

Portfolio Report

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Arooj Shah, Leader of Oldham Council & Cabinet Member for Building a Better Oldham

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

We are making remarkable progress in building a better Oldham. This report outlines the story so far, and the ongoing work to continue to transform Oldham into a vibrant, thriving borough.

Pride, Progress, Partnership: The Oldham Plan

The plan launched a fortnight ago and its three missions of Healthier, Happier Lives; Greater Place to Live; and Green and Growing put regeneration at its heart. It aligns with the government's missions for growth, security, opportunity, and fairness for all. It demonstrates our commitment not just to building a better Oldham for our residents, but also to setting an example for Greater Manchester and the whole country.

The Oldham Plan is not just about words – it's about action. We are investing in education to equip our young people with the skills necessary to succeed. We are enhancing our healthcare and support services to make them more accessible and effective, especially for our most vulnerable residents. We are tackling health inequalities head-on and making Oldham a place where everyone has the opportunity to live well and thrive. We are also committed to providing affordable, high-quality homes that reflect the needs of our diverse community. Our efforts to transform public spaces, develop a vibrant night-time economy, and create an environment where families want to stay, businesses want to invest, and tourists want to visit are all part of our mission to make Oldham a great place to live.

Our achievements and future plans

Over the past year, we've stepped our regeneration up a gear with projects complete and spades in the ground. Here are some of the key highlights:

- **Spindles transformation:** Had Oldham Council not stepped in and bought Spindles we would be facing the same problems that many other towns are experiencing following the collapse of many national retailers and big names like Debenhams. Instead, the new Spindles is the beating heart of our town centre. The opening of The Hive is a testament to our commitment to fostering local entrepreneurship and innovation. It is already a hub for local businesses, providing them with the resources and support they need to thrive. The Hive is not just a workspace - it is a symbol of our ambition and a beacon of hope for the future of Oldham. Our new indoor market and fantastic new event space for gigs and functions is taking shape. We are on track for completion in spring, providing a vibrant new venue for our community. The Spindles project continues to attract industry recognition, with our contractors winning prestigious awards for their work.
- **Egyptian Room:** The new Egyptian Room opened on November 1st, has already created a buzz in the town centre, providing 80 new jobs and a fantastic venue for events. This project is a shining example of how we are breathing new life into Oldham and creating spaces that our community can be proud of.
- **Royton Town Hall:** Our restored Town Hall and Library opened in September, and we have received amazing feedback from visitors. With new gardens, a modern library, and accessible spaces for the community, it is a fantastic venue at the heart of Royton, restoring civic pride in an important heritage building.

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- **Town centre park:** The first section of our brand-new town centre park has been completed at Rock Street, and we are well on our way to delivering the rest. A planning application will be submitted this autumn, and the next phase of work will start next spring. This green oasis in the heart of Oldham will provide a much-needed recreational area for residents and visitors alike.
 - **Accessible Oldham:** We have demolished the Snipe Inn and are creating a brand-new entrance into the town centre from the bus station. Much of the area is already transformed with trees, plants, and new cycle routes, making it easier and safer to get to Oldham. This work is also bringing nature into the town centre and finding new ways to make Oldham the greenest borough in Greater Manchester.
 - **Town Centre Living / Muse Partnership:** This partnership will create a new neighbourhood of 2,000 homes in Oldham Town Centre, and this work has taken a huge step forward following community engagement over summer which will shape Oldham for the next 15 years, as the development plan is presented to Cabinet next month.
 - **Broadway Green / Foxdenton:** A joint venture redevelopment which was forged on the back of a new significant highway, Lydia Becker Way, and as a result has catapulted the creation of new homes, a green parkway and the roll out of hundreds of new jobs for the borough. A recent planning application for the speculative building on the site demonstrates the ongoing investment into the borough.
 - **Hollinwood Junction:** This joint venture regeneration site has spearheaded regeneration in the borough. The final phase of development at Hollinwood Junction has now started, and a new Lidl store will open soon, creating 40 new jobs. When complete, Hollinwood Junction will have created 760 jobs, new retail, leisure, and employment space, and up to 150 family homes.
 - **Southlink and Derker:** At Southlink, we are transforming brownfield land into 146 affordable homes, including 32 for social rent. In Derker, work has begun on 132 new homes, with a significant portion dedicated to affordable housing. These developments are crucial in addressing the housing needs of our residents and ensuring that everyone has access to high-quality, affordable homes.
 - **Powering our homes:** We have appointed a contractor to start work on our brand-new solar farm in Failsworth. The solar farm will create green energy capable of powering the equivalent of around 750 homes at one time. It will transform the land, previously a derelict site, giving it a new sustainable purpose that will boost the environment and biodiversity.
 - **Coliseum and Old Library:** Work is taking place to prepare the Coliseum for refurbishment, with asbestos removal underway ahead of the major works starting in the new year. The internal fit-out of the Old Library Building continues to bring this beautiful heritage building back to life. We were thrilled to open the doors to residents during Heritage Week and look forward to welcoming the public early next summer.
 - **Alex Park Eco Depot:** This new depot is now complete and includes a new training space for apprentices and offers opportunities for community use, as well as being the home for many of the Council's Environmental Services as we continue our commitment to fighting climate change.

Pride in Oldham

At the heart of all these projects is a deep sense of pride in Oldham. We are proving that the reports of the death of town centres are greatly exaggerated. Our town is not just surviving - it is thriving. We are creating a town centre that will be a jewel in the crown of Greater Manchester and a blueprint for other towns to follow. We are building a better Oldham, one that is inclusive, vibrant, and full of opportunity. This report is not just a summary of our achievements - it is a testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved in this journey.

Together, we are making Oldham a place that we can all be proud to call home. Oldham's time is now.

Recommendations: Council is requested to note the report.