

Oldham Borough Council



Council Meeting
Wednesday 13th March 2024

OLDHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

Tuesday, 5th March 2024

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council which will be held on Wednesday 13th March 2024 at 6.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, for the following purposes:

- 1 To receive apologies for absence
- 2 To order that the Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 13th December 2023, 22nd January 2024 and 28th February 2024 be signed as correct records (Pages 1 - 32)

Minutes of the meeting held on 28th February 2024 to follow.

- 3 To receive declarations of interest in any matter to be determined at the meeting
- 4 To deal with matters which the Mayor considers to be urgent business
- 5 To receive communications relating to the business of the Council
- 6 To receive and note petitions received relating to the business of the Council

(time limit 20 minutes)

There have been no Petitions received.

- 7 Youth Council

(time limit 20 minutes)

There is no Youth Council business.

- 8 Public Questions

(time limit 15 Minutes)

- 9 Reports of the Leader and Cabinet Members (Pages 33 - 120)

(Time limit 90 minutes)

Leader and Cabinet Members to present their reports

Non-executive members may ask questions.

- a. Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Reform and Regeneration – including the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held 13th November 2023, 11th December 2023 and 22nd January 2024; urgent decisions made during 2023/24; and the meetings of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority held 24th November 2023, 15th December 2023, 26th January 2024 and 9th February

2024

- b. Deputy Leader and Housing and Licensing Portfolio
- c. Deputy Leader and Children and Young People's Portfolio
- d. Education and Skills Portfolio Holder
- e. Health and Social Care Portfolio Holder
- f. Communities and Culture Portfolio Holder
- g. Neighbourhoods Portfolio Holder
- h. Business, Employment and Enterprise Portfolio Holder
- i. Finance and Corporate Resources Portfolio Holder

10 Notice of Administration Business

(time limit 30 minutes)

Motion 1

To be moved by Councillor Shah

Seconded by: Councillor Birch

This Council calls for a lasting peace in Palestine & Israel

The loss of civilian life in Palestine and Israel since October is intolerable, Save the Children estimates that over twelve-thousand children have died in Gaza since the start of this conflict.

The conflict has had a deep and emotional impact on many Oldhamers, some of whom may have friends or relatives in the region.

Whilst this Council is limited in our ability to affect change in foreign policy, we have a duty to express the concerns of our residents.

This Council Notes:

that the House of Commons passed a resolution backing calls for a ceasefire and the immediate release of hostages.

that members of this Council, led by the Mayor Cllr Dr Zahid Chauhan and Leaders of all Political Groups, called for a ceasefire in early November.

the international community is increasingly backing calls for a ceasefire and welcomes comments in this regard by the UK Foreign Secretary and US President but recognises that words are not enough, and Palestinian civilians need urgent action to prevent further loss of life.

the International Court of Justice's provisional measures and expresses concerns at reports that Israel has failed to comply with this ruling.

that Tell MAMA recorded over 2,000 incidents of anti-muslim hatred since October 7th – the largest volume of cases recorded in four months since Tell MAMA was founded in 2011.

that the Community Safety Trust recorded 2,699 incidents of anti-Jewish hate between October 7th and the end of the year – totalling two-thirds of all incidents reported in 2023.

This Council:

condemns the terror attacks carried out by Hamas on 7th October 2023.

reiterates calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, observed by all sides,

to allow urgent aid into Gaza.

urges all international powers to work together to establish a diplomatic process to deliver the peace of a two-state solution, with a safe and secure Israel alongside a viable Palestinian state.

recognises that a Palestinian state is key to lasting peace in the region, and that statehood is the inalienable right of the Palestinian people and not in the gift of any neighbour.

This Council further:

resolves to support the Oldham Interfaith Forum and Community Safety Partnership to combat any incidents of Islamophobia and antisemitism in Oldham.

supports diplomatic efforts to ensure rapid and unimpeded humanitarian relief is provided in Gaza.

regrets that previous attempts to pass a ceasefire resolution at the UN Security Council have failed.

Believes an Israeli ground offensive in Rafah risks catastrophic humanitarian consequences and must not take place.

Motion 2

To be moved by Councillor Taylor

Seconded by: Councillor Holly Harrison

Bee Network

Bus deregulation was a failed experiment. Passengers lost out and vital public transport routes were lost.

Once Tranche 2 of bus franchising in Greater Manchester launches at the end of March over half of Greater Manchester buses will be under local control.

In August 2022, Greater Manchester became the first major city outside of London to introduce a cap on bus fares, prices for adults were capped at £2 a journey or £5 a day, and £1 for journey or £2.50 a day for children under 16.

This Council:

believes public transport should be run in the interest of public good and to the benefit of the communities it serves, not private profit.

welcomes the arrival of the second phase of Greater Manchester's bus franchising in Oldham on March 24th.

further welcomes bus improvements including more frequent buses, more reliable buses, a commitment to improve performance to benefit residents and to make buses safer by increasing the number of TravelSafe Officers on the Bee Network by 30

supports plans to full integrate Greater Manchester's Public Transport System by January 2025.

This Council resolves:

- a. To work with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Transport for Greater Manchester, via the Bee Network Committee, to improve bus services for all Oldham residents.
- b. To ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Mayor of Greater Manchester

and thank him for his commitment to bringing buses in the city-region back into public control as well as efforts to make public transport in Greater Manchester more affordable.

11 Notice of Opposition Business

(time limit 30 minutes)

Motion 1 (Liberal Democrats)

To be moved by Councillor Harkness

Seconded by Councillor Gloster

Save Oldham Coliseum Theatre

This Council believes:

Oldham Coliseum Theatre was a treasured local asset that has drawn audiences from across the country to Fairbottom Street for more than 135 years. Its productions have put Oldham on the map and brought acclaim from across the UK's arts and culture sector.

For many years, the Coliseum has been one of only a handful of producing theatres outside of London, providing a platform for the development of new work. The closure of its Fairbottom Street home signifies a serious failure by all parties involved, with the withdrawal of ACE funding – and the failure to secure the long-term future of the site, despite missed opportunities linked with town centre regeneration projects.

This Council notes that:

Since the Coliseum announced that it would close in March 2023, the public support for the Theatre has been phenomenal. Oldham residents, theatregoers from across the country, as well as some of the biggest names in UK performing arts are united by a desire to resolve the difficulties facing the Oldham Coliseum; and keep it on Fairbottom Street where it belongs.

In September 2023, despite the then leadership of this Council publicly stating otherwise, a study commissioned by the Coliseum Board concluded that the Fairbottom Street building is not beyond repair and could be used again and brought up to a modern standard with the appropriate investment.

Investing in the Fairbottom building could be a much more cost-effective proposal freeing up millions for other projects and much needed regeneration.

This Council resolves to:

1. Examine the feasibility of refurbishing and investing into the Fairbottom Street building.
2. Explore funding streams that could help finance the redevelopment of the existing venue, including the reallocation of funds from other initiatives linked with the future of Oldham Coliseum.
3. Bring a report to cabinet as soon as possible outlining the steps that this Council can take to support the Oldham Coliseum Theatre to remain at home, on Fairbottom Street, which would also help regenerate that part of Oldham town centre and Yorkshire

Street.

Motion 2 (Conservative Party)

To be moved by Councillor Quigg

Seconded by Councillor Sheldon

Confidence in Oldham Council Leadership

In Shakespeare's Hamlet, Marcellus states that "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" and sadly following the closure of Oldham's Coliseum theatre by this Council, these words echo across the empty stage and stalls as a warning to this Boroughs Leader. For instead of Denmark, the people of this town believe "Something is rotten in Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council".

Driven by the next press release or online video, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (OMBC) and this Labour administration continues in its quest for the 'Game Changing' Holy Grail that will fix the town's decline. The numerous town centre focused projects that go over budget; 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 and that led to the closure of the 140 year old Coliseum theatre, Marks and Spencer's, a 'Budget' Hotel at Princes' Gate scrapped, and the Council even failing to deliver a Lidl. Countless opportunities missed, thousands of promised jobs failing to materialise and a Borough back to square one and in a worse position.

Undeterred the Council even went and bought a shopping centre in the middle of pandemic, spending millions of pounds of taxpayer's money, which has now resulted in conflicting messaging coming from this administration that the Council is on the brink, with headlines stating, "Our councils haven't declared bankruptcy yet... but that doesn't mean the situation isn't dire", can only leave residents in this Borough feeling fearful.

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. The administration is failing to get the basics right. Most egregious was the improvement notice issued by the Department for Education following on from an inspection which found OMBC was failing our towns Special Educational Needs and Disabilities children.

To assets being sold off, seeing little or no return on their true value to the people of this Borough. It is important to state that 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 the Council is run in the interests of those who run it, instead of those who pay for it.

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, with the buck

stopping firmly at the Leader of OMBC door.

After doing the hockey cokey of staying and then going, the now part time Chief Executive has the unenviable task trying to resolve the administrations mess. After spending unknown amounts on consultants to try and find the right candidate for the post of Chief Executive, OMBC shamefully couldn't find a new full time Chief Executive. It is no wonder there is a torrent of senior officers leaving the Council before the last person to leave the Civic Centre turns out the lights.

In 2012 Oldham Council was runner up in the prestigious most improved council award and in 2014 Oldham was 'highly commended' at the LGC Council of the Year Awards. Since that high water mark things have gone very wrong. It is clear radical measures need to be taken to restore the confidence of our residents, our business community, and OMBC workforce. Now more than ever we need to restore trust in the Metropolitan Borough of Oldham.

If Oldham is to have any chance of rebuilding residents trust, incentivising people to stay or move into the area with their families, then there needs to be massive change at OMBC. The Council needs to offer hope for the future. Sadly, this administration under the Leadership of Arooj Shah is not capable of delivering this.

This Council therefore resolves to:

To write to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, to request a full audit of the Council's governance and finances.

This Council also resolves that it:

Has **NO** confidence in the Labour Council Leader Arooj Shah and Labour administration to run OMBC.

Motion 3 (Oldham Group)

To be moved by Councillor Ghafoor

Seconded by Councillor Wahid

The Conflict in Gaza

Whatever your background, creed, colour, or political persuasion, there is no one in this borough that has been left untouched by the current conflict in Gaza.

As national politicians squabble in parliament, the ongoing conflict has resulted in significant loss of life. Over 30000 dead so far. The majority, 21000 at the most recent count, are children.

As the numbers of the innocent massacres increase and with no end to suffering in sight, we call upon this Council to act and add the voices of the people of Oldham to those of the millions across the world appalled by the atrocities of the conflict in Gaza.

However small our voice, we as a council should add our name to the many Councils across England pleading for an immediate ceasefire and to stop the violence and protect civilian lives.

However insignificant we know our influence to be, we must speak out in support of the

aid agencies that are being prevented from reaching those that are starving to death. The need for humanitarian agencies to provide essential aid and assistance to those affected by the conflict is critical.

As this council knows, many Oldhamers have donated to these agencies. As we debate this issue, there are groups of children and young people from across our town raising funds for these aid agencies. They are pleading with us to help get the aid through. We are pleading with you all here to do what can be done and help people from starving to death.

The people of Oldham are neither Islamists today anymore than they were Far Right yesterday. Caring about others does not make us extremists. From all backgrounds, all of us are traumatised by the images of the horrors of the conflict in Gaza. We are concerned about the daily reported breaches of human rights, including allegations of genocide and ethnic cleansing. No one, however powerful they are, should be above the law. Which is why the people of this borough believe it is right that investigations to hold perpetrators accountable are done so through the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

This is why so many of us were shocked by the comments of the leader of the Labour Party Sir Keir Starmer when he shared his belief in an LBC radio interview on October 11th that Israel had the right to continue bombing Gaza and cutting off electricity and water to its population of over 2 million people. What the Labour Party leader is describing is collective punishment. Collective punishment is a war crime.

At its core, this motion seeks to affirm the United Kingdom's commitment to upholding human rights, promoting peace, and holding perpetrators of violence and atrocities accountable for their actions. No matter the justification of this atrocity, the cause of humanity should be at the forefront of all our minds.

The Council notes;

the convention of the prevention and punishment of the crime and genocide as the first human right treaty adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 9th December 1948

that according to the Genocide Convention, ratified by 153 states including the United Kingdom, that genocide is a crime prohibited under international law that collective punishment is a war crime as prohibited by treaty in both international and non-international armed conflicts, more specifically Common Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and Article 4 of the Additional Protocol II

The council further notes;

- that after initially abstaining or failing to turn up to vote supporting a ceasefire, all 3 Oldham Labour Party MPs now support what Labour describe as an 'immediate humanitarian ceasefire' which does not go far enough to stop the plausible case of genocide

- the statement from the Secretary-General of the United Nations condemning the incident in northern Gaza in which more than a hundred people were reportedly killed or injured while seeking life-saving aid and his call for an immediate humanitarian

ceasefire and the unconditional release of all hostages

- the head of UNICEF's warning that without safe water, "many more children" will soon die from disease. "Access to sufficient amounts of clean water is a matter of life and death...children in Gaza have barely a drop to drink...without safe water, many more children will die from deprivation and disease in the coming days."

-the order from the ICJ for Israel to provide aid was one of six provisional measures ordered by the Court on 26 January 2024. Since that period, Amnesty International has reported that Israel has continued to disregard its obligation as the occupying power to ensure the basic needs of Palestinians in Gaza are met and failed to lift restrictions on the entry of life-saving goods, or open additional aid access points and crossings or put in place an effective system to protect humanitarians from attack that in its January 26 decision, the ICJ ordered Israel to take steps to prevent any acts of genocide in Gaza. The Court required that Israel ensure that it does not commit acts that might fall within the scope of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This includes that Israel takes steps to punish any Israeli who might have individually committed acts of genocide or incited others to commit acts of genocide in Palestine.

The Council resolves;

1. To instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister reiterating the United Kingdom's commitment to adhering to the Geneva Convention and International law and request that His Majesty's Government communicate this with all
2. To instruct the Chief Executive to write to all 3 Oldham MPs, Debbie Abrahams, Jim McMahon & Angela Raynor, on behalf of the people of Oldham, condemning the statement issued by their party leader Sir Keir Starmer and ask that all 3 MPs confirm their understanding that collective punishment is a war crime
3. To instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary General of the United Nations informing him that the citizens of Oldham stand alongside millions from across the world and support the United Nations demands for an immediate ceasefire and for Humanitarian aid to be provided to all those in need in the affected area of Gaza
4. To write to the Foreign Secretary requesting that our government does everything possible to help bring the governments of Israel and Palestine together to resolve the issue and create a two-state solution so that innocent lives are no longer at risk.

Motion 4 (Failsworth Independence Party)

To be moved by Councillor Hobin

Seconded by Councillor Rea

Commission a Judge Led non-statutory independent inquiry into all aspects of historical and current instances of child sexual exploitation within the borough

Contrary to the claim made by the previous Council leader, being groomed and gang raped did and still does destroy lives. The initial failures of those whose responsibility to protect them were scandalous and it is right that she was forced to publicly

apologise for the failings of this council. Unfortunately, the findings of GM Mayor's so-called Assurance Review neither provided assurance nor sufficiently reviewed what had taken place. Despite claiming there was no cover up, and that lessons had been learned, allegation after allegations have proven to be true.

The most terrifying was that the ringleader of the infamous Rochdale Grooming Gang, had been an Oldham Council employee with access to children for 18 years. People from across all communities of Oldham have lost trust in this council after this revelation was confirmed as accurate. A revelation that had been kept hidden from all of us.

As recently as this January, the highly respected Maggie Oliver referenced the Oldham Assurance Review and told its authors Malcom Newsam & Gary Ridgway that in Oldham they had been prevented from getting to the truth. This is after it emerged that survivors had been prevented from giving testimony to the Review Team. The individual identified within the Assurance Review as responsible for preventing survivors from testifying is a senior Oldham Council employee.

There have been several attempts so far to secure the support of this Labour Party run council, under 3 different leaders, to call in the government and lead a fit for purpose inquiry. On each occasion, including calls for a Public Inquiry, every Labour Party councillor has voted to block these motions. Given Maggie Oliver's most recent statement, and the failure of Operation Sherwood to so far charge a single offender, it is time that this Council looked to itself to secure justice for the as of yet unknown number of children that this council failed.

A non-statutory inquiry, an action within the powers of this Council, will allow the opportunity for victims, survivors and whistleblowers to give evidence in private and free from any other pressures or interference. This is especially important because of the up to now less than candid role of both Oldham Council and Greater Manchester Police. Such arrangements will hopefully also encourage other victims to come forward and once and for all lift this dark cloud that has hung over this town for too long.

The Council notes;

That since the review in 2022, little has been done to bring to account those responsible, both within the Council and other authorities and externally by way of criminal prosecutions.

That survivors deserve to see the full powers of law enforced on perpetrators and facilitators.

We as a council, and as such members herein, have a duty to protect children and vulnerable people of the borough and beyond. The reality is, until we get to the root of the issue, we cannot move forward as we are unable to ensure that failings highlighted in the review are not continuing.

It is very clear there is significant dissatisfaction from the public and opposition parties on the lack of action on this issue and this has been further evidenced in the press and

on social media. There is a significant groundswell of opinion that an independent inquiry is needed to address the issue of CSE in Oldham, both historically and in the present.

The purpose of the Inquiry should be to fully investigate and establish the facts of child sexual exploitation across the Borough of Oldham, to identify if, and where, public, and other, services had failed and where possible, to establish who was accountable for any failure and to make recommendations for the future.

So that trust can once again be rebuilt in this borough, survivors finally have their testimonies heard and those that abused our children and those also that covered up the abuse are brought to justice,

This Council resolves;

- to approve the commissioning and implementation of a non-statutory independent inquiry into all aspects of historical and current instances of child sexual exploitation within the borough.
- instruct council officers to commission such an inquiry immediately.

12 Update on Actions from Council (Pages 121 - 154)

To update council on actions from the previous Council meeting held on 13th December 2023 and meetings earlier in the 2023/24 municipal year.

13 Annual Reports 2023 (Pages 155 - 270)

The Annual Reports 2023 received are attached

14 Members Allowances Scheme 2024/25 (Pages 271 - 280)

To approve a Members Allowance Scheme for 2024/25

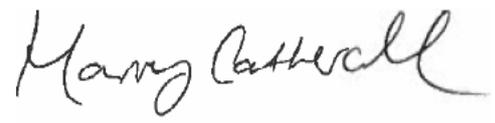
15 Appointment of Independent Persons under Localism Act 2011 - Standards (Pages 281 - 282)

To consider the appointment of two Independent Persons to the standards committee under the Localism Act 2011.

16 Adoption of Places for Everyone Plan (Pages 283 - 304)

A Joint Development Plan Document for Nine Greater Manchester Local Authorities (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) 2022-2039 (The Places for Everyone Plan)

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Harry Catherall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

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

