

Report to Place, Economic Growth and Environment Scrutiny Board

Creating a Better Place Update

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Shah, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Reform and Regeneration

Officer Contact: Emma Barton, Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

Report Author: Chris Lewis, Asst. Director - Creating a Better Place

2nd April 2025

Reason for Decision

Briefing on the Creating a Better Place Programme

Executive Summary

Cabinet approval was first obtained in January 2020 for the Council's '**Creating a Better Place (CaBP)**' strategic framework and capital regeneration programme. This report is the annual update on progress of the programme.

The programme remains on track to deliver new homes, create jobs and deliver against our Green New Deal commitments ensuring Oldham is a great place to live, work and visit with lots of family friendly and accessible places to go. This report provides Place Scrutiny with an update on the strategic progress of the Creating a Better Place regeneration programme, including external funding opportunities secured, benefits realised, and the associated Social Value generated to **Create a Better Place**.

Recommendations

To review and note progress on the Creating a Better Place Programme

Creating a Better Place Update

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The very best towns and cities around the world have one thing in common – they are both people and quality focused. Quality of place is paramount to thriving communities and we want Oldham to be a place where people feel they belong, they feel safe, proud and it is an exciting place where people can live, work and spend time.
- 1.2 Growing our economy through social enterprise, starting new business ventures and supporting the expansion of existing businesses, apprentice opportunities for work and skills development, and development and construction employment opportunities is increasingly more important to ensure residents have access to paid work to support themselves and their families through various challenges including rising inflation.
- 1.3 The Creating a Better Place programme has enabled a number of key partnerships to be strengthened ensuring Oldham has a strong narrative locally, regionally and nationally enabling Oldham, amongst other things, to secure substantial external funding to invest within the town and accelerate delivery of our regeneration activities to Create a Better Place. Alongside the Council strengthening our ability to secure funding we are also gaining a strong reputation for delivery.
- 1.4 The projects within the Town Centre will ensure its sustainability, including the development of the Spindles, that the Council acquired and the associated projects that have already been delivered including new public sector office accommodation, a new social enterprise 'Hive' supporting business launch and development and projects due to launch shortly including a new food court, new home for the indoor market and the Performance space. In addition, across the Town Centre we are establishing a new public park, the delivery of 2,000 new homes whilst also protecting and investing in our historical assets through the redevelopment of the Old Library and outside of the Town Centre the successful redevelopment of Royton Town Hall and Library.
- 1.5 CaBP also provides important Capital receipts and revenue saving opportunities to ensure the best use of public funds, value for money is demonstrated and social value is embedded into all projects for wider community benefits. The financial savings have been embed into the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Capital Programme. Separate annual reports are due for Cabinet consideration once again, which includes Creating a Better Place financial matters, as part of the annual budget setting procedures.
- 1.6 Strong progress is being made against the priorities identified through comprehensive and ongoing consultation with members, residents and businesses to deliver family friendly activities, improved accessibility, sustainability, green energy, new jobs and apprenticeships, new businesses, filling empty units, more things to do and places to visit. The update contained within this report and accompanying presentation evidences our progress in delivering against these key priorities.

2.0 Creating a Better Place: Strategic Updates

- 2.1 The CaBP Programme continues to make a strong positive impact to the regeneration of the town, creating Social Value and delivering financial savings. The programme has delivered

£3.5m of revenue savings to date with further additional savings projected over the next three years.

- 2.2 Working closely with various partners locally, regionally, and nationally Oldham's strong Vision, plans and ability to deliver schemes have resulted in the CaBP Programme securing external funding in excess of £70m to date with the Council continuing to identify additional funding opportunities moving forward. The Council is delivering strongly against spend and outputs particularly around jobs created ensuring we have a strong track record of delivery with funders placing us in a strong position for future grant funding opportunities.
- 2.3 Our Green New Deal continues to progress at pace with various schemes in development and delivery, these include large capital infrastructure schemes including the Oldham Town Centre Low Carbon District Heat Network and Wrigley Head Solar Farm. The Green New Deal Programme continues its strong track record of securing external funding that is detailed further within the report and includes grant funding to enable decarbonisation works to commence on the Spindles shopping centre in support of the Councils continuing drive to decarbonise the Council's buildings.
- 2.4 The programme continues to act as a catalyst for new jobs within Oldham through the various projects both planned and in delivery. The Broadway Green development is a prime example that includes 700,000sq feet of employment space now let, creating up to 2,000 new jobs and up to 500 new homes on the development. The development is clear evidence of the private sector investing in Oldham. Further evidence of private sector investment is the lease signed for the Egyptian room by the Northern Lights Group (NLG), who run a number of popular restaurants and entertainment venues across the North West which has created 80 jobs. Jobs and apprenticeships are also being created through the construction work both planned and underway within the Town Centre and across the town, with all opportunities supported where possible through Oldham Get Oldham Working service.
- 2.5 A key component of the CaBP programme is generating Social Value, which has substantial opportunity to benefit both individual residents and our wider communities. Social value is firmly embed within CaBP as part of our procurement processes and secures a contractual commitment from our contractors to deliver social value benefits. New apprenticeships, job creation and educational sessions at local schools and colleges are a few examples.

3.0 Creating a Better Place: Strategic Updates

3.1 Town Centre

The CaBP programme was constructed following comprehensive consultation with our local communities and businesses to help clearly define and ensure wider awareness and engagement with our regeneration ambitions. This work has also helped ensure that local priorities, and ideas and suggestions from local communities and businesses were embedded into the Programme and associated project work in various stages from planning through to delivery.

The engagement process formed part of the Big Oldham Conversation, with specific consultation and engagement events both digitally and in person with specialist groups, residents, town centre businesses and market traders to help raise awareness and seek feedback on various town centre projects and the overall vision for the future of the town. Consultation continues as each project goes through the key stages of development.

Clear visible progress can be viewed with various communication channels being used on projects working their way through the planning process combined with those currently on

site that is contributing to a real vibrancy within the Town Centre. These schemes include the new town centre park, Snipe gardens and the creation of much needed new homes. In addition, other schemes currently on site safeguarding and ensuring the future sustainability of historical buildings, include the Old Library and the refurbishment of the much loved Oldham Coliseum on Fairbottom Street. Whilst the CaBP vision and programme is clearly articulated we continue to explore further opportunities in parallel to ensure a sustainable town centre that is safer, cleaner and greener with an improved shopping experience and regular events for all generations within the Town Centre. Further details on the various schemes can be viewed here: [Creating a Better Place | Oldham Council](#)

Further project consultation will take place at the appropriate time in conjunction with standard practice for project development / planning application considerations, however feedback from residents, local business, visitors, and market traders continues to be positive and really helpful for shaping the following projects ahead of seeking approval for progression

The transformational plans can also be viewed via a fly through video, bringing the town centre plans to life with the film outlining what we plan to do and where – including the redevelopment of Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre, the creation of a brand-new town centre park and a dedicated cultural quarter with new theatre. The video can be viewed here [INSERT NEW VIDEO ONCE SIGNED OFF](#).

3.2 Housing

The CaBP programme continues with great success to deliver against ambitious housing targets to meet the housing needs of our residents in delivering various sizes and tenure of new homes. Delivery of these homes include various sites across Oldham as detailed below.

Helping to address the cost of living and housing crisis, the Council has committed to building 500 truly affordable homes over the next 5 years. These will be let at Local Housing Allowance Rates at rents residents can afford. Zero and low carbon housing is also being delivered to support the borough's pioneering Greener Oldham developments - supporting the Green New Deal by embedding sustainability with including new homes being built to the government's Future Homes Standard.

Key schemes within the CaPB Programme include:

Town Centre – Plans are taking shape with the Council's Strategic Development Partner Muse to deliver 2,000 new homes across a number of strategic sites within Oldham Town Centre. Over the last 12 months, the main successes include:

- The Partnership concluded a comprehensive public consultation exercise and successfully secured approval for the Town Centre Development Framework at Cabinet in November 24
- The Partnership secured approval to incorporate Prince's Gate into the MDA alongside delegated authority to progress and approve the associated agreements
- Places Matter design review panel was held in November 24 with positive and constructive feedback taken onboard to further develop the design of the masterplan
- Social Value Charter was completed via Social Value Portal which forms the basis of social value commitments and aspirations across the masterplan
- Enabling works funded via the One Public Estate grant funding commenced on the Former Leisure Centre site in November 24, with works to start on the Civic Centre and Former Magistrates Court sites in February and March 25

Work is now progressing on submitting the planning applications for the masterplan in Spring 25, consisting of a fully detailed application for Prince's Gate and Phase 1 Civic Centre, alongside outline applications for the remainder of the Civic Centre, Former Leisure Centre site and Former Magistrates Court site.

Joint Ventures at Broadway Green and Hollinwood Junction - The Council entered into Joint Venture Projects to drive forward the regeneration of two key strategic sites within the borough to drive growth, create employment opportunities and provide new homes.

Broadway Green - alongside an employment site delivering valuable jobs for our residents of Oldham, the final residential phase (R3 – 102 homes) is being considered at Planning Committee in Spring 2025. A further residential phase (R4) is nearing completion with the first of 42 new affordable homes to be completed in March 2025. 392 mixed tenure homes have already been built and are now occupied.

The former Kaskenmoor School Site at Hollinwood Junction has capacity for around 150 zero/low carbon homes including a high percentage of truly affordable homes, this site is on track to be marketed in Spring 2025.

Residential Pipeline – Significant progress is being made with the Council's disposal programme of key sites including the following highlights.

Derker - Hive Homes have started construction of 132 low and zero carbon housing on brownfield land which will include a mix of truly affordable rented homes, shared ownership and private sale. The first homes will be ready for occupation in December 2025.

Southlink – Vistry Partnership have been appointed as the preferred developer on the former Oldham Mumps Station site, jointly owned with TfGM. A planning application to deliver 147 affordable apartments and houses built to the low carbon Future Homes Standard is to be submitted shortly.

South Chadderton – following a successful marketing exercise, Rowland Homes were appointed by Cabinet in January 2025 to deliver 150 new homes including 60 affordable at the former school site. All homes will be constructed to Future Homes Standard and Planning Application is expected to be submitted in April.

Foundry Street, Oldham Town Centre – In partnership with Jigsaw Homes, 14 specialist Supported Housing Accommodation Programme (SHAP) single flats aimed specifically at preventing homelessness amongst 18- to 23-year-olds are under construction on a vacant brownfield town centre site. The apartments should be ready in early 2026.

Other significant developments underway across the borough that the Council has helped bring forward include Fitton Hill (365 mixed tenure homes by Vistry), Vaughan Street, Royton (46 affordable homes by Great Places) and Maple Mill, Hathershaw (112 affordable homes by MCI/Great Places).

The Creating a Better Place programme will clearly continue to play a key role in response to the Housing Crisis within Oldham and the wider Council/partner response to this key agenda and challenge.

Creating new homes on such a large scale will bring about a huge range of benefits for the whole borough including within the Town Centre with increased footfall and boosting local businesses whilst maximising the opportunities presented by under-utilised sites. The approach to housing will also support the borough's pioneering Greener Oldham

developments - supporting the Green New Deal by embedding sustainability and net zero carbon ambitions where possible. The schemes will also provide opportunities for employment, learning, skills and social contributions across the design, procurement, delivery, and operational phases of the projects.

The Creating a Better Place programme will clearly continue to play a key role in response to the Housing Crisis within Oldham and the wider Council/partner response to this key agenda and challenge.

3.5 Green New Deal

The Oldham Green New Deal (OGND) Strategy was adopted in March 2020 and deals with the upgrade of energy infrastructure in the Council's estate and Oldham borough to achieve stretching carbon neutrality targets. The strategy aims to achieve this by securing investment and delivery capacity in low carbon infrastructure to realise a range of benefits such as jobs and training opportunities for residents in this key growth sector, contracts for Oldham's local Green Technology and Services sector businesses, lower energy bills for businesses and residents and improvements in local green infrastructure for communities.

The OGND delivery programme comprises a range of initiatives and projects including large capital infrastructure schemes such as the Oldham Town Centre Low Carbon District Heat Network (£27m) and heat network zone (£265m), decarbonisation retrofit of Spindles (£4m) and Wrigley Head Solar Farm (£2m). With the exception of Wrigley Head, most of these capital schemes have either secured grant funded (e.g. via the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme) or the intention is that they will be funded and delivered by our private sector should the Council wish to proceed on this basis (e.g. Town Centre District Heat Network). This Town Centre Heat Network will form a strategic piece of energy infrastructure linking into the redevelopment of the Town Centre as a whole, including the new Master Developer partnership with Muse, and has already attracted significant grant funding and capacity support from the Department of Energy Security & Net Zero and the GM Combined Authority. First Choice Homes Oldham are also a key partner in that project, and we have the opportunity to transfer the existing heat network at St Mary's into the new town centre wide heat network scheme at a future point in time as part of the Council's procurement of an Oldham Green New Deal Delivery Partner (see below).

Other projects within the OGND delivery programme include RED WoLF (demonstrating an innovative hybrid low carbon electrical heating system in 19 Council-owned social homes at Primrose Bank), Alexandra Park Eco-Centre (depot renovation), Northern Roots and the Oldham Green New Deal Delivery Partnership.

The OGND Delivery Partnership initiative is potentially the most significant of all of the projects within the OGND programme, and aims to establish a cross-sector investment and delivery partnership, and to this end the Council which will procure a major commercial infrastructure developer partner to work with Oldham's anchor organisations and communities to develop and deliver a pipeline of low carbon infrastructure projects which will aim to meet local needs and priorities (including the reduction of energy bills for residents and businesses). Oldham's Local Area Energy Plan (developed by Energy Systems Catapult as part of the GM Local Energy Market project) shows an opportunity for up to £5.6bn of low carbon infrastructure in the borough which will be required to reach carbon neutrality. The Council has carried out three market engagement exercises which have each showed significant interest from major market players in working in Oldham on a collaborative basis. The Council has now secured £1.3m from the GMCA / DESNZ Local Net Zero Accelerator programme to implement the OGND Delivery Partnership. The partnership will be designed to be self-funding on an ongoing basis. The main tender for

the OGND Delivery Partner will be published over the coming months with the aim of establishing the strategic decarbonisation Joint Venture by summer 2026.

4.0 Creating a Better Place: Project Updates

- 4.1 An overview and further information on the progress of the CaBP Programme is provided within the accompanying presentation for scrutiny members to review, given the commitment to make timely progress and so local communities can see the projects brought to life on site and benefiting from our Social Value commitments.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 The CaBP programme was constructed following comprehensive consultation with our local communities and businesses to help clearly define and ensure wider awareness and engagement with our regeneration ambitions. This work has also helped ensure that local priorities, and ideas and suggestions from local communities and businesses were embedded into the Programme and associated project work in various stages from planning through to delivery.
- 5.2 The engagement process formed part of the Big Oldham Conversation, with specific consultation and engagement events both digitally and in person with specialist groups, residents, town centre businesses and market traders to help raise awareness and seek feedback on various town centre projects and the overall vision for the future of the town. Consultation continues as each project goes through the key stages of development.

6.0 Key Decision

- 6.1 No

7.0 Background Papers

- 7.1 Not Applicable

8.0 Appendices

- 8.1 CaBP PowerPoint Presentation