

# Oldham Borough Council



**Council Meeting**  
**Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> September**  
**2024**

## OLDHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council which will be held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> September 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 meeting of the Council held on 10th July 2024 be signed as a correct record (Pages 1 - 28)
- 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 are no petitions for this meeting of Council to consider.

- 7 Leader's Annual Statement

Leader to address Council

- 8 Youth Council

*(time limit 20 minutes)*

### **Holiday Activities and Food Programme**

As part of their election manifesto, the new UK government are planning to spend £315M to introduce free breakfast clubs in every primary school.

While Oldham Youth Council welcomes support for young people, we feel that this money could be spent targeting those who need it most. We believe the threshold for free school meals needs to be increased to ensure the wellbeing of young people in poverty.

We would also like to see the continuation of the HAF (Holiday Activity and Food) program that has helped so many young people across Oldham. We do not feel there needs to be an increase in the money provided in this scheme, but we would like to see it used universally, allowing all young people access. This will reduce any stigma of attending sessions and hopefully encouraging more young people eligible for free school meals to take up the offer.

Council recognises that over the past few years the Oldham Youth Council have made the 'cost of living' a priority issue and have undertaken much work in this area to

improve the experiences of Oldham's young people. This includes:

- Working with the Council to take unused stationary and distribute through schools to those students who need it most.
- 2022 motion to Council asking that the Chief Executive writes to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Education and the Shadow Secretary of State for Education requesting to extend the offer of the Holiday Activities and Food programme to all young people not just those on free school meals.

Council notes:

- That according to several 2024 surveys commissioned by organisations, such as General Mills and Greggs Foundation, between 20-30% of young people do not eat breakfast before school.
- Just over two million children are eligible for free meals in England, according to the latest government figures.
- However, a 2024 Food Foundation survey found that there are 900,000 children living in poverty in England who are missing out on national eligibility for Free School Meals due to the strict threshold set by government.
- Scottish and Welsh Government is considering increasing free school meals across primary schools and London's Mayor has announced free meals will be provided in all primary schools across London for the 2024/2025 academic year.
- Since 2022, the HAF programme has provided 10.7 million HAF days to children and young people in this country. The expansion of the programme year-on-year has meant a total of 5.4 million HAF days provided between Christmas 2022, Easter and summer 2023.

We propose that Council therefore **resolves** to ask the Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister, Secretary of State for Health and the Secretary of State for Education asking that, rather than a blanket breakfast club for all primary schools, that they look at increasing the threshold for free school meals so more young people (both primary and secondary age) benefit; that they continue the HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) program, making sure young people are fed during the school holidays while making this a universal service for all young people to reduce the stigma in attending and making it more cost efficient.

## 9 Public Questions

*(time limit 15 Minutes)*

## 10 Questions to Leader and Cabinet (Pages 29 - 90)

(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 Building a Better Oldham –

including the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and 15<sup>th</sup> July 2024, the meetings of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority held 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and the meetings of the AGMA Executive Board held 9<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024

- b. Deputy Leader and Decent Home Portfolio Holder
- c. Deputy Leader and Value for Money and Sustainability Portfolio Holder
- d. Children and Young People's Portfolio Holder
- e. Education and Skills Portfolio Holder
- f. Enterprise Portfolio Holder
- g. Adults, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder
- h. Don't Trash Oldham Portfolio Holder
- i. Thriving Communities and Culture Portfolio Holder

## 11 Notice of Administration Business

*(time limit 30 minutes)*

### **Motion 1: Strengthening the Online Safety Act**

To be moved by Councillor Harrison

Seconded by Councillor Nasheen

Social media giants have displayed time and again that they cannot be trusted to self-regulate, the riots across the country in recent weeks showed how dangerous misinformation can be and how quickly it can spread online.

There was at least one doctored video circulating online in early August purporting to be of Aldi in Chadderton, not only was this video not filmed within the Borough of Oldham it was several years old. However, this caused a tremendous amount of community concern and even lead to Police resources being deployed to the scene.

It is urgent that we take proactive measures to enhance the safety and security of our online environment. We cannot allow malicious actors to spread misinformation online in an attempt to cause unrest and division and destruction.

The current Online Safety Act, while a significant step forward, requires strengthening to address challenges and ensure comprehensive protection for all users, particularly vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly.

This Council resolves:

- to write to the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police and the Chief Superintendent for Oldham to thank them for the work their officers did to keep Oldhamers safe and violence off our streets.
- to write to the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation & Technology to ask

his Department:

- to undertake a review of the Online Safety Act to identify areas for improvement.
- to strengthen enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance and increase penalties for violations.
- to provide resources and training for parents, schools, and third sector organisations to help them protect and guide children in the digital world.
- to ensure victims of online abuse and crimes are supported.

**Motion 2: A Welcome Start to Delivering the New Deal for Workers**

To be moved by Councillor Taylor

Seconded by Councillor Islam

The King's Speech delivered on the 17th of July 2024 included plans for a new Employment Rights Bill. This bill builds on the previously announced New Deal for Working People and will enshrine much of the plan to make work pay, provide security at work and ensure the work life balance that everyone deserves.

This Council notes:

- The Government's commitment to improve workers' rights, and terms & conditions across the UK.
- The key components of the New Deal for Working People, include:
  - A ban on zero-hour contracts.
  - A commitment to end 'fire & re-hire' practices
  - Strengthening employment rights and flexible working from day one.
  - Making sure work pays, with a genuine living wage.
  - Better access to trade unions and fair representation in the workplace.

This Council believes:

- That fair pay and decent working conditions are fundamental rights for all workers.
- That the measures proposed in the New Deal for Workers will significantly improve the lives of workers in Oldham
- That fair and decent work provides greater security, improves national productivity and increases economic opportunity for all workers.
- That supporting these measures aligns with our commitment to social justice and economic fairness.

This Council resolves to:

- Lobby for support for the Employment Rights Bill.
- Write to the Borough's three MPs, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, reaffirming our support for the New Deal for

Workers.

- Promote awareness of the New Deal for Workers in Oldham through our communication channels.
- Encourage local businesses to adopt the principles of the New Deal for Workers voluntarily, ahead of any legislative changes.

## 12 Notice of Opposition Business

*(time limit 30 minutes)*

### **Motion 1: Scrap the Two-Child Benefit Cap**

To be moved by Councillor Sykes

Seconded by Councillor Al-Hamdani

The Two Child limit to benefit payments was introduced by the Conservative Government in 2017 and is supported by the current Labour Government. It prevents families from claiming Child Tax Credit or Universal Credit for more than two children in the household.

Council notes the recent research conducted by the End Child Poverty Coalition which has found that:

- 1.5 million children in the UK live in households subject to the two-child limit on benefit payments. That is roughly one-in-ten children in the UK.
- In 2023/24 the two-child limit cost families up to £3,235 per child each year.
- There is a strong correlation between families affected by the two-child limit and those who are living in poverty.
- Scrapping the two-child limit would lift 250,000 children out of poverty overnight, and significantly reduce the level of poverty that a further 850,000 children live in.
- Scrapping the two-child limit would cost £1.3 billion, however it is estimated that child poverty costs the economy £39 billion each year.

In Oldham 11,340 children in 3,160 households are currently affected by the two child limit to benefit payments. That is 18% of all children in the authority area. At the same time 27,760 local children are living in poverty.

Council strongly believes that the two-child limit to benefit payments is a cruel and harmful policy that should be scrapped. Research from the University of York has shown its introduction has had no positive impacts on employment and earnings. Instead, it has dragged thousands of local families into poverty.

Council notes the Liberal Democrats have consistently opposed the two-child limit to benefit payments since it was introduced – calling for it to be axed in their 2017, 2019 and 2024 manifestos. Council notes with concern the stance of the Labour Government who are committed to keeping the cap – going as far as suspending the

whip from MPs who rebel against this position.

**Council resolves to:**

1. Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister outlining Oldham Council's strong belief that the two-child limit to benefit payments should be scrapped – which would help more than 11,000 children across Oldham.
2. Further instruct the Chief Executive to write to all of Oldham's MPs, asking them to commit their public support to the campaign to end the cruel two child limit to benefit payments.
3. Ensure the number of children a family has is considered when a hardship grant is given out by the council.
4. Explore ways to support families impacted by the two-child limit across Oldham Borough, including through free school meals.

**Motion 2: Motor Insurance Premiums**

To be moved by Councillor Akhtar  
Seconded by Councillor Ibrahim

Recent research has exposed stark and unacceptable racial disparities in motor insurance premiums across the UK, including in Oldham. A 2023 survey by Citizens Advice found that residents in the most ethnically diverse areas are being quoted insurance premiums that are, on average, 33% higher than those in less diverse areas. Shockingly, this disparity persists even when controlling for factors like crime rates, vehicle values, and local road traffic accident statistics. Furthermore, evidence suggests that individuals with names associated with certain ethnic groups, such as "Muhammad," face higher premiums compared to those with names like "John," despite similar risk profiles.

These findings are a damning indictment of an industry that is systematically disadvantaging Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has committed to investigating these practices, but the urgency of the situation demands immediate action. Section 19 of the Equality Act (2010) defines indirect discrimination as the application of a provision, criterion, or practice that, while applied uniformly, results in worse outcomes for a group of people with protected characteristics. These practices must be recognised as such.

Addressing these disparities is not just a legal necessity but a moral imperative, aligning with Oldham Council's commitment to promoting equity, fairness, and social justice.

**Oldham Council Notes:**

Oldham's diversity is one of its greatest strengths, but this strength is undermined when our residents are subjected to systemic discrimination in essential services like motor insurance. The reported discriminatory practices not only erode trust in financial institutions but also exacerbate existing socio-economic inequalities by imposing an

undue financial burden on ethnic minority communities.

While the Council does not have direct control over insurance premiums, we have a duty to stand up for our residents, challenge unfair practices, and advocate for systemic change. It is not enough to passively acknowledge these issues; we must actively work to dismantle the structures that allow such disparities to persist.

We welcome the commitment in the Labour manifesto, which states that the new Government will further support people by “tackling the soaring cost of car insurance,” but this must include specific actions to eliminate racial discrimination within the industry.

**Oldham Council Believes:**

Every resident of Oldham has the right to be treated fairly and equitably in all aspects of life, including motor insurance, regardless of their race or ethnicity. The Council must take an active role in raising awareness about this issue, applying pressure on relevant bodies, and advocating for substantive change at both local and national levels.

**Oldham Council Resolves:**

1. **To Demand Accountability:** Write to Oldham’s newly elected MPs, urging them to take immediate action by raising these concerns about racial disparities in motor insurance premiums with the relevant Secretary of State. Additionally, demand that they press the FCA to expedite its investigation into these discriminatory practices and report back to the community on the progress made.
2. **To Challenge the Insurance Industry:** Instruct the portfolio holder for neighbourhoods and community safety to write to the Association of British Insurers (ABI), demanding a comprehensive review of their pricing practices. The ABI must be held to account for why motorists from BAME backgrounds are charged significantly higher premiums than their White counterparts with similar risk profiles. The Council should insist on transparency and a full explanation, accompanied by concrete steps to rectify this injustice.
3. **To Empower the Community:** Support and amplify local initiatives and campaigns that raise awareness of this issue and provide support to those affected by these discriminatory practices. The Council must work closely with community leaders and advocacy groups to ensure that all residents are informed of their rights and the support available to them.
4. **To Build a Coalition for Change:** Collaborate with other councils, governmental bodies, and relevant organisations to form a coalition dedicated to addressing and eliminating racial disparities in motor insurance premiums. This coalition should work towards developing and implementing policies that ensure fair treatment for all citizens, regardless of ethnicity.

**Motion 3: Putting Oldham Council Back in the Black**

To be moved by Councillor Quigg



Seconded by Councillor Woodvine

Despite Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (OMBC) passing a budget on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2024, Oldham Council say they are now 'working on' reducing a predicted £36m budget black hole. Despite being halfway through the current financial year the budgetary picture has worsened.

If the administration fails in cutting costs, OMBC could well end up using most of its reserves in 2025, leaving it vulnerable to 'effective bankruptcy' or the issuance of a Section 114. OMBC has also made clear to the media that they are encouraging voluntary redundancies across council services in a bid to cut spending and were looking at 'all options'.

Last year, the cabinet reported a projected overspend every quarter and each time they said they expected the real figure to be less than predicted –it wasn't. Too often Council spending and financial information is not as comprehensive and transparent as it should be, meaning local taxpayers don't have a full and accurate picture of the finances. Too often the Labour administration has dismissed or failed to implement opposition budget amendments.

### **Clearly something is going wrong at OMBC.**

Is the Cabinet Member for Value for Money & Sustainability to blame or is the Director of Finance to blame?

Was this Council misled at the last budget?

Who has failed to manage OMBC finances by failing to keep them under control?

Councillors and the people of Oldham have not been given the full picture on the financial challenges facing the Borough. The budget set on the 28th of February 2024 was clearly not worth the paper it was printed on.

### **This Council resolves to:**

- Immediately commission an investigation by a forensic accountant on the Councils finances both past and present and whether it has complied with the Best Value Duty.
- For the investigations outcome report to be presented to a special sitting of the full Council.

### **The Council further resolves to:**

- Immediately publish discussions OMBC has had with HM Government about any financial packages to help repair the financial black hole and to provide a full list of meetings and minutes of those meetings that took place and with who.
- Immediately provide a full budgetary analysis to each Council grouping by the Director of Finance, providing a full report on the Councils finances.
- Make sure all 60 Oldham Borough Councillors have a DBS check completed by

the time of the next Council meeting to make sure there are no issues financial or otherwise that prevent them from carrying out their duties.

Write to Saddleworth Parish Council and Shaw and Crompton Town Council to confirm if they have carried out DBS checks on all elected members and asking them to reply by the next full Council meeting with a response as to whether they are carrying out DBS checks on elected members

#### **Motion 4: Mass Graves in Oldham Cemeteries**

To be moved by Councillor Hurley

Seconded by Councillor Hughes

Before the 1980s, it was common practice across the UK that when a woman had a stillbirth, hospital staff would quickly take the baby away.

Parents were informed by hospital staff that it was better they didn't hold or even see their baby as they believed a mother would recover from the experience quicker if they had no interaction with their baby. It was explained that their baby would be buried in a coffin alongside a 'nice' person, and that was that.

No funeral, no mental health assistance, and no support; grieving mothers and fathers were simply told and expected to just get on with their lives. The emotional toll of this experience cannot be overstated. So many people have carried the pain and trauma of the practice from the past, with many never knowing the final resting place of their babies.

Sadly, the reality of what occurred with thousands of stillborn babies is now known thanks to the fantastic campaign work of a woman from the Wirral, Gina Jacobs, who found her baby in a mass grave alongside 63 other babies.

A resident from Royton asked us to help her in finding her twin brothers; one was stillborn, and the other had died at 5 hours old in 1962. Her parents had since passed away, but her quest to find the graves of her brothers eventually led her to Royton cemetery after years of anguish and trauma.

After many years of searching and inquiring, also being passed back and forth between the hospital and registrar and then the cemetery records, it became clear that the process needs to be looked at. A clear pathway between multi-agency agencies must be put in place so relatives can find the information required quickly. The resident eventually found out that Royton Cemetery had a mass grave where her brothers lay.

Our research of the public records at Hollinwood and online records uncovered even more: believed to be buried together in one box, the resident's brothers Nicolas and Lawrence shared their unmarked mass grave with 303 others, which included:  
146 stillborn babies  
128 babies and young children  
29 Adults

Due to errors in the system, only 147 names of the 303 buried were recorded online. This is a matter of extreme urgency that should be fixed immediately to ensure all

those who are buried in mass graves are properly recorded.

Thankfully, staff at the records office hold the original handwritten books in which we found 157 missing names, which, through the work of one staff member these 157 have manually been added to the online records for this one mass grave.

Through Online Records and with the help of the staff from Hollinwood Cemetery, we discovered that there are three mass graves in Royton Cemetery; Royton is not unique there are mass graves of stillborn babies, babies and young children in every cemetery across the borough, who lay forgotten, totalling thousands.

We cannot undo what has happened, but as an authority, we must recognise that it did happen and support residents and their families.

**This council resolves to:**

- Recognise the loss and suffering in the past and present by publicly marking out each mass grave and erecting a memorial to all our babies born asleep and the many who lay with them forgotten.
- That records of mass graves in our cemeteries be collated and recorded entirely online so that relatives can at last see the final resting place of their babies, children and relatives.
- To implement and publicise a clear procedure that provides those seeking their loved ones, a professional, sensitive and transparent process.
- Provide relatives with a dedicated point of contact who can support and assist people in this traumatic time.

**Motion 5: Collective Spirit Free School**

To be moved by Councillor Hince

Seconded by Councillor Navesey

The council and its members (as corporate parents) have a duty of care towards children within the borough. This includes when they are failed by the very organisations meant to educate and develop them.

This Council notes:

- Collective Spirit Free School based in Oldham closed in 2017 amid serious allegations of financial irregularities and mismanagement.
- Hundreds of pupils were subject to catastrophic failures in their education, as well as receiving substandard care, with even basic requirements such as school lunches being described as inedible.
- When inspected by Ofsted, the school was put into special measures. However, such was the level of failings and conditions the school was closed with two hundred and ten students needing to be urgently re-schooled.
- In addition, the Education & Skills Funding Agency report identified a number of

significant failings in governance and financial control arrangements relating to a company connected to the school's leadership.

- It has been reported that between September 2013 and August 2017 Collective Spirit Free School paid between £1,247,637 and £1,265,177 to a company connected to the school's leadership.
- The Education & Skills Funding Agency report concluded that "owing to the lack of supporting documentation and evidence in relation to the financial transactions, the Education & Skills Funding Agency is unable to conclude on the allegations, specifically whether costs were inappropriately inflated, or invoices submitted for services not delivered". The Education & Skills Funding Agency also concluded "that from a review of documentation and the governance and control arrangements operated by Collective Spirit Free School, casts significant doubt on the legitimacy of funds paid to" a company connected to the school's leadership. The report states that The Education & Skills Funding Agency encountered substantial difficulties establishing any reasonable audit trail of financial transactions or evidence to assure the regularity of funds spent by the trust (school).
- It has also been reported that during this time, the school even failed to pay pension contributions to teachers totalling £124000.
- In addition, it has been reported donations from parents and carers to the school totalling £33,512, essentially from some of the poorest homes in the borough also remain unaccounted for.
- Although an investigation was carried out and subsequent report was published by the Education & Skills Funding Agency, the report found many questions remain unanswered, with responsibility for potential wrongdoing going unaccounted for.
- Victims of this mismanagement, former pupils, parents, carers, and former employees still seek answers, accountability, and closure.

This Council resolves:

- To outline the tragic failings, impacts and alleged financial irregularities still unanswered in the Collective Spirit Free School scandal to the Secretary of State for Education the Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP.
- To request the Secretary of State for Education the Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP to instruct the Department of Education (DfE) to carry out a full inquiry into Collective Spirit Free School. With the aims and objectives of fully highlighting the schools' failings and negative impacts on pupils and their families, by giving them a voice in said inquiry. To provide a platform to individuals who wish to make statements of evidence. And a comprehensive investigation into financial irregularities previously unanswered including the holding to account of any individual(s) accountable (and) or complicit in wrongdoing.

- To offer the inquiry any support or resources as requested by the DfE.

13 Update on Actions from Council (Pages 91 - 114)

To note actions taken arising from Council meetings

14 Constitution Update (Pages 115 - 208)

To consider updates to the Council's Constitution

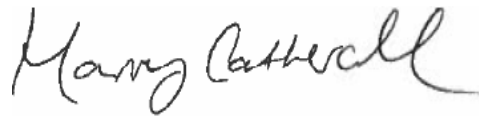
15 Treasury Management Outturn Report 2023/24 (Pages 209 - 226)

To consider the Treasury Management Outturn in respect of 2023/24

16 Oldham Youth Justice Service Plan 2024-2025 (Pages 227 - 270)

To approve the Youth Justice Plan 2024/25

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



**Harry Catherall  
Chief Executive**

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

MOTION – Mover of the Motion to MOVE



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



DEBATE ON THE MOTION: Include Timings



MOVER of Motion – Right of Reply



VOTE – For/Against/Abstain



Declare outcome of the VOTE

**RULE ON TIMINGS**

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

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

**WITH AMENDMENT**

