

**COUNCIL**  
**04/11/2020 at 6.00 pm**



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

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

**1 TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Consultation had been undertaken with Group Leaders to vary the order of the agenda due to the changes to the regulations. Councillor Fielding MOVED and Councillor Sykes SECONDED an amendment to Council Procedure 15.5 and proposed that timings would include the extensions, therefore, any members wishing to speak would be granted 4 minutes and 30 seconds and those members with a right of reply 6 minutes and 30 seconds. On being put to the vote, this was AGREED.

Apologies were received from Councillors Akhtar, S. Bashforth, Chadderton, Ibrahim and Williams.

**2 TO ORDER THAT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 9TH SEPTEMBER 2020 BE SIGNED AS A CORRECT RECORD**

Councillor Fielding made an observation and noted that in the minutes of the previous meeting there were three motions submitted under Opposition Business and that the had been the case since he had been Leader and had been the case since 2015 and that this information was available on the Council's website.

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020 be approved as a correct record.

**3 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ANY MATTER TO BE DETERMINED AT THE MEETING**

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

Councillor Chauhan declared a personal interest at Item 9d by virtue of his appointment to the MioCare Board.

Councillor Garry declared a pecuniary interest at Item 9d by virtue of her husband's employment with Greater Manchester Police.

Councillor C. Gloster declared a personal interest at Item 9d by virtue of his receipt of an occupational pension from Greater Manchester Police.

Councillor H. Gloster declared a personal interest at Item 9d by virtue of her husband's receipt of an occupational pension from Greater Manchester Police.

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

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

There were no items of urgent business.

5 **TO RECEIVE COMMUNICATIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL**

The Mayor informed Members that Councillor Chadderton had given birth to a little girl and asked Members to join her in congratulations to Councillor Chadderton.

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

The Mayor advised that two petitions had been received for noting by Council.

People and Place

Reference 2020-10: Request for 3.5 Tonne Access Weight Limit to be Imposed on Cooper Street (Saddleworth West & Lees and Saddleworth North Wards) received on 1 September 2020 with 50 signatures

Reference 2020-11: Petition for a Request for Improvement to Alleyways (St. Mary's Ward) received on 3 September with 80 signatures

**RESOLVED** that the petitions received since the last meeting of the Council be noted.

7 **LEADER'S ANNUAL STATEMENT**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Sean Fielding, delivered his third Annual Statement. The Leader reminded members that the previous year he had reflected on the turbulent political period and a budget decimated by austerity, questions over the Brexit withdrawal agreement and the December general election, but that was now an understatement.

The Leader highlighted the launch of the Town Centre Vision which was a plan to invest in the borough, to boost the local economy and make it a greener, cleaner and better place to live. The pandemic had prompted for these plans to be revisited. The Leader reflected on the loss of loved ones, young people who had missed months of schooling, residents who had lost jobs, spent time furloughed or worried about the future of their employers or businesses. There had been a cycle of confusing

and changing restrictions which had impacted on people's mental and physical health.

The Leader also noted that the outcome of Brexit was still awaited.

The Leader noted the challenge to the Council's revenue budget which after another year of being told by Government to do more with less, the Council were instructed to spend whatever it took to tackle Covid. It was seen across the country that local authorities were on the brink of bankruptcy but the local government finance settlement for 2021/22 had not yet to be seen to help plan with confidence.

The Leader made reference to the lockdown, Government initiatives and re-imposition of restrictions at a local level when case numbers rose without support deemed necessary the first-time round. The Leader also referred to another national lockdown which was due to be start at midnight and to the impact on lives and the economy and the places that would be worst affected was where poverty was the highest. People in areas with a lot of poverty were more likely to live in cramped and overcrowded housing, do frontline key worker jobs that involved interaction with the public and more likely to have other health conditions that increased the risk from Covid. The Leader made reference to the scapegoating of communities and how it had encouraged a rise in racism, and the ignorance as the virus was in all towns and villages.

The Leader referred to the work being done by mutual aid groups, Council officers and the voluntary sector in providing information, support and tests and partners and businesses across the borough who had stepped in to feed young people when the Government had decided not to. The Leader referred to the impact Government intervention could have and highlighted train and bus services as well as the furlough and business support scheme.

The Leader highlighted the need for better social care, the value of a good home and the importance of green space.

The Leader highlighted what could be done locally despite the huge budget challenge and announced the purchase of Spindles which was an investment in a central, strategically important site. The Leader added that permission had been given to confirm that, while Spindles had been bought by the previous owners for £40m, the Council got the whole of the centre for £9.5m. The Leader highlighted the plans which included moving the Tommyfield Market Traders which would bring the retail offer into one space, open a new linear park in the town and build more homes on brownfield sites to protect the greenbelt.

The Leader reflected on the long fight ahead before the brighter future and success which had been seen when the Borough pulled together, people looked out for one another and spoke with one voice. The Leader added that it was important to follow

the guidance, particularly around social distancing and personal hygiene

The Leader referred to the Save Oldham's Services Campaign which highlighted the impact of Covid on the services provided. The letter would be sent to the Prime Minister that evening.



The Leader was proud to lead the Council and was proud of the borough.

**RESOLVED** that the content of the Leader's Annual Statement be noted.

8 **YOUTH COUNCIL**

There were no items submitted by the Youth Council.

9 **QUESTIONS TIME**

a Public Questions

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

The following questions were submitted:

1. Question received from Joshua Charters via email:

"What action is the council taking to deter fly tipping across the borough, specifically in the Medlock Vale ward, where fly tipping has caused many streets to become an eyesore?"

Councillor Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Culture responded that the Council took the matter of fly tipping extremely seriously and had in the last few years increased the staff to enforce and collect fly tipping with the need arose. The district partnerships worked closely with local communities to educate people in doing the right thing which included how to dispose of waste through domestic waste streams, including recycling, to try to minimise the amount of waste left for others to collect. The Council had also streamlined the reporting procedure which could be found on the Council's website to make it easier to report and get information on the progress of how the waste had been dealt with. In all cases where evidence was found, the Council issued a fixed penalty of up to £400 or if this went unpaid, the Council would prosecute. If, as in some cases, those responsible could not be identified, the Council aimed to remove the waste at the earliest opportunity up to a maximum of 20 days. It was assured that Oldham Council was serious when dealing with fly tipping and did all it could within the law to

ensure that those irresponsible people were dealt with in the most appropriate way and would eventually see an end to the blight that such behaviour caused.

2. Question received from Connor Green via email:

“Work has finally started on Saddleworth School though many children who should have attended the new building are now grown up. When is the new school expected to be open for pupils who deserve a much better learning environment than that in Uppermill?”

Councillor Mushtaq, Cabinet Member for Education, responded that the Department for Education (DfE) had advised that Interserve, the main contractor for the new Saddleworth School, were due to handover the school by the start of March 2022.

3. Question received from Mark Rooney via email:

“Remembrance Sunday Services are due to take place soon and it is likely that we will still be under some kind of restrictions on social gatherings because of Covid 19. Has the Council got contingency plans in place to commemorate the war fallen on Remembrance Sunday if services cannot take place in the usual way?”

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that the decision not to hold parades or ceremonies at each memorial this year was not an easy one. The Council looked very carefully as to whether gatherings could be arranged but came to the decision that people’s safety could not be guaranteed. The Council was committed to keeping people safe and doing what could be done to stop the spread of Coronavirus while commemorating Remembrance Sunday. The Council had planned to hold a special Church Service at Oldham Parish Church on Remembrance Sunday with Civic dignitaries, members of the Royal British Legion, Service Units and Organisations in a safe and social distanced environment. The Government’s announcement for the national lockdown with restrictions on gatherings at places of worship had prevented the Council from holding the planned church service. However, the service would still be streamed via the Council’s website. Although not all of the service would be broadcast live, the new arrangements would hopefully ensure that the broadcast was as meaningful and respectful as it would have been if everyone was able to be there in person. Residents were reminded of ‘Remember at Home’ and also that anyone was invited to lay a wreath and pay their own respects at any of the borough’s memorials, but to avoid the time around 11 am on either Remembrance Sunday or Armistice Day and ensure that

everyone adhered to Covid-19 social distancing guidelines. The Council would be lighting the Civic Centre tower and Oldham Parish Church with poppies, as a visual reminder that the sacrifice of so many would not be forgotten. The Council also encouraged people to support the Royal British Legion by visiting their website, make a donation to the Poppy Appeal and download a poppy poster to display at home. The Council knew that people would be disappointed by changes to the Remembrance events this year, but respects could still be paid together in spirit, if not in person. Donations to the Poppy Appeal could be made online by visiting The Royal British Legion's website – [www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk). Additionally, tributes could be added to the online field of remembrance and an A4 Poppy post could be downloaded. Donations made a huge difference to the lives of current and former service personnel, especially as support was given to those from all generations who experienced new hardships during the pandemic. Residents were reminded to take care and more importantly to be safe and hopefully respects could be paid in the usual way next year.

4. Question received from Glyn Williams via email:

“Oldham Council has launched a ‘save our services’ campaign because it says that it has not received the money it needs to deal with covid 19 and might have to make further cuts to recover the money. What kinds of things has Oldham Council had to pay for that it wouldn't otherwise have done for which it wants to be reimbursed?”

Councillor Jabbar, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Green responded that at the end of October, the Government responded to national calls for additional resources for Local Government and provided the Council with £6.508m of additional unringfenced grant. The Council also expected to receive £1.282m as a first tranche of compensation for lost sales, fees and charges income. This had therefore improved the financial position of the Council, but nonetheless there were still financial pressure being experienced that would not otherwise had been the case. This related to both increased expenditure but also lost income. Some examples included:

- Purchase of additional beds and packages of care in care homes;
- Purchase of personal protective equipment;
- Additional costs of home to school transport due to social distancing requirements;
- Additional costs of supporting children with special educational needs and disabilities;

- Reduced income from car parking, school meals, licencing, commercial rents and investments.

Whilst the Government had provided increased support in this financial year, a key concern was that funding intentions for 2021/22 were not clear. There was an estimated £30m budget shortfall for 2021/22. The Council awaited the Government's Spending Review announcement due at the end of the month.

5. Question received from Nick Georgiou via email:

“Oldham certainly needs a mix of new homes including homes for people who want to move up the property ladder without moving away but what is the Council doing to provide affordable housing for those who need it, particularly when the Government definition of affordable is not really affordable to the majority of people in Oldham who are less affluent? The entry point of affordability is set to high I feel and I wondered whether the council could contribute towards the need for assisting the poorest in our communities who wish to remain.”

Councillor Roberts, Cabinet Member for Housing responded that last year 575 new homes were completed in Oldham of which 176 were completed by Registered Providers and the Council and were classed as 'affordable'. The majority of these affordable homes were let at Affordable Rent which was set by government at up to 80% of open market rent. Government rules meant that grant to support affordable new build was only available for homes let at affordable rent or shared ownership. Funding was not currently available to build general needs homes for Social Rent (around 60% of open market value) in Oldham. The new Affordable Homes Programme which runs from 2021 to 2026 did allow for homes to be let at Social Rent in areas such as Oldham, however, the grant levels would only be the same as for homes let at Affordable Rent. Oldham Council was currently building 19 new homes at Primrose Bank and plans were being developed to deliver 48 new wheelchair accessible affordable homes on sites across the borough.

6. Question received from Gareth Evans via email:

“Could you please let me know what is happening with Chapel Road 3G facility in Hollinwood. This facility, is a million pound facility, which has been shut for nearly 3 years now and will run into ruin if not reopened soon. There seems to be no urgency with reopening the facility even though it was a heavily used community facility that was funded out of tax payers money the SRB fund. Whilst this facility is unmanned it leaves itself open to vandalism and worse and a community facility is just

being lost and is a total waste of a resource. I believe that this facility was transferred over to a successful bidder once 18 months ago, but the whole process had to be reperformed at a great expense of money, time and effort for all concerned due to a technicality. I believe that the bids have again been submitted and we are once again way past the deadline with no progress made. Can you please give me some undertaking as to when this decision will be made. My football club used the facility since its inception right up until it closed and we have been nomadic for 3 years playing our football outside the borough. Our football club is one of the oldest in the area and we have been going since 1968. This facility was used by hundreds of children every week from the Oldham Girls league and Junior leagues on Saturday morning and adults on Saturday afternoon and I would please like to know the timescales of it reopening. Originally the bids had to maintain its use as a community facility and the community is desperate for this facility having waited patiently for over 3 years.”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that Oldham Community Leisure had terminated its contractual arrangements to operate the site in September 2017. A sale marketing exercise was undertaken in July 2018 which resulted in a preferred bidder being selected. However, this decision was legally challenged. Therefore, the Council took full account of the challenge and cancelled the tender exercise. Following this, a full review had taken place which considered the site status, the needs of the adjoining school and other users and disposal processes. The pitch was assessed in February 2019 under FA guidelines and was failed principally on account of the poor condition of the pitch. The Council had decided to proceed with the disposal through an open procurement exercise. This would provide the Council with an opportunity to specify the scope and standard of works required to bring the facility back into use. The property had not been remarketed yet and no new bids received. The occupation and use of part of the site by St. Margaret’s School would be regularised. The lease to the school of part of the site and the disposal of the whole site, subject to the lease, would both be subject to the approval of the Secretary of State. The Council was not in control of the timing and process of those consents which would be in the hands of the Secretary of State. It was not possible to predict how long the process would take as the Council was only a facilitator which meant that the Council was unable to give a timetable of when a successful bidder would be able to proceed. Officers would endeavour to expedite matters within the Council’s control and to keep interested parties informed. It was unfortunate that the pitch had reached the end of its useful life which meant



that on safety grounds it had been taken out of use. It was accepted that the loss of the resource was regrettable, but the Council was progressing the matter with all due diligence. It was also acknowledged that the site's status in recent history had caused it to be a target for vandals and as a result, the Council had periodically carried out appropriate repair work.

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

**RESOLVED** that the questions and responses provided be noted.

b Questions to Leader and Cabinet

The Leader of the Main Opposition, Councillor Sykes, raised the following two questions:

Question 1: A future for Oldham's town centre shopping centres?

“My first question tonight concerns the future of the Spindles and Town Square shopping centres. It would be remiss of me firstly to not congratulate the Leader on becoming Oldham Borough's biggest shopkeeper. It is a bold venture to purchase not one, but two shopping centres, in today's retail climate, but I understand the Leader described it as an 'absolute bargain'. Let us all hope so. Many of the units in both the Spindles and the Town Square shopping centres lie empty, some of these for a long time, and consequently many residents are wondering whether this in fact represents a risky purchase. Town centres across Britain are becoming increasingly devoid of customers as many people are today wary of stepping much further than their doorsteps with the ever-present threat of Covid-19, and the pandemic has massively exacerbated the trend of the last decade for shoppers to turn more and more to their keyboards to order goods from mail order stores or the supermarket. The Leader has spoken about moving Tommyfield Market in its entirety into these two shopping centres and relocating hundreds of Council staff above the shops, though I am sure many will be working from home for the foreseeable future, if not forever. These actions to repurpose the shopping centres will cost significant sums of money as will their refurbishment. The Council's relationship with some Tommyfield Market traders has in recent history not been a happy one with some traders feeling abandoned. Can the Leader tonight tell us what discussions Council officers have held in advance of the purchase with the Tommyfield Market traders, what their response has been to the proposals, and what incentives and support this Council will provide them with to make the move? Now the Leader has let us know the purchase cost of £9.5m to Oldham Council Taxpayers. Can he also tell us more about the Administration's plans for these two shopping precincts to make them vibrant once more, whether as a renewed and reduced retail offer, as town centre homes, as a new civic hub, or even as a potential new home for Coliseum?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills thanked the Leader of the Main Opposition for the



constructive challenge on the issue and many of the questions he had raised on behalf of residents which the Leader noted were legitimate concerns for people to raise. The Leader responded that it was a disappointment to walk around Spindles and the Town Square Shopping Centre as it was at the moment with the number of vacant units and that was why the Council's control of the shopping centre allowed something to be done that could stimulate things and drive more footfall into the shopping centre by repurposing it in many of the ways that had already been discussed, moving Tommyfield traders to there and potentially moving many Council staff in there as some staff would still need desks and places to work and some staff liked coming into work because people were social animals and that absence of interaction was something that had taken a toll on many members of staff's mental health so there would be a demand for office space. In terms of refurbishment of the Centre, an allocation was made for purchases within the capital programme and the allocation was significantly larger than the final price of the Spindles Shopping Centre and so there was sufficient give within the capital programme to complete remodelling works within the budget as necessary in order to relocate both Tommyfield and office space and whatever else it might be without creating an additional drag or a need to revisit and expand the capital programme. With regard to discussion with the Tommyfield Market Traders, the Leader noted a meeting with the traders where traders were asked what they considered to be retail core of Oldham Town Centre and the challenges they faced by not being perceived to be within that retail core and were perceived to be on the edge of town. It was the traders themselves who had suggested moving into vacant space in Market Place in Oldham Town Centre and had suggested the former Littlewoods Building which was now Primark as a missed opportunity, but if not there into Spindles itself, so this was a suggestion that had come from a number of market traders in which they were enthusiastic about before the option for purchasing the shopping centre had been explored. There had been discussions since with more traders where they were made aware of the news of the purchase of the shopping centre before it went into the newspapers and heard it directly from the Council rather than the press and that had received some positive comments. There had been a number of comments of concern about the uncertainty and timescale and what it meant for traders in the future but now that the news had settled down, the feedback was that the majority of traders were up for moving and recognised that the current building, which did attract a subsidy from the Council to keep it sustainable and did have a number of backlog maintenance issues in the building which may never be resolved, the traders were up for the move and understood why it was necessary. Now that the Tommyfield Market Traders had certainty over the length of time that they would remain in the building before the they were asked to move to Spindles if they wanted to remain in Oldham, the Council could start to look at the money used to support them in terms of rent or whatever that might be. A question had been around how long support would have been needed, but now that the timescale was known, ways of supporting Tommyfield Market Traders could be looked and to engage with them on the best way to do that.

Question 2: Building on Brownfield Sites



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“I wish to turn to a very topical subject for my next question. A subject heightened in importance by the recent publication of the latest Oldham Plan and the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework proposals, namely the use of brownfield land to build houses upon. I am sure that the Leader will be aware that the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017 require local authorities to prepare, maintain and publish a register of brownfield land. The register should identify previously developed sites in the Borough that are considered as being suitable for housing. The present government supposedly has a target to build 300,000 homes in each of the next five years. A recent study by the countryside charity, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, has found there is enough brownfield land that has been previously developed to provide space to build 300,000 homes in England in each of the next four years. And then some. In fact, enough land to build One Million Three Hundred Thousand homes in all. Given that this administration has now - rightly – adopted a Brownfield First policy and the Oldham public are, rightly, up in arms about any possibility of building on the Green Belt, can the Leader tell me how many homes the sites listed currently on the Council’s Brownfield Register accommodate?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills thanked the Leader of the Main Opposition for the recognition of the Brownfield First Policy. It was a policy that was particularly challenging to put into practice in Oldham because of the remediation costs of many of the brownfield sites and also the complexity of the ownership of the sites. It was something the Council remained committed to because, as with all members, the Council wanted to protect as much of the green belt from development as it could. In terms of the number of homes the Council was required to provide land for as part of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) which was based on, what the Leader felt to be inflated figures to meet the Conservative Party manifesto pledge to build 300,000 homes per year. In terms of the numbers to be constructed on brownfield sites, this was more than 8,000 out of a total of 11,000. So the number of homes in total in the plan was in excess of 11,000 of which fewer than 3,000 would be built on or proposed to be built on land released from the greenbelt. The Leader said that it was clear that the majority of homes that would be built during the period of the GMSF would be on brownfield sites. The Council could look in the future at picking up some of the slack on other brownfield sites that had not necessarily been identified or had been discounted as they were either expensive to remediate or had complex ownership issues, but the plan was a plan for the next 20 years and that was to meet housing requirements as set out by the Conservative Government.

Councillor Hudson, Leader of the Conservative Group asked the following question:

“We are in the middle of the biggest crisis of this century and people of this borough now need to know more than ever where their hard earned money is being spent and how. As the Council faces financial pressures due to Covid-19 and I pay tribute to the Council staff who are going the extra mile to make sure the public services continue as best they can. So will the Council Leader please confirm if the cost of the

purchase of the Spindles Shopping Centre includes all liabilities?”

The Leader of the Council sought clarification on liabilities and Councillor Hudson responded and asked if debts had been included



Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that no money was borrowed to purchase the Spindles Shopping Centre, the purchase price was £9.5m which was less than a quarter of the price the previous owners had paid for it. All appropriate due diligence had been done by Finance staff as was expected at the Council.

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

1. Councillor McLaren asked the following question:

“Telecommunications technology continues to evolve and residents have expressed concerns about masts that are being erected in various parts of the borough, could the cabinet member responsible for planning please advise us what powers the council have to control these types of developments?”

Councillor Roberts, Cabinet Member for Housing, responded that telecommunications development was one of the Government's priorities as set out within Section 10 of the NPPF. As a result, they mostly benefited from permitted development rights, meaning they do not in most cases require planning permission. However, masts were in most part subject to the prior approval of the Council. The issues that the Council could consider under the prior approval were however very limited. They were specifically limited to 'siting and appearance'. All other issues (such as health implications, etc) were outside the prior approval regime. In relation to siting, consideration was usually restricted to whether the siting jeopardised highway safety, e.g. where the structure was to be sited on a footpath. The Council could refuse prior approval on grounds of siting if there was a demonstrable harm to public safety, but not health concerns. Under appearance, the Council would usually consider visual impact but in most cases, as the structures were required to be designed in specific ways, it was difficult to control their appearance. The Council may, however, consider mitigating measures to soften visual impact where appropriate.

2. Councillor Malik asked the following question:

“It has been well documented in the local media that the Market Traders would like a rent holiday for their stalls at Tommyfield. Could the Council tell me if they have granted rent holidays to occupiers of any of their other properties during the crisis?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that many small businesses,

sole traders and independent traders were in contact from across the borough as they were struggling to survive at this very difficult time. The Council continued to lobby the Government for more financial support, but it continued to be very limited and the Council were currently working through the latest guidance from government with regard to the latest support packages for businesses for the second lockdown period which commences tomorrow morning. For consistency and fairness, the Council had not granted rent holidays to any occupiers of any corporate properties, and due to the financial support packages available from the Government to pay rents, etc., the Council would continue to issue rental invoices to all its tenants (not just market traders), with repayment plans being developed for those who were not able to make payments during the lockdown periods.

3. Councillor Taylor asked the following question:

“One of the most important roles of this Council, is our responsibility as corporate parents. Could the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, please tell us how Oldham Council fulfils its role as a corporate parent in ensuring that all young people in our care receive the best possible support as they prepare for adult life?”

Councillor Moores, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People responded that the Corporate Parenting Panel received regular performance data related to young people in and leaving care. The Children in Care Council attended panel meetings and provided valuable feedback. There was a dedicated Independent Reviewing Officer for Leaving Care who focussed on supporting young people transitioning from care into adulthood. There was a commitment to ensure that young people did not leave care until they were ready to do so. Young people could live with their foster carers post 18 under Staying Put. The number of young people who remained with their former foster carers had been high in Oldham in comparison to statistical neighbours. Looked After young people aged 16 – 18 had access to a specialist nurse. Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had agreed to fund a pre-payment prescription for any care leaver up to the age of 25 years who was registered with a GP in Oldham. There was a dedicated looked after team within the Healthy Young Minds (HYM) service in Oldham. In terms of Employment, Education and Training (EET) outcomes for 16 – 18 year olds, Oldham was comparable to statistical neighbours. Oldham had a high number of its care leavers going to university. The Virtual School and Social Services had recently funded and developed a Youth Involvement Project which provided support to care leavers around their pre-employment skills. There was a new Speech and Language therapist role within the Virtual School focused on raising the educational attainment of children and young people looked after with additional needs as they transitioned to further education. Also, for care leavers aged 19 plus there was a dedicated work coach at Get Oldham Working.

The participation of young people and care leavers was promoted. The Youth Service promoted the work of the Children in Care Council and Barrier Breakers. Oldham was successful in its application to the nationally recognised Coram Voice New Belongings Programme. Oldham had 'Mind of My Own' to help children, young people and care leavers to share their views and contribute towards planning for their future. There is also a Young Inspectors Scheme where care experienced young people could quality assure services that helped prepare young people for adulthood. The Cabinet Member also highlighted the Children's Champion scheme.

4. Councillor H. Gloster asked the following question:

“Can the Cabinet Member please tell me how much money per year Oldham Council and its partners are receiving from the European Union, from funds such as the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund?”

Councillor Jabbar, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Green responded that with regard to European Funding, the Council did not receive a fixed sum per year. Instead, funding was allocated to specific projects which spanned several financial years. For projects which were currently in progress, funding had been secured up to 31 March 2023 and totalled £2.568m. Projects currently supported included employment support projects funded by the European Social Fund. In addition, the European Regional Development Fund provided funding for projects which:

- Supported the community energy sector;
- Supported the community food sector;
- Developed new models for business support;
- Explored how local economies could transition to a circular business model, taking waste out of circulation; and
- Designed and piloted new carbon free heating systems for residential properties.

In addition, the Greater Manchester Growth Company was responsible for managing a series of business development and growth projects through the Greater Manchester Business Growth Hub. These are all funded by the current GM European Structural Investment Fund. Oldham Council benefited from a dedicated accounts manager at the Growth Hub that provided pathways for Oldham businesses to access support. The government had announced that the 'Shared Prosperity Fund' would replace EU Structural Investments Funds. Historically, these funds had formed a substantial component of spending on regional economic development in the UK, especially in the poorest regions. As yet there were no details regarding the overall amount of replacement funding available or how funding would be allocated between different parts of the UK and between different projects. The government had, however, highlighted that boosting productivity and tackling inequalities would be two key objectives of the new Shared Prosperity Fund. The Council would need to keep an eye on this and lobby the

government.



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5. Councillor Haque asked the following question:

“We all know that the pandemic had a major impact on the NHS’s ability to provide what were previously routine treatments and services. A particular concern was the diagnosis and treatment of cancer, can the Cabinet Member responsible for health, please tell us what have been put in place to try and prevent the risk of cancer going undiagnosed and where it is diagnosed lifesaving treatment being delayed?”

Councillor Chauhan, Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care responded that there was a significant amount of work going on across Oldham to reduce delays in the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. The Cabinet Member was pleased to say that Oldham had taken significant steps and was overtarget for two-week diagnosis. Two week waiting services continued to do certification which assessed high risk patients to expedite their care and Oldham was already meeting targets in terms of treating and diagnosis of cancer and secondly cancer diagnostics were being prioritised over routine investigations which meant that when cancer was suspected, the patient would be given priority in terms of diagnosis and treatment compared with someone who could wait longer. Unfortunately, those steps had to be taken due to Covid. There were some issues with delays in some parts of diagnostics and that was why Greater Manchester was operating under a new model which involved the provision of cancer surgical hubs at the Christie and Rochdale which meant that those places had been ringfenced to provide diagnosis and treatment so it did not impact on capacity. Primary Care FIT testing had been introduced for all colorectal two-week referrals which ensured that all two-week wait referrals could be triaged more effectively in secondary care by flagging those patients who were presented as higher risk through FIT test results. Teledermatology had been introduced for dermatology referrals which allowed photos to be sent to specialists and as a result more cancers were being picked up and treated in a timely manner.

6. Councillor Leach asked the following question:

“I have read reports about a drastic cut to Government provision of laptops to schools – up to 80% in some cases. Such cuts will clearly hit Northern schools hardest – the schools which have been hardest hit by Covid restrictions. And they will hit the poorest children hardest, those whose education has been most severely disrupted and who live with no access to computers for home learning. Would the Cabinet Member for Education clarify the position in Oldham? Schools now have a legal duty to provide remote education for isolating children. Will there be many children and young people in Oldham who cannot access on-line teaching?”

Councillor Mushtaq, Cabinet Member for Education, responded

that the DfE scheme for children and young people with social workers delivered devices to schools in July. Since then Oldham schools with Covid-19 cases where pupils have had to isolate had been able to order the additional devices. A number of schools had already received these, so the cuts in allocations would not impact on these schools. Oldham was part of a pilot for access to BT Wi-Fi where access continued until the end of December. If there were issues with access to devices and internet connectivity for families, then the Council would work with DfE and providers to resolve these. Oldham schools had provided learning activities for children and young people to complete at home throughout the pandemic. These had been a combination of online and hard copy resources. Where necessary, schools had posted or hand delivered hard copies to ensure the children and young people could still access the bespoke resources. The recent legal duty to provide remote education for isolating children still enabled this blended approach to continue to take place.

7. Councillor Hulme asked the following question:

“I welcome the wonderful way Oldham businesses, local residents, charities and the Council have come together to support Marcus Rashford’s campaign to ensure no child goes hungry, after the Government shamefully refused to provide Free School Meal vouchers during the October half term. Disgusting comments have been made defending this decision, with one Tory stating that this would mean ‘nationalising children’ another saying that any business who provides free meals should no longer receive Government support and one MP even saying that these vouchers would be going to ‘crack dens and brothels’. Boris Johnson has claimed that the Government has given local authorities funding in the form of grants to specifically pay for these meals. Please can the leader confirm if the Government conditions for the grant said that it could be used for free school meal vouchers at the October half term?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that no funding had been given directly to the Council specifically identified for school meals, however, the Council was concerned about the issue and provided funding for food support to activity providers where there were high levels of need. Oldham had spent more than £3,300 on food during October half term week working with partners who provided activities in school holidays and provided funding for healthy food alongside these activities. Some examples of the work included:

- 20 families in South Chadderton received food each day which included a breakfast pack, lunch pack and tea pack plus a cooking live session during the week with a virtual ‘super hero’ academy.
- Vulnerable youngsters attended a multi-sport camp at Hathershaw College and each had received a free packed lunch each day



The Council also liaised with a number of local businesses and organisations (for example Oldham Athletic, Mahdlo, the Muslim Society) who provided food and the Council helped signpost these via social media and the free school meals webfinder. The Council also provided £50K to support Oldham's three foodbank centres (The Three Crowns, South Chadderton Methodist Church and the Salvation Army in Shaw).



8. Councillor Williamson asked the following question:

“Please can the Cabinet Member tell me how this Council will be responding to the Government new KickStart jobs scheme for under-25s given the record number of young people in this borough on benefits? Can the Cabinet Member tell me how many jobs will be established through this initiative by this Council and by Oldham Community Leisure, Unity and MioCare?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that the KickStart scheme was similar to the successful Labour designed Future Jobs Fund, a scheme launched in 2009 as a response to the economic crash of 2008. The Council had maintained this scheme in some form since 2013 with 80% of citizens progressing into sustained employment. The KickStart scheme would be overseen by the GMCA KickStart Board to make sure the value of the programme was maximised and an ambitious target of 16,500 placements to be created had been set. DWP and the Oldham family were hoping to create 1600 – 2000 placements for Oldham's young people. This would be managed by DWP, but the Council intended to fully play its part by creating internal opportunities and playing a key role in many external opportunities, including creation and increasing quality. A key concern was how the scheme would operate under lockdown. The scheme required each employer to commit to a minimum of 30 placements but the Council wanted these to be high quality good jobs which were now under pressure due to the national lockdown measures. As a consequence, Team Oldham (Council, MioCare, Unity, CCG) had committed to a minimum of 50 opportunities in the first phase. In addition, Get Oldham Working had registered as an 'intermediary' and was working with local employers to secure the minimum threshold of 30 placements across local employers. To date, the Get Oldham Working team had spoken to 75 Oldham based employers which equated to 200 opportunities, however, there was an issue that some of these were not good quality and would not be progressed by the Council. It was important that this was not just a 'free labour' scheme. The team was targeting key growth sectors such as health and social care, education (schools), digital and finance, manufacturing and construction. The Get Oldham Working team was therefore screening all opportunities and would enhance the scheme by providing in work support across both elements to support the kickstart workers in work and to progress them into sustained work. It was believed around 1,650 would be created over the next 13

months in Oldham through differing intermediaries regardless of roles but it was important to stick to those with high quality and meaningful opportunities.



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

**RESOLVED** that the questions and responses provided be noted.

**NOTE:** Councillor Chauhan left the meeting during this item.

c

Questions on Cabinet Minutes

Council were requested to note the minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on the undermentioned dates and to receive any questions on any items within the minutes from members of the Council who were not members of the Cabinet, and receive responses from Cabinet members. The minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020, 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and urgent key decisions taken from 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019 to 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020 were submitted.

Members raised the following question:

Councillor Ahmad asked the following question related to Cabinet, 24 August 2020 (reconvened 28 August 2020), Items 9 and 21 – Creating A Better Place:

“I can see that the Cabinet has reviewed Creating a Better Place, including the Oldham Town Centre Vision, and agreed which projects can go ahead in the current financial circumstances. Personally, I believe it to be fantastic news that the Council have secured ownership of the Spindles shopping centre. It is unfortunate that the price cannot be released as I am sure the Council would not have bought the centre had it not been a good deal. It is clear that some of the Council’s detractors are exploiting the understandable lack of understanding of complex local government finance and the distinction between capital and revenue budgets for cynical political gain. Can the relevant cabinet member explain why the Spindles purchase does not affect the Council’s day to day budget and the ability to employ staff and deliver essential services?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that the distinction between capital and revenue expenditure was not understood by the public, but understandably so as it was quite unique to Local Government. The majority of members did understand that distinction but there were some who did not or pretended that they didn’t in order to make a political point. As many councillors would know, local government was forced to observe a distinction between capital and revenue expenditure in local authorities. Capital was money that could only be used for one-off costs such as the purchase of a building like Spindles whilst revenue was to be used for ongoing costs such as the payment of staff wages. Therefore the purchase of Spindles Shopping Centre from the capital budget had not used funds that could have otherwise been used to mitigate the impact of the cuts the Council faced to the

revenue budget and paid staff wages or ran day-to-day services. As the Leader had confirmed in his statement earlier, the Council had secured the centre for £9.5m which was less than a quarter of what the previous owners had paid. In the intervening period since the Leader of the Minority Opposition's question, there had been a rumour that the Council had taken on debt liabilities from the previous owners of the centre. The Leader noted that this was a rumour and that no debt had been taken on and the building had been bought for £9.5m.

**RESOLVED that:**

1. The minutes of the Cabinet meetings held on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020, 28<sup>th</sup> September 2020 and the urgent key decisions taken from 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019 to 26<sup>th</sup> October 2020 be noted.
2. The question and response provided be noted.

d Questions on Joint Arrangements

Council was asked to note the minutes of the following Joint Authority and Partnership meetings and the relevant spokespersons to respond to questions from Members.

The minutes of the Joint Authorities and Partnerships were submitted as follows:

Greater Manchester Transport Committee	14 August 2020
Greater Manchester Waste and Recycling Committee	22 July 2020
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	2 September 2020 25 September 2020
AGMA Executive Board	31 July 2020 9 September 2020
Police, Fire and Crime Panel	20 July 2020
Commissioning Partnership Board	23 July 2020 24 September 2020
MioCare Board	23 July 2020

Members raised the following questions:

1. Councillor Murphy asked the following question on the Greater Manchester Waste and Recycling Committee minutes, 22 July 2020, Minute WRC 20/40, Communications and Behavioural Change Action Plan Progress:  
 "Members may recall that at a meeting of Oldham Council in July 2016, the Liberal Democrats brought a motion asking for a local bin app which was almost unanimously supported across the Chamber. The motion was approved by Council and it was pleasing that two years later the then Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority introduced the R4GM app. The R4GM bin app for mobile phones contained information such as 'Where's my nearest...?', 'When's my bin collected?', 'What do I do with...?', 'What can I recycle at home?' and a Contact Us. I have used the app and found it really helpful and the feedback I have received from local residents, when I have directed them to it, has been positive. When we are looking to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill the app can only be a good thing. It



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was quick and easy to use, and the information you needed was at your fingertips. We need to use such technology in our fight to increase 're-use' and 'recycling' and therefore save cash for much need community projects. I understand that GMCA are looking at procuring a new app – therefore, could I ask the relevant Cabinet member for GMWRC spokesperson firstly if they were aware of the decommissioning of the app; secondly to support the procurement of the new app and thirdly when can we expect the new app to go live?"

Councillor Ur-Rehman, Council spokesperson for the Greater Manchester Waste and Recycling Committee responded that it was agreed at the GMCA Waste Committee on 12 March 2020 that the R4GM app was to be decommissioned and that he was aware of this. The app had ceased, however, all of the information on the app could be found on the Oldham Council and Recycle for Greater Manchester website. The procurement of a new app was fully supported. GMCA had not provided definitive timelines in terms of the date for the app, but the Council has asked for information and this will be forwarded to the elected member as soon as the information was available.

2. Councillor Roberts asked the following question submitted by Councillor S. Bashforth on the Greater Manchester Combined Authority minutes, 2 September 2020, GMCA 144/20, Approval of the Variation to the Working Well Work and Health Programme Contract:

"The working well work and health programme has been expanded to support those in Greater Manchester who have recently become unemployed. What was the previous focus of this programme and will its ability to deliver on its original objectives be compromised by this expansion?"

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that the Working Well Work and Health Programme was not just something that was featured in the GMCA minutes but was part of the Leader's brief on GMCA regarding Work, Skills and Digital. The Working Well Work and Health Programme was something that was outperforming its requirements in the contract and these requirements were to support those who either recently found themselves unemployed or were at risk of finding themselves unemployed due to vulnerabilities they experienced themselves. It was a comprehensive package of support that not only got people back to work or supported them to remain in work but provided mental health and wellbeing support too. It was a holistic package and it was nationally leading in its own way. As it was overperforming it had not been considered unreasonable to expand the scope given the challenges more people were likely to face because of the Covid-19 pandemic and there had been sufficient resource put into the contract and the provider so that the work they originally carried out around those who were the most vulnerable at falling out of the labour market could still continue and deliver on the same objectives whilst the additional stream of work to support those who had been affected by Covid

was ongoing so there did not need to be any concern that the expansion of the Working Well Work and Health contract would have a detrimental impact on its original piece of work.



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3. Councillor Harrison asked the following question on the Greater Manchester Combined Authority minutes, 25 September 2020, GMCA 164/20, Local Growth Deal (1, 2 and 3) – Six Monthly Progress Update and Expenditure Approvals:  
“It is good news that funding of up to £1.355 million of growth deal funding has been approved for regeneration projects in Oldham Town Centre. This is just one of many successful external funding bids that will support investment and regeneration in our Borough. Could it be confirmed what this particular grant is being used for?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that the funding was part of the Growth Deal 3 allocation of £6 million for the Accessible Oldham Town Centre scheme which was a programme of interventions that would improve connectivity to and around Oldham Town Centre, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists and supported the regeneration of the town. The £1.355 million approved by GMCA would be released to Transport for Greater Manchester and allowed Oldham to recover the money it had invested so far in developing the Accessible Oldham Programme, subject to meeting certain conditions which the Council was on with. The funding also covered the cost of works already carried out on Retiro Street, improvements underway on Hunters Lane and the junction improvement at Waterloo Street / Rhodes Bank, which would see new traffic lights installed and crossing facilities provided for pedestrians with work due to start before Christmas. The remainder of the £6 million was earmarked for public realm works around Albion Street / Henshaw Street and for a new access junction into the Southlink development site and would be released by GMCA at a later date once the detail of these schemes had been firmed up.

**RESOLVED that:**

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

10

**PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE OLDHAM REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE**

Council noted an overview of support that the Council and its statutory safeguarding partners were providing to the ongoing independent review into historical safeguarding practice in Oldham which was launched in November 2019. Due to the independent nature of the review, an update on the current lines of enquiry or any findings could not be given until the review was completed and the Independent Review Team had reported. This was expected towards the end of the calendar year.

In November 2019, Oldham Council and Oldham Safeguarding Partnership had commissioned an independent review into historical safeguarding practice in Oldham. The review was established in response to allegations and concerns related to child sexual exploitation (CSE) raised by members of the public on social media. The Leader of Oldham Council and the Chair of Oldham's Safeguarding Partnership wrote jointly to the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Greater Manchester Safeguarding Standards Board requesting a dedicated investigation into the effectiveness of the response to historic CSE in Oldham be carried out by the existing Independent Review Team who were already delivering an assurance exercise into Greater Manchester CSE practice.

The Independent Review Team, Malcolm Newsam CBE, a child-care expert with extensive experience driving improvement in children's services, and Gary Ridgeway, previously a Detective Superintendent and Head of Public Protection, were currently undertaking a review of the practice of Oldham Council and its partner safeguarding agencies in response to allegations of child sexual exploitation.

The review would focus on historical allegations related to Child Sexual Exploitation and would consider whether the Council, along with its statutory safeguarding partners, provided an appropriate response to protect children vulnerable to or known to be victims of child sexual exploitation. The scope of the review included, but was not limited to:

- The Council and its statutory safeguarding partners response to allegations of CSE between 2011 and 2014 with particular reference to concerns expressed on social media that agencies were aware of the abuse, failed to respond appropriately and covered up any failings.
- The risk posed to children from local shisha establishments during the period 2011 – 2014;
- The nature and extent to which adults had inappropriate access to children and young people resident in children's homes in Oldham during 2011 – 2014;
- The nature and extent of the use of local taxi services to access children and young people for the purposes of CSE during 2011 – 2014;
- Allegations or concerns expressed related to specific cases; and
- The cases of known offenders previously employed by Oldham Council and the extent to which the historical actions and employment records had been investigated by the Council.

Additionally, where it was considered necessary to inform the overall purpose of the review, the review team had, and would continue to consider matters outside of the 2011 – 2014 timeframe.

The full terms of the reference were appended to the report.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) provided overall governance of the review and oversight was provided by a GM Steering Group which met regularly and was chaired by the Deputy GM Mayor. GMCA provided administrative support to the Review Team.



The report provided a progress update and the support provide by the Council to the Review Team.

Question received from Councillor H. Gloster:

“Prior to the commissioning of the enquiry in November 2019 were the Leaders of the three political groups on the Council consulted, were they all aware of the proposed scope and terms of reference for the enquiry, and did they all agree to the enquiry being commissioned on this basis?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that a meeting was held with the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council and Group Leaders to share and discuss the scope and Terms of Reference prior to the commencement of the review. The terms of reference were freely available on the Council’s website.

Question received from Councillor Sykes:

“How long have similar reviews taken to complete, so that we can have some idea of when the final findings are likely to be reported?

How will they be shared, and will there be opportunity for elected members to discuss them with the report tabled as a specific agenda item at a future meeting of the Full Council? Although the years 2011 – 2014 were chosen for the focus of the enquiry, ‘the Review Team have, and will continue to consider matters outside of the 2011 – 2014 timeframe’. Why were the years 2011 – 2014 specifically chosen for the focus of this enquiry? How many witnesses have been interviewed about events outside of this period, and which years do these events span?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that it was very difficult to give an accurate timescale given every review was different in scope and scale. A progress review was expected to be completed by the Review Team by December 2020. Following this progress review, the Council expected to be advised by the Review Team of the timescale for any additional work that needed to be completed. The findings of the Review would be published and made available to Members of the Council and the Public. This would include being tabled at a future Full Council meeting and Oldham Safeguarding Partnership Board and any other relevant meeting or committee. The period 2011 – 2014 was determined to be the most appropriate timescale to ensure that the issues and allegations being circulated online could

be addressed. However, the Review Team were not limited to the period 2011-2014 and could investigate any other specific concerns they identified outside that time period. The Council was aware from information requested that the Review Team had used this flexibility and had considered evidence dating back to 2006 and as recently as 2017. As this was an independent enquiry, the Council was not aware of the total number of witnesses interviewed by the Review Team.

Question received from Councillor C. Gloster:

“How were the members of the Review team selected; specifically, what was the process of selection, what factors favoured the selection of Mr. Newsham and Mr. Ridgeway, and how was Oldham Council involved in the process?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that Oldham Council and its Safeguarding Partnership had not been involved in the selection of the members of the Review Team. The Independent Review Team comprised Malcolm Newsam CBE, previously a Director of Children’s Services for a number of Local Authorities, with extensive experience driving improvement in children’s services and Gary Ridgeway, previously a Detective Superintendent and Head of Public Protection. The Review Team were already in place having been commissioned by GMCA to conduct the Manchester review which had culminated in the publication of a report entitled ‘An Assurance Review of Operation Augusta’ published in January 2020.

Question received from Councillor Al-Hamdani:

“The national Home Office-sponsored Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) has recently concluded its hearings of the sexual exploitation of children and young people by organised networks.

The Liberal Democrat Group wrote to IICSA to ask if it would actively engage with the investigation in Oldham. IICSA replied that they were examining six other areas across the UK which had been chosen to represent a range of sizes, demographics and institutional practices, and it had not seen it necessary to liaise with the Oldham investigation. We believe that as the Oldham enquiry is looking at similar issues to the IICSA investigation, it would be common sense to share outcomes, so that any conclusions that applied could be implemented quickly and effectively to enhance the safety and protection of children and young people in Oldham and elsewhere in the country. Can the Leader or Cabinet Member please provide me with the reassurance tonight that we will make every effort to work with IICSA to make it so?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that Oldham



Council had been in contact with the Home Office who were aware of the Oldham Review. The Leader assured that the Council would do all that it could to ensure that the learning from the Review was shared with IICSA. The Council would also bring learning from the IICSA to Oldham Council and the Safeguarding Partnership.

Question received from Councillor Hamblett:

“The progress report acknowledges the difficulties for survivors of talking to the Review Team about their experiences and recognises that a sensitive approach is required. It does not provide any information on what follow-up support is made available for them after their interview. Could you provide any information on what support is made available to those survivors once they have completed their interviews?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that support for any survivors of CSE identified by the Review had been made available from St. Mary’s Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Manchester. The centre offered a wide range of support and aftercare for victims which included ongoing counselling.

Question received from Councillor Harkness:

“The terms of reference specify that there will be a first Gateway Review, expected at the end of this year. Will this specifically identify any additional key lines of enquiry that it is recommended should be pursued to provide further reassurance? If someone wanted to ensure that this additional assurance was delivered, or to ensure that any additional lines of investigation were covered, how would they respond at that stage?”

Councillor Fielding, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills responded that Gateway Review was an opportunity for the Review Team to share their progress in reviewing the evidence. At this point, the Team would highlight if they felt they needed to investigate any further matters before reporting their findings. It was not the best opportunity for any additional lines to be fed in by others. The Leader urged that anyone with concerns or allegations that they felt needed to be included to contact the Review Team directly.

**RESOLVED that:**

1. The ongoing work to support the Independent Review be noted.
2. The questions and responses provided be noted.

Councillor Shah MOVED and Councillor Fielding SECONDED a report which provided an update on how the Council and its partners continued to monitor and manage the impact of Covid-19 in Oldham.



Covid-19 was still circulating in the UK and a rise in cases continued across Oldham every day. The report summarised activity and demonstrated how the Council and its partners collectively managed and prevented the spread of Covid-19 across the Borough's communities following the implementation of new restrictions.

Over the past several months Covid-19 cases had risen in Oldham, across Greater Manchester and nationally. As cases continued to rise across the UK, central government had introduced three-tier coronavirus alert levels. On Friday, 23 October Oldham, with the rest of Greater Manchester, was placed into local Covid alert very high (Tier 3) restrictions. Oldham's response had been broken into four key themes: Test, Trace, Enforcement & Compliance, and Community Engagement and Communications.

The ongoing aim of Oldham Council's local testing approach was to test at least 500 people/100,000 a day and to have testing sites operating in all districts of the borough each week. Testing continued at a higher daily average than Greater Manchester and national counterparts. A data and intelligence led mapping exercise had been undertaken to identify suitable local testing sites and was reviewed by the Testing Bronze Group.

The Council recognised that Test and Trace was both a key part of the immediate response to Covid-19 and a feature of the locality system for the foreseeable future. Alongside other Greater Manchester Authorities, the Council had invested in a Greater Manchester Contact Tracing Hub which handled complex cases and situations referred on from the national contact tracing service.

The report also outlined information related to Enforcement and Compliance and Community Engagement and Communications. The report also outlined the financial implications of the pandemic on the Council, the allocation of grants, specific Tier 3 support and business support at Tier 2.

Question received from Councillor Williamson:

"The enforcement of the mandatory wearing of face coverings in supermarkets and shops. Whilst the wearing of face coverings has been mandatory in supermarkets and shops since July 24, there are still many instances of customers not wearing them whilst shopping. Some customers are entitled to be exempted from wearing them on medical grounds, but the majority are not. I know that unions and the British Retail Consortium have expressed concerns over the safety of staff asking customers to wear masks, so clearly it is not reasonable to expect shop staff

to take sole responsibility for enforcing the law. Can the Cabinet Member therefore please answer a two-part question? What we as a local authority are doing to encourage retailers to promote the take up of the Sunflower Scheme whereby customers with a medical condition are issued with a lanyard identifying their exemption? How this authority is working with retailers and with the Police to enforce compliance and to fine those individuals who are not exempted and who continue to flout the rules?"

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that the Council was working closely with the Police who were the enforcing authority for the wearing of facemasks and had undertaken joint visits to engage with supermarket operators. In addition, the wider approach to national chains had been taken up at a Greater Manchester level and patrols had noted a significant improvement in the number of customers now wearing masks in supermarkets. There was still work to do – and should Members be aware of or saw any particular failures they should be reported to the Police. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response confirmed that the approach with which the police approach customers was to first understand if an individual has an exemption from wearing a mask where this was evidenced, this was accepted in line with current Government guidance and could be as simple as an exemption card, badge or even a home-made sign.

Question received from Councillor Harkness:

"Covid outbreaks in schools – Regrettably there have been outbreaks of Covid-19 in clusters in certain schools in Oldham. Can the Cabinet Member please tell update Council on which schools and how many children and staff have been affected to date? And can the Cabinet Member also tell me how these outbreaks are being managed to ensure the safety of children and staff? And how this is impacting on the education of our children?"

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that Oldham schools had been open for children of key workers and vulnerable pupils throughout lockdown and fully reopened at the start of September. School and council staff worked closely to ensure that schools opened as safely as possible by meeting the guidelines set down by the Department for Education. Attendance at the start of September was very strong with figures above the national and regional averages. As schools started to be notified of positive cases, pupils and staff had followed advice from Public Health to isolate and attendance had dropped below the averages. Most Oldham schools had now had positive cases which had resulted in bubbles of pupils and staff isolating. In recent weeks an average 4,750 pupils and 130 staff had been isolating each day. Council teams in Public Health and Education were in direct communication with Headteachers and continued to support them with preventative

infection control and case management advice to ensure provision was safe. If pupils were required to isolate from schools, then there was an obligation for online learning to be provided.



Question received from Councillor Al-Hamdani:

“Support for businesses during Lockdown ahead of new trading arrangements with EU – Given that the earliest date that this lockdown will end is only eight days ahead of the new trading arrangements with the EU come in, for businesses – in particular those which are closed during this lockdown – has there been any indication from the Government of when they will be making an announcement on this, and whether they will provide additional support for businesses which have been forcibly closed, especially if lockdown is extended? “

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that the new trading arrangements with the EU would begin on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021. Trade negotiations were ongoing but there were significant issues. Concerns persisted within the business sector related to exporting/importing issues and border controls. It was clear that the focus for the business community had been on managing the impact of Covid-19 whilst the Government continued to negotiate a deal. The Council had been proactive in the promotion of the Business Growth Hub Brexit support programme which outlined 10 steps businesses needed to take and the opportunity to discuss issues with an advisor. The Council was supporting the GMCA Economic Resilience Group which had focussed Covid related issues but was also considering the impact of Brexit. The impact of both Coronavirus and Brexit would be a recession. Councils and GMCA were looking to develop/implement a recession package for businesses. With regard to Covid related support, the Government held a live policy update on 4<sup>th</sup> November to outline what financial packages would be available for local businesses. It was expected that this would include a grant payment for the four-week national lockdown (potentially between £1,334 and £3,000 per four weeks of closure for businesses with a rateable value). The controversial Job Support Scheme had been suspended with the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme being extended until December (increasing from 67 to 80% of salary from a maximum of £2,083 now up to a maximum of £2,500).

Question received from Councillor Hamblett:

“Reduction of essential services for patients – Due to Covid-19 restrictions, access to the services customarily provided by GPs and district nurses have become more limited. GP surgeries are closed, and consultations are often made over the telephone or by video link, technology which some patients find hard to access. Some services provided in the home, such as district nurses providing B6 injections and chiropodists visiting elderly patients, appear to have disappeared. My worry is that the longer this goes on the more harm will be caused to patients.

Can the Cabinet Member please tell me how this is impacting on the health of patients, and in the management of their conditions, and what active steps local health services are taking to ensure all patients, particularly those who are elderly, vulnerable or have chronic health conditions, can access the essential services they need?”



Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that in March 2020 there was a national directive issued that all GP practices should move to a 'triage first' model in order to protect other patients and stem the spread of Covid-19. This meant that where possible every patient would be screened for Covid-19 before attending and, where appropriate, should be treated remotely, either by phone or digital consultation. GP Practices were also instructed to remain open for the delivery of face-to-face where a condition could not be treated remotely or the patient could not use the technology for any reason. All patients who could manage digital solutions were encouraged to do so which allowed more telephone and face-to-face capacity for those who could not. By way of hard data, the latest published data as at the end of August 2020 showed that appointments in General Practice had continued to rise to pre-Covid-19 levels during September and October. While there had been a significant shift towards online and telephone consultations, the data showed that face-to-face consultations were still taking place across all practices and the number of home visits remained relatively unchanged to pre-Covid-19 levels. During the height of the first wave of the pandemic General Practice supported colleagues in community nursing performing roles such as B12 injections usually performed by community teams. It remained the case that any patient or their representative who had queries about accessing care should contact their registered practice in the first instance or the Clinical Commissioning Group team who would be able to assist. Members were reminded that General Practices were also now focused on the restoration of routine chronic condition management and prevention services which included vaccination, screening and immunisation, contraception and health checks. This year's flu vaccination commenced in late September and as at the 21<sup>st</sup> October, 60% of people aged over 65 in Oldham had received the flu vaccination.

Question received from Councillor H. Gloster:

“False Positives – A study released in September by Oxford University's Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine and the University of the West of England found that the polymerase chain reaction or PCR test, which is widely used to test Covid-19, can result in the detection of a large proportion of false positives. According to Oxford University's Professor Carl Heneghan, this is a situation in which the presence of 'harmless virus particles which (a person's) immune system has efficiently dealt with' results in a positive test, despite that person being no longer infectious. Previous reports have also indicated that the presence of antibodies in a person after infection can also similarly lead to a false positive test. Given these situations

would result in a greater number of positive tests being recorded than actual infectious persons, can the Cabinet Member please tell me if the PCR test is exclusively being carried out in Oldham's testing centres, whether we know what the percentage of 'false positives' is, and whether any other secondary test to PCR is carried out to verify whether someone is actually infectious?"

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that the Local Testing Sites and Mobile Testing Units currently in operation all used PCR tests. A PCR Test could tell if someone had the virus, however, it did not tell if someone was infectious. This was not the same as a 'false positive'. The term 'false positive' was used when a test incorrectly identified someone as having the virus, rather than a term associated with the level infectivity. Research published in the British Medical Journal suggested that the proportion of false positives from PCR tests for Coronavirus was in the region of 2%. This figure would also vary depending on the characteristics of the population tested and did not tell if someone was likely to pass the virus onto others. People were more likely to pass the infection to others if they had symptoms and it was known that approximately 90% of people who tested positive at local testing sites reported having symptoms when they booked their test. Therefore, it was likely that a high proportion who tested positive were infectious, however, secondary tests were not available to confirm this. Understanding whether someone was still infectious required additional analysis in laboratories and this was not currently part of the national testing programme for tests undertaken at local testing sites.

Question received from Councillor C. Gloster:

"The Employment of Covid Marshals – The Prime Minister announced on 9 September that an 'army' of COVID marshals would be employed nationwide to check that businesses are taking the contact details of customers and that social distancing is enforced enforce rules. Then he announced that the marshals will have no new powers and that local authorities will not receive any new money and assistance to employ them. Can the Cabinet Member tell me if Oldham Council has engaged any 'marshals', and, if so, how many and what their effectiveness has been?"

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that Oldham had adopted a 3 stage approach to compliance and enforcement – initially working with communities through door-to-door engagement; targeted communications through community networks; and information and intelligence sharing. Follow up action supported through the additional funding enabled additional patrols which enabled wider engagement through engagement with the public to promote the necessity of social distancing and wearing face coverings; engagement with businesses and information monitoring of rules compliance

(signage and physical compliance); collation of intelligence of non-compliance; information and intelligence sharing; and working closely with other multi-agency partners (Police, Community Safety, Environmental, etc). This work provided a sound basis for informed and focussed enforcement through joint police and Council officer visits, particularly over evenings and weekends.



Question received from Councillor Sykes:

“Garden visits to care homes – Can the Cabinet Member please clearly define what form of support there is likely to be for our care homes after we enter Lockdown and will all residents of care homes continue to be able to receive regular virtual / garden visits or telephone calls from their relatives?”

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that there had been a significant amount of support in place for care homes and their residents since the outbreak of the pandemic and the movement into Tier 3 would not require a change to the support provided. The care home situation was reviewed on a daily basis and any indications which suggested enhanced support was required either for any individual care home or across the sector were immediately addressed. The following information summarised the support in place and the arrangements with regard to visiting:

- Support was being offered by partners across the system to care homes, to ensure they could best care the most vulnerable people in these difficult times. This included specialist GP support, including the provision of medical equipment, visits from the multi-disciplinary Supporting Treatment in Care Homes team (STICH) to offer practical nursing support; GP-led seminars on a range of topics; a care home liaison service for specialist mental health support; the introduction of a frailty app for additional support, a weekly newsletter to care homes with key information and advice; daily sit-rep calls to gain a ‘real time’ picture and a weekly Care Home Support Group meeting which consisted of senior clinical, social care, commissioning and quality representatives from across the system to identify priority areas which required rapid intervention and support.
- The Infection Control Grant had been implemented by DHSC to support care homes and other care providers to put in place effective measures to minimise the risk of infection. Oldham’s allocation was £2.3m in Round 1 and £2.1m in Round 2.
- A system wide risk assessment and individual risk assessment had been developed regarding care home admissions. This had involved all parts of the system including the hospital and formed the basis of the approach to care home admissions.
- All care homes were following the Government’s Care Home Support Plan, which advised a period of 14-day

isolation on admission and works on the basis of an assumption of Covid positivity.

- In line with national hospital discharge requirements, all patients being discharged to care homes were tested for Covid-19 prior to discharge. In addition, staff were tested every 7 days and residents every 28 days.
- On 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020, DHSC stated a requirement to put in place 'designated settings' for Covid positive individuals who would have ordinarily entered care homes. The purpose was to provide care and support while people go through their 14-day isolation period and the arrangements were in the process of being finalised in Oldham.
- Whilst no care home visiting (other than essential visits by visiting professionals and visits by relatives in exceptional circumstances such as end of life) had been taking place in Oldham, from Friday 16 October closed window visiting was reintroduced and guidance issued to care homes to enable them to facilitate this in a safe way. Care homes had also been requested to start to plan for more progressive visiting and submit their risk assessments for review. Further guidance and a visiting framework for Greater Manchester was imminent and care homes would be worked with to implement this in a safe way. With regard to other forms of contact, care homes had been provided with smart phones and given access to schemes which offered free ipads and these were widely used to support video calls with families and friends.

Question received from Councillor Murphy:

“GP lists closed to new patients – Can the Cabinet Member also help to dispel any misinformation that GP surgeries have closed their lists to patients due to the pandemic who wish to change GP's or have recently moved?”

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response reminded members that all GP practices in Oldham were and had remained open throughout the Covid pandemic. Lists for new registrations had also remained open and there had been no change in rules regarding patient registrations. Any person who moved house or wished to change GP practice for any other reason could register at the practice of their choice provided that they lived within the agreed practice boundary. If any person experienced any challenges in respect of registration they should contact the Clinical Commissioning Group who would be able to provide advice and liaise with GP practices if required.

Question received from Councillor Garry:

“I would like some clarification, if any can be given, regarding the Covid-19 tests carried out by the NHS and the Covid-19 tests being carried out by private companies such as SERCO.



The Government has made much of its 'World-Beating Covid-19 contact tracing application but now we hear that the app itself cannot handle NHS or Public Health England results. The app itself returns to the following message: - 'If your test took place in a Public Health England lab or NHS hospital, or as part of national surveillance testing conducted by the Office for National Statistics, test results cannot be linked with the app whether they're positive or negative.' If this is true then the one thing that the Government's contact tracing app isn't, is a National Health Service app. It would appear the only data it can hold is that provided by Private organisations such as SERCO. This raises a question regarding the doorstep testing that the Council has recently been organising. Do we know if that data is being picked up by the SERCO app or not?"

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that most tests for Covid-19 were undertaken under Pillar 1 or Pillar 2 of the national testing strategy. Pillar 1 tests were those undertaken in NHS hospitals and through Public Health England laboratories, and Pillar 2 tests were those undertaken in the community and handled by commercial laboratories. The vast majority of tests conducted in Oldham were Pillar 2, which included all tests at local testing sites and mobile testing units as well as those undertaken through door-to-door testing.

Question received from Councillor Phythian:

"Unfortunately for the people of Oldham and the country the Conservative Government have failed to provide a track and trace system that is fit for purpose, this is not helped by groups and individuals who persist in posting misleading or divisive information on social media. I have been very concerned recently to see such posts from people who say they are proud of Oldham. Post such as 'The top two Corona-Virus hotspots in Oldham. Werneth & Alexander. Expect another police crackdown in Shaw, Chadderton, St. James's, Medlock Vale, Royton and Saddleworth then. Plus extra patrols outside The Granby in Uppermill.' This was posted on the 24<sup>th</sup> October, and relates to MSOA data which is clearly being used in a selective manner to try and stimulate division at time when we should be pulling together. The people of Oldham need clear and accurate information to help them understand how the corona virus is spreading and what steps have been put in place to try and reduce infection rates. They definitely do not need information from keyboard warriors who fail to either understand or are unwilling to give the full facts. Could the relevant Cabinet member, please tell us what if anything can be done, to prevent individuals and groups from posting misleading and divisive information on social media, could you also tell us how can residents ensure they are accessing accurate and up to date information?"

Councillor Shah, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response responded that Coronavirus was one of the greatest challenges – if not the greatest

challenge – most had ever faced. During the pandemic, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Covid-19 Response had been heartened by the response from the borough's communities and hard working Team Oldham staff. People had volunteered to make a difference, checked on their neighbours and others across their communities and stepped up to keep people safe and supported. Nothing less was expected from people in Oldham. The borough had been through a lot, from the devastation of two World Wars, to the Shaw gas explosion and the Saddleworth Moor fires. In the spirit of Oldham's famous suffragette, Annie Kenney, people had shown strength, resilience and community spirit in the darkest of days. As the pandemic continued and there were tighter restrictions this winter, it was more important than ever that attributes Oldhamers were famed for were demonstrated. But, the comradery, determination and resilience was being picked apart by a minority who were attempting to use Coronavirus to sow hatred, intolerance and division. They must not be let to succeed. Posting misleading and divisive information on social media was absolutely unacceptable and would not be tolerated. It would be called out and action taken when it was seen and others were urged to do the same. Anyone who had been a victim of any sort of hate crime, including on social media, must report it to the police. People could not be let to 'get away with it' and the people who spread hate did not represent the vast majority of Oldhamers. The fact remained that the virus was circulating in all areas of the borough from Saddleworth to Shaw to St. Mary's. The engagement teams had been out and about across the Borough engaging with residents across all communities for that very reason, just as enforcement teams had taken action where restrictions were being breached. The Council was committed to providing accurate and timely information on Coronavirus figures and updated the data on the Council's website weekly. Residents were urged to visit the website and other factual reliable sources of information. People from all backgrounds had helped to fight back against the virus. This must continue because the virus could not be beat if divided.



**RESOLVED that:**

1. The update on Oldham's response to Covid-19 pandemic be noted.
2. The questions and responses provided be noted.

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**NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION BUSINESS**

Motion 1 – Recover, Retrain, Rebuild

Councillor Shah MOVED and Councillor Surjan SECONDED the following MOTION:

“The Council notes that the Chancellor has announced a patchwork of schemes to provide support to jobs and companies which have been affected by coronavirus restrictions and has rushed out changes to previous measures as it has become apparent that infection rates continue to rise and more and more areas will be enter Tiers 2 and 3.

The Council believes that while the Job Retention Scheme was a historic investment of taxpayers' money to avert widespread job losses, unprecedented investment will, essentially, go to waste as millions of people, including thousands in the Borough of Oldham, who have suffered throughout the Covid-19 crisis, now face the very real prospect of unemployment as their jobs are not viable to return to at this moment in time under Covid-19. While this Council acknowledges that support to Tier 2 jobs and businesses has been backdated to areas including Oldham which have been under restrictions since July 2020, it regrets that support will have come too late to save some otherwise viable jobs and businesses.

This Council believes we need a strategy that focuses on recovering jobs, retraining workers and rebuilding our country. This strategy must involve:

- 1) A Job Recovery Scheme that allows staff to work reduced hours, with the Government subsidising a proportion of wages for the rest of the week. The scheme should be designed to reward companies who bring back more workers part-time, rather than bringing some back full-time and letting others go.
- 2) A nationwide Retraining Strategy for the unemployed and those facing unemployment. This strategy must help those whose hours have been cut to increase their skills to retrain and enable people who have lost jobs to transition to new work.
- 3) A business Rebuilding Scheme which must give businesses, who have taken advantage of Government loan schemes, the payments for which start in March, the confidence and security that they will be able to continue operating past March 2021, or else a whole new set of businesses and workers may well be pushed back underneath then.

The Council therefore resolves to instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to revisit their scheme, work with business and trade unions and create one that will help our towns, borough and country recover, retrain and rebuild.”

Councillor C. Gloster spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Roberts spoke in support of the Motion.  
Councillor Al-Hamdani spoke in support of the motion.



Councillor Shah exercised her right of reply.

On being put to the vote, 50 votes were cast in FAVOUR of the MOTION and 0 votes were cast AGAINST with 1 ABSTENTION. The MOTION was therefore CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** that the Chief Executive be instructed to write to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer to revisit their scheme, work with business and trade unions and create one that will help with our towns, borough and country recover, retrain and rebuild.

Motion 2 – Remembrance Sunday will be the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2020

Councillor Ball MOVED and Councillor Hulme SECONDED the following MOTION:

“The Royal British Legion, supported by the Council, traditionally organises commemoration events at the Oldham War memorial and at 6 other locations across the borough. It is with great regret that this notes that it will not be possible in 2020 to hold the public services which have been well attended for many years.

The Council has worked with the Royal British Legion, the police and faith groups to decide how to pay our respects on Remembrance Sunday.

Arrangements have been made to stream a pre-recorded Covid secure wreath laying ceremony from each of these locations on the Council website and an invitation only service from the Oldham Parish Church will also be live-streamed on Remembrance Sunday (this may change if further restrictions are imposed).

Organisations and individuals will be able to lay their own wreaths privately between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> November and are asked to ensure that Covid guidelines are followed.

This Council resolves:

1. To ask residents to show their respects at home by following the streaming on the Council’s website and to encourage residents to stand on their doorstep on Sunday 8 November and Armistice Day at 11 am in remembrance and to place poppy posters in windows similar to NHS thank you.
2. To ask those who can, to make a donation to the Royal British Legion as it is likely their income from poppy and wreath sales will be much reduced this year.”

Councillor Sykes spoke on the Motion.  
Councillor Byrne spoke in support of the Motion.  
Councillor Hudson spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Ball exercised her right of reply.

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



**RESOLVED that:**

1. Residents be asked to show their respects at home by following the streaming on the Council's website and to encourage residents to stand on their doorstep on Sunday 8 November and Armistice Day at 11am in remembrance and to place poppy posters in windows similar to NHS thank you.
2. To those who could, be asked to make a donation to the Royal British Legion as it was likely that their income from poppy and wreath sales would be much reduced this year.

NOTE: Councillor F. Hussain left the meeting during this item.

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**NOTICE OF OPPOSITION BUSINESS**

At this point in the meeting Councillor Hobin raised a Point of Order and referred to Opposition Motion 4 on the agenda and the Amendment put forward on the Motion. In reference to Council Procedure Rules, Councillor Hobin sought clarification that as the Amendment looked like a complete rewrite, if the Amendment should be allowed and also sought clarification as to if the Amendment had been received before the deadline. Clarification was provided that the Amendment had been received before the deadline and that the Amendment was valid.

Motion 1 – 20's Plenty in 2020

Councillor Sykes MOVED and Councillor Williamson SECONDED the following MOTION:

"This Council notes that:

- Speed limits on Britain's residential roads are 60% higher than in Europe.
- More than half of all road accident casualties occur on roads with 30mph limits.
- That a pedestrian is 7 times more likely to die if they are hit by a vehicle travelling at 30 miles per hour than they are at 20mph and 10 times more likely if aged 60 or older.
- Reducing speed limits on residential roads has been found to reduce the incidence of accidents, the numbers of fatalities and serious injuries that result, and air pollution.
- Over 20 million citizens live in local authorities in the UK, including five authorities in Greater Manchester, which have adopted or are adopting a default speed limit of 20mph on residential roads.
- The default speed limit of 20mph has been adopted by other local authorities without the implementation of physical calming measures.
- In February 2020, road safety experts from 130 countries adopted the 'Stockholm Declaration' recommending 20mph / 30kph as the preferred default speed limit on



residential roads and, in August 2020, the UN General Assembly endorsed this recommendation.

This Council recognises that:

- If we are to 'build back better' after Covid-19, one of our key concerns must be to address all aspects of public health.
- This should include lowering the default speed of motor vehicles driven on our residential roads to reduce the danger to residents.
- Such a measure should be boroughwide and comprehensive.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- Seek in principle to implement a borough-wide 20 mph speed limit on residential roads.
- Ask the Overview and Scrutiny Board to look again at the practicalities and timescale of introducing such a scheme, in consultation with the 20's Plenty Campaign, for consideration by full Council at the earliest opportunity."

Councillor Harkness spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor C. Gloster spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Hudson spoke on the Motion.

Councillor Sykes exercised his right of reply.

Councillor Sykes raised a point of order related to timing as electronic voting was not working and it was confirmed that time needed for votes to be taken would not be included in the timing of the motions.

On being put to the vote, 45 votes were cast in FAVOUR of the MOTION and 0 votes were cast AGAINST with 5 ABSTENTIONS. The MOTION was therefore CARRIED.

**RESOLVED that:**

1. The implementation of a borough-wide 20 mph speed limit on residential roads be sought in principle.
2. The Overview and Scrutiny Board be asked to look again at the practicalities and timescales for the introduction of such a scheme, in consultation with the 20's Plenty Campaign, for consideration by Full Council at the earliest possible opportunity.

**Motion 2 – Let's Make Street Harassment a Crime**

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

"This Council is committed to making our Borough a safer place for everyone.

Council notes:

- Public sexual harassment is the most common form of violence against women and girls, restricting their freedom of movement and expression;

- That in surveys two-thirds of women and girls report they have faced street harassment in the UK;
- That street harassment in the UK is not covered by any specific offence, unlike in Portugal, Belgium and France;
- That stopping street harassment would be a powerful step in tackling inequality and keeping women safe;
- The incredible work of Our Streets Now, and their petition which has attracted over 200,000 signatures to make street harassment a specific crime;
- That according to a report by Our Streets Now, only 14 per cent of pupils have been taught about public sexual harassment at school, and that 47 per cent of them would not report an incident of public sexual harassment to their school because they were afraid or feared they would not be taken seriously by staff.

Council recognises:

- That we must create an environment where street harassment is seen and policed as a crime, and where girls feel safer on our streets;
- That we need to work together with our schools to ensure that anyone who is harassed will feel confident that their report will be treated with the respect, care and seriousness that is required;
- That changing the law, and education for our young people, are key planks in combating street harassment, establishing safer streets, and delivering equality.

Council resolves to:

- Promote the Our Streets Now campaign to make street harassment a crime, and encourage all elected members, and residents to sign the petition;
- Ask the Chief Executive to write to the Home Secretary to ask her to make street harassment a specific crime;
- Ask the Chief Executive to write to the three MPs who cover the Borough, and the Mayor of Greater Manchester / Police and Crime Commissioner, to ask them to show their support for this campaign by signing the petition and by lobbying ministers to make street harassment a specific crime;
- Ask schools, academies and colleges in the Borough to each develop a clear policy on tackling harassment, separate to their bullying policy;
- Ask local schools to include education around public sexual harassment as part of the PSHE education;
- Ensure that the recommendations of the Our Schools Now report are communicated to schools with a view to integrating their recommendations into their PSHE teaching.”

Councillor Byrne spoke on the Motion.

Councillor Mushtaq spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor Al-Hamdani exercised his right of reply.

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

**RESOLVED that:**

1. The Our Streets Now Campaign to make street harassment a crime be promoted and all elected members and residents be encouraged to sign the petition.
2. The Chief Executive be asked to write to the Home Secretary to ask her to make street harassment a specific crime.
3. The Chief Executive be asked to write to the three MPs who cover the Borough and the Mayor of Greater Manchester / Police and Crime Commissioner to ask them to show their support for this campaign by signing the petition and by lobbying ministers to make street harassment a specific crime.
4. Schools, academies and colleges in the Borough be asked to develop a clear policy on tackling harassment, separate to their bullying policy.
5. Local schools be asked to include education around public sexual harassment as part of the PSHE education.
6. The recommendations of the Our Schools Now report be communicated to schools with a view to integrating their recommendations into their PSHE teaching.

Motion 3 – Time to Tackle Child Food Poverty

Councillor Harkness MOVED and Councillor Hamblett  
SECONDED the following MOTION:

“This Council:

- Believes that, in one of the world’s most advanced economies, it is shameful that two decades into the twenty-first century, children still go hungry in the UK.
- Is committed to ensuring that reducing child food poverty in our Borough remains one of our top priorities and commends organisations in this Borough which is working to do so.
- Also commends the initiative of Manchester United footballer Marcus Rashford who has successfully campaigned on school holiday hunger and has recently formed a taskforce with some of the UK’s leading food retailers and charities to help reduce child food poverty.
- Notes that this taskforce has called upon the government to fund three policy recommendations from the National Food Strategy, an independent review of UK food policy, as soon as possible;
  - The expansion of free school meals to every child from a household on Universal Credit or equivalent, reaching an additional 1.5m children aged seven to 16
  - The expansion of holiday food and activities to support all children on free school meals, reaching an additional 1.1m children
  - Increasing the value of the Health Start vouchers from £3.10 to £4.25 per week and expanding it to all those on Universal Credit or equivalent,



reaching an additional 290,000 children under the age of four and pregnant women

- Notes that the taskforce has said that implementing these three recommendations would mark a 'unifying step to identifying a long-term solution to child poverty in the UK'.

Council concurs with the conclusion of the taskforce in calling upon the government to immediately fund these recommendations.

Council feels that if the Prime Minister wishes to be believed when he talks of 'building (Britain) back better' the he must address child food poverty as a top priority; for how can Britain be better when our nation's children continue to go hungry?

Council resolves to ask the Chief Executive to write to:

- Mr. Marcus Rashford commending him for his initiative and offering this Council's support for his work and that of the taskforce.
- Mr. Henry Dimbleby, who led the National Food Strategy, commending the work of the review panel and offering this Council's support for their recommendations
- The Chancellor of the Exchequer calling upon him to fund these three top recommendations as a matter of great urgency.
- Our three local MPs asking them to also make urgent representations to the Chancellor on this issue."

Councillor Harkness did not exercise his right of reply.

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

**RESOLVED** that the Chief Executive be asked to write to:

1. Mr. Marcus Rashford commending him for his initiative and offering this Council's support for his work and that of the taskforce.
2. Mr. Henry Dimbleby, who led the National Food Strategy, commending the work of the review panel and offering this Council's support for their recommendations.
3. The Chancellor of the Exchequer calling upon him to fund these three top recommendations as a matter of great urgency.
4. The three local Ms asking them to also make urgent representations to the Chancellor on this issue.

Councillor Sykes MOVED and Councillor Fielding SECONDED a 15 minute extension under Council Procedure Rule 12.4 to Item 13. This was AGREED.

Motion 4 – Independent Public Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) (Historical and Present) within Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (OMBC), including the actions and knowledge of Council Members and Officers.

Councillor Hobin MOVED and Councillor Hudson SECONDED the following MOTION:

“Council notes that:

Over the past 12 months or more, allegations have been levelled at OMBC and its officers, calling into question whether the protection of children has been compromised.

Allegations that officers/members were aware of child grooming gangs operating in the OMBC administered area, seeking to prevent this from the public.

Trust and accountability are important measurements when dealing with issues such as these. We are therefore disappointed when it was claimed that ‘allegations and claims made online are bare faced lies designed purely to stoke fears and score political points.’ In matters such as these we believe that we all have a duty to answer the concerns of members of the public who are deeply, deeply concerned about this issue. It is an issue which transcends party politics.

The ‘review’ currently in place and its Terms of Reference are insufficient as we are aware from regrettable developments and consequential investigations in Rotherham and Rochdale, alleged CSE offending – including matters of trafficking, abduction, grooming and inciting sexual activity with children – does not begin and end with compartmentalised and readily definable time periods. Whilst we concede that in order to be manageable any review must have frames of references, we submit that a lack of flexibility in the same creates an artificial line-in-the-sand that may ignore evidence pre-dating the frames of reference. They are not suitably independent due to the oversight of the offices of the Greater Manchester Mayor, and Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council officers sitting within the steering group.

That placing the burden of reporting matters outside the frames of reference upon potential historic victims of CSE in Oldham, is ignoring the fact that complainants in such matters of this nature are often reluctant to come forward. Of concern are claims that interviews have not been robust and that testimony does not accurately reflect the discussions held, investigators have failed to attend pre-arranged interviews, whilst others, including victims with relevant information, are still waiting to be contacted. Therefore we believe that the current review lacks the flexibility needed in order to take account for the fact that any review of evidence (direct testimony on oath, statement accompanied by a statement of truth or documentary records) is an organic process and may result in potentially new information coming to light. Indeed, victims can be reluctant to come forward especially if their first point of contact was the same institution that may have failed them in the first instance. It clearly falls short of what the public expect and what victims deserve.

This issue is above any party-political leanings. Is not an indictment on the work carried out by Council Children’s Services team, rather the governance of this administration. The ultimate basis is the welfare and protection of children in the borough.

The council regularly claims to be open and transparent in its workings. Now is the time to demonstrate this and reassure constituents, and the wider public by standing together against the discovery of paedophilia or any forms of Child Sexual

Exploitation. Now is the time for us, as a united Council to show that we will not shy away from identifying any perpetrator, ensuring justice, regardless of their standing.

Council resolves that:

The Chief Executive contact the Home Secretary and the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government, requesting they instigate a fully independent enquiry.

The Chief Executive request that said enquiry be totally outside the scope of the present OMBC administration, with full legal standing and complete access to all relevant documentation and departments within the council.

The Chief Executive write to the Greater Manchester Mayor to demand that all documentation obtained to date, be handed over to the Central Government led enquiry.

The Council to nominate a member to work with the enquiry, acting as an independent conduit between all parties. This nominee would be responsible for reporting progress and any relevant findings back to Council at regular intervals. In order to reassure constituents, they should share updates with the wider public also. All information would be subject to legal processes and confidentiality measures.”

#### AMENDMENT

Councillor Fielding MOVED and Councillor Moores SECONDED the following AMENDMENT:

“In paragraph 1 insert ‘unsubstantiated’ before ‘allegations’.

In paragraph 1 replace ‘calling into question whether’ with ‘suggesting that’.

At beginning of paragraph 2 replace ‘seeking to prevent’ with ‘and sought to conceal’

Delete paragraph 3 and insert ‘Child safeguarding is an issue which transcends party politics.

Delete the beginning of paragraph 4 up to the word ‘alleged’.

Delete everything after ‘periods’ in 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph and insert ‘That is why the terms of reference of an independent review which has been commissioned to investigate the aforementioned allegations state that the review “will not be limited to” the concerns numbered 1 – 3 under the section ‘Scope’.

Insert new 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph as follows: ‘The full terms of reference are publicly available on Oldham Council’s web site.’

Delete beginning of original 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph up to and including ‘nature’ and insert ‘That victims of CSE’.

In 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph replace ‘of concern are’ with ‘there exist unsubstantiated claims that.

Delete remainder of 5<sup>th</sup> paragraph after contacted.

Replace end of 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph from ‘rather’ with ‘Though Council acknowledges that the unsubstantiated allegations, personal abuse and criticism directed at members and officers of the Council and even members of their families who are not in public life, have a negative impact on the mental health and morale of those concerned, particularly given that some members in this Chamber and those who hope to be elected to it align themselves to this behaviour.’

Amend 8<sup>th</sup> paragraph to read ‘The Council regularly demonstrates openness and transparency in its workings. The Council stands together with residents and partners against paedophilia and any forms of Child Sexual Exploitation. We will not shy away from identifying any perpetrator, ensuring justice, regardless of their standing.’

Insert new first paragraph under ‘Council resolves that’ to read ‘it formally requests any elected members and other residents who have evidence to support allegations that they believe not to have been properly considered by the independent inquiry to submit it to the review as a matter of urgency and not later than the 18<sup>th</sup> November’.

In current first paragraph under ‘Council resolves to’ replace ‘requesting they instigate’ with ‘informing them that’ and after ‘inquiry’ add ‘of the unsubstantiated allegations and related cases is underway in Oldham and if no evidence referred to above is forthcoming, to inform ministers in her letter that despite repeated requests it remains unclear what evidence would be available to any further enquiry that has not yet been examined by the Independent Review.’

In current second paragraph under ‘Council resolves to’ replace ‘The Chief Executive Requests that said enquiry be’ with ‘The Chief Executive assures the aforementioned ministers in her correspondence that said inquiry is’

Delete current third paragraph under ‘Council resolves to’.

Insert new paragraph (which in amended motion will become the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph under ‘Council resolves to’ to read ‘The Chief Executive of the Council includes in her correspondence the details of those representatives of OMBC who work with the review as members of the steering group.’

Delete final paragraph under ‘Council resolves to’ and insert the two following paragraphs:

‘The Chief Executive write to the Independent Chair of the review steering group highlighting that unsubstantiated claims have been made that interviews held as part of the review have not been robust and that testimony does not accurately reflect the discussions held, investigators have failed to attend pre-arranged interviews, whilst others, including victims who may have relevant information, are still waiting to be contacted. This will allow the steering group to decide whether any action is required to respond to these unsubstantiated claims.

Council again commits to following the recommendations of the Independent Review.’”

Amended motion to read:

“Over the past 12 months or more, unsubstantiated allegations have been levelled at OMBC and its officers on social media, suggesting that the protection of children in the Borough has been compromised.

The unsubstantiated allegations suggest that officers/members were aware of child grooming gangs operating in the OMBC administered area, and sought to conceal this from the public. Child safeguarding is an issue which transcends party politics. Alleged CSE offending – including matters of trafficking, abduction, grooming and inciting sexual activity with children –

do not begin and end with compartmentalised and readily definable time periods. That is why the terms of reference of an independent review which has been commissioned to investigate the aforementioned allegations state that the review 'will not be limited to' the concerns numbered 1 – 3 under the section 'Scope'.

The full terms of reference are publicly available on Oldham Council's web site.

That victims of CSE are often reluctant to come forward. There exist unsubstantiated claims that interviews have not been robust and that testimony does not accurately reflect the discussions held, investigators have failed to attend pre-arranged interviews, whilst others, including victims with relevant information, are still waiting to be contacted.

This issue is above party-political leanings. Is not an indictment on the work carried out by Council Children's Service team.

Though Council acknowledges that the unsubstantiated allegations, personal abuse and criticism directed at members and officers of the Council and even members of their families who are not in public life, have a negative impact on the mental health and morale of those concerned, particularly given that some members in this Chamber and those who hope to be elected to it align themselves to this behaviour

The ultimate basis is the welfare and protection of children in the Borough.

The Council regularly demonstrates openness and transparency in its workings. The Council stands together with residents and partners against paedophilia and any forms of Child Sexual Exploitation. We will not shy away from identifying any perpetrator, ensuring justice, regardless of their standing.

Council resolves that:

It formally requests any elected members and other residents who have evidence to support allegations they believe not to have been properly considered by the Independent inquiry to submit it to the review as a matter of urgency and not later than the 18<sup>th</sup> November.

The Chief Executive contact the Home Secretary and the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government, informing them that a fully independent inquiry of the unsubstantiated allegations and related cases is underway in Oldham and if no evidence referred to above is forthcoming, to inform ministers in her letter that despite repeated requests it remains unclear what evidence would be available to any further enquiry that has not yet been examined by the Independent Review.

The Chief Executive assures the aforementioned ministers in her correspondence that said inquiry is totally outside the scope of the present OMBC administration, with complete access to all relevant documentation and departments within the Council.

The Chief Executive of the Council includes in her correspondence the details of those representatives of OMBC who work with the review as members of the steering group.



The Chief Executive write to the Independent Chair of the of the review steering group highlighting that unsubstantiated claims have been made that interviews held as part of the review have not been robust and that testimony does not accurately reflect the discussions held, investigators have failed to attend pre-arranged interviews, whilst others, including victims who may have relevant information, are still waiting to be contacted. This will allow the steering group to decide whether any action is required to respond to these unsubstantiated claims.

Council again commits to following the recommendations of the Independent Review.”

Councillor Hobin exercised his right of reply.  
Councillor Fielding raised a point of personal explanation.  
Councillor Fielding exercised his right of reply.

A recorded vote was taken on the AMENDMENT.

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

On being put to the vote, 38 votes were cast in FAVOUR of the AMENDMENT and 4 votes were cast AGAINST with 9 ABSTENTIONS. The AMENDMENT was therefore CARRIED.

Councillor Hobin exercised his right of reply.

A recorded vote was taken on the SUBSTANTIVE MOTION.

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

On being put to the vote, 47 votes were cast in FAVOUR of the SUBSTANTIVE MOTION and 1 vote was cast AGAINST with 3 ABSTENTIONS. The SUBSTANTIVE MOTION was therefore CARRIED.

**RESOLVED that:**

1. Any elected members and other residents who had evidence to support allegations they believed not to have been properly considered by the Independent inquiry be formally requested to submit it to the review as a matter of urgency and not later than the 18<sup>th</sup> November.
2. The Chief Executive contact the Home Secretary and the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government informing them that a fully independent

inquiry of the unsubstantiated allegations and related cases was underway in Oldham and if no evidence referred to above was forthcoming, to inform ministers in her letter that despite repeated requests it remained unclear what evidence would be available to any further enquiry that had not yet been examined by the Independent Review.

3. The Chief Executive assures the aforementioned ministers in her correspondence that said inquiry was totally outside the scope of the present OMBC administration, with complete access to all relevant documentation and departments within the Council. The Chief Executive of the Council to include in her correspondence the details of those representatives of OMBC who worked with the review as members of the steering group.
4. The Chief Executive to write to the Independent Chair of the review steering group highlighting that unsubstantiated claims had been made that interviews held as part of the review had not been robust and that testimony did not accurately reflect the discussions held, investigators had failed to attend pre-arranged interviews, whilst others, including victims who may have relevant information, were still waiting to be contacted. This would allow the steering group to decide whether any action was required to respond to these unsubstantiated claims.
5. To again to commit to following the recommendations of the Independent Review.

14

#### **UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM COUNCIL**

Councillor Fielding **MOVED** and Councillor Jabbar **SECONDED** an extension to the timing of the meeting to allow for consideration of Items 14 and 15. This was **AGREED**.

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

Councillor Sykes spoke on the report.

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

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#### **COUNCIL SIZE SUBMISSION - ELECTORAL REVIEW OF OLDHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Council gave consideration to a report of the Director of Legal Services. The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) had informed the Council of its decision to carry out an Electoral Review of the Council and the number of wards and ward boundaries for the Council. The outcome of the review would be implemented for the 2023 Council elections.

Under Stage 1, the Council was required to provide the Commission with a Council Size Submission which provided the



Council's view on the appropriate number of Councils (council size) using relevant supporting evidence. The submission date to the Local Government Boundary Commission was 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020.



The Council Size Submission appended to the report had been produced to help inform the first part of the review on Council size. The Commission would form its view regarding Council Size for Oldham by considering the following:

- The Governance Arrangements of the Council;
- The Council's Statutory Functions; and
- The representational role of Councillors.

A cross departmental officer working group produced the submission and this was presented to Group Leaders. The recommendation contained within the submission was that the Council size remains the same.

Individual members and groups were able to submit their own representations to the LGBCE if required.

#### Options/Alternatives

It was a statutory requirement for the Council to produce the information requested by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in relation to Council Size. If members disagree with the submission and recommendations an alternative proposal could be submitted which met the statutory criteria.

On being put to the vote, 43 votes were cast in FAVOUR of the MOTION and 0 votes were cast AGAINST with 8 ABSTENTIONS. The MOTION was therefore CARRIED.

**RESOLVED** that the Council Size Submission to the Local Government Boundary Review Commission for England be approved.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 10.04 pm