

Present: The Mayor – Councillor G. Alexander (Chair)

Councillors Akhtar, Al-Hamdani, Ali, Alyas, Ball, M Bashforth, S Bashforth, Briggs, Brownridge, Byrne, Chadderton, Chauhan, Cosgrove, Curley, Davis, Dean, Fielding, Garry, C. Gloster, H. Gloster, Goodwin, Hamblett, Haque, Harkness, Harrison, Hewitt, Hobin, Hudson, Hulme, A Hussain, F Hussain, Ibrahim, Iqbal, Jabbar, Jacques, Leach, Malik, McLaren, Moores, Murphy, Mushtaq, Phythian, Price, Roberts, Salamat, Shah, Sheldon, Shuttleworth, Stretton, Surjan, Taylor, Toor, Ur-Rehman, Williamson and Williams

1 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Ahmad and Councillor Sykes.

2 **ATTENDANCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Due to the current pandemic and the virtual meeting, a roll call of elected members present was taken, and at the same time, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, elected members declared the following interests:

Councillor Garry declared a pecuniary interest at Item 8d by virtue of her husband's employment with Greater Manchester Police.

Councillor Chris Gloster declared a personal interest at Item 8d by virtue of his receipt of an occupational pension from Greater Manchester Police.

Councillor Hazel Gloster declared a personal interest at Item 8d by virtue of her husband's receipt of an occupational pension from Greater Manchester Police

Councillor Hamblett declared a personal interest at Item 8d by virtue of his appointment to the MioCare Board.

Councillor Ur-Rehman declared a pecuniary interest at Item 13 by virtue of his appointment to the Greater Manchester Transport Committee. Councillor Ur-Rehman left the meeting during this item and took no part in the discussion or vote thereon.

3 **TO ORDER THAT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 17TH JUNE 2020 BE SIGNED AS A CORRECT RECORD**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 17th June 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

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

There were no items of urgent business.

5 **TO RECEIVE COMMUNICATIONS RELATING TO THE**



BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL

There were no communication items.

6

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

There were no petitions received to be noted.

7

YOUTH COUNCIL

The Youth Council PROPOSED the following MOTION:

“The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdown has proved to be a trial for many people, around the world.

As a Youth Council we have consulted with various young people, to explore the specific areas of everyday life which have been greatly affected by the restrictions that we, as a nation, have had to follow. We asked young people in Oldham to share their experiences of lockdown for them as individuals.

We have found that these restrictions have had significant impacts on our education experience and employment aspirations and in turn this has led to further stress and strain being put on young people’s mental health during lockdown.

Indeed, it has been reported that as a result of schools being closed and jobs being furloughed many young people may lose a sense of structure and positive stimulation, and that this will lead to an increase in anxiety and depression for many young people.

It is now clear that this pandemic will have had a devastating effect on our society, and particularly on young people. The current economic crisis risks pushing an additional 600,000 18 – 24 year olds nationally into unemployment in the coming year. In addition to this, there will be long-term damage to their pay and job prospects even after the economy recovers unless new support is provided.

The risks to the borough could be particularly devastating to young people as the reported youth unemployment rate in Oldham in May 2020 stood at 15.1%, the highest across Greater Manchester. This will be again increased as the employment rates of graduates entering work during the pandemic are projected to be 13% lower than they would have been without the crisis, while rates for mid and low-skilled workers risk falling even more, by 27% and 37% respectively.

Furthermore, those who do find work are likely to face reduced pay. The Class of 2020 report by the Nuffield Foundation states that, ‘one year after leaving education, the pay of graduates is projected to be 7% lower, and 9% and 19% lower for mid- and low-skilled workers’, Oldham’s average salary comparison is already £8000 per annum lower than the national average.

There are also questions about whether there will be work for those who have been furloughed, let alone for those only just beginning to enter the labour market. This all paints a rather grim picture for the future Employment of Young People.

It hasn’t all be bad news and we have seen some positives within the ongoing COVID-19 lockdown. With schools delivering remote teaching our digital skills have increased. Teachers and

students have learnt about apps such as Google Hangouts or Zoom, Google Classroom or Microsoft Teams.

As people are staying at home, they have been using technology a lot more and learning new skills such as how to socialise via video apps, starting online social media accounts, trading products online or freelancing and selling services, some young people have even learned how to code in python or manage big data on excel. We are given tasks and asked to research rather than have somebody stood at a projector or whiteboard giving us the answers. All these skills are transferable and maybe, more than ever, young people will be ready for the world of work and have the creative and digital skills needed for the future workforce.

We believe that Oldham Council needs to be an advocate for the skills young people are currently cumulating during lockdown, as we are currently unsure that these skills will be recognised or that the job opportunities requiring these skills will be available to us.

The increase in digital skills have already been proven to assist in productivity within the everchanging workplace, helping increase the chance of those who are unemployed finding a job and helping with the introduction of digital services from some key providers. Young people have had the opportunity to get more acquainted with the digital world whilst during lockdown, whether this is for school, work or home benefits. Some of our young people will have gained new digital skills, in photography, in animation, the list is long, and it would be a shame if these skills could not be enhanced further once lockdown is lifted, and we try to return to our 'normal' lifestyle. These skills should not be left on the backburner and forgotten, leaving the time during lockdown wasted. These new skills could have brought a new light to pathways young people might want to take for their future, and we should not let their potential dwindle and disappear, especially with the rise of youth unemployment becoming an unfortunate reality. A larger recognition of the digital skills will help young people feel more comfortable with entering a forever expanding sector which is shaping our society as we speak.

Lockdown has brought us many negatives in all different aspects of life, however we do not want these negatives to overrule the positives that have come from working online. We need to open up opportunities for young people and we would like to see designated apprenticeships for young people within the digital industry to enable the skills that Oldham's young people have gained to be used and not wasted. This will also help Oldham's economy as we build up our digital industry.

We ask Council to resolve that:

1. Oldham Council pledges its commitment to providing quality job opportunities for young people and developing the digital sector within the town.
2. A review is undertaken of the current apprenticeship offer across Oldham to ensure there is a broad range of high-quality opportunities available to all young people, and;
3. As one of the largest employers in the Oldham, digital apprenticeships are considered for those leaving education"

Councillor Fielding spoke in support of the Motion.
Councillor Ali spoke in support of the Motion.
Councillor H. Gloster spoke in support of the Motion.
Councillor Leach spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Roberts **MOVED** and Councillor C. Gloster **SECONDED** that the **MOTION** presented by the Youth Council be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board under Council Procedure Rule 14.9h).

On being put to the **VOTE**, that the motion be **REFERRED** to the Overview and Scrutiny Board was **CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**.

RESOLVED that under Council Procedure 14.9h), the Youth Council Motion be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

8 **QUESTIONS TIME**

a Public Questions

The Mayor advised that the next item on the agenda was Public Question Time. Questions had been received from members of the public and would be taken in the order in which they had been received. Council was advised that the questions would be read out by the Mayor.

The following questions were submitted:

1. Question received from Nazrul Islam via email:

“The Council announced that it had established a discretionary grant fund for businesses who were not eligible for the Government grants. How much has the Council paid out via this fund and how many businesses have been helped by it?”

Councillor Jabbar, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Green responded that the Council was administering the Government’s discretionary grants fund. At close of play on 13th July 2020, the Council had spent £2.230m of the maximum £2.501m available to spend and had supported 234 businesses. Applications were still being process and subject to completion of the review of applications, it was hoped to support around another 30 businesses. The Council was making maximum use of the Government grant schemes before considering payment of grants to any businesses that fell outside of the Government’s arrangements. The Secretary of State had been lobbied to give greater flexibility in the use of allocations received as part of the small business grants to support businesses in Oldham which fell outside the grant criteria and had not received financial assistance. No confirmation had been received on the flexibility, but lobbying would continue as it was intended to support all businesses in Oldham who had losses due to the



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pandemic.

2. Question received from Helen Norton via email:

“I would like to ask when pools and gyms will be re-opening as I was a regular user of both Failsworth & Oldham Leisure centres and have missed not being able to attend. I am aware that other countries have re-opened theirs and wonder when we may be in a position to re-open our centres. Thanks in advance.”

Councillor Chauhan, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care responded that the Leisure Centres were operated by Oldham Community Leisure and the gyms would be allowed to open when deemed safe, it was assured that appropriate measures would be taken and following Government guidance the gyms would be opened. Thanks were added to Oldham Community Leisure for the support provided to the residents of Oldham as OCL had opened centres to facilitate food banks for vulnerable people in the communities, car parks for testing centres and running online classes.

3. Question received from Ian Manners via email:

“My question is how is Oldham Council planning to address the gap in its finances caused by Covid-19?”

Councillor Jabbar, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Green responded that the Council was still working through the full financial implications of the impact of COVID-19. At this point there was a shortfall of £20.8m in this financial year and a projected shortfall of £41m for the next year. This was still be working through. The Council had recently received an award but had not yet received the allocation and exactly to understand what it would mean for Oldham Council. There was no doubt that there would be financial pressure in both this and next year. To address the potential financial challenge, the Council was reviewing both revenue and capital spending plans which included the Creating a Better Place programme with a view to reducing expenditure.

4. Question received from Ceridwen Short via email:

“I love walking in Daisy Nook, it is a real gem of greenspace in a part of Oldham that doesn't have lots. I was very upset that an illegal rave took place in the area and the way that it was trashed with lots of rubbish being strewn all over. What action has the Council taken against those who planned this illegal rave and also to restore Daisy Nook to its natural beauty? I would also like to say thank you so much to the volunteers who turned up at short notice to help clean up.”

Councillor Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Culture responded that concerns were shared on the



recent illegal rave. The Council had been working very closely with the police who took the lead role in the joint efforts to bring those responsible to account and would be best placed to provide any update. An update on the clean-up operation, which benefited greatly from the help of many volunteers. Cleaning teams had visited the area to remove litter and debris from alongside the river and generally cleaned the area. The Council were also engaging with the canal trust to undertake a shared approach to cleaning the environment in a sustainable way.

5. Question received from Connor Green via email:

“School closures were the right decision to reduce the spread of COVID-19 but how have young people been supported so they do not fall behind from having missed weeks of education?”

Councillor Mushtaq, Cabinet Member for Education responded that Oldham schools had continued to support children and young people throughout the COVID-19 situation by remaining open for vulnerable pupils and those of critical workers including during school and bank holidays. Keeping in touch with families was a priority for schools at present and good communication had never been more vital. Children could feel isolated in a house full of people and might be missing quality time with peers, space to work or a place to be quiet. Many families were trying to work from home whilst providing education for their children. Regular ‘check-in’ by schools staff created the opportunity to guide pupils to appropriate home learning opportunities and to support their emotional wellbeing. Many parents required guidance on how to support children and some needed advice about additional family support. Alongside this, schools were providing a variety of home learning activities that met children’s academic, physical, mental and emotional needs and provided support for parents. Work and resources were being delivered in a variety of ways, in line with guidance provided by the DfE. The use of technology has increased exponentially during lockdown. Schools were using different mechanisms and platforms to share information and home learning activities with pupils and parents. Schools were also striving to ensure that pupils without sufficient access to technology could still access their school’s learning offer. Examples that were being used included:

- Hard copy packs of work, reading books and text books available for collection from school, posted or delivered to homes
- Technology equipment loans by schools and additional provision by DfE and GMCA
- Informing parents that the activities and websites could be accessed on mobile phones or that the BBC Bitesize lessons were on TV via the red button
- Setting activities that required no printing or screen time.

As children returned to school, teachers would adapt the curriculum plans to ensure that they met the demands of the national curriculum and took into account the different learning experiences their pupils would have had during this period.



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6. Question received from Nick Georgiou:

“I am a member of the general public and would like to ask a public question for the council meeting on 17th July. I'm interested to know how the council will develop its green credentials and what its investment plans are for de polluting our area. One of the noticeable consequences of the covid pandemic has been the flourishing of wildlife and cleaner air. With further green projects added to hydro project at Dovestones and other green initiatives for which I applaud you. We could become carbon neutral at an accelerated pace. Solar farms, bike lanes, encouraging employers to allow their workforce to work from home are all initiatives I'd love you to pursue. Can you undertake to invest in schemes such as these?”

Councillor Jabbar, Cabinet Member for Finance and Green, responded that building on the Council's previous achievements on climate change and the environment, Oldham Council had adopted the UK's first ever Green New Deal Strategy in March this year – just before the lockdown. The Council was now also looking at ways that the Council could help to make sure that the positive environment changes which had been since March were not lost by supporting residents and businesses to maintain the changes in behaviour which were improving the environment. The Council had enabled all staff to work from home except where it was essential that they were in the office or another place of work. The Council was also looking at all of its buildings, land and car parks for opportunities to install solar power and energy efficiency measures, to make the Council more self-sufficient and cut energy bills and carbon footprint. The Council was investing in cycling and walking infrastructure and would be delivering a number of Bee Network schemes over the next couple of years to help people make better travel choices for health and for the environment. The Council was also looking at new ways to engage with residents online to find out how people would like to improve their neighbourhoods to make them safer and greener and to support them to make these improvements. Oldham was already home to some first-class parks and green spaces, and with the new exciting new Northern Roots project, the Council was going to make sure the offer to residents was even better.

7. Question received from June Roddison via email:

“I have heard that Oldham Library will be opening on the 6th July 2020, with a limited service. I understand the need to maintain social distancing and other health protection

measures; I would however like to be able to access my local library, Crompton. Could the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods let me know when local libraries will reopen, and what services will be available? Also when it will be possible to browse the shelves.”



Councillor Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Culture, responded that a phased approach had been developed for the re-opening of library services to:

- Reflect and align the gradual easing of restrictions;
- Ensure there were enough staff on site to operate safely. Some library staff had been redeployed to essential Covid related activity which must take priority.
- Ensure processes had been tried and tested that could be replicated and, if necessary, adjusted to deliver services safely at other sites.

All library site were being fully risk assessed and would only open when it was safe to do so. If all went well and Covid cases continued to decline, it was oped to be able to introduce browsing at Oldham and start to open full-time community libraries between August and December. The focus would, however, remain on access to books and IT with other services and programmes of activity being online for the rest of 2020.

8. Question received from Glyn Williams via email:

“Following Marcus Rashford’s brilliant work and subsequent victory on free school meals over the summer. I was wondering how many children in Oldham will be receiving meals on a daily basis?”

Councillor Mushtaq, Cabinet Member for Education, responded that all children entitled to free sschool meals, which was approximately 10,765, would receive a food voucher which entitled them to food over the summer.

RESOLVED that the questions and responses provided be noted.

b Questions to Leader and Cabinet

The Deputy Leader of the Main Opposition, Councillor Chris Gloster, raised the following two questions:

Question 1: Local Lockdown in Oldham

“My question concerns the issue of Coronavirus Local Lockdowns. It is a great tragedy that after four months we are still dealing with the impact in human suffering, lost lives, and increasingly, the economic downturn caused by this terrible virus. Just as the situation appeared to be slightly improving and people began to experience hope, on the 29th June, the health secretary announced that the first local lockdown would be applied. This was of course in Leicester. This included the closure of schools (except for children of key workers), which partially reopened on 1 June, and non-essential retail, which reopened across England on 15 June. Before the lockdown in Leicester, the



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Government had suggested that local lockdowns would be handled by local leaders. What actually happened was that the imposition of lockdown in Leicester was decided by central Government. Boris Johnson's leadership has overseen fatal communication blunders. These blunders kept 'local leaders' in the dark on what was happening with Covid-19, much too late. When Leicester went into lockdown, the Government said that the local seven-day infection rate was 135 cases per 100,000 people, three times higher than the next highest city. How did it get to that clear level of cases and local politicians and officers hadn't a clue what was going on? The aim of a local lockdown is to control the spread of the Covid-19 by containing it within a localised area, but not necessarily by authority. It means re-imposing social distancing restrictions across the whole of the affected area. Sadly, Oldham has been harder hit than many other towns and cities in England by the Coronavirus Pandemic. I am optimistic that we have the right preparations in place for the worst-case scenario. As the Government has given consistently conflicting and confusing advice and acted slowly and communicated slowly, please can he tell us what are we doing locally to make sure that we are ahead of the game, even if the Conservative Government is not? I know that tonight we have another detailed report on Oldham's response to the Covid-19 crisis, but I believe many of our concerned residents would welcome an honest appraisal of our local situation and a reassurance that Oldham is ahead of the game in lay person's language. So I invite the Leader to provide that appraisal and reassurance tonight by telling us more about our Oldham plan if we are required to go into local lockdown? And I would specifically welcome his assurance that the local track and trace testing data from the Department of Health and Social Care and its' contractor Deloitte is now being passed onto our relevant health teams so they can act on them to help mitigate against any local spike in Covid-19 infection?"

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Cabinet and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills echoed the points raised in the question and the lack of communication from the Government and the lack of shared data from the Government with local authorities and referenced the leaders in Leicester who had not been in full possession of information to anticipate their position. The Leader responded that Oldham had a comprehensive Covid Management Plan and also had amongst the highest rates of testing in the country including innovative testing of asymptomatic people in at-risk occupations such as taxi drivers, front line restaurant workers and other high risk occupations which had high levels of exposure to other members of the public. Also testing for those at risk in care homes and been ongoing longer than other places in order to get a measure on the figures so the Council could come to any judgement that may be needed in the future or to put in any mitigating measures far enough in advance to have the effect of helping to avoid a local lockdown. The Leader had contacted the Mayor of Greater Manchester and called for support asking for negative testing data as this was one element of the testing data the Government did not share and could not be built into forecasts. There was more data available now including the Pillar 2 data which had led to Oldham being featured, unfairly, in the national and local newspapers. Whilst Leicester had a rate of 135 per 100,000, which had led to the local lockdown, Oldham's figure as on the date of the

meeting, was 11.8 per 100,000 which was slightly above average but nowhere near the Leicester figure. The Leaders reassured members that there was a comprehensive management plan and testing was continuing. All the information would be demanded from Government that was needed. It was noted that the Council had more data than Leicester before it was placed in lockdown. The Leader was convinced that Oldham was well placed to avoid a local lockdown but very well placed to manage whatever might be necessary should the Council find itself in that position.



Question 2: Turning the Frog Into A Prince

“Later tonight, I will second the Cabinet Member for Finance’s motion attacking the Government for its failure to honour its promise to fully reimburse Councils like Oldham for the financial hit caused by Coronavirus, and I am happy to do this as he and I are both as one on this issue. However, I regret that this Entente Cordial cannot extend to another issue concerning a town centre regeneration project which has dragged on and on. I am of course referring to the Princes Gate development. The BBC on 19 November 2014 reported Oldham Council’s announcement on the ‘game changer’ and the promise of a 150,000 square foot retail development, with 800 homes and 700 parking spaces. Now after the withdrawal of Marks and Spencers, we now no longer have a ‘game changer’. We have the promise of a 28,500 square foot retail development and a hotel. And the promised ‘missing retail giants’ are now Lidl and Travelodge, not M+S. However, anyone passing the site, probably on a tram, can see nothing is happening. Yet the Council’s Town Centre Vision, agreed in June of last year, promised work ‘due to start on site autumn 2019’. It is interesting to contrast this inactivity with that seen in the centre of another town that you go to by tram from Mumps. And that town is Rochdale. Here you can step straight off a tram and into the new Riverside retail and leisure development. Councillors there also called Riverside a ‘game changer’. For phase one is a development totalling 200,000 square feet, including 24 shops, restaurants and a six-screen cinema. Not only can you play indoor golf and watch a film, but Rochdale offers visitors a new Marks and Spencer Foodhall. Work on site started in 2018. In April the Foodhall opened and in the last few days, other units in the development have started to open as promised. Two years on, bang on time. Despite Coronavirus. From time to time in Council meetings, we gently rib our neighbours in Rochdale, but on this, they have got things so right and we so wrong. The Leader will be very aware that we are fast approaching our sixth anniversary of inactivity at the Mumps site. So for my second question tonight I would ask him when will this Frog be turned into a Prince? When will we finally see something begin to happen at Mumps?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that the Council remained committed to the complete regeneration of the town centre with rebalancing the economy in Oldham away from a retail led economy to the kind of night time economy, leisure and dining opportunities could be created that people in the modern day would like. People no longer shopped as they did on the local high streets. The Leader referred to Rochdale



as there had been new retail space created in Rochdale with their development, it was not completely new but had replaced existing retail space on Yorkshire Street in Rochdale. There was an opportunity to build new homes, retail and leisure opportunities at Mumps. It would need to be done in such a way that did not undermine the retail core of Spindles in the town centre. The opportunity to re-evaluate the entire regeneration strategy had been taken as a result of the COVID-19 as had been alluded to in a previous response during the meeting related to Creating a Better Place. The Council remained ambitious for the area in and around Mumps and hotel provision was still wanted in Oldham Town Centre, as were more retail units in the town centre, not necessarily in the same numbers as before. The Leader advised that news related to the development was not far away.

Councillor Byrne, on behalf of the Conservative Group asked the following question:

“Saddleworth School runs its own successful catering department and has done so for some years. The catering staff are funded through income from that department. Income available to use from this is £300k. The school is the only community school in Oldham running its own catering service, and therefore does not qualify for any government grant. Academies and trusts with their own catering departments may be funded differently. The school needs to pay the staff itself and there will be a deficit of £150k. This is in addition to the losses as in other schools from lettings and lessons. Can we find a section of funding to cover this in the government grants which the Council has received?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills thanked the catering staff of Saddleworth School and all other schools who had continued to provide meals for both vulnerable children who attended schools and those who did not attend but still required to be fed during the day. The Leader sympathised with the comments and the school's position which sounded as if the catering department was at an unfair disadvantage due to the structuring of the service within the school. The Leader was unable to comment without further details. The Leader gave assurance that the Council was committed to supporting schools and commented on how the schools had supported communities. The Leader responded that contact would be made with the school to see if there could be help with the funding gap the school was predicting.

The Mayor reminded the meeting that the Council had agreed that, following the Leaders' allocated questions, questions would be taken in an order which reflected the political balance of the Council.

1. Councillor Garry asked the following question:

“How can you tell if an alleyway is adopted or unadopted and how does it affect the ability to gate it? There are many alleyways in Failsworth West which are not gated which residents wish were because they would like to improve them as communal spaces like many resident volunteers have in

other gated alleys. It is very frustrating as Councillors when there are residents keen to improve their area but the barriers to gating an alley way off scupper their good intentions.”



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Councillor Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Culture responded that the ability to gate an alley was governed by the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act. Decision upon the installation of the gates at any given location were dependent upon the Council's ownership and/or duties to maintain the land and the funding available. In addition, there was a requirement under the legislation to evidence crime and disorder at a location to justify the need for the gates to be installed. The Council could not physically restrict access over privately owned land, however residents could work with private landowners to have gates installed through a private arrangement with locally arranged funding agreements to undertake gating installations and ongoing maintenance. Details of who owned any piece of land could be obtained by any person via the Land Registry. Residents may be able to apply for grant funding for such schemes. Action Together would be able to advise on available grant streams. The Council fully supported this type of collaborative and cooperative working for environmental improvements.

2. Councillor Hulme asked the following question:

“The Council acted quickly to paint double yellow lines on the A635 Holmfirth Road, following a weekend of unacceptable parking and behaviour by a minority of visitors to Dovestone Reservoir. Unfortunately, I am still receiving reports of double and pavement parking on the A635 and other local roads, which can make it difficult to residents to get in and out of their homes. How can we encourage people to keep fit and enjoy the countryside in a socially distanced manner without overwhelming beauty spots like Dovestone and what more can the Council do to tackle this anti-social behaviour by people who should know better?”

Councillor Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Culture responded that the Council sympathised with residents regarding the problems that had been caused by the popularity of Dovestone and the surrounding area. Dovestone was owned by United Utilities and managed by the RSPB and Oldham Council had worked alongside these and other partners to find solutions to the issues created by an unprecedented number of visitors. Additional marshals had been funded who were on duty every day. The double yellow lines recently installed on the A635 Holmfirth Road were introduced to address significant problematic parking activity which caused serious road safety and traffic congestion issues. Although visitor numbers to the areas peaked as COVID-19 lockdown controls were eased, the problems had occurred previously. Now that the TRO's were in place, traffic officers had been meeting with local councillors to consider to best manage the impact of the displaced parking that was taking



place in adjacent residential areas and the village of Greenfield. Enforcement action regularly took place with 514 fixed penalty notices issued since 7th June 2020 when the yellow lines were introduced. The vast majority of these were either in the car park itself at Dovestone or on Holmfirth Road, but others were on the local residential streets. The Peak District National Park was trialling a car park 'traffic light system so that visitors could see which car parks were full before they set off. The continued message from United Utilities, RSPB, the Council and partners was – enjoy Dovestone and the other green spaces, but act responsibly, respect the surroundings and clean up after yourselves. It was also suggested that there were many other green spaces in Oldham such as the Pennine Bridleway, Alexandra Park, Dunwood Park and wonderful country parks and local trails such as the Oldham Way, Medlock Valley Way and Crompton Circuit as well as fabulous canal routes along the Rochdale and Huddersfield Narrow Canals and footpath networks across Saddleworth and Beyond.

3. Councillor Jacques asked the following question:

“The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework is intended to allocate land for up to 14,000 homes in the Borough to meet our projected housing need. This included up to 260 homes on land in Woodhouses Village in my ward which is currently classed as green belt. These proposals were strongly opposed by local residents. I am grateful to the Leader for meeting with local representatives of the green belt action group to explain the position and understand that the Council was looking for more viable brownfield sites to develop so green belt allocations can be reduced. Given the delay to the framework caused by Covid 19 has the Council used the time to find more such brownfield sites and if so how soon will we know whether they can offset green belt allocations such as those in my ward?”

Councillor Roberts, Cabinet Member for Housing responded that the Council reviewed the housing land supply position every year. The Council's 'Creating a Better Place' programme identified a series of residential led development opportunities as part of repurposing the town centre and this fed into the latest housing land supply. Many of the GMSF responses suggested that derelict mills should be built on before using green belt land. A Mill Strategy was underway to look at which unlisted mills should be protected, but also possibly be converted for housing, with financial viability and other constraints taken into account. The strategy would also identify less important unlisted mills which could more easily offer land for new homes. At the same time, the Council did not want to undermine successful businesses which operated from some of the mills. All this evidence would feed into Oldham's land supply. The revised housing land supply and other detailed viability work commissioned by the GMCA to inform revised strategic allocations which would be published in the final GMSF proposals later this year.



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4. Councillor Hazel Gloster asked the following question:

“St. Paul’s Church on Rochdale Road Shaw partially collapsed in February 2019 and in excess of £250,000 later we have been left with dwarf walls and a pile of rubble. The Deputy Head of Planning has made clear that this cannot simply be rebuilt and would need a complete rebuild. There are more than 400 graves under this rubble, of local Shaw people, and this site is an absolute eyesore. Can I ask how efforts to resolve this issue are progressing, if this was Oldham Town Centre, it would have been resolved long ago?”

Councillor Roberts, Cabinet Member for Housing responded that a number of meetings had been held with representatives from the church and their contractors which local members had attended. Whilst the focus had been on making the building and site safe, the future use of the site would require an application from the site owners. Unfortunately, recent events had made wider meetings impractical. However, planning officers would make contact with the owners to discuss any proposals they may have. This was an issue around ownership and for the best approach to be sorted.

5. Councillor Briggs asked the following question:

“Dog fouling continues to be a problem across the Borough because of irresponsible dog owners. One area where it causes a major problem for my constituents is Recreation Road playing fields in Failsworth East. This playing field is used by local football teams and the organisers of the matches often have to clean up the field themselves in advance of the matches because the amount of dog dirt on the field makes it dangerous for local young people to play on. Is there more that can be done to prevent dog fouling in this, and other problem areas around the Borough and what can we do to tackle those irresponsible dog owners?”

Councillor Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Culture responded this was a continuing problem in Failsworth and the rest of the Borough. The owners needed to be challenged to chair their behaviours and it was encouraged that anyone who witnessed individuals letting their dogs foul the playing fields to report it to Environmental Health. The behaviour needed to be challenged and this evidence would allow the team to target in their limited resources. Signage around the fields were to be reviewed and enhanced, where appropriate, to the messaging was clear to all users.

6. Councillor Haque asked the following question:

“Foster Carers play a vital role in caring for some of Oldham’s most vulnerable and sometimes challenging children and young people. Could the relevant Cabinet Member please tell us, what support was put in place to support Foster Carers during

this very difficult period?"



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Councillor Moores, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People responded that the vital role foster carers played in enabling children and young people to feel safe, secure and stable was recognised. In these unprecedented times, foster carers had gone above and beyond to ensure that children and young people received the highest standard of care. The Council was acutely aware that COVID-19 had had a significant impact on foster carers and had increased the level of support to counteract some of the additional pressures. The additional support provided included a two week allowance payment as a one off contribution this financial year to all foster carers; an activity duty system had been maintained which meant that foster carers always had a point of contact during working office hours; supervising social workers had continued to offer direct support to foster carers; Health Young Minds for Foster Carers and HYM were supporting carers in facilitating fostering support groups during COVID; specialist online training had been purchased to support foster carers and the children being cared for; proactive support offered to carers in respect of critical issues such as Black Lives Matter, and a weekly news bulletin being sent to all foster carers.

7. Councillor Ibrahim asked the following question:

"A lot of young people have been out around the borough enjoying the fine weather, unfortunately they are also tempted to take part in activities such as swimming and barbecues. We all know how dangerous these activities can be for individuals involved and the local environment. Could council please tell us, what interventions were put in place to try and encourage young people not to participate in these types of activities and have the youth service been active during this period

Councillor Moores, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People responded that the Youth Service had been active and supported young people throughout the lockdown. There had been some limitations in what they could deliver face to face, but the detached youth team and the District youth teams had been out in communities. They had been focused on supporting young people to be safe, delivering key safety messages and offering support where needed by targeting key 'hot spots' such as reservoirs, parks, open spaces and other places where young people enjoyed spending their time. The service had also been actively involved in the GM Safe4Summer campaign, which was an annual partnership campaign which took place over the summer months and involved the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS), Greater Manchester Police (GMP), Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), the Council's Community Safety Team, plus others with the ultimate aim to keep young people safe and provide information to their parents and carers. More information about the Campaign and to access to online activities could be found at

www.safe4summer.com. There was a wider plan for summer provision and specifically, the Youth Service had a comprehensive summer programme of activities available to support young people during the summer months which included face-to-face youth work in all communities as well as targeted youth work in places as mentioned earlier.



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8. Councillor Al-Hamdani asked the following question:

“I welcome the work to ensure that a thorough equality strategy is underway, as promised in the motion on Black Lives Matter at the last meeting. Our equality objectives, which were due to be updated at the start of the year have still not been. As these were due before the current coronavirus outbreak, and we have a legal obligation to update them, could the cabinet member please inform me as to the reason for the delay, and give a firm date as to when they will be updated?”

Councillor Shah, Statutory Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded the Council was committed to tackling unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. In 2019, the Council had started to review the Equality Objectives. However, it was clear that this needed to be a more in-depth piece of work. Objectives need to be ensured that they aligned with the Workforce Strategy, as well as being backed up by a plan on how the objectives would be achieved. The development of the Equality Strategy was announced at the last Council meeting. The aim of the strategy was to place equality and diversity at the heart of what the Council did, setting ambitious goals and measuring progress against these in order to drive organisational improvement. It was important that the strategy and accompanying objectives were codeveloped with partners and residents. The draft strategy would be taken to Oldham’s Equality Advisory Group for consultation after which the strategy would be formally adopted and revised equality objectives through internal governance process and to be brought to September Council.

At this point in the meeting the Mayor advised that the time limit for this item had expired.

RESOLVED that the questions and responses provided be noted

c Questions on Cabinet Minutes

Council were requested to note the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on the undermentioned data and to receive any questions on any items within the minutes from members of the Council who were not members of the Cabinet and receive responses from Cabinet Members. The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 23 April 2020 were submitted.

Members raised the following question:



Councillor Sheldon asked the following question related to Cabinet 23 April 2020, Item 10 – Proposed Purchase of Former WH Shaw Pallet Works, Huddersfield Road, Diggle.

Councillor Sheldon asked for an update on the purchase and assumed that now that the land in Diggle earmarked for the new Saddleworth School was complete, asked how much the purchase of the land cost and also sought assurance that the clock tower building, which e believed as a listed building, would be protected. Councillor Sheldon also asked that Council give consideration that when the current Saddleworth School was removed, would the Council revisit the plan for this Uppermill site and include a much-needed larger medical centre to replace the existing facility on Smithy Lane. This would provide space at the current Smithy Lane Health Centre to be developed into village centre car parking. This was something that residents and businesses had asked for many years and suggested that businesses had suffered from the lack of parking spaces.

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that so as not to provide incorrect information and he would provide the response in writing and that could then be shared.

RESOLVED that;

1. The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 23rd April 2020 be noted.
2. The question and response provided be noted.

d

Questions on Joint Arrangements

To note the minutes of the following Joint Authority and Partnership meetings and the relevant spokesperson to respond to questions from Members.

The minutes of the following Joint Authorities and Partnership meetings were submitted as follows:

Police and Crime Panel	28 January 2020
	31 January 2020
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	14 February 2020
	29 May 2020
	24 June 2020
MioCare Board	23 January 2020
Peak Park District Authority	13 March 2020
	22 May 2020

Members asked the following questions:

1. Councillor Al-Hamdani asked the following question on the Police and Crime Panel Minutes, 28 January 2020, Item PCP/09/20 – Child Sexual Exploitation:
“The Deputy Mayor has provided a verbal update, which covers three strands of the CSE review, on Operation Augusta (with reference to Maggie Oliver’s allegations),on the situation in



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Rochdale, and the way respond in future to allegations of sexual exploitation, but due to the timing of the meeting, not on the investigation into Oldham – which has commenced and been running for several months in the intervening period. Given the importance of this for anyone who has suffered any form of exploitation, and for reassuring other members of the public of the seriousness with which this must be treated, could you let us know when we can expect information to be provided on the investigation into Oldham will be provided to the GMCA, and indeed to the Borough Council, and what areas we expect this report to cover.

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that he was pleased to put on record his response as there was ample speculation made by people who were not in full possession of the facts surrounding this issue. The review into historic child sexual exploitation in Oldham being conducted by an independent review team was well underway. The review was being overseen by the GMCA Steering Group, chaired by the Deputy Mayor and the review team regularly reported progress to the steering group. The terms of reference were publicly available. Given the complexity and independence of the review the Council was not in direct control of the timeline for completion of the review or release of its report and it shouldn't be to guarantee independence. Through the GMCA Steering Group, the Council was confident that positive progress was being made. The Leader commented that it was regrettable that the most verbal of those who made allegations on historic failings had refused to engage with the review. The Leader further commented that it was regrettable that a small number of individuals continued to share allegations but had no evidence behind them. The Leader hoped that upon hearing this response those making allegations without presenting evidence to support them to the authorities would think about their behaviour. The Leader hoped that any victims would not be denied the justice they deserved by selfish individuals holding onto information that could allow prosecutions to take place and answers which were sought provided. Further details would be provided to Council when made available.

2. Councillor Harkness asked the following question on GMCA Minutes, 14 February 2020, Item GMCA53/20 – James Briggs: “I refer you to the note under Item 5. That an update on James Briggs Limited be noted. This sounds innocuous enough and few people, even journalists, would bother to investigate what is hidden within the lack of detail. Further digging through the update reveals that in 2013 and 2014 loans were made by the GMCA to James Briggs totally £4,250,000 for business expansion and capital investment. In August 2019, the business was bought and at that time a payment was made to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority supposedly to settle any outstanding debt. Unfortunately, this £1,600,000 payment still left the combined authority £1,317,380 out-of-pocket. The authority chose to write this off. The agenda item



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was hidden, and the language used obtuse. A failing as big as this should have been easier to find, not spanning several documents in less than a hundred words. This is real life changing money that could have been spent on vital services in the region. Correct me if I'm wrong but as I read it the Greater Manchester Combined Authority wrote off one million, three hundred and seventeen thousand and three hundred and seventy pounds (£1,317,370). I would like to ask the question why? Because it is a fact that Tetrosyl acquired the James Briggs firm in August 2019, a company now with a turnover of more than £150 million pounds per annum. It is the shareholders of this parent business who have benefited from this write-off, and the rate-payers of this and the other nine Greater Manchester authorities who lost out. Why was pressure not put on this private company to pay up? I'd like to hear a worthy answer that justifies a write-off of £1.3 million to a huge company which is rolling in cash."

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that the investment fund from which the James Briggs firm original loans were made derived from the Regional Growth Fund which was granted to the GMCA for investment into businesses in 2012 and 2013. The GMCA took the decision for a recycling fund to be created for loans to businesses in Greater Manchester who could not access other private sector funding and therefore created or sustained jobs that ultimately otherwise wouldn't have been created or sustained if left to the market. The financial intervention provided by the GM Investment Fund involved higher risk than traditional bank loans in order to ensure access was available to more GM businesses that otherwise would have been. Unfortunately, this also meant that the chance of default was higher and, in some case, the value of investments may not be recovered in full. The James Briggs firm transaction dated back to 2013 and, at the time of the original investment, provided much needed financial support to a long standing and significant employer in the Oldham Borough. Due to a deterioration in the company's financial position, £1.9m of GMCA's loan was converted to equity in January 2019 to stabilise the business and safeguard jobs within the Oldham economy. In June 2019, the majority owner in James Briggs agreed to sell the business to Tetrosyl and, as a minority shareholder, GMCA was forced to sell its shareholding. GMCA received the same price per share as the private sector owner of the business and represented the market value of the investment at that time. There was nothing that GMCA could legally do to increase the share price, but officers did have several meetings with the management at Tetrosyl to maximise the return to GMA as much as possible.

3. Councillor Hazel Gloster asked the following question on the MioCare Board Minutes, 23 January 2020, Item 9 – MD Update:
"The minutes reports the end of year loss of £229,000. I would like to ask how this loss is being addressed to make the

business again solvent? And what the impact of this loss will be on the delivery of service in this and future years?”



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Councillor Steven Bashforth, Chair of MioCare Board responded that the losses occurred mainly due the impact of the pay awards given recently to MioCare Staff. Fortunately, there was not impact on service delivery and, in fact, MioCare had performed exemplary through the COVID crisis. Actions were in place to mitigate against a similar position in the future. MioCare was part of the Community Health and Social Care Alliance and a key partner in the evolving Health and Social Care for Oldham there would be an opportunity to do that. MioCare was also taking on additional activity which would help in the balancing of the books. Councillor Bashforth added that for the current financial year, MioCare would be reporting a balanced budget and much of the COVID-19 related costs would be managed through access to the national government infection control fund. Councillor Bashforth added that following a further check, the period 5 accounts which were to be presented to the Board in a couple of weeks showed a forecasted surplus. Councillor Bashforth also added that this highlighted the underfunding of Adult Social Care and the budget pressures it faced, reflected the challenges faced by all social carers. MioCare along with other responsible social care providers would continue to lobby the government for the funding to be reviewed.

4. Councillor Williamson asked the following question on the Police and Crime Panel Minutes, 31 January 2020, PCP/14/20 – PCC Component of the Mayoral Receipt:
“On the recruitment of new police officers, whilst the news is welcome, please can I ask how inequalities issues are being addressed in the recruitment of new officers for Greater Manchester and specifically for Oldham, to ensure that the composition of the Greater Manchester Police Service continues to reflect the communities that it serves?”

Councillor Steve Williams, Deputy Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response and Oldham Council representative on the Police and Crime Panel responded that he would write formally to Councillor Williamson. Councillor Williams responded that following a recent training course, half of the recruits were female. GMP had a positive action team in place to ensure recruitment took place properly. Councillor Williams had received information but want to ensure the data was correct. He would raise the question at the next meeting and provide the information.

RESOLVED that:

1. The minute of the Joint Authorities and Partnership meetings as detailed in the report be noted.
2. The questions and responses provided be noted.

Motion 1 – Funding Recovery, Jobs and Services



Councillor Jabbar MOVED and Councillor C. Gloster
SECONDED the following MOTION:

“This council notes with thanks the combined efforts of council officers, our public sector partners, volunteers and businesses in working together to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. From carers looking after older residents and putting themselves at risk, to the waste team quickly finding new ways of working to keep our bins empty, to the huge army of volunteers distributing food parcels to those in need, the crisis has shown Oldham at its best.

We must also acknowledge the funding and support packages that the Government has put in place to assist businesses in Oldham, some of which have been administered by the council. Without this Government support many businesses would have ceased trading and more Oldhamers would be facing unemployment.

However, whilst there has been a range of Government support, the council is facing a significant financial challenge. Some Government funding has been received, including £14.2m of unringfenced grant. A further funding package was announced on 2nd July but it did not provide the clarity required for the council assess the extent of the additional financial support. However, it is evident that it will fall far short of the funding required to compensate for the additional expenditure being incurred and for the income that has been lost in this financial year.

If the Government does not provide any more support the council will have to consider making cuts to key services in order to manage its finances effectively. This will also have an impact in 2021/22 which already has a budget reduction target of £23m. Any additional financial pressure will be on top of the £221m of budget reductions that the council has been forced to make as a result of the Government’s austerity regime.

It is important to note that on 16th March the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Robert Jenrick, told English council leaders ‘This government stands with local councils at this difficult time. Everyone needs to play their part to help the most vulnerable in society and support their local economy. The government will do whatever is necessary to support these efforts.’ By 14 April the message had changed and Jenrick told council leaders that councils would have to ‘share the burden’ of coronavirus related costs. We need the Government to honour its original statement and do whatever is necessary to support councils in their response to COVID-19 – including fully funding the extra financial pressures.

This Council resolves to ask the Chief Executive to write to:

- The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to fully fund councils for the extra costs and lost income arising from COVID-19 in line with his communication of 16th March

- The LGA to confirm the council's support in their lobbying of Government for increased funding for local government in response to financial pressures arising from COVID-19
- Key partner organisations across Oldham, requesting their support for our campaign for central government funding that protects the jobs of key workers and enables Oldham to build back together."

Councillor Shah spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Ali spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Al-Hamdani spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Surjan spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Mushtaq spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Fielding spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Jabbar exercised his right of reply.

On being put to the vote, 53 votes were cast in FAVOUR of the MOTION and 0 votes were cast AGAINST with 1 ABSTENTION. The MOTION was therefore CARRIED.

RESOLVED that the Chief Executive be asked to write to:

1. The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to fully fund councils for the extra costs and lost income arising from COVID-19 in line with his communication of 16th March.
2. The LGA to confirm the Council's support in their lobbying of Government for increased funding for local government in response to financial pressures arising from COVID-19.
3. Key partner organisations across Oldham, to request their support for the Council's campaign for central government funding that protects the jobs of key workers and enables Oldham to build back better.

Motion 2 – Care Workers vs COVID-19 Motion

Councillor Leach MOVED and Councillor Phythian SECONDED the following MOTION:

"This Council commends the incredible work of care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic caring for the most vulnerable people in Oldham.

This Council notes the results of a survey conducted by UNISON North West which found that 8 out of 10 care workers would not receive their full normal pay if they were ill or had to self-isolate or shield because of COVID-19. As a result of the lack of occupational sick pay, some care workers said that they may have to attend work whilst ill as they could not afford to live off statutory sick pay (SSP).

This Council believes that this situation poses a serious public health risk to people that receive care and frontline care workers. Indeed, official figures from the Office for National Statistics show that care workers are twice as likely to die from coronavirus that NHS staff.

This Council acknowledges its responsibility under the Government's Infection Control Fund to administer the distribution of additional funding to social care providers to reduce the spread of infection, including maintaining normal wages for COVID-19 related absence.

This Council believes that no care worker should have to choose between their own health or hardship. This Council welcomes UNISON North West's Care Workers vs. COVID-19 Campaign which is calling for care workers to receive the support and resources they need to combat the virus.

This Council notes that 12 local authorities in the North West have already supported the Care Workers vs COVID-19 Campaign or made similar commitments around maintaining normal pay for all COVID-19 related absence.

This Council undertakes to:

- 1) Formally endorse the principles of UNISON's Care Workers vs. COVID-19 Campaign and commit to campaigning for the funding this Council requires to deliver on them;
- 2) Communicate to providers to pay care workers their full normal pay for all COVID-19 related absences, including sickness, self-isolation or shielding;
- 3) Review procurement and commissioning policies with view to increasing the weighting of social value commissioning and to ensure it includes specific requirements around occupational sick pay."

AMENDMENT

Councillor Al-Hamdani MOVED and Councillor Hamblett SECONED the following AMENDMENT:

"Insert after paragraph 6 which ends with 'related absence', two new paragraphs, the second with bullet points as follows:
This Council also believes that the UK Government should provide greater financial rewards, ongoing support and proper recognition for care, NHS and key workers reflecting the personal danger and stress they have been placed in whilst caring for, treating or supporting residents and patients with Covid-19.

Specifically, this Council believes that such workers should:

- receive an additional payment for every working day they have spent on the front-line of this crisis, amounting to £29 per day, backdated to the start of the pandemic. This would be akin to the deployment allowance military personnel receive during service in war-zones.
- be able to access a free 24-hour telephone support service funded by the Government.
- receive a state-funded funeral should they die from a condition related to Covid-19.
- receive, once the crisis is ended, a pandemic service medal from the Government.

And that in addition all migrants working in the NHS & social care during this crisis should be given the right to stay in the UK, with no visa fees and no bureaucracy.

Insert after bullet point 3) in the resolution two new bullet points 4) and 5) as follows:

4) Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Health and the Home Secretary asking them to:

- institute a daily front-line service payment, backdated to the start of the pandemic
- establish a 24-hour helpline
- provide state-funded funerals
- issue a pandemic service medal
- make changes to immigration rules to grant immigrants working in health and social care the right to stay and a waiver on visa fees and bureaucracy.

5) Ask the Chief Executive to copy in our three local MPs and the Mayor of Greater Manchester to ask for their support on these issues.”

The motion as amended to read:

“This Council commends the incredible work of care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic caring for the most vulnerable people in Oldham.

This Council notes the results of a survey conducted by UNISON North West which found that 8 out of 10 care workers would not receive their full normal pay if they were ill or had to self-isolate or shield because of COVID-19. As a result of the lack of occupational sick pay, some care workers said that they may have to attend work whilst ill as they could not afford to live off statutory sick pay (SSP).

This Council believes that this situation poses a serious public health risk to people that receive care and frontline care workers. Indeed, official figures from the Office for National Statistics show that care workers are twice as likely to die from coronavirus than NHS staff.

This Council acknowledges its responsibility under the Government’s Infection Control Fund to administer the distribution of additional funding to social care providers to reduce the spread of infection, including maintaining normal wages for COVID-19 related absence.

This Council believes that no care worker should have to choose between their own health or hardship. This Council welcomes UNISON North West’s Care Workers vs COVID-19 Campaign which is calling for care workers to receive the support and resources they need to combat the virus.

This Council notes that 12 local authorities in the North West have already supported the Care Workers vs COVID-19 Campaign or made similar commitments around maintaining normal pay for all COVID-19 related absence.

This Council also believes that the UK Government should provide greater financial rewards, ongoing support and proper recognition for care, NHS and key workers reflecting the personal danger and stress they have been placed in whilst caring for, treating or supporting residents and patients with Covid-19.

Specifically this Council believes that such workers should:

- receive an additional payment for every working day that have spent on the front-line of this crisis, amounting to £29 per day,

backdated to the start of the pandemic. This would be akin to the deployment allowance military personnel receive during service in war-zones.

- should be able to access a free 24-hour telephone support service provided by the Government.
- receive a state-funded funeral should they die from a condition related to Covid-19.
- receive, once the crisis is ended, a pandemic service medal from the Government.

And that in addition all migrants working in the NHS & social care during this crisis should be given the right to stay in the UK, with no visa fees and no bureaucracy.

This Council undertakes to:

- 1) Formally endorse the principles of UNISON's Care Workers vs COVID-19 Campaign and commit to campaigning for the funding this Council requires to deliver on them;
- 2) Communicate to providers that it is this Council's view that additional funding is used by social care providers to pay care workers their full normal pay for all COVID-19 related absence, including sickness, self-isolation or shielding;
- 3) Review procurement and commissioning policies with view to increasing the weighting of social value commissioning and to ensure it includes specific requirements around occupational sick pay.

4) Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Health and the Home Secretary asking them to:

- institute a daily front-line service payment, backdated to the start of the pandemic
- establish a 24-hour helpline
- provide state-funded funerals
- issue a pandemic service medal
- make changes to immigration rules to grant immigrants working in health and social care the right to stay and a waiver on visa fees and bureaucracy.

5) Ask the Chief Executive to copy in our three local MPs and the Mayor of Greater Manchester to ask for their support on these issues."

Councillor Leach exercised her right of reply.

Councillor Al-Hamdani exercised his right of reply.

A vote was then taken on the AMENDMENT.

On being put to the vote, 7 votes were cast in FAVOUR of the AMENDMENT and 45 votes were cast AGAINST with 2 ABSTENTIONS. The AMENDMENT was therefore LOST.

Councillors who spoke on the ORIGINAL MOTION.

Councillor Leach did not exercise her right of reply.

On being put to the vote, the ORIGINAL MOTION was CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

RESOLVED that the Council undertook to:

1. Formally endorse the principles of UNISON's Care Workers vs. COVID-19 Campaign and commit to campaigning for the funding this Council requires to deliver on them.
2. Communicate to providers that is this Council's view that additional funding is used by social care providers to pay care workers their full normal pay for all COVID-19 related absence, including sickness, self-isolation and shielding.
3. Review procurement and commissioning and to ensure it includes specific requirements around occupational sick pay.

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NOTICE OF OPPOSITION BUSINESS

Motion 1 – Preventing modern slums in Oldham Borough

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

“This Council notes that:

- In 2019, 15 oppressive flats got the go ahead in Watford through a planning loophole. These dwellings were below the government's advisory space guidelines for homes, and some had no access to natural light.
- Homes without natural light are inhumane for people to dwell in. This is not an acceptable standard for people to live by in Oldham Borough nor anywhere for that matter.
- The Government minimum recommended size for dwellings built or renovated is 37 square metres. However, this is not a legal requirement.
- The current legislation allows offices and warehouses to be converted to flats without planning permission. This is how the inhumane dwellings in Watford got around the council's humanitarian objections.
- We live in a time where it is decent and common practice that farm animals get to see sunlight as part of their daily living conditions.
- A government review of these regulations is underway.
- Oldham Borough Council must prevent modern slums from slipping through the planning net locally. An oppressive environment would have a serious impact upon the health of future occupiers.

This Council resolves to:

- Write to the Secretary of State urging that the General Permitted Development Order be changed so that council can have the final say on dwellings and that those proposals with no natural light be rejected on humanitarian grounds.
- Write to Mayor Andy Burnham to request that the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework notes the inhumane nature of this policy when assessing the use of brownfield sites.
- That proposed dwellings with no natural light will not be built in Oldham Borough as an oppressive living

environment would have a serious negative impact upon physical and mental health.

- The Council has a commitment to providing homes that are of an acceptable modern standard.”



AMENDMENT

Councillor Roberts MOVED and Councillor S. Bashforth SECONDED the following AMENDMENT:

“This Council notes bullet point 1

Delete: through a planning loophole

Insert: using permitted development rights expanded by the Coalition Government in 2015 and widened further by later Conservative Governments.

Bullet point 6

Add at end; with the intention of restricting further a local Council’s right to grant or refuse planning permission.

Bullet point 7

Insert between must and prevent: take all possible steps to

This Council resolves

After urging that begin number points and insert 1. Before the General Permitted Development Order; then insert: 2015 and subsequent amendments

Delete: have the final say on dwellings

Insert: make locally accountable planning decisions and apply locally agreed policies and standards.

Delete and that those proposals with no natural light be rejected on humanitarian grounds

Insert: 2. the Government’s minimum required space standard be made mandatory

3. all homes be required to have adequate natural light

Delete bullet point 2:

Replace with: Write to Mayor Andy Burnham to confirm that minimum space standards have been applied when assessing housing numbers on brownfield sites for the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework

Bullet point 3; delete: proposed dwellings; insert homes

Delete built; insert; given planning permission

Bullet point 4: delete this Council and insert confirm it and add at end: and will take steps to include as many safeguards as practicable in the revised Local Plan”

Revised motion to read;

“This Council notes that:

- In 2019, 15 oppressive flats got the go ahead in Watford using permitted development rights expanded by the Coalition Government in 2015 and widened further by later Conservative Governments. These dwellings were below the government’s advisory space guidelines for homes, and some had no access to natural light.

- Homes without natural light are inhumane for people to dwell in. This is not an acceptable standard for people to live by in Oldham Borough, nor anywhere for that matter.
- The Government minimum recommended size for dwellings built or renovated is 37 square metres. However, this is not a legal requirement.
- The current legislation allows offices and warehouses to be converted to flats without planning permission. This is how the inhumane dwellings in Watford got around the council's humanitarian objections.
- We live in a time where it is decent and common practice that farm animals get to see sunlight as part of their daily living conditions.
- A government review of these regulations is underway with the intention of restricting further a local Council's right to grant or refuse planning permission.
- Oldham Borough Council must take all possible steps to prevent modern slums from slipping through the planning net locally. An oppressive environment would have a serious impact upon the health of future occupiers.

This Council resolves to:

- Write to the Secretary of State urging that
 - 1 the General Permitted Development Order 2015 and subsequent amendments be changed so that councils can make locally accountable planning decisions and apply locally agreed policies and standards.
 2. the Government's minimum required space standard be made mandatory
 3. all homes be required to have adequate natural light
- Write to Mayor Andy Burnham to confirm that minimum space standards have been applied when assessing housing numbers on brownfield sites for the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework
- That homes with no natural light will not be given planning permission in Oldham Borough as an oppressive living environment would have a serious negative impact upon physical and mental health.
- confirm it has a commitment to providing homes that are of an acceptable modern standard and will take steps to include as many safeguards as practicable in the revised Local Plan"

Councillor Harkness spoke against the Amendment.

Councillor Brownridge spoke in support of the Amendment.

Councillor Al-Hamdani exercised his right of reply.

Councillor Roberts exercised her right of reply.

A vote was then taken on the AMENDMENT.

On being put to the vote, 44 votes were cast in FAVOUR of the AMENDMENT and 0 votes were cast AGAINST with 9 ABSTENTIONS. The AMENDMENT was therefore CARRIED.

Councillor Al-Hamdani did not exercise his right of reply.

On being put to the vote, the SUBSTANTIVE MOTION was CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.



RESOLVED that:

1. The Secretary of State be written to urging that:
 1. The General Permitted Development Order 2015 and subsequent amendments be changed so that councils can make locally accountable planning decisions and apply locally agreed policies and standards.
 2. The Government's minimum required space standards be made mandatory.
 3. All homes be required to have adequate natural light.
2. Mayor Andy Burnham be written to, to confirm that minimum space standards have been applied when assessing housing numbers on brownfield sites for the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework.
3. That homes with no natural light will be given planning permission in Oldham Borough as an oppressive living environment would have a serious negative impact upon physical and mental health.
4. A commitment be confirmed to providing homes that are of an acceptable modern standard and would take steps to include as many safeguards as practicable in the revised Local Plan.

2. Motion 2 – Tackling Clothing Poverty and Waste

“This Council notes that:

- The culture of ‘fast-fashion’ which prevails in the UK and elsewhere leads to the over-production and over-consumption of clothing.
- Over-production represents the excessive depletion of precious natural resources and the financial exploitation of workers in the clothing industry. This exploitation is often close to home.
- Over-consumption can lead to clothing being worn once or never at all.
- In contrast, many residents of Oldham Borough living on a low-income struggle to afford to buy much-needed clothing for themselves, and or those in their family.
- This is an environmental disaster and a waste. It is the underutilisation of good clothing that could go to other people in need.
- Whilst there are charitable providers of free clothing in Oldham Borough to those in need, not every district is well served and there is a lack of awareness of provision.
- In parts of the UK, innovative schemes exist such as ‘community clothing exchanges’, where at regular events participants can swap clothes; ‘community clothes banks’, where clothing racks are sited in prominent locations in

the community to enable unwanted clothing to be left for others; and 'community sewing clubs', where attendees repair and alter clothing to make better use of what they have.

Council resolves to:

- Work to end clothing poverty and waste, and the exploitation of clothing workers as part of our collective effort to tackle social deprivation and make this Borough carbon-neutral.
- Map and promote the current provision of free clothing available to those in need and identify where and how to address any shortfall in this provision.
- Identify innovative schemes which can be replicated in this Borough and establish a timetable and plan to do so.
- Identify how the Council and its partners can best support workers in the garment sector at risk of exploitation.
- Consult the voluntary sector, local clothing manufacturers and retailers, trades unions in the clothing sector, and the campaigning groups Wrap, Labour Behind the Label, and Home Workers World Wide on these issues.
- Bring a report back to full Council with findings and recommendations by July 2021.

On being put to the vote, 9 votes were cast in FAVOUR of the MOTION and 44 votes were cast AGAINST with 0 ABSTENTIONS. The MOTION was therefore LOST.

Motion 3 – The Local Electricity Bill

The Mayor advised that time had expired for this item and that the motion be put to the vote.

Councillor Murphy MOVED and Councillor C. Gloster SECONDED the following MOTION:

“This Council notes:

- Local authorities play a central role in creating sustainable communities, particularly through the provision of local generated, renewable electricity.
- The very large setup and running costs associated with selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers prevent local renewable electricity generators from doing so.
- Making these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation would create significant opportunities for councils to supply locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people and businesses.
- Revenues received by councils from the sale of local renewable electricity can be used to help fund measures to reduce local greenhouse gas emissions and to help fund local services and facilities.
- The recent reintroduction of the Local Electricity Bill under the Ten-Minute Rule. If enacted the new law would make the setup and running costs of selling renewable

electricity to local customers proportionate by establishing a Right to Local Supply.

- This Bill has received the support of 151 Members of Parliament.
- We should make every attempt to build a sustainable Britain after the Coronavirus crisis has passed. Our support for the Bill and this motion helps us achieve that.

Council resolves to:

- Write to the relevant Government Minister asking them to enact this legislation as soon as possible.
- Ask our local Members of Parliament to support the Bill.
- Write to the campaign promoting the Bill, Power for People (at 8, Delancey Passage, Camden, London, NW1 7NN) expressing the Council's support for the campaign and the Local Electricity Bill."

On being put to the vote, the MOTION was CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

RESOLVED that:

1. The relevant Government Minister be written to asking them to enact this legislation as soon as possible.
2. The local Members of Parliament be asked to support the Bill.
3. The campaign promoting the Bill, Power for People, (at 8, Delancey Passage, Camden, London, NW1 7NN) be written to expressing the Council's support for the campaign and the Local Electricity Bill.

11

OLDHAM'S COVID-19 RESPONSE

Councillor Shah MOVED and Councillor Fielding SECONDED a report which provided an update on the Council and its partners continued to monitor and manage the spread of the virus as lockdown restrictions were relaxed.

COVID-19 was still circulating across the UK and new cases were still being seen across Oldham every day. There was a clear plan in place in case of an outbreak locally. The report summarised those plans, demonstrated how the Council and its partners would collectively manage and prevent the spread of COVID-19 across Oldham's communities. Work was also ongoing to address the wider impacts of COVID-19, for example, the impact on Oldham's economy and this would be considered in future update reports.

The report highlighted COVID-19 in Oldham with the number of cases, testing, hospital admissions, differences based on ethnicity and age and the number of deaths. The data on testing and confirmed cases was being analysed and work was also ongoing to quickly identify any disproportionate impacts and potential hot-spots to allow resources to be targeted as detailed in Oldham's Outbreak Management Plan.

The report also highlighted equality and COVID-19 with analysis and data still being developed. An Equality Advisory Group had been established to provide insight and expertise to help capture the voice of lived community experience and recovery planning. The group was meeting regularly to anticipate and identify any discriminatory or negative consequences of the pandemic and help positively respond to any disproportionate impact COVID-19 had on communities.

The report also provided information on Contact Tracing and Outbreak Management Planning which included Oldham's approach to preventing and managing the spread as well as responding to cases and managing outbreaks. The report highlighted "Reopening Safely" which including business, town centre signage and the Oldham Library Service. The report detailed the significant financial impact on Oldham Council.

Question received from Councillor Malik:

"Can the relevant Cabinet member tell us how many children of key works and vulnerable children attended school and what is the picture across the borough to extending the offer to selected year groups from 1st June?"

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that Oldham's schools and colleges had continued to open throughout the Covid period catering for vulnerable pupils and the children and young people of key workers. Alongside this, home learning had been provided for those not attending school or college. The exact numbers of vulnerable pupils and children and young people of key workers who attended varied on a daily basis according to shift patterns but built towards 1100 pupils before the wider reopening of primary schools started to take place on 1st June 2020 and had increased further since then as schools widened their opening arrangements. Primary schools started their wider reopening from 1st June 2020 with all schools increasing the number of children attending. This had also seen the number of key worker children attending continuing to increase since 1st June 2020. The DfE guidance for secondary schools meant that the date for wider reopening was Monday, 15th June and then only for pupils in Years 10 and 12. All secondary schools increased their face to face contact with pupils in line with the guidance. The most recent daily attendance was just below 6000 pupils and included children of key workers, vulnerable children and those from other selected year groups.

Question received from Councillor Davis:

"Oldham Council is committed to an inclusive economy and this Council now spends almost 60% of its money locally which is fantastic. To be truly inclusive, however, residents and local businesses need to play their part too and I know that many in Failsworth, where I live and represent, are keen to. However, Covid 19 could have a huge impact on local businesses and

how many are left after this crisis. Could the cabinet member confirm how much money has been paid out to individuals and businesses with an M35 post code via the various business grants and support schemes available?"

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that the Government had provided various financial packages to help support local businesses to survive the lockdown period. It has not been sufficient to help all local businesses, however, through the Small Business Grant, the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grants and Discretionary Grant figures, the following was confirmed for the M25 postcode:

- 373 businesses had received the Small Business Grant amounting to £3.73m
- 57 businesses had received the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant amounting to £1m
- 13 businesses had received the Discretionary Grant amounting to £4.87m.

Question received from Councillor Alyas:

"Oldham Council reorganised services very quickly to provide support to vulnerable residents. Can the relevant Cabinet member outline what was the impact of the work done by the staff in the Community hubs, how effective this has been, and how this might affect the way we work and provide support to the most vulnerable in the future?"

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that in March 2020, the Council was given a statutory duty to coordinate food, self-care, medical supplies and other forms of necessary assistance to vulnerable groups in response to the pandemic. Within days, the Council, in partnership with Action Together, had mobilised 5 hubs to coordinate food, medicines, mutual aid, volunteering and community intelligence and an emergency helpline to act as a front door and triage. Behind this was a comprehensive food distribution network led by Oldham Food Bank and Action Together with support wrapped around from the Council and Oldham Community Leisure (OCL). The Council quickly recognised that this work needed to go beyond the statutory duties and by week 3 the group had started to co-ordinate clear referrals for vulnerable groups from both the Helpline and the 5 hubs to ensure wider need was being met. This included Age UK, CAB, Housing Providers, Early Help, Mental Health, Benefits and Advice and Welfare Rights. As well as Community Pharmacies, Community Health and Adult Social Care, GPs and Schools. In addition, a wide range of voluntary sector and crisis support had also begun to align to the hub model with the coordination of white goods, furniture, transport and donated items being coordinated between voluntary sector, public services and businesses to complement the food offer. As of last week, the Council had helped 6,253 residents through the COVID helpline, delivered 5,800 food parcels and sent 17,448

letters to over 70s to check that they were safe and well. As time goes on calls to the helpline were dropping, but the needs of people were getting more complex and the hubs were taking more from the Helpline, referrals were 50% a month ago, but 68% of calls were now going through for more help. At the start of the pandemic, the need was coming from people that were isolating, but much of the need now was for people who were in economic crisis and were struggling to cope. The Council was therefore trying to get more services formally aligned to the hubs to best respond to the needs in the transition from lockdown. The needed to be done at the same time as being to revert back to crisis mode if needed, such as in the event of a winter lockdown.

Question received from Councillor Stretton:

“The Government has now announced that extra Government help for people who have been shielding will end on the 31st July. Has the Government offered any funding to help local authorities support the most vulnerable when central support ends?”

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that on 10th July the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) advised the Council of its share of £63 million of funding intended to help local authorities to continue to support vulnerable people in communities and those struggling to afford food and other essentials over the coming months due to COVID-19. The funding allocation model had distributed funds to local authorities on the basis of population weighted by a proxy measure of need, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for the authority area. The Council’s allocation was £361,208.27. The grant funding had to be spend within the 2020/21 financial year, but the Government expected that the majority would be used within 12 weeks of receipt of the funds. The grant had not yet been received and as the Council was only notified of the funding a short time ago, the arrangements for the distribution of the funding was still being developed.

Question received from Councillor Williamson:

“As members will be aware, exactly one month ago today, the Government made it a legal requirement of passengers that they wear face coverings on public transport with few exemptions. Commendably, many passengers comply with this requirement, but regrettably some do not. It is impractical for tram and train drivers to enforce this measure, and for bus drivers and other train and tram staff to do this entails endangering themselves. Many thousands of our residents travel to work on our buses, trams and trains; other travel to school or enjoy time on leisure pursuits. They all have the right to be safe. I would like to ask the Cabinet Member several questions relating to this issue:

- How is this Council working with Transport for Greater Manchester, the bus, train and tram operators and the



Police to educate the travelling public about the requirement to wear face coverings, and where the message is not heeded, enforced?

- I understand that tram regulations need to be changed for the law to be enforceable. When will this happen?
- Is further consideration being given to introducing contractors on trams to aid enforcement?
- Are there plans to distribute free face coverings to passengers without them at the major tram, train and bus stops, as has taken place at major railways stations elsewhere?
- And finally, is there any mechanism by which a passenger might apply to Transport for Greater Manchester for a legal exemption from wearing a face covering on one of the grounds listed in the legislation, in order that they be issued with an official letter or card which they might show staff or other passengers if challenged for not wearing a face covering?"

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that the Council continued to work closely with TfGM and following concerns raised by operators and members of the public, and reflected a change in approach nationally, TfGM and partners, under the TravelSafe Partnership, moved to a more proactive phase of engagement, specifically by undertaking a 'Week of Action' and through more high profile and visible patrolling. Launching on 16 July, this would see a 'step-up' in the operational response and involved GMP, British Transport Police, TfGM and partner staff. The intention was for an education and engagement approach to be maintained in a more visible and proactive manner, however, warranted officers would be present and able to eject people from public transport where necessary. The Regulations were made under the Public Health Act 1984 and were already in force. There was not an intention to provide free face coverings as the wearing of face coverings was becoming a more general requirement and relatively easily accommodated by the use of a scarf or other piece of clothing. The Government exemptions were clear and the point regarding documentation would be taken to TfGM for their views and consideration.

Question received from Councillor Hamblett:

"Can the Cabinet Member please tell me:

- How many Oldham residents availed themselves of the testing service offered by the Army mobile Track and Trace Unit in the Town Centre?
- Do we know how many of the attendees used public transport to get there?
- Where attendees who used public transport to attend and tested positive provided with alternate transport to get home, or did they have to return home the same way?
- Has any consideration been given to operate this mobile Track and Trace Unit from district centres on a rotating basis rather than simply Oldham Town Centre in order to

allow local people to use the service without recourse to public transport?

- Has any approach been made to non-military bodies to operate a similar service increasing capacity and service regularity? I am thinking of the British Red Cross and the St John's Ambulance Brigade."

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that the Council did not know how many residents availed themselves of the testing as this information was not provided to the Council. The Council did not know how many of the attendees used public transport. The mobile unit testing was for those who had symptoms and people with symptoms were strongly advised not to use public transport for any purpose including going for a test – according to national guidance. The mobile testing unit only took samples which were then sent to laboratories for testing. As a result, it was not possible to tell if people tested positive until the samples were tested and this could take up to 72 hours. However, the mobile unit testing was done for those who had symptoms and those with symptoms were strongly advised not to use public transport. There was now an additional testing option provided by Deloitte commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care which could be used flexibly. A successful pilot period had just been completed at the Oldham library. Plans were being developed to use this as a 'pop-up' testing unit on a rotating basis around Oldham to ensure easy accessibility and respond to population needs. An approach to non-military bodies to operate a similar testing service as the military was not being considered currently. This was because the determination as to who carried out tests was decided at national level.

Question received from Councillor H. Gloster:

"Now that lockdown has eased, more and more people are going out to shop or take leisure activities, sometimes a considerable way from home and for a considerable length of time. And this brings us to a major biological challenge that we all face on a regular basis – the need to answer the call of nature. Some local authorities have already opened their Council-owned facilities. I would like to ask the Cabinet Member what plans we have to open ours in parks and district centres, and when does she envisage the Community Toilet Scheme will be fully operational?"

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that she agreed that it was important that facilities be opened. The Council was working with Public Health to determine what steps needed to be taken to ensure that toilets were open in a safe manner. It was intended that when everything was in place, and consumables could be replaced regularly, particularly soap dispensers, to open them from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm each day starting from Tuesday, 21st July. In addition, the businesses that had signed up to the community toilet scheme were being

approached to safely open their toilets at the earliest opportunity.



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Question received from Councillor Taylor:

“Some of the narrative in the public domain is unhelpful and targets certain communities, is this a myth or something that is of concern to us in Oldham.”

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that unfortunately, even at the height of the pandemic that had brought communities closer together, there will always be those who sought to divide. The reality was that the vast majority of Oldhamers, regardless of age, ethnicity, area, had followed public health guidelines and had done everything to reduce the spread of this virus. There is absolutely no evidence that any area or community had not done their bit. The data that the Council now had access to showed that BAME communities seemed to be more vulnerable to coronavirus. There were a huge number of potential causes for this differential impact but what was known was that where there were higher numbers of cases there was also higher levels of poverty. The everyday inequalities Oldham’s residents faced were making them more likely to be victims of this virus – whether because they were more likely to live in larger households, in more cramped conditions or because they were more likely to work in occupations that brought them into contact with large numbers of people. Councillor Shah added that this was not about people’s compliance with guidelines – it was about the lives people lived and the additional risk that posed. The focus must be for the underlying inequalities to be eradicated. The Council was working hard with partners and the third sector to create a fairer Oldham, working to reduce poverty not through tokenistic one-off projects but by redesigning services so that their focus was always on reducing poverty and inequality. Everyone was urged to ensure not to enter into a divisive ‘them and us’ narratives about the impact of COVID but seek to understand more about the underlying causes.

Question received from Councillor Shuttleworth:

“COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities within our communities that really need addressing. What is the Council and the Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Recovery doing to protect residents that are already vulnerable through poverty?”

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 that the Council had recognised that this pandemic has disproportionately impacted those with protected characteristics which included those individuals and families on low incomes. An equality impact assessment had been produced which aimed to identify and mitigate the impact of COVID 19 across all communities and also outlined the steps that Team Oldham services had put in place to address and reduce the impact. The council had put in community hubs and

a helpline since March which had provided a wrap around support service for any Oldham resident who had needed it including those in poverty and those on a low income. The hubs had been making referrals into the welfare rights service who assisted residents to access the government hardship fund and other grants. Free school meal vouchers had been made available and lunches provided those who attended school. Recently a poverty workshop had been held with senior leaders from across Team Oldham to explore how to better coordinate work across the system. Following on from that, an action plan was being developed to outline priorities in the short, medium and long term. The action plan will build upon the learning and experience from the COVID-19 response and reflect the additional challenges on the Council's services as the economic impact of the lockdown were felt. Lived experience would be at the heart of the report, working with partners and directly with people experiencing poverty to inform future services planning and delivery. Poverty Truth Commission, working alongside the Action Together would be central to this work going forward.

Councillor Garry asked when visits to the hospitals will be allowed for residents to visit friends and family.

Councillor Shah responded that access to the hospital was based on safety for patients. This was not about the hospital being awkward, it related to safeguarding family and residents during the pandemic. This was also led by national guidance. There had been conversations and was constantly under review.

Councillor Shah exercised her right of reply.

RESOLVED that:

1. Oldham's Partnership Response update to the COVID-19 pandemic be noted.
2. The questions and responses provided be noted.

12

UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM COUNCIL

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Legal Services which informed members of actions that had been taken following previous Council meetings and provided feedback on issues raised at those meetings.

RESOLVED that the actions regarding motions and actions from previous Council meetings be agreed and the correspondence and update provided be noted.

13

MEMBERS ALLOWANCES - TRANSPORT

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Legal Services related to a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) of £4,079 payment for members who undertook duties on the Greater Manchester Transport Committee. Members were reminded the Council in July 2019 decided to continue the SRA pending a final decision.

It had been ascertained that the Combined Authority could not pay remuneration and the decision as to whether an SRA was to

be paid for these duties was a matter for the districts to determine. Across Greater Manchester, Rochdale, Tameside, Manchester, Salford and Bury were paying the SA. Stockport, Trafford and Bolton were not paying. The SRA was subject to review in Wigan.

Oldham Council had two members who are members of the Greater Manchester Transport Committee.

It was a matter for members to determine, given the responsibilities of the Committee, whether the SRA should continue to be paid.

On being put to the vote, 51 votes were cast in FAVOUR of the MOTION and 0 votes were cast AGAINST with 1 ABSTENTION.

RESOLVED that the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) payment for members undertaking duties on the Greater Manchester Transport Committee be continued.

NOTE: Councillor Ur-Rehman declared a pecuniary interest at this item by virtue of his appointment to the Greater Manchester Transport Committee. Councillor Ur-Rehman left the meeting during this item and took no part in the discussion or vote thereon.

14 **ANNUAL REPORTS 2019/20**

Consideration was given to a report which provided individual Councillor Annual Reports for 2019/20.

As part of strengthened accountability, every Councillor was required to produce a report each year and the reports were published on the Oldham Council web-site.

RESOLVED that the annual reports be noted.

15 **REVIEW OF WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

Consideration was given to a report which outline the review of the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.

The Whistleblowing Policy provided the means for disclosures to be reported, investigated and actioned. In addition, the policy outlined the statutory protection afforded by the Public Disclosure Act 1998 to employees who made a complaint which met the 'public interest test'. This provided employees with protection from any detriment in the workplace, including harassment, victimisation or dismissal.

The review had been commissioned to ensure that the policy was robust and that complaints were managed, processed and actioned by the Council appropriately. The purpose of the review was to:

- Improve policy accessibility for employees to promote a culture of openness and transparency where employees feel able to report concerns;

- Provide employee assurance that the council will investigate and act upon matters appropriately and on a timely basis;
- Provide clear contact points for employees to submit a whistleblowing complaint to;
- Provide clarity as to what constitutes a whistleblowing complaint as defined in the context of the Public Disclosure Act (1998) and the Employment Rights Act 1996;
- Provide examples of complaints which may constitute a whilst blow for employee reference;
- Include clarity in terms of what information will / can be shared with the complainant; and
- Provide a clear process (with timeframes) by which the Council will investigate whistleblowing complaints.

The format and layout of the policy had been significantly changed to make it more accessible. The key content was outlined with changes and additional information highlighted. Extensive consultation had been undertaken.

RESOLVED that the Whistleblowing Policy be approved and adopted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 9.51 pm