

**POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**26/07/2022 at 6.00 pm**



**Present:** Councillor McLaren (Chair)  
Councillors Alyas, Barnes, Dean, Harrison, C. Phythian,  
Wilkinson and Williamson

Also in Attendance:

Emma Barton	Executive Director for Place & Economic Growth
Laila Chowdhury	Constitutional Services
Christopher Lewis	Strategic Lead – Creating a Better Place
Kaidy McCann	Constitutional Services
Katrina Stephens	Director of Public Health

1           **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies of absence.

2           **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

3           **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

4           **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no public questions received.

5           **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022 be approved as a correct record.

6           **LOCAL MATTERS RELATING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Consideration was given to a verbal update on the local matters which related to the Covid-19 Pandemic by the Director of Public Health.

Members were informed that, since the update received by the Committee in January 2022, the position with the Coronavirus had changed. The Virus was still around however, no community testing was taken place. The Office of National Statistics estimated that as of 13<sup>th</sup> July 2022, 5.77% of the population, which translated to 1 in 17 were currently infected with Covid-19. The rate of infection for the week before was 1 in 19. Whilst this was a slight increase the overall rate of increased infections was slowing.

Members noted that testing was only available for high-risk settings, such as Care Homes. For any others, tests were

available to purchase. Contact tracing was no longer being checked, masks were no longer in use and the requirement for self-isolation had been removed. It was explained that Omicron was still the main variant however, it had evolved from BA1 to BA5 strain. The BA5 strain spread faster than others however, the symptoms experienced were described as mild and Flu like.

Hospitals had been experiencing less stress on services, the Royal Oldham had an average of 3 to 5 patients in intensive care who had Covid-19. The weekly death numbers within Oldham were very low with a maximum of three deaths per week. For some weeks, the Hospital had recorded no deaths due to Covid-19. Since the beginning of the Pandemic, around 900 residents of the Oldham Borough had lost their lives due to Covid-19. Covid-19 was here to stay for the foreseeable future however, it was unlikely to return to the levels and seriousness of the beginning of the Virus.

78% of the Borough had received a vaccination and 50% that had received 3 vaccinations. A fourth booster jab was being made available for residents over the age of 50s and those that are immunosuppressant. There had been a 100% uptake of the fourth vaccination within care home settings. Overall, there had been a 50% uptake for the vaccination from the rest of the eligible demographic. The uptake was lower as many people felt the risks with the current strain were low.

Members asked for and received clarification on the following:

- When would the fourth booster be offered more widely? Members were informed that the work was getting started on the roll out of the booster, Guidance had been released the previous week and contact had been made with the providers that delivered the vaccines previously with many indicating they would deliver again.
- Would a vaccine be needed yearly similar to the Flu vaccination? It was noted that it was a potential scenario however it was difficult to say at the point in time. Over the next 10 years it may be possible to combine both vaccines into one.
- What was the impact on the Health Services and absences? Members were informed that the Health Service were currently at winter levels for absences. There was some pressures on absences however this was mainly due to backlog issues. It was confirmed that breakdown of the details could be provided to Members.

**RESOLVED** that:

1. The local matters relating to the Covid-19 Pandemic be noted;
2. A further report be submitted to the Committee in January 2023 to provide an update.

Consideration was given to a report which provided updates one year on from the adoption of Creating a Better Place and acquisition of the Shopping Centre.



Members were informed that Creating a Better Place set out the comprehensive vision and strategic framework for the Borough, which included the Oldham Town Centre Vision, the Housing Strategy, Green New Deal and utilisation of the Council's corporate estate (land and property) to support development and open space requirements across the Borough.

Members were provided with the ambitions and visions which were as followed:

- Building quality homes
- Providing opportunities to learn and gain new skills
- Providing opportunities to grow local businesses and create jobs
- Ensuring Oldham is the greenest Borough
- Embedding sustainability, energy efficiency and low (zero) carbon
- Improving life-chances and the health and well-being of our residents and local communities.

External funding bids had been secured with further bids in development. The Capital Receipt Target for 2021/22 was £6.106m, with the actual achieved target of £8.771m. This translated into a Capital Receipt Target for 2022/23 of £2.462m. The Council aimed to accumulate £8.5m revenue savings over the next 5 years. In 2021/22, c£1.1m had been achieved (of £1.443m). 2022/23 had a challenging target of £2.720m to achieve.

Members were provided details of the approved External Funding Success which included:

- £285m capital commitment from Oldham Council
- Growth Deal public realm / transport funding
- Future High Street Fund £10m
- Town Deal Fund £24.4m
- Brownfield Land Bids £6.5m
- Re Opening High Street Safely Fund
- Welcome Back Fund
- BEIS Investment £166k
- Hanging Places Fund
- Levelling Up Fund £125k to develop a submission

Alongside the confirmed bids, there were some still in the bid stage which included:

- Brownfield Land Bid (next round)
- Levelling Up Fund bid c£40m
  - Green Innovation and Technology Network
  - Creative Improvement District
- BEIS Decarbonisation Fund c£3m
  - Spindles and Chadderton Town Hall

Whilst there were several benefits to the programme, there would be challenges to face mainly around construction. Within the construction market, Contractors were not able to hold prices by more than a few weeks (standard 90 days) that could be affected due to the decision-making processes. There were also issues of material shortages that caused escalation of prices and longer ordering timescales. The construction market had also suffered during Covid due to sourcing sufficient labourers and drivers and sourcing site accommodation. It was estimated that the current issues would cause a minimum of 20-25% increase to budget costs with Economic Specialists predicting that the problems would continue for 3-5 years.

Construction Insurance had also become a major challenge, prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, 17 insurers were available to underwrite building renovation works. That had reduced to 4 as a result of high-profile losses including Grenfell, Glasgow School of Art, Mandarin Oriental, and Primark in Belfast. It had been recommended by insurers to market six months ahead of the works being undertaken to assess the appetite for the projects.

Members were informed of the £24m secured Town Deal Fund that had been allocated for Northern Roots, the new Theatre and Performance Space, Tommyfield Market and an Entrepreneur Space. £10m was confirmed for the Future High Street Fund allocation that would be used for the Egyptian Room fit out, the Prudential Building, Union Street for the potential use as an incubator hub, and Accessible Oldham to enhance the public realm development around Mumps for pedestrians, cycling and public transport routes.

The Town Centre Development Prospectus was now published and sought a partner to develop sites within the Town Centre. Within Spindles, the Enterprise and Innovation zone was anticipated to be completed in December 2023. The Public Sector Accommodation phase one was under construction and on schedule for completion in September 2022. Phase two of the full accommodation scheme was also expected to be completed in December 2023. Enabling works were underway on the New Indoor Market, Food Court and Performance Space and also the Archive Centre. Renovations works were underway and a business case for interior use was in development for the Old Library. A funding application had been submitted to BEIS for feasibility works on the Town Centre Heat Network which was now secured and work underway.

The Committee were provided details of strategic partnerships in place at Broadway Green with Grasscroft and Seddons and at Hollinwood with Langtree. Members were also informed of the various housing projects which included the 19 x 5 bed homes for Affordable Rent at Primrose Bank, the various HRA infill sites that would create c40 new homes over 7 cleared sites and the housing pipeline development of c2,000 new homes which included over 900 in the town centre and 12 brownfield sites identified for different tenures/house types. To facilitate those

projects £800k had been allocated from the Growth Deal Fund to facilitate road access onto the Southlink site and a Brownfield Housing Land Grant of £6m towards Derker and Southlink.



The programme included the Education Capital Projects. Members noted that the Brian Clarke Academy and North Chadderton extension were under construction whilst Saddleworth School, Greenfield Primary, Oldham Academy North, Kingfisher Hydropool, Mayfield Primary, North Chadderton: Kingsland and the Kingfisher MAT Free School: New Special Educational Need Free School had all been completed.

The Committee were advised of the Green New Deal Projects which included:

- Green New Deal E-Learning Package: first of its kind in GM had been launched within the Council. 930 staff had completed the course
- Green Your Neighbourhood: appropriate community engagement to complement street cleaning and other community “green” priorities
- Local Energy Market / Green Power Purchase Agreements: GM programme procurement work ongoing.
- Growing the green economy / jobs & skills: integrated into Economic Growth Strategy refresh and part of Levelling Up Fund bid. Oldham Green Business Network to be established.

The Committee were informed of the other projects not within the town Centre which included:

- Royton Town Hall: the scheme had started on site with the Clock Tower works and demolition of the rear extension. This was expected to be completed in February 2023.
- Alexandra Park Eco Centre: a new energy efficient, sustainable building to replace the old derelict buildings. This was expected to be completed in March 2023.
- Corporate Estates Utilisation: a HR workforce strategy, placed based, new ways of working and digital programmes to enable greater work/life balance for employees and new service delivery models for residents, communities, and partners.

Members asked for and received clarification on the following:

- Had there been any slippages within the programme and if so, what action was being taken? Members were advised that there were no slippages in the current programme and no reserves had been used. There was rigorous monitoring in place to identify any potential slippages.
- Penalty charges for non-completion? It was confirmed that penalty charges were in place for a number of factors including non-completion.
- What support was available to new start-up businesses? Members were advised that a GM Enterprise and Social

Fund had been set up for new businesses with £2m allocated for Oldham. Businesses could work with growth companies and wrap around care would be provided. Oldham had been identified as one of the top 10 places for sustainable new growth.

- The types of homes identified for the Town Centre Living? It was noted that a strategy for needs would take place.



**RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

8 **POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23**

The Committee was invited to review the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2022/23. The drafted work programme included a number of potential items and the Committee was asked to determine whether or not they wished to pursue these going forward.

**RESOLVED** that the submitted Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2022/23 be noted.

9 **KEY DECISION NOTICE**

The Committee reviewed the Key Decision Notice which provided an opportunity for the identification of items or policy or service development, not otherwise listed on the Committee Work Programme.

**RESOLVED** that the report and the Key Decision Notice be noted.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.10 pm