

## Portfolio Report

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Elaine Taylor, Deputy Leader of Oldham Council  
Cabinet Member for Decent Homes

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

### Housing Needs / Homelessness

Unfortunately, residents continue to seek housing support when they find themselves homeless as ongoing rent and mortgage financial pressures impact on residents and communities. The Council is now supporting over 600 households in temporary accommodation. With so many residents, and families being supported, the limited places available within the borough are under significant pressure and we're keen to find move-on homes as soon as possible to avoid families living in hotels and B&Bs.

We have recently introduced a new computer system to help manage the housing register and advertise social housing properties that become available to rent. Residents are telling us that they find it easier to register for rehousing and they are able to upload their supporting documents to the system while keeping track of the application progress. This has already assisted with reducing wait times on the phone and via email for residents. There are currently over 6,500 households on the housing register waiting for social housing and just to put this into context, from 1 April 2023 to 14 June 2024 only 1,211 homes (1bed – 4 bed) became available for let: there simply is not enough socially affordable homes for residents to bid for.

The Housing Options team will be moving location in July to a new location within the Civic Centre – this will provide a new front door for all housing enquiries and a dedicated place to visit when residents need help, advice and support related to housing issues.

### Housing Standards / Selective Licensing

The Environmental Health team has continued to respond to complaints of disrepair from residents living in the private rented sector. This sector has witnessed a significant increase in the number of overall complaints compounded by the poor weather and the cost of living challenge. In the last 12 months, the team has received over 800 complaints from Oldham Residents. Housing Standards Officers respond to all complaints and take necessary enforcement action to ensure that the property is suitable for occupation. Officers work with landlords but also use emergency powers to ensure risks are management and the property is safe. In response to the Housing Emergency declaration by Oldham Council earlier this year, the team has been supported by 2 additional housing standards officers to help deliver the compliance and improvements in the private rented sector.

In addition to the ongoing enforcement, the Council's Selective Licensing Scheme continues to deliver improvements in the housing stock - since its commencement in July 2022, the scheme has received 672 applications from landlords; 464 licenses have been issued, and 308 condition audits have been completed. Work and inspections are ongoing; however, during this period, Officers have addressed over 100 'Category 1 hazards' (the most serious) in rented properties.

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## Housing Delivery

Helping to address the cost of living and housing crisis, the Council has committed to building 500 truly affordable homes over the next 5 years. These will be let at rents residents can afford (at Local Housing Allowance Rates). A Housing Recovery Board has been established to further accelerate the delivery of new homes (including empty homes being brought back into use) and the supply of additional temporary accommodation. Key housing delivery projects are as follows:

**Town Centre** – Last year the Council signed a strategic partnership agreement with a nationally accredited company called MUSE, to deliver the Council's plans for 2,000 new homes across a number of strategic sites within Oldham Town Centre. A Detailed Business Plan has been signed off by the Council and public consultation on the Development Framework is taking place in July 2024 (which is a precursor to an outline planning application for the core sites being submitted early next year). One Public Estate (£3.2 M) and GMCA Brownfield Funding (£5.5 M) have been secured to help bring forward the first key sites.

**Broadway Green** - alongside an employment site delivering valuable jobs for our residents of Oldham, the final two residential phases (R3 and R4) are being finalised and should be on-site over the next few months. This will deliver 138 further homes in addition to the 332 already built.

**Fitton Hill** – Countryside Properties are on site constructing 365 mixed tenure homes on brownfield land owned by the Council and ForViva that had been derelict for over 20 years. The development includes 49 truly affordable homes as well as shared ownership, private rented and open market sale with the first homes ready for occupation in September 2024. Discussions are taking place with Great Places and Countryside to potential increase the number of truly affordable homes by a further 23.

**Derker** - In April, Hive Homes secure Planning Permission for 132 low and zero carbon housing on brownfield land which will include a mix of truly affordable rented homes, shared ownership and private sale. Construction is due to commence in July 2024.

**Southlink** – Marketing has commenced on the former Oldham Mumps Station site, jointly owned with TfGM, to deliver around 150 apartments and houses including truly affordable homes and zero carbon homes. Market interest has been encouraging with 3 strong bids expected to be submitted by the end of June. An application by the Council for £1.9M has been submitted to Round 3 of the One Public Estate Brownfield Housing Land Remediation Fund and the outcome of this application is expected after the election.

**Foundry Street** - In June Planning Permission was granted for 15 one-bedroom supported living apartments in the town centre. The specialist accommodation will provide much-needed homes for young people at risk of homelessness and is being delivered by Jigsaw Homes, working in partnership with the Council. £1.5 M Grant has been secured from the Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP). A start on site is anticipated in the Summer 2024 with completion schedule for Autumn 2025.

## Taxi & Premises Licensing

The Licensing team delivers the Council's statutory licensing service which has a varied remit, and includes the licensing of alcohol, entertainment, and late-night refreshments premises together with gambling establishments, street trading, some highways permissions, scrap metal dealers, marriage premises and adult entertainment venues. The team undertakes routine compliance inspections at these locations to ensure they comply with legal requirements. Where issues are identified, the team works with partners to ensure compliance.

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The licensing team also fulfils the council's statutory duty relating to the private hire and hackney carriage trade, covering operators, drivers and licensed vehicles. Since changes in the policy, the Council has seen a significant increase in the number of drivers and vehicles registered. Currently, there are 1,417 licensed vehicles and 2,262 licensed drivers. There are also another 839 applications for a driver's license being processed, almost a doubling in numbers since the policy was amended in 2023. In the last 12 months, the Licensing team inspected 120 vehicles and drivers to ensure compliance.

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