

## Public Questions Full Council 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023

	From / Date	To	Question	Response
1	Syed Maruf Ali	Councillor Ali	<p>Eating a healthy, nutritious meal supports pupils with their learning and has been shown to improve behaviour and academic achievements.</p> <p>Oldham Council must act now to introduce universal free school meals for all primary and secondary school children regardless of their parent incomes. This would help build a better Oldham for everyone, saving families hundreds of pounds a year, ensuring all primary and secondary pupils are eating a healthy, nutritious meal at school.</p> <p>All children should have an equal chance to thrive and be healthy, no matter where they live or how much their parents earn. By making school meals free for all children the Oldham Council can deliver on its levelling up promise and help children achieve their true potential – especially children living in the most deprived parts of Oldham.</p> <p>Ensuring children receive a hot, nutritious meal at lunchtime will be a</p>	<p>Thank you for your question</p> <p>The Council provide free school meals to all pupils who are eligible via the means tested criteria, in addition we receive funding for universal infant free school meals (Years 1 and 2). We work proactively to encourage all those eligible to apply for free school meals and are keen to reach as many families as possible who may be eligible. The provision of school food is an opportunity to ensure that children and young people have healthy nutritious food. To ensure this, food served in all maintained schools and academies in England must meet school food standards. These standards help schools to provide children with healthy, balanced diets.</p> <p>In addition, we also have the following initiatives to support families who maybe struggling financiall:</p> <p>The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme</p> <p>Poverty Proofing the School Day Audits</p> <p>Breakfast Clubs</p>

			<p>lifeline for many Oldhamers facing extreme cost-of-living pressures – many of whom are having to spend less on both cooking and eating at home to make ends meet.</p> <p>Oldham Council should immediately prioritise the introduction of free school meals for the thousands of children who are living in poverty, but who don't currently qualify, as a first step towards rolling out free school meals to all children in primary and secondary schools in September.</p> <p>I hope the Cllrs in this chamber will support this recommendation and discuss this further in their next individual political party meeting and cabinet meetings, so that every child in primary and Secondary School receives free school meal?"</p>	<p>More information on these is available on our website.</p>
2	Karl Bardsley	Councillor Shah	<p>"Frontline Police officers are there to keep our communities safe. They are comprised of our neighbours, friends and relatives. They face the daily dangers of patrolling our streets to keep us safe. Sadly, some Police officers do not make it home and are killed in the line of duty.</p> <p>It is why many were shocked to read in the Mail on Sunday that Oldham</p>	<p>Thank you to Mr Bardsley, the unsuccessful Conservative Candidate for Chadderton North in the recent local elections, for his question.</p> <p>I will refer the questioner to the answer to this question that I gave at the Full Council meeting in December 2019.</p>

			<p>politicians, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council in particular have been openly photographed celebrating with a convicted criminal who was a getaway driver for the infamous 'Cop Killer' Dale Creegan.</p> <p>Could the relevant Cabinet member please clarify whether such associations are appropriate and whether they agree that such public associations only damage what little trust the public have for those running the Council?</p>	
3	Julie Heywood	Councillor Shah	<p>In the lead up to this May's Council elections, the Labour Party complained of hate speech and homophobia following a councillor's literature opposing LGBTQ+ education in schools. More recently, ZAHID CHAUHAN the new Mayor recently stated, Great Britain is called Great Britain because it has great people...who co-exist together. People from different backgrounds, people from different faiths, from different religions - they all come together.' In a town historically divided, the Labour Party's position should be applauded and hopefully the Council leader and her Cabinet</p>	<p>Thank You Mr Mayor! Mr Mayor I've never been in front of the Standards Committee, so if what I'm about to say lands me there under your watch I apologise in advance as you are my friend and ward colleague! I challenge the premise, the origins, the ideology and and the genesis of this question, it names only Muslim councillors in a pathetic and failed attempt to divide. Let's be clear this question does NOT stand up for the LGBTQ+ community, it does NOT stand up for Oldham Pride but most importantly it does NOT stand up for the values of a liberal democracy. Mr Mayor you speak of Great Britain of Britain being great and that is exactly what this question is directly attacking, the greatness of this great nation! Why are we referred to as the Western world, as a nation seen as a leader of the Free</p>

			<p>will back up their words with actions. Therefore;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Will AROOJ SHAH in her capacity as leader of Oldham Council join Oldham's Pride march and support Oldham's LGBTQ+ community?</li> <li>2. Will Dr Chauhan, in his capacity as Mayor of Oldham, join Oldham's Pride march and support Oldham's LGBTQ+ community?</li> <li>3. Will Mohon Ali, in his capacity as Cabinet Member for Education &amp; Skills join Oldham's Pride march and support Oldham's LGBTQ+ community?</li> <li>4. Will Arooj Shah's Oldham Council confirm that every member of her Cabinet is committed to the rights of Oldham's LGBT+ community?</li> </ol> <p>As the Mayor Dr Chauhan rightly referenced, 'Oldham is a town in Great Britain'. Great Britain is an inclusive society where we do not discriminate against people because of their sexuality. Will our town's leaders join Oldham Pride in the fight against homophobia?</p>	<p>World and a leader in the free world?? it's because questions like this can be asked, it's because people that look like me can stand up in chambers like this and speak freely without fear of torture or death!</p> <p>One of the things that makes Britain Great Mr Mayor is that we live in a society where everyone one of us is innocent until proven guilty! This question Mr Mayor is a direct attack on that fundamental premise upon which our free society is built!</p> <p>Mr Mayor this question is effectively accusing you and others of being guilty insinuating that because of your faith, culture, appearance and way of life you are homophobic and asking you, no demanding that you prove your innocence! It's a direct attack on the very foundations upon which our society is built!</p> <p>They know Mr Mayor that when you treat your patients in your capacity as a GP you do not treat them on the grounds of their race, gender or sexuality you treat them all equally based on their need. They know that Councillor Arooj Shah leads a borough that is proudly diverse and represents ALL communities within the borough!</p> <p>This is what they don't like, this is what they don't want to accept.</p> <p>The intolerance and hate is what they THINK makes their Britain great, in actual fact Mr Mayor it is our differences, our diversity and our acceptance, not tolerance, our acceptance of these differences that scares these people and leads to the creation of questions like this targeting people like you!, like councillor Shah and councillor Mohon Ali!</p>
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				<p>I reject the premise of the question and I reject the question! Thank you, Mr Mayor!</p>
4	Denise Leach	Councillor Shah/Councillor Ali	<p>The previous Council leader confirmed that an individual can self-identify their gender and that a woman can have a penis. With this in mind, and the Labour leader Kier Starmer also of a similar mind, will the Council leader, please confirm if the Council's position is that an individual can self-identify gender whereby not only can a woman have a penis, a male can breastfeed babies?</p> <p>Furthermore, Will the relevant Cabinet member for Education please confirm whether Oldham schools will be promoting transgender education to primary school children, including providing sexual instruction? And if so, will this Council allow parents to withdraw their children from lessons where this takes place?</p>	<p>Councillor Shah replied: Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you to Ms Leach for her most recent contribution to public questions. I have to say I was surprised at some of the statements made in this question as I can find no evidence of them being true. For example, I can't find any reference or recording that shows any previous council leader confirming that women could have a penis. I find it interesting that the statement has been made with such confidence and can only imagine I must have missed something and that the evidence for this will be provided by those who are spreading this latest culture war narrative online. As to the main body of the question, as the questioner well knows there is a difference between someone's sex and someone's gender identity. Our policies here in Oldham are that we comply with the Equality Act in offering the required protections for both the characteristic of sex and separately of gender reassignment. On the issue of transgender education I will ask my colleague and Cabinet Member for Education Cllr Ali to answer.</p> <p>Councillor Ali replied: To be absolutely clear primary schools in Oldham do not 'promote transgender education' as is stated by the questioner.</p>

				<p>Children at primary school are taught about a range of issues to help them understand the diversity of British society in the spirit of respect and tolerance.</p> <p>The Government's guidance on Relationships, Sex and Health Education is freely available online for any parents who are concerned about what children are being taught. It makes clear that individual primary schools can opt out of the sex education element of that curriculum. In addition, parents can also withdraw their children from the sex education element should their primary school choose to teach it.</p> <p>I must be absolutely clear that there is no school in Oldham providing sexual instruction to either primary school pupils or secondary school pupils. I do not know where this misinformation has come from but it is both incorrect and very damaging. Schools in this borough work really hard to build relationships with parents around sensitive issues such as these and it is disappointing that we have people willing to damage that work for their own divisive reasons.</p>
5	Lynne Kovacs	Councillor Shah	<p>I have heard personally from many Oldhamers who read with shock and also a sense of shame, the story in the recent Mail on Sunday where Oldham Council leader Arooj Shah was reportedly celebrating her victory with the convicted heroin dealing getaway driver of the Oldham cop killer Dale Cregan.</p>	<p>Thank you, Mr. Mayor, and thank you to conservative campaigner and former conservative candidate Ms Kovacs for her latest public question.</p> <p>Again, I would refer this questioner to the response I gave to Full Council in December 2019.</p>

			<p>This career criminal has posted multiple photographs of himself on social media alongside Arooj Shah whilst abusing members of the public.</p> <p>Contrary to being rehabilitated, I heard that this gangster's most recent conviction was on the very morning of the voting count, 5th April, and who was actually at the count in the civic chambers.</p> <p>Arooj Shah has previously described Mohammed Imran Ali, or Irish Immy as he likes to call himself, as a childhood friend and then later changed her reply to knowing him as a family friend.</p> <p>The people of Oldham deserve an explanation. This is in the public interest. Just what exactly is Arooj Shah's relationship with the one time viagra and steroid salesman so there is no confusion in the future</p>	
6	Gary Tarbuck	Councillor Shah	<p>During the 'COVID crisis', barricades were erected around the Public Gallery in the Council Chamber. However, once all COVID restrictions had been lifted by the Government, the Council, decided they wanted to leave the barricades in place. The Council then</p>	<p>Thank you to Mr Tarbuck, the recently unsuccessful Independent Candidate for Saddleworth South and one time Proud of Oldham and Saddleworth candidate for this council, for his question.</p> <p>Mr Tarbuck provides an interesting although not quite accurate description of the security and health protection measures that we have had in</p>

			<p>introduced draconian entrance requirements into public meetings. So draconian, that a councillor previously challenged as, "More stringent than prisons that they had visited." Not satisfied with these two measures the Council also used Greater Manchester Police's logo on letters issued to members of the public to try and silence dissent to the Council's failings to protect the town's children from the Grooming Gangs. The very toxicity that this Council wants to tackle was instigated by the actions of this very Council.</p> <p>Will the new Council leader, if not apologise, at least acknowledge the completely unacceptable actions of her Council? And will she also acknowledge that waving and pointing a finger, or simply looking at someone, are completely unacceptable reasons to ban a member of the public from meetings?</p> <p>Surely, if this town is to heal, then the Council must also accept its role in what it did wrong and its attempt to stifle democracy? Three leaders have already paid the price. What</p>	<p>place to protect our staff, elected members and the public over the last few years. He is correct in saying that plastic screens, which he refers to as barricades, were erected in this chamber, and in many other council buildings, during the covid 19 pandemic, in keeping with national public health guidance at the time to support ongoing infection control, especially for vulnerable members of the community. The council, at the same time implemented a number of other health protection measures including distancing and the installation of hand sanitiser dispensers across our buildings. During this time entrance requirements and sign in procedures were also strengthened as part of enabling track and trace procedures should a further outbreak be recorded. This process also supported the health and safety risk assessment undertaken as part of installing the screens as their installation meant the introduction of different emergency evacuation procedures. Aside from our actions to protect people during the pandemic it is incredibly unfortunate that the behaviour of a small number of people at council meetings last year have led the council to have to take firm action against those who choose to shout obscene and abusive things at elected members and staff, against those who damage public property and against those who assault council staff. While Mr Tarbuck can make inaccurate statements about the reasons for us having to ban people from this chamber for the safety of others attending meetings I can confirm that those who received bans have been clearly informed</p>
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			<p>more needs to happen before this Council takes a look at itself and takes action against its own politicians and officers?</p> <p>How is it that this Council thinks it's right that their elected leader, Arooj Shah, is seen celebrating during an election count, inside the Council building, with someone who has been convicted as a heroin dealer, a murderers getaway driver, and who also, was yet again, convicted hours earlier that very day? Yet think it's fine denying law-abiding citizens access to the Council chamber?</p>	<p>why they were being given, were given time to appeal against them and were told that those bans would be reconsidered at an appropriate time.</p> <p>I can confirm that those decisions were made in the interest of safety. It is categorically not acceptable that people who come here to take part in the democratic process, whether as elected members, council employees or members of the public be subjected to abuse, to foul language, to threats, to acts of vandalism and to violence. Those sorts of actions will not be tolerated and we will continue to take firm action against anyone behaving in that manner. That sort of behaviour is not democracy, we do not 'stifle democracy' but we do protect people from abuse and from violence.</p>
7	David Else	Councillor Shah	<p>Don't Trash Oldham is rightly one of the Council leader's flagship projects. One of the key concerns of Oldhamers is fly tipping and the appalling state of some of our streets. Can the leader of the Council therefore explain why she is being photographed celebrating her election victory at the home of a man who was fined for trashing Oldham? Does she accept how this looks to those of us who care deeply about this issue and will she apologise to the people of our town for her indiscretion?</p>	<p>Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you to Mr Else for his question.</p> <p>I have no idea who or what this question is referring to but would like to say that surely even I cannot be expected to know and memorise the names of every person who has ever been fined or prosecuted by the council?</p> <p>However, I can say that WITHOUT EXCEPTION I fully support the prosecution of ANYONE who flytips, litters or commits other environmental crimes in our borough – that's why we've recently established our new environmental crime team so that we can take action against as many offenders as possible. My commitment to our Don't Trash Oldham approach is absolute – we will work to clean up and transform</p>

				neighbourhoods and we will work to take action against anyone who blights our great borough.
8	Hannah Roberts	Councillor Shah	<p>Data from the Rivers Trust shows that in 2022 raw sewage was discharged from 17 locations in 537 separate spills for a total of 4,703 hours across Oldham East and Saddleworth.</p> <p>In Saddleworth, discharges were reported along the River Tame at Clifton Holme, Delph New Road/Station Approach, Dobcross New Road, Greenfield and Woodbrook Road.</p> <p>The Conservative Government has not only allowed this to happen – it voted down Labour’s attempts to make the privatised water companies clean up our streams and rivers. United Utilities is responsible for keeping our rivers clean but despite paying out £300m to shareholders plan to add the cost onto all our water bills.</p> <p>Does the Leader of the Council agree that it is unacceptable for United Utilities to continue to discharge raw sewage in our waterways and will she raise residents’ concerns with United</p>	<p>Thank you to Ms Roberts for this question. It is an absolute national disgrace that raw, untreated sewage is being allowed to enter our beautiful waterways, damaging wildlife and ruining our rivers, lakes and seas. I’m appalled that here in Oldham we are being used as a free dumping ground for the waste of private companies who, while they are destroying our waterways with sewage, continue to make exorbitant profits and pay outrageous amounts to their shareholders. And the biggest disgrace is that the Government in Westminster is seemingly going to do nothing about it.</p> <p>I know that those concerns are shared and have been raised by all local MPs – including Jim McMahon – both in his local constituency role and also as Shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This council will absolutely do all we can to make the Government and the companies involved aware that they cannot and morally should not be destroying our environment for profit.</p>

			Utilities and ask for an urgent plan to stop this happening and to pay for the clean-up out of their profits rather than asking residents to pay more?	
9	Chris McManus	Councillor Dean	<p>The council has invested in Oldham Town Centre with events such as the Reindeer Parade, Christmas Lights Switch On, Brass Monkey's Festival, and Festival Oldham over the last few years.</p> <p>Oldham Council spent £136,530 on these events last year with a further £128,910 budgeted for this year.</p> <p>These events are funded by the Councils Economy Service in the Place and Economic Growth directorate.</p> <p>However, outlying areas in the borough have had difficulty funding their traditional events, such as the Whit Walks, these being funded solely by the residents and local businesses of Saddleworth, and the Whit Friday Band Contest, this being funded by the residents, local businesses and contributions from local Councillors from their councillors allowances.</p>	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>I can confirm that the Council is committed to events across the borough on an annual basis, however as with every local authority across the country, there is support for events in the town centre to boost footfall to support traders and local businesses.</p> <p>The economic importance of local events is welcomed across the borough, and that is why the Council actively supports various events which cover different areas of the borough including the Tour of Britain, Half Marathon, and the Saddleworth and Oldham Band Contest.</p> <p>Each year there are essential elements funded by the council to ensure that the Whit Friday Walks and Band Contests in the various villages can go ahead safely -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road closures, traffic management and stewards</li> <li>• Toilet provision</li> <li>• First Aid provision</li> </ul> <p>In addition, there has been a regular contribution towards the central prize fund. For a number of years, local ward members have also chosen to</p>

			<p>Despite the popularity of these events, and in the case of the Band Contest, International popularity, funding has become a major concern, putting these cultural traditions at risk and unless resolved, I fear for the future of the Whit Friday walks and the Band Contest.</p> <p>With that in mind can the following be answered;</p> <p>Is the Council committed to supporting events that benefit the wider community, not just the Town centre?</p> <p>Will the council commit to allocate funds for events, outside of the sphere of the Town Centre block Labour vote, and into the surrounding areas, ensuring that the historic events, such as Whit Friday can continue far into the future?</p> <p>If not willing to allocate funds to ensure the Whit Friday events can continue, can you confirm that the council will be happy to see the events ended and be replaced with Festival Oldham, which so happened to take place the following day this year?</p>	<p>make contributions from their individual councillor budgets.</p> <p>The Council meets with the Band Contest organisers to support their various requirements and to support plans in development across the year. This year's contribution equated to £15k on top of contributions from ward members</p>
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10	Mark Birchall	Councillor Goodwin	<p>Fireworks are now creating a huge distress and disturbance causing alarm fear in many residents in Oldham. People who suffer from PTSD, along with small children, elderly and pets across the borough. Recently there has been a large rise in fireworks being set off during the week at early hours of the morning waking people up who have to work and creating tensions amongst and against areas which are setting off these fireworks.</p> <p>We all know the rules and do not want to spoil people's enjoyments and celebrations, but it is evident that some of the celebrations do not take any consideration for the residents affected by their illegal behaviour.</p> <p>It does not help when a local councillor actually post on social media celebrating re election and illegal fireworks being set off roadside.</p> <p>Can the officers and councillors explain what the plans are to ensure all people holding celebrations are well educated in the use of fireworks and the laws around them .</p> <p>It seems as the summer months are coming now as last year the setting off of fireworks increase. Can you please reassure the residents who</p>	<p>Thank you for your question Mr Birchall. I share your concerns regarding the use of fireworks, especially late at night. Sadly, this is a national issue and one which has become a greater problem, all year round. Fireworks can be a nuisance and very disruptive, especially for young families and pet owners. The legislation which deals with use of fireworks after 11pm is a police power and the council are not authorised under this legislation. Following a Council motion in September 2022, our Environmental Health team has written to wedding venues advising them of their responsibilities, but we believe that it's individuals letting the fireworks off rather than the businesses themselves. The Council also wrote to the Government asking for a strengthening of the legislation on the sale of fireworks and more restrictions on where they can be purchased. If fireworks are being let off in the street or outside the permitted times, residents should contact Greater Manchester Police by calling 101 or visiting the GMP website.</p>
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			have had enough of illegal use of fireworks, that swift action will be taken by the authorities and any licenced venues will have this facility removed.	
11	Kyle Phythian	Councillor Taylor	Has there been an increase in people being made homeless from the Private Rented Sector and is there any evidence of increasing illegal evictions as has been reported nationally?	<p>Thank you for your question. During 2022/23 the Council saw 20% increase in the number of household's seeking assistance due to the loss of their private rented home. In 2021/22 402 households approached the Council for this reason with 507 approaching in 2022/23.</p> <p>Whilst there has been an increase in the number households losing their private rented home, Oldham has not seen a significant increase in illegal evictions. The Council's Tenancy Relations Service supports both tenants and their landlord's ensuring the landlord follows their legal obligations</p>
12	Ghazala Rana	Councillor Shah	I've noticed the scaffolding has come down at the Old Library on Union Street, can we have an update on what's going on with the building and when it will be done?	<p>Thank you, Mr Mayor, and thank you to Ms Rana for her question.</p> <p>I have to say what a delight it has been to return this year and to see the progress that is being made on some of our key regeneration projects – both in Oldham Town Centre and across the borough.</p> <p>One of my favourite projects is the Old Library – mainly because it holds so many memories for me as a young person who grew up here in Oldham visiting the library building when it was Oldham's museum – including its interesting underground street.</p>

				<p>The building, which has been out of use for many years, is being beautifully restored to make it a flexible and modern meeting and event space that retains many of the original heritage features of the old library building.</p> <p>The Old Library will also be a new civic base for the borough- providing a new home for the council chamber, for the mayor and for their civic and charitable events and as a home for the beautiful silverware and memorabilia currently displayed here in the civic centre but that belongs to the people of Oldham.</p> <p>For me that's the best bit of the project – that it will offer much more access and many more opportunities for use by Oldhamers – for their own events and activities and just to pop in and have a look at what is displayed there.</p>
13	Dawn Stewart	Councillor Goodwin	Can the relevant Cabinet Member explain to Oldham how the Council will work with communities to transform their neighbourhoods?	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>The Don't Trash Oldham Campaign has two key focus areas – enforcement against people who fly-tip in our communities, and transformation works where Council teams engage with local ward members to understand local priorities. Examples of transforming neighbourhoods requests range from cleaning up communal areas, gulley cleaning, grounds maintenance, refreshing milestone markers, planting trees, flowers and improving play areas. This engagement has taken place before the teams mobilise in each ward area for a 4-week period.</p> <p>Similarly, as part of the Transforming Neighbourhoods campaign, we will engage with</p>

				ward members and look to deliver on their priorities which will be informed by their engagement with their residents.
14	Connor Green	Councillor Goodwin	<p>I'm pleased that the Council is continuing Don't Trash Oldham and setting up an Environmental Crimes Team but a lot of land is owned privately or by partners and Housing Associations who also need to do their part.</p> <p>What can the Council do to make sure everyone who is responsible for open spaces and land on estates keeps them clean and free of flytipping and litter?</p>	<p>Thank you for your question, Mr. Green</p> <p>The Environmental Enforcement team investigate all reports of flytipping and as part of this investigation, we establish who owns the land. The Council also work in partnership with Housing Associations where their land is involved to ensure it is kept clean.</p> <p>Where the land is owned privately, the team can serve a legal notice on the owner to make sure the waste or litter is removed once the investigations are complete. Where the owner fails to comply, the team will take action, complete the works and recharge the costs.</p>
15	Sharon Green	Councillor Jabbar	<p>Can the leader or cabinet member update Oldhamers on any conversations with telecoms companies like IX Wireless who don't care about residents' views and erect huge masts in our streets?</p>	<p>The Leader of the Council and Senior Council officers have met with IX Wireless last month. Officers are having regular discussions with IX Wireless regarding their proposals, and are seeking to influence the proposals, where we can, to limit some of the impacts of the proposed new infrastructure. However, much of the new infrastructure (such as the telegraph poles) can be installed by operators under permitted development rights, and so the Council has very limited, or no, control over that infrastructure delivery.</p> <p>In relation to the large masts that IX Wireless' infrastructure plans specifically involve, we are working closely with IX Wireless to identify sites with the least impact and that still meet the technical requirements for the wireless</p>



				infrastructure network to function properly, but even with these masts, the ability for the Council to control their implementation is quite limited under planning and highways legislation.
16	Martin Fleming	Councillor Dean	I was pleased to hear that the Leader is committed to ensuring the Oldham Coliseum has a future in the Borough as a producing theatre, can she provide an update on the latest position between the Coliseum and Oldham Council?	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>The Council and the new Board of Trustees at the Coliseum continue with regular discussions about the proposed new theatre, which will be built on Union Street. Both the Council and the new Chair of the Coliseum Board were in attendance at a recent engagement event ahead of the planning application being considered.</p> <p>There remains a joint determination between the Council and the Coliseum to work together for the good of theatre, arts and culture in the borough, and with the borough's other cultural partners, and with ongoing support of the Arts Council, we will shape these plans together.</p>
17	Ethan Penny	Councillor Shah	Is the council planning to do anything about the tired looking district centres in Royton and Chadderton?	<p>Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you to Mr Penny for his question.</p> <p>We're absolutely committed to improving our district centres alongside our ambitious plans for Oldham Town Centre. In Royton, the refurbishment of the Royton Town Hall and Library buildings are well underway and will ensure these buildings of local heritage importance are improved and retained to benefit the local community and wider town.</p> <p>We look forward to welcoming the community back to a much-improved building for them to use as soon as work completes, which is currently planned for 2024.</p>

				<p>However, we do not own all of the spaces and buildings in our district centres, for example the Market Square precinct in Royton is managed by London &amp; Cambridge Properties. We aim to work with other landowners and landlords to make improvements and repairs as quickly as possible and to the highest standard. The council is currently working with London and Cambridge to encourage repairs and refurbishment of the canopies over the shops and also undertake some improvements to the elevations above. In Chadderton, I know that local ward members and the New Chadderton Partnership are exploring possibilities for how the town centre could be improved. That work will feed into the Neighbourhood Planning process for Chadderton, as well as inform future work with the Council on projects in and around the district centre. However, as with Royton, the precinct itself, and the majority of other properties in the centre, are not owned or managed by the Council, as such the Council will continue to work with property owners to encourage repairs and refurbishment where needed.</p>
18	Paul Scoltock	Councillor Goodwin	<p>I know that many residents in Oldham will have seen people riding around the streets of our Town on scrambler style motorbikes meant for off-road use, usually without helmets or any other safety equipment and more often than not performing wheelies and other dangerous stunts.</p>	<p>The illegal and improper use of off-road motorcycles is a significant problem that the Local Authority and Greater Manchester Police are working in partnership to address. Residents are encouraged to report the use of such vehicles to Greater Manchester Police, either through the crime reporting portal on their website or via the non-emergency 101 number, as without intelligence/information being provided by</p>

			<p>How can the Council and GMP work together to stop idiots riding round on these bikes putting themselves and the people of Oldham at risk with their dangerous behaviour?</p>	<p>residents, it is very difficult for the Local Authority and GMP to take action against the offenders. However, if residents are able to provide information regarding the location of the offences and/or the identity of the individuals involved, Greater Manchester Police will seek to seize vehicles which are being used in an anti-social manner under s.59 of the Police Reform Act 2002. In some areas, where vehicles are being used anti-socially, the Local Authority have funded and installed s.59 warning signs, to enable Greater Manchester Police to enforce these powers more quickly. The Local Authority will seek to use the Civil tools and Powers which are available to them, to take action alongside any criminal proceedings that are pursued against individuals by Greater Manchester Police. If off-road motorcycles are being used illegally and being stored in the properties of registered Housing Providers, then the Local Authority in partnership with Greater Manchester Police, will seek to work with the Housing Providers to identify these properties and encourage the Housing Providers to pursue tenancy enforcement action against the offenders for breach of tenancy.'</p>
19	Ian Manners		<p>What is the impact of increased rents and mortgage payments on demand at the Council's Housing Options Service - are more people asking the Council for help with housing?</p>	<p>you for your question Mr Manners The Council is seeing an increasing demand for the service provided by the Housing Options team across a range of areas.</p> <p>In 2021/22 402 households approached the Council for assistance as they were losing their</p>

				<p>private rented accommodation and 507 approached in 2022/23.</p> <p>During 2021/22 11 households approached the Council due to mortgage repossession and in 2022/23 there were 12 households seeking assistance due to this reason.</p> <p>The demand for social housing continues to grow, at the end of 2021/22 there were 6,919 households seeking social housing via the Council's Housing Register and at the end of 2022/23 there were 7,349</p>
20	K. Fetch	Councillor Jabbar	<p>I'd like to ask the councils stance on sexism within the borough.</p> <p>I emailed the council last October regarding a post shared on Twitter which had several Councillors tagged into it, including our MP Jim McMahon.</p> <p>It advertised an event that included the words 'brothers only' I'm looking to see if the council is ok with this and if not, why have the people tagged in it not removed themselves from the post or at least questioned it? Also I'm still waiting for a reply from the Council?</p>	<p>Thank you, Mr Mayor, and thank you to the questioner.</p> <p>While I can categorically say that the Council does not condone or support any form of sexism it is hard to give a thorough answer without knowing the nature of the event in question.</p> <p>As a council we are not against single – sex activities though. Why would we be? Every day in this borough events and activities take place that are single sex – whether that's men's talking clubs to promote better mental health or women's football training, there are many, many examples of people getting together to take part in activities with people of their own sex.</p>
21	Shona Farnworth	Councillor Brownridge	<p>In Oldham there are many unpaid carers to friends and families, such as providing personal care, arranging medical and social support, and attending appointments</p>	<p>Unpaid carers do an amazing job and in Oldham there 9.8% of our population that are unpaid carers. We do believe we can do more to support unpaid carers and that's why work has already</p>

			<p>and with the carer's leave bill being passed recently in parliament does the council believe that more action is needed, both nationally and locally, to support people in work with caring responsibilities and the boroughs unpaid carers.</p> <p>Will the council support this effort by launching an unpaid carers survey in Oldham so that carers can have their say on the support and services they need, and will the council offer efficient, effective support and guidance that is always available for carers, throughout the borough?</p>	<p>progressed and we will be in a position to launch a new Carers Strategy in September 2023.</p> <p>A recent carers survey (2023) has helped inform the strategy &amp; the priorities for 2023 -2026. The Carers strategy will focus on early intervention and prevention for unpaid carers &amp; ensuring there is sufficient information, advice and support to unpaid carers. Ongoing annual surveys will take place with carers, but the carers service is happy to hear your thoughts and feedback at any time. We are re-establishing the carers partnership board and are always looking for board members to represent the views of unpaid carers.</p>
22	Michael Powell	Councillor Shah	<p>GMCA have recently received £50million a year for three years in additional funding for brownfield development. How much of that is being directed to Oldham? What is being done to ensure that we are maximising its impact in reducing green space development? And what will be being done to ensure it helps local residents to either access or build their own new homes?</p>	<p>Thank you Mr Powell for this question. Under the first tranche of Brownfield Funding which had a focus on schemes ready to start building in the current financial year, Oldham housing schemes have secured £935,000 to deliver 65 new affordable homes. Last week, the Council announced a new partnership with a private developer to bring forward 2,000 new homes on strategic brownfield sites across Oldham Town Centre. The Partnership will deliver a range of new affordable and private homes to create a new housing market for our town centre. It is envisaged that sites of this nature are likely to have a strong case to secure brownfield funding. Additionally, Officers continue to work closely with the GMCA, Private Developers and landowners and have developed a residential pipeline of over</p>

				800 new homes on brownfield sites across the borough to secure brownfield grant in the future.
23	Irene Muschamp	Councillor Goodwin	<p>Recently work has been completed on Albion Street within the town centre as part of “ The town Centre improvement scheme” spearheaded by the administration’s previous leader.</p> <p>However, it has come to many people’s attention that when the new surface is wet, it quickly becomes slippy, the steps which lead to and from tommy field market have no definition as it were they either begin or end so visitors especially those who are elderly and those with poor eyesight tend to lose focus or balance as the steps are the same colour as the floor!</p> <p>Can I therefore ask was an Equality Impact Assessment undertaken and</p>	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>Firstly, there are national standards that all materials need to adhere to: such as skid resistance tests which have been carried out and they have all passed the relevant British Standards. These were conducted in simulated wet conditions to replicate inclement weather.</p> <p>Corduroy textured tactile (rippled effect) flags have been installed at the top and foot of each step as well as handrails to help identify a change in level and heighten awareness as well as providing a support to those who require aid in traversing the steps.</p> <p>The Designers arranged a meeting with Oldham’s Disability Groups (Action Together &amp; Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People) which included visually impaired and others. We discussed the design and listened to concerns. They expressed their understanding of the project</p>

			<p>if so where any of its findings done in consultation with residents of a certain age, mobility or sight impermeant and what were those findings or if none were carried out why was deemed not to do so?</p>	<p>objectives in the context of the wider and future aspirations of the Town Centre redevelopment. All concerns were considered during the design process and mitigation measures implemented. Additional consultation meetings are scheduled with the working Group to discuss future projects across the Town Centre.</p> <p>An independent Road Safety Audit was carried out by Transport for Greater Manchester Road Safety Team at preliminary and detailed design stages, and we are awaiting a post construction, Stage 3 review now the project is completed. This rigorous review does focus on provisions for all users including disabled groups as well as many other aspects of the completed scheme. We will continue to work with all partners and stakeholders to ensure that the developments and improvements to the town centre meet the needs of all Oldham's residents</p>
24	Karl Bardsley	Councillor Shah	<p>Parking on the pavement and causing pedestrians, including parents with prams, to walk into busy roads can pose several dangers. Here are some potential risks associated with this situation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased vulnerability to traffic accidents: When pedestrians are forced to walk on the road due to blocked pavements, they become more exposed to traffic. This increases the risk of accidents, especially in busy areas such as</li> </ol>	<p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>The Council fully appreciates the community issues that are caused by irresponsible parking, however Civil Enforcement Officers can only issue penalty charge notices where there is a restriction in place that covers the footway. Where there are no restrictions, the only authority who can enforce the obstruction is the Police.</p>

			<p>Broadway where vehicles are moving at higher speeds.</p> <p>2. Reduced visibility: Walking on the road due to obstructed pavements can make pedestrians less visible to drivers. This can lead to a higher likelihood of collisions, as drivers may not see pedestrians in time to react or yield the right of way</p> <p>3. Limited space for manoeuvring: Walking on the road alongside moving vehicles can be challenging, particularly for parents with prams. It reduces the space available for pedestrians to navigate safely, increasing the likelihood of incidents or close calls with passing vehicles</p> <p>4. Impeding emergency access: Blocked pavements can impede emergency vehicles' access to sidewalks and pose a hindrance to their ability to reach people in need quickly. This can lead to potentially life-threatening delays in emergency situations.</p> <p>Will and how will OMBC address these dangers</p>	
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