

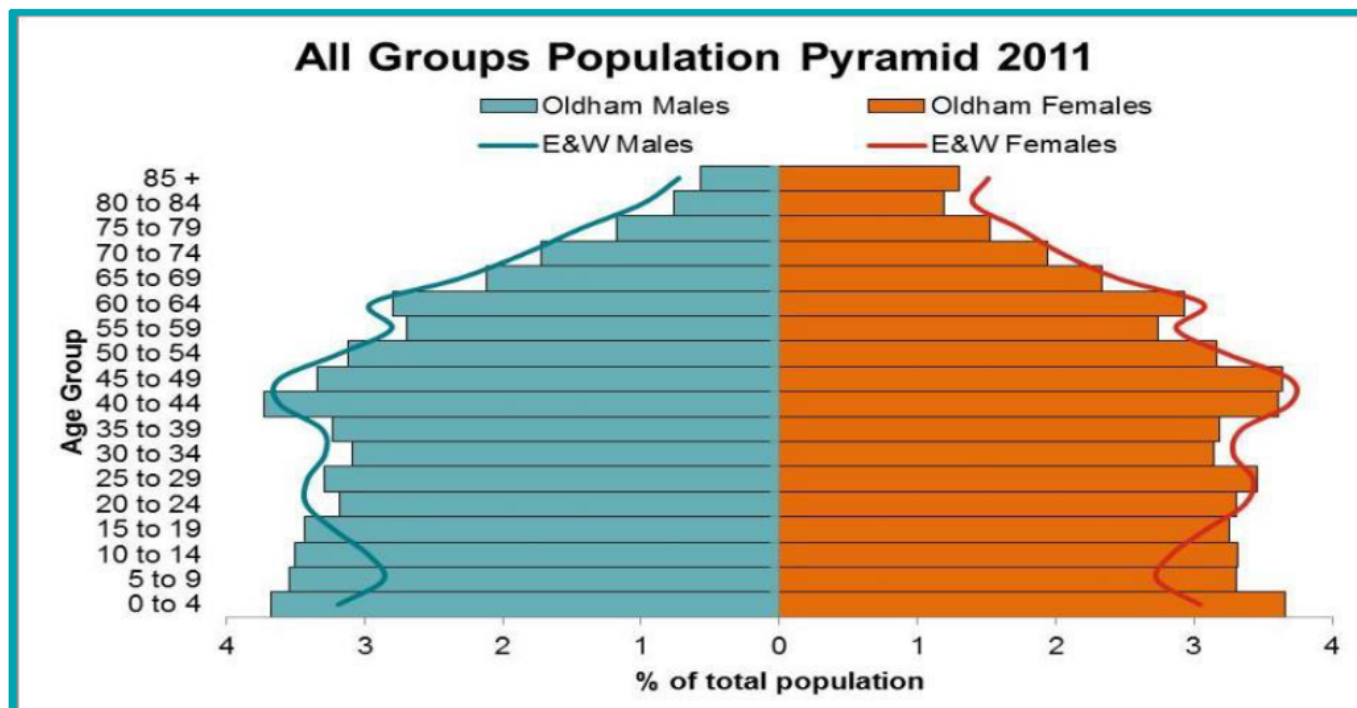
# Council Size Submission



**Oldham**  
Council

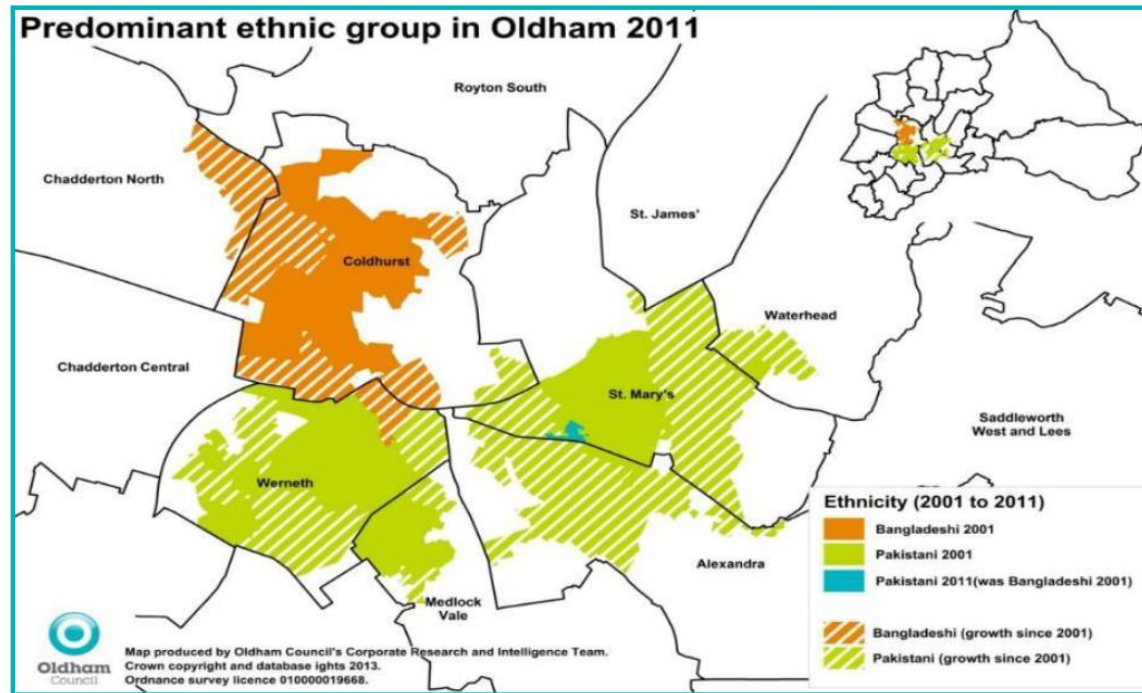
## Local Authority Profile

- Oldham is a local authority within the Greater Manchester conurbation. Though predominantly urban, Oldham benefits from a high-quality rural and semi-rural environment, including a quarter of the borough lying within the Peak District National Park. This means Oldham has more countryside than other GM local authorities, with a less complete transport network than that seen in urban areas.
- Economically, Oldham has many challenges, stemming largely from its history as a cotton town. As the cotton industry declined jobs were partially replaced by those in heavy industry and manufacturing, although not on the scale of places like Warrington and even Tameside owing in part to the limited availability of flat areas of open land. Oldham is home to several national and international brands and companies including the Trinity Mirror Group, Diodes Incorporated, Ferranti Technologies, Seton Healthcare Ltd, Park Cake Bakeries, Innovative Technologies, Ambassador Textiles, and Nov Mono Pumps.
- Demographically, after 100 years of population decline Oldham has now returned to population levels last seen in the early 1900's, with further increase expected. Oldham has a high proportion (22.5%) of residents aged under 16 and proportionally fewer (15.7%) aged 65 and over. The age distribution of the borough is as follows:



Source: ONS Census 2011

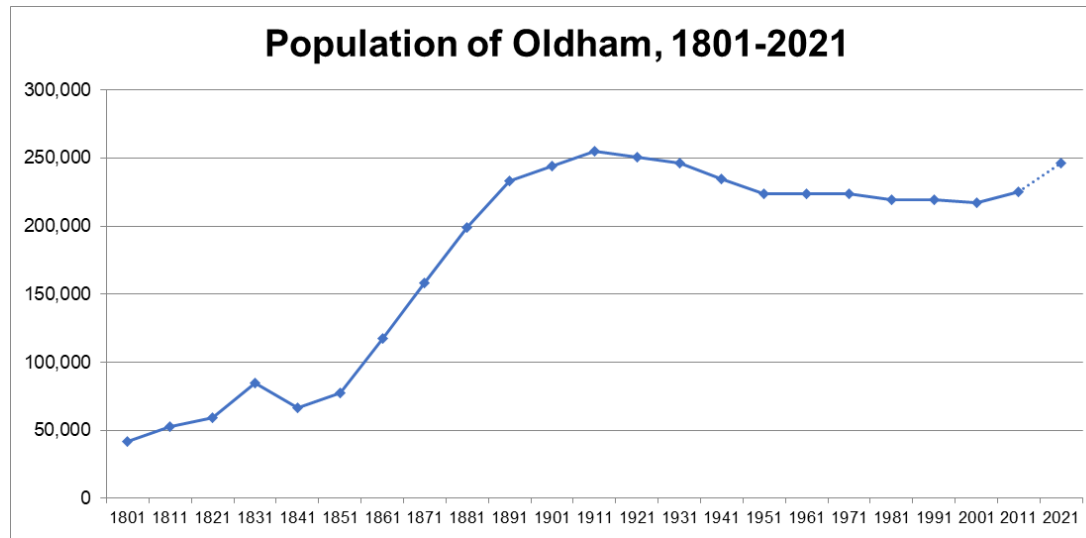
- The overall structure of the population has shifted downwards due to the growth in Oldham’s Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities, which have younger age profiles. The expected future population increase will be driven both by the growth of relatively young ethnic minority populations and programmes of new house building opening-up more suburban areas for development.
- Oldham has a higher proportion (22.5%) of non-white Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) residents than in Greater Manchester (16.3%), the North West (9.8%), and England (14.6%). This proportion has increased from 13.5% in 2002. The ethnic composition in Oldham currently stands at 77.5% White, 10.1% Pakistani, 7.3% Bangladeshi and 5.1% ‘other’. Oldham’s Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are primarily concentrated around the Oldham town centre wards of Coldhurst, St Mary’s, Alexandra and Werneth as illustrated on the map below:



Source: ONS Census 2011

## Population Forecasts

- The population of Oldham is growing, after a period of decline in the 20th Century, following the closure of many of Oldham's mills:



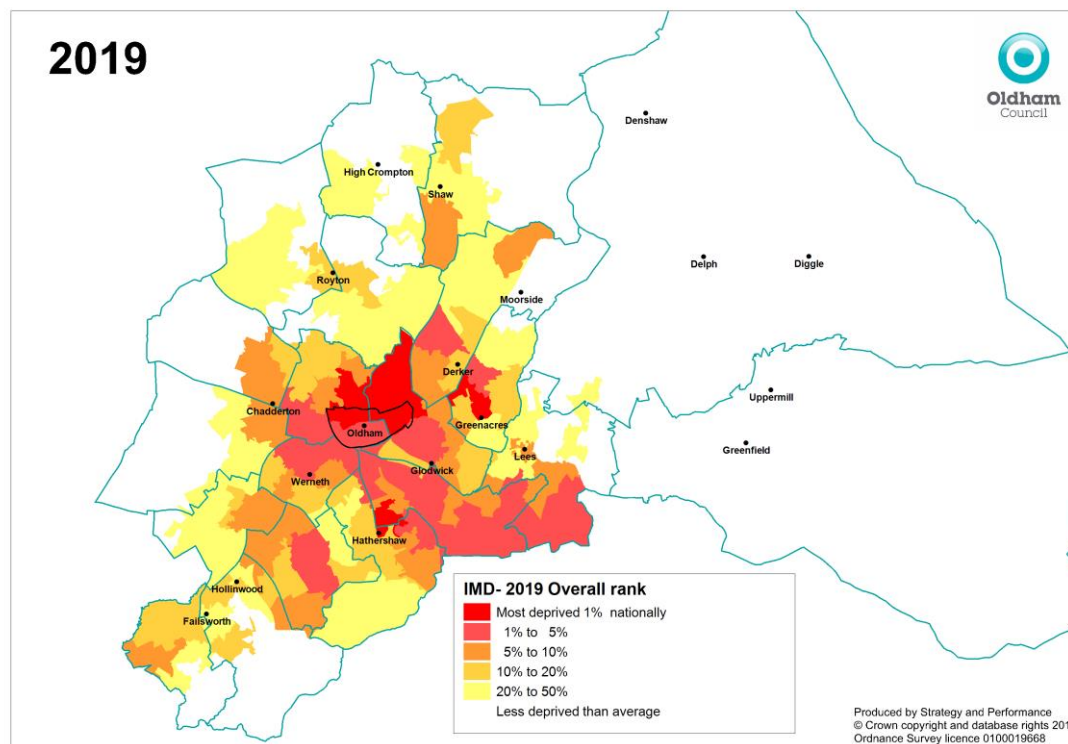
Sources: 1801-1991 Vision of Britain, 2001 Casweb, 2011 Nomis, 2021 Oldham 2020-based projection

- There are two population projections available: the official ONS Sub-National Population Projection (SNPP), and the council's own projection. The latter uses data available within the council and puts our population as slightly higher than the official projections.
- Both have the population of Oldham continuing to grow for the foreseeable future:

Year	ONS SNPP-18	Oldham Council's own projection
2018	235,623	241,860
2019	237,112	243,540
2020	238,525	244,930
2021	239,878	246,200
2022	241,176	247,440
2023	242,395	248,600
2024	243,495	249,730
2025	244,539	250,860
2026	245,551	252,010

## Deprivation

- Deprivation in local authorities is usually measured by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Levels of deprivation directly impact on the caseload and community working of elected members, with higher levels of deprivation leading to increased intervention and need.
- According to the Office for National Statistics Oldham is one of the most deprived boroughs in the UK. Oldham currently has four areas within the borough which are among the top 1% of the nation's most deprived areas. Most of these areas are centred in and around the town centre, particularly within the wards of St Mary's, Coldhurst and Alexandra. Only the wards of Crompton, Saddleworth North and Saddleworth South do not contain any areas that fall within the nation's top 20% most deprived. In Oldham, 33 per cent of children are in absolute poverty.



- As can be seen below, Oldham’s IMD rank has worsened over time. Of perhaps particular relevance is the worsening in the extent rank, which would imply that more elected members will be seeing a greater workload associated with deprivation.
- Our local councillors are on the front line when it comes to supporting families and individuals who are in crisis. Individually, councillors often encounter constituents in distress either at surgeries, or through referrals, emails and telephone calls. We know that many people who come to our councillors for help – whether for housing, financial or family issues – are struggling with their mental health too. This often means elected members are supporting these individuals on an ongoing basis to get the support they need, placing a significant demand on their time. Higher levels of unemployment, and particularly youth unemployment, are also linked to anti-social behaviour and community tensions, which also add substantially to councillor caseloads. Councillors have reported rarely taking the full recess to which they are entitled owing to the ongoing demand of residents, which can increase during holiday periods when issues like hunger are more prominent, particularly for young people.
- Examples of support provided by councillors include helping constituents to access advice and support through our Welfare Rights, Revenue and Benefits Team to resolve issues in relation to Council Tax arrears.
- While it should be added that these figures are relative rather than absolute, we would still expect relative deprivation increases to impact on workload, as they will at the very least affect lifestyle expectations versus national norms.

<b>Domain</b>	<b>2019 Rank (of 317 LAs)</b>	<b>2015 Rank (of 326 LAs)</b>	<b>2010 Rank (of 326 LAs)</b>	<b>2007 Rank (of 354 LAs)</b>	<b>2004 Rank (of 354 LAs)</b>
IMD Score	19	34	37	42	43
Income Scale	39	44	44	39	48
Employment Scale	46	45	48	49	44
Concentration	22	28	25	23	26
Extent	18	29	30	34	36

- Child poverty is another important marker. According to recently released DWP/HMRC calculations, 38% of Oldham children are now in relative poverty, up from 28.7% five years ago. Oldham has the highest child poverty figures nationally, and one of the highest rates of increase, so we might expect deprivation to remain high over the next five years and beyond.

- Our Councillors also work to support residents through their knowledge of and work with local voluntary and charitable organisations in their area. Councillors have, for example, worked to support local charities by making them aware of potential sources of funding from within the Council and across Team Oldham. This has helped to ensure the longer-term sustainability of organisations that provide frontline support in some of our most disadvantaged wards.
- The Council has established a focused long-term strategy to tackle poverty in the borough, including establishing a commitment to support every school to reach a “good” Ofsted rating. This strategy does, however, recognise that tackling poverty can only be achieved sustainably over the long term, meaning that the negative impact of deprivation on councillor workload will remain for the foreseeable future.

## **Impacts of Covid-19**

- The impacts of Covid-19 are likely to further increase elected member workload.
- Covid-19 has exacerbated many of the challenges we have been facing in Oldham, especially when it comes to high levels of unemployment. Between 12th March and 13th August, unemployment claimants in Oldham rose by 6,515 to a total of 13,985 claimants. Since the beginning of Covid-19, Oldham’s monthly Claimant Count has increased by 108.7%. Since the beginning of Covid-19, Oldham’s monthly youth Claimant Count has increased by 136.5%. 40,900 employees are on furlough schemes such as the CJRS and SEISS, which gives Oldham an estimated furlough rate of 40.94% (July 2020). Based on the path of the last recession, and Oldham’s levels of economic resilience, we would expect at a minimum that there would be significant unemployment impacts for at least 3 years (as was seen last recession), and perhaps 5 years or more (given that the economic impacts this time appear to be significantly more severe nationally). Hence there are likely to be caseload implications for members.
- This significant increase in unemployment is going to lead to additional pressure across the system, especially across crisis support services. Our elected members are already seeing a huge increase in workload due to people losing their jobs, being made homeless, or requiring emergency support and provision. Members report increasing enquiries for support accessing welfare, with business support, on council tax and greater levels of door to door engagement alongside officers. Elements of this caseload increase are likely to remain for a considerable number of years to come.



- Over the past six months we have seen a 5-fold increase in the use of food banks, with many of our elected members volunteering to distribute essential food and medicines through our emergency hubs. Our District Teams who support our local councillors have been redeployed to support our crisis response, meaning that there is a backlog of core casework that will need to be completed.
- Through our Place-Based approach, we will be better able to support our elected members to complete this work, though it's important to recognise the challenges that Covid-19 has presented, especially to our most deprived communities.
- We are aware that Covid 19 has impacted disproportionately on our diverse communities in Oldham and our local Councillors, as community connectors, have played a pivotal role in working with their local community contacts and networks to ensure information about Covid19 is accessible to everyone. Our Councillors have, for example, participated in door-knocking and leafleting exercises and worked with local faith leaders to ensure constituents are aware of and adhere to Covid restrictions.
- Others have been directly involved in the delivery of food and medical supplies to shielded constituents during the lockdown – using their local knowledge and connections to ensure that all those who need help receive it; especially those previously not known to services.
- Further, there are significant numbers of other Covid-19 impacts being documented locally or nationally which will impact on workloads into the future, only some of which are listed here:
  - Reviews of Covid-19 practices, internally or by external bodies
  - Increased poverty crisis issues (food and fuel poverty, eviction, pensions etc)
  - Lack of support for those with long term conditions
  - Increased mental health issues
  - Vaccination campaigns and community advocacy
  - Increased addiction issues (drugs, alcohol, gambling)
  - Contested health and safety situations
  - Business support for new or failing businesses
  - Support for charities and other 3rd sector groups seeing increased demand
  - Increased fly tipping
  - Increased hate offences
  - Fraud and cyberattack

- Increased relationship breakdowns and domestic violence

## Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role. These are categorised as: Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership. Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

## Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified.

The Council currently has 60 Councillors elected by thirds. There are 20 wards within the Borough with three Councillors representing each of the Borough's wards.

The Political composition of the Council is:

- The Labour Group                      44 Members
- The Liberal Democrat Group        8 Members
- The Conservative Group            4 Members
- Independent                            2 Members
- Vacancies                                2 Members (to be filled at 2021 election)

### Full Council

Full Council meetings take place eight times a year comprising: An Annual Meeting, a Budget Meeting and six ordinary meetings. Extraordinary meetings are convened as and when required by the Council's Constitution. Full Council Meetings comprise all 60

ward Councillors, one of whom is also the Civic Mayor and chairs the meetings.

Full Council has responsibility for taking decisions that affect the Council's Constitution, approve and adopt the budget and policy framework, appoints the Leader of the Council, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and Council Committees, and all matters reserved to the Council by law. There is good attendance and participation of Councillors in Council meetings demonstrated by the debating of submitted Motions, the asking of questions of Cabinet Members on both corporate and ward issues, and discussion of significant issues affecting the Borough.

### **The Executive**

The Council operates an Executive System with a Strong Leader Model of governance and has done so since 2009. The Council appoints one of its 60 members to be the Leader of the Council and this appointment is for a prescribed period (4 years) unless the Leader resigns from the position, ceases to be a Councillor or is removed from the position by Full Council by resolution. The period of office of the current Leader of the Council was due to expire in May 2020 but has been extended by virtue of provisions within the Local Authorities and police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

The Leader provides political and strategic leadership of the Council and specific duties include:

- Political Leadership - being principal spokesperson for the Council; providing political leadership and direction to the style, priorities, strategic policy and strategic management initiatives of the Council, and developing and managing Members of the Executive.
- Corporate Leadership - taking overall political responsibility for the revenue and capital budget strategies, priorities and the Corporate Plan which underpin the Budget and Policy Framework; providing political leadership to the Chief Executive, Chief Officers, and all other officers in relation to the Corporate Plan and to the development and implementation of the Budget and Policy Framework
- Accountability and Governance - Reporting when required to bodies such as Full Council, Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the Cabinet, partners and other stakeholders and promoting good governance by promoting open and transparent decision making.
- Community Leadership - Promoting Council priorities, acting as an advocate for residents and local communities.
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority/Association of Greater Manchester Executive Board –The Leader is the Council's representative on both the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Association of Greater Manchester (AGMA) Executive Board which both comprise the Leaders or elected Mayors of the ten Greater Manchester Councils and the

elected [Mayor of Greater Manchester](#), who work with other local services, businesses, communities and other partners to improve the city-region. Each Council Leader and elected Mayor holds a portfolio of responsibilities at the Greater Manchester level. The current Oldham Council Leader is responsible for Employment Skills and Digital.

- The Leader is also the representative for the Brough in relation to national bodies and forums to promote the Borough.

All executive functions of the Council are, by law, vested in the Leader of the Council who may, as he/she sees fit, delegate executive functions to the Cabinet, Cabinet Committees or Boards, individual Cabinet Members, district partnerships or Officers, or arrange for the delivery of executive functions through joint arrangements. The Leader determines all delegation of executive functions, appoints the Cabinet and determines the Cabinet Member Portfolios and responsibilities.

The current Cabinet comprises nine Members (including the Leader). The size of the Cabinet and the roles of individual members of the Cabinet is reviewed by the Leader of the Council, considering changing circumstances and challenges, and while the Leader may make changes in mid-year, the Annual Council always receives details of the Leader’s executive arrangements for the coming year. For example, in June 2020 the size of the Cabinet was increased by one and responsibilities re-allocated to provide for a Cabinet Member with specific responsibilities linked to the Borough’s recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Oldham Council’s Executive comprises the Cabinet, Cabinet committees and sub-Committees, and the Commissioning Partnership Board. Part 3 of the Constitution sets out in detail matters reserved for Executive decision

<https://committees.oldham.gov.uk/documents/s118524/ConstitutionPart3ResponsibilityforFunctionsJune2020.docx.pdf>

<b>Executive Body</b>	<b>Membership</b>
Cabinet	9 Executive Members
Bishops Park Trust Cabinet Sub-Committee	3 Executive Members
Community Asset Transfer Cabinet Sub- Committee	3 Executive Members
Failsworth Trust Committee Cabinet Sub- Committee	3 Executive Members
Local Improvement Fund Committee Cabinet Sub-	Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the

Committee	Council, and Cabinet Member for Finance and Human Resources
Shareholder Committee	4 Executive Members
Commissioning Partnership Board	Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid Recovery, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care

The Cabinet

The Council's Constitution provides for the Leader to appoint at least two but no more than 9 Executive Members to sit on the Cabinet. The Cabinet meets on average 12 times a Municipal year and makes key decisions above certain financial thresholds. During the 2018/19 Municipal year the Cabinet made 70 key decisions.

Key Decisions that are to be taken by Cabinet, Cabinet Members or its Committees are published in a Key Decision Document on the Council's website 28 days in advance of the decision being made. The meetings are open to the public except where confidential or exempt matter are being discussed of which notice has been given.

Cabinet Members

Each Cabinet Member has been allocated responsibility for a particular portfolio area. In relation to their portfolio areas, Cabinet Members have delegated powers assigned to them by the Leader of the Council to make decisions on matters relevant to their particular portfolio as set out in the Council's constitution. Cabinet Members make decisions in relation to contracts/key decisions above a financial threshold within their relevant portfolios.

## Deputy Cabinet Members

The Leader of the Council may nominate Members of the Council to act as ‘Deputy Cabinet Members’. The role of these Members is to assist the Portfolio Holder to whom they are assigned. Deputy Cabinet Members cannot, by law, exercise any formal executive decision-making powers, either in a meeting or in connection with any individual delegated powers.

Deputy Cabinet Members may:

- Deputise for Cabinet Members at Cabinet briefings
- Deputise for Cabinet Members when responding to questions at Full Council
- Be appointed a Member of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee (provided the matter under consideration is not related to the portfolio).

Since June 2020 there have been 9 Cabinet portfolio areas. These are detailed below:

Leader of the Council	Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader	Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member	Stat. Deputy Leader
<b>Economy and Skills</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>Neighbourhoods and Culture</b>	<b>Finance and Green</b>	<b>Children and Young People</b>	<b>Health and Social Care</b>	<b>HR and Corporate Reform</b>	<b>Housing</b>	<b>COVID-19 Response</b>
City region and devolution	Education and Skills Commission	Highways	Capital projects and investments	GM Children's Partnership	Adult social services	First response	Strategic housing	Community wealth building
External relations	Education Alliance	Trading Standards	Finance	GM Children's Services Review	Adult safeguarding	District working	Housing quality enforcement	Unemployment
Policy and performance	School place planning	Registrars and cemeteries	ICT and transactional services	Adoption and fostering	Provider services	Early help	Planning and building control	Isolation
Communications and media	Looked after children – educational	Car parking and enforcement	Internal Business Support Unit	Children in care	Disability services and adaptations	Public service reform	Homelessness	Community cohesion

	performance							
Regeneration and infrastructure		Street lighting	Revenues and benefits	Child safeguarding	Family support	HR and organisational development		Community engagement
Enterprise and business support		Environmental services	Customer Services (inc. Contact Oldham)	Children's health and wellbeing	GM Adult Services Review	Council workforce and progression		Poverty
Corporate property and assets		Licensing	Energy	Youth service	Health devolution	Community safety and policing		
Oldham town centre and markets		Libraries, heritage and local studies	Green New Deal	Early years	Oldham Locality Plan	Youth justice		
Get Oldham Working		Culture and arts	Unity Partnership		Health improvement	Community justice		
Employability		Transport	Welfare rights		Mental health	Probation services		
Work and skills strategy		Waste and recycling						
Lifelong learning		Clean air						
Apprenticeships								

The Deputy Cabinet Member portfolios are listed below:

Deputy Cabinet Member	Deputy Cabinet Member	Deputy Cabinet Member	Deputy Cabinet Member	Deputy Cabinet Member	Deputy Cabinet Member	Deputy Cabinet Member	Deputy Cabinet Member
Skills	Education	Neighbourhoods and Culture	Finance and Green	Early Years	Poverty	Health and Social Care	Blue Light Services

In addition to the requirements to take decisions under the Scheme of Delegation and exercise their responsibilities in their particular Portfolio, members of the Cabinet will be required:

- a) to work, as appropriate, with the other Executive members and with Chief Officers and their staff to compile and, after approval, implement the approved Budget and Policy Framework. The collective responsibility to implement the approved Budget and Policy Framework includes the monitoring of both service delivery and financial performance during the year, and, when necessary, ensure that remedial action is identified and then carried out;
- b) to represent the Council, or arrange for it to be represented, in all National, Regional and Local forums relevant to their responsibilities; This includes a range of Committees within the Greater Manchester Combined Authority in relation to their portfolios and representation on Joint venture bodies and local partnerships.
- c) to work, as appropriate, through formal and informal partnerships with voluntary, private sector and other public sector interests to enhance the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the local community;
- d) to contribute to the preparation, carrying out and monitoring of performance of the Community Strategy (“The Oldham Plan”), the Corporate Plan, and other Strategies and Plans of equivalent status; to liaise and work with other members of the Cabinet as and when required, balancing the demands and requirements in relation to personal Portfolio responsibilities with cross cutting corporate perspectives and obligations;
- e) to commission relevant research, especially into better ways of service delivery, in relation to personal Portfolio responsibilities. When doing so, Cabinet members will be expected to place citizens’ needs for services and information above the preferences of service providers while recognising the practical, legal and financial constraints which apply;
- f) to liaise with and respond to the Chairs or Vice Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as and when required,



balancing the demands and requirements of personal Portfolio responsibilities with cross cutting corporate perspectives and obligations;

- g) to ensure that all actions and activities of the Council, especially those in relation to personal Portfolio responsibilities are carried out in a socially inclusive way, in full acknowledgement and discharge of the legislation on gender, race, disability and the environment;
- h) to contribute to the determination, adoption, application and review of operation of the Corporate and Service Strategies, Policies and Standards;
- i) to monitor the effectiveness of and levels of satisfaction in current service delivery;

Individual Cabinet Members can also make key decisions and make contract decisions in line with financial thresholds. Part 3 of the Constitution sets this out in detail

<https://committees.oldham.gov.uk/documents/s119536/Part%203%20-%20Responsibility%20for%20Functions.pdf>

The workload of Cabinet Member is a full-time role and demands on time including reading documents, attending meetings, individual decision making, as well as decision making at Cabinet makes it difficult for this role to be undertaken part-time. Cabinet members also hold positions on a wide range of sub-committees, joint committees, outside bodies and partnerships including:

- Commission Partnership Board
- Oldham Leadership Board
- Oldham Economic Development Board
- Shareholder Committee
- Foxdenton Development Company
- First Choice Homes Oldham
- Capital Programme Investment Board
- Corporate Property Board
- Corporate Parenting Board

Cabinet Members also attend Scrutiny meetings relevant to their portfolios and attend several portfolio related Grater Manchester Combined Authority Committee and Partnership meetings.

### Non-Executive Councillors

There are 51 non-Executive Councillors who are expected to attend Full Council and in addition sit on various Committees of the Council. In addition to Full Council every Councillor sits on at least 1 committee of the Council.

### **Council Delegation**

Non-Executive functions are delegated by the Council. The Council's Constitution sets out the delegation arrangements in respect of Regulatory functions including Planning and Licensing functions.

### **Executive Delegation and Terms of Reference**

The Leader determines the nature and extent of the delegation of executive functions and powers to the Cabinet, Cabinet Committees or Boards, individual Cabinet Members, district partnerships or Officers, or through joint arrangements, and the terms of reference of any Cabinet Committee, Board or Joint Committee established.

The Cabinet may delegate all or some of its powers to a Cabinet Committee or Board, a district partnership or an officer. A Cabinet member may delegate all or some of their delegated powers to a district partnership or an Officer. A Cabinet Committee or Board, or an individual Cabinet member holding delegated powers, may delegate all or some of their delegated powers to a district partnership or an Officer. Details of such delegations and the terms of reference are provided at Sections 7-9 of Part 3 of the Constitution.

## **Accountability**

Give the Commission details as to how the authority and its decision makers and partners will be held to account. The Commission is interested in both the internal and external dimensions of this role.

Executive decision makers are held to account through the scrutiny function via:

- the call-in process which allows any two Members of the Council to call-in eligible executive decisions taken by the Cabinet, Cabinet Committees/Sub-Committees, individual Cabinet Members and the Commissioning Partnership Board (a Committee-in-Common established with the Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group) for scrutiny before they are implemented. Any decision called in is considered by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee in public (subject to any exception as a result of exempt or confidential information forming part of the consideration). A representative of the decision maker (or the decision maker in the case of an individual decision) is required to attend and explain the decision before the Committee;
- the publication of a Forward Plan (or Key Decision Notice) that provides all Members of the Council and the public with at least four weeks' notice of major decisions that are intended to be taken by the executive. This provides an opportunity for Members of the Council to seek a prior scrutiny consideration of a proposal and alerts members of the public to issues that they might wish to make representations on.
- the statutory requirement for certain policy proposals that are being developed by the Cabinet for submission to the full Council for adoption to be consulted upon through the overview and scrutiny function – this is the 'Policy Framework'. The views of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee are reported to the Cabinet who respond to the matters raised.
- the similar statutory requirement for the Council's annual budget and related proposals that are being developed by the Cabinet for submission to the full Council for adoption to be consulted upon through the overview and scrutiny function. The views of the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee are reported to the Cabinet who respond to the matters raised.
- the consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committees of regular financial and performance monitoring reports, enabling the identification of poorly performing areas and the holding to account of the respective executive Member.
- any non-executive Member of the Council can have an item relevant to the functions of that Committee included on an agenda, subject to the Chair considering the request against the Committee's prioritisation framework.

The Council has had an overview and scrutiny function comprising three Committees/Sub-Committees for some time. The structure was reviewed in early 2020 during which it was considered that the three-body model remained appropriate to Oldham's needs and had proved deliverable in terms of both Member and Officer time and capacity. In considering options, a thematic approach to

overview and scrutiny was considered (comprising, in brief, a corporate/strategic Committee, a 'place' based Committee, and a Committee covering health, schools and care), alongside the policy/performance/health model ultimately adopted. Implementation of the new structure was delayed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic but will be implemented no later than the Annual Meeting of the Council to be held in 2021.

The new structure comprises the three following Committees:

- a Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee that would lead the development of the overview and scrutiny process in Oldham; undertake strategic level scrutiny relating to the Council and to outside bodies and partners; scrutinise the Policy Framework and Budget proposals of the executive; be the statutory designated 'crime and disorder' overview and scrutiny committee; and consider all called in business (with the exception of called in business from the Commissioning Partnership Board);
- a Performance and Value for Money Overview and Scrutiny Committee that would monitor and hold to account the performance of service delivery within Oldham Council and of strategic partners; scrutinise plans for improvement where performance is weak and maintain oversight until performance improves; scrutinise the financial performance of the Council against the approved budget and identified efficiency savings; and scrutinise issues identified as requiring improvement by external assessors (with the exception of social care matters); and
- a Health Scrutiny Committee that would discharge the statutory health scrutiny functions of the Council; scrutinise the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board, including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy; scrutinise any joint arrangements established or being established under a s75 Agreement between the Council and a relevant NHS organisation; scrutinise public health services generally; scrutinise issues identified as requiring improvement by external assessors in respect of social care matters; and consider called in business arising from the Commissioning Partnership Board.

All three Committees would hold the power to make referrals to the Council or to the executive, either in accordance with statutory or Constitutional requirements or as a Committee might consider appropriate in the circumstances.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the current Overview and Scrutiny Committees collectively had been programmed to meet on 22 occasions over the 2020/21 Municipal Year, broadly on a six-weekly cycle with additional meetings linked specifically to the budget development process. It is envisaged that a similar pattern and number of meetings would be programmed for the new committees

when implemented.

Alongside the three formal Committees, the council has established an additional Scrutiny Committee dedicated to looking at the response to Covid for the duration of the pandemic.

The undertaking of scrutiny work outside of a formal Overview and Scrutiny Committee setting is a longstanding feature of Oldham's overview and scrutiny arrangements and is recognised as essential if an effective scrutiny work programme is to be delivered. The terms of reference of all three new Overview and Scrutiny Committees permit the establishment of Task and Finish Groups, Inquiries, or other such bodies to give in depth consideration to issues within the terms of reference of a particular Committee. Approaches to such work may include site visits, undertaking public surveys, holding public meetings, commissioning research and any other action they reasonably consider necessary to inform their deliberations. On a more informal basis, the Committees are able to hold workshops or development sessions, generally as one-off sessions to enable Committee members to become better acquainted with particular matters under scrutiny or of a more general interest.

While Task and Finish Groups and other events established outside of the formal Committee meetings might be held in private, the requirement for openness and transparency in the overview and scrutiny process is recognised. Each Committee is required to maintain a work programme that is submitted to each meeting and which details the activities undertaken by the Committee and its members. This work programme includes the detail of work undertaken outside of formal Committee meetings if this is not otherwise reflected in reports submitted to the Committee.

There is no requirement on the Committees to establish a set number of Task and Finish Groups or other bodies in a particular year. At any one time, the issues presenting themselves may lead to consideration by Task and Finish Groups, Inquiries and the like, or may be better considered in one-off sessions. Matters under consideration outside of a Committee setting may be subject to timescales not in the gift of the Committee. While the undertaking of activities outside of a formal Overview and Scrutiny Committee are by their nature ad hoc and therefore unpredictable, it might be reasonable to suggest that an Overview and Scrutiny Committee member would be called upon on at least one occasion between each Committee meeting to undertake an activity other than Committee attendance.

The Council has determined that an Overview and Scrutiny Committee should comprise eight Members. This membership level is longstanding and was re-affirmed in the recent review exercise. The Council has a substitute member arrangement for its Committees to cover Member absence which expands the potential pool of non-executive Members who can be called upon to participate in the scrutiny function. While the Council does not prescribe the number of Members required to form a Task and Finish Group, leaving it to individual Committees to make such a determination, it might be expected that this number does not

exceed the number of Members serving on the Committee. While membership of a Task and Finish Group, Inquiry or other like body would be drawn from the parent Committee membership in the first instance, it would be an option to call upon substitute members or a Member from outside the Committee ‘family’ who has a particular interest or expertise in the matter under consideration if this would add value to the process. Notwithstanding, Committee members would be expected to be in the majority and take a leading role, and for the Committee to retain ownership.

### **Joint Scrutiny**

In addition to the above Committees, the Council is a constituent authority of three joint Overview and Scrutiny Committees or Panels that have been established for the scrutiny of NHS organisations whose boundaries cover more than one local authority area. These three joint bodies are -

- the Joint Scrutiny Panel for Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust;
- the Joint Scrutiny Panel for Pennine Care NHS Trust; and
- the Greater Manchester Joint Health Scrutiny Committee.

The establishment of these bodies does not preclude the Health Scrutiny Committee from considering purely local issues concerning the NHS bodies covered by these three joint scrutiny Committees or Panels.

In addition to the Executive and Full Council the Council has established Committees to discharge Council functions including regulatory, trustee and Chief Officer appointments functions. Membership of the committees is predominately comprised of the 51 non-executive members.

Membership of a Committee requires all attendees to prepare, attend site visits (if required) and to read and digest committee papers to ensure decisions can be made with reasons given. Meeting duration can last between ½ and hour to 4 hours.

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Quorum</b>
Planning Committee	14 Council Members	4 Members
Licensing Committee	14 Council Members	4 Members
Audit Committee	9 Council Members	3 Members
Traffic Regulation Order Panel	4 Council Members	3 Members
Commons Registration Committee	5 Council Members	3 Members
Charitable Trustee	5 Council Members	3 Members

Committee		
Selection Committee	5 Council Members	
Standards Committee	5 Council Members, 2 Parish Councillors and 4 Independent Persons	3 Members, one of which must be an Independent Person
Appeals Committee	3 Members	3 Members
Independent Panel	3 Independent Members	3 Members
Health and Wellbeing Board	At least one Council Member appointed by the Leader of the Council; the Council's Directors of Adult Social Services, of Children's Services, and of Public Health; a CCG representative; a Healthwatch representative; any additional person/body the Board or the Council (subject to consultation with the Board) thinks appropriate.	One Third

### **Planning Committee**

The Planning Committee is responsible for exercising the Council (or 'non-executive') functions as defined in Part A of Schedule 1 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Regulations 2000 (as amended) in respect of planning applications and related matters (except where the site is specifically allocated for that purpose in the adopted Development Plan, major development).

The applications that are considered by the Committee include:

1. applications for minerals or waste development;

2. the provision of: i. 20 or more dwellings; or ii. residential development on a site area of 1 hectare or more;
3. the provision of a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1000 square metres or more;
4. retail, commercial, industrial or other development on a site having an area of 1 hectare or more;
5. Applications which require an environmental statement;
6. Applications which are notifiable departures from the Council's Development Plan, other than applications which the Deputy Chief Executive is minded to refuse;
7. Applications to be considered under the referral procedure or referred at the discretion of the Head of Planning and Development Management;
8. Applications submitted by a Councillor, senior Council Officer (Officers on senior manager pay grade and above) or a member of staff employed within the Planning and Development Management service area, or by an immediate family member or partner of these persons, which would otherwise be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive;
9. Applications to remove or vary conditions where the relevant planning condition was agreed by the Planning Committee in addition to those recommended in the Officer's report;
10. Consultations from adjoining local authorities, including the Peak District National Park Authority, which fall into the categories 1 (a-d) above, where an objection is raised to the proposed development;
11. The nomination of a Member of the Committee to represent the Council at any subsequent hearing or inquiry where the decision was made contrary to Officer advice.
12. Major applications involving the Council either as applicant or land owner (not including minor developments which accord with planning policy and to which no objection has been made).

The Planning Committee is comprised of 14 councillors, all non-executive. Although it is legally possible for executive members to sit on the committee, to reduce any conflicts of interest, the Council has for several years adopted the practice of not appointing executive members to this committee.

The Committee meets 11 times a year with at least one training session taking place following elections. There may be further training and there may also be extraordinary meetings.

During the municipal year 2018/19 a total of 58 applications were considered by the Planning Committee and during the 2019/20 municipal year a total of 57 application were considered. It isn't anticipated that the numbers will reduce for the foreseeable future.

### **The Licensing Committee – Meets 3 times a Municipal year**



The Licensing Committee has 14 Members and undertakes Council (or 'non-executive') functions as defined in Paragraph B to Schedule 1 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) Regulations 2000 (as amended) to the extent of –

- a) Functions under the Licensing Act 2003
  - a) Functions under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1972/Town Police Clauses Act 1847 (as amended)
  - b) Functions under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
  - c) any further functions relating to licensing, registration or a related permission
    - Private hire and hackney carriages
    - Gambling premises
    - Alcohol, entertainment and late night refreshment
    - Street trading
    - Highways licences
    - Animal licensing
    - House to house and street collections
    - Marriage premises
    - Sexual entertainment venues and shops
    - Housing licences
    - Scrap metal
    - Other small-scale licensing permissions

In accordance with Part 3 of the Councils Constitution the Licensing Committee has the power to determine all licensing applications received. On a day to day basis it is not practical for the several thousand applications that are received to all be determined by the Licensing Committee or its panels. In addition, there are also occasions where urgent decisions need to be taken. The Constitution allows for the Committee to delegate its functions to the Deputy Chief Executive who, in turn, can delegate to Officers for the smooth running of the licensing function.

There are occasions where a hearing is convened due to legislation or local delegations not allowing for Officer determination. In such circumstances a Panel of Elected Members is convened. These circumstances include: -

- Convictions held by proposed or current licenced drivers
- Private hire operators
- Objections to premises licences of various sorts

- Objections to scrap metal applications
- Objections to or reviews of street trading licences

**Licensing Panel - Deals predominately with alcohol licensing and licensing in relation to gambling legislation- There are 10 meeting scheduled each municipal year**

The Licensing Committee has established a Sub-Committees (Panels) to deal with such matters specified by that legislation and other matters as may be referred to that Sub-Committee or Panel by the relevant Officer, the Committee or the Council, including –

- a) Licensing Act 2003 – such matters as referred to at 4.3.1(a)(i, ii, iv-x) of the Licensing Committee terms of reference;
- b) Gambling Act 2005 - such matters as referred to at 4.3.1(b)(i-1iii, v-x) of the Licensing Committee terms of reference; and
- c) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 – such matters as referred to at 4.3.1(d)(i-iii, v) of the Licensing Committee terms of reference.

The Licensing Panels comprise no fewer than three Elected Members drawn from Members of the Licensing Committee. There are 5 Licensing Panels and the membership of the Panels is rotated as necessary amongst Members of the Committee at the beginning of each municipal year.

**Licensing Driver Panel – Deals with anything taxi related, mainly new applicants or existing taxi drivers with convictions to assess licence suitability. – 10 meetings scheduled each municipal year**

The Licensing Committee has established a Sub-Committee (Panel) to deal with such matters as referred to at 4.3.1(c) of the Licensing Committee terms of reference related to Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1972/Town Police Clauses Act 1847 (as amended) as may be referred to the Panel by the relevant Officer.

The Licensing Driver Panel comprises of seven Elected Members drawn from Members of the Licensing Committee.

**Audit Committee**

The Audit Committee undertakes the statutory function of approving the Council's statement of accounts; as suggested in guidance prepared by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), is responsible for oversight of the Council's

internal audit arrangements and for oversight of the relationship with the external auditor, reviews Financial and Contract Procedure Rules, and contributes to corporate governance arrangements; and contributes to the Council's risk management process. The Committee is scheduled to meet on six occasions per year and comprises an independent Chair and nine members of Council. Beyond the statutory function of the Committee, it is considered appropriate for elected Members to undertake the further roles to ensure the proper scrutiny of the Council's affairs.

### **Traffic Regulation Order Panel**

The panel undertakes statutory functions with regard to footpaths, bridleways and other rights of way, considers representations in respect of traffic regulation orders and public space protection orders, and acts as the Petitioner Panel in respect of the Council's petition procedure. The Committee is scheduled to meet on six occasions per year and comprises four members of the Council. The Panel is convened principally when objections or representations are received concerning published proposals of the Council. In these circumstances it is considered appropriate to have those objections and representations considered by elected members.

### **Commons Registration Committee**

The Committee undertakes statutory functions in relation to the registration or variation of common land or town or village greens. Such matters may be linked to other issues and be controversial and it is considered appropriate for these to be considered by elected Members. Meetings are convened on an ad hoc basis, as and when issues arise. The Committee comprises 5 members.

### **Charitable Trust Committee**

The Charitable Trust Committee discharges the functions of the Council where the Council acts as Trustee of various charities including land and legacy funds and any further or future Trusts or bequests or arrangements where the Council is identified as the sole Trustee, including the consideration of matters where there is a conflict or potential conflict between the Council's interests and those of the beneficiaries of the charitable trusts. Meetings are convened on an ad hoc basis, as and when issues arise. The Committee comprises 5 members.

### **Transport Appeals**

To consider individual cases and make arrangements on behalf of the Council to pay for or provide transport to and from an education provider for pupils and students whom the Director of Children's Services does not consider to qualify either statutorily or

under the normal policy of the Council for such transport.

## **Joint Arrangements**

The Council is involved in several joint arrangements with other local authorities or bodies. These joint arrangements may be formal, in that they may be required by law or the Council or the Leader of the Council has established them to deal with statutory functions, or informal where the Council or the Leader of the Council has chosen to enter into informal partnership with other organisations from the public, private and/or third sector.

### **Greater Manchester Combined Authority**

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) is made up of the ten Greater Manchester Councils of which Oldham is one and the Greater Manchester Mayor, who work with other local services, businesses, communities and other partners to improve the city-region. The work undertaken by GMCA requires a large amount of time spent by the Leader and Cabinet Members on Combined Authority business.

Several non-Executive Members are members of some GMCA committees. The work undertaken as Members of various committees includes, preparation for the meetings, reading and understanding technical information contained in the agendas, attendance at the meetings which can last between 1hour up to 3hours and to act as a representative of Oldham.

A variety of boards, panels and committees look specifically at areas like transport, Police and Crime, health and social care, planning and housing within the City region:

- GM Combined Authority
- AGMA Executive Board
- GM Health Scrutiny Committee
- Statutory Functions Committee
- GM Culture and Social Impact Fund Committee
- Christie Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- GMCA Audit Committee
- GM European Structural Investment Fund
- Greater Manchester Pensions Fund Management Panel

- Greater Manchester Reform Committee
- GMCA Standards Committee
- Health and Social Care Partnership Board
- Health and Social Care Joint Commissioning Board
- Manchester Growth Company Board
- Peoples History Museum
- Halle
- Planning and Housing Commission
- Police and Crime Panel
- Police and Crime Steering Group
- Greater Manchester Transport Committee
- Transport for the North Scrutiny Committee
- GM Waste and Recycling Committee
- Corporate Issues & Reform Overview & Scrutiny
- Economy, Business Growth & Skills Overview & Scrutiny
- Housing, Planning & Environment Overview & Scrutiny
- GMCA Overview and Scrutiny Substitute Pool Nominations

### **Commissioning Partnership Board**

Oldham Council and Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group had been working closely together for a number of years to ensure there was alignment and the necessary interdependencies existed between the two organisations' commissioned services.

In February 2015, the Greater Manchester Devolution agreement for Health & Social Care provided a new impetus to the integration of Health & Social Care provision across GM and within each of the ten localities. Oldham's ambition for integration was outlined in the Oldham Locality Plan, agreed in December 2015.

Significant work had been carried out by the Council and Oldham CCG to develop the vision, structures and processes that were needed to be put in place to make this vision a reality.

The Commissioning Partnership Board was established and is the integrated strategic commissioning body for health and social care services established under section 75 of the NHS Act 2006 between NHS Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group (the CCG) and Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (the Council or OMBC).

The Commissioning Partnership Board is a joint committee of the Council and the CCG established under Regulation 10(2) of the NHS Bodies and Local Authorities Partnership Arrangements Regulations 2000 (the Partnership Regulations).

The Board was established to exercise functions on behalf of the CCG and Oldham Council integrated commissioning functions delegated to it by way of S.75 agreement by way of pooled and aligned budgets. The board has equal representation of Cabinet Members, clinical leads/members of the CCG and advisory members.

The role of integrated commissioning will demand more time and commitment from all ward councillors within their geographical footprint as the Council moves to a 'Place Based' model of delivery. Place based, multi-agency integration is key to the transformation and reform of public services and communities both here in Oldham and across Greater Manchester. Only by developing a single approach to building resilience that is informed by insight into what drives demand and shapes behaviour in communities will we shift the stubborn inequalities that exist within our borough.

This way of working will also need a strong scrutiny element which will be driven through the Council's Scrutiny model.

### **Partnership Working**

In addition, there are a number of partner organisations and outside bodies that have Councillor representation to ensure partnership working and that a whole Oldham approach is taken in service delivery. The organisations include the following;

- ACE Centre
- Action Oldham Fund Advisory Panel
- Community Safety and Cohesion Partnership
- Corporate Parenting Panel
- Domestic Violence Partnership
- Fostering Panel
- Learning Disability Partnership Board
- MioCare and Support
- Oldham Council Music Awards
- Oldham Distress Fund
- Oldham Leadership Board
- Oldham Strategic Housing Board
- PFI and Housing Revenue Account Board
- Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education

## **External and Voluntary Sector**

- LGA General Assembly
- LGA Executive
- MAHDLO
- North West Employers Organisation
- Oldham Athletic Community Trust
- Oldham Brass Bands Association
- Oldham Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Oldham Credit Union
- Oldham Henshaw and Church of England Education Trust
- Oldham Hulme Grammar Schools
- Oldham Play Action Group
- Oldham United Charity
- Parking Traffic Regulations Outside London (Patrol)
- Peak District National Park Authority
- Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust - Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- Pennine Care NHS Trust – Joint Mental Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- Pennine Care NHS Trust – (Mental Health) Council of Governors
- Southern Pennine Rural Regeneration Company (formerly Pennine Prospects)
- Positive Steps Board
- NW Reserve Forces and Cadets Association
- University of Manchester General Assembly
- Youth Justice Management Board

## **GM Bodies**

- Greater Manchester Forests Partnership
- Greater Manchester Pension Fund Management/Advisory Panel

## **Joint Ventures**

The Council is involved in a number of Joint Ventures of which includes elected Members on the various boards:

- Foxdenton Development Board
- Meridian Development Company Ltd
- Oldham Coliseum Theatre
- Oldham Community Leisure Ltd Management Committee
- Oldham Community Power Ltd Management Board
- Oldham Economic Development Association Board
- Oldham Property Partnership Limited (and associated OPP Ltd companies)
- Southlink Developments Limited

## **Community Involvement**

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties?

## **Representational Role**

An elected Member's role is set out within the Council's Constitution and all Members are required to adhere to the Member's Code of Conduct.

[https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200143/complaints\\_and\\_feedback/631/councillor\\_complaints\\_and\\_feedback](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200143/complaints_and_feedback/631/councillor_complaints_and_feedback)



As per Part 2, Article 2 of the Constitution all Councillors will:

- a) collectively be the ultimate policy-makers and carry out a number of strategic and corporate management functions
- b) effectively represent their communities, balancing the different interests identified in the Ward or the community, and bring their views into the Council's decision making process, i.e. become the advocate of and for their communities;
- c) contribute to the good governance of the area and actively encourage community public participation and citizen involvement in decision making;
- d) deal effectively with individual casework fairly and impartially, and act as an advocate for constituents in seeking to resolve particular concerns or grievances;
- e) participate in the governance and management of the Council, being involved in decision making and, as required, in the exercise of the Council's quasi-judicial functions;
- f) be available to represent the Council on other bodies; and
- g) maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics.

Following each local election, newly appointed and existing members are invited to an induction which includes training on the Members Code of Conduct, decision making and declarations of interest. Members are provided with IT and facilities information and details of the Elected Member Development programme which runs throughout each municipal year. Licensing and Planning members have specific training session so that they have a thorough understanding of the legal requirements and meeting procedures of those committees. All Members through induction are required to attend mandatory Safeguarding sessions.

Oldham Councillors spend extensive periods of time working within their wards/districts and communities holding Ward Surgeries, attending community meetings, holding community forums, working with partners, scrutinising local delivery of services and dealing with casework.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Council has managed to continue with 'business as usual' committee meetings via Microsoft Teams. In addition to their role as committee Members during the evening, elected Members are also Community Leaders interacting with their constituents using a variety of methods, email, Facebook, Twitter, blogs and Microsoft TEAMS which has enabled Members to reach a wider audience including younger constituents, minority groups and those not on the electoral register. The Youth Council also work with Councillors to be the link between young people and the Council. The Council has a Youth Service that supports the wider Youth Voice and access to young people members can consult with. This is supported by Youth Workers and includes The Youth Council, The Children in Care Council and Barrier Breakers (Children and Young people with a disability). Elected members can work with young people through this mechanism. These groups are representatives of our young people from each part of the Borough. In addition there are many other mechanisms elected members can engage with young people including full council and

panels. In addition elected members get invited to specific thematic conversations with *young people*. overview and scrutiny.

Oldham Councillors were surveyed and asked about their representational role. Oldham Councillors carry out a range of activities and responsibilities whilst carrying out their role. These include:

- Engagement with residents, groups and local organisations on a wide range of different issues
- Carrying out casework on behalf of residents and local groups
- Providing important community leadership
- Providing a bridge between the Council and the community, communicating decisions and policies made by the Council that affect residents and community members
- Promoting ward interests within and outside the Council
- Ensuring that the needs of local communities and residents are identified, understood and supported.

Representing local views at council meetings and leading local campaigns on behalf of the community.

It is part of the role of a councillor in Oldham to make sure that they regularly engage with constituents. The most popular means to engage with constituents are face to face, by telephone and by email. 97% of respondents stated that they use face to face means and the telephone when engaging with residents, while 91% stated this also happened through email.

When asked if there had been a significant change to the amount of time spent communicating with constituents over the last 12 months; 90% of councillors stated that they felt that they were spending significantly more time engaging through email, while 84% stated they were spending more time engaging on the phone.

While more time was spent on phone and email engagement, councillors felt that face to face engagement was on the decline. When asked if they had noticed any changes in the past 12 months 81% said they were spending less time (or significantly less time) on surgeries than they had done before, while 65% stated they were spending less time on face to face engagement in general.

An aspect of the role of a councillor is being available to residents through a number of channels. When asked, nearly two-thirds believed they had the right balance of communication channels for them to conduct their role appropriately.

When it comes to casework, councillors deal with their casework in a variety of ways. Councillors often liaise with the appropriate officers as well as dealing with the issues themselves. 78% states that they deal with casework using the appropriate officers, while only 8% carried out casework with little or no support.

When asked, 59% of councillors stated that they spent more time on casework duties than they did when first elected. Just under 1 in 5 state that another aspect of their workload that had increased was having to attend and prepare for meetings.

91% of respondents stated that they spend more time in general on council business than they did when initially elected. 22% of these indicated that part of the reason was down to being more familiar in the local community, and therefore being asked to assist more with issues that might crop up for residents.

All Councillors are very active within their communities and hold regular Ward Surgeries basis and do encourage constituents who are not able to attend surgeries (pre COVID) to get in touch via email/telephone with any concerns queries they may have. Following the Covid-19 restrictions Ward Surgeries are held via email/telephone and Microsoft TEAMS.

The high population density, pockets of deprivation in the Borough and the comparatively high number of out of work benefit claimants means the demand for services is high and the volume and complexity of casework that Councillors manage is significant. The current pressure on Members time is a combination of evening meetings and complex casework.

Engagement with residents and local groups also includes communicating Council decisions, policies and service decisions and promoting their ward issues and interests both within the Council and outside.

Members are the conduit for their constituents in relation to liaising with Cabinet Members and officers to ensure local views are represented and as advocates for their ward create a Community Leadership role by being visible and accessible.

Councillors were surveyed as part of the review process to understand the demands on time, communication with residents and the impact of changes in role of the Councillors.

- Most commonly respondents identified as White British and were over 40 years of age. Six in ten respondents were male. : 63% respondents are male and 37% female<sup>1</sup>
- Around three-quarters of respondents specified their length of service as between 0 to 10 years, and around three-quarters held additional roles to that of Councillor.

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<sup>1</sup> Source LGBCE Survey 2020 Q25 (n40)

- The majority of respondents spent over 20 hours a month on attending meetings with officers and Council groups, followed closely by engaging with constituents and dealing with enquiries and casework. Around three-quarters of respondents dealt with casework with support from officers.
- The majority felt the time spent on Council business had increased since they were first elected. Reasons included becoming more involved in local activities and increased familiarity with constituents as well as service and budget changes.
- In relation to the aspects of duties which had most increased since becoming elected, the majority of respondents reported casework and constituent issues, followed by attending or preparing for meetings.
- Almost all respondents engaged with constituents face to face or via telephone. Nine in ten respondents engaged with residents via email or meetings. Around one-quarter of respondents' time was taken up by email communication.
- Nine in ten respondents stated that email communication had taken up more or significantly more of their time in the last 12 months, and around eight in ten reported an increase in telephone communication.
- Two-thirds of respondents felt that the balance was about right to communicate effectively with constituents, with half commenting on the importance of being available via different communication tools.

The use of technology and immediacy of social media has resulted in Councillors spending extended periods of time responding using this technology with expectations from constituents of immediate responses and this '24-7' demand is becoming more challenging for Councillors. There are over 100 committee places plus substitute positions that Councillors need to fill not including community meetings, political meetings, Member development meetings and with the majority of meetings taking place in the evening. Case work is increasingly complex and Members are dealing with constituents that have multiple needs.

### **Casework/Constituent issues'**

A majority of the councillors responded that since being elected they had since the biggest increase in the amount of casework and constituent issues they face:

- 'Case work around health, housing and ASB'
- 'Responding to constituents enquiries. Typing support and research always important in this respect. More time needed to fully

understand reports presented by officers on range of problems confronting the Council'

- 'chasing up casework when officers don't keep you updated on progress'
- 'Issues in the community such as fly tipping and crime issues'

### **Attendance at/preparation for meetings'**

Just under 1 in 5 mentioned that they had seen their workload increased by having to attend meetings, be it as an ordinary councillor or due to being on a committee(s):

'Attendance at leadership meetings, participation in portfolio meetings and preparation for them'

'Initially after being elected in a by-election I was not assigned to many committees. I work full-time I pick up most of my council work in the evening and at weekends, including committees I now serve on'

'Internal meetings. Complex casework such as benefits and housing cases'

'Casework and preparation. Also preparation for meetings'

### **'General increase in workload'**

A number of the respondents mentioned that their workload has increased generally, sometimes without being able to pinpoint anything specifically. Councillors stated 'Everything' can be case work including;

- 'Poverty issues ,housing issues , keeping communities together , and health challenges'
- 'General enquiries and need of front line services mainly on environmental issues'
- 'All ward work has increased. Services required have increased. Along with residents needing help on how to obtain the service and funding they need'
- 'Hard to pin point, it is just a lifestyle you have to adopt to and not a job. Jobs you can at some point switch off from but this I feel you can't'

### **Time pressures'**

15% of responses reflected on time pressures as a factor impacting on communicating effectively with constituents:

- 'Casework has increased and is still increasing'

- 'Not enough time and so much to do'
- 'it isn't always possible to do so as much as I would like as demand determines where you need to prioritise'

## **Districts**

Oldham has a long history of area and District working. Prior to 2019 the Council had District Executives operating as the formal decision making element within area working, taking decisions about funding or other resources delegated to them by Council. The primary role of each District Executive was to set priorities and take decisions at a local level, and to promote the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area. They were responsible for developing a plan for their area, within the context of the Oldham Plan and allocating resources in support of this.

In 2019 a review was undertaken to;

- Consider how elected members can be supported in their role as democratic leaders and in particular at a place based level.
- Review the resources allocated to Districts and district working.
- Consider district working in the context of the wider reform agenda, to ensure we operate in the most effective way to support elected members and deliver better outcomes for residents.

A new model of District working was agreed by Full Council which;

- Created the role of a District Lead
- Created a wider programme of work to include;
  - A member development programme that will ensure members have the skills and support needed. The 2019/20 programme is currently being developed, with a new Learning Needs Analysis survey (to help identify any gaps in elected member skills and knowledge) sent to all members. Work is ongoing to engage elected members with the programme, with a cross-party elected member development group now established to support the development and promotion of the programme.
  - A review of how District Teams were connected into and supported by Council services. This would involve developing networks between Districts, the wider organisation and partners and reviewing governance arrangements to improve integration and joint working.
  - More effective ways of engaging with residents. It is recognised that a wider range of approaches to engagement are required.
  - A new Casework system to improve management of casework and communication.

- Better tools and more systematic partnerships to identify the area priorities and to plan effectively for more integrated working with partners. Over the next twelve months work will continue to develop a placed based operating model of which Districts and elected members will be an integral part. This requires detailed work in the meantime, ensuring Districts are well placed to integrate with this developing place-based model.

### Place-Based Integration

We are currently developing an ambitious programme of place-based reform aligned to our newly agreed 5 public service areas that will integrate a whole range of council, health, care, housing and policing services at sub borough level. This will include a local leadership structure that will include both elected members and key partners as the key decision makers for the area (e.g. policing, health, primary care, housing, council etc). This leadership team will be responsible for developing a plan for the area, directing resources across public services and a single outcomes agreement. Mechanisms will also be put in place to ensure this is informed by resident voice and a strong voluntary sector network. We are currently developing these proposals and it is anticipated they will be in place by March 2021.

We recognise that to deliver the scale of change required it is essential that elected members are at the heart of our approach, ensuring the focus of public services is on the people who receive them and the communities in which they live, and not on the organisations that provide them. Elected members are key to understanding and communicating the needs of Oldham’s diverse communities, ensuring that the voice of the resident shapes the delivery of public services in Oldham.

Elected members are also incredibly important as community connectors, connecting residents to the assets of the community, including community groups and wider support services. Their role is critical to understanding the wider system, helping residents access services, but also supporting Team Oldham to integrate services around the needs of our communities.

There are seven Districts representing the different parts of the Borough each with a District Lead as follows:-

District	Wards Covered
Oldham East	Alexandra St Mary’s St James Waterhead
Oldham West	Coldhurst

	Medlock Vale Werneth
Failsworth and Hollinwood	Failsworth East Failsworth West Hollinwood
Chadderton	Chadderton Central Chadderton North Chadderton South
Saddleworth and Lees	Saddleworth North Saddleworth South Saddleworth West and Lees
Royton	Royton North Royton South
Shaw and Crompton	Crompton Shaw

### **District Leads**

The role of the District Lead is to work closely with all elected members in their district to support them in their role as strong local leaders. The District Lead also plays a vital role in championing the needs of the district. They provide leadership across the district and ensure parallels exist between corporate and local priorities.

The role is a strategic position that requires vision and the ability to look beyond ward issues to those that affect the district as a whole. It is important that the District Lead is able to make decisions based on district priorities which may not always align fully with ward priorities.

### **Requirements of the District Lead**

The District Lead is a Councillor who will –

- a) provide leadership within and beyond the district;
- b) support elected members in the district in their role as local leaders;
- c) engage with elected members across the district and encourage active contribution to district initiatives that take place;



- d) work with the District Team to develop the District Plan, ensuring it reflects both local and corporate priorities;
- e) champion the district as a place and represent the district in any discussions and/or negotiations at a borough level;
- f) lead on any applications to the Local Improvement Fund.
- g) Chair relevant working groups as appropriate;
- h) lead on the development of a district Community Engagement Strategy, ensuring all residents have an opportunity to contribute their ideas or concerns to the district;
- i) work as appropriate with the Executive Management Team, District Co-ordinator and District Team to plan and deliver against locally agreed priorities;
- j) liaise and work with other District Leads as and when required to deliver against priorities that cross district boundaries;
- k) liaise with and respond to the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees as and when required;
  
- l) ensure that all actions and activities of the district are carried out in a socially inclusive way, in full acknowledgement and discharge of the equality legislation pertaining to all protected characteristics, and also legislation pertaining to the environment;
- m) work with the Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services to identify further opportunities for district working as appropriate;
- n) be the lead member in a district for corporate campaigns and ensure the involvement of Ward Members in supporting this activity.
- o) work, as appropriate, through formal and informal partnership with voluntary, private sector and other public sector interests to enhance the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the local community;
- p) support the development of a strong Voluntary, Community and Faith sector which can work with the District Team in improving the quality of life of local people and encouraging the active involvement of residents in this;
- q) promote the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector as a key driver of local productivity, recognising the contribution of this sector in improving the economy and enterprise of the district;
- r) champion events, festivals and celebrations across the district. provide leadership in building strong cohesive communities within and beyond the district; and promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination

There are two Districts in Oldham which also have Parish Councils. The District Councillors work closely with and support the Parishes and joint meetings/events are held to provide partnership working and support within the District.

Members have high levels of case work resulting from surgeries, queries, meetings normally from residents reporting issues or requiring assistance. The Executive support provided to Members is limited to the Leader, Cabinet Members and the Leader of the Major Opposition. Non-Executive Members must be self-sufficient, personally managing most of their case work and their diaries of

formal and informal meetings, events and Council commitments. Additionally, District Teams support Councillors with day to day constituency work,

Members also receive support from the Civic and Political team and Democratic in relation to:

- Induction
- IT Support
- General queries
- Committee advice
- Allowances
- Member Development
- Civic events and duties

Councillors are issued with appropriate technology equipment and this increased use of technology has allowed Councillors to reach wider groups and communities via Facebook, Twitter and other social media channels. The increased use of technology places pressure on Councillors to respond with immediately with increasingly complex workloads.

The Councillor survey stated that 35 respondents indicated a range of between 6 and 150 cases per month. Most commonly respondents indicated a workload of 30 cases per month.

### **How do you deal with your ward casework and what support do you receive**

There were 40 responses to this question, with the main themes being dealing with casework with support from the relevant officers (78%), dealing with casework directly (53%) and dealing with casework without any, or with very little, support (8%).

#### **Dealing with casework using the relevant officers**

The majority of the respondents mentioned that they often look to support/district/relevant officers for support when it came to be carrying out casework

'Deal with casework by email, phone and personal visits. I receive support from the caseworker in the District Office'

'Most of the casework I deal with them myself. I do however use the Executive Support Officer and the Oldham West District for some casework'

'Refer to caseworker if appropriate. Contact officers directly when necessary. Ask advice from other councillors if unsure how to

proceed with a particular issue.'

### **'Dealing with casework directly'**

Over half stated that they often dealt with casework directly by themselves, either with or without support from officers and the Contact Centre:

'I reply to all queries and obtain advice as necessary or ask for steps to be taken. I do not use the district team unless absolutely necessary as they are very busy'

'I adopt a variety of ways when dealing with casework. Where possible I deal with it directly if not, I go through council officers, I may directly contact housing associations, a local business, a resident or the local PCSO'

'All Casework is dealt with personally on the administration side with no support. Officers offer advice and support on specific details and any historical information which may be necessary'

## **Other Issues**

### **Future Challenges and Priorities**

- Oldham is a diverse and dynamic Borough. It has a growing population and demand for services. For planning purposes Greater Manchester is about to approve for consultation on the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and the latest ONS figures projects households to grow by:
  - 2019 (93,890), 2020 (94,560), 2021 (95,182), 2022 (95,979) and 2023 (96,746),
  - Since the previous review in 2003 the population of electors has grown by 18,620 and we forecast this upward trend will continue. By 2023 our Councillors will be representing a greater number of residents living in larger households which will have implications on the casework of councillors and the increase in residents will also lead to an increased demand on council services and the scrutiny and governance of decision making.
    - Population Growth – Increases in Oldham's population will in turn increase demand for universal services.

- Older People Growth – It is expected that the number of older people in Oldham’s population will grow by 40% within the next 24 years. This will bring major challenges for adult social care and health provision.
- Increased Diversity – Changes in Oldham’s ethnic composition are likely to affect patterns of residence within Oldham. There may be an increased need to support community relations, particularly within neighbourhoods where ethnic compositions are shifting rapidly.
- Oldham’s councillors have a pivotal role of community leadership in demand for services, scrutiny and decision-making regarding Health and Social Care and to support community relations.

## Changing Role of Elected Members

As a co-operative council and a founding member of the Co-operative Councils’ Innovation Network, Oldham is committed to reconnecting the Council with our local communities; providing new ways of delivering services and facilitating the regeneration of the borough.

The Oldham Model is a whole-system approach that encompasses everything we do. This ranges from working in line with co-operative principles to getting residents to actively take part in decision making and from co-production of services with residents to establishing co-operative models of delivery.

Elected members are at the heart of our co-operative approach, engaging with communities to coproduce solutions to challenges we face, while championing change across Team Oldham and the communities they serve.

An important aspect of the role of a Councillor is to be accessible to those they represent and to be able to devote time to the decision-making process. The Council is of the view that by retaining its existing complement it facilitates easy access for residents whilst at the same time driving forward our co-operative ambition.

Oldham is now at the forefront of the Co-operative Council agenda – rethinking the way residents are involved in shaping and receiving services, facilitated by local councillors. We are serious about giving residents the chance to shape local decisions. We look at the real issues and challenges facing communities and how together we can make a co-operative difference, capturing the residents in everything we do.

The role of Councillors has changed over the years as demonstrated by the Member survey. The changes in role include; Health and Social Care integration, working with the CCG, Adult Social Care, hospitals and care providers. As public health is such a cross-cutting issue, one of the major public health activities of local councils is to develop, foster and influence relationships with the rest of the local and regional health system. Some of these relationships will be facilitated by HWBs, but others will need individual councillors to take the initiative, for example, in working with very local community groups or with large employers and/or education providers.

## **Oldham's Role in Greater Manchester as part of the GMCA**

The Greater Manchester Strategy sets out a clear set of priorities including:

- All children to start school ready to learn
- Young people equipped for life
- Good quality housing, and an end to rough sleeping
- Greater Manchester to pioneer a positive vision for growing older

Through the GM devolution agreements, local authorities across GM have additional responsibility for:

- more control of local transport, with a long-term government budget to help us plan a more modern, better-connected network
- new planning powers to encourage regeneration and development
- a new £300 million fund for housing: enough for an extra 15,000 new homes over ten years
- extra funding to get up to 50,000 people back into work
- incentives to skills-providers to develop more work-related training
- extra budget to support and develop local businesses
- the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner being merged with the elected mayor
- control of investment through a new 'earn back' funding arrangement which gives us extra money for the region's infrastructure if we reach certain levels of economic growth

This additional responsibility also comes with an increased workload for elected members, who are represented on numerous GMCA boards, committees and groups as detailed earlier in the submission.

The GMCA gives local people more control over issues that affect their area. It means the region speaks with one voice and can make a strong case for resources and investment. It helps the entire north of England achieve its full potential. Oldham Council as a member of GMCA is working to meet those priorities and deliver, this work is undertaken by the Leader, Cabinet Members and other councillors as part of GMCA appointments/committees.

## **Meeting The Budget Challenge**

The Council is facing unprecedented budget savings with further financial pressures resulting from COVID-19, with analysis undertaken by the ten Greater Manchester councils and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) showing that the impact of coronavirus and the actions taken to manage the pandemic will be in the region of £732m by the end of 2020/21 alone.

Council budgets are underpinned by a substantial amount of locally raised income, of which council tax makes up a significant proportion. Most metropolitan districts are c49% reliant on council tax income and, in some Greater Manchester authorities, this is as high as 67%. Council tax receipts have fallen because people's incomes have been adversely affected by the COVID crisis and this has led to an increase in those eligible for council tax support, with others struggling to pay bills or deferring or defaulting on payments.

With a big loss of income coming from commercial investments, it will significantly impact on the economy of the city-region and Oldham and the recovery efforts to build back better. These investments are about the strategic development of local places and are part of wider regeneration and economic development strategies, for example acquisition of property to support regeneration, enhancing existing assets, zero carbon interventions, site remediation and facilitation works, and other measures.

The impact of Covid on budgets is particularly stark because of the decade of budget cuts that Oldham has experienced. Oldham has experienced the 6th deepest cuts in the country, losing 60% of our budget and a third of our staff since 2010. These cuts have in part been managed by working with the voluntary sector, looking to them to provide some of the services that used to come from the council. This in turn has further increased pressure on councillors, who play a central role in establishing and maintaining the relationships with these voluntary groups, as well as supporting them to deliver effectively.

The Council will have to take even more challenging and unpalatable measures to deliver the savings required because of Covid. This will call for additional demand on Member's time to help identify savings through the budget challenge process, as well as future

proofing services so we can continue to serve Oldham's residents. The required savings will also lead to changes in service provision which will result in increased demand on Councillor time via casework, queries and decision making.

## Summary

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

In developing the recommendation, the Council has carefully considered the various factors outlined in this document and it is recommended that the Council size remains the same. The submission above provides detail on the Borough's growing population, diverse communities, budget challenges, COVID-19 and its impact all these factors will have on a Councillor's work load, the ability of the Council to meet its governance and scrutiny requirements and to continue to play an active role as representatives and leaders of our local communities.

### **Reduction in Councillors**

As stated above the growth in the population of Oldham would not be well supported with fewer councillors. The changes to the role of a councillor in relation to Greater Manchester, Health and Social Care and Place based working and the additional work/caseloads generated by the budget challenges mean that the option of reducing the number of councillors is unsustainable. Austerity has increased the burden on Councillors to pick up more demanding issues and queries for their constituents which require more support and a reduction in numbers would limit the ability of Councillors to carry out their full range of duties.

### **Increase Councillors**

Although there are significant demands placed on the Councillors as a result of the increase to the electorate, and the growing complexity of the role, the substantial financial pressures faced by both the Council and residents would make a decision to increase the number of councillors very difficult. Any increase in Councillor numbers would have to be offset by a further reduction in service provision elsewhere which would be unpalatable for the council and the electorate.

### **Remain the Same – preferred option**

The Council remains the same with 20 wards and 60 councillors. The survey shows that although there are demands placed on Councillors the Council's current function allows for the management of this, with the 3 councillor per ward model, this allows workloads and representational roles to be shared equally and allows support for those ward Members that are also Cabinet Members, Deputy Cabinet Members, Opposition Members, Scrutiny Members, Planning and Licencing Committee Members.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and response numerous challenges will be presented to the Borough which will shape how the Council operates. Councillors play a fundamentally important role, supporting, connecting, and representing residents. That role has become more challenging and more stretching. The capacity of councillors is currently near its limit. However, it is felt that at this point in time resources should be directed to front line services rather than expanding the number of councillors to reduce pressure on their workloads. { The view supported by the majority of Members is that the number of Councillors should remain the same.}