

# Oldham Borough Council



**Council Meeting  
Wednesday 15 March 2023**



## OLDHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

Tuesday, 7 March 2023

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council which will be held on Wednesday 15 March 2023 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, for the following purposes:

- 1 Civic Appreciation Awards  
Miss. Keira Louise Arnold, Miss.Hannah Miah, Mr.Ibrahim Yousaf BEM BCyA
- 2 To receive apologies for absence
- 3 To order that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 14th December 2023 and 1st March 2023 be signed as a correct record (Pages 1 - 36)  
Minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023 to follow.
- 4 To receive declarations of interest in any matter to be determined at the meeting
- 5 To deal with matters which the Mayor considers to be urgent business
- 6 To receive communications relating to the business of the Council
- 7 To receive and note petitions received relating to the business of the Council

*(time limit 20 minutes)*

*There is one Petition to note:*

Executive Director for Place and Economic Growth  
Petition in relation to the implementation of a parking scheme of three hour waiting outside the Salvation Army Citadel, Farrow Street, Shaw  
(33 signatures)

- 8 Youth Council

*(time limit 20 minutes)*

Protected Characteristics for Care Experience

Many care experienced people face discrimination, stigma, and prejudice in their day to day lives. Public perceptions of care experience centre on the idea that we are irredeemably damaged and that can lead to discrimination and assumptions being made.

We do realise discrimination we face often comes from unbiased prejudice and what is reported about care experienced people. For instance, despite care experienced people making up around 1.4 per cent of the UK population, they account for 25 per

cent of homeless people in England and a quarter of the prison population. Nearly half of all under 21-year-olds in contact with the criminal justice system have been in care. When we look at the statistics like these it's easy to see why people make assumptions about the likely characteristics of children and adults that have care experience. Issues around school attainment, and behaviour within school of some in the care system will lead to the way care experience is discussed in schools, workplaces, and the media. However, we are not statistics, we are just young people struggling with everyday life like everyone else.

We feel that when things go wrong it is expected due to our circumstances, but if things go right, we succeed despite our circumstances. Care experienced young people don't want our care being mentioned or used as an excuse, as it makes people look at us differently. Comments like "You're smart - for a kid in care" and "it's understandable with what you deal with", make us want to pretend to be someone else.

When we talk with colleagues in schools and as part of the Children in Care Council, we have realised that the discrimination and unconscious bias, at its worst, can lead to care experienced people being refused employment, failing to succeed in education or facing unfair judgements about our ability to live independently or even to have families of their own. Designating care experience a protected characteristic would mean decision-makers would have to consider the needs of care experienced young people more seriously and have to consider how their decisions and policies affect people with care experience.

This discrimination, that they have experienced, is similar in nature to other groups that have a legally protected characteristic under the Equality Act (2010). So, while there may be ways that society can help reduce stigma and discrimination, including creating greater public consciousness on these issues, just as with other areas of equality, there is a case to go further. Therefore, the Council should make care experience a protected characteristic for Oldham.

We propose that the council notes:

- Care experienced people face significant barriers that impact them throughout their lives.
- Despite the resilience of many care experienced people, society too often does not take their needs into account and often face discrimination and stigma across housing, health, education, relationships, employment and in the criminal justice system;
- As corporate parents, councillors and officers have a collective responsibility for providing the best possible care and safeguarding for Oldham's children and young people who are looked after by the authority.
- All corporate parents should commit to acting as mentors, hearing the voices of looked after children and young people and to consider their needs in all aspects of council work.
- Councillors should be champions of the children in our care and challenge the negative attitudes and prejudice that exists in all aspects of society.

We propose that the Council therefore resolves:

- That it recognises that care experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination.
- That it recognises that Councils have a duty to put the needs of disadvantaged people at the heart of decision-making through co-production and collaboration.
- That future decision, services and policies made and adopted by the Council

should be assessed through Equality Impact Assessments to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience, alongside those who formally share a protected characteristic.

- That in the delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty the Council includes care experience in the publication and review of Equality Objectives and the annual publication of information relating to people who share a protected characteristic in services and employment.
- That this Council will treat care experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic.
- To formally call upon all other bodies to treat care experience as a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.
- For the council to continue proactively seeking out and listening to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views.

9 Questions Time

a Public Questions

*(time limit 30 Minutes)*

b Questions to Leader and Cabinet

*(time limit 30 minutes)*

c Questions on Cabinet Minutes and Urgent decisions taken (Pages 37 - 66)

*(time limit 15 minutes)*

14<sup>th</sup> November 2022

12<sup>th</sup> December 2022

23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023

Urgent Decisions

10 Notice of Administration Business

*(time limit 30 minutes)*

Motion 1

*Actions Not Ambitions – A Renewable Energy Future*

Councillor Jabbar to MOVE and Councillor Akhtar to SECOND:

We have seen a significant increase in the cost of energy since the start of the War in Ukraine, exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, meaning that residents and businesses in Oldham are facing energy bills almost twice what they were 18 months ago.

Next month, the Energy Price Guarantee will rise to around £3,000 a year for a typical household, this is an almost £2,000 rise from the Energy Price Cap set in August 2021 at £1,277. Lower and middle-income households in Oldham are struggling with this increase.

A survey by the Federation of Small Businesses in November 2022 found that 25% of their members had seen their energy costs double and 19% have seen their energy costs triple.

Whilst support from central Government has been welcomed by both households and businesses, it has not gone far enough. More than half the residents responding to the GM Residents survey say they are having difficulties paying their bills. Almost a quarter of businesses in the FSBs survey anticipate that with further energy bills rises coming in April they will have to close, downsize or radically restructure.

At a time where oil and gas supplies are restricted, investment in the UK's renewable energy sector is paramount to creating energy security and ensuring that people in towns like Oldham are not impacted by the effects of a conflict over a thousand miles away.

Oldham has ambitious targets to become the Greenest Borough in Greater Manchester and meet the goal of being a carbon neutral borough by 2030, with the council being carbon neutral by 2025.

In doing this we have invested in renewable energy schemes across Oldham, including our pioneering Mine Water Heat Network. To protect the people of Oldham from further shocks to the energy market, as well as to meet the council's ambitious climate targets, municipal investment in renewable energy is an innovative way of utilising council owned assets to add value and support the local economy.

Whilst Oldham is not known for its sunny weather, solar panels are able to be used in all weather, with rain and wind helping their efficiency by clearing away dust and debris that block light from reaching the panels. By installing solar panels at council assets and building a solar farm at Wrigley Head, Oldham Council can utilise renewable energy created here in Oldham to meet these targets and reduce our own energy bill in the process.

This Council notes:

- 57% of respondents to the GM Residents Survey say they are struggling to pay their energy bills.
- Since the We Can Help initiative was launched in September 2022, over £100,000 has gone to residents directly to help them with their energy bills, an increase of 200% compared to the same time period last year.
- That Oldham Council has been leading the way with innovative renewable energy solutions, including the continuing Oldham Mine Water Heat Network project, Wrigley Head Solar Farm and community energy schemes.
- This Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and became the first Green New Deal Local Authority in the country in 2020.
- As a local authority we are committed to exploring all options to help support residents and make sure that they are able to heat their homes by doubling funding to our Warm Homes programme.
- The work that the council is undertaking across all departments to ensure that our ambitious climate targets are met.
- That central government has backed our Greener Oldham plans with our successful £20m Levelling Up bid – one of only three successful bids in Greater Manchester.

This Council resolves to:

- Ensure that the council continues its ambitious plans for the council to be operating as a carbon neutral council by 2025.
- Continue to work towards a carbon neutral Oldham by 2030, and a carbon neutral Greater Manchester by 2038.
- Explore further options for renewable energy schemes across the Borough.
- Commit to re-evaluating all council owned assets for the viability of having solar

panels installed to maximise the renewable energy generated by the Council.

- Explore the creation of a Local Energy Market to sell excess energy generated by council renewable assets to residents at a reasonable price, independent of the main energy providers, and to support the development of privately owned renewable energy generation in Oldham which can also help residents and businesses to reduce their energy bills through schemes like the Oldham Energy Futures project - piloted in Sholver and Westwood – and the Oldham Green New Deal Delivery Partnership.

This Council further resolves to:

Work alongside the partner agencies to identify more sites in the Borough which could potentially help Oldham reduce its reliance on fossil fuels.

Work alongside a future Labour government to support the creation of a national public energy company, where the income generated will be reinvested into the UK, rather than into the pockets of shareholders or other nations who own energy companies operating in the UK.

## Motion 2

### *A Fit and Proper Healthy Start*

Councillor Munroe to MOVE and Councillor Chadderton to SECOND:

Lower-income families in Oldham are missing out on thousands of pounds worth of Healthy Start vouchers which help feed babies and young children. The national Healthy Start scheme helps parents, carers and pregnant women pay for milk, formula, fruit and vegetables.

Pregnant women, parents and carers who have children aged three or under and in receipt of certain benefits are eligible for the scheme. It is estimated millions of pounds worth of Healthy Start Vouchers are unclaimed across the country. Families who are entitled to help face hardship because of complications in the system and delays in being accepted onto the scheme.

The campaign group Pregnant Then Screwed recently conducted research which found that three quarters of mothers who pay for childcare say that it doesn't make financial sense for them to work. A quarter of parents said that childcare costs equate to almost 75% of their pay packet. And half of parents say that they have had to reduce the number of hours they work because childcare has become unaffordable.

This Council Notes:

- That families in Oldham are struggling to pay expensive childcare bills, and that more often than not this leads to women not being able to work full time
- That the early years sector is struggling to make ends meet and that it requires fundamental urgent reform
- Despite collaborative effort the take up of Healthy Start Vouchers is only 67% of eligible families in Oldham
- The value of Healthy Start Vouchers has not changed since April 2021, despite research from the British Pregnancy Advisory Service showing that the price of some of the cheaper infant formula brands has increased by 22%. In addition, the rate of inflation has also been unequal across food groups with higher inflation on fresh produce meaning those receiving the benefit get less food for their money.

This Council resolves to:

- Instruct the Managing Director of Children and Young

People to organise a campaign to further increase take up of Healthy Start vouchers in the Borough

- Ask the Government to increase the value of the Healthy Start vouchers by at least 14% to match general food inflation to support residents with the cost-of-living crisis.
- Continue to push for reform to provide affordable childcare to all Oldhamers
- Ask the responsible Cabinet member(s) to explore whether any extra support can be provided to early years providers in the Borough
- Continue to work with schools on our poverty proofing audits – to make sure children from low income backgrounds can participate fully in all aspects of learning and reduce stigma attached to poverty
- Commit to use the newly developed Equality Impact Assessment Tool to determine the impact of council decisions on Children and Young People.

## 11 Notice of Opposition Business

*(time limit 30 minutes)*

### Motion 1

*Reputation of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council At An All Time Low*

Councillor Sharp to MOVE and Councillor Arnott to SECOND:

Oldham is a town made up of decent hard-working people. There is an untapped potential which is yet to be unleashed. Sadly, the same cannot be said of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (OMBC).

OMBC is dragging our Borough down, due to poor leadership and mismanagement of our history, assets and services.

The failure of OMBC to deliver the best possible services that many residents rely on and pay for, is one of the key reasons why this administration is failing this Borough. It is not the hard-working frontline staff that are to blame, they have been dealt a bad hand, it is the lack of leadership and responsibility at the top. There is an iron law at the top of OMBC; which is that it is run in the interests of those who run it, instead of those who pay for it.

Driven by the next press release or headline, OMBC and this administration is failing to manage the numerous town centre focused projects properly, such as the thirty-two million pound overspend on the Cinema, the failed 'Hotel Future and Conference Centre' that was never built, two Coliseum theatre plans that were scrapped, Marks and Spencer's, Lidl and a 'Budget' Hotel at Princes' Gate scrapped and failing to materialise.

It is no wonder residents fear the costs of the Spindles/Town Centre project running over budget by tens of millions of pounds given the Councils track record.

The bunker mentality that exists within the administration and leadership of OMBC is damaging this Borough. The failure by the administration to attract the right investment and failure to deliver on existing projects is damaging the prospects of our Borough.

The failure to attract the right talent starts and ends with those at the top.

In 2012 Oldham Council was runner up in the prestigious most improved council award and in 2014 Oldham was 'highly commended' at the LGA Council of the Year Awards. Since that high water mark things have gone very wrong and it is clear radical



measures need to be taken to restore the confidence of our residents, our business community, and our workforce.

Now more than ever we need to restore pride in the Metropolitan Borough of Oldham. It is clear this Council's strengths are; spending millions of pounds of resident's hard-earned money and throwing it away on failed scheme after failed scheme. It is clear this Council does not have the experience to manage the Borough's finances and is incapable of bringing regeneration schemes to fruition in Oldham.

If Oldham is to have any chance of rebuilding residents trust, incentivising people to stay or move into the area with their families and offering a full rounded living experience, then there needs to be massive change at this Council. Sadly this administration is not fit for purpose and nor is the leadership at the top of OMBC.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- Admit that it is currently out of its depth and is incapable of building Oldham back up again without the necessary help and expertise.
- To write to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, noting that Oldham needs to seek professional support from external bodies in writing achievable funding bids for future projects and to ask for Oldham to be provided with extra support and guidance on how to run a local authority.

## Motion 2

### *Removing Oldham Borough from Places for Everyone*

Councillor Al-Hamdani to MOVE and Councillor H Gloster to SECOND:

This council notes that:

In December 2022, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities made a statement in the House of Commons in relation to an update on the Levelling up Bill.

This statement effectively represented a move away from top-down, mandatory housing targets.

The Secretary of State further added it will be up to Local Authorities, working with their communities, to determine how many homes can actually be built, taking into account what should be protected in each area, be that in our precious Green Belt or National Parks.

The Secretary of State further outlined how those local authorities with local plans at an advanced stage of preparation who will not benefit from these provisions can take advantage of transitional arrangements to produce plans that are compliant with the new guidance.

It has always been the position of Oldham Council that Places for Everyone (and the Green Belt development therein) was only necessary because of the top-down, mandatory housing targets that the government was imposing on local authorities.

This council believes that:

Although this Council is part of the Places for Everyone submission, we have no adopted local plan.

As such the housing need calculation made within Places for Everyone is now obsolete and not in line with national guidance.

Tackling the housing crisis is essential, in order to provide fairer futures for the next generation; and that a plan that works for all of Oldham Borough is best developed in Oldham Borough, by this Council and in consultation with the people we represent.

This council resolves to:

1. Withdraw Oldham Council from the Places for Everyone Plan as an immediate priority.
2. Develop a joint approach to calculating housing need through community consultation; with a reinforced brownfield first policy and a focus on ex-industrial clean up and repurposing of Oldham's industrial legacy buildings.
3. Reaffirm our commitment to the preservation of Green Belt and the places of natural beauty that make Oldham Borough unique.
4. Failing the above the Council seeks an urgent review of housing allocations in Places for Everyone Plan, to ensure the numbers are reduced and are reduced specifically on green sites in Oldham.
5. Write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to request a national brownfield first policy along with the funding to enable decisions to build the houses we need to be made, in the places we need with the infrastructure we need such as health services, schools and transport.

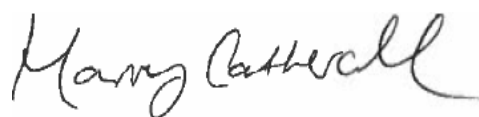
12 Update on Actions from Council (Pages 67 - 106)

13 Annual Reports 2022 (Pages 107 - 218)

Report to follow

14 Review of Special Responsibility Allowances for Members appointed to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 219 - 244)

**NOTE: The meeting of the Council will conclude 3 hours and 30 minutes after the commencement of the meeting.**



**Harry Catherall  
Chief Executive**

**PROCEDURE FOR NOTICE OF MOTIONS**  
**NO AMENDMENT**

MOTION – Mover of the Motion to MOVE



MOTION – Secunder of the Motion to SECOND – May reserve right to speak



DEBATE ON THE MOTION: Include Timings



MOVER of Motion – Right of Reply



VOTE – For/Against/Abstain



Declare outcome of the VOTE

**RULE ON TIMINGS**

(a) No Member shall speak longer than four minutes on any **Motion or Amendment**, or by way of question, observation or reply, unless by consent of the Members of the Council present, he/she is allowed an extension, in which case only one extension of 30 seconds shall be allowed.

(b) A Member replying to more than one question will have up to six minutes to reply to each question with an extension of 30 seconds

## WITH AMENDMENT

