

Portfolio Report

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Elaine Taylor, Deputy Leader of Oldham Council & Cabinet Member for Decent Homes

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

Town Centre Living:

As members will know, public consultation on the emerging proposals for the 2,000 new homes in the town centre closed on 11 September. We were delighted so many people have taken part and had their say on the proposals at the various drop-in events, through the online webinars, and by responding to the online survey, especially the fantastic level of response from young people in the borough. The team have been collating the feedback received and making changes to the Town Centre Development Framework because of that feedback, and the final Development Framework will be considered by Cabinet later this month. That document will then inform planning applications from Muse on the core town centre sites. Cabinet will also be considering the recommendation to add the Prince's Gate site to the partnership with Muse at the Cabinet meeting on 18th November.

Housing Delivery:

Vistry have been awarded the contract for the development of the Southlink site on the edge of Oldham Town Centre, which is owned jointly with Transport for Greater Manchester. Vistry's proposals involve approximately 130 net zero homes, including around 20 Social Homes. Tender returns have also been submitted for the former South Chadderton School site, Butterworth Lane, Chadderton. This site of approximately 10.8 acres will have capacity for up to 175 new high-quality net zero homes, with at least 30% being affordable homes, including a number of which will be social homes. We are looking forward to announcing our preferred development partner over the next couple of months.

Housing Standards:

Environmental Health continues to receive significant reports relating to housing standards. This is mainly driven by residents in the private rented sector who are reporting disrepair problems they are experiencing. Recent recruitment of Environmental Health Officers and 2 Housing Technical Officers means that the team is now fully resourced to be able to respond to the expected increase in complaints as the weather conditions deteriorate. In the first instance officers engage with landlords with the aim of addressing the problems being reported. If landlords fail to act, officers have a range of options, including legal notices, civil penalties, and prosecution to secure compliance.

Officers are also working closely with the Planning Department in responding to queries relating to houses in multiple occupation – this aims to ensure that those seeking to create a HMO meet the planning and licensing requirements where these are appropriate. This is in addition to the licensing regime that is delivered by the Environmental Health department. There has been a significant increase in the number of properties needing to be licensed. As part of this process, officers inspect properties to ensure they meet the necessary standards as set out in legislation and where additional work is needed, Officers work closely with the landlord and other regulators to ensure this is completed before the properties are occupied.

Housing Needs / Homelessness

The demand for Housing Options Services continues to remain at a high level and we are still averaging 100 residents through the front door each working day, in desperate need of housing support and accommodation.

We had 649 households present as homeless to the Council during the month of September. As of 30th September, we have 722 households in temporary accommodation (with 793 children residing in TA). There was also 7,228 households on the housing register actively seeking different housing options.

The main reason for homelessness at this time is loss of lodgings from family or friends, who have been supporting people for a period of time and found that this is no longer sustainable. The Council is making better use of the private rented sector, and we have successfully secured some move on out of temporary accommodation into the Private Rented Sector.

Planning:

It has been great to see some major developments being granted approval at Planning Committee over the past couple of months, including 102 apartments at Ivy Mill in Failsworth, 53 affordable homes at the former Bedford Mill site in Waterhead, approving the creation of an industrial premises at Broadway Green in Chadderton that could see 760 jobs created, and the approval of a new Lidl store at Hollinwood Junction.

It was also pleasing for Cabinet to approve the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy and to approve public consultation on two joint Supplementary Planning Documents. Those planning documents seek to protect and enhance the internationally-significant habitats on our doorstep (the South Pennine Moors) and elsewhere in Greater Manchester, whilst the Nature Recovery Strategy seeks to enhance nature across our borough and Greater Manchester wherever we can. We want Oldham to be the greenest borough in Greater Manchester, so it's fantastic to be able to support these proposals.

Recommendations: Council is requested to note the report.