

**Report to COUNCIL - 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

## **Cabinet Report of Housing and Licensing Portfolio**

### **Portfolio Holder:**

Councillor Elaine Taylor,  
Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing and Licensing

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This report provides an update on the main activity since the last Council meeting relating to portfolio responsibilities.

### **Housing Summit**

A round table discussion will be held on the 14<sup>th</sup> December with the Leader, social landlords from the Strategic Housing Partnership and from the private sector ahead of the DLUHC deep dive on Temporary Accommodation, which takes place on 19<sup>th</sup> December.

The discussion will be focused on the key challenges faced such as the lack of housing supply, the increasing demand for homelessness services and temporary accommodation as well as housing standards within the borough.

The session will capture how as a collective we can address these issues and the key actions that will need to be taken to take forward.

### **Homelessness**

Further to my report last month, the demand for the homelessness service continues to increase. While acknowledging these challenges, the Council continues to review the level of service being provided to help the huge numbers of residents in need of housing support. A new IT system is being developed to reduce the amount of paperwork involved and support residents to access the Housing Register in a more effective way. We are also undertaking a review of staffing capacity, casework demand and systems and processes compared to other local authorities across Greater Manchester to understand if there are any other areas of best practice that we can adopt at this critical time. The team in Access Oldham continues to support residents, but the number of people coming through the door for assistance continues to grow, with approximately 100 residents attending daily for housing support and advice.

Given the complex escalation of housing demands in Oldham – the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) are coming to do a deep dive to review the procurement and management of temporary accommodation. This will provide the Council with an opportunity to outline directly to government officers what the key challenges and issues are affecting Oldham's residents and the impact on service provision. We hope this will highlight the need for extra assistance in order to alleviate this demand led service.

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## Housing Standards

The Council continues to respond to, and address, housing standards issues in private rented properties. There have been a number of 'rapid action plans' as a result of visits by Environmental Health Officers. One example is where Officers closed a House In Multiple Occupation, occupied by 5 individuals due to a complete lack of fire protection and a poor means of escape and serious electrical issues. Another example was arranging for emergency remedial work at a privately rented property due to an imminent risk from electrical safety. This was done to ensure the family were allowed to remain in the property with the landlord being recharged for this emergency work.

Officers from the team have also served an emergency prohibition order on a ground floor flat due to its poor conversion and serious fire safety issues as well as arranging temporary accommodation by working with the Council's Housing Options and Social Services colleagues for a family so the landlord could carry out works after serious flood that affected the electrics.

## Planning

Places for Everyone Joint Plan consultation on the modifications ran for 8 weeks, between 11 October 2023 and 6 December 2023. The representations received will now be submitted to the Inspectors examining the Plan together with any comments from the nine authorities on those representations.

The Council's own Draft Local Plan is to be considered by Cabinet for public consultation on 11 December. The intention is that our own Local Plan will sit alongside Places for Everyone to inform decisions on planning applications going forward. We would encourage engagement in this Draft Local Plan consultation by all residents, businesses and other stakeholders to help us refine this draft version into a final set of robust policies that we can submit for our own Local Plan examination.

In addition, we have recently emailed all local members to engage in the review of the playing pitches across the borough as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. This piece of work will take 12 months to complete and is critical piece of evidence that will also support the local authority to apply for external funding for improving existing, and creating new, sports pitches.

## Licensing

The Authority has received a significant increase in new driver applications after the Taxi policy was amended earlier this year. Before June 2023, approximately 1,300 drivers were licensed at Oldham Council as Private Hire drivers. Since June and the changes to the policy, the Council has received an additional 1,272 applications for a driver's licence with 382 successfully being awarded after the necessary checks and tests. This is almost doubling the fleet of licensed drivers of private hire vehicles and allows for local regulation of these drivers to protect the public.

We are also seeing an upturn in the number of vehicles licensed locally at the Council - another 238 vehicles have been licensed through the Council - joining the existing fleet of 1,035 private hire vehicles.

**Recommendations:** Council is requested to note the report.