

Public Questions Full Council 1st November

	From / Date	Question	Response
1	Mick Harwood 04/09/23	What can be done to stop idiots vandalising play areas in Oldham's parks?	<p>Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you to Mr Harwood for his question. It is disappointing when we see incidents of vandalism and anti-social behaviour marring our fantastic parks and green spaces. We would always encourage residents witnessing such incidents to report them to Greater Manchester Police through the non-emergency 101 number, or through the Greater Manchester Police web reporting portal. This will hopefully allow Greater Manchester Police to identify and arrest the individuals responsible. Once those responsible have been identified the council can seek to use civil powers, alongside any criminal prosecution, to take action against the individuals, such as Anti-Social Behaviour Injunctions, or Criminal Behaviour Orders. Such Injunctions/Orders can prevent Offenders from entering specific areas and we would seek to prevent further such behaviour by prohibiting offenders from entering the Boroughs Parks where appropriate. When we have identified issues previously in parks, the Local Authority have also asked the First Response Security Service to patrol or monitor the location to deter such incidents. In some cases, where young people are found to have been involved our youth service can work in local parks and neighbourhoods to engage with the young people and divert them into more positive activities if possible.</p>
2	Ghazala Rana 04/09/23	I've seen in the news that the chief executive is leaving and it left me with a really obvious question in my mind which I think most	QUESTION WITHDRAWN

		Oldhamers will probably have as well, what does the chief executive actually do?	
3	Connor Green	What's the council doing to improve SEND provision after the recent ofsted and CQC inspection?	<p>Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you to Mr Green for his question. A joint Ofsted/CQC area SEND inspection of the Oldham partnership took place in June 2023.</p> <p>Following the inspection, Oldham Council and the Chief Executive of Greater Manchester Integrated Care Board received the inspection report, which highlighted some positive practice but also two priority areas that required addressing urgently and some areas for development.</p> <p>To respond to this, the local area partnership, including the council, the integrated care partnership, parents/carers and wider partners, came together to coproduce a Priority Action Plan, which details the actions that the local area will take to address the two priority actions identified by the inspection.</p> <p>The areas for development have been included in the existing SEND & Inclusion Improvement Programme. The Priority Action Plan forms part of this and will be published shortly, so the actions we are taking as a local area partnership are open and accessible to everyone.</p>
4	Meg Birchall 06/09/23	What services are on offer at Beever Family Hub and when will Family hubs open across the rest of the borough?	<p>Beever Family Hub was the first of six planned Family Hubs across the borough that will offer a wide range of support for families with young children.</p> <p>At each family hub local families will be able to access a range of help and support to make sure their child is developing well, is healthy, safe and looked after. Services at Beever currently include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weekly Baby Play and Stay & Play sessions Weekly FAB activity sessions for children aged 5-11 years old Midwifery clinics for before and after the baby is born. Health visitor contacts and development clinics such as baby weigh sessions Breastfeeding and weaning support groups

			<p>Families can also purchase Healthy Start vitamins, children’s toothbrushes and toothpaste and feeder cups</p> <p>We continue to develop new sessions and services so would urge families to check our website or visit a family hub or childrens centre for the most up to date information about the services and support available.</p> <p>Improvement and redecoration work is due to commence on the new Family Hub sites in the new year. The formal transition and launch of these sites as Family Hubs will be in late Spring/early Summer 2024. Work is also underway to develop Family Hub services at Oldham Library.</p>
5	Denise Leach 06/09/23	<p>Would the leader of Oldham Council please confirm the number of knife crime incidents that have taken place in Oldham since January 2023, and detail what her Councils strategy is to discourage our young people from being influenced by criminals who carry knives.</p>	<p>Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you to Ms Leach for this question which I think she has mistakenly attributed to the council leader, despite community safety sitting in my portfolio.</p> <p>The council recognises the significant impact and harm that knife and weapon enabled crime has on Communities and has implemented a number of measures to attempt to reduce such types of behaviour, using a mixture of education, intervention and enforcement.</p> <p>This includes using research from the Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit, adapting recognised good practise from other areas, and listening to residents to establish why they feel the need to carry a knife, or other weapon. The responses have included sessions in schools , including presentations to young people and the commissioning of a play regarding knife crime and its effects.</p> <p>The council have also funded commissioned, targeted works, with individuals at risk of engaging in knife crime and focusing on messaging around how we are keeping residents safe, so they do not feel the need to carry a knife, or other weapon.</p> <p>We are also working closely with Greater Manchester Police to identify individuals involved in knife crime, supporting their criminal prosecutions, where appropriate, by using Civil powers such as Criminal Behaviour Orders.</p>

			<p>The Local Authority have also in the past funded knife arches at the request of GMP, which were deployed in hotspot locations’.</p> <p>With regards knife crime incidents that have occurred in the Borough this information would be held by GMP. I would suggest that the resident request this information from GMP directly.</p>
6	<p>Gary Tarbuck 06/09/23</p>	<p>Can the relevant Cabinet member please confirm what the total net debt for Oldham Council is forecast for the year 2023-24 year and what the total amount anticipated in interest payments to service this debt will be over this current financial year?</p>	<p>Thank your Mr Mayor and to Mr Tarbuck for his latest question to Full Council.</p> <p>The Council’s debt is forecast to be £160.996m at the end of the Financial year.</p> <p>For 2023/24, the interest payments to service this debt are forecast to be just over £6.5 million.</p>
7	<p>David Nestor 06/09/23</p>	<p>Can the relevant cabinet member please confirm how many racially motivated crimes were recorded in schools in Oldham and provide a breakdown of these crimes? As part of this, can they provide a breakdown of victims and perpetrators by ethnicity.</p>	<p>Thank you Mr Mayor and can I thank Mr Nestor for his question.</p> <p>While the council encourages schools to report any hate incidents there is no legal requirement for schools to report incidents to the Council, nor to report the breakdown of information you have specifically requested in your question.</p> <p>The total number of incidents that have been reported to Oldham Council for the academic year 2022/23, so the school year ending in July this year, is 195.</p> <p>I welcome your concern about any hate incidents happening in schools but would like to offer reassurance that, where these issues occur, they are taken incredibly seriously by schools who use their local policies to tackle perpetrators and support victims.</p> <p>Alongside this schools throughout the borough do fantastic work in promoting respect and a culture of zero tolerance for racism and hate. During the last week before half-term I know many local schools were taking part in curated activities around hate crime awareness week.</p>

8	Lynne Kovacs 06/09/23	Can the relevant Cabinet member please confirm the total number of HMOs in Oldham and how many people are being accommodated in them in total?	<p>Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you to Ms Kovacs for her question. There are currently 72 properties that have been licensed as HMOs by Oldham Council. To be licensed as a HMO a property must house 5 or more people of 2 or more households sharing facilities.</p> <p>There are also a number of smaller HMOs that do not require licensing under the legislation and as of August 2022, the Council's monitoring of HMOs identified 331 such properties in the borough.</p> <p>The above equates to just 0.34% of all residential dwellings in the Borough of Oldham.</p> <p>This data does not specify the number of people accommodated in each property.</p>
9	Julie Heywood 06/09/23	Can the relevant cabinet member please confirm how many secondary schools in Oldham have gender neutral toilets? Can they also confirm if risk assessment were conducted to ensure the safety of girls in schools with gender neutral toilets.	<p>The provision of toilet facilities is a matter for individual schools and the council does not hold this information. If, as a parent, Ms Heywood has questions about provision at her children's school these can be taken up with the school in question directly.</p>
10	Anita Lowe 07/09/23	<p>On viewing the council meeting on 6th September and previous live meetings</p> <p>It's obvious to observe some council members and also those of the cabinet whilst sat in the council chamber using there mobile phones</p>	<p>While I accept it may seem to an outside observer that those using their phones aren't paying attention in reality the very opposite may be true. Councillors and council staff use their phones, tablets and other devices to access information, to read agendas and reports and to gather information in response to queries raised during meetings. In fact, we are actively discouraging members from using printed copies of reports and agendas – to save us money and time in printing.</p> <p>Far from being a distraction, mobile device of all sorts are now an essential tool in many settings.</p>

		<p>They have there phone either on the desk in view or sit as though they appear to be asleep with there heads bowed and viewing there devices.</p> <p>There social media must be far more important to be looking at there phones than being interested in what is being spoken about in the chamber by there comrades</p> <p>Observing Councillors on there phones is happening far too often and it appears as though they are not interested in the meetings as all we see is heads bowed</p> <p>My question is this:</p> <p>Can all Cllrs and staff please refrain from using there social media devices whilst in the chamber. Switch them off or out of sight After all they may learn something !!!!</p>	
11	<p>Kyle Phythian 07/09/23</p>	<p>I know Failsworth Town hall is now offering a range of services to the community, when will other</p>	<p>The recent changes at Failsworth Town Hall within our south district, represents the first stage in providing services in districts across Oldham, as part of the Council's on-going commitment to improving access to services</p>

		parts of Oldham benefit from these community hubs?	<p>and support as part of our 'Resident Focused' approach. Meaning people can get advice and appointments closer to home rather than having to travel further afield.</p> <p>This will get stronger as we develop more integrated services working across the council, voluntary and other public sector partners.</p> <p>We are working on providing similar improvements in the other four district areas (North, East, West and Central), to ensure the transition of local services within other key venues in the new year. The formal launch of the other community hubs across the remaining four districts will be late Winter/early Spring. Some local services, such as weekly Citizens Advice sessions are already available in several venues across the borough</p>
12	Derek Gatley 07/09/23	<p>I watched the council meeting on 6th September and was disturbed to see so many councillors not paying attention and were more interested in their phones. Surely all councillors, from the leader down, should be listening to what is going on in the town, and not glued to their phones. Shouldn't the use of mobile phones be banned during Council meetings?</p>	<p>The council is actively discouraging the printing of agendas and reports for all meetings including full council.</p> <p>As a result, elected members often use electronic devices including mobiles, tablets and laptops to refer to papers and reports or to seek information to respond to queries. This is appropriate use of such technology and there are no plans to ban the use of electronic devices during meetings.</p>
13	Lewis Farnworth 07/09/23	<p>My wife and I went to the council chamber for the September meeting to watch the council proceedings.</p>	<p>I'm horrified to hear of Lewis's and his wife's experience in the Council Chamber in September, but I am grateful that he's raised it because this behaviour is frankly unacceptable from anyone.</p> <p>I've asked officers to review CCTV, and unfortunately nothing has been picked up.</p>

		<p>After which we were told that a member of the public who sat behind us was making mocking gestures and faces about my wife's disability.</p> <p>While this was not captured on the live stream other members of the public and members of the council told us of this individual's behaviour.</p> <p>Could the Leader or relevant cabinet member assure My wife and I that this sort of behaviour is not welcome in the chamber and should people who make an open mockery of disabilities be allowed to sit in the chamber also because if they are it shows that the council tolerates that kind of behaviour?</p>	<p>I hope any member in here who witnessed this has helped Mr Farnworth file a police report about the individual in question because the behaviour he mentioned in his question is categorically not welcome in this chamber and this is not the sort of Council we are.</p>
14	Lisa Philips 07/09/23	<p>Why does the Leader of the Council want Eton to come to Oldham?</p>	<p>Thanks for your question, Lisa.</p> <p>Really simply, I want Eton to come to Oldham as a key partner in the Eton Star Oldham sixth form college because this is about our young people and not politics. Oldham's young people deserve the best educational possibilities and that means taking up opportunities like this Eton partnership when they present to us.</p> <p>We have fantastic schools and sixth forms in Oldham already, but we know that in the next decade we'll need 1,500 new sixth form places in Oldham, so this partnership with Eton will help to create some of these places.</p>

			<p>This sixth form college will be aimed at those students who might need that bit of extra help to get the top marks to get into the best universities in the country.</p> <p>What it won't do is "cream off" the most able students, who would have had the best chances to succeed regardless.</p> <p>And this isn't a grammar school like some people have suggested, this isn't a fee-paying school at all.</p> <p>My ambition for this sixth form college was always about ensuring the admissions process will focus on accepting those who will benefit the most.</p> <p>Not necessarily the highest achievers, but those with the potential to be high achievers, who need some additional focus and support to get to where they deserve to be. This will involve a focus on admitting large numbers of students on free school meals, children looked after, or those who would be the first in their families to attend university.</p> <p>I'm really excited about this this project and what it will mean for young people in Oldham. It will improve opportunities and education outcomes for not just the families who live here now, but for generations to come.</p>
15	Karl Bardsley 13/09/23	<p>In a recent news report in the MEN about how over 500 children were abused in oldham in 2022 alone, I would like to ask the relevant cabinet member the following questions.</p> <p>1)What concrete measures and policies do our local councillors plan to implement to address the</p>	<p>The figures quoted in the article by the Manchester Evening News on 12 September 2023 relate to the number of referrals received by our Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub on children and young people potentially at risk of or believed to have suffered harm as a result of exploitation or sexual abuse. This does not mean that the number of children and young people experiencing abuse has increased, but that it is being reported more often than previously was the case.</p> <p>We believe that this is due to increased public and professional awareness of all forms of child abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse, as a direct result of the work of the Council and its safeguarding partners have</p>

		<p>failure in preventing child abuse within our community.</p> <p>2)how will they ensure accountability and support for affected children and families moving forward?</p> <p>3)Also do you agree with me that Mr Gerard Jones has failed oldhams children and should now resign ?</p>	<p>undertaken to ensure that everyone understands and takes action to tackle all forms of child abuse within families and communities. In addition, mechanisms for reporting child criminal exploitation have improved and this has allowed us to capture more data. Previously, this has been a challenge for all local authorities.</p> <p>In terms of the work we do to prevent child abuse Oldham Children’s Safeguarding Partnership’s priority is the safety of our young people. That’s why it has robust procedures in place should any member of the public or professional believe that child exploitation or abuse is taking place. Our child protection teams respond immediately to any possible risk of harm and our Complex Safeguarding Hub is dedicated to supporting children and young people at high risk of exploitation. The Unit comprises of social work, health professionals, psychologists and police officers who work together to tackle all forms of child exploitation. The work of the Hub has been praised by inspectors as part of our regional peer review.</p> <p>The Council is working closely with a local charity Keeping Our Girls Safe to ensure that children and young people are aware of and can access services in their local communities.</p> <p>We also have a dedicated Training Officer who works with schools and colleges to ensure that children and young people, parents and professionals are fully aware of what exploitation is and how to safeguard against it. In addition to this, we publish communications year round across council channels on how to spot the signs of CSE and how to report a safeguarding concern.</p> <p>Sadly, there will always be predatory, evil, individuals in society who will seek to abuse others. The council is working hard to prevent this, to seek justice and to support victims and survivors of abuse.</p>
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The Council has put in place a Child Sexual Exploitation Steering Group which oversees our progress against our priority actions following on from the completion of the Independent Review into Historic Child Sexual Exploitation. Our priorities are:

- To bring offenders to justice
- To support survivors of child sexual exploitation
- To provide assurance on current safeguarding practice
- To ensure cross-party involvement and oversight
- To raise public awareness of child sexual abuse

We are working closely with our partners within Oldham Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Operation Sherwood to ensure delivery of these actions. Our progress is being monitored by our Member Steering Group.

In addition to this, a Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel has been established and Oldham Safeguarding Children's Partnership also holds the Council to account through its Performance Sub Group and auditing activity. External scrutiny is provided both through the Peer Review Process and Ofsted. Finally, the Greater Manchester Assurance Review is examining current safeguarding practice in relation to child exploitation across all 10 local authorities, including Oldham, to ensure that our response to safeguarding children and young people at risk or identified as experiencing exploitation and abuse is of a high standard.

On the final point we believe that the council is working hard to improve how we safeguard young people, to learn and to continuously improve how we work.

Our current children's leadership team has invested and promoted our work with children and young people at risk of exploitation and ensured that the Complex Safeguarding Hub is equipped to respond. Oldham is a much safer place as a result of the work we have undertaken to dramatically improve our response to exploitation in all its forms.

16	Chris McManus 14/10/23	<p>At a recent Community meeting in Saddleworth attended by the Council Leader I was heartened to hear that at last OMBC is taking a strong stance on the issue of unpaid Council Tax across the Borough and is an indication that this local authority is at last taking the matter seriously.</p> <p>This is a positive development long called for by many within the communities of Oldham and is clearly intended to address an issue that has been going on for a long time.</p> <p>As it is not clear what measures the council has been taking or indeed what success the Council has had in recouping this unpaid Council Tax so far can the Leader answer the following questions; Has the Council yet achieved any success in collecting a greater proportion of owed Council Tax? And With the unpaid Council Tax being several Millions of pounds per year will the Leader confirm if the residents of Oldham will be having</p>	<p>The Revenues department, working in a targeted but appropriate way, are using the range of statutory recovery methods available to collect outstanding council tax. Arrears have reduced by £2.6million since 1 April 2023.</p> <p>The current year collection stands at 54.59%, £72.9million in monetary terms, at the half year point. The Council is currently on target to achieve its 2023/24 Target of 94.2%</p>

		a freeze on their Council Tax contributions this financial year or indeed, depending on the success of the before mentioned, a Council Tax Reduction.	
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