

Portfolio Report

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Fida Hussain, Cabinet Member for Enterprise

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

Market and Town Centre Businesses

We have delivered a refreshed town centre events programme in the last quarter, with Nostalgic Oldham in September, Halloween trails, Fireworks evening, Christmas Switch-On and free events every Saturday up to Christmas. I personally attended all the three key events and was overwhelmed by the number of people in the town centre and the really good feedback I have been getting from residents and business owners. The shopper numbers have been up, with a 10% increase in Spindles footfall on the switch-on date this year compared to last year.

I was also pleased to attend the opening evening of the Egyptian Rooms on 1 November. As well as being a fantastic space, wonderfully restored, more importantly this is more new businesses in the town centre, more jobs and another addition to the offer of our town centre. It has also been another source of positive feedback from residents.

The new market development continues at pace, and please keep supporting our market stallholders at this key time for retail. Every penny spent with a local business supports local staff and local families.

Finally I am pleased to confirm that a new home is being designed for our fabulous outdoor market on George Street. Very much behind the hoardings at the moment, this space will integrate with Manchester Chambers to become a fresh new space for the town centre, perfect for our outdoor stallholders.

Oldham Giftcard

Launched earlier in the year, the Oldham Giftcard is the perfect way to support our businesses and keep the Oldham pound in the Oldham economy. More and more businesses are signing-up to accept the Giftcard. It's completely free for businesses to take part and I encourage any business in the borough who accept card payment whatever their service or product to take part. The card works in the same way as a pre-paid card and is an ideal gift. I would also ask our large employers to consider buying these cards for their staff rewards schemes. For more information contact invest@oldham.gov.uk

Business Engagement

The final OL1 business network of 2024 takes place at Billingtons on 18 December. Since launching in Spring, these sessions have provided a valuable opportunity for businesses from across the town centre to meet up, connect, do business together and enjoy presentations from a variety of speakers. Feedback from the sessions has been positive and then town centre team will be hosting further meetings in 2026.

Frank Rothwell, Oldham's Business Ambassador, hosted a Business Breakfast on 12 December.

Frank will be re-starting his business visits early in 2025 with the first ones already in the diary for 10 January. These visits to businesses within Oldham take place with an officer from the Business Growth & Investment team. These visits are intended to create contact with businesses, offer a point of contact within Oldham Council and inform them of any support that may be available to them.

These visits usually consist of 4-5 business site visits each lasting at least an hour. The visits open a conversation to what support the business needs to grow. Whether that be help with recruitment, funding, or upskilling staff. The officer in attendance of the business visits follows up with each business informing of them of the support that they can access. I would encourage businesses to contact Invest@oldham.gov.uk if they would like to host a visit.

The Hive: Social Enterprise

A varied and dynamic programme of events continues to take place in the Hive. Last week we hosted the GM LINK programme Cisco Demo Day. This programme is designed to inspire and enable local organisations to help provide solutions to predetermined health and climate issues in the region. The idea behind Demo Day is for participants to showcase their solutions at the end of each 10-week programme to a diverse group of stakeholders to help facilitate onward support. The Hive provides a dynamic and inclusive workspace that caters to the diverse needs of all businesses - whether pre-startup, a fledgling startup, or an established enterprise. For more details on the offer at the Hive contact the Hive Team on 0161 652 9000 or email info@upturn.org.uk

Recommendations: Council is requested to note the report.