

## Portfolio Report

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Peter Dean  
Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities and Culture

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

### **Customer Services:**

The Customer Service teams are focussing on providing support to residents this winter. Winter welfare checks to over 550 Pensioners eligible for pension credit or just above the threshold to claim have taken place by phone. The purpose of these calls has been to answer any queries about claiming pension credit and to establish if any support is needed to make a claim - we have increased our capacity over the winter to support with making pension credit applications. We are continuing our communications urging Oldham pensioners to check if they are entitled to pension credit so they can get more money – and receive the winter fuel payment.

During the winter welfare calls to pensioners the team are also sharing the council's wider winter support offer part funded by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to deliver the sixth round of Household Support Fund (HSF). The team are supporting with referrals to teams and partners including Warm Homes Oldham, Welfare Rights and Citizens Advice and can offer supermarket vouchers to cover the cost of food and essentials in an emergency as well as foodbank referrals. This support is available for any household in Oldham in a financial emergency and we encourage all residents to come forward to access support by visiting the council website or calling the Helpline on 0161 770 7007. The Helpline will be open between Christmas and New Year 10am – 2pm on 27, 30 and 31 December.

HSF is also funding £40 payments per eligible child on means tested free school meals in Oldham over the Christmas holidays and funding additional activities in the Holiday Food and Activities (HAF) programme providing enriching activities and food for children and young people during the Christmas holidays.

Full details of Oldham's HSF scheme is available on the council website and a winter communications plan has been developed to share the key messages about the support available.

### **Heritage, Libraries and Arts**

The beautifully refurbished Royton Library opened its door to the public on 14<sup>th</sup> September. To date over 300 new members have joined the library and feedback from residents has been overwhelmingly positive.

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Oldham Theatre Workshop delivered their winter show 'Guinea Pig' in November with over 380 people attending. The theme of the production focused on the debate on whether mobile phones should be banned for under 16's. Thought provoking and emotive theatre delivered by an exceptionally talented group of young people.

Gallery Oldham have secured £46k from the Art Fund to redesign Oldham Stories Exhibition Space. The new space will be designed in consultation with Family Hubs and Northern Roots to deliver an interactive and family friendly exhibition.

### **District Community Councils and Neighbourhood Working:**

Royton town hall opened in September and alongside the new library we are now able to offer residents access to support and services from the District Hub.

The Community Engagement Coordinators are working in partnership with customer services, revenue and benefits and comms to support the proactive work around Pension credit take up. Eligible residents have been contacted, and the team are working to support the work via offering one to one appointments to provide guidance to those who need it on completing applications.

The Quarter 3 Community Councils are scheduled for December. Each Community council will be reviewing the District Priority Plans as well as a focused agenda item on transport with TFGM colleagues including the Network reviews and planned engagement work.

### **Stronger Communities and Community Safety Services**

From October, Home Office Prevent duty training 'Learn how to support people susceptible to radicalisation' became mandatory training for all Council staff. To date, over 900 staff members have completed the training, and this will ensure a greater awareness and understanding of what Prevent is, how it applies to their roles and how they can identify the emotions and behaviours that might make someone susceptible to radicalisation.

The Community Safety Team has continued to support residents using a combination of early intervention and enforcement tactics. In one area, a Closure Order has been secured on a property due to persistent anti-social behaviour and criminal activity including drug dealing at the address. After the Closure Order was obtained, one of the residents who had been subjected to the behaviour said "this is the best Christmas present we could possibly have had."

### **Sport and Leisure**

[@Rebecca Fletcher \(Public Health\)](#)

On the back of the successful first Oldham Sports Club Network Event in February 2024, we saw the second event delivered on 6 November 2024 at St Anne's Rugby Club. Delivered in partnership by Council Sports Development team, District Teams, Action Together, and OCL. We had 60 people in attendance from a number of different sports clubs

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across our borough, and it allowed them all an opportunity to learn more about the support available across our partners in areas such as Funding, Volunteers, Policies & Procedures, and Facilities. Some National Governing Bodies (NGBs) were in attendance too and clubs were able to ask questions, get support and network with others. These events will now be twice a year moving forward as clubs and partners see real value in them.

**Recommendations:** Council is requested to note the report.