

Present: Councillor J. Hussain (in the Chair)
Councillors Aslam, Ghafoor, Harkness, Marland (Substituting for Councillor Williamson), McLaren, Rustidge and Wilkinson

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Taylor – Statutory Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods

Councillor Goodwin – Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways

Councillor Al-Hamdani – Calling-in Member

Peter Richards - Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Housing Delivery

Elizabeth Dryden-Stuart – Strategic Planning Services

Peter Thompson – Constitutional Services

1 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Kouser, Sharp and Williamson.

2 **URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair advised that agenda item 8 (Corporate Performance Report 2024/25 - Quarter 4: 1st January to 31st March 2025) was to be deferred to the Board's next scheduled meeting on 24th July 2025.

3 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions for this meeting of the Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Board to consider.

5 **MINUTES**

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Place, Economic growth and Environment Scrutiny Board, held on 2nd April 2025, be approved as a correct record.

6 **CALL-IN PROCEDURE**

Resolved:

That the Call-in Procedure be noted.

7 **COMPLYING WITH THE BIODIVERSITY DUTY - OUR POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES FOR THRIVING WILDLIFE IN OLDHAM**

The Chair reported that the purpose of this report was to consider an item of Called-in business, from the Cabinet's meeting held on 24th March 2025. Councillors Al-Hamdani and Kenyon, in accordance with the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules had called-in Minute 11 taken from the proceedings of the Cabinet's meeting held on 24th March 2025

‘Complying with the Biodiversity Duty - Our Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham’, a report that had been prepared by the Executive Director for Place/Deputy Chief Executive.



The grounds for the call-in, which Councillor Kenyon outlined to the Scrutiny Board meeting were that:

1. There was not enough information in the report to make the decision. The cabinet minutes make reference to some of these deficiencies: “resources such as funding may be needed to be identified for management plans”. However, there are further gaps in this report which need to be filled and the report resubmitted to cabinet for approval. These gaps include.
2. The plan does not make any assessment of existing capacity (eg authority maintained public rights of way and that existing contribution to green corridors) and new capacity required.
3. The plan does not attach a budget nor any identified sources of funding. In the absence of funding, it does not offer a paired down and prioritised list of objectives that can be fulfilled with existing capacity. This is particularly relevant considering the continued strain on local authority finances
4. The plan is full of objectives but is short on how achievement will be measured and by whom. If measurement is needed by specialists, then how will that be funded?
5. There are no milestones or touchpoints to measure progress towards these important objectives eg the tree canopy objective ends in 2040. How and when will the authority measure progress towards this objective?
6. Measurement is discussed on page 32, paragraph 7.4 “Indicators on biodiversity are also included in our monitoring report¹⁵ related to the implementation of the local plan.” which in footnote 15 references a monitoring report [Monitoring and Housing Land | Oldham's Monitoring Report | Oldham Council](#). The latest iteration of this report is for 2023-24 and is already one year out of date.

On 24th March 2025, the Cabinet had approved a report of the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) which authorised the publication of Oldham Council’s policies and objectives to conserve and enhance biodiversity – ‘Complying with the Biodiversity Duty – Our Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham’. The Cabinet also resolved to support the implementation of the actions identified within Tables 4 to 9 of the submitted report.

In accordance with the protocol for dealing with Called-in business and in consideration of the Call-in, Members of the Scrutiny Board asked questions of the Statutory Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Councillor Taylor and of the Assistant Director Planning, Transport and Housing Delivery, who both explained the reasons for the decisions made by the Cabinet, on 24th March 2025 and the reasons for

the recommendations that were contained in the submitted report.

Members of the Scrutiny Board also asked questions of the Calling-in member who was present, Councillor Al-Hamdani asking him for a fuller explanation of the reasons for the Call-in.

The Scrutiny Board proceeded to consider the report in detail and afterwards the cabinet member, the Director and the calling-in Member were all given the opportunity to respond to the debate.

In considering the report Members of the Scrutiny Board requested that an annual report detailing how the Council is complying with its Biodiversity Duty with respect to its Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in the Borough. The Scrutiny Board members also requested that the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, Councillor Taylor, to provide a written summary, detailing the key issues detailed in the submitted report.

Resolved:

That the Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Board upholds the decision of the Cabinet made on 24th March 2025, in respect of the item: Complying with the Biodiversity Duty - Our Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in Oldham (minute 11 refers), meaning that the decision of the Cabinet takes immediate effect, subject to the following two caveats:

- A. That the Executive Director for Place/Deputy Chief Executive be requested to present an annual report, to the Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Board, which details, how the Council is complying with its Biodiversity Duty with respect to its Policies and Objectives for Thriving Wildlife in the Borough and that this be factored into future Work Programmes the Scrutiny Board.
- B. That the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods, be asked to provide a written summary, detailing the key issues detailed in the submitted report.

8 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25 -
QUARTER 4: 1ST JANUARY TO 31ST MARCH 2025**

The Chair advised that this item was to be deferred to the Board's next scheduled meeting on 24th July 2025.

9 **LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND**

Members of the Scrutiny Board considered a report of the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Housing Delivery which advised that the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) had launched a third round of the Local Authority Housing fund (LAHF) to run over the financial years of 2024/25 and 2025/26.

In October 2024, Oldham Council had accepted a funding allocation of £1,506,000 to deliver 16 homes.

In January 2025, an Expression of Interest process was launched by MHCLG for additional funding and Oldham Council had secured a further £372,000 to provide four additional homes.

The Council had only received interest from Cromwood Housing to deliver the additional homes, as detailed in the submitted report. To deliver the homes, Cromwood required an additional £320,574 and without this additional funding the project would not be deliverable.

A revenue cost from the Council of £40k per annum would achieve a revenue saving of £61k per annum by virtue of a one-off capital investment therefore delivering an annual revenue saving of £21k.

Options/alternatives to be considered by the Cabinet:

Option 1 – Award grant monies to Cromwood Housing to enable Cromwood to deliver the housing project. If the Council passported the £372,000 grant monies from MHCLG and it provided Cromwood with additional grant funding of £320,574 from its own budget monies, Cromwood would identify, purchase, refurb, manage and maintain the homes. The homes would be available for letting by December 2025 at the latest. Cromwood have a strong track record of delivery from the previous LAHF Programmes.

Option 2 – Council to Self-Deliver. If the Council were to retain the MHCLG Grant and self-deliver the programme, this option would require the Council to find an additional £0.5M. The Council would be responsible for finding the home, purchasing, completing refurbishment works and all on-going management and maintenance. The Council would own the properties and retain rental income. Capacity and skills for managing the works outlined above would also need to be identified.

Option 3 – To decline the grant. The Council could decline to accept the MHCLG grant and not take part in the scheme. Any grant received through signing the MoU would be returned to MHCLG.

Option 1 was the preferred option.

The Scrutiny Board were informed that the report was due to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 16th June 2025 and any comments from this Scrutiny Board would be taken into consideration, prior to a decision being made thereon.

Resolved:

1. That the Scrutiny Board notes and endorses the report.
2. That the Cabinet, at its meeting on 16th June, be recommended to approve the recommendations detailed in the submitted report.

HOUSING DELIVERY INTERIM PLANNING POSITION

The Scrutiny Board received a report of the Executive Director of Place/Deputy Chief Executive that sought approval, from the Cabinet, for the publication of the Housing Delivery Interim

Planning Position Paper on the council's website, to assist in the interpretation and implementation of existing planning policies in Oldham's Local Plan.



Members were advised that the Interim Planning Position Paper supported the implementation of policies within Oldham's Local Plan – The Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document, adopted November 2011. The paper supersedes the previous 'Affordable Housing Interim Planning Position Paper' published by the council in March 2022.

The submitted report set out the council's updated position in relation to:

- a. Housing mix – size, type and tenure – including housing mix for affordable housing.
- b. Affordable housing requirements, including affordable housing thresholds and exceptions (including the application of Vacant Building Credit).
- c. Housing in the Green Belt including the application of the affordable housing 'Golden Rule'.

The report was intended to be used as guidance for developers in preparing development proposals and as a material consideration when assessing planning applications and development proposals for residential development.

The report was intended to be read alongside PfE and the Local Plan as a whole, but in particular - PfE policy JP-H2 'Affordability of New Housing', JP-H3 'Type, Size and Design of New Housing' and also policy 3 'Address of Choice', policy 10 'Affordable Housing' and policy 11 'Housing' of Oldham's Local Plan.

The report was therefore informed by the council's Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA) (2024). The LHNA was a key evidence base document and sets out information on local housing needs of different groups (including affordable housing, provision for older people and disabled people), housing mix – including size, tenure and type, and sets out recommendations and policy guidance.

The council's approach to updated national guidance and local evidence will be considered further and inform policy preparation as part of the Local Plan Review.

Options/alternatives to be considered by the Cabinet:

Option 1 - To approve the Housing Delivery Interim Planning Position Paper for publication on the council's website, to assist in the interpretation and implementation of existing planning policies in Oldham's Local Plan.

Option 2 – To not approve the Housing Delivery Interim Planning Position Paper for publication on the council's website.

Option 1 was the preferred Option.

The Scrutiny Board were informed that the report was due to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 16th June 2025 and any comments from this Scrutiny Board would be taken into consideration, prior to a decision being made thereon.

Resolved:

3. That the Scrutiny Board notes and endorses the report.
4. That the Cabinet, at its meeting on 16th June, be requested to approve the recommendations detailed in the submitted report.

11

HOUSING DELIVERY TEST ACTION PLAN 2025

The Scrutiny Board considered a report of the Executive Director of Place/Deputy Chief Executive that was seeking approval for the publication of Oldham Council's Housing Delivery Test Action Plan (2025 update)

Members were advised that this report provided an update on the Housing Delivery Test (HDT) position in respect of Oldham. It also sets out an updated position to the previous Housing Delivery Test Action Plan published in July 2024.

The HDT was introduced by the Government as a monitoring tool to demonstrate whether local areas are building enough homes to meet their housing need. The HDT measures net additional dwellings provided over the past three years against the homes required over the same period. The thresholds for consequences for under-delivery remain as per the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The latest HDT results (and which will be reported in the HDT Action Plan 2025) were published 19 December 2024.

Oldham Council had delivered 91% of its housing need over the past three years (2021/22 to 2022/23). This was the same as the 2021 and 2022 measurement result (91%) and an improvement from the 2020 result of 80%.

The pass rate for the HDT was now 95%. There were consequences of not achieving 95% in the HDT that require some form of action, as set out in the NPPF.

As Oldham had delivered 91% of the housing required, we are required to prepare an Action Plan to address housing delivery. Oldham's previous Action Plan was published in July 2024, as such it is proposed to update the Action Plan as required. Action Plans should be published within six months from the measurement publication date.

This was Oldham Council's fifth Action Plan, drawn up in response to the Housing Delivery Test: 2023 Measurement, published December 2024.

Options/alternatives considered:

Option 1 – To approve the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2025 for publication in line with the requirements of the Housing

Delivery Test: 2023 Measurement results (published December 2024).

Option 2 – To not approve the Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2025 for publication. This would not comply with the requirements of the Housing Delivery Test Rule Book and the Housing Delivery Test: 2023 Measurement results (published December 2024).

Option 1 was the preferred Option.

The Scrutiny Board were informed that the report was due to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 16th June 2025 and any comments from this Scrutiny Board would be taken into consideration, prior to a decision being made thereon.

Resolved:

1. That the Scrutiny Board notes and endorses the report.
2. That the Cabinet, at its meeting on 16th June, be recommended to approve the recommendations detailed in the submitted report.

12

OLDHAM ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE (EVCI) STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Members of the Scrutiny Board considered a report of the Executive Director of Place/Deputy Chief Executive that was seeking approval from the Cabinet to adopt and publish the Oldham Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) Strategy and Action Plan.

The Oldham Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (EVCI) Strategy and Action Plan sets out the future direction for EVCI in Oldham. It would ensure that the Council's plans will align with relevant national, regional and local policies, as well as Oldham's goals to decarbonise the borough by 2030.

The strategy outlined how Oldham Council was committed to making EVCI more accessible, appropriate and available for our residents - a significant step in overcoming the barriers to EV ownership and helping to make the borough a more attractive place to live and work.

The Action Plan outlined a phased approach over the next three years of smaller work packages that lay the foundations for larger, more ambitious schemes. Each action works towards the overall vision of the strategy and will utilise grant funding where available, whilst acknowledging the role commercial charge-point operators will also play.

The Oldham EVCI Strategy and Action Plan was intended to support the borough's ambitions for growing the EVCI network across the borough, with key actions set out over the next three years to support this.

The Scrutiny Board were informed that the report was due to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 16th June 2025 and

any comments from this Scrutiny Board would be taken into consideration, prior to a decision being made thereon.

Resolved:

1. That the Scrutiny Board notes and endorses the report.
2. That the Cabinet, at its meeting on 16th June, be recommended to approve the recommendations detailed in the submitted report.

13

GREATER MANCHESTER LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

Members of the Scrutiny Board considered a report of the Executive Director of Place/Deputy Chief Executive that was seeking the Cabinet's approval for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to be published, on the Council's website and to authorise the Assistant Director Planning, Transport and Housing Delivery to confirm the same in writing to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Mayor of Greater Manchester (GM), as the responsible body for the GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

The Environment Act 2021 introduced the requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to cover the whole of England, to set out where and how efforts should be focused locally to contribute to halting and reversing the decline in biodiversity.

The GM LNRS represented an opportunity to set out a long-term vision for a greener city region, where nature is returning, and more people have better access to greenspace.

The strategy covered the following:

- a. A shared vision for nature recovery in Greater Manchester
- b. Shared priorities and targets for nature recovery
- c. Actions we can all work towards to help deliver them
- d. Maps of a Greater Manchester Nature Network made up of:
- e. Core local nature sites - existing valuable areas for nature
- f. Nature Recovery Opportunity Areas - opportunity areas where action should be focused across the city-region.

Officers at Oldham Council had inputted into the LNRS through various workshops and meetings. The LNRS was also publicly consulted on between 15th November 2024 and 31st January 2025.

Options/alternatives considered:

Option 1 - Oldham Council to agree that they are content for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) to be published; and authorise the Assistant Director Planning, Transport and Housing Delivery to confirm the same in writing to the GMCA and the Mayor as the responsible body for the GM LNRS. This would allow support for the GM LNRS to be expressed, allowing the LNRS to be published once all supporting authorities have

confirmed their support. There are no disadvantages to this option.

Option 2 - Oldham Council to disagree that they are content for the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) to be published; and to give a publication advisory notice to the responsible authority outlining that they disagree with the publication of the strategy based on one the grounds under article 15 of the LNRS regulations within 28 days of the receipt of the final LNRS. This would allow for any valid objections to be raised and considered but would delay a nature recovery network being published. Option 1 was the preferred Option.

The Scrutiny Board were informed that the report was due to be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 16th June 2025 and any comments from this Scrutiny Board would be taken into consideration, prior to a decision being made thereon.

Resolved:

1. That the Scrutiny Board notes and endorses the report.
2. That the Cabinet, at its meeting on 16th June, be recommended to approve the recommendations detailed in the submitted report.

14

WORK PROGRAMME

The Scrutiny Board considered its Work Programme for 2025/26.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

15

KEY DECISION DOCUMENT

The Scrutiny Panel considered the Key Decision Document which outlined key decisions that the Cabinet were due to take at its meeting on 16th June 2025 and at future meetings.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 8.00pm