

**Public Questions Full Council 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

	From / Date	To	Question	Response
1	Andy Powell	Councillor Roberts	<p>A flagpole was recently installed and uninstalled at Dogford Park, Royton at a cost of over £2,000 under the Local Improvement Fund. A response to an FOI request states that the flagpole was requested by one or more councillors who appear to have circumvented the proper process and requested the flagpole even though it was not on the approved expenditure.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. which councillor(s) requested and/or instigated this use of Royton tax payers money without authorisation?</li> <li>2. what action has been taken in respect of those involved?</li> <li>3. will the people of Royton get chance to recoup some on this 2k for much needed local improvements?</li> <li>4. what has been put in place to stop it happening again</li> </ol>	<p>Earlier this year a number of concerns were raised with the council, during a weekend of extremely high winds, about the safety of a flagpole which had been recently erected at Dogford Park. On investigating these concerns it became clear that the flagpole had been installed, by council officers, outside of the proper processes and approvals for the local investment fund and, as a result, no risk assessment or safety assessment could be found in relation to the installation.</p> <p>As a result the decision was made to remove the pole as soon as possible while the circumstances and process of its installation could be discovered. The pole was stored for reuse once a suitable local site could be identified.</p> <p>The council staff involved in the purchase and installation have been reminded about the established processes for approval of Local Improvement Fund bids and our guidelines around approvals have been reviewed to try to avoid any further issues of this kind.</p> <p>Happily the pole has now found a fitting new home alongside the War Memorial Royton Park where it can be enjoyed by the park's many visitors.</p>
2	Ben Ingham	Councillor Roberts	<p>I am writing to raise a concern around the parking on lea view in Royton. The road is now effectively single carriage at times right up to the junction with Middleton Road, this coupled with the increase in traffic seemingly using this route as a cut through to Broadway is beginning to cause issue. Additionally, there is a lack of visibility, coupled with the reduction in road space, as you turn onto Middleton Road causes potentially hazardous situations. Could the council look into restrictions on parking around the junctions to ease this?</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. We are aware that parking is problematic in many places across the borough, particularly in densely populated residential areas, where households own more than one vehicle and do not have off street parking provisions.</p> <p>We are aware of the issues on Lea View, where parking narrows the available road width forcing motorists to operate a 'give and take' system around the parked vehicles.</p> <p>The introduction of parking restrictions and yellow lines requires a legal Traffic Regulation order, which is subject to public consultation. As the some of the parking relates to residential vehicles, it is a challenge to balance where alternative parking locations would be located.</p> <p>We are happy to investigate options to relief the parking concerns, but given the low traffic volumes and potential for residents to object to the parking restrictions, we will need to review other options to help the local community.</p>
3	Shaheen Akhtar	Councillor Ali	<p>In September Andrew Clowes, the Head, Teacher at Hey with Zion wrote an article asking 'Where do I cut?' as his budget has to stretch to deal with rising prices, unfunded staff pay rises and the energy crisis. He said that his staff also had to cope with the rising cost of living and many of the families of his pupils were finding it hard to make ends meet. He wrote a long list of things the school already does to help and</p>	<p>The Council has set its funding formula for schools for 2023/24, based on initial funding notified earlier this year. This formula determines the funding allocations to be received by individual schools. The Council expects to receive final Dedicated Schools Grant funding notifications around 21 December and this is likely to increase the grant available and therefore increase the funding for schools.</p>

			<p>pointed out there is nothing left to cut to be able to make up for underfunding of schools. He did suggest that schools be given the money to pay for catch up tutoring rather than a poor value for money national programme and wondered what the new Secretary of State for Education would have to offer. He was right to suggest that there might be a few – Kit Malthouse has now been followed by Gillian Keegan. <b>Does the Cabinet Member for Education have any information about what this minister is doing to plug the funding gap in schools and to help Head Teachers like Mr Clowes balance the books for their schools and continue to provide good quality education for Oldham children? What does the November Statement have to offer Oldham Schools?</b></p>	<p>However, in addition to already notified funding, on 17 November 2022, the Autumn Statement was issued and this included an announcement that core schools budgets in England will receive an additional £2.3 billion of funding in 2023/24 and £2.3 billion in 2024/25. Clearly this is good news and will mean more funding for schools in Oldham. The detailed impact of this new money cannot as yet be determined and will only be available when the Dedicated Schools Grant funding information is received, which as previously indicated, is likely to be around 21 December.</p> <p>The total funding increase and actual impact for individual schools can only be determined once all the detailed funding notifications have been received.</p>
4	David Barker	Councillor Roberts	<p>As a resident who often travels on the Metrolink through the town centre in the evening, it is an all too frequent occurrence to have a tram brought to a halt on Union Street by a car stopped in the road obstructing the route of the tram.</p> <p>With a high cluster of take away units on Union Street and George Street, and limited parking available, drivers using those premises often take to mounting kerbs or stopping in the middle of the road, completely ignoring road markings such as double yellow lines, and parking in an obstructive and often dangerous manner.</p> <p>Part of the problem seems to be a lack of patrolling by either police or traffic wardens, which effectively encourages irresponsible and illegal parking with drivers confident they will not be held to account.</p> <p>This a problem every day of the week and routinely causes problem for tram drivers and passengers travelling through the town centre. In fact Councillors only need to take a short walk after this meeting to see the problem for themselves first-hand.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. We saw the parking problems on Union Street increase dramatically during the Covid pandemic and has become worse following the growth in hot food and take away home delivery services.</p> <p>Parking Enforcement Officers patrol the route everyday, but the drivers of tend to move the vehicles when they see the patrols approaching ... only to return later when they have left the area.</p> <p>We are looking at options to change the nature of the town centre on Union Street to restrict the levels of parking currently being observed. We are exploring funding options for these works.</p> <p>We are also aware that part of the issue is the number of unregistered vehicles being used for these delivery services – as parking tickets have been issued, but they do not get paid and some now have considerable debt without a registered owner or address on the national DVLA system. This issue has been escalated to the Safer Roads Partnership at a Greater Manchester level and to Greater Manchester Police as these issues are also being seen at a national level, and where possible, these vehicles are being removed from the road.</p>

			Given that this has been a recurring problem for years, is the council able to come up with an effective solution to deal with this issue and make a major road in the town centre useable for public transport and pedestrians all hours of the day?	
5	Connor Green	Councillor Jabbar	What preparations is Oldham Council making to deal with possible energy blackouts this winter? The Government has been 'war gaming' to find out how the country would deal with energy blackouts of up to a week this winter. Has the Government issued any guidance on how Oldham Council should keep services going for the most vulnerable or offered any money to help e.g. care homes or children's homes? I agree with Debbie Abrahams MP that 'we mustn't forget that it was the Tories who have, over the last twelve years, cut investment in energy efficiency, stopped the construction of onshore wind farms, and closed gas storage facilities, meaning that we have lower levels of stored gas.' But given that we seem to be in a precarious position, what reassurance can the Council give about help if blackouts do happen?	<p>The Council has recently received some guidance from our energy suppliers including from the National Grid, who are advising that they are no longer anticipating interruptions to energy supplies.</p> <p>However, we are still planning support programmes in case we do see supply issues this winter – worst case scenario is when electricity supplies across the UK would be intermittently turned off in a “managed and controlled manner”.</p> <p>If this does occur – we are reviewing 'vulnerable sites' and registering them via Electricity Supply Emergency Code for Protected Site Status, which essentially provides priority energy to registered sites to allow services to continue. Beyond that we are also reviewing provisions for emergency generators to be commissioned.</p> <p>Finally, we continue to work with the Greater Manchester Resilience team to review key sites and services to ensure the Council can respond to a power outage ... should it occur.</p>
6	Azad Hussain	Councillor Brownridge	Oldham East MP Debbie Abrahams is the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Action Group (APPG) on dementia which has just published a report 'Workforce Matters: putting people with dementia at the heart of care'. Workforce Matters has been shaped by the voices of nearly 2,000 people affected by dementia through an APPG survey, as well as oral and written evidence. The goal was to discover how the social care workforce can enable people affected by dementia to live the lives they want. The main recommendation of the report is for the Government to bring forward a People Plan for social care that's centred around building a workforce that supports people with dementia to live with meaning, purpose, and connection. Other recommendations include more government support for local councils to commission more services to help people with dementia. Can the Cabinet Member for Adult & Social Care tell us what say people with dementia have in how Oldham's services are designed and delivered and ask Council Officers	<p>We have developed a dementia strategy in Oldham that was developed by engaging with all stakeholders in dementia services in both health and social care. People with dementia and their carers were at the centre of this engagement and were represented throughout. We wanted more representation of people from BAME communities and developed the role of a BAME Link Worker for dementia. The link worker accessed BAME communities and a whole section of the strategy relates to BAME access to services. Our link worker has worked with memory assessment services to ensure practice is culturally appropriate for patients and information / documents have been translated into several languages.</p> <p>From findings within the strategy we have re-shaped / developed several services and people with lived experience have been at the heart of development including our latest service, a dementia hub in Dr Kershaw's hospice. People with lived experience were present from the start in the planning group and were clear about what they wanted and were key in the design in the service This is a good model of partnership working between all dementia service providers and people who use services in Oldham.</p>

			<p>to read and consider the APPG report to see how it might help us to deliver better services?</p>	<p>We work closely with Springboard (peer support group for people with dementia and their carers) who regularly attend Oldham's Dementia Partnership Board and support us to develop person centred services.</p> <p>Oldham were a key player in the development of the Digital Dementia Pathway which was developed by Dementia United. Oldham were part of GM wide engagement which reached over 300 people with lived experience and their views were embedded into the pathway standards and design.</p> <p>This pathway supports people with dementia to live with meaning and purpose by giving information on services and groups they can access in their area. We also support living with purpose by the development of the dementia LGBT+ group to address issues related to people from the LGBT+ community and a physical health trainer with Age UK Oldham to advise on diet and to plan exercise such as walking, exercise classes and group sessions as we know physical health and good diet slows the onset of dementia.</p> <p>We continue to work towards meeting strategic objectives placing people with lived experience at the centre of development work to co-produce service design and operation.</p> <p>We are aware of the All-Party Parliamentary Action Group Report on Dementia and the findings will be considered in dementia service development.</p>
7	Joshua Charters	Cllr Roberts	<p>In St James Ward there has been a lot of antisocial behaviour and crime over the past few months, with people riding illegal dirt bikes at all hours in Derker and Sholver and cars being stolen regularly in Sholver. Is the council working with GMP to address this and how can we see what's been done?</p>	<p>The use of off-road bikes and vehicle crime is a concern for us all, both in Sholver and Derker and across the borough.</p> <p>Unfortunately the specialist off-road bikes team is a very small force-wide resource which is in significant demand. This is a very dangerous activity and many riders do not wear headgear – this restricts the opportunities for pursuit and enforcement at the time, even by the specialist team.</p> <p>Resolution of this issue requires a much wider long-term problem solving approach and Council colleagues from across a variety of services are working with GMP's Neighbourhood Policing Teams and the new Neighbourhood Prevention Hub to address this as a key priority. It remains important that reports are made to GMP, with as much detail being provided as possible, such as vehicle details and registration numbers. There are a number of legal powers which can be used, not just against those riding the bikes, but against those involved in the storage and transportation of them, due to the associated nuisance they cause and services will be working together to explore all options and opportunities. Intelligence regarding where vehicles are being stored and the vehicles which bring off-road bikes to a site is key to identifying the individuals involved and the potential seizure of the bikes, using the available legislation.</p> <p>There is a robust response to serious acquisitive crime, which includes the theft of vehicles and this is also a local priority. Community Safety Services are working with the Neighbourhood Crime Team to take action, including making applications for Criminal Behaviour Orders, against those identified as responsible for car thefts.</p>

				Community Safety Services is working with other partners in the District, and will use all the powers available to tackle these types of behaviours. For example they will share information and evidence with housing providers to enable tenancy enforcement action to be taken too, where it is appropriate to do so.
8	Paul Scoltock	Councillor Chadderton	I live in Derker and rely on the bus service to travel into Manchester. I used to be able to get the regular 83 Service to travel into Manchester in the morning, but now I have to get a frequently delayed bus into Oldham and either change buses or get a tram to get there now. The 83 service only runs to Manchester from Sholver in the evening now. Can the Council liaise with TGFm and the operators to ensure that buses are running regularly from Sholver to ensure that residents are not cut off from the rest of the Town and City Region?	<p>Oldham Council are in regular contact with Transport for Greater Manchester regarding bus services in Oldham and the performance of them.</p> <p>The 82 service (daytime link to Oldham) and 83 service (evening link to Oldham &amp; Manchester) are both provided by First Manchester. While TfGM have no direct control over these services we've asked that the feedback relating to these services is raised at the next performance review meeting with the provider.</p> <p>TfGM actively encourage residents and councillors to raise specific issues (on any service) via <a href="mailto:customer.relations@tfgm.com">customer.relations@tfgm.com</a>. This is really important as this register is used to log and monitor feedback from communities and provides a stronger position for challenging performance and service delivery.</p> <p>As soon as the new bus franchising is rolled out for Oldham services, TfGM will be consulting on changes to bus routes to allow for better connected bus network from communities to key destinations, and it will also provide a much greater level of accountability from operators for higher levels of service standards.</p> <p>The Bus Franchising programme will be rolled out across Oldham in 2024 and is expected to deliver simpler fares and ticketing, with the ability to enable more joined-up journey planning between bus and tram journeys.</p>
9	Steve Croft	Cllr Roberts	<p>If you've seen my comments on our local forums you'll know I'm no fan of fireworks. Last night we had the fireworks display after the switch-on and to my view they were more expansive than in previous years. That might be a subjective view based on the amount that they bothered us.</p> <p>I have a question for the council: why are the council not setting some sort of example in either reducing the scale of the display or by using 'silent' fireworks?</p> <p>This comes on the back of the council leader's comments recently that demonstrated the council are fully aware of the high number of people that find fireworks distressing.</p> <p>Thanks in advance, and thanks for all the work you do for our area.</p>	<p>Show duration: The display has gradually reduced from an original 12 minutes to this years 8 minutes so that the firework element is a finale to the main show which enables us to re-direct resources into working with local performers and artists and the development of the new style Switch On show. This also reduces the disturbance to the local community and elevates the overall impact whilst reducing the costs of delivering the display in line with the budget.</p> <p>Show Size: The display this year substantially increased the use of quieter roman candle and lower level effects and reduced the number of large aerial shells to fit with the music that was written for the show. This will have reduced the impact of noise over larger distances compared with previous years, but to reduce these levels further for the higher aerial effects in the future would have a significant effect on the view for audience members on the periphery of the event viewing areas, making the majority of the display hidden behind buildings etc.</p> <p>Silent Show: 'Silent Fireworks' is not a term used by the pyrotechnic industry who prefer to use the term 'Quiet Fireworks'. This distinction is very important as anyone asking about 'silent' fireworks needs to understand that there is no such thing. Yes, there are quieter fireworks available which, while certainly quieter, are not silent. They are also less exciting, not only because noise is part of the visceral attraction of a fireworks display, but also because it is necessary for the</p>

				<p>propulsion and bursting of the highest-flying effects which are usually the most memorable and impressive parts of the display. Quieter fireworks result in a less impressive display that will be seen by less people and will cost more.</p> <p>Noise levels: The display is not at full volume the whole time. It has its lulls as well as its climaxes. During those lulls, the noise is relatively modest. The fireworks are fired in conjunction with a soundtrack and If we have a prolonged section of quiet music to accommodate a prolonged section of quiet fireworks this would have a detrimental effect on the audience experience. To hear the full volume of the fireworks you would need to be very close to the Town centre firing zone as sound dissipates quickly the further away you are from it (Db levels reduce by approx. 6Db for every doubling of distance from a measured point. I.e. 120db at 15metres reduces to 114 at 30m). Wind direction also plays a big part. Noise is louder downwind than upwind of its source</p> <p>Complaints: We did receive some feedback from residents that dislike fireworks but we also receive lots of positive feedback year on year from people who enjoy events that include firework displays and we have 8-10,000 people on average attend the 'Switch On' event which creates additional footfall for town centre businesses.</p>
10	Stephen Ingham	Cllr Chadderton	<p>It is great news that Council staff have started moving into the Spindles and that work has taken place to help businesses to relocate elsewhere in the shopping centre to allow this to happen.</p> <p>I know that part of the point of locating Council staff in the Spindles is to put them closer to the shops and the new market and hopefully this will support these businesses to thrive. Can the council confirm how many staff are expected to work from Spindles when the fit out for offices is complete and what the timetable is for this work?</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Mr Ingham. We are currently finalising the floorplan which will ultimately determine the final number of staff that will occupy the new Spindles accommodation, at present we estimate between 800 and 1,000 staff will be located in the Spindles at any one time with some officers working out in communities or at home from time to time depending on the nature of the services being provided.</p> <p>One of the strategic drivers of the relocation is to ensure the ongoing sustainability of a thriving Town Centre recognised as a location with quality office space, accommodation, recreation and leisure opportunities.</p>
11	Nicola Longshaw	Cllr Chadderton	<p>I was pleased to see Oldham Council's cost of living package featured on BBC North West Tonight and referenced as the largest of its kind in Greater Manchester. At the last Council meeting the Leader referred to a dashboard to measure the demand for and impact of the 'We can help' campaign – can she give some further detail on what this dashboard shows us so far? Has the council received any government support to devise this package or has it been put together solely from Oldham Council's own resources?</p>	<p><i>The Cost of Living dashboard allows us to compare demand on our key services to the same time last year, and also tracks more recent changes. It is clear that demand has increased significantly over the last year. We also ask each service to comment on capacity; it is clear from their input that recent officer appointments funded by the Cost-of-Living package have been vital in allowing them to cope with the increase in demand.</i></p> <p><i>The dashboard is part of a larger body of intelligence work that is being used to target our limited resources more effectively. Officers are continuing to review and improve the data that is used to provide the required intelligence as part of a long term strategy to support our residents proactively and efficiently.</i></p> <p><i>We have committed £3 million of funding to support Oldham's cost-of-living response. The majority of this investment is coming from the</i></p>

				<i>Council's own resources, while the Household Support Fund – a grant paid by Central Government – is contributing £295,000 to the response.</i>
12	Dee (Dorice) Johnson	Cllr Abdul Jabbar	Our current prime minister was caught on camera earlier this year, bragging about cutting funding from the least wealthy areas, so he could give more money to richer areas. His predecessor crashed the economy, costing the country billions. Please can someone advise how these actions have impacted on funding for Oldham?	It is not possible to directly assess the impact of the Prime Minister's comments. However, the Government allocates general revenue grant funding to Councils by means of a funding formula. Changes to the formula can result in a redistribution of grant between Councils. There have been no major changes to the general funding formula recently, although such changes have been discussed for some time including the introduction of the outcome of the Fair Funding Review which would use more up to date indices for factors such as deprivation in determining grant allocations. The Government has repeatedly deferred the introduction of Fair Funding. If it had been introduced, it would undoubtedly have increased the funding received by Oldham and reduced funding for more affluent boroughs.
13	Abdul Rahim	Councillor Chadderton	<p>The Labour Team issued written confirmation that bus gates and road closures will not go ahead following the consultation meetings held on 18th October 2022.</p> <p>Hundreds of people have completed the TfGM survey strongly opposing the entire plan after those meetings. Hundreds of surveys were hand delivered and receipts were provided to ensure it was delivered by the consultation deadline.</p> <p>A petition 'Completely oppose and reject entirely TfGM Draft Proposal for Chadderton North &amp; Westwood Active Neighbourhood' was launched following the consultation sessions held on Tuesday 18th October 2022. 736 people within five days signed this petition, clearly illustrating the residents reject the entire plan.</p> <p>Please update us on the final outcome of this proposal. As this matter concerns many of the residents of Coldhurst and Chadderton</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. Firstly, I would like to assure you that we are listening to all the views shared by local residents and businesses from the local community. This is very important and I would like to thank everyone for taking the time to share their views.</p> <p>The consultation closed on 4<sup>th</sup> November and at present, and the responses are still being assessed and reviewed by an independent company helping the Council with this work, to ensure all the points raised by the community are considered. This work has taken longer than expected due to the complex nature of the scheme and the number of responses submitted.</p> <p>The proposals we consulted on included many different elements, not just bus gates and road closures, and to ensure everyone's views are listened to, we want to ensure this is all reviewed and captured.</p> <p>On completion, we need to compare the community feedback with the eligibility criteria for the programme of works, as the final proposals must reduce traffic levels, improve road safety and increase active and sustainable modes of travel.</p> <p>We hope to be able to review all the community feedback in the new year to help determine what happens next.</p>
14	Karl Bardsley	Councillor Brownridge	<p>I would like to ask the relevant councillor why has the council evicted the mobility centre a charitable Organisation for the disabled people of Oldham which was located at Tommyfield market, where people with disabilities could hire for a small fee an electric mobility scooter which enabled them to visit Oldham completely independently.</p> <p>The council's shameless decision to evict this charitable organisation from the unit it was housed in, in order to use the unit as canteen facilities for the market traders and its own employees, this disgraceful decision has taken away the opportunity for people with mobility issues to meet others and independently visit</p>	<p>I would like to thank Mr Bardsley for his question. The Officers have reviewed the history and it appears that the independent charitable organisation Mr Bardsley is referring to is the Community Transport Services programme that was delivered by <i>Community Transport Oldham (CTO)</i>. <i>The service was originally grant funded in 2009. Following the change in Government and the introduction of austerity by the Cameron Government all contracts were reviewed. The Council extended the funding until April 2019. The Adult Social Care team reviewed the use of the service and determined that there was no clear evidence that those residents using the service required statutory services, in accordance with the Care Act. A full equality impact assessment was completed, and in January 2019, Full Council made the decision to cease the funding on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019</i></p> <p><i>The Council offered to support the organisation by providing access to a smaller, cheaper unit within the Indoor Market.</i></p>

			<p>the town centre, therefore confining these residents me to there home, plunging them into even deeper loneliness and depression. Can you imagine how frustrated these residents are that they can no longer independently visit the town centre, in particular at this time of year and also visit the Oldham integrated care unit, for vital medical treatment? I always believed Oldham was an equal opportunities council but your complete disregard of its disabled residents proves to this to be not the case. Can I ask the council to think of the needs of our disabled people and reintroduce this facility at the earliest possible opportunity?</p>	<p><i>The review concluded there were 4 other locations around the town centre that provided electric mobility scooters for hire, namely;</i> Millercare Oldham, Huddersfield Road; Keep Active Mobility, Ashton road, Keep Active Mobility, Market Square, Royton, Eden Mobility, Henshaw Street,.</p> <p>With regards to the reintroduction of this facility: The council will continue to monitor the availability of services to support disabled residents, whilst taking into consideration commissioning decisions, local availability of services and residents identified care and support needs.</p>
15	Ali Khan	Cllr Chadderton	<p>Please could you inform me with the final outcome of the TfGM Draft Proposal for Chadderton North &amp; Westwood Active Neighbourhood.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question. Firstly, I would like to assure you that we are listening to all the views shared by local residents and businesses from the local community. This is very important and I would like to thank everyone for taking the time to share their views.</p> <p>The consultation closed on 4<sup>th</sup> November and at present, and the responses are still being assessed and reviewed by an independent company helping the Council with this work, to ensure all the points raised by the community are considered. This work has taken longer than expected due to the complex nature of the scheme and the number of responses submitted.</p> <p>The proposals we consulted on included many different elements, not just bus gates and road closures, and to ensure everyone's views are listened to, we want to ensure this is all reviewed and captured.</p> <p>On completion, we need to compare the community feedback with the eligibility criteria for the programme of works, as the final proposals must reduce traffic levels, improve road safety and increase active and sustainable modes of travel.</p> <p>We hope to be able to review all the community feedback in the new year to help determine what happens next.</p>