

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.

Devolution:

The Government has confirmed that Greater Manchester will receive an historic new £630 million funding settlement, as part of its trailblazing devolution deal. The new integrated settlement replaces a system of separate funding pots from the various different Government departments and gives Greater Manchester more freedom and flexibility to invest in our priorities, to fund local services, and so we can take a more preventative approach by getting to the root causes of the issues facing our communities and allow us to take a more practical approach to delivering everyday support.. This new funding settlement will also support the ambitious ten-year plan to turbocharge growth and deliver tens of thousands of new homes and jobs over the next decade for our future generations.

Bee Network:

The new contactless 'tap and go' system was launched 23 March 2025, which now allows all Oldham residents and all Greater Manchester Bee Network passengers to use their debit / credit card, phone or smart device for seamless travel on trams and buses – no longer needing a ticket before travelling.

Anyone wanting to pay cash or purchase tickets can still do so, with tickets also available for purchase via the Bee Network app. Residents are reassured that they will always pay the best value fare over the day or week, as fares are automatically calculated up to the daily or weekly amount. A new annual Bee Network ticket has also been announced recently allowing unlimited travel on both the tram and buses for the equivalent of between £2.76 and £4.10 a day.

There is also an option to spread the payments of an annual ticket weekly or monthly – at no extra cost – with the support of a Credit Union loan. There is more information on the Bee Network website if residents and members wish to see more information on this.

Building a Better Oldham: Community Regeneration Partnership – Grant Acceptance

Cabinet accepted receipt of the new £20m Community Regeneration Partnership grant from Government following various community engagement activities held last year. A total of seven community regeneration projects were identified for funding support:

- **District Growth Funding** - £4.4m capital and £100k of revenue to support the delivery of district growth priorities across the whole borough via co-produced plans and prioritised through the District Councils; ensuring residents, communities and businesses are engaged with improvements in their local areas.
- **Tommyfield Market Traders** - £2m to support Market Traders move to the new Market Hall in the Spindles by establishing a new grant scheme for purchasing modern, low-carbon fit-for-purpose kit.
- **George Street: Outdoor Market Relocation** – £1m to match the Council £1m to radically transform George Square into a multifunctional high quality public space which will be the new home for the Oldham Outdoor Market.
- **SportsTown:** £5m to support an ambitious public / private partnership to bring together Oldham's sporting excellence, health care and much needed enhanced educational pathways through the creation of a new centre of excellence whilst also increasing participation for residents at the heart of the community.

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- **Yorkshire Street and Implementation of the Cultural Co-Operative Model** – £2.5m to support the implementation of the Cultural Co-operative model for the refurbished Fairbottom Street Theatre (Town Deal Funding), and will see vacant retail unit brought back into use on Yorkshire Street.
 - **Town Centre Homes** - £5m to support the development of a planning strategy and associated pre-development costs to help de-risk the four key town centre housing sites including Civic, Magistrates Court, Leisure Centre site and Princes Gate.

This funding announcement forms a key part of what we are badging as a year of delivery for Oldham's regeneration plans when residents will see major change finally coming to life, including the completion of our new indoor market and event space, the redevelopment of the Old Library and the re-opening of the Coliseum.

Located in the heart of the town, The Egyptian Room, a beautifully restored historic space, continues to strengthen our town centre offer and I'm delighted to report that this new thriving eatery continues to receive positive feedback since opening at the end of last year.

Meanwhile, The Hive serves as a collaborative business hub in Spindles, fostering networking, skills development, as business growth continues to go from strength to strength including the space recently being used as a key meeting and collaboration hub, recently hosting a Bank of England event and the launch of the Oldham Trading Platform – something which would not have happened without The Hive bringing key people together.

Building a Better Oldham is more than just the projects as the social value generated to date exceeds £31m of additional benefits to local businesses and communities, including:

- 1,005 weeks of apprenticeships
- 4,479 hours of Career Support sessions
- 173 locally employed individuals
- £46.9m of Local Spend
- 700 Volunteer Hours

Strategy and Performance:

Armed Forces Covenant: Oldham has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the Armed Forces community through the recent signing of the Armed Forces Covenant. Work continues toward achieving Gold Award accreditation under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, strengthening our support for veterans, reservists, and their families.

Shortlisting for 'Most Improved Council' – Local Government Chronicle Awards: Oldham Council has been successfully shortlisted for the 'Most Improved Council' award at the 2025 Local Government Chronicle Awards! The shortlisting highlights the impact of collective efforts to drive positive change and deliver better outcomes for residents.

Recommendations: Council is requested to note the report.