

Present: The Mayor – Councillor Garry (in the Chair)

Councillors Ahmad, Akhtar, Al-Hamdani, Ali, Alyas, Azad, Ball, M Bashforth, Birch, Brownridge, Byrne, Chadderton, Cosgrove, Dean, C. Gloster, H. Gloster, Goodwin, Hamblett, Harrison, Hobin, Hulme, Ibrahim, Iqbal, Islam, Jabbar, Kenyon, Marland, McLaren, McManus, Munroe, Murphy, Mushtaq, Nasheen, K Phythian, Quigg, Rea, Roberts, Salamat, Sharp, Sheldon, Shuttleworth, Surjan, Sykes, Taylor, Wilkinson, Williamson, Williams and Woodvine

1 **CIVIC APPRECIATION AWARDS**

Further to Minute 19 of the meeting of the Council held on 14th December 2022, the Mayor invited Miss Keira Arnold, Mr Ibrahim Yousaf and Miss Hannah Miah to receive a Civic Appreciation Award, in recognition of their service and dedication to the local community and the borough of Oldham.

The Mayor advised that Ibrahim Yousaf was unable to attend this meeting of the Council.

Councillor Chadderton, Councillor Sykes and Councillor Sheldon each addressed Council, paying tribute to the work undertaken by Keira, Ibrahim and Hanna.

Keira and Hanna both addressed the Council.

2 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Arnott, Barnes, S. Bashforth, Chauhan, Hindle, A. Hussain, F. Hussain, Lancaster and Moores.

3 **TO ORDER THAT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 14TH DECEMBER 2022 AND 1ST MARCH 2023 BE SIGNED AS A CORRECT RECORD**

RESOLVED:

1. That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 14th December 2022 be approved as a correct record.
2. The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held 1st March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

4 **TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ANY MATTER TO BE DETERMINED AT THE MEETING**

There were no declarations of interests received.

5 **TO DEAL WITH MATTERS WHICH THE MAYOR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business for this meeting of Council to consider.

6

TO RECEIVE COMMUNICATIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL

The Council was informed that several Members had indicated they would be retiring at the end of the current Municipal Year.

Councillors Jabbar and Marland paid tribute to the work of Councillor Hulme.

Councillors Akhtar, C. Gloster and Byrne paid tribute to the work of Councillor Iqbal.

Councillors Dean, Birch, C. Gloster and Sheldon paid tribute to the work of Councillor Ahmad.

Councillors Mushtaq, Harrison, Hamblett, Chadderton, Hobin and Byrne paid tribute to the work of Councillor Garry.

Councillors Jabbar, Marland and Byrne paid tribute to the work of Councillor Alyas.

7

TO RECEIVE AND NOTE PETITIONS RECEIVED RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL

Council received a report of the Head of Democratic Services which asked Members to note a petition that had been received by the Council in accordance with the Petitions Protocol. The Petition related to the implementation of a parking scheme of three hour waiting outside the Salvation Army Citadel, Farrow Street, Shaw, which had 33 signatures.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

8

YOUTH COUNCIL

The Youth Council PROPOSED the following MOTION:

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 aspect 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.

The Youth Council proposed that the Council resolves:

- a. That it recognises that care experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.

- d. 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.
- e. That this Council will treat care experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic.
- f. 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.
- g. 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.

Councillor Birch spoke in support of the Motion

Councillor Byrne spoke in support of the Motion

Councillor H. Gloster spoke in support of the Motion

Councillor Birch MOVED and Councillor H. Gloster SECONDED the MOTION as presented by the Youth Council.

RESOLVED

1. That it recognises that care experienced people are a group who are likely to face discrimination.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. That this Council will treat care experience as if it were a Protected Characteristic.
6. 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.
7. 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

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

1. Question from Karl Bardsley

I would like to ask the relevant cabinet member, how much of the £3 million cost of living package announced by the council leader on 21st September 2022 has gone towards the heating of the town's libraries/warm banks?

Councillor Chadderton, Leader of the Council, replied that in Oldham we have 37 warm banks across the borough, including 11 council-owned libraries. No additional funding has been allocated to Oldham's libraries as the warm banks have been run during normal opening hours, which include evening and weekends.

In addition to the 11 library warm banks, we have also helped 26 community groups to establish warm banks, making support much more accessible for our residents. Approximately £40k has been allocated to support the running costs of these community facilities, paying for heating, lighting, staffing and refreshments. The support of our voluntary and community sector has been fantastic, with many warm banks put in place quickly to support Oldham's response.

2. Question from Tia Henderson

As an Oldham care-leaver and ex youth mayor of Oldham, I recently found myself classed as "intentionally homeless" due to a rat infestation in my home and not accepting the emergency accommodation as it didn't take pets and I have a dog and a ferret. My circumstances led to me being homeless for 6 months so I would like to know what is being done in Oldham to ensure that pets are not a barrier to anyone needing emergency accommodation due to being homeless as a result of unsuitable accommodation, domestic violence, mental health or anyone who is struggling financially?

Councillor Chadderton, Leader of the Council, replied that Great Places and Wates, who are responsible for providing housing management services to Tia, have fully accepted that they failed to provide an immediate response to the rat infestation which resulted in Tia being unable to continue to live in her home. Great Places and Wates have apologised to Tia and have implemented measures to ensure tenants do not suffer similar circumstances in the future.

The majority of Oldham Council's emergency accommodation is supplied via contracts between Oldham Council and hotels or third party providers. It is for the owners of the hotels or third party providers to agree if pets can be accommodated, in accordance with providers' own policies regarding pets. We have tried to source accommodation providers who will take pets however to date have been unsuccessful. We continue to seek accommodation providers that will take pets and also meet the specified accommodation requirements.

Oldham Council gives careful consideration to the Homelessness Code of Guidance and looks to direct households, to pet boarding charities and where they are unable to help, support households to arrange kennelling where needed.

3. Question from Janet Hargreaves

I understand that Mulberry Homes has gone into administration. Can you tell me what therefore is happening to the construction of these homes in Shaw? There has been no building here for at least 12 months. We are in desperate need of housing. This abandoned site is adding to the general scruffiness of the

area. What is now planned for this part of Shaw and for these partly built houses?



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Councillor Chadderton, Leader of the Council, replied that Great Places Housing Association own the site. Great Places are aware of the sites condition and are working expediently to get things moving again. They have been updating the Council regularly and we supported them to secure Brownfield Funding from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to accelerate their endeavours.

Great Places are now in the advanced stages of negotiation with a new contractor to enable them to deliver much needed Shared Ownership and Affordable Rented Homes. We are expecting announcements at any time with the new contractor starting on site before the end of March, and expectations that the first new homes will be ready later in 2023.

4. Question from Josh Charters

I attended the consultation for the proposed new homes in Derker which was held in December by Hive Homes, and I wanted to ask the relevant cabinet member when we will see these new affordable homes delivered in Derker. Can they also provide an update on the accessible homes being built on Flint Street and when they will be available for those in need of these vitally important homes?

Councillor Chadderton, Leader of the Council, replied that Hive Homes have already started pre-construction works in preparing the area for building works, and the legal contracts between Hive and the Council have been exchanged. We anticipate that the main construction works will start within the next two months.

The Wheelchair Accessible homes proposed for Flint Street form part of a programme on small sites across the borough. We are working closely with partners to access how best to deliver these much-needed homes and expect to make an announcement in the near future?

5. Question from Michael Harwood

Please could I ask for an update on the position at the Coliseum following withdrawal of Arts Council England funding and what can the council do to help?

Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure replied that like many people across Oldham, I was devastated by the news that the Coliseum decided to close its doors at the end of March.

It is clear that their financial situation since they lost Arts Council funding is incredibly challenging and that they are having to make some tough decisions about their future. As an independent organisation we cannot control their decisions or speak for them but we can, and have, supported them during their difficulties.

The Coliseum have recently appointed new Board members who are leading work on the organisations' future. We are in discussion with these Board members about their future plans,

as well as plans for investment in arts and culture in the borough.

Oldham has such a rich cultural heritage and we recognise the value this brings to the town.

That's why we have committed to building a new theatre on Union Street. Plans for this new building are being finalised ahead of planning application being submitted in Summer. We continue to work with the Coliseum Board to shape what their role might be in that new theatre and hope a way forward can be found that protects the artistic legacy of the Coliseum company.

6. Question from Vikki White

Parking around schools at the start and end of the school day is a problem in Chadderton – residents complain about people parking across driveways, on corners making it hard to see oncoming traffic and ignoring requests to move their cars causing obstruction and preventing residents getting to their homes.

Are there any plans to find ways of improving the situation, making it safe for children to walk to school and bearable for residents?

Councillor Roberts, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, replied that as more and more children are now driven to school, parking concerns in local communities have increased significantly at school drop off times, and particularly at pick up times.

Communities are reporting that parents and guardians continue to park as close as possible to the school gates and increasingly have little or no regard for other motorists, residents and pedestrians, never mind the residents who live near schools. Unfortunately, the issues described in Vikki's question are not uncommon on streets located within the vicinity of most schools across the borough.

I am aware that there are two camera enforcement cars who visit every school frontage on rotation, but they can only enforce the *School-Keep-Clear* Markings and bus stop clearways. Any other parking restrictions have to be enforced by an officer on foot. What we find is often the case with patrol officers, is that parents wait in their cars and then when Enforcement Officers are seen, they simply drive away for a short period of time, making enforcement very difficult.

The legislation is complicated when it comes to issues and concerns outside schools, which doesn't help – for example, if there are vehicles causing an obstruction, blocking a driveway for example, where there are no parking restrictions in place, this can only be enforced by the Police.

We understand the frustrations and increasing concerns from local communities and from schools themselves, given the increased levels of road rage and safety concerns outside their gates, therefore the Council is supporting a School Streets programme. With these projects, the Council works with communities, partners, schools and local business to explore a range of initiatives which might help to encourage children to choose to walk or cycle to school (active travel initiatives) and in

turn reduce the dependency on the car for what are often very local school journeys.



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Question from Jayson Pape-Jones

The Egyptian Room at the old Town Hall is unique. I'm a bit anxious about the work just starting even though it will be good to have the space used and more food choices in Oldham Town Centre – can the Leader assure me that the refit will preserve the historic features that give the room its name? And how long will the work take?

Councillor Chadderton replied that the fitout of the Egyptian Room has been granted with full Listed Building Consent which involved architects working closely with the Council's conservation officers. This work has been developed to specifically ensure the fit-out works preserve and do not adversely affect any heritage or historic features.

The plans for the food hall fitout can be viewed online on the Council's planning portal.

The contract was awarded to the Hub Contractors and with works already started, they are scheduled for completion later this year, subject to everything proceeding as planned.

8. Question from Jodie Entwistle

Can the Cabinet Member for Finance explain how Council Tax works and why a house in Band D has a much lower Council tax in the City of Westminster?

Councillor Jabbar, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Low Carbon, replied that Council Tax is a property-based tax and one of the ways in which local authorities raise funds to pay for the services it provides to its residents. It also helps to fund our two Parish Councils: the Mayoral Police and Crime Commissioner and the Mayoral General Precept (including Fire Services). How much you pay in council tax depends on several things, such as the council tax band set for your home, (based on its value on 1 April 1991 and set by the Valuation Office Agency); your personal circumstances and how much money the council, and the other bodies mentioned, need to raise for their budget requirements, considering income from all other sources.

Although places like Westminster have some of the most expensive properties in the UK, they have some of the lowest levels of council tax primarily due to a large proportion of properties being in the higher Council Tax Bands (in Oldham, the highest proportion are in the lower Bands) but also through gaining more revenue from other sources such as parking charges.

9. Question from Thomas Yarwood

How will we be able to tell if Oldham has levelled up?

Councillor Chadderton, Leader of the Council, replied that this was a simple question with a potentially complicated answer – but Oldham will have levelled up when our residents are able to access better paid jobs, having accessed good education and



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skills provision, leading to a better quality of life for all. This will require numerous changes across the system and will take time to embed.

By working collaboratively with partners on a resident first methodology we can drive up the all the key drivers, that were set out in the Levelling Up White Paper, but we need to be clear about the routes to funding.

Our Regeneration programme is delivering new education, health, employment and housing sites. Successes include the new diagnostics centre in Royton, new schools in Saddleworth and in the town centre, and the successful Levelling Up bid for Green Tech. We are excited to be working with Rochdale and Bury to deliver the Atom Valley Development Zone which will boost jobs and business opportunities for our residents but this needs investment in transport and skills capital.

The Oldham Economic Review set out recommendations which will help us grow the right skills for the new opportunities which include roles in the Green Tech sector, Health and Social care.

Working with Innovation GM the Council is supporting innovation companies to thrive and new ones to invest e.g. JD Harrison, Innovative Technologies and the ambition to develop jobs in sustainable materials linked to Electric Vehicles.

Oldham has huge social capital, but it is disconnected from financial capital following 13 years of austerity. The borough needs proper investment. We have a strong sense of identity and will grab the opportunity, but this Government insists on short term funding, being competitively won in an ad hoc manner. We were one of just 3 local councils to win anything in the second round of levelling up funding. This meant we were competing with our neighbours when we should be collaborating like we are with Bury and Rochdale with Atom Valley.

10. Question from Megan Birchall

Oldham's Cabinet has approved a new Transport Strategy for Oldham which aims to increase active travel and get more people walking and cycling. How is the Council going to convince people to agree to the changes in the way roads are used and to reduce car journeys to be able to make this work? And what difference will the Strategy make for people living in Saddleworth?

Councillor Chadderton, Leader of the Council, replied that the recently approved Transport Strategy aligns with both national and regional policy and unlocks funding streams which aim to move journeys away from the private car to walking, cycling or public transport, where possible.

At a local level, the ambitions in the Transport Strategy look to make the borough a healthier place where people want to live, work and visit.

However a pipeline of schemes is in development across the borough, so all areas can benefit, that help make walking and cycling an easy, safe, and appealing option. Schemes will vary in their size and nature, and some may look to change the way our roads are used.

The Transport Strategy is just as much about changing people's behaviour as it is about physical works on the ground and we

welcome involvement from all our communities to make Oldham safer, less congested and better connected.



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11. Question from Usman Latif

Could you please explain as the council of Oldham, how are you supporting the local area with the cost of living? Secondly, once the price cap runs out in April. Can you confirm if people will still have the support of the council in regard to gas and electricity payments?

Councillor Chadderton, Leader of the Council, replied that To help those who need it most, we have invested more than £3 million to provide funding for energy, food and childcare, as well as extending the range of existing support available such as the Citizens' Advice service and community engagement teams, who go door-to-door checking on people's welfare and helping them access the support they are entitled to. We have also put in place 'warm banks' in every District, open to anyone who needs a warm, inviting space through the colder months.

As part of the £3 million invested to support our residents, we are currently extending the Warm Homes Team to provide additional support to residents of Oldham, providing telephone advice and home visits to support residents in understanding how to reduce energy usage and therefore their utility bills.

12. Question from Junaid Hussain

With central Manchester booming in the technology sector, it would be good to see the tech start-ups and smaller tech businesses locate into Oldham. It's an opportunity to attract businesses who may not want to be the higher operating costs in central Manchester but still want to stay close. Not discounting the excellent transport links Oldham has to offer.

This would not only help Oldham grow economically but also create opportunities for Oldham residents and local entrepreneurs.

Does the council have any future prospects for such investments.

Can Oldham Council request funding through the Northern Powerhouse initiative?

Councillor Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Employment and Enterprise, replied thank you for your question. Oldham is already home to a number of brilliant tech businesses such as Koderly, Sudlows, Innovative Technology and Needi and we want to build on this.

Encouraging businesses to start-up, grow and relocate to the Borough is a key priority for the Council and as such we do have several prospects in development.

Through the Levelling-up Fund the Council secured £20m, £8.8m of which will be used to create a green tech enterprise centre helping to support the start-up and growth of businesses in that sector. The Green Shoots Enterprise Centre will be located in Oldham town centre at Rhodes Bank. It will provide managed workspace as well as a location for green tech businesses. It will also provide a space for businesses to

collaborate, innovate and support to help them grow. We are expecting the centre to be operational by March 2025.

Money has also been secured via the Future High Street Fund to transform the derelict Prudential building on Union St, Oldham to create an incubator facility for start-up businesses focussing on the digital, media and creative sectors. The aim is to turn the 19th century building into a vibrant and modern workplace that will attract young and upcoming tech businesses. The building will be refurbished to create private and open co-working spaces, an event space a café and a lounge. We are hoping that the “Pru” will be operational by March 2025.

Finally, a new enterprise space known as the Hive is also being created as part of refurbishing the upper mall areas of the Spindles Shopping Centre. Building on a legacy of excellent enterprising businesses here in Oldham, the Hive will provide a focus of activity for new and budding entrepreneurs - it will be a hub to link together different resources and social enterprises with other entrepreneurial activities, as well as creating opportunities for collaboration and co-working by providing a space for businesses to meet, hot-desk and co-locate. The Hive is expected to be open in later this year to kick start the ambitions for new business growth and social enterprise here in Oldham.

13. Question from Bibi Khan

What will happen when the current Don't Trash Oldham campaign comes to an end? What will the Council be doing to tackle the fly tipping issues we face daily? And how will not only the hotspots, but the whole borough kept clean and tidy please?

Councillor Roberts, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods replied, thank you for your question. Dealing with environmental crimes and fly tipping will remain a priority for Oldham Council once the current Don't Trash Oldham campaign comes to an end later this year – following two years of dedicated activity in every ward across Oldham.

Looking ahead, we will need to re-focus resources to deal with persistent offenders and those who are illegally collecting and disposing of waste. In addition, we will continue to engage with residents and communities, we will continue to provide advice and education on how to dispose of waste, and we will continue to ensure strict legal action is taken where evidence is available.

14. Question from Pat Highley

I wish to ask the Council if there are any plans to respond to the Government's advice that more CPADs(Community Public Access Defibrillators)should be made available throughout the town.

Defibrillators could be placed in areas where they are most needed, such as places with high footfall, vulnerable people, rural areas or due to the nature of activity at the site.

Examples could include community buildings, local shopping centres, post offices and local parks, to ensure defibrillators are evenly spread throughout communities and easily accessible if

someone is experiencing an unexpected cardiac arrest. A cardiac arrest can happen to anyone regardless of age. It is not a heart attack.

I also want to ask the Council if there are any grants towards buying defibrillators and if bought by fundraising in public areas owned by the council will they be responsible for the maintenance of these? Oldham is sadly lacking in CPADs.



Councillor Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care, replied thank you for the question on defibrillators. We know how important and lifesaving it is for communities to have access to a defibrillator when experiencing cardiac arrest. We are already in the process of reviewing the process in place to make sure we have a consistent and equitable policy across the borough.

15. Question from Charlotte Watson-Lister

I would like to ask the following questions of the Full Council on the 15th March please. Can you retract the comment that the current Coliseum building is dangerous, as mentioned by Councillor Mushtaq at the last meeting? If it is dangerous why have audiences been allowed in? (I gather the level of asbestos that remains is small, and the building is safe for audiences and will remain so going forward, if repaired and maintained correctly.) What evidence have you got that the theatre is "at the end of its lifespan", is "no longer fit for purpose" as mentioned by Councillor Chadderton at the same meeting?

Can we please see the 2 building surveys the council has had done on the Oldham Coliseum theatre please, one from around 2012 I believe, and one in January 2023? to see evidence of the above.

Have you had repairs for the Coliseum, to future proof it, costed? (Surely this would be cheaper than the £24.5 m you are planning to spend on a new Coliseum?)

Are the plans for the new Coliseum final? Can you promise that the new Coliseum is actually going to be built, and you are aiming for completion 2026?

There is £1.845m available from the Arts Council, can you confirm that you have been banned by the Arts Council from using this to fund the Oldham Coliseum theatre company, to allow them to carry on performing, in whatever venue? If so, can you give any other funds to the Oldham Coliseum theatre company please, to allow them to survive? They will probably need a lot less money than £1.845m to survive. You mentioned at the last meeting the Coliseum has been offered a new events space in Spindles which will have a capacity of 750. When will this be ready, and will it be capable of being used as a theatre? And will it be free?

Are there any other venues you could please offer to the Coliseum to use for free, for example: the Queen Elizabeth Hall? I look forward to having the above questions addressed at the meeting?

Councillor Taylor, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure replied, many thanks for your questions Charlotte – let me take each one in turn.

Regarding the building being dangerous - there are a number of matters which the Coliseum Management team are aware of that need addressing urgently to ensure the property remains safe for members of the public. The Coliseum team themselves have flagged issues including water pipe bursts, damp and mould, and wall instability. All of which are currently in hand with no risk to staff, performers, or audiences.

With regards to the asbestos – I can confirm that this remains an issue throughout the building, and while it is safe while undisturbed, it would cause additional issues and costs should we look to refurbish or renovate the current building.

Regarding the future of the current building both the Coliseum and the council have long acknowledged the need for a new theatre building. It has a long list of maintenance issues but outside of those the site itself – its size and location – isn't ideal for the type of theatre the Coliseum, or any producing theatre, needs for the future. All parties have long agreed that a new build theatre was the best solution – and those views haven't changed, despite recent speculation and discussion.

The costs associated with rebuilding, repairing and reinvesting in the existing site are significant and would be more than a new theatre but also would make it difficult to meet the needs of a modern theatre.

In terms of whether the plans for a new theatre are final, no, the plans for the new theatre building were discussed at the recent Cabinet meeting on 27 February, where it was agreed that continued consultation and engagement with theatre specialists would help to finalise the plans ahead of a planning application being submitted later this year with the theatre due to open in 2026.

With regard to the £1.8 million of Arts Council funding for the borough – we don't have the ability to transfer this wholly to the Coliseum to replace their lost funding but we are continuing conversations with a range of arts organisations including the Coliseum about how we might use that money to ensure we have continued performance in Oldham.

Regarding other venues available to the Coliseum earlier conversations about capacity at the new theatre did include an offer for the Coliseum to use the larger event space where needed, for example, for the pantomime. This would have been available from 2025.

The unfortunate and sad facts are that the Coliseum, as an independent organisation, have decided to close their doors in March and have taken steps to do so. We have not removed any council funding, nor have we refused any asks for funding or access to other venues. We continue to have conversations with their Board to see how we can best support them at this challenging time but questions about their future as a business are best answered by that Board.

Several questions, submitted by members of the public, remained unanswered at the end of the allotted 30 minutes period for this matter. The Mayor advised that the unanswered questions would be published to the Council's website, with written answers, in due course.

QUESTIONS TO LEADER AND CABINET**Councillor Sheldon, Leader of the Conservative Group****Question 1: GP Surgeries**

There is a stark contrast when comparing the number of General Practitioner (GP) surgeries in Oldham and the wider greater Manchester region. In the Borough of Oldham there were, as at August 2022, 88 qualified GP's in the Borough, which was exactly the same figure as reported in September 2015. In this regard Oldham was the only Borough, in Greater Manchester, not to see a rise in the number of working GP's. during the same period Manchester had seen a rise of 74, there were 65 extra GP's in Stockport and 51 in Wigan. Councillor Sheldon added that since 2016 health and social care is a function that has been devolved to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Therefore will the Leader of the Council put pressure on the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to see Oldham as a more attractive place for GP's to work?

The Leader of the Council replied that the recruitment and retention of NHS staff was not a function that had been devolved to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

Question 2: Levelling Up

Councillor Sheldon commended the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt, for his Budget proposals, that were announced to Parliament earlier in the day. Councillor Sheldon stated that included measures that will be beneficial for the residents of the Oldham Borough. This includes additional support with the 'cost-of-living crisis', energy costs and prices, additional funds for repairing potholes on the Borough's roads and additional funding form the Levelling Up Partnership Scheme that is targeted at regeneration and infrastructure projects. Therefore, will the Leader of the Council join him in congratulating the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the announcements made in his Budget speech earlier today?

The Leader of the Council replied that she always welcomed additional funding for the Borough of Oldham, from which ever source it came from.

Councillor Sykes, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group**Question1: Roadworks**

Next week more 25 streets have programmed works then there will be the emergency ones or late notice on top of that. Our roads are in a crumbling state of neglect. Because of this, emergency repairs are often needed and even though these can be disruptive, I think most people in Oldham accept that they are necessary.

What people are sick and tired of Madam Mayor, is what is now becoming known as the March Month of Madness on our roads. Every year it seems to get worse and worse. Jobs that could have been prioritised are just rolled into March and the result it

is mayhem on the roads.

Is it because we aren't taking the utility companies to task? When, instead of applying for permits to do planned work they lazily say the work is deemed an emergency repair and get on with it when it suits them and their shareholders, not when it suits the people who rely on those roads every day?

The council also does a disproportional amount of work towards the end of the financial year in rush to spend up.

So, when you add UU, Gas, Electric, broadband, and Council you get road works everywhere. This is not just an Oldham problem.

It impacts on all road users, bus timetables become meaningless.

The road works that impact around Oldham town centre is worth a special mention for the chaos they cause and continue to especially at peak times.

There must be a better way of doing this.

Does the Leader agree that we need a proper enforceable licensing approval scheme in place?

And will she start to take a tougher approach with utility companies to ensure that works are carried at the earliest opportunity and for the benefit of people who use the roads, rather than being crammed into March – which has become the Month of Madness on our roads?

The Leader of the Council acknowledged that there was a large amount of roadworks around the Borough at the present time but that there were some factors that were contributing to additional hardship for motorists not least delays caused by the ongoing regeneration work in Oldham town centre which, whilst difficult at present, would, in the long term, see lasting benefits for the Borough's citizens. In addition there were problems caused by a burst water main on Lees Road which had left electricity cables exposed.

Question 2: Clean Air Zone (CAZ)

After nearly two years, three Prime Ministers and countless back-and-forth exchanges between the Manchester Mayor and the government. We are now told that the Clean Air Zone will only be a charging zone in Manchester and in Salford.

At least £3.3 million has been spent on signage across all Greater Manchester, including across Oldham Borough. A scandalous example of reckless spending.

We've had the creation of a new clean air committee across Greater Manchester. You would think after the farce they made of the Clean Air Zone, Labour would want this to be a truly cross-party and collaborative committee.

But no. It's not politically balanced and you need three members to agree a call-in. So, nothing will happen on this new committee unless Labour say so.

One thing that should concern us in Oldham is the use of the cameras that have been put up across our borough for the enforcement of the original clean air zone.

These cameras are no longer needed for their original purpose. So, what will they be used for? Are they going to be turned over to Greater Manchester Police? Is there going to be any public

consultation on their use?

We already have more CCTV cameras per head of population than any other democratic country Madam Mayor. And Greater Manchester is the second city after London by number of cameras

Is all of this helping GMP catch criminals? Not with 96% of burglars going uncharged in 2022 Madam Mayor. So does the Leader agree with me that the future usage of these cameras must not be decided in a back room somewhere. What is her position on the future use of these cameras? And if we need these cameras at all, will she make sure that the people of Oldham and Greater Manchester are consulted on their use?

The Leader of the Council replied that she, personally, was opposed to the introduction of a charging zone and was concerned at the numbers of cameras that were in place in Oldham and the wider Greater Manchester region. Councillor Chadderton undertook to be clear and transparent with the public about the role of the cameras, why they were being erected where they were and what they were being used for.

Councillor Hobin, Leader of the Failsworth Independent Party

Councillor Hobin asked if all people who were due to be moved into the Spindles shopping centre, as part of the relocation of staff and organisations as a result of the regeneration of Oldham town centre, had been properly informed and were being taken care of, including voluntary groups and organisations, such as Oldham Community Radio?

The Leader of the Council undertook to find appropriate office space for Oldham Community Radio in the Spindles shopping centre following their planned relocation from Oldham Market Hall.

Question from Councillor McLaren

During Covid-19, the swings in Chadderton Hall Park were removed, unfortunately not all the swings have been reinstated. Could the relevant Cabinet Member please tell us why the swings have not been put back and if it is intended for them to be put back?

Councillor Roberts, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods replied that the works had now been carried out. The delays had been caused by a shortage of spare parts that had now been addressed.

Question from Councillor Islam

Residents in Chadderton and across the borough, have raised concerns regarding the impact of tele communications masts boxes being erected close to their homes, they raise concerns about the impact on health, the loss of visual amenity and the lack of consultation. Could the relevant Cabinet Member, please tell us what powers the Council have in deciding where these masts are placed?

Councillor Chadderton, Leader of the Council, replied that the erection of most forms of telecommunications equipment are usually 'permitted development' given provisions made by the Town and Country Planning - General Permitted Development in England Order from 2015. Essentially, this means the principle of their installation is already accepted, and the Council cannot prevent that.

For certain types of telecommunications equipment (such as masts, and cabinets over 2.5m³ in volume) the permitted development is subject to a condition that the operator applies to the Council as Local Planning Authority for what is known as 'prior approval'. Only the subject matters of 'siting' and 'appearance' of the equipment can be considered as part of this process and no other issues can be considered.

The circumstances for each location might therefore be different depending on the purpose of the apparatus being installed and its size, but the very limited ability for the Council to refuse prior approval means the Council has limited ability to prevent the erection or general location of most forms of telecommunications equipment.

Question from Councillor Ibrahim

Can the Leader or Cabinet Member for Finance update us on the impact that the Council's We Can Help programme has had on struggling families across the Borough?

Councillor Chadderton, Leader of the Council, replied that the 'We Can Help' programme continues to provide vital support for residents across the borough, helping them to face the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, but also helping with issues like personal debt, finding a job, heating your home, and feeding your family. We Can Help is fundamentally about supporting residents in immediate need, but it's also about working with those residents to build their financial resilience to avoid the need for future crisis support. We have invested £3 million to support our residents during the cost-of-living crisis, strengthening the advice and support we offer and providing essential grants and support to struggling families.

Since the launch of the We Can Help campaign we have seen a real increase in the take up of Healthy Start Voucher; in January Oldham's take-up was the highest in GM at 67%. We have also seen a significant increase in the number of families accessing funded early education places, with 87% of the families of eligible 2-year-olds taking up a place. This is much higher than the England benchmark of 62%.

Since the start of the campaign, we have also answered 7,646 helpline calls from residents requiring urgent support, held 10,962 doorstep conversations to provide advice and guidance, provided over £130k of Warm Homes related support, distributed 5,462 foodbank vouchers, established warm banks in every district with over 5,000 residents visiting a warm bank in February alone, delivered poverty proofing training in several schools, invested nearly half a million pounds in funding for charities to support their communities, reaching around 3,800 at risk households across the borough, and provided over 500 winter warm packs to struggling families.

Question from Councillor Kenyon

Despite this council passing unanimously in July last year a motion to require this council to measure the impact of its decisions on local spending and safety to children, neither of these measurements were included in the budget reduction proposals put first before cabinet members and then before this council.

In the case of local spending, which means local job creation.... This meant that when cabinet members were considering the raft of eye-watering cuts put before them, they were unable to see in Section B of each of the proposals where it discusses the impact of the decision, members were unaware if their proposed cut would have the consequence of reducing investment in the local economy. In fact the phrase "local spending" is only mentioned three times in the entire budget report....and that's in the liberal democrat budget amendment.

Can the cabinet member concerned explain why the instructions of this full council were so casually ignored and reassure us all that the motion will be complied with in future and that these two important considerations will appear front and centre in the main pages of the decision documents?

Councillor Jabbar, Cabinet Member for Finance and Low Carbon, replied that the Council report template has been amended to include details of Equality Impact Assessments, including the safeguarding of children and that all Members of the Council have been notified of this development.

Question from Councillor Byrne

The Local Improvement Fund Bidding process for 2023 has been interesting to say the least.

Based on the hard work of the Advisory Committee who I understand met several times in late 2022 and early 2023. I would like to thank them for their time and input in the process. However, there are lingering questions as to the way the Cabinet Sub-Group has pulled bids out of the hat whilst discarding well received and well-placed bids as that in my own Ward in Dobcross, which met the relevant criteria but were subsequently not funded.

Councillor Chadderton, Leader of the Council replied that it was important to recognise that the Local Improvement Fund is a competitive process. We received over £700k of applications for capital funding in the latest funding round, but only had £400k available. This means that some projects will not receive funding.

The purpose of the Advisory Panel is to make recommendations to the LIF Cabinet sub-committee – they are there in an advisory capacity. Whilst the Advisory Panel have no formal decision-making power and are not able to approve or fund applications to the LIF, their advice to the Cabinet Sub-Committee does carry a lot of weight.

I think it's worth pointing out that the advisory panel did not recommend that the bid in Dobcross Cllr Byrne mentions be

funded, and for the most part the Cabinet sub-committee agreed with the recommendations of the advisory panel.



Oldham
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Question from Councillor M. Bashforth

Due to the disastrous Tory cost-of-living crisis we've unfortunately had several small businesses in Royton close their doors, can the relevant cabinet member explain what support is available for SMEs in Oldham?

Councillor Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Employment and Enterprise, replied that the Council was working with local businesses based in the Borough to mitigate against the worst effects of the cost-of-living crisis but was fearful for future developments bearing in mind that the energy relief scheme was due to finish in a few weeks and that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in his Budget announcements earlier in the day, had not indicated that this will be extended.

11

QUESTIONS ON CABINET MINUTES AND URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN

The Council was requested to note the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 14th November 2022, 12th December 2022 and 12th January 2023 and to note any urgent decisions that had been taken by Cabinet members and Officers of the Council, using their delegated authority. The Council was asked to receive questions on these minutes and decisions, from members of the Council who are not members of the Cabinet and to receive appropriate responses from Cabinet members.

Members asked the following questions: -

- a. Question from Councillor Murphy
In 2014, then Conservative Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles banned the use of camera cars for the enforcement of traffic laws including for cracking down on inappropriate, on-street parking. This issue clearly needs to be part of our transport strategy. Now I know I won't be alone in this Chamber when I say that inconsiderate and dangerous parking is a real bugbear of mine.
With more cars on the road than ever, this sort of behaviour is all the more dangerous. We all know areas where inconsiderate parking causes safety issues. Those with prams forced into the road or elderly or disabled residents unable to get about safely. It's a problem we hear about time and time again.
And we know the issues with enforcement too, Madam Mayor. The parking team has a limited number of resources and when an Enforcement Officer approaches a vehicle, drivers often drive off which makes enforcement difficult and cost prohibitive. So, this is why Eric Pickles got it wrong in 2014 and we need to re-empower councils on parking offences.
Now the vast majority of drivers are considerate. They follow the rules and pay attention to the road markings. They have nothing to worry about. But residents in the problematic hotspot areas, where anti-social parking exists are sick and tired of seeing the same problem time and time again and want action. And the Council's message to the thoughtless minority who

continue to park on roads with parking restrictions in an anti-social manner for example when dropping off and collecting children should be clear.



Councillor Roberts, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, replied that she would agree that inconsiderate parking is a bugbear of most of us in this chamber and is of course concerning as poor parking can be very dangerous to our residents.

The parking team does indeed have a limited resource and I would agree that the Enforcement Officers cannot be everywhere all at once. We know that there are particular hotspots where we might need to look at changing the Traffic Regulation Orders to allow us to allow us to enforce poor parking in the traditional way, however as Cllr Murphy points out, that would not stop some people just driving off as soon as they see the Enforcement Officer in the location. The use of "camera cars" could be a more beneficial way of being able to enforce these kinds of contraventions if legislation is granted. I would also make members of the chamber aware that we have two camera cars in Oldham that are allowed to be used in some circumstances, such as such as school crossings and bus stops where traffic regulation orders are in place. Oldham Council has also just applied for powers to enforce moving traffic, but this will be limited to infringement of one-way streets, box junctions and banned turns. We are also looking at the potential to ban cars from entering a "school street" during school drop off and pick up times to ensure that we can do our best to protect our children at the start and end of the school day. If adopted, this could be enforced using the camera car or a fixed camera. We've completed the application to Department of Transport and we hope to have the powers granted to us by the summer.

b. Question from Councillor C. Gloster

In recent years, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) has historically been in deficit, however it is now clear after the budget process has taken place, with significantly more funding than was initially anticipated that there will be a predicted cumulative surplus outturn of £0.442m in 2022/23. The position is now forecast to improve slightly with an in year 2022/23 surplus of £3.287m producing a £0.514m favourable outturn. This in turn produces a 2023/24 in-year surplus of £1.924m leading to an overall surplus balance of £2.438m at the year-end being carried forward. In 2024/25 a forecast in year surplus of £0.263m increases the cumulative balance carried forward to £2.701m. Anticipated increases in High Needs funding have been offset by the provision of a Service Improvement Development Fund to support a range of initiatives. Oldham Schools like many other organisations across the borough, have seen a substantial increase in costs across all budget areas, especially energy and proposed pay rises for our teaching staff, therefore is it reasonable to see a retained surplus in the dedicated schools grant when this surplus could go directly to the place it is needed most, our schools, at a time when it is needed most, immediately.

Councillor Jabbar, Cabinet Member for Finance and Low Carbon, replied that the DSG was essentially funded in four blocks, of which, by far the most significant were the Schools Block and the High Needs Block. Councillor Jabbar outlined the funding formula and indicated that he was willing to meet with any member to discuss this in more detail.

RESOLVED

1. That the Minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 14th November 2022, 12th December 2022 and 23rd January 2023 be noted.
2. That urgent decisions made by Cabinet Members and Officers of the Council be noted.
3. That the questions and responses thereon be noted.

12

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION BUSINESS

Motion 1 – Actions Not Ambitions – A Renewable Energy Future

Councillor Jabbar MOVED and Councillor Akhtar SECONDED the following Motion:

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.

1st AMENDMENT

Councillor Al-Hamdani MOVED and Councillor C. Gloster SECONDED the following AMENDMENT

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.
- Centrica – owners of British Gas and Britain’s largest energy provider- posted profits of £3.3 billion in 2022, up from £948 million in 2021 as a result of the war in Ukraine.
- 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. Specifically, by identifying companies who could be involved in running a Mine Water Heat Network and working with them to develop a successful plan for Oldham 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.
- Request that Greater Manchester Pension Fund (GMPF) divest from fossil fuel companies by 2030 at the latest
- Request GMPF provide an annual report - until such a time that they are fully divested - to record active interventions they are making to change those companies’ policies to become carbon neutral.

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 future governments 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.
- Reaffirm our commitment to a true windfall tax on the runaway profits of oil and gas giants. This tax revenue is needed to support families who are struggling.

On being put to the Vote the AMENDMENT was CARRIED.

2nd AMENDMENT

Councillor Quigg MOVED and Councillor Sharp SECONDED the following AMENDMENT

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 prices are high due to the illegal War launched by the Russian Federation on the Ukraine, investment in the UK's domestic hydrogen, coal, oil, gas, and renewable energy sectors is paramount to creating energy security.

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 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 energy bills for Oldham Council 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 w2019 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 the Conservative government has delivered a £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– but only when it publishes a full cost benefit analysis of how much more it will cost taxpayers to reach carbon neutrality so council taxpayers understand where their council tax money is being spent.
- Continue to work towards a carbon neutral Oldham by 2030, and a carbon neutral Greater Manchester but only when it publishes a full cost benefit analysis of how much more it will cost taxpayers to reach carbon neutrality so council taxpayers understand where their council tax money is being spent.
- Explore further options for renewable energy schemes across the Borough which do not involve taxpayer subsidies for big landowners, other local authorities, or multinational corporations.
- 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.

Sell any excess energy generated by council renewable assets to residents, local NHS and local care homes at a reasonable

price, independent of the main energy providers, through the Greater Manchester Local Energy Market 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.
- Condemn the Russian Federation for its invasion of Ukraine and further condemn the Russian Federation for manipulating energy and food supplies to fund its war effort.
- Oppose the Greater Manchester Clean Air Zone and soon to be Parking Levy.
- Support the suspension of green levies on energy bills to help bring energy bills down.
- Source more of our own domestic energy supplies, whether hydrogen, coal, oil, gas, nuclear, or renewables from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and not from foreign or unstable regimes abroad and back calls for the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in becoming energy independent.
- Deliver on the Labour administrations local election manifesto promise to pay each household in Oldham £600 to help with energy bills.

A vote was taken on the 2nd AMENDMENT, which was LOST.

On being put to the Vote the MOTION as AMENDED (1st AMENDMENT) was CARRIED.

RESOLVED: That the Council

1. Ensures that it continues its ambitious plans for the council to be operating as a carbon neutral council by 2025.
2. Continues to work towards a carbon neutral Oldham by 2030, and a carbon neutral Greater Manchester by 2038.
3. Explores further options for renewable energy schemes across the Borough. Specifically, by identifying companies who could be involved in running a Mine Water Heat Network and working with them to develop a successful plan for Oldham Borough.
4. Commits to re-evaluating all council owned assets for the viability of having solar panels installed to maximise the renewable energy generated by the Council.
5. Explores 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.

6. Requests that Greater Manchester Pension Fund (GMPF) divest from fossil fuel companies by 2030 at the latest
7. Requests that GMPF provide an annual report - until such a time that they are fully divested - to record active interventions they are making to change those companies' policies to become carbon neutral.
8. Works alongside the partner agencies to identify more sites in the Borough which could potentially help Oldham reduce its reliance on fossil fuels.
9. Works alongside future governments 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.
10. Reaffirms its commitment to a true windfall tax on the runaway profits of oil and gas giants. This tax revenue is needed to support families who are struggling.

Motion 2 – A Fit and Proper Healthy Start

Councillor Munroe MOVED and Councillor Chadderton SECONDED the following Motion:

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.

On being put to the vote the MOTION was CARRIED

RESOLVED:

1. That the Council instructs the Managing Director of Children and Young People to organise a campaign to further increase take up of Healthy Start vouchers in the Borough.
2. That the Chief Executive be requested to write to the Secretary of State for Education asking 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.
3. That the Council continues to push for reform to provide affordable childcare to all Oldhamers.
4. That the responsible Cabinet member(s) be requested to explore whether any extra support can be provided to early years providers in the Borough.
5. That the Council continued 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.

6. That the Council commits to use the newly developed Equality Impact Assessment Tool to determine the impact of council decisions on Children and Young People.

NOTICE OF OPPOSITION BUSINESS

Motion 1 – Reputation of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council At An All Time Low

Councillor Sharp MOVED and Councillor Quigg SECONDED the following Motion:

This Council notes that:

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.

A vote was taken on the MOTION which was LOST

Motion 2 – Removing Oldham Borough from Places for Everyone

Councillor Al-Hamdani MOVED and Councillor H Gloster SECONDED the following Motion:

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.

A recorded vote was taken on the MOTION as follows:

COUNCILLOR		COUNCILLOR	
Ahmad Riaz	AGAINST	Iqbal Javid	AGAINST
Akhtar Shoab	AGAINST	Islam Nazrul Mohammed	AGAINST
Al-Hamdani Sam	FOR	Jabbar Abdul	AGAINST
Ali Mohon	AGAINST	Kenyon Mark	FOR
Alyas Mohammed	AGAINST	Lancaster Luke	APOLOGIES
Arnott Dave	APOLOGIES	Marland Alicia	FOR
Azad Ali Montaz	AGAINST	McLaren Colin	AGAINST
Ball Sandra	ABSENT	McManus Chris	FOR
Barnes Robert	APOLOGIES	Moore's Eddie	APOLOGIES
Bashforth Marie	AGAINST	Munroe Leanne	AGAINST
Bashforth Steven	APOLOGIES	Murphy Dave	FOR
Birch Ros	AGAINST	Mushtaq Shaid	AGAINST
Brownridge Barbara	AGAINST	Nasheen Umar	AGAINST
Byrne Pam	FOR	Phythian Clint	ABSENT
Chadderton Amanda	AGAINST	Phythian Kyle	AGAINST
Chauhan Zahid	APOLOGIES	Quigg Lewis	FOR
Cosgrove Angela	AGAINST	Rea Lucia	FOR
Dean Peter	AGAINST	Roberts Hannah	AGAINST
Gloster Chris	FOR	Salamat Aqeel Ali	AGAINST

Gloster Hazel	FOR	Sharp Beth	FOR
Goodwin Chris	AGAINST	Sheldon Graham	FOR
Hamblett Louie	FOR	Shuttleworth Graham	AGAINST
Harrison Jenny	AGAINST	Surjan Ruji	AGAINST
Hindle Neil	APOLOGIES	Sykes Howard	FOR
Hobin Brian	APOLOGIES	Taylor Elaine	AGAINST
Hulme George	AGAINST	Wilkinson Mark	ABSENT
Hussain Aftab	APOLOGIES	Williams Steve	AGAINST
Hussain Fida	APOLOGIES	Williamson Diane	FOR
Hussain Sajed	ABSENT	Woodvine Max	FOR
Ibrahim Nyla	AGAINST	Garry Elaine (MAYOR)	AGAINST

On a recorded VOTE being taken, 17 VOTES were cast in FAVOUR of the MOTION with 30 VOTES cast AGAINST and 0 ABSTENTIONS.

The MOTION was therefore LOST.

14 **UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM COUNCIL**

Councillor Chadderton MOVED and Councillor Sykes SCONDED an updated report which presented Members with information as to the actions arising from the previous Council meetings on 2nd November and 14th December 2022 and on any matters outstanding from Council meetings from the commencement of the current municipal year, with the additional recommendations on the Polling District Review circulated.

RESOLVED:

1. That Council notes the actions taken and notes the correspondence has been received regarding some Motions agreed at previous Council meetings.
2. That Council approves the additional recommendations of the Polling District Review, as circulated.

15 **ANNUAL REPORTS 2022**

Councillor Chadderton MOVED and Councillor Sheldon SCONDED a report which presented the Member Annual Reports for 2022.

As part of the ongoing work to strengthen accountability to local people and their role as a Councillor in a co-operative borough, Elected Members were asked to produce an annual report that presented information regarding their work in the community over the last 12 months. Individual reports included ward priorities, work in the community and contact information.

Members were informed that their Reports were available to view under the Councillors' section on Oldham Council's website.

Council was advised that those Members with reports outstanding had until 31st March 2023 to submit them.



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RESOLVED - that the Member Annual Reports be noted.

REVIEW OF SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES FOR MEMBERS APPOINTED TO THE GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Chadderton MOVED and Councillor Sykes SCONDED a report that presented the recommendations of the Greater Manchester Independent Remuneration Panel in relation to the remuneration of the Members of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority's (GMCA) Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED

1. That Council notes the recommendations of the report of the Greater Manchester Independent Remuneration Panel. (detailed at Appendix 1 of the Council report).
2. That Council notes that the Levelling Up Bill is still proceeding through parliament and therefore the GMCA does not yet have legislative power to pay allowances directly to the GMCA's Overview and Scrutiny Committee members.
3. That Oldham Council (along with the other Greater Manchester District Authority's) pay allowances to their appointees to the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the interim.
4. That the allowance payments (referred to at 3 above), be reimbursed from the GMCA.
5. That the payments of Special Responsibility Allowances for Members of the GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Committee are set at the level recommended at Appendix 1 to the Council report) and are backdated to 24th June 2022 when the new scrutiny arrangements were put in place with increases outlined in paragraph 3 (e) of the Council report.
6. That the Council's Member Allowances Scheme is adjusted to take account of the interim arrangements.

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 9.35pm