

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD**  
**20/10/2020 at 6.00 pm**



**Present:** Councillor McLaren (Chair)  
Councillors Taylor, Jacques, Curley and Williamson

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Fielding	Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills
	Head of Lifelong Learning, Employment and Skills Service
	Community Safety Manager
	Reward & Recognition Strategic Lead
	Constitutional Services
	Constitutional Services

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Surjan and Councillor Toor.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

**3 URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

**4 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions received.

**5 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020 be approved as a correct record.

**6 MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 24TH SEPTEMBER 2020**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Joint Meeting of Overview and Scrutiny held on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020 be approved as a correct record.

**7 MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY SELECT COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting the Performance and Value for Money Meeting held on 27th August 2020 be noted.

**8 GMCA CORPORATE ISSUES AND REFORM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the GMCA Corporate Issues and Reform meeting held on 8th September 2020 be noted.

**9 GMCA ECONOMY, BUSINESS GROWTH AND SKILLS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the GMCA Economy, Business Growth and Skills Overview and Scrutiny Committees held on 10th July 2020 and 11th September 2020 be noted.

## **GMCA HOUSING, PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**



**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the GMCA Housing, Planning and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committees held on 29th July 2020 and 10th September 2020 be noted.

### **OLDHAM WORK AND SKILLS STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board received and considered an update on the progress made in relation to the key components of Work and Skills Strategy. The Board were informed that the impact of Covid 19 had been significant and noted a supplementary paper had been produced to examine the primary impact upon unemployment.

The Work and Skills Strategy (2016-2020) sought to improve population skills outcomes to support Oldham's strategic goals. It was intended to inform and raise awareness across the Oldham Partnership of the complexity of and multiple challenges facing the employment and skills systems, and to position the Oldham economy in the context of emerging strategies for employment and skills across Greater Manchester (GM).

The Work and Skills Strategy was organised around four strategic goals, supported by a new outcomes framework for work and skills:

- 1.1. Create jobs**, including targets for Phase 2 of Get Oldham Working
- 1.2. Social regeneration and in-work progression**, including the new pilot Career Advancement Service
- 1.3. Deliver the OESC and improve the colleges**, including a commitment to support the sustainability of the post-Area Based Review settlement for Oldham
- 1.4. Support a thriving private sector**, including to better represent our six priority employment sectors in our partnership framework

The Board were informed of key highlights, including:

- The successful attraction of £3m of European Social Fund monies (to date) to deliver the Skills Support for Employment (previously Skills for Employment and Skills Support for the Unemployed), RAISE, National Careers service programmes which had enabled a full programme of employment and skills support to be delivered by Get Oldham Working.
- In addition, as a response to the economic fallout from Covid 19, the Get Oldham Working team had secured an extension of Skills for Employment until 2023 and a new contract called JETS (job entry targeted support) secured for next 18 months, starting in October 2020 for those that had been unemployed short term and been on benefits for 13 weeks, a total value of £370k.
- Agreement with GM Combined Authority to maintain the £2.83m commitment to Oldham Lifelong Learning Service to deliver Adult Education Budget related activity.

Additional funds had been secured to deliver the Talk English programme.



Key risks were noted, including:

- 75% of corporate funding had been disinvested due to budgetary pressures but this had been more than offset by winning externally funded projects.
- The devolution agenda was more keenly focussed on skills provision that led to increased productivity and met the needs of employers. This would reshape the current offer which might have an impact on some learners.

The position in June 2020 in relation to each outcome was set out and compared to the position in 2016 and the intended outcome by 2020.

Members requested and received clarification on the following:

- Apprenticeship low pass rate – the apprenticeship levy had changed the way the programme was delivered and current learners were not necessarily as motivated.
- Acceleration of priority aims – this would be happening. Oldham had upskilled many people who had then moved on. The pathways were established and employers being encouraged to use them. The aim was to offer progression to a career rather than just a job.
- Impact of Covid and Brexit – a recovery plan would be put in place for the next twelve months, which would be brought to the Board. It was expected that a revised Strategy would be brought after that.
- Education and training in the recovery period – the comprehensive spending review had looked to devolve funding to colleges and the colleges had been expected to improve employer involvement. In the current situation, the spending review had been revised and there may be a delay to devolving the funding.
- The impact of the ending of the in-work training fund on the recovery plan – the Council will be looking at all available funding and there could be more funding for Kickstart. As people increasingly needed to compete in a global market, there was a need to develop their skills.

**RESOLVED** that;

1. The update be noted.
2. The recovery plan to be put in place for the next twelve months be brought to the Board for review.
3. The revised Strategy be brought to the Board

## **IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON UNEMPLOYMENT, INCLUDING YOUNG PEOPLE AND CARE LEAVERS.**

The Overview and Scrutiny Board received and considered an update on the impact of Covid 19, which had been a hugely significant economic event, alongside the clearly evident impact on the health and wellbeing of many citizens. The report was a position statement which reviewed the latest data relating to

economic inactivity and proposed programmes to address these issues, with a review of the impact upon youth unemployment. However, it was noted that this was likely to change over the coming months, as local and national restrictions were implemented. The dynamic of the Government policy had been shaped by a quick recovery phase in Quarter 2 and 3 during 2020 with the economy moving back to business as usual. This was looking increasingly unlikely, as cases of Covid-19 increased

The Board was informed there were three key aspects which needed to be considered in terms of Covid related employment concerns, the first being the rise in unemployment, the second was the impact of the furlough scheme and consequences of this scheme ending in October 2020, and finally the confidence in companies to create new opportunities.

The Board noted that the Oldham economic function had been significantly impacted by the effects of Covid 19 lockdown.

- 32,000 Oldham employees on the Job Retention Scheme
- 8,900 claims made for Self-Employment Income Support Scheme
- 13,985 citizens claiming unemployment benefits.
- Since the beginning of Covid-19, Oldham's monthly Claimant Count had increased by **108.7%**, a similar rate to GM (**109.6%**) but lower than English levels (**128.1%**).
- Over the same period Oldham's monthly Youth Claimant Count had increased by **136.5%**, faster than GM (**125.5%**) and slightly lower than England (**139%**).
- In July 2020 c. 55% of citizens were economically inactive.
- Modelling suggested that unemployment in Oldham would reach c.22,000 by end of November.

GMCA and HM Government had invested in services to support citizens back into employment. The Autumn Statement could see investment in key infrastructure schemes and ensuring that this activity supported Oldham's citizens and young people was paramount.

Members requested and received clarification on the following:

- Support in finding jobs for care leavers – there were two schemes and pathways in place for care leavers and people with disabilities. The facilities of the Kickstart programme were being reflected to offer support and the Council was working closely with employers and Job Centre Plus. Work was underway with care leavers to identify their ambitions and to prepare them for the application process so they were ready to apply for opportunities.
- The increase in modelling figure to 22,000 from 14,000 current claimants – Greater Manchester was lobbying to

get early access to information on redundancies. As government support for business reduced, it was expected that the number of claimants would increase in November and December, when businesses could not afford to pay staff and people could not live off reduced pay. There were many variables, including the impact of local lockdown on the ability of businesses to compete for national contracts. Business support had been increased by over £50M in six months.

- Support for people becoming self-employed – there was government funding for this. An increase in start-ups had been evident, though some new businesses would wait until the situation improved. The Council was also securing income for social enterprises and maximising inward investment.
- The success of grant applications - GMCA had launched the AEB Local Authority (LA) Grant Programme on the 6th July 2020 to enable each LA to submit proposals for work towards alleviating barriers and constraints faced by residents around Adult Skills. The Council had submitted applications to a value of £150k and these had all been successful.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The update be noted.
2. The update on the Covid-19 recovery plan be brought to the Board at the earliest opportunity.

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## **COMMUNITY SAFETY AND COHESION PARTNERSHIP**

The Board received an update on the Community Safety and Cohesion Partnership

- The Community Safety and Cohesion Partnership commenced activity at the start of the year to refresh the local CSCP Plan
- A partnership workshop was held which clearly identified:
  - the need to focus upon behaviours causing the most threat, risk and harm and work to strengthen communities, with consideration of all factors which affected cohesion.
  - new CSCP Plan would need to be reflective of the changing world in relation to protecting the most vulnerable, with inclusion of the response to serious and organised, crime, modern slavery, complex safeguarding and serious violence as key priorities
  - a number of themes which impacted on community safety and cohesion were cross cutting with other work areas, for example poverty. It was agreed that some thematic areas would not necessarily be led in the CSCP Plan but that there would be connectivity and reference to these as ongoing in other work streams.

- the new Plan would need to be aligned with the developing work around the Place-Based working arrangements.
- In addition to the work around the CSCP Plan it was also agreed that the Partnership itself needed to be reviewed, with a refresh of the terms of reference and the membership to ensure the best value from the Partnership was achieved from across all sectors.
- The work on Covid had continued to take up a significant amount of time and this had resulted in this work not being progressed in the timeline originally planned.
- The underlying work of the existing Plan continued, with a commitment to protecting individuals and communities from harm. The operational work had not been impacted and the response to Covid had provided opportunities to work much closer with communities and the voluntary/community/faith sector area, and reinforced how important it was that they were recognised and the contributions they could make, as key stakeholders in the Plan going forward.

Members requested and received clarification on the following:

- The correlation between poverty and inequalities and serious crime – poverty made individuals more susceptible to the criminal world eg loan-sharking. It made families easier to exploit and the Council was working with vulnerable families to find alternative opportunities.
- The enhancement of the ability to support by working in partnership – there was a very strong partnership ethos in Oldham, with a huge benefit from it. Services were able to mobilise quickly because of the excellent working relationships and strong work with communities.
- Social isolation and keeping safe online – there was awareness that isolation could put vulnerable adults at risk, but no specific projects.
- Voluntary and community sector training and resources – the Council was working closely with Action Together and there were funding pots that groups could apply to. Volunteers had to be carefully risk-managed during the pandemic.
- Consultation on the draft Plan - once the draft had been put together, it would be circulated for comments.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The update be noted.
2. Once the draft Plan had been put together, it would be circulated to Board Members for their comments.

#### **AMENDMENT TO UNITED NATIONS - SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS REPORT TO COUNCIL**

The Board gave consideration to a report which asked them to consider to an Amendment, as proposed by Liberal Democrat Councillors at Full Council on 9 September 2020, to the report

submitted in response to 'Making a Commitment to the UN Sustainable Development Goals' Motion.



The Board were reminded that consideration was given to a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 3 March 2020 and by the Health Scrutiny Committee on 7 July 2020 in response to a motion that requested the committees identify the work that was already being done by the Council and its partners, what more could be done and to present a report to full Council with its findings and recommendations.

Both Overview and Scrutiny Board and Health Scrutiny commended a report which detailed work being done in support at a local level. At the full Council meeting on 9 December, an Amendment was proposed which including information which had not been provided to the Overview and Scrutiny Board nor the Health Scrutiny Committee following the commendation to Council of the original report. It was agreed that the original report as submitted to Council be agreed, but that the Amendment would be referred to Overview and Scrutiny for their consideration.

**RESOLVED** that the inclusion of the Amendment to the report be not agreed or commended to Council.

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## UPDATE ON NORTHERN ROOTS

The Board gave consideration to an update on the Northern Roots project.

The Board were reminded that they had received an update in June 2019, which was followed by a visit to the Northern Roots site in September 2019. In February 2020, the Board held a workshop to help decide the best legal and governance structure for the establishment of the Northern Roots Company. On the basis of the guidance provided at this workshop, Cabinet approved a proposal in March 2020 that the Northern Roots company be established as a Charitable Company, Limited by Guarantee, with an initial board of nine members comprising four Council nominees and five independent Directors.

The Board were informed of the progress in meeting objectives:

- The Northern Roots trademark and wordmark had been registered
- Community, partner and stakeholder engagement took place throughout 2019. A programme of pilot projects and consultations was planned for and initiated in 2020. Much of this programme had to be paused due to Covid 19, but all initiatives that could safely continue had taken place.
- Over the course of 2019, ownership of the land within the Northern Roots site boundary was confirmed and, where necessary, registered. A register of easements, covenants or other constraints in place over the land had also been identified and recorded. The Charity Commission had approved the broadening of the terms of

- a charitable covenant which limited the usage of one plot of land.
- Over the past six months a number of reports had been completed and the initial site Masterplan has been updated. A planning application was now being developed and was on schedule to be submitted before the end of the current financial year.
  - Additional external funding had been secured to supplement the current revenue funding. This funding will cover the costs of developing and submitting the planning application. In parallel the project has been developing a pipeline of external capital and revenue funding to facilitate the development and operation of the site. No OMBC funding for the project, either capital or revenue, had been approved beyond March 2021.
  - The Northern Roots company had been established as a Charitable Company, limited by guarantee. The company board comprised six Directors – four nominated by Oldham Council (Cllrs Jabbar, Brownridge and Chauhan and Rebekah Sutcliffe) and two independents (Anne Selby and Jonathan Bland). Two Board meetings had taken place. A further three independent Directors will be recruited in the coming months from the local community. An application to register the Northern Roots company as a charity was being prepared for submission to the Charity Commission.

**RESOLVED** that

1. The appointment of further independent Directors be noted
2. The appointment of an independent Director as Chair be recommended
3. An update be provided the Board when charitable status was established
4. The update be noted.

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## SALARY SACRIFICE CYCLE TO WORK SCHEME

Consideration was given to a report updating the Board on the scheme.

Following the report to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 8th September regarding ‘Tax Relief for Public Transport Travel’, the Board asked for a follow-up brief on the Council’s Cycle to Work scheme and on the future intentions for this Salary Sacrifice initiative.

The Board was informed that the employee hired the bicycle to undertake some/all of their work commute and/or work business on and, at the end of the loan period of twelve months, the employee would either return their bicycle, or discuss with the provider the options for “transfer of ownership”. In addition to the purchase of a bike, the voucher provided by the Council could include spend on some cycling accessories, mostly associated with road safety, e.g. helmets and lights, plus locks. In June 2020, the eligibility for accessories had been increased, and

could now include items such as pedals, saddles and tyres. The scheme could only be used for the benefit of the employee and was not transferable to their family or friends.

The Board noted that the scheme had not operated every year and had last been offered in December 2018. The Council was looking to offer the scheme again, along with re-establishing its Give As You Earn scheme (GAYE) and considering the offer of Salary Sacrifice Share Cost AVC's for employees to top up their pension.

Members requested and received clarification on the following:

- The delay around the implementation of the new payroll system – the Council wanted to be in a position to exploit the full potential of the new system to develop the best offer and attract the best people to come and work for Oldham. When the full benefits offer had been developed, this would be communicated to Councillors as well as staff.
- Timeline for the payroll system – this request would be passed on to Julia Veall, who would provide information to be circulated to the Board.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The update be noted.
2. Julia Veall be requested to provide information on the timeline for the payroll system, to be circulated to the Board.

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## **COUNCIL MOTIONS**

The Board gave consideration to a briefing note received in relation to a motion which had been referred to Overview and Scrutiny by Full Council.

The Board noted that, at the Council meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020, the 'Let's All Do Our Bit to Tackle Litter' motion was debated.

The first resolution of the motion, as amended, was as follows:

- Ask the Overview and Scrutiny Board to examine the merits of becoming a local authority member of the Keep Britain Tidy Network and identify which of the campaign's initiatives, including Love Parks and Charity Bins could be introduced in the Borough.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The information contained in the report be noted.
2. The update as provided in the report be included in the next Council action update.
3. An update be received when available from Environmental Services related to Charity Bins.

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## **KEY DECISION DOCUMENT**

The Board gave consideration to the latest published Key Decision Document.

**RESOLVED** that the latest published Key Decision Document be noted.

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**GENERAL EXCEPTION OR SPECIAL URGENCY DECISIONS**

There were no decisions taken under authorisations granted under Access to Information Procedure Rule 13 (General Exception) and Rule 14 (Special Urgency) to be considered.

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME**

**RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.45 pm