the national inquiry and confirmation of Oldham's position in relation to that inquiry.</p>

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