

## Portfolio Report

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Peter Dean, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure.

---

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

**Heritage, Libraries and Arts:** Oldham Theatre Workshop, in partnership with Oldham Coliseum, have recruited 13 young people (aged 13-19) for their Technical Theatre Course, who will be working on delivering the summer show in July. The show will take place at Oldham Library Performance Space before OTW move into their brand-new studio spaces in the Old Library Building later in the year. OTW's Actors House (16-25yrs olds) performed their show at Oldham Library over 3 nights, attracting over 250 people.

Schools linking celebration event took place at Gallery Oldham. Schools Linking is a unique programme helping to build cohesion and solidarity in our communities. In Oldham, children meet up with their link class four times a year, visit Galley Oldham, Castleshaw and share experiences with children they wouldn't normally get a chance to meet. 25 schools took part with over 480 pupils participating.

Gallery Oldham launched three new exhibitions this quarter:

- Pick and Mix is our summer family friendly exhibition created by and for children and families of all ages. The exhibition opened on 10<sup>th</sup> May and runs through to 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2025.
- Bird Photographer of the Year, 14 June – 6 September' - This stunning exhibition showcases the work of photographers capturing the beauty and diversity of birdlife.
- Pedestrian by Emma Blackburn, 10th May – 26th July - Steeped in contrasts between movement and stillness, Pedestrian is a retrospective of textile-based works by artist/maker Emma Blackburn.

Archives and local studies closed their temporary service offer at the end of May, as they prepare for their move to their new home in Spindles. The library service is getting ready for the summer holidays to deliver StoryFest, and the Summer Reading Challenge, which will launch on Saturday 12th July.

**Culture:** 1000's of visitors attended Festival Oldham on Saturday 5 July. The annual flagship event showcased 60 performances from the very best local and national outdoor artists in spaces across Oldham Town Centre. This year it included music programming from the Oldham Music Service, merging the Summer Music Festival into the main programme with over 30 performances from talented musicians from across the borough.

Jubacana, Oldham's youth-led percussion and dance project based at Gallery Oldham, has been invited to perform at Manchester Day on Saturday 26 July. The group of 25–30 young people aged 8–18 create powerful music influenced by Brazilian rhythms with a UK twist, blending percussion, guitars, flute, and vibrant choreography. Led by young leaders with support from professional artists, Jubacana exemplifies what youth can achieve through the arts.

Barcelona La Mercè Festival 2025 - Oldham dancers will represent the borough and Manchester on the international stage as part of Manchester's Guest City programme at La Mercè Festival in Barcelona this September. 16 local women from Saddleworth Women's Morris & Clog and Oldham Indian Association Dancing Diyas have been selected to perform, supported by funding from GM Arts Network and the GMCA Culture Fund.

Looking ahead - Khushi Festival – Oldham's Happy Festival will return this August. Delivered in partnership with the Oldham Chai Women's Project and Oldham Coliseum, this all-female South Asian-led festival will take place over two days. August at Gallery Oldham and Oldham Library and

---

August at Northern Roots. Featuring specially commissioned performances and installations, music, storytelling, food, dance, and joy. September will see the return of Nostalgic Oldham - A hugely successful event in 2024 drawing together community memory, heritage and creativity. Over 3,000 residents engaged with exhibitions, workshops, and storytelling experiences last year reflecting Oldham's rich industrial, social and cultural history.

**Leisure & Sports:** Recently, over 25 Community Health Champions came together at the new Environmental Centre in Alexandra Park. The session focused on encouraging physical activity and enjoying the great outdoors in our communities. Champions learned practical ways to build movement into everyday life, how being active can bring people together, and the huge benefits it has for our health and wellbeing. They also explored the brilliant outdoor spaces we have here in Oldham – including our wonderful parks – and the importance of active travel. The session ended with a visit to the Growing Hub in the park, and these champions are now taking this knowledge back into their communities to spread the word.

Following the successful introduction of Bikeability sessions through our Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, demand is growing. This summer, we're now working with two providers to offer even more opportunities for young people to gain cycling confidence and road safety skills.

Earlier this year, we welcomed an externally funded Move More Active Travel Activation Officer. Since then, we've seen a rise in numbers attending Dr Bike sessions across the borough. These free sessions offer a health check for bikes, with basic repairs like brakes and tyres included. So far, over 40 bikes have been seen at community events, such as the Foxdenton Park Family Day, and we've got three more events we're supporting with these sessions.

The Workforce Health Check programme, run by Oldham Active in partnership with Oldham Council and local businesses, concluded in May. Over 1,000 full Health Checks were completed across local businesses and workplaces and the comprehensive checks were well received by employers and employees. Oldham Active are looking at ways to continue their work to support businesses and the Health and Wellbeing of the workforces.

This summer, Oldham Active is delivering a fantastic programme to support young people across the borough to Move More and support their own Health and Wellbeing. In partnership with Oldham Council through the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme, they're offering free gym and swim access to teenagers aged 14 to 16 who receive free schools meals. This initiative gives eligible teens unlimited access to all Oldham Active centres, helping them to stay active and healthy during the school holidays. Participants will also receive 16 free hot meals over the summer.

In addition, Oldham Active is running a wide range of free holiday camps and activities for children aged 6 plus, including sports, swimming, gymnastics and more. These sessions are part of the HAF programme, aimed at supporting families during the summer holidays, ensuring access for young people to fun, enriching and healthy experiences this summer.

Finally, Oldham had a strong presence at the GM Moving Conference at The Lowry Theatre in June – an event that attracts people from across the UK. We were proud to be part of a panel in the main theatre, sharing the great collaborative work happening in Oldham to tackle inactivity and inequalities in our communities. Talking about working alongside our communities to find ways to support them to move more, in a way that works best for them.

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