



Cabinet Report of Communities and Culture Portfolio

Oldham Council

Portfolio Holder:
Councillor Peter Dean Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture

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

District Working and Place Based Integration

The second round of Community Councils has now taken place, with feedback given on progress against the initial priorities that Members and partners have identified. Each meeting has also received a presentation from, and held in depth discussions with, a specific partner on a key theme identified as a wider priority:

- North – GMP on crime and policing
- South – Environmental Services on access to green space
- East – Primary Care partners on access to services
- West – Youth Service on access for activity for young people
- Central – Education and schools on primary attendance and attainment

These discussions will contribute towards the development of the District Plan for each area, providing a set of shared objectives that we are able to work towards as a partnership. This would not be possible without the our partners and the positive way in which they are supporting this work.

Feeding into this, our new partnership problem-solving model, led by the District Teams, is now becoming embedded, and we are working to bring a wider selection of partners on board. An important part of this is the opening of our partnership offices, allowing for colocation of partners and Council services – we now have these spaces operational in three of our five Districts, with the others expected to be in place over the coming months. Our face-to-face support offer is also developing, and we expect to have locations up and running in each District soon, allowing people to access a variety of support nearer to home.

Heritage, Libraries and Arts

The Christmas Fair at Oldham Library, Christmas Parade and Lights Switch On took place on Saturday 18th November. Great attendance and feedback has been received from residents. The Christmas Fair attracted 2707 visitors (over double the usual Saturday footfall). The parade and switch-on attracted 10,000 people to the town centre.

The latest exhibition at Gallery Oldham opened on 21 October. Carboniferous Monsters: 150 million Years before the Dinosaurs. This exhibition shows what Oldham was like 300 million years ago. Suitable for prehistoric monster fans of all ages!

LS Lowry's masterpiece **Going to the Match** is going on public display in Gallery Oldham from 2 December 2023 to 24 February 2024. It will feature in a new Oldham Stories display alongside much-loved Oldham Athletic items from our collection and footage of Latics fans going to the match in the 1960s.

To support our work in libraries the council has been successful in gaining £6000 from the Good Things Foundation's 'Digital Inclusion Capability Grant - Fix The Digital Divide'. This will purchase laptops for the Digital Champions Network and support staff training.

Sport and Leisure

During October and November of this year, Oldham Community Leisure (OCL) invested around £620,000 in improving facilities for our residents. Their focus was on upgrading four gyms. These were in Oldham Leisure Centre, Royton Leisure Centre, Chadderton Wellbeing Centre and Failsworth Sports Centre. The refurbishment included replacing all cardiovascular equipment at all venues. All existing strength and resistance kit was totally refurbished to bring it back to pristine condition. There are also 40 new Spin Bikes. To enhance the offer, OCL have also improved the ambience of the gym spaces with new décor, floor coverings and LED mood lighting. Finally, a new 16-person sauna was also installed at Royton which will enhance the offer at this facility. The full project was completed on Monday 20th November and feedback has been extremely positive with an increase in membership of those leisure centres.

The utilities costs for maintaining our leisure facilities have increased over the past two years. This creates a particular issue for heating the seven swimming pools OCL operate in the borough. In partnership with OCL the Council put in a bid to the Sport England Swimming Pool Support Fund and were awarded the maximum funding of £500,000. This is amazing news for the borough and will help with the operating costs of our pools. Swimming is an essential life skill, as well as being an excellent form of physical activity with benefits for mental and physical health. The fund is a one-off payment though and the increased price of utilities is likely to continue to present a challenge going forward.

Recommendations: Council is requested to note the report.