

**Present:** Councillor J. Hussain (Chair)  
Councillors Ghafoor, Kouser, McLaren (Vice-Chair), Moores,  
Sharp, Shuttleworth and Wilkinson

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Peter Dean – Cabinet Member for Thriving  
Communities and Culture  
Paul Clifford – Director of Economy  
Neil Consterdine – Director of Communities  
Jodie Barber – Head of Youth Services  
Subnum Hariff-Khan – Head of Heritage, Libraries and Arts  
Peter Thompson – Constitutional Services

1            **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Murphy and Williamson. Apologies were also received from Councillor Mushtaq (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People).

2            **URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of urgent business received.

3            **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest received.

4            **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions for this meeting of the Scrutiny Board to consider.

5            **MINUTES**

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Board, held 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024, be approved as a correct record.

6            **YOUTH SERVICES**

Members of the Board scrutinised a report of the Director of Communities and an associated presentation from the Youth Service, which provided an update on Oldham Council Youth Service Performance, highlighting Key work streams.

The youth service provided an informal education service, working with people (aged 11 – 25 yrs.), enabling young people to develop holistically, working in partnership with young people to support and facilitate their personal, social, political and educational development. The service provided opportunities for young people to develop their voice, influence and place with society and supports them to make positive choices and reach their full potential as individuals, members of their community and members of society.

The service provided a comprehensive range of youth work programmes, projects and opportunities and comprised three distinct teams.

- The detached youth work team,
- The district youth work team
- The Boroughwide team.



The Service worked to the national youth work curriculum which provided 10 thematic curriculum areas that sets out the educational process which underpin the quality youth work that they delivered. It was not a prescribed syllabus but rather a framework to support and develop their practice as a catalyst for learning. The National Youth Work Curriculum is a flexible framework which allowed youth workers to identify how their interventions and activities can be used to support the personal, social and political development of young people. Above all, their Curriculum responded to the diversity of young people's needs, interests and to the concerns of young people.

In 2021 the service received a core investment of £80,000 to support the establishment of a core youth work offer across all five districts of Oldham. The service underwent a restructure to secure alignment with the Places based model of working within Oldham and to deliver a consistent youth work offer across Oldham.

The key objectives of the services were identified as:

- To meet the identified needs of young people in Oldham via a range of high-quality youth work programmes and interventions, with delivery aligned to placed based working approaches.
- To raise aspirations and attainment of young people through informal and non-formal education and community-based learning opportunities
- To support young people to have a voice and influence in all matters that affect their lives.
- To support the wider youth sector to contribute to the wider youth offer, have a shared voice, and promote collaborative and effective partnership working.
- The service is gradually getting back to pre-pandemic levels which is in line with regional and national trends. Oldham, after Manchester, has highest visitor footfall in Greater Manchester.

As part of the Youth Service's Strategic leadership, they had developed a children and young people's participation Framework for Oldham to enable the service to build on a culture of positive participation. A Children and Young People's Participation framework has been developed which is aimed at supporting the development of a culture of participation across all services working with and on behalf of children and young people. This will guarantee the place of children and young people participation as a long-term priority with its principles reflected and embedded in all future strategies and in turn practice. The Framework includes:

- Provision of shared definitions and language.
- The multiple benefits of participation with children and young people.
- Legal and legislative drivers around the rights and requirements of participation work with children and young people.
- Clear principles that should be underpinning all participation work.
- A charter, devised by young people around putting principles into practice.
- A series of shared objectives around participation.
- Information around our existing participation work both collective and individual.
- A preferred model for participation – as adopted across Greater Manchester.
- Application of the model to our current whole system approach to participation.
- Useful tools and links to further support participation work with children and young people.

The Framework is underpinned with a preferred participation Model – the LUNDY model, as this has been adopted within GM as the preferred model for children and young people’s participation and ensures our participation work in Oldham is aligned and compliments wider work across the GM system. The Framework has been developed with engagement from a range of key stakeholders, Including:

- Young people supporting the development of the framework via workshops with our youth voice family.
- A range of stakeholders including Childrens Social Care, Childrens Commissioning, Education, Youth Services and Strategic Youth Partnership.

Members of the Scrutiny Board considered the report and presentation in some detail seeking clarification on a number of issues including budgetary provision and funding, measures to tackle anti-social behaviour, use of facilities – including community centres and an analysis of what young people considered to be the current key issues, which included vaping and violent crime and anti-social behaviour.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted and welcomed.
2. That the Youth Service be invited to attend the Scrutiny Board in approximately 12 months to update members on their activities and progress against achieving their key objectives.

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## **LIBRARY SERVICES**

Members of the Scrutiny Board considered a report of the Director of Communities that provided an update on Oldham Council Libraries’ Performance, highlighting capital and revenue programmes.

The Scrutiny Board was informed that between April 2021 and July 2022 Heritage, Libraries and Arts (HLA) had become an integrated service. This was undertaken to ensure the service could meet required budgetary savings and become a more agile organisation, meeting the needs of its diverse service users. The total recurring savings achieved amounted to £250k.



The HLA service was therefore an integrated team that combined the offer of the following services:

- Gallery Oldham
- Oldham Libraries
- Oldham Local Studies and Archives
- Oldham Theatre Workshop

The declared mission was to make a positive difference to people's lives by connecting them to high-quality information and creative experiences. The integrated team have worked together to develop a new HLA Strategy.

It was reported that the service was gradually getting back to 'pre-pandemic' levels which was in line with regional and national trends. Oldham, after Manchester, had the highest visitor footfall in Greater Manchester. However, it was noted that Royton library had been operating from a temporary site offering limited service, which affects total visitor footfall.

Flexible and resident focused, libraires had adapted to support and deliver services as needs arise, including being at the forefront in responding to the Cost-of-Living Crisis by providing warm, safe spaces and signposting residents to essential services, and more recently delivering the Housing Support Offer from Oldham Library, working closely with housing and doorstep engagement teams. Oldham Libraires were also an integral part of the Family Hub offer, working closely with Children Services to ensure families have access to a range of services across the 0-19 offer. Also, to try and tackle the high levels of digital exclusion, Oldham Libraries are playing a critical leading role in supporting residents to gain digital access, skills and knowledge. For example, libraries supported residents to complete the 2021 Online Census and have developed the digital device lending scheme.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, libraries were recognised by central government as being essential service and remained open during lockdown to offer access to essential PC use and click and collect book service, supporting digital inclusion and mental wellbeing. In addition, libraries played a critical role in supporting the covid response, from being used as community testing centres, distributors of lateral flow tests, working with partner agencies to deliver covid emergency response services and an anchor site for the community engagement teams.

All library staff were part of the first phase of training to support new ways of working. The Council's management have facilitated training sessions to support cultural change. This

builds on work we are already undertaking with key partners to deliver services from Oldham Libraries including health and community partners.

Members of the Scrutiny Board considered the report in some detail seeking clarification on several issues noting the large amount of volunteering and work-experience opportunities that existed in the Borough's libraries and the prevalence of accessible ICT facilities including ready access to the internet. Members also noted how libraries had developed from being in years gone by, a book lending service to being now such a central and integral community service that reaches out to so many sectors and groups within the Borough.

Resolved:

3. That the report be noted and welcomed.
4. That officers from the Council's Library Service be invited to attend the Scrutiny Board in approximately 12 months to update members on their activities and progress against achieving their key objectives.

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## **ECONOMIC PLAN**

The Scrutiny Board received a report of the Director of Economy which updated Members on the emerging Economic Plan for Oldham. The Oldham Economic Plan built on the original Oldham Economic that was published in March 2022. The Plan aimed to set out the strategic context for economic growth within the borough covering the period up to 2030.

The Oldham Economic Review, (OER), was originally published in March 2022 and was undertaken by an independent panel of experts with a focus on examining the opportunities for sustained and positive economic growth within Oldham. Building on the OER work, the Oldham Economic Board was established in July 2023 sitting within the context of the wider Oldham Economic Partnership. The Economic Board consists of a range of stakeholders from business, education, and wider public sector partners. The board provides a vehicle to drive forward OER recommendations and seeks to ensure that sustained and good growth is achieved across Oldham.

The emerging Oldham Economic Plan will be owned by the Economic Board and aims to set out the strategic growth context for the Town covering the period up to 2030.

The draft Economic Plan had been prepared (and was attached to the submitted report at Appendix A) by council officers, with the wider support of the Oldham Economic Board. Members were advised that the emerging Plan consisted of a number of key areas including:

- a. The history of the Towns Economy.
- b. An overview of the levelling opportunities and need within Oldham.
- c. Seeks to recognise the strength in our diverse communities.

- d. A recognition of Oldham as a green borough both in terms of natural capital but also the emerging economic strengths arising from the bold and ambitious Oldham Green New Deal strategy.
- e. Alignment to wider regional growth strategy within Greater Manchester which is critical in terms of unlocking both future regional resource through devolution and national resource through wider government initiatives.
- f. Connectivity and mobility.

It was envisaged that future growth activity would be aligned to the above key areas which will be underpinned by clear outcome measures helping to evidence direction of travel during in the life of the plan.

The plan also sought to recognise the current and future strategic growth opportunities that exists within the borough with an appreciation that wider projects and initiatives will be identified and developed throughout the life of the plan. The priority areas of opportunities identified included: Atom Valley, town centre developments and district growth plans.

It was considered critical that evidence of the delivery of the plan be provided to demonstrate progress. Therefore, the Economic Plan set out a number of potential outcome measures. Over the coming months, work will focus of the development of a robust measurable performance and monitoring framework which will include a baseline position and 2030 targets.

It was envisaged that the Economic Board will receive quarterly performance progress reports across all metrics helping to provide full visibility on progress to date. Where applicable, it is also envisaged that key success measures will be embedded into the wider corporate performance report and it was further envisaged that the Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Board will receive an annual report providing an opportunity for a further deeper assessment on delivery progress.

Resolved:

1. That the Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Board supports and endorses the Oldham Economic Plan, as outlined in the Director of Economy's report.
2. That the Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Board shall receive an annual report providing an opportunity for a further deeper assessment on delivery progress and the submission of interim reports if the need arises.

## **HIGH STREET ACCELERATOR AND EMERGING EVENING AND NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY**

Members scrutinised a report of the Director of Economy, which outlined that the previous Government had announced the High Street Accelerator Programme in September 2023 and had



invited Oldham Council to submit an expression of interest in participating, due to the high level of vacant premises in the town centre.



The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had confirmed ten towns to participate in a High Street Accelerator pilot. Oldham's High Street Nomination Form had been completed for Union Street and Yorkshire Street as the pilot high streets for this funding based on existing data, notably: that in 2019, Oldham town centre was identified as one of the top 20 town centres in the country most 'at risk' from key consumer trends (Oldham Economic Review). Geographically, Oldham had historically struggled with leakage of jobs, visitors and spending to central Manchester and surrounding towns, and employment opportunities had fallen consistently in recent years, leading to vacant retail and eatery units; according to CACI Retail Footprint Data, the flows to Oldham town centre have retracted significantly and the spend profile for Oldham reduced from £170m in 2010 to £156m in 2017.

The Council was looking to seek approval to accept Oldham's pilot grant allocation of £500,000 from the Green Spaces Fund held by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), and to approve the programme of spend for the various projects it will fund. There would be an option to accept the Green Spaces Fund grant of £500,000 from DLUHC, to progress the proposed projects detailed in the Director's report and to expend the grant monies as detailed in the report's funding breakdown section.

The Cabinet, later in 2024, would receive a report which would recommend the acceptance of an external Green Spaces Fund grant and to expend the funding on progressing the proposed High Street Accelerator programme projects.

Resolved:

That the report be noted and that the Cabinet be encouraged to accept the recommendations in the report, when they give consideration to this matter.

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### **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Board considered its Work Programme for 2024/25.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

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### **KEY DECISION DOCUMENT**

The Scrutiny Panel gave consideration to the Key Decision Document which outlined key decisions that the Cabinet was due to take at its meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024 and at future meetings.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

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**RULE 13 AND 14**

The Chair advised that there was nothing to report in relation to this item.

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 7.45pm

