

Portfolio Report

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Chris Goodwin
Cabinet Member for Don't Trash Oldham

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

Highways

The Council's highways team continues to undertake a range of work across the borough. As part of the 2024/25 resurfacing programme, 6 schemes have been completed to date. A further 8 schemes will be completed before the end of March 2025. The routine inspection and maintenance of all the network is also ongoing. This is both in response to reports by residents' and is proactive to ensure the network is safe. Where repairs are needed, these are programmed and completed as soon as possible.

The highways team also inspects all permits for work to ensure that the contractor is following health and safety and highway safety practices. Where contractors fail to do this, the team undertakes legal action to ensure compliance. In extreme cases, the team also withdraws permission to work on Oldham's highways until it is satisfied that the contractor will be compliant and can meet the necessary standards.

Winter Maintenance

Preparations are complete for Winter Maintenance operations. Vehicles, materials, grit and the staffing resource is all in place to ensure that main roads are kept open during the winter months. Highways colleagues will be constantly monitoring forecasts, road conditions and will undertake gritting as necessary. If there is snow, as with previous years, our teams will be out to clear the roads as quickly as possible.

As far as reasonably possible, we will look to keep the primary highway network free of ice and snow at all times, to help ensure safe journeys. Our teams are out filling the borough's grit bins and we have contingency plans in place, including for heavy snowfall. The council has a good supply of grit which was bought earlier in the year when prices were lower – providing value for money for residents.

The council's social media accounts will also share up to date winter information, including traffic and road closure updates and more details about our winter work are on the council's website - <http://www.oldham.gov.uk/winter>. It features the news on gritting routes, locations of grit bins, and tips on how residents can stay safe and get help and support.

We will also update the winter webpage with any school closures that we are notified about. Schools also have a text messaging system to inform parents if they are closing for the day.

Streetlighting

The Streetlighting Team continues to renew lighting columns, boroughwide, as part of the replacement programme. Having completed the programme in Failsworth East, West, and Chadderton South in 2023/24, the teams are currently replacing columns in Chadderton Central, North and in Coldhurst and Werneth. To date, 50% of the 2024/25 programme has been completed and we are on track to complete 100% of the annual programme by the end of March 2025.

Furthermore, as part of the ongoing maintenance programme, and to react quickly to complaints, the website for reporting faults has also been upgraded. This now means that residents can report faults quickly, as well as track the repair and also receive an update once the fault has been fixed.

Finally, the team have also been leading on the festive lights roll-out. Christmas lights and displays will be installed at 18 locations across the whole borough. As usual, the first switch on will take place in Oldham Town Centre on Saturday 16 November and will be a great event for all the residents. The remainder of 'switch ons' will be completed on time.

Greenspace

The Council's tree planting is now underway for the 2024/25 season with materials being delivered and framework contractors engaged – 650 new trees will be planted between October 2024 and March 2025 across the borough. This work is being delivered in partnership with, and supported by, the 'City of Trees' as part of the 'Trees for Climate Change' project. The other main source of trees is the Northern Forest Initiative and use of S106 Funding that the Council secures for environmental improvements. The first trees will be planted W/C 1st November.

In addition to the tree planting, the Service will also aim to deliver a further 2.5 hectares of new woodland across the borough during the 2024/25 planting season. This programme is consistent with the aim of increasing woodland and tree planting year on year. The service has also secured funding for various hedge planting projects which will see 500m of new mixed native hedge across a number of Countryside sites – improving habitats and biodiversity.

The programmes aim to continuously increase green coverage across the borough, using Council resources and by working closely with partners and environmental groups across Oldham and the Greater Manchester region. All tree and woodland planting support the environmental challenges of climate change / adaptation and deliver the recognised benefits that are brought about by sustainable tree planting and increasing woodland and green coverage.

Play Areas

The Council recognises the importance of parks and play areas and the excellent facilities these provide to the borough's residents and visitors. Parks are continuously improved with funding from various sources, including investments in outdoor gym equipment, which are highly utilised. Managed footpaths, cycleways, and green routes connect district centres, offering healthy transport options. Changes in land management enhance biodiversity and sustainability, improving both our urban parks and countryside estates, which offer activities like hiking and cycling, with potential for expanding health programs. Sports facilities, including pitches and play areas, are well-maintained, with over 100 play sites inspected regularly for safety. Training programmes in horticulture and other disciplines help increase local employment, while community growing initiatives, such as Growing Hubs and Fruit Routes, promote healthy eating, lower living costs, and foster community engagement through sustainable practices.

Recommendations: Council is requested to note the report.