

Portfolio Report

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

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

Customer Services: The council's new Customer Service Centre opened in July. Located in Spindles, the new service replaces Access Oldham at the Civic Centre. Residents can access support and signposting to a range of council and partner services with several services available at different points during the week including Citizens Advice, TOG (Tameside, Oldham, and Glossop) MIND and Welfare Rights. The new location has been designed with input from residents with lived experience through engagement with Oldham Poverty Action Group. A communications plan and directional signage is in place to ensure residents can access support and services. The Contact Centre Team have undertaken outbound calls over the summer period to support residents living in Temporary Accommodation to access the council's HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) programme. 71 families were supported to book sessions and access wider support and services.

Sport and Leisure: GMCA (Greater Manchester Combined Authority), England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), Lancashire Cricket Club and other cricketing bodies have developed a long-term partnership to develop the sport in Greater Manchester. A priority of this partnership is to create a network of community cricket facilities that will provide access to cricket in urban, non-traditional settings. There has been an increase in demand for cricket-based facilities across the borough with an increase in new recreational cricket teams being formed. Also, previously installed NTP's across the borough are no longer fit for purpose and may need to be replaced.

The Sports Development and Environmental Services teams in Oldham have worked closely with ECB and Lancashire Cricket Foundation (LCF) to recognise five potential sites across the borough that had the minimum standards required by the ECB. This project has been 100% funded through the ECB with two separate ECB approved suppliers completing installations across two different timeframes due to material and capacity issues experience nationally. Once all sites are installed, we will be working closely with LCF and other key local stakeholders including clubs, schools, and community organisations to create activation plans to ensure community usage.

Cultural Strategy Refresh – Following significant community interest in culture following the Cabinet's decision to retain the Coliseum Theatre on Fairbottom Street, various cultural groups and partners attended a workshop in early August to discuss how they could co-design and co-create new ways of working, so Oldham's communities have the best offer from all their respective creative areas and in the various performance locations across the borough (buildings and open space). This work will be progressed in the coming weeks and months to help re-shape clearer governance around the cultural partnership and to help feed into the Cultural Strategy Refresh.

Work has commenced on the Fairbottom Street building following a break into the building where considerable damage was caused looking for copper pipes. The approved refurbishment work will soon be underway, starting with the removal of the remaining asbestos within the building.

Events - Over the last period the Council has continued to lead on the delivery of several key events:

- Exhibition: One Seven Five: An incomplete history of Oldham in 175 objects opened in Gallery Oldham on 15th June and will run through till 11th Jan 2025

- In partnership with the Coliseum, Oldham Library hosted the Khushi Festival on Saturday 3rd Aug showcasing work made by Oldham's South Asian communities, presenting a rich mix of events for everyone. This was followed by a music night at the QE Hall on Wednesday 7th August to celebrate the life and works of the late music promoter Sam Malik.

- Throughout the summer holiday, the library service is delivering the Summer Reading Challenge and Oldham Theatre Workshop is delivering a creative HAF programme across Oldham.

- Oldham Theatre Workshop delivered satellite workshops for young people in partnership with Mahdlo and delivered their outstanding summer show at the QE Hall in August.

District Community Councils and Neighbourhood Working: The local support offer launched in February continues to grow from strength to strength, with a wide variety of services on offer for local people across our Districts. Local people can access information about the offer through the "Neighbourhoods" section of the Council website. The first round of Community Councils for 2024/25 has now taken place across all Districts, with plans beginning to be formulated for each patch. Behind the scenes, new partnership structures are now in place for each area, ensuring local agencies can work together in a coordinated way, for residents' benefit.

Stronger Communities and Community Safety Services

The use of partnership problem solving continues in the place, with the Community Safety Service working closely with partner agencies to develop comprehensive information led problem solving strategies to combat crime and disorder within the borough. The Council has worked collaboratively with colleagues in Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the voluntary, community and faith sector to mitigate the impact upon Oldham's communities in response to disturbances that have taken place across the country including Greater Manchester. Over two hundred voluntary, community and faith (VCF) sector organisations operating within the Borough were invited to attend a community resilience briefing with Senior officers from Oldham Council and Greater Manchester Police. Further community reassurance messages and offers of advice and guidance have been provided to the sector through Action Together.

The Council and Police have worked in partnership with community leaders across the Borough to dispel misinformation and provide reassurance. The strong and trusted relationships that have been built over many years with voluntary, community and faith sector organisations, community leaders and businesses have ensured that Oldham has remained resilient and united during challenging times.

Recommendations: Council is requested to note the report.