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COUNCIL
11/09/2024 at 6.00 pm



Present: The Mayor – Councillor Chauhan (in the Chair)

Councillors Adams, Akhtar, Al-Hamdani, M Ali, Z Ali, Arnott, Aslam, Azad, Ball, Bashforth, Bishop, Brownridge, Byrne, Charters, Cosgrove, Davis, Dean, Ghafoor, Goodwin, Hamblett, Harkness, Harrison, Hince, Hindle, Hobin, Hughes, Hurley, A Hussain, F Hussain, J. Hussain, S. Hussain, Ibrahim, Iqbal, Islam, Jabbar, Kenyon, Kouser, Lancaster, Malik, Marland, McLaren, Moores, Murphy, Mushtaq, Nasheen, Navesey, Quigg, Rustidge, Shah, Sharp, Sheldon, Shuttleworth, Sykes, Taylor, Wahid, Wilkinson, Williamson and Woodvine

1 **TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Chowhan.

2 **TO ORDER THAT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 10TH JULY 2024 BE SIGNED AS A CORRECT RECORD**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Council meeting held 10th July 2024 be approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

3 **TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ANY MATTER TO BE DETERMINED AT THE MEETING**

There were no declarations of interests.

4 **TO DEAL WITH MATTERS WHICH THE MAYOR CONSIDERS TO BE URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business for this meeting of the Council to consider.

5 **TO RECEIVE COMMUNICATIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL**

The Mayor informed Council that at a meeting of the Group Leaders it had been agreed that the time limit for Opposition Business (agenda item 12) would be increased from 30 minutes to 40 minutes, to allow time for the five Motions listed to be considered.

The Mayor advised that Members would be aware that this was the last Council meeting that the Managing Director of Children's Services, Mr Gerard Jones and the Director of Legal, Mr Paul Entwistle, would be attending prior to their imminent departure from Oldham Borough Council. Accordingly, the Mayor called on Councillor Shah, Leader of the Council, Councillor Sykes Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and Councillor Sheldon, Leader of the Council to speak in tribute to Gerard and Paul's service to the Authority.

6 **TO RECEIVE AND NOTE PETITIONS RECEIVED**

RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THE COUNCIL

There were no petitions for this meeting of the Council to consider.

7

LEADER'S ANNUAL STATEMENT

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Arooj Shah, delivered her Annual Statement.

The Leader reminded the Council of her priorities, as set out in May 2023, when she first assumed office and highlighted work that had been done and which was still being done to improve Oldham, to retain a resident focused approach and to provide high quality services for local people.

The Leader noted a significant change in that there had recently been a change of government and that Oldham Council was looking forward to embracing a new relationship with central government.

The latest financial forecasts were predicting that there is a nearly £ 6 billion nationwide 'black hole' in local government finances, which, predictably, hits boroughs like Oldham with higher needs and lower council tax revenues the hardest.

It was added that there was a need to reset how the Council provides services, collaborates and cooperates with other groups and individuals to deliver change, and once more champion that sense of pride in Oldham and the wider Borough.

The Council was launching a renewed and collaborative Oldham Plan. Much has changed since the last one. A global pandemic, rampant inflation, a cost-of-living crisis and Brexit have impacted the borough. It was therefore felt to be the right time to reset our shared plan for the borough, which we will bring before the Council in November for ratification.

Part of that plan will be to set clear priorities which impact and improve the lives of Oldhamers every day. One of the most important responsibilities any Council carries is to protect the most vulnerable in our community. Today, Oldham is experiencing very high demand for its health and care services. This is particularly prominent in acute care and children's services. When the free market model for social care fails, as it did with the collapse of Acorn Lodge, this Council stepped up and secured the protection of its 70 residents and the rights of the care staff.

The leader stated that the Council was resetting care for our youngest residents as well. The Leader stated that she was pleased that, following a recent Ofsted Inspection, our Children's Services had been rated 'GOOD' in all areas – an outstanding achievement for everyone involved – but there is more we can do. Post-inspection action plans are already underway to drive further improvements over the next 12 months. One area everyone is particularly focused on is child safeguarding. Last

month the Department for Education commissioned a project to build a detailed understanding of how to support Safeguarding Partnerships in response to serious incidents, improve practice and better protect children. Oldham Council is participating in this review, and we will shape and adopt the best practices it develops to further improve our safeguarding.

The Council currently supports more than 600 households living in temporary accommodation. Nearly 6,500 households on the housing register are also waiting for social housing. Last year, only 1,211 homes became available for let - that's simply not enough. Every Council across the country should be putting housing at the forefront of their minds – this Labour administration is. We're committed to finding a local solution to this national crisis.

The other part of this is about the Council being bold and doing its bit like our commitment to build 500 new truly affordable homes over the next five years. There was a commitment, as part of the GM Places for Everyone programme, to build a further 11,000 new homes in the Borough.

The Council had recently signed a strategic partnership with the developer MUSE, which will deliver this Labour administration's plan for 2,000 new homes right here in the town centre. The public consultation has been strong and robust for this with lots of locals giving their views online and in person.

In Broadway Green, 138 more homes will be delivered in addition to the 332 already built. In Fitton Hill, 365 mixed tenure homes are planned on brownfield land which had been derelict for more than 20 years, and in Derker, planning permission for 132 low and zero-carbon housing on brownfield land, which include a mix of affordable rent homes, shared ownership, and private sale has been secured.

There was a shortage of supply, but in too many cases, the quality of private rental accommodation falls well short of the standards we should expect. The Council was determined to improve our housing stock over the longer term and will continue to hold bad landlords to account and make it easier for residents to report bad practices.

Resetting how we care for our most vulnerable residents, building new homes, and renewing our town centres are big-ticket items that catch headlines, debates, and discussions in this chamber.

The Council collects waste from almost 100,000 residential properties and more than 1,900 businesses throughout the borough, collecting about 3,000 tonnes of general waste and 775 tonnes of recycling waste every month.

Cracking down on fly-tipping, litter and vandalism are also priorities we all share.

In Oldham, residents are especially proud of our parks and outdoor spaces.

As well as creating new green spaces in the Town Centre as part of the on-going redevelopment, play areas including

Waterhead Park, Salmon Fields and Royton Park are scheduled to undergo improvements, while new changing rooms, gym equipment and sports courts are taking shape at Clayton Fields, Churchill Playing Fields and Dunwood Park amongst others. The Council is also committed to improving the green environment by planting 650 trees across the borough this autumn and winter. There are plans to add 2.5 hectares of new woodland in the coming twelve months.

Pride in Oldham is also about making our town a place to visit, spend leisure time, and interact with friends, family and neighbours.

Last month, the Council and its partners successfully delivered Festival Oldham which more than 6,000 local residents and visitors. Earlier in the Summer, The Tour of Britain Women's Race saw the world's top female riders go head-to-head racing in front of record crowds through the borough's many beauty spots.

In response to public demand, the Council announced its decision to retain the Coliseum Theatre on Fairbottom Street, which will reopen for Panto in 2025. To ensure the future of theatre for Oldham we have also been working with various cultural groups and partners to co-design and co-create a new future for the building and a new co-operative, more supportive and sustainable future for art and performance in Oldham.

The Council and residents can also take pride in our town's sporting successes too. As well as the Roughyeds winning promotion back to the championship, Oldham Council's Active Through Football program took a team to the Greater Manchester Refugee World Cup. Without losing a game, they won the tournament beating 16 other teams in the process. Also, working in partnership with Nike, Manchester F.A, Oldham Athletic Community Trust and Shree Swaminarayan Mandir Oldham, the Council supported a women's only football project which has been recognised by the US sportswear giant as exemplary and will feature in a video promoting the team and the program.

The Leader stated that the Council should reset its ambitions for the future of our residents. That means building on the welcomed improvements in OFSTED scores across our borough's primary schools and secondary schools. Across Oldham more than 90% of primary schools and 60% of secondary schools are now rated good or outstanding.

The Council had recently welcomed the Children's Commissioner for England, Rachel De Souza to Oldham to congratulate the council and its schools on our partnership work to improve school attendance, an issue where we are leading nationally. The Council's support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is improving. With the support of the Department for Education and NHS England, we have been able to recruit new staff to support schools and families across a range of areas such as early language

support, preparation for adulthood, and early access to mediation.

Since being launched a decade ago, the Get Oldham Working team have helped find work for more than fourteen thousand residents - over ten thousand full time jobs, over one and a half thousand apprenticeships, 367 Traineeships, and 1,667 Work Experience placements. As work patterns continue to shift, the Council's support for startups and entrepreneurs continues, such as with the opening of The Hive, a dedicated space in the Spindles Shopping Centre supporting social enterprises and start-up businesses.

The Leader asked that Council joins with her in championing Oldham in every forum, continuing to play an active part in the economic regeneration of our town by offering support, assistance and encouragement to businesses and employers looking to grow or expand in our borough. With a renewed pride in Oldham, a set of shared ambitions, and a commitment to collaborate, cooperate and face challenges together - we can make a difference. We have so much happening, so much to look forward to. Oldham's time is now.

Resolved:

That the Leader's Annual Statement be noted.

8

YOUTH COUNCIL

The Youth Council PROPOSED the following MOTION:
Holiday Activities and Food Programme

As part of their election manifesto, the new UK government are planning to spend £315M to introduce free breakfast clubs in every primary school.

While Oldham Youth Council welcomes support for young people, we feel that this money could be spent targeting those who need it most. We believe the threshold for free school meals needs to be increased to ensure the wellbeing of young people in poverty.

We would also like to see the continuation of the HAF (Holiday Activity and Food) program that has helped so many young people across Oldham. We do not feel there needs to be an increase in the money provided in this scheme, but we would like to see it used universally, allowing all young people access. This will reduce any stigma of attending sessions and hopefully encouraging more young people eligible for free school meals to take up the offer.

Council recognises that over the past few years the Oldham Youth Council have made the 'cost of living' a priority issue and have undertaken much work in this area to improve the experiences of Oldham's young people. This includes:

- Working with the Council to take unused stationary and distribute through schools to those students who need it most.

- 2022 motion to Council asking that the Chief Executive writes to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Education and the Shadow Secretary of State for Education requesting to extend the offer of the Holiday Activities and Food programme to all young people not just those on free school meals.

Council notes:

- That according to several 2024 surveys commissioned by organisations, such as General Mills and Greggs Foundation, between 20-30% of young people do not eat breakfast before school.
- Just over two million children are eligible for free meals in England, according to the latest government figures.
- However, a 2024 Food Foundation survey found that there are 900,000 children living in poverty in England who are missing out on national eligibility for Free School Meals due to the strict threshold set by government.
- Scottish and Welsh Government is considering increasing free school meals across primary schools and London's Mayor has announced free meals will be provided in all primary schools across London for the 2024/2025 academic year.
- Since 2022, the HAF programme has provided 10.7 million HAF days to children and young people in this country. The expansion of the programme year-on-year has meant a total of 5.4 million HAF days provided between Christmas 2022, Easter and summer 2023.

We propose that Council therefore **resolves** to ask the Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister, Secretary of State for Health and the Secretary of State for Education asking that, rather than a blanket breakfast club for all primary schools, that they look at increasing the threshold for free school meals so more young people (both primary and secondary age) benefit; that they continue the HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) program, making sure young people are fed during the school holidays while making this a universal service for all young people to reduce the stigma in attending and making it more cost efficient.

AMENDMENT

Councillor Mushtaq MOVED and Councillor Navesey SECONDED the following AMENDMENT.

As part of their election manifesto, the new UK government are planning to spend £315M to introduce free breakfast clubs in every primary school.

While Oldham Youth Council welcomes support for young people, we feel that extra help is needed to target those who need it most. We believe the threshold for free school meals needs to be increased to ensure the wellbeing of young people in poverty.

We would also like to see the continuation of the HAF (Holiday Activity and Food) program that has helped so many young people across Oldham. We do not feel there needs to be an increase in the money provided in this scheme, but we would like to see it used universally, allowing all young people access. This will reduce any stigma of attending sessions and hopefully encouraging more young people eligible for free school meals to take up the offer.

We also welcome the recent decision taken by the Government to extend the Household Support Fund which means Oldham Council can continue to give help to people including food vouchers, fuel vouchers and support with other essential items.

Council recognises that over the past few years the Oldham Youth Council have made the 'cost of living' a priority issue and have undertaken much work in this area to improve the experiences of Oldham's young people. This includes:

- Working with the Council to take unused stationary and distribute through schools to those students who need it most.
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On being put to the Vote the AMENDMENT was CARRIED.

On being put to the vote the MOTION as AMENDED was CARRIED.

RESOLVED

That the Chief Executive be requested to write to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Health and to the Secretary of State for Education asking that, as well as a blanket breakfast club for all primary schools, that they look at increasing the threshold for free school meals so that more young people (both primary and secondary age) can benefit; that they continue the HAF (Holiday Activities and Food) program, making sure young people are fed during the school holidays while making this a universal service for all young people, to reduce the stigma in attending and making it more cost efficient.

9

PUBLIC QUESTIONS

1. Question from Megan Birchall

The government announced mandatory housing targets after the election - does this mean we will need to build more homes than PfE said?

Councillor Taylor, Statutory Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Decent Homes replied, that the Government proposals restore, and update, the nationally set Local Housing Need calculation in NPPF as mandatory.

Based on the mandatory LHN calculation the housing requirement for Oldham would increase from the average annual housing requirement of 680 under Places for Everyone to 1,049 new homes per year. This represents a 54% increase. It is anticipated that this new requirement would not apply immediately for Oldham given the recent adoption of PfE, However, this is not entirely clear in the consultation document. If this were the case, we would continue with the housing requirement set under PfE.

We would then be expected to commence the preparation of a brand-new Local Plan to meet the new housing requirements.

2. Question from Ghazala Rana

I heard Ed Miliband say "Britain will be a clean energy superpower" - What does this mean for Oldham?

Councillor Jabbar, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Value for Money and Sustainability replied that are two national initiatives on energy which could benefit Oldham – Great British

Energy and the Local Power Plan. GB Energy will provide investment into renewable energy projects and the Local Power Plan will provide grants and other support to local authorities and communities to develop renewable energy projects, so that the financial benefit of energy generation can be kept in local economies. Oldham is well placed to benefit from this, as our existing plans under Oldham's Green New Deal will already bring in large-scale private sector investment in low carbon infrastructure, and our Green New Deal Delivery Partnership model puts communities at the heart of energy planning. These new national initiatives will complement and strengthen the approach that the Council has already developed, and which has already secured over £10m in grant funding to implement.

3. Question from Lisa Phillips

I was pleased to see the town centre was busy for the recent Festival Oldham; are there going to be more events like this upcoming to get people in the town spending money with local businesses?

Councillor Dean, Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture replied that there has been a planned programme of events for the town centre including a new event on 28 September – Nostalgic Oldham with many of the town centre businesses taking part.

We also have a busy Christmas programme starting with the Christmas Light Switch-On taking place on Saturday 16 November.

On Saturday 31 August we also launched the Oldham Gift-card which is available for anyone to buy to give to their friends, family and colleagues as a gift. This is another way we are working with businesses to keep people spending money locally.

4. Question from Alison Shore

I have heard that Access Oldham had moved into Spindles. What services are offered there & is it now fully open.

Councillor Dean, Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture replied that Access Oldham had relocated from its base in the Civic Centre tower, over to the new site positioned in the lower mall of the Spindles shopping centre, reopening as the Customer Service Centre on 18th July. The improved service delivers Benefits, Council Tax and Blue Badge support together with access to Welfare Rights, Support and Inclusion team and Client Finance as well as access to several partner organisations including Citizens Advice, TOG Mind and Turning Point. Freephones for contacting other council services and public access computers for online services are also available. Our Housing Options Team are currently providing support and services next to Rochdale Road Reception at the Civic Centre in a space that provides more space to meet demand including private meeting facilities and additional waiting areas for residents.

5. Question from Kyle Phythian

Oldham's children are the most important thing the council looks after - how is our children's services department performing?

Councillor Mushtaq, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People replied, thanking Mr Phythian for his question, adding that Ofsted have responsible for the external assurance of local authorities Children's Services. We've recently been through a thorough inspection on our performance, making sure were keeping children safe and improving outcomes.

We are delighted that Ofsted has recognised our Children's Services to be 'good' across all areas and the positive difference our workforce makes every day. Post inspection action plans are underway to enable the service to drive further improvements over the next 12 months, as outlined in the report which is available at the link <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50252252>

6. Question from Jason Pape-Jones

Can I ask the cabinet member for education how Oldham has done in this year's GCSE and A-Level results?

Councillor Mohon Ali, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills replied, stating that he wanted to praise the resilience of our students and pupils in overcoming the challenges of the Covid pandemic to achieve excellent grades in 2024.

On GCSE results day, Cllr Nasheen and I visited 10 schools to congratulate pupils and staff. The unvalidated results for GCSEs show that most schools in Oldham improved their outcomes since 2019, and this improved borough attainment. At the same time, the number of strong passes at grades 9 to 5 in English and Maths increased.

It's a testament to the hard work of our children and young people that since the pandemic our GCSE outcomes have improved at a better rate than national and are moving closer to the average.

On post-16 results day, I was pleased to visit Oldham Sixth Form College and Oldham College to celebrate the achievements of our young residents receiving A-Levels, T-levels and BTECs grades.

Unvalidated A-Level results show that A-E grade passes were higher than last year, higher than the national average and are back in line with pre-pandemic results. The A*-C pass rate showed a significant improvement on the 2023 figure and this narrowed the gap to national average.

These academic successes are rooted in the excellent work that the Council, Trusts, academies, schools and colleges have done to increase attendance rates, raises aspirations, and continue to further improve the quality of teaching and learning since the pandemic.

7. Question from Imran Ghaffar

As a seasoned cyclist who rides 60 miles a week to work, I want to commend the council for its efforts to encourage more people

to cycle. It's great to see initiatives that promote healthier, more sustainable transport options.

However, I do have concerns regarding the placement of the new cycle lane on one of the biggest hills in Oldham, particularly on St Mary's Way, as this may deter rather than encourage new cyclists. While experienced riders may manage, I imagine many would find this challenging.

Additionally, I would be interested to know how many current councillors have cycled up this hill and, more broadly, how many of the 60 councillors cycle to work or council meetings. As public figures leading this initiative, it would be great to see councillors setting an example.

I look forward to your response and thank you again for the work being done to support cycling in our community?

Councillor Shah, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Building a Better Oldham replied that the Council is grateful for Mr Ghaffar's positive feedback on our proposals to promote healthier and more sustainable transport options – it's something we think needs to be at the heart of place-making in Oldham. Mr Ghaffar raises a really good point about the challenge of cycling in Oldham as it does have more hills than many other towns and cities, but that shouldn't stop us from creating the safe and pleasant environments for people to walk and cycle as part of their daily journeys if they are able to.

Hopefully by creating these spaces, more people will walk and cycle, and they will develop those healthier habits that means their fitness grows and they can manage to cycle up the steeper routes as well.

In addition, the increased availability of e-bikes may help residents tackle Oldham's more challenging hills!

As for councillors, I don't think we have any specific statistics about how many cycle or walk to work or their council duties, but I know a number do walk or cycle where the opportunity allows, and so creating these fantastic new routes can only encourage that amongst the councillors who are able to.

The Mayor advised that any unanswered questions would be published to the Council's website, with written answers, in due course.

10

QUESTIONS TO LEADER AND CABINET

The Mayor invited the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members to present their reports and further invited non-executive members to ask questions thereon, as follows:

- a. Leader and Building a Better Oldham Portfolio – including the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held 17th June 2023 and 15th July 2024; the Minutes of the meeting of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority held 14th June 2024 and the Minutes of meetings of the AGMA Executive Board held on 9th February 2024 and 14th June 2024.

Councillor Sykes, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Question 1: Are Oldham's MPs in Oldham's Corner

Councillor Sykes noted that since the General Election we've had a welcome change of government but there has been little to cheer about for the people of our Borough.

Oldham now has a Labour government in London, a Labour Mayor in Greater Manchester, and a Labour Administration in Oldham Borough, supported by some so-called Independents. There is nowhere left to hide, and no one left to blame.

The new Prime Minister has said there will be painful times ahead.

The question is, can Oldham Labour stand up to him? Are they in our corner or not?

We need to see the end of the two-child cap on universal credit. We need to know that pensioners in Oldham will be warm this winter, and that the government will stop this poorly thought out cut to winter fuel payments.

Local government needs a cash injection now and long-term funding reform. So that instead of circling the financial drain, this Council can fund the services our residents need and deserve.

For years, Oldham Labour have been telling us its Oldham first and politics second and challenging the government. It's time to practice what you preach.

If our three Labour MPs are truly in Oldham's corner they will support calls for the end of the two-child cap, proper local government funding reform, and the continuation of winter fuel payments.

So, will the Leader agree to write to Oldham's MPs urging them to pledge support for those causes in Parliament on behalf of all of the people in Oldham Borough who desperately need this government to fight their corner.

Councillor Shah, Leader of the Council, replied that the government was still very much in its early stages and had inherited a poor economic legacy from the outgoing Conservative administration and therefore needed time to start to put things right, which she expressed every confidence that they would do so. Therefore, she would not be writing to the three Members of Parliament as requested by Councillor Sykes as it was too early in the Parliamentary cycle to be doing so.

Question 2: Eton Star College

Councillor Sykes asked his second question regarding the Eton Star College. The Leader has expressed her enthusiasm for the Eton Star Oldham project on many occasions and does so again in her report on tonight's agenda.

The decision to develop a 480-student selective sixth form in partnership with Eton College has been torn to shreds by the National Education Union.



Oldham
Council

They have pointed out the disruption this will likely cause to the current sixth form provision in our Borough, which already delivers a first-rate post 16 offer.

There are also concerns that a selective offer will do nothing for disadvantaged young people in Oldham Borough and will only help a very small number of young people who are already achieving at a high level.

Last year's Year 12 cohort saw an increase of nearly 300 young people. And the numbers are expected to continue to rise until at least 2028.

In Oldham there is a gap in our post-16 offer. But we know that this gap is due to a lack of Entry Level study programmes.

Back in March, Children's Scrutiny Committee was told that Eton Star Oldham would not replace training provision that has been lost in the Borough over recent years and therefore does not enable us to bridge the gap.

So, if Eton Star is not going to provide us with the courses our young people need... what is the Leader's plan to bridge this very real and growing gap?

How is she working with our schools and Oldham College to ensure the right courses are on offer?

Have external providers been approached to help and if so how many and for what courses?

And can the Leader explain to the Council why she thinks Eton Star Oldham is necessary and how it will help solve these problems – never mind be offered one our Borough's prime developed sites for its activities?

Councillor Shah, Leader of the Council, replied that the ethos of the Eton Star project was focused on providing educational excellence. She added that the Eton Star College would not have an admissions policy that would not exclude the most disadvantaged people/groups in the Borough and that she was looking forward to its opening in 2027.

Question from Councillor Ghafoor, Leader of the Oldham Group
Councillor Ghafoor sought clarification on the reasons for the closure of the Marlborough Centre in Oldham (the old Pakistani Community Centre). Councillor Ghafoor claimed that members of his group were being denied information about this matter by officers of the Council. He also sought assurances that relating to the tendering had been undertaken properly and if the views of local residents had been taken into account. Councillor Ghafoor stated that whilst he personally did not have an interest in this matter he asked if Councillor Shah did?

Councillor Shah, Leader of the Council, replied that she didn't have any interest in this property or in any proposed future use. Councillor Shah confirmed that the tendering process was undertaken independently with no involvement from herself or any other Cabinet Member.

It was agreed that the Chief Executive be requested to write, via email, to all members of the Council clarifying the various issues raised in this question.



Question from Councillor Sheldon, Leader of the Conservative Group

Councillor Sheldon commented on the low morale amongst opposition members arising, leading to a feeling that they are not fully part of the authority. This was mainly, he said, because from the Leader's decision to restrict the access of opposition members from certain parts of the Civic Centre, the rearranging of certain chair and vice-chair positions, at the Council meeting on 10th July 2024 and the exclusion of opposition members from the celebrations that marked the reopening of the Coliseum Theatre. He asked therefore if the Leader would take on board his concerns and ease some of the restrictions that have been placed on opposition members?

Councillor Shah, Leader of the Council, replied that she was sad to have to introduce the restrictions which, she said, were imposed following some unpleasant incidents that occurred in lead-up to the Annual Council meeting on 22nd May 2024.

b. Deputy Leader and Decent Homes Portfolio Holder

The Deputy Leader and Decent Homes Portfolio Holder presented her report.

Question from Councillor Lancaster - Does Oldham Council have a robust, responsible approach to planning enforcement? Councillor Taylor replied, thanking Councillor Cllr Lancaster for his question, stating that effective planning enforcement is important in terms of tackling breaches of control and maintaining the integrity of decision making.

So far in 2024 the Council has received just over 300 reported cases of alleged breaches of planning controls.

Where a breach of planning controls has been reported we will review the circumstances of each case and determine what action is appropriate and proportionate to ensure that compliance is achieved.

Formal action is reserved for those cases that cannot be resolved through informal measures where that action is justified. In 2023, 19 formal notices were served on individuals in breach of planning controls which demonstrates our robust position in respect of planning enforcement.

Question from Councillor Rustidge - Can the Cabinet Member for Decent Homes confirm that if we were to pull out of PfE now that ALL Green Belt in the Borough would be subject to a developer's free for all because they'd lose protections guaranteed within PfE? So Green Belt sites that have been removed from the plan as potential development land over the years could come forward for development and we as a council would not be able to do much about it?

Councillor Taylor replied, thanking Councillor Rustidge for his question, stating that without PfE, we would be required to meet

the nationally-set local housing need requirement for Oldham in full straight away. We do not have enough housing land supply without Green Belt release to meet that housing requirement, and so the council would immediately be in a difficult position when it comes to deciding applications for housing development in the borough. Our housing land supply would be so poor in this context that the "presumption in favour of sustainable development" in NPPF would kick-in, meaning that we should grant permission for any sustainable housing development, even potentially in the Green Belt, and, if we didn't, we would almost certainly lose any appeal related to those planning applications (and have significant costs awarded against us). As such, without PfE, the risk of unplanned, ad hoc housing development taking place across the borough, including in the Green Belt, is infinitely greater, causing significantly greater harm to our borough's environment than the planned release of land for development in PfE.

Question from Councillor Williamson – In May this year, the BBC revealed that cavity-wall insulation fitted under government-backed green energy scheme could have failed in hundreds of thousands of homes because it was not installed properly. This leaves residents, potentially including many in Oldham, exposed to the health impact of damp and mould, which we have seen can have devastating consequences. Professionals have identified lack of oversight and regulation as major loophole in achieving successful government-backed insulation schemes. Indeed, energy suppliers inspect just 5% of the work they are responsible for overseeing, despite this work being funded with public money. Oldham council has a public health responsibility to ensure that substandard government-funded insulation work is identified and put right in Oldham Borough. Will the Cabinet Member agree to work with partners to develop a programme of inspections where work of this nature has taken place in Oldham and to report the findings back to the Council and, if necessary, the Housing Minister, Matthew Pennycock MP?

Councillor Taylor replied, thanking Councillor Williamson for her question stating that she agreed that this was a serious issue and the Council is keen to assist in dealing with the concerns expressed via the BBC.

We are awaiting government guidance on the approach to enforcement, compliance and what work is needed to address this issue and where the duty/responsibility for securing this compliance will rest. I can confirm that currently the Government have an established complaint process for residents who are concerned about any issues with an installation. After contacting the provider asking them to resolve this issue they can contact the Green Deal Ombudsman if the complaint has not been resolved within 8 weeks, or they are not happy with the provider's response. The contact details are as follows: - Green Deal Ombudsman; enquiries@os-energy.org
Telephone: 0330 440 1624

Councillor Taylor committed to reporting back to a future Council meeting on intended actions with partners as soon as further guidance is received from central government.

c. Deputy Leader and Value for Money and Sustainability Portfolio



The Deputy Leader and Value for Money and Sustainability Portfolio holder presented his report.

Question from Councillor Al-Hamdani - The Council has announced an expected overspend of £25 million and has asked staff to consider voluntary redundancies. This has been largely attributed to rising demand for social care and homelessness. Why was the Council unable to forecast the rising demand for social care and homelessness, given that both have seen regular significant increases in the past few years, which have left the Council massively overspent, and in significant financial distress?

Councillor Jabbar replied that he had a longer answer which he could provide in writing but quite simply this isn't JUST an issue of rising demand, which is always difficult to predict but also about rapidly increasing prices driven by the external market. Families are complex and lots of things can drive them to need support or drive them to crisis which means we need to intervene.

Over the last three years, the Council has invested a total of £52m into Adults and Childrens Services to try and tackle these increasing demands. But while the private sector is making millions from placements and council budgets have been starved over the last 14 years of the funds they need to build in-house provision we have limited ability to stem these cost increases.

And we are not alone, many other Councils are facing projected overspends in these services of tens of millions of pounds. The local housing crisis has been caused by national policy decisions. Year on year national decisions on house building, increases in mortgage rates and other decisions are driving more and more people into poverty and more and more people into homelessness. And again, the lack of provision means private providers are increasing the costs we pay for temporary accommodation as demand increases.

In summary, we need national solutions to what are national challenges facing everyone in the sector. Genuinely if Cllr Al Hamdani has a magic bullet that can help us predict the future or can help us find a solution to the problems facing every council in the country then he is in the wrong job.

Question from Councillor S. Hussain – As a result of 14 years of Tory government, local councils like Oldham have faced significant cuts in funding, with their budgets slashed. This has resulted in a devastating reduction in vital services, from social care to housing, education, and youth services. Services which are vital for our residents.

The impact of these cuts extends far beyond Oldham. Councils across the UK have faced similar reductions, struggling to provide the basic services their communities depend on. Public services that used to be a safety net for the most vulnerable are now stretched to breaking point. And it's not just Oldham—

across the country, communities are bearing the brunt of these cuts, with some councils on the brink of bankruptcy.

Consequently, I urge the Deputy Leader to confirm how much funding has been lost from the decisions of the previous Conservative Govt? And how hopeful is he that the spending review will bring better news?

Councillor Jabbar replied, thanking Councillor Hussain for his question.

This Council has been forced to make over £200m worth of cuts during this time because our funding has never adequately met our demand for services.

At times I feel like a broken record in this chamber, but fourteen years of Tory austerity have hit this Council hard and has made the problems in our Borough harder to deal with. This is not news.

During this time Oldham's core spending power increased by 15.5%, compared to the England average of 26.9% - had Oldham received funding increases at the average level for England then it would have received an additional £26.3m in this year alone.

Cllr Hussain is right that this isn't just an Oldham problem, Councils across the country have been struggling with funding. We've seen services that people rely on repeatedly cut and cut. We're lobbying the new government hard for fairer funding and I am hopeful that we'll get a better deal, I can tell you that the announcement of multi-year settlements is a much better position to start from and will allow local authorities to plan better for the future.

I'm under no illusions that the spending review will include tough decisions, but I'm confident that this government values local government and the services we provide to our residents.

Question from Councillor Akhtar – could the Portfolio Holder outline what progress is being made to ensure that citizens of the Oldham Borough can access services readily online?

Councillor Jabbar explained that work was being undertaken, across all areas of the Council, to ensure that as much information as possible was available for people to access online.

d. Councillor Mushtaq – Children and Young People Portfolio

The Children and Young People Portfolio holder presented his report.

Question from Councillor Al-Hamdani - The Council is on track to introduce three children's homes in the borough in the current financial year. Could the Council confirm how many children's places will be made available as a result? Will the Council commit to creating a rolling programme of creating new Council-run children's homes over at least the next five years, with a target for the number of places, bringing down the financial burden on the Council for children's social care, and creating an avenue for income by creating provision for neighbouring authorities?

Councillor Mushtaq replied thanking Councillor Al-Hamdani for his question. The three children's homes opening in 2025 will create 8 local placements for children in our care alongside the 5 placements already available in our existing provision.

As part of the children and young people placement sufficiency ambitions, the council is reviewing the residential model and creating another three homes for a further 7 placements which would deliver 20 council run placements over the next three years, providing Oldham with a more sustainable offer. This approach is in line with other local authorities across Greater Manchester.

Given the increase in the number of looked after children in Oldham, it is envisaged that all new placements created will provide a safe and stable home for Oldham children and young people and consequently reduce the council's financial pressure.

Question from Councillor Iqbal - It is extremely welcome that the recent inspection of our Children's services has rated our services as 'good' but I am sure the Cabinet member would agree with me that one-word judgements and labels do not really do justice to the service people receive. With that in mind could he set out his personal priority for improving our children's services over the next year?

Councillor Mushtaq replied thanking Councillor Iqbal for his question. The council is delighted with the outcome of the recent ILACS inspection which details that all Children's Services were judged 'Good'.

The judgements are supported with a comprehensive report for each area of judgement inclusive of Help and Protection, Children in Care, Care Leavers, the impact of Leaders and overall judgement. The full report is available at the link <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50252252>

The service recognises the need for continuous improvement and my three priorities for improving our children's services are:

- **Priority 1:** Improving the lives of children and young people through quality social work, working closely with our partners.
- **Priority 2:** A local home for every child in care and care leaver.
- **Priority 3:** A stable and permanent workforce committed to Oldham.

e. Councillor Mohon Ali – Education and Skills Portfolio

The Education and Skills Portfolio Holder presented his report.

Question from Councillor Bishop – Could the Cabinet Member please confirm the how much has been spent annually on Alternative Education Providers in the last three years, and what percentage of the annual education budget this had represented? What steps are the administration taking to ensure that our secondary schools are improving in their ability to meet the needs of all children?

Councillor Mohon Ali replied, thanking Councillor Bishop for her question. For 2023/24 the Oldham Council alternative education provision spend was £459,107.58 for Council-commissioned provision. Secondary schools also commissioned their own alternative education provision. The Council does not have access to information on the level of that spend. However, the Council does have a robust quality assurance framework in place for all alternative education provision in Oldham that includes a self-assessment, annual formal monitoring visits by SEND and Advisory Teaching staff and regular visits throughout the year, alongside an Alternative Provision (AP) provider network.

Commissioned AP is always in exceptional circumstances and always with the end goal of reintegration back to their mainstream school. Children and young people will only access AP for up to two days per week in addition to their mainstream offer.

In relation to the education system, we take a partnership approach, which incorporates schools/settings, services across education, health and social care and parents/carers.

Our SEND and inclusion strategy and improvement programme have been coproduced with parents/carers, to ensure that we take a joined-up approach to address the rising level of need.

They share common ambitions to ensure that:

- Locally, we work collaboratively with schools/settings in a structured and targeted way. We prioritise supporting them to enhance their own provision.
- All our specialist services in SEND & Inclusion are designed to support earlier identification and intervention to avoid the need for higher levels of support later, including alternative provision. Where it is required we work closely with our schools and providers.
- Kingsland School is our local specialist provision who are integral in supporting the whole system in Oldham for children and young people who have social, emotional and mental health needs.

Local specialist support is of high quality, and this has been recognised in the recent ILACS and Ofsted annual conversation feedback.

Question from Councillor Junaid Hussain - After the visit to Oldham by the Children's Commissioner Dame Rachel de Souza where Oldham was praised for our efforts to improve school attendance, could the cabinet member update council on the overall picture of school attendance across the borough?

Councillor Mohon Ali replied, thanking Councillor Hussain for his question. Attendance at secondary schools in Oldham is above the national average and the best among similar local authorities across the country.

Primary school attendance is slightly below national average with a particular issue among younger children in reception. Dame Rachel's visit allowed us to share the fantastic work we have been doing to improve this including a stronger transition programme this summer, involving over 500 calls to parents and

carers as they prepared for the new term which resulted in a 3% improvement in attendance rates in week 1 of the new term. After her visit, Dame Rachel commented: “One of my young ambassadors on my national ambassadors’ team is from Oldham and told me I had to come. Oldham is trailblazing in helping kids get back to school after lockdown and the council is doing some amazing work, so I’ve come to talk to the councillors today to see how they’re making a difference to young people’s lives.”

Question from Councillor Al-Hamdani - The Labour Government has announced that it will be continuing the process of forced academisation for failing schools but have not got any plans in place to allow failing academies to be taken back into public hands. Given the experiences we have had of failing academies, where it has been extremely difficult to find alternative trusts to take over failing academies, will the Cabinet Member responsible be lobbying the Government to introduce legislation to address this as soon as possible?

Councillor Mohon Ali replied, thanking Councillor Al-Hamdani for his question. After visiting 5 secondaries and 2 colleges on GCSE and ‘A’ level results days in August, Councillor Ali was happy to report back on the impressive performance of both maintained schools and academies in the borough and some of the best ever outcomes for young Oldhamers.

He expected that the Labour Government to bring forward plans for improving the school system in due course and we will work with local school and academy leaders to implement their proposals for the benefit of residents.

We are fortunate to have many successful schools and academies in our borough. Our Oldham Learning Partnership ensures that trusts contribute to the local system and that all schools and academies deliver the best possible education for Oldham residents. So, I was pleased to see the improvements that were noted by Ofsted when they visited Radclyffe, Oasis Oldham and Co-op Failsworth this year and found all three establishments to be Good. Further I was very pleased to see that Waterhead Academy will become part of E-ACT, a group with a proven track record in the borough.

He did not therefore believe that there is a need to lobby the Government to introduce legislation to address this matter.

f. Councillor Fida Hussain – Enterprise Portfolio Holder

The Enterprise Portfolio Holder presented his report.

Question from Councillor Aftab Hussain - Could the Cabinet Member update the Council on the timetable for allocating stalls to stallholders in the new indoor market?

Councillor Fida Hussain replied, thanking Councillor Aftab Hussain for his question.

Stallholders are working closely with the markets team on the selection of stalls to the new market as well as the design and fit-out works needed as part of this process. This work will continue through Autumn. The team are working to balance the need to keep the process moving at pace, whilst respecting and

allowing time for each stallholder to make their choice of location in the new market. The team only move to the next stallholder once the previous stallholder is 100% happy with their location.

- g. Councillor Brownridge – Adults, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio



The Adults, Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder presented her report.

Question from Councillor Hamblett - Is the Cabinet Member aware of the unjust and detrimental of the calculation that Oldham Council uses to assess the amount a disabled person contributes to their non-residential care financial package? Because of the prejudiced structure of the calculation disabled people in Oldham are disenfranchised and pushed even further under the poverty threshold than they already are. Will the Cabinet Member agree to undertake a review of non-residential care financing to ensure that assessments are carried out in a fair manner?

Councillor Brownridge replied, thanking Councillor Hamblett for his question, stating that we are in the process of reviewing our policies and procedures for Adult Social Care charging.

As part of that process, we will be running a consultation process with Oldham residents, families and carers as well as with colleagues from various services and partners to ensure a fair charging policy is in place.

This will also be bench marked across other local authorities to ensure Oldham falls in line with authorities with similar demographics whilst also encompassing our strength-based approach.

The current policy is compliant with statutory minimum framework as outlined in the Care Act (2014), the Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) 2014 Regulations and the care and support statutory (CASS) guidance.

The current charging policy for non-residential care was implemented in April 2015 and further reviewed in 2021, following the Norfolk judgement.

Question from Councillor Malik - Following the acquisition of Oldham Total Care by the Council, there has been a marked improvement in performance. What steps are being taken to make sure this progress is sustained and built upon?

Councillor Brownridge replied, thanking Councillor Malik for his question, regarding Oldham Total Care and the reference to marked improvement. A detailed improvement plan had been developed, with oversight from Charlotte Walker, Assistant Director – Adult Social Care Reform & Improvement, who also holds the CQC Nominated Individual responsibility for the home. Phase one of the plan has been completed, which included thorough analysis of the financial, workforce and estates position for the home, and a focus on maximising occupancy whilst driving recruitment of staff across the business, and stabilising the home. Occupancy has improved from approximately 75% to 94% since January of this year, with

approximately 130 residents now living at Total Care. The Board of Directors meets monthly and has full oversight of improvement at the home via internal governance routes established since acquisition.

Alyson Wadsworth, Quality Matron, was seconded from the Northern Care Alliance last year and remains on site full time, working with the team to make the improvements in line with the CQC quality standards, to ensure the workforce receive training relevant to their role, and maximise positive outcomes for our residents. Further to the recent successful recruitment of a new registered manager (due to start in post early November) the team at the home, with support from key council officers in addition to Charlotte & Alyson, will move into phase two of the improvement plan which aims to build on the work to date, and ensure it is sustainable. A detailed business plan is in progress, with a focus to the future to ensure that Total Care fulfils it's potential to become a centre of excellence for the residents of Oldham.

Question from Councillor Lancaster - Will Oldham Council support the Age UK campaign to save winter fuel payments? Councillor Brownridge replied, thanking Councillor Lancaster for his question, adding that AgeUK and the Council work together on a variety of projects and services to help lift older people out of poverty.

This is the best way for the council to support those who need help – collaboration and partnership.

Most recently, as already talked about by the Leader of the Council, was our joint campaign with AgeUK using the councils Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) to identify pensioners who are eligible for Pension Credit and not claiming.

Pension Credit gives extra money to help with living costs if you're over State Pension age and on a low income. It's also a passporting benefit which means it gives an individual access to other benefits like; housing benefit, council tax reduction, warm homes discount and other important support.

This council will absolutely make sure that we work to get everyone who needs it, access to both pension credit and the winter fuel payment.

h. Councillor Goodwin – Don't Trash Oldham Portfolio

The Don't Trash Oldham Portfolio Holder presented his report.

Question from Councillor Murphy - The Administration was warned that cuts to Environmental Services would result in a much poorer service for residents, but Labour councillors insisted that this wouldn't be the case. This year weed treatment was virtually non-existent in large parts of the borough and summer planting didn't take place. What guarantee can the Cabinet Member give residents that there will be no further cuts to Environmental Services and that the service will improve going forward?

Councillor Goodwin replied, thanking Councillor Murphy for his question saying that the Liberal Democrats seem completely

unaware of the financial crisis facing local government and the impact on this council.

Of course we cannot guarantee no further cuts to environmental services while budgets are reducing and demand for statutory services is increasing. We can only work hard to protect them as much as we can.

The weed spraying service was nothing to do with reductions in budgets bit was because the service was contracted to an external provider who failed to deliver to the agreed standard. As a result, rather than dealing with additional delays by re-procuring the service, the Council decided to bring the service in house.

As a result, we have increased investment in the Service, trained additional staff, bought more equipment and materials to deliver the service.

We appreciate that this has taken time, but given the significant investment made to bring the service in-house, we are confident that we will be able to meet the demand and resident expectations. The weed spraying programme is being supported by teams undertaking mechanical removal and this will continue as we move forward.

Question from Councillor Sharp - Across the Borough a number of sections in our parks are now designated naturalist areas and form part of the Council's bio diversity charter. These areas are left to naturalise with deferred mowing and are only cut back once or twice a year. I would be grateful if the relevant Cabinet member could highlight how much this cut back in maintenance saves the council each year?

Councillor Goodwin replied, thanking Councillor Sharp for her question, stating that Oldham Council is committed to meeting the climate and biodiversity challenge.

Reducing mowing generates a number of benefits for the environment, these include, but are not limited to, increased biodiversity, carbon sequestration, reduced soil erosion, moisture retention, creation of natural spaces and community engagement and involvement. All these benefits are difficult to quantify in monetary terms.

Reduced mowing areas still require ongoing management and maintenance to ensure highway safety, public safety, and sustainable growth.

These changes do lead to some savings, but given the growth of the green space boroughwide, any savings realised are invested elsewhere. However, understandably, there are equipment and fuel/material/ time savings for specific sites, but these have not been quantified as the service that delivers this work, does so on a boroughwide basis.

Question from Councillor Kouser – why were the repairs to Waterloo Bridge, Oldham taking so long?

Councillor Goodwin replied, thanking Councillor Kouser for her question and undertaking to provide her with a detailed written answer.



Oldham
Council

Question from Councillor Bishop - Can the Cabinet Member provide the following details relating to parking marshals at Dovestones:

- a. How much did OMBC contribute towards the parking marshals at Dovestones in the financial year 2023-2024?
- b. How much is OMBC contributing towards the parking marshals at Dovestones in the financial year 2024-2025?
- c. If there is a difference, how is it explained?
- d. How much did OMBC raise in total revenue from parking charges and fines at Dovestones in 2023-2024?

Councillor Goodwin replied, thanking Councillor Bishop for her question and confirming that the contribution from the Council towards parking control at Dovestones has remained unchanged over the financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25 at £6,000 a year. This contribution has been matched by funding from our partners United Utilities and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

I can also confirm that Pay and Display income was £159,821 and Penalty Notice Charges issued amounted to £25,629 for the period 2023-24.

- i. Councillor Dean – Thriving Communities and Culture Portfolio

The Thriving Communities and Culture Portfolio Holder presented his report.

Question from Councillor Marland - Following the recent announcement relating to the town centre development could the Cabinet Member tell us what the future of the nuclear bunker will likely to be under this building it would be a great asset indeed to have it turned into an educational facility to teach the past of cold war and life during 60s and 70s to future generations and preserve our history before it is consigned to rubble?

Councillor Dean replied, thanking Councillor Marland for her question and confirming that the Council are working closely with our Development Partner MUSE Places to progress proposals for the future of key Town Centre assets, including the Civic Centre. This includes the basement bunker, which has been visited recently by both the development partners technical advisors and relevant Local Interest Groups.

At this stage however, no final decision has been taken on the long-term future of the building, however we will be happy to provide further updates as the plans are progressed over the coming months.

Question from Councillor Adams - Royton has a thriving and vibrant nighttime economy. On Sunday 25 August, in broad daylight, and in a deliberate attack, 2 youths threw bricks through the windows on The Barclay Pizza and Prosecco Bar. What meetings has the cabinet member had with the owners of the Barclay and GMP regarding this matter?

Councillor Dean replied, thanking Councillor Adams for her question adding that he was aware of the incident that you refer to and our Community Safety Service have been in contact with Greater Manchester Police to ensure that this matter is being dealt with. Greater Manchester Police have confirmed that the incident is subject to an ongoing police investigation. To support this the leader of the Council has also met with the bar owners along with GMP and our Licensing Team. This was also followed up by the attendance of a pub watch meeting hosted by Barclay's. The Community Safety Service will continue to work closely with the Police to ensure that the offenders, when identified, are dealt with appropriately. This will include the use of civil tools and powers alongside any criminal prosecution undertaken by Greater Manchester Police. The Local Authority will actively seek to exclude the offenders from the area and prohibit their association in public, to reduce the detrimental impact that their actions have had in the area.

It is a key priority for the Local Authority, Greater Manchester Police and other partners to ensure that the thriving and vibrant night-time economy you refer to continues to grow and we will take swift and decisive action to ensure that residents and business owners are protected from the unacceptable actions of a small minority of individuals who choose to blight their communities.

Question from Councillor Davis - Could the Portfolio Holder confirm the additional police support and other support which Lucy Powell MP and I have requested around the Alder Road area of Failsworth after the recent machete attack and antisocial behaviour in the area?

Councillor Dean replied, thanking Councillor Dean for his question adding that he was pleased to confirm that the new inspector for the area has now allocated additional resource. This will be targeted Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. The Councils community safety team have visited local businesses and residents with the offer of support. Additional community safety measures are also being considered. The Youth Work team are targeting the area at key times and will discuss with young people consequences of behaviour and how they may engage them into other activity. We also will be looking for a more suitable location for them to socialise. The team also report that they have already managed to get some of the young people onto some mainstream youth activity and contact with schools has been made.

Question from Councillor Lancaster - From a justice and community safety perspective, could the Cabinet Member please provide update on what actions Oldham Council can and will take to address late night fireworks?

Councillor Dean replied, thanking Councillor Lancaster for his question, confirming that the Council and the wider Community Safety Partnership is committed to trying to tackle this issue on behalf of all residents. We understand how distressing the use of fireworks can be and the impact it has upon communities.

The current legislation allows for legal fireworks to be set off on private premises between the hours of 7am and 11pm throughout the year.

Unfortunately, the Council has no legal powers to take action for the illegal use of fireworks as the offences, which are criminal, can only be enforced by the Police. The demand on the Police in responding to all crime types is significant and being able to respond in time and catch somebody in the actual act of setting a firework off is very difficult.

As a partnership we continue to explore opportunities to take action to protect residents from firework nuisance.

We have been proactively sending messages out through our social media channels as part of our efforts to encourage responsible and considerate behaviours.

Through Facebook and Twitter, we have reiterated that it is illegal to let fireworks off between 11pm and 7am and that individuals should consider their neighbourhood and act responsibly.

We have also promoted reporting pathways through GMP through 101 and via the GMP online portal.

Any person with information about the illegal sale or use of fireworks can also report this anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Leader and Portfolio Holder reports be noted.
2. That the Minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held 17th June 2023 and 15th July 2024, the Minutes of the meeting of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority held 14th June 2024 and the Minutes of meetings of the AGMA Executive Board held on 9th February 2024 and 14th June 2024, be noted.

11

NOTICE OF ADMINISTRATION BUSINESS

Motion 1: Strengthening the Online Safety Act

Councillor Harrison MOVED and Councillor Nasheen SECONDED the following Motion:

Social media giants have displayed time and again that they cannot be trusted to self-regulate, the riots across the country in recent weeks showed how dangerous misinformation can be and how quickly it can spread online.

There was at least one doctored video circulating online in early August purporting to be of Aldi in Chadderton, not only was this video not filmed within the Borough of Oldham it was several years old. However, this caused a tremendous amount of community concern and even lead to Police resources being deployed to the scene.

It is urgent that we take proactive measures to enhance the safety and security of our online environment. We cannot allow malicious actors to spread misinformation online in an attempt to cause unrest and division and destruction.

The current Online Safety Act, while a significant step forward, requires strengthening to address challenges and ensure comprehensive protection for all users, particularly vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly.



This Council resolves:

1. To write to the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police and the Chief Superintendent for Oldham to thank them for the work their officers did to keep Oldhamers safe and violence off our streets.
2. To write to the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation & Technology to ask his Department:
 - a. to undertake a review of the Online Safety Act to identify areas for improvement.
 - b. to strengthen enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance and increase penalties for violations.
 - c. to provide resources and training for parents, schools, and third sector organisations to help them protect and guide children in the digital world.
 - d. to ensure victims of online abuse and crimes are supported.

AMENDMENT

Councillor Quigg MOVED and Councillor Arnott SECONDED the following AMENDMENT:

We live in a world where distance and connectivity between nations and people is shrinking. Information is available 24/7 and at the swipe or push of a button. For the first time in history, human beings have access to seemingly vast amounts of information at their fingertips.

But that vast amount of information is stored with mainly private companies.

We have seen how state and non-state actors are increasingly using social media to exploit weaknesses in those companies but also the data that they hold. From the vulnerability of platforms such as Tik-Tok, who are facing US Congressional hearings over a failure to protect user's data from the Chinese Communist Party to non-state actors, criminals and terrorists who use it to blackmail individuals, cause harm to children and cause harm to adults via these platforms.

Social media is increasingly a double edge sword.

Without social media, the documenting of criminality in Bangladesh, ballot rigging in Venezuela the conflicts in Ukraine, North Africa and the Middle East would have been limited to a news cycle or newspaper column. Equally we have seen how governments and media can censor and control information, which is why for many social media is the now go to platform to consume, document, and distribute news.

But again, in the United Kingdom we have seen the impact of foreign and malign influences. According to a BBC investigation, they found that a Pakistani national linked to a website called Channel3Now, had posted an article that included a false name for the perpetrator responsible for the slaughter of three young girls in Southport. The article was shared widely on social media and quickly went viral. Only after UK police had refuted the false information, was the post deleted and an apology issued. The damage however was done.

Locally, there was at least one doctored video circulating online in early August purporting to be of Aldi in Chadderton, not only was this video not filmed within the Borough of Oldham it was several years old. However, this caused a tremendous amount of community concern and even lead to Police resources being deployed to the scene.

It is urgent that we take proactive measures to enhance the safety and security of our online environment. We cannot allow malicious actors to spread misinformation online in an attempt to cause unrest and division and destruction. Equally, we must make sure that where criminality happens that existing laws are enforced by the Police and where they are outdated, that Parliament updates and amends the law. The Police must act without fear or favour and must be the only ones who police our streets and protect the public when there is the potential for harm or injury.

We must always make sure that the right to free speech and the right to exercise it is paramount. Freedom of speech is increasingly under threat, it must not be used by politicians to censor, curtail or silence their critics. The road to hell is always paved with good intentions.

The current Online Safety Act, while a significant step forward, requires strengthening to address challenges and ensure comprehensive protection for all users, particularly vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly.

This Council resolves:

1. That Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council will value and protect freedom of speech.
2. That Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council will never abuse the powers it has and use them against residents when they are lawfully exercising freedom of speech.
3. That we recognise the Peelite principle of policing that the Police must act without fear or favour and firmly believe that the police are there to police our streets and that we will **never** accept convicted criminals policing or 'managing' our streets, vigilantism, or rioting.
4. To write to the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police and the Chief Superintendent for Oldham to thank them for the work their officers did to keep residents in the Oldham Metropolitan Borough safe and violence off our streets, as well as thanking officers for the around the

clock work, they do to keep our ports of entry, like Manchester Airport, safe also.

5. To write to the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology to ask his Department:
 - a. to undertake a review of the Online Safety Act to identify areas for improvement.
 - b. to strengthen enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance and increase penalties for violations.
 - c. that HM Government will protect freedom of speech and not curtail hard won rights and freedoms.
 - d. to provide resources and training for parents, schools, and third sector organisations to help them protect and guide children in the digital world.
 - e. to ensure victims of online abuse and crimes are supported.

A vote was taken on the AMENDMENT which was LOST.

On being put to the vote the MOTION was CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

This Council resolves:

1. To write to the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police and the Chief Superintendent for Oldham to thank them for the work their officers did to keep Oldhamers safe and violence off our streets.
2. To write to the Secretary of State for Science, Innovation & Technology to ask that his department:
 - a. Undertake a review of the Online Safety Act to identify areas for improvement.
 - b. Strengthen enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance and increase penalties for violations.
 - c. Provide resources and training for parents, schools, and third sector organisations to help them protect and guide children in the digital world.
 - d. Ensure victims of online abuse and crimes are supported.

Motion 2: A Welcome Start to Delivering the New Deal for Workers

Councillor Taylor MOVED and Councillor Islam SECONDED the following Motion:

The King's Speech delivered on the 17th of July 2024 included plans for a new Employment Rights Bill. This bill builds on the previously announced New Deal for Working People and will enshrine much of the plan to make work pay, provide security at work and ensure the work life balance that everyone deserves.

This Council notes:

- The Government's commitment to improve workers' rights, and terms & conditions across the UK.

- The key components of the New Deal for Working People, include:
 - a. A ban on zero-hour contracts.
 - b. A commitment to end ‘fire & re-hire’ practices
 - c. Strengthening employment rights and flexible working from day one.
 - d. Making sure work pays, with a genuine living wage.
 - e. Better access to trade unions and fair representation in the workplace.

This Council believes:

- That fair pay and decent working conditions are fundamental rights for all workers.
- That the measures proposed in the New Deal for Workers will significantly improve the lives of workers in Oldham
- That fair and decent work provides greater security, improves national productivity and increases economic opportunity for all workers.
- That supporting these measures aligns with our commitment to social justice and economic fairness.

This Council resolves to:

1. Lobby for support for the Employment Rights Bill.
2. Write to the Borough’s three MPs, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, reaffirming our support for the New Deal for Workers.
3. Promote awareness of the New Deal for Workers in Oldham through our communication channels.
4. Encourage local businesses to adopt the principles of the New Deal for Workers voluntarily, ahead of any legislative changes.

1st AMENDMENT

Councillor Quigg MOVED and Councillor Adams SECONDED the following AMENDMENT:

The King’s Speech delivered on the 17th of July 2024 included plans for a new Employment Rights Bill. This bill builds on the previously announced New Deal for Working People and will enshrine much of the plan to make work pay, provide security at work and ensure the work life balance that everyone deserves.

This Council notes:

- The Government’s commitment to improve workers’ rights, and terms & conditions across the UK.
- The key components of the New Deal for Working People, include:
 - a. A ban on zero-hour contracts.
 - b. A commitment to end ‘fire & re-hire’ practices
 - c. Strengthening employment rights and flexible working from day one.

- d. Making sure work pays, with a genuine living wage.
- e. Better access to trade unions and fair representation in the workplace.

This Council resolves to:

Ask the groups and individuals, within the Council chamber of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, if they so choose, to write to their Members of Parliament to:

- Lobby for support for the Employment Rights Bill.
- Write to the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, to support the New Deal for Workers.
- Promote awareness of the New Deal for Workers in Oldham through their communication channels.
- That fair pay and decent working conditions are fundamental rights for all workers.
- That the measures proposed in the New Deal for Workers will significantly improve the lives of workers in Oldham
- That fair and decent work provides greater security, improves national productivity, and increases economic opportunity for all workers.
- That supporting these measures aligns with Labour's commitment to social justice and economic fairness.

To further ask the groups and individuals, within the Council chamber of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, if they so choose, to write to:

- The Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer to:
 - confirm that HM government will not allow freedom of movement of any kind with the European Union or the European Economic Area.
 - That HM government will reconsider their decision to scrap plans that force councils to introduce mandatory 'local connection tests' for social housing, and an income test.

A vote was taken on the 1st AMENDMENT which was LOST.

2nd AMENDMENT

Councillor Al-Hamdani MOVED and Councillor Sykes SECONDED the following AMENDMENT:

The King's Speech delivered on the 17th of July 2024 included plans for a new Employment Rights Bill. This bill builds on the previously announced New Deal for Working People and will enshrine much of the plan to make work pay, provide security at work and ensure the work life balance that everyone deserves.

This Council notes:

- The Government's commitment to improve workers' rights, and terms & conditions across the UK.
- The key components of the New Deal for Working People, include:
 - a. A ban on zero-hour contracts.
 - b. A commitment to end 'fire & re-hire' practices
 - c. Strengthening employment rights and flexible working from day one.
 - d. Making sure work pays, with a genuine living wage.
 - e. Better access to trade unions and fair representation in the workplace.

This Council believes:

- That fair pay and decent working conditions are fundamental rights for all workers.
- That the measures proposed in the New Deal for Workers will significantly improve the lives of workers in Oldham
- That fair and decent work provides greater security, improves national productivity and increases economic opportunity for all workers.
- That supporting these measures aligns with our commitment to social justice and economic fairness.

This Council resolves to:

- 1 Lobby for support for the Employment Rights Bill.
- 2 Write to the Borough's three MPs, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, reaffirming our support for the New Deal for Workers.
- 3 Promote awareness of the New Deal for Workers in Oldham through our communication channels.
- 4 Encourage local businesses to adopt the principles of the New Deal for Workers voluntarily, ahead of any legislative changes.
- 5 Cease using zero hours contractors for workers employed on or on behalf of Oldham Council, such as bin collections staff.

A vote was taken on the 2nd AMENDMENT which was LOST.

On being put to the vote the MOTION was CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

This Council resolves to:

1. To lobby for support for the Employment Rights Bill.
2. To request that the Chief Executive write to the Borough's three MPs, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, reaffirming our support for the New Deal for Workers.
3. To promote awareness of the New Deal for Workers in Oldham through our communication channels.

4. To encourage local businesses to adopt the principles of the New Deal for Workers voluntarily, ahead of any legislative changes.

NOTICE OF OPPOSITION BUSINESS

Motion 1: Two Child Benefit Cap

Councillor Sykes MOVED and Councillor Al-Hamdani SECONDED the following MOTION:

The Two Child limit to benefit payments was introduced by the Conservative Government in 2017 and is supported by the current Labour Government. It prevents families from claiming Child Tax Credit or Universal Credit for more than two children in the household.

Council notes the recent research conducted by the End Child Poverty Coalition which has found that:

- 1.5 million children in the UK live in households subject to the two-child limit on benefit payments. That is roughly one-in-ten children in the UK.
- In 2023/24 the two-child limit cost families up to £3,235 per child each year.
- There is a strong correlation between families affected by the two-child limit and those who are living in poverty.
- Scrapping the two-child limit would lift 250,000 children out of poverty overnight, and significantly reduce the level of poverty that a further 850,000 children live in.
- Scrapping the two-child limit would cost £1.3 billion, however it is estimated that child poverty costs the economy £39 billion each year.

In Oldham 11,340 children in 3,160 households are currently affected by the two-child limit to benefit payments. That is 18% of all children in the authority area. At the same time 27,760 local children are living in poverty.

Council strongly believes that the two-child limit to benefit payments is a cruel and harmful policy that should be scrapped. Research from the University of York has shown its introduction has had no positive impacts on employment and earnings. Instead, it has dragged thousands of local families into poverty.

Council notes the Liberal Democrats have consistently opposed the two-child limit to benefit payments since it was introduced – calling for it to be axed in their 2017, 2019 and 2024 manifestos. Council notes with concern the stance of the Labour Government who are committed to keeping the cap – going as far as suspending the whip from MPs who rebel against this position.

Council resolves to:

1. Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister outlining Oldham Council's strong belief that the two-child limit to benefit

payments should be scrapped – which would help more than 11,000 children across Oldham.

2. Further instruct the Chief Executive to write to all of Oldham's MPs, asking them to commit their public support to the campaign to end the cruel two child limit to benefit payments.
3. Ensure the number of children a family has is considered when a hardship grant is given out by the council.
4. Explore ways to support families impacted by the two-child limit across Oldham Borough, including through free school meals.

AMENDMENT

Councillor Jabbar MOVED and Councillor Rustidge SECONDED the following AMENDMENT:

The Two Child limit to benefit payments was introduced by the Conservative Government in 2017. It prevents families from claiming Child Tax Credit or Universal Credit for more than two children in the household.

The 2017 two-child limit followed many other punitive welfare changes introduced by the Conservative Lib Dem Coalition between 2010 and 2015 which had a devastating impact on poverty levels including the Household Benefit cap implemented in 2013.

The last Labour Government made tackling child poverty a national priority. The Coalition Government abandoned the Act to enshrine in law the target of eradicating child poverty by 2020.

Council notes the recent research conducted by the End Child Poverty Coalition which has found that:

- 1.5 million children in the UK live in households subject to the two-child limit on benefit payments. That is roughly one-in-ten children in the UK.
- In 2023/24 the two-child limit cost families up to £3,235 per child each year.
- There is a strong correlation between families affected by the two-child limit and those who are living in poverty.
- Scrapping the two-child limit would lift 250,000 children out of poverty overnight, and significantly reduce the level of poverty that a further 850,000 children live in.
- Scrapping the two-child limit would cost £2.5 billion in this year, rising to £3.6 billion when fully rolled out however it is estimated that child poverty costs the economy £39 billion each year.

In Oldham 11,340 children in 3,160 households are currently affected by the two-child limit to benefit payments. That is 18% of all children in the authority area. At the same time 27,760 local children are living in poverty.

Council strongly believes that the two-child limit to benefit payments is a cruel and harmful policy that should be scrapped when the Government's fiscal position allows and as part of a wider strategy to reduce child poverty.



Council further notes the £22 billion 'black hole' of unfunded Conservative spending commitments discovered following an audit of Government finances subsequent to the General Election in July 2024.

Oldham welcomes creation of a Ministerial Taskforce already beginning work on a cross government Child Poverty Strategy. The taskforce is supported by a Child Poverty Unit in the Cabinet Office.

Oldham Council will always stand up for families in need and has a long track record of delivering support to those affected by the cost-of-living crisis and poverty through the We Can Help campaign, Cost of Living support, development of Family Hubs, Real Living Wage targets and Work and Skills programme to mitigate and alleviate poverty in our borough.

Council resolves to:

1. Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister welcoming:
 - a. The development of a Child Poverty Strategy including reviewing the impact of both the two-child limit and the family benefit cap.
 - b. The opportunity to develop a new partnership between Oldham Council and the Labour Government to tackle the shameful legacy of fourteen years of Coalition and Conservative Welfare policies which have embedded child poverty in Oldham and across the UK
2. Further instruct the Chief Executive to write to all of Oldham's MPs, asking them to commit their public support ending child poverty as quickly as possible.
3. Ensure the number of children a family has is considered when a hardship grant is given out by the council.
4. Explore ways to support families impacted by the two-child limit across Oldham Borough, including through free school meals.

A vote was taken on the AMENDMENT which was CARRIED.

On being put to the vote the MOTION as AMENDED was CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Chief Executive be instructed to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister welcoming:
 - a. The development of a Child Poverty Strategy including reviewing the impact of both the two-child limit and the family benefit cap.

- b. The opportunity to develop a new partnership between Oldham Council and the Labour Government to tackle the shameful legacy of fourteen years of Coalition and Conservative Welfare policies which have embedded child poverty in Oldham and across the UK.
2. That Council further instruct that the Chief Executive to write to all of Oldham's MPs, asking them to commit their public support ending child poverty as quickly as possible.
3. Ensure the number of children a family has is considered when a hardship grant is given out by the council.
4. Explore ways to support families impacted by the two-child limit across Oldham Borough, including through free school meals.

Motion 2: Motor Insurance Premiums

Councillor Akhtar MOVED and Councillor Ibrahim SECONDED the following MOTION:

Recent research has exposed stark and unacceptable racial disparities in motor insurance premiums across the UK, including in Oldham. A 2023 survey by Citizens Advice found that residents in the most ethnically diverse areas are being quoted insurance premiums that are, on average, 33% higher than those in less diverse areas. Shockingly, this disparity persists even when controlling for factors like crime rates, vehicle values, and local road traffic accident statistics. Furthermore, evidence suggests that individuals with names associated with certain ethnic groups, such as "Muhammad," face higher premiums compared to those with names like "John," despite similar risk profiles.

These findings are a damning indictment of an industry that is systematically disadvantaging Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has committed to investigating these practices, but the urgency of the situation demands immediate action. Section 19 of the Equality Act (2010) defines indirect discrimination as the application of a provision, criterion, or practice that, while applied uniformly, results in worse outcomes for a group of people with protected characteristics. These practices must be recognised as such.

Addressing these disparities is not just a legal necessity but a moral imperative, aligning with Oldham Council's commitment to promoting equity, fairness, and social justice.

Oldham Council Notes:

Oldham's diversity is one of its greatest strengths, but this strength is undermined when our residents are subjected to systemic discrimination in essential services like motor insurance. The reported discriminatory practices not only erode trust in financial institutions but also exacerbate existing socio-

economic inequalities by imposing an undue financial burden on ethnic minority communities.



Oldham
Council

While the Council does not have direct control over insurance premiums, we have a duty to stand up for our residents, challenge unfair practices, and advocate for systemic change. It is not enough to passively acknowledge these issues; we must actively work to dismantle the structures that allow such disparities to persist.

We welcome the commitment in the Labour manifesto, which states that the new Government will further support people by “tackling the soaring cost of car insurance,” but this must include specific actions to eliminate racial discrimination within the industry.

Oldham Council Believes:

Every resident of Oldham has the right to be treated fairly and equitably in all aspects of life, including motor insurance, regardless of their race or ethnicity. The Council must take an active role in raising awareness about this issue, applying pressure on relevant bodies, and advocating for substantive change at both local and national levels.

Oldham Council Resolves:

1. **To Demand Accountability:** Write to Oldham’s newly elected MPs, urging them to take immediate action by raising these concerns about racial disparities in motor insurance premiums with the relevant Secretary of State. Additionally, demand that they press the FCA to expedite its investigation into these discriminatory practices and report back to the community on the progress made.
2. **To Challenge the Insurance Industry:** Instruct the portfolio holder for neighbourhoods and community safety to write to the Association of British Insurers (ABI), demanding a comprehensive review of their pricing practices. The ABI must be held to account for why motorists from BAME backgrounds are charged significantly higher premiums than their White counterparts with similar risk profiles. The Council should insist on transparency and a full explanation, accompanied by concrete steps to rectify this injustice.
3. **To Empower the Community:** Support and amplify local initiatives and campaigns that raise awareness of this issue and provide support to those affected by these discriminatory practices. The Council must work closely with community leaders and advocacy groups to ensure that all residents are informed of their rights and the support available to them.
4. **To Build a Coalition for Change:** Collaborate with other councils, governmental bodies, and relevant organisations to form a coalition dedicated to addressing and eliminating racial disparities in motor insurance premiums. This coalition should work towards developing

and implementing policies that ensure fair treatment for all citizens, regardless of ethnicity.



Oldham
Council

AMENDMENT

Councillor Shah MOVED and Councillor Mohon Ali SECONDED the following AMENDMENT:

Recent research has exposed stark and unacceptable racial disparities in motor insurance premiums across the UK, including in Oldham. A 2023 survey by Citizens Advice found that residents in the most ethnically diverse areas are being quoted insurance premiums that are, on average, 33% higher than those in less diverse areas. Shockingly, this disparity persists even when controlling for factors like crime rates, vehicle values, and local road traffic accident statistics.

These findings are a damning indictment of an industry that is systematically disadvantaging poorer communities and, because Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities are more likely to experience poverty, disproportionately affecting BAME people. The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has committed to investigating these practices, but the urgency of the situation demands immediate action. Section 19 of the Equality Act (2010) defines indirect discrimination as the application of a provision, criterion, or practice that, while applied uniformly, results in worse outcomes for a group of people with protected characteristics. These practices must be recognised as such.

Addressing these disparities is not just a legal necessity but a moral imperative, aligning with Oldham Council's commitment to promoting equity, fairness, and social justice.

Oldham Council Notes:

Oldham's diversity is one of its greatest strengths, but this strength is undermined when our residents are subjected to systemic discrimination in essential services like motor insurance. The reported discriminatory practices not only erode trust in financial institutions but also exacerbate existing socio-economic inequalities by imposing an undue financial burden on disadvantaged communities.

While the Council does not have direct control over insurance premiums, we have a duty to stand up for our residents, challenge unfair practices, and advocate for systemic change. It is not enough to passively acknowledge these issues; we must actively work to dismantle the structures that allow such disparities to persist.

We welcome the commitment in the Labour manifesto, which states that the new Government will further support people by "tackling the soaring cost of car insurance," but this must include specific actions to eliminate the poverty premium being applied to policies and the subsequent disproportionate impact on BAME communities.

Oldham Council Believes:

Every resident of Oldham has the right to be treated fairly and equitably in all aspects of life, including motor insurance, regardless of their race or ethnicity. The Council must take an active role in raising awareness about this issue, applying pressure on relevant bodies, and advocating for substantive change at both local and national levels.

Oldham Council Resolves:

1. To write to Oldham's newly elected MPs, asking them to raise these concerns about racial disparities in motor insurance premiums with the Secretaries of State for Transport and for Business and Trade. Additionally, ask that they urge the FCA to expedite its investigation into these discriminatory practices and report back their response to this Council.
2. To instruct the portfolio holder for community safety, the Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture to write to the Association of British Insurers (ABI), urging them to undertake a comprehensive review of their pricing practices. The ABI must be asked to account for why motorists from BAME backgrounds are charged significantly higher premiums than their White counterparts with similar risk profiles. The Council should insist on transparency and a full explanation, accompanied by concrete steps to rectify this injustice.
3. To support and amplify local initiatives and campaigns that raise awareness of this issue and provide support to those affected by these discriminatory practices.
4. To ask the Leader of the Council, as the Greater Manchester Portfolio Holder for Equalities and Communities to Collaborate with other councils, governmental bodies, and relevant organisations to form a Greater Manchester wide working group dedicated to addressing and eliminating poverty premiums and associated racial disparities in motor insurance premiums. This coalition should lobby the government and associated groups, like the ABI and FCA, for the development and implementation of policies that ensure fair treatment for all citizens, regardless of ethnicity.

A vote was taken on the AMENDMENT which was CARRIED.

On being put to the vote the MOTION as AMENDED was CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Chief Executive be requested to write to Oldham's newly elected MPs, asking them to raise these concerns about racial disparities in motor insurance premiums with the Secretaries of State for Transport and for Business and Trade. Additionally, ask that they urge the FCA to expedite its investigation into these discriminatory practices and report back their response to this Council.
2. To instruct the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, the Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture to

write to the Association of British Insurers (ABI), urging them to undertake a comprehensive review of their pricing practices. The ABI must be asked to account for why motorists from BAME backgrounds are charged significantly higher premiums than their White counterparts with similar risk profiles. The Council should insist on transparency and a full explanation, accompanied by concrete steps to rectify this injustice.

3. To support and amplify local initiatives and campaigns that raise awareness of this issue and provide support to those affected by these discriminatory practices.
4. To ask the Leader of the Council, as the Greater Manchester Portfolio Holder for Equalities and Communities, to Collaborate with other councils, governmental bodies, and relevant organisations to form a Greater Manchester wide working group dedicated to addressing and eliminating poverty premiums and associated racial disparities in motor insurance premiums. This coalition should lobby the government and associated groups, like the ABI and FCA, for the development and implementation of policies that ensure fair treatment for all citizens, regardless of ethnicity.

Motion 3: Putting Oldham Council Back in the Black

Councillor Quigg MOVED AND Councillor Woodvine SECONDED the following MOTION:

Despite Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (OMBC) passing a budget on the 28th of February 2024, Oldham Council say they are now 'working on' reducing a predicted £36m budget black hole. Despite being halfway through the current financial year the budgetary picture has worsened.

If the administration fails in cutting costs, OMBC could well end up using most of its reserves in 2025, leaving it vulnerable to 'effective bankruptcy' or the issuance of a Section 114. OMBC has also made clear to the media that they are encouraging voluntary redundancies across council services in a bid to cut spending and were looking at 'all options'.

Last year, the cabinet reported a projected overspend every quarter and each time they said they expected the real figure to be less than predicted –it wasn't. Too often Council spending and financial information is not as comprehensive and transparent as it should be, meaning local taxpayers don't have a full and accurate picture of the finances. Too often the Labour administration has dismissed or failed to implement opposition budget amendments.

Clearly something is going wrong at OMBC.

Is the Cabinet Member for Value for Money & Sustainability to blame or is the Director of Finance to blame?

Was this Council misled at the last budget?

Who has failed to manage OMBC finances by failing to keep them under control?

Councillors and the people of Oldham have not been given the full picture on the financial challenges facing the Borough. The budget set on the 28th of February 2024 was clearly not worth the paper it was printed on.



This Council resolves to:

- Immediately commission an investigation by a forensic accountant on the Council's finances both past and present and whether it has complied with the Best Value Duty.
- For the investigation's outcome report to be presented to a special sitting of the full Council.
-

The Council further resolves to:

- Immediately publish discussions OMBC has had with HM Government about any financial packages to help repair the financial black hole and to provide a full list of meetings and minutes of those meetings that took place and with who.
- Immediately provide a full budgetary analysis to each Council grouping by the Director of Finance, providing a full report on the Council's finances.
- Make sure all 60 Oldham Borough Councillors have a DBS check completed by the time of the next Council meeting to make sure there are no issues financial or otherwise that prevent them from carrying out their duties.
- Write to Saddleworth Parish Council and Shaw and Crompton Town Council to confirm if they have carried out DBS checks on all elected members and asking them to reply by the next full Council meeting with a response as to whether they are carrying out DBS checks on elected members.

On being put to the vote the MOTION was LOST.

Motion 4: Mass Graves in Oldham Cemeteries

Councillor Hurley MOVED AND Councillor Hughes SECONDED the following MOTION:

Before the 1980s, it was common practice across the UK that when a woman had a stillbirth, hospital staff would quickly take the baby away.

Parents were informed by hospital staff that it was better they didn't hold or even see their baby as they believed a mother would recover from the experience quicker if they had no interaction with their baby. It was explained that their baby would be buried in a coffin alongside a 'nice' person, and that was that.

No funeral, no mental health assistance, and no support; grieving mothers and fathers were simply told and expected to just get on with their lives. The emotional toll of this experience cannot be overstated. So many people have carried the pain and trauma of the practice from the past, with many never knowing the final resting place of their babies.

Sadly, the reality of what occurred with thousands of stillborn babies is now known thanks to the fantastic campaign work of a woman from the Wirral, Gina Jacobs, who found her baby in a mass grave alongside 63 other babies.

A resident from Royton asked us to help her in finding her twin brothers; one was stillborn, and the other had died at 5 hours old in 1962. Her parents had since passed away, but her quest to find the graves of her brothers eventually led her to Royton cemetery after years of anguish and trauma.

After many years of searching and inquiring, also being passed back and forth between the hospital and registrar and then the cemetery records, it became clear that the process needs to be looked at. A clear pathway between multi-agency agencies must be put in place so relatives can find the information required quickly. The resident eventually found out that Royton Cemetery had a mass grave where her brothers lay.

Our research of the public records at Hollinwood and online records uncovered even more: believed to buried together in one box, the resident's brothers Nicolas and Lawrence shared their unmarked mass grave with 303 others, which included:

- 146 stillborn babies
- 128 babies and young children
- 29 Adults

Due to errors in the system, only 147 names of the 303 buried were recorded online. This is a matter of extreme urgency that should be fixed immediately to ensure all those who are buried in mass graves are properly recorded.

Thankfully, staff at the records office hold the original handwritten books in which we found 157 missing names, which, through the work of one staff member these 157 have manually been added to the online records for this one mass grave.

Through Online Records and with the help of the staff from Hollinwood Cemetery, we discovered that there are three mass graves in Royton Cemetery; Royton is not unique there are mass graves of stillborn babies, babies and young children in every cemetery across the borough, who lay forgotten, totalling thousands.

We cannot undo what has happened, but as an authority, we must recognise that it did happen and support residents and their families.

This council resolves to:

- Recognise the loss and suffering in the past and present by publicly marking out each mass grave and erecting a memorial to all our babies born asleep and the many who lay with them forgotten.
- That records of mass graves in our cemeteries be collated and recorded entirely online so that relatives can at last see the final resting place of their babies, children and relatives.
- To implement and publicise a clear procedure that provides those seeking their loved ones, a professional, sensitive and transparent process.
- Provide relatives with a dedicated point of contact who can support and assist people in this traumatic time.

On being put to the vote the MOTION was CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

RESOLVED:

1. THAT THE Council recognises the loss and suffering in the past and present by publicly marking out each mass grave and erecting a memorial to all our babies born asleep and the many who lay with them forgotten.
2. That records of mass graves in our cemeteries be collated and recorded entirely online so that relatives can at last see the final resting place of their babies, children and relatives.
3. That the Council implements and publicises a clear procedure that provides those seeking their loved ones, a professional, sensitive and transparent process.
4. Provides relatives with a dedicated point of contact who can support and assist people in this traumatic time.

Motion 5: Collective Spirit Free School

The following Motion was MOVED by Councillor Hince and SECONDED by Councillor Navesey

The council and its members (as corporate parents) have a duty of care towards children within the borough. This includes when they are failed by the very organisations meant to educate and develop them.

This Council notes:

- Collective Spirit Free School based in Oldham closed in 2017 amid serious allegations of financial irregularities and mismanagement.
- Hundreds of pupils were subject to catastrophic failures in their education, as well as receiving substandard care, with even basic requirements such as school lunches being described as inedible.
- When inspected by Ofsted, the school was put into special measures. However, such was the level of failings

and conditions the school was closed with two hundred and ten students needing to be urgently re-schooled.

- In addition, the Education & Skills Funding Agency report identified a number of significant failings in governance and financial control arrangements relating to a company connected to the school's leadership.
- It has been reported that between September 2013 and August 2017 Collective Spirit Free School paid between £1,247,637 and £1,265,177 to a company connected to the school's leadership.
- The Education & Skills Funding Agency report concluded that "owing to the lack of supporting documentation and evidence in relation to the financial transactions, the Education & Skills Funding Agency is unable to conclude on the allegations, specifically whether costs were inappropriately inflated, or invoices submitted for services not delivered". The Education & Skills Funding Agency also concluded "that from a review of documentation and the governance and control arrangements operated by Collective Spirit Free School, casts significant doubt on the legitimacy of funds paid to" a company connected to the school's leadership. The report states that The Education & Skills Funding Agency encountered substantial difficulties establishing any reasonable audit trail of financial transactions or evidence to assure the regularity of funds spent by the trust (school).
- It has also been reported that during this time, the school even failed to pay pension contributions to teachers totalling £124000.
- In addition, it has been reported donations from parents and carers to the school totalling £33,512, essentially from some of the poorest homes in the borough also remain unaccounted for.
- Although an investigation was carried out and subsequent report was published by the Education & Skills Funding Agency, the report found many questions remain unanswered, with responsibility for potential wrongdoing going unaccounted for.
- Victims of this mismanagement, former pupils, parents, carers, and former employees still seek answers, accountability, and closure.

This Council resolves:

- To outline the tragic failings, impacts and alleged financial irregularities still unanswered in the Collective Spirit Free School scandal to the Secretary of State for Education the Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP.
- To request the Secretary of State for Education the Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP to instruct the Department of Education (DfE) to carry out a full inquiry into Collective Spirit Free School. With the aims and objectives of fully highlighting the schools' failings and negative impacts on

pupils and their families, by giving them a voice in said inquiry. To provide a platform to individuals who wish to make statements of evidence. And a comprehensive investigation into financial irregularities previously unanswered including the holding to account of any individual(s) accountable (and) or complicit in wrongdoing.

- To offer the inquiry any support or resources as requested by the DfE.

A recorded vote, in line with the Regulations was then taken on the MOTION as follows:

COUNCILLOR		COUNCILLOR	
Adams Christine	FOR	Hussain Junaid	FOR
Akhtar Shoab	FOR	Hussain Sajed	FOR
Al-Hamdani Sam	ABSTAIN	Ibrahim Nyla	FOR
Ali Mohon	FOR	Iqbal Nadeem	FOR
Ali Zaheer	FOR	Islam Mohammed Nazrul	FOR
Arnott Dave	FOR	Jabbar Abdul	FOR
Aslam Naseem	FOR	Kenyon Mark	ABSTAIN
Azad Montaz Ali	FOR	Kouser Aisha	FOR
Ball Sandra	ABSTAIN	Lancaster Luke	FOR
Bishop Helen	ABSTAIN	Malik Abdul	FOR
Bashforth Marie	FOR	Marland Alicia	ABSTAIN
Brownridge Barbara	FOR	McLaren Colin	FOR
Byrne Pam	FOR	Moore Eddie (Deputy Mayor)	FOR
Charters Josh	FOR	Murphy Dave	ABSTAIN
Cosgrove Angela	FOR	Mushtaq Shaid	FOR
Chowhan Naveed	APOLOGIES	Nasheen Umar	FOR
Davis Peter	FOR	Navesey Lisa	FOR
Dean Peter	FOR	Quigg Lewis	FOR
Ghafoor Kamran	FOR	Rustidge Ken	FOR
Goodwin Chris	FOR	Shah Arooj	FOR
Hamblett Louie	ABSTAIN	Sharp Beth	FOR
Harkness Garth	ABSTAIN	Sheldon Graham	FOR
Harrison Holly	FOR	Shuttleworth Graham	FOR
Hince Marc	FOR	Sykes Howard	ABSTAIN
Hindle Neil	FOR	Taylor Elaine	FOR
Hobin Brian	FOR	Wahid Abdul	FOR

Hughes Jade	ABSTAIN	Wilkinson Mark	ABSTAIN
Hurley Maggie	ABSTAIN	Williamson Diane	ABSTAIN
Hussain Aftab	FOR	Woodvine Max	FOR
Hussain Fida	FOR	Chauhan Zahid (MAYOR)	FOR

On a recorded VOTE being taken 46 VOTES were cast in FAVOUR of the MOTION with 0 VOTES cast AGAINST and there were 13 ABSTENTIONS. The MOTION was therefore CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Chief Executive be requested to outline the tragic failings, impacts and alleged financial irregularities still unanswered in the Collective Spirit Free School scandal to the Secretary of State for Education the Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP.
2. To request that the Secretary of State for Education, the Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP, instruct the Department of Education (DfE) to carry out a full inquiry into Collective Spirit Free School; with the aims and objectives of fully highlighting the schools' failings and negative impacts on pupils and their families, by giving them a voice in said inquiry and to provide a platform to individuals who wish to make statements of evidence. And a comprehensive investigation into financial irregularities previously unanswered including the holding to account of any individual(s) accountable (and) or complicit in wrongdoing.
3. To offer the inquiry any support or resources as requested by the DfE.

13

UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM COUNCIL

Councillor Shah MOVED and Councillor Sykes SECONDED a report of the Director of Legal, which updated members on actions taken following the meeting of the Council held on 10th July 2024 and also on any updated responses from meetings held in the last 12 months.

RESOLVED:

That the actions regarding motions and issues from the meeting of the Council held on 10th July 2024, be noted and confirmed.

14

CONSTITUTION UPDATE

Councillor Shah MOVED and Councillor Jabbar SECONDED the report of the Director of Legal, which recommended that Council consider and approve the proposed constitution changes detailed at paragraphs 2.1 to 2.7 of the submitted report and to reconfirm the Constitution as amended by this meeting.

The main areas that were recommended for amendment included 'Member/Officer Protocol' (as detailed at Appendix 1),

'Planning meeting protocol' (as detailed at Appendix 2), 'Organisational changes' (as detailed at Appendix 3), 'Employee Code of Conduct' (as detailed at Appendix 4), 'Financial Procedure Rules' (as detailed at Appendix 5), 'Contract Procedure Rules' (as detailed at Appendix 6) and 'Other procedural changes' (as detailed at Appendix 7).

Council was advised that the Constitution needs to be regularly reviewed to ensure that it reflects any procedural or organisational changes and the Director of Legal's report identified areas where amendments to the Constitution were required.

RESOLVED:

1. That Council approves the recommended constitutional changes detailed at paragraphs 2.1 to 2.7 of the report, including the organisational changes outlined at paragraph 2.3.
2. That Council confirms the Constitution, as amended.
3. That Council delegates to the Director of Legal, the making of consequential amendments to the Constitution.

15

TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2023/24

Councillor Jabbar MOVED and Councillor Shah SECONDED a report of the Director of Finance concerning the Treasury Management outturn for 2023/24.

The Council was required to consider the performance of the Treasury Management function to comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (revised 2021). The submitted outturn report provided an update and set out the key Treasury Management issues for Members' information and reviews and outlines, namely: an economic update for 2023/24; an update of the Council's current treasury management position; Council Borrowing; Treasury Investment Activity; Treasury Performance for 2023/24; and Treasury Management Prudential Indicators.

The Treasury Management Outturn report 2023/24 had previously been presented to and considered by the Audit Committee on 27th June 2024 and by the Cabinet on 15th July 2024. Both of these bodies were content to commend the report to Council for approval.

RESOLVED:

1. That Council approves the actual 2023/24 prudential and treasury indicators presented in the Director of Finance's report.
2. That Council approves the annual treasury management review report for 2023/24.

16

OLDHAM YOUTH JUSTICE SERVICE PLAN 2024-2025

Councillor Mushtaq MOVED and Councillor Shah SECONDED the Youth Justice Plan 2024/25. The Oldham Youth Justice Plan sets out the strategic direction for youth justice in Oldham, taking a partnership approach to reducing re-offending, reducing the number of first-time entrants into the criminal justice system and reducing the use of custody. The Plan had previously been considered by the Youth Justice Management Board, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Board and the Cabinet, who had all recommended its approval.

There had been an acknowledgment that the plan is significant in length. However, this was dictated by the template provided by the national Youth Justice Board. The Youth Justice Service Plan and Action Plan were attached as appendices to the submitted report.

RESOLVED:

That the Youth Justice Plan 2024/25 be approved.

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 9.59pm