

Report to Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Board

Creating a Better Place Update

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Reason for Decision

Briefing on the Creating a Better Place Programme

Executive Summary

Cabinet approval was first obtained in January 2020 for the Council's '**Creating a Better Place (CaBP)**' strategic framework and capital regeneration programme. Following the onset of the pandemic, the programme was reviewed to re-prioritise and reconfirm the projects included in the programme to ensure alignment to the borough's economic recovery and to support the financial implications associated with responding to the Covid-19 virus: this was reported to Cabinet in July 2021.

The programme remains on track to deliver new homes, create jobs and deliver against our Green New Deal commitments ensuring Oldham is a great place to live, work and visit with lots of family friendly and accessible places to go. This report provides Place Scrutiny with an update on the strategic progress of the Creating a Better Place regeneration programme, including external funding opportunities secured, benefits realised, and the associated Social Value generated to **Create a Better Place**.

Recommendations

To review and note progress on the Creating a Better Place Programme

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The very best towns and cities around the world have one thing in common – they are both people and quality focused. Quality of place is paramount to thriving communities and we want Oldham to be a place where people feel they belong, they feel safe, proud and it is an exciting place where people can live, work and spend time.
- 1.2 Growing our economy through social enterprise, starting new business ventures and supporting the expansion of existing businesses, apprentice opportunities for work and skills development, and development and construction employment opportunities is increasingly more important to ensure residents have access to paid work to support themselves and their families through various challenges including rising inflation.
- 1.3 The Creating a Better Place programme has enabled a number of key partnerships to be strengthened ensuring Oldham has a strong narrative locally, regionally and nationally enabling Oldham, amongst other things, to secure substantial external funding to invest within the town and accelerate delivery of our regeneration activities to Create a Better Place. Most notable of these is the recent partnership announced with MUSE to create up to 2,000 new homes across a number of strategic sites within Oldham Town Centre.
- 1.4 The projects within the Town Centre will ensure its sustainability, including the Spindles, that the Council acquired and the associated projects including new public sector office accommodation, a new food court, new home for the indoor market and a Performance space. In addition, across the Town Centre we are establishing a new public park, the delivery of 2,000 new homes whilst also protecting and investing in our historical assets through the redevelopment of the Old Library and outside of the Town Centre the redevelopment of Royton Town Hall and Library.
- 1.5 CaBP also provides important revenue saving opportunities to ensure the best use of public funds, value for money is demonstrated and social value is embedded into all projects for wider community benefits. The financial savings have been embedded into the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Capital Programme. Separate annual reports are due for Cabinet consideration once again, which includes Creating a Better Place financial matters, as part of the annual budget setting procedures.
- 1.6 Strong progress is being made against the priorities identified through comprehensive and ongoing consultation with members, residents and businesses to deliver family friendly activities, improved accessibility, sustainability, green energy, new jobs and apprenticeships, new businesses, filling empty units, more things to do and places to visit. The update contained within this report and accompanying presentation evidences our progress in delivering against these key priorities.

2.0 Creating a Better Place: Strategic Updates

- 2.1 The CaBP Programme continues to make a strong positive impact to the regeneration of the town, creating Social Value and delivering financial savings. The programme has delivered £3.5m of revenue savings to date with further additional savings projected over the next three years to the value of c£7.2m.
- 2.2 Working closely with various partners locally, regionally, and nationally Oldham's strong Vision, plans and ability to deliver schemes have resulted in the CaBP Programme securing

external funding in excess of £70m to date with the Council continuing to identify additional funding opportunities moving forward.

- 2.3 Our Green New Deal continues to progress at pace with various schemes in development and delivery, these include large capital infrastructure schemes including the Oldham Town Centre Low Carbon District Heat Network and Wrigley Head Solar Farm. The Green New Deal Programme continues its strong track record of securing external funding including £8.7m for the Oldham Town Centre Low Carbon District Heat Network and £2m of external grant funding to enable decarbonisation works to commence on the Spindles shopping centre in support of the Councils continuing drive to decarbonise the Council's buildings. The Council are bringing together key stakeholders and partners at the launch of Oldham's inaugural Green Summit on the 8th March 2024 to further progress and strengthen this agenda.
- 2.4 The programme continues to act as a catalyst for new jobs within Oldham through the various projects both planned and in delivery. The Broadway Green development is a prime example that includes 600,000sq feet of employment space, creating up to 2,000 new jobs and up to 500 new homes on the development. The development is clear evidence of the private sector investing in Oldham with the recent addition of an ALDI and Costa on the site. Jobs and apprenticeships are also being created through the construction work both planned and underway within the Town Centre and across the town.
- 2.5 We continue to perform well against our programme housing targets with the delivery of 403 homes against our target of 352 for 2022/23. Our recently announced new strategic partnership with MUSE is set to deliver a further 2,000 much needed homes within the Town Centre.
- 2.6 A key component of the CaBP programme is generating Social Value, which has substantial opportunity to benefit both individual residents and our wider communities. Social value is firmly embed within CaBP as part of our procurement processes and secures a contractual commitment from our contractors to deliver social value benefits. New apprenticeships, job creation and educational sessions at local schools and colleges are a few examples.

3.0 Creating a Better Place: Strategic Updates

3.1 Town Centre

The CaBP programme was constructed following comprehensive consultation with our local communities and businesses to help clearly define and ensure wider awareness and engagement with our regeneration ambitions. This work has also helped ensure that local priorities, and ideas and suggestions from local communities and businesses were embedded into the Programme and associated project work in various stages from planning through to delivery.

The engagement process formed part of the Big Oldham Conversation, with specific consultation and engagement events both digitally and in person with specialist groups, residents, town centre businesses and market traders to help raise awareness and seek feedback on various town centre projects and the overall vision for the future of the town. Consultation continues as each project goes through the key stages of development.

Clear visible progress can be viewed with various communication channels being used on projects working their way through the planning process combined with those currently on site that is contributing to a real vibrancy within the Town Centre. These schemes include work at the Spindles on new office accommodation, new archives centre, the new Tommyfield Market and Food Court, new Performance Space. In addition, other schemes

currently on site include schemes to safeguard and ensure the future sustainability of historical buildings, including the Old Library and the Old Post Office which will be transformed into a state-of-the-art theatre as part of our ongoing development of Oldham's Cultural Quarter. Whilst the CaBP vision and programme is clearly articulated we continue to explore further opportunities in parallel to ensure a sustainable town centre that is safer, cleaner and greener with an improved shopping experience and regular events for all generations within the Town Centre. Further details on the various schemes can be viewed here: [Creating a Better Place | Oldham Council](#)

Further project consultation will take place at the appropriate time in conjunction with standard practice for project development / planning application considerations, however feedback from residents, local business, visitors, and market traders continues to be positive and really helpful for shaping the following projects ahead of seeking approval for progression

The transformational plans can also be viewed via a fly through video, bringing the town centre plans to life with the film outlining what we plan to do and where – including the redevelopment of Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre, the creation of a brand-new town centre park and a dedicated cultural quarter with new theatre. The video can be viewed here [Welcome to your new town centre - YouTube](#)

3.2 Housing

The CaBP programme continues with great success to deliver against ambitious new housing targets to meet the housing needs of our residents in delivering various sizes and tenure. Delivery of these homes include various sites across Oldham most notably Broadway Green alongside an employment site delivering valuable jobs for our residents of Oldham, the latest housing phases for Broadway Green are due to be approved in the next few months.

It is clear that Oldham is being recognised as having a clear strategic approach to regeneration and as a result securing various external funding grants to accelerate our progress, for example Brownfield Land Grant, whilst also attracting high calibre partners. Following the completion of a competitive procurement exercise, the Council were delighted to approve at Cabinet the appointment of national placemaker Muse, as its new Strategic Development Partner for the delivery of new homes within Oldham Town Centre.

Entering into a delivery partnership of this nature is a key milestone for the Council helping to realise one of the key objectives within the Creating a Better Place Programme, notably the creation of up to 2,000 new homes across a number of strategic sites.

Muse were selected as the preferred bidder having demonstrated a thorough understanding of the ambition and scale of Oldham's regeneration plans, and the capability and track-record to deliver, with a highly experienced team headed by a born and bred Oldhamer Phil Mayall. Oldham Council and Muse's joint delivery of up to 2,000 homes in the Town Centre is a fantastic opportunity to create new communities for the future and unlock brownfield land for regeneration.

Creating new homes on such a large scale will bring about a huge range of benefits for the whole borough including increased footfall in the town centre and boosting local businesses whilst maximising the opportunities presented by under-utilised sites. The partnership will also support the borough's pioneering Greener Oldham developments - supporting the Green New Deal by embedding sustainability and net zero carbon ambitions within the project where possible. The partnership will also provide opportunities for employment, learning, skills and social contributions across the design, procurement, delivery, and operational phases of the projects.

The Creating a Better Place programme will clearly continue to play a key role in response to the Housing Crisis within Oldham and the wider Council/partner response to this key agenda and challenge.

3.3 Green New Deal

The Oldham Green New Deal (OGND) Strategy was adopted in March 2020 and deals with the upgrade of energy infrastructure in the Council's estate and Oldham borough to achieve stretching carbon neutrality targets. The strategy aims to achieve this by securing investment and delivery capacity in low carbon infrastructure to realise a range of benefits such as jobs and training opportunities for residents in this key growth sector, contracts for Oldham's local Green Technology and Services sector businesses, lower energy bills for businesses and residents and improvements in local green infrastructure for communities.

The OGND delivery programme comprises a range of initiatives and projects including large capital infrastructure schemes such as the Oldham Town Centre Low Carbon District Heat Network (£40m), decarbonisation retrofit of Spindles (£4m) and Wrigley Head Solar Farm (£1.3m). With the exception of Wrigley Head, most of these capital schemes have either secured grant funded (e.g. by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme) or the intention is that they will be funded and delivered by our private sector should the Council wish to proceed on this basis (e.g. Town Centre District Heat Network). This Town Centre Heat Network will form a strategic piece of energy infrastructure linking into the redevelopment of the Town Centre as a whole, including the new Master Developer partnership with Muse, and has already attracted significant grant funding and capacity support from the Department of Energy Security & Net Zero and the GM Combined Authority. First Choice Homes Oldham are also a key partner in that project, and we have the opportunity to transfer the existing heat network at St Mary's into the new town centre wide heat network scheme at a future point in time.

Other projects within the OGND delivery programme include RED WoLF (demonstrating an innovative hybrid low carbon electrical heating system in 19 Council-owned social homes at Primrose Bank), Alexandra Park Eco-Centre (depot renovation), Northern Roots (now an independent charity developing the UK's largest eco-park) and the Oldham Green New Deal Delivery Partnership.

The OGND Delivery Partnership initiative is the most significant of all of the projects within the OGND programme, and aims to establish a cross-sector investment and delivery partnership which will procure a major commercial infrastructure developer partner to work with Oldham's anchor organisations and communities to develop and deliver a pipeline of low carbon infrastructure projects to meet local needs and priorities (including the reduction of energy bills for residents and businesses). Oldham's Local Area Energy Plan (developed by Energy Systems Catapult as part of the GM Local Energy Market project) shows an opportunity for up to £5.6bn of low carbon infrastructure in the borough which will be required to reach carbon neutrality. The Council has carried out three market engagement exercises which have each showed significant interest from major market players in working in Oldham on a collaborative basis. The Council has also recently submitted a bid for £1.6m of revenue grant funding from Innovate UK (as part of a consortium with GMCA and Manchester CC) which, if successful, will fund all costs associated with establishing the OGND Delivery Partnership. The partnership is expected to be self-funding on an ongoing basis.

Further grant funding from the Levelling Up Fund is supporting the creation of the Green Shoots Centre, a state-of-the-art zero carbon business incubator facility to be situated at Rhodes Bank (also the site for the proposed low carbon heat network energy centre), the new town centre park and an education centre at Northern Roots, as well as improvements in active travel infrastructure in the Oldham Greenway.

The Council also recently secured £140K revenue grant funding from Connected Places Catapult to develop area-based retrofit schemes for 'able to pay' Oldham residents to support them to improve the energy performance and comfort of their homes and reduce their energy bills over the longer term.

4.0 Creating a Better Place: Project Updates

4.1 An overview and further information on the progress of the CaBP Programme is provided within the accompanying presentation for scrutiny members to review, given the commitment to make timely progress and so local communities can see the projects brought to life on site and benefiting from our Social Value commitments.

5.0 Consultation

5.1 The CaBP programme was constructed following comprehensive consultation with our local communities and businesses to help clearly define and ensure wider awareness and engagement with our regeneration ambitions. This work has also helped ensure that local priorities, and ideas and suggestions from local communities and businesses were embedded into the Programme and associated project work in various stages from planning through to delivery.

5.2 The engagement process formed part of the Big Oldham Conversation, with specific consultation and engagement events both digitally and in person with specialist groups, residents, town centre businesses and market traders to help raise awareness and seek feedback on various town centre projects and the overall vision for the future of the town. Consultation continues as each project goes through the key stages of development.

6.0 Key Decision

6.1 No

7.0 Background Papers

7.1 Not Applicable

8.0 Appendices

8.1 CaBP PowerPoint Presentation