

## 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.

---

**Leisure & Sports:** Oldham's commitment to helping residents Move More continues to grow, with exciting developments across our 'Move More Feel Better' work. We've recently been through a successful recruitment process for two new Community Development Officers (Move More), in partnership with Action Together Oldham. These roles will be instrumental in supporting our Sport England-funded Place Partnership work, helping tackle inactivity and inequality in some areas across all five districts of Oldham to build movement into their everyday lives.

Alongside this, we've been working closely with GM Moving to co-develop a Theory of Change for our Move More Feel Better programme. This collaborative approach is helping us shape a clear, shared vision for how we support communities to Move More, tackle inequalities, and embed physical activity into the fabric of everyday life in Oldham.

Over the summer OCL completed their upgrade investment of over £160k at Oldham Leisure Centre and Royton Leisure Centre on replacing their full range of strength equipment on gym floors. A new supplier was selected and feedback from customers to date has been overwhelmingly positive.

The pool at Royton Leisure Centre has been closed to complete the re-lining of the pool tank. The current expected reopening date is 22<sup>nd</sup> September. The replacement, which comes with a 15 year warranty, was triggered by deterioration of the pool tank that was installed as part of the original build over ten years ago. OCL, in partnership with the Council, have optimised the repair phase to undertake additional works on the pool treatment system and lighting in the pool hall at the same time, and with the upgrade of the air-conditioning in the fitness areas, represents a combined investment of around £125k to maintain and improve this well-used community asset. Staff have worked hard to re-home swim lesson pupils and swim club sessions at other sites over this period to minimise disruption.

Since launching the new OCL membership offer for Council staff this summer, 275 have already signed up with the latest enrolment due to start in October; this significant discount, administered directly through payroll, represents a great offer for Council staff and will encourage healthier lifestyles amongst colleagues. The next phase is to develop and launch a similar offer for Councillors in the coming months.

**Heritage:** Civic Collections have been moved from Rochdale Road Civic Building to the new JR Clynes Building. The display was enjoyed by visitors on Sat 16<sup>th</sup> August as part of the opening event for the refurbished Old Library.

Move of archive collections into the new Spindles space has been progressing well. First collections to return to their new home was the Oldham Chronicle archives.

Oldham Histories Festival and Heritage Open Days will run from 12 to 21 September across the borough celebrating the heritage of Oldham. [Festivals & Outdoor Events - Oldham HLA](#)

**Libraries:** Northmoor Library reopened on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2025, following refurbishment, with funding secured from Arts Council England's (ACE) Library Improvement (LIF) Round 2. The investment

---

enabled the modernisation of the library with new windows, doors, roof, and a complete refit and layout of furniture, which will support more flexible programming and increased work with partners. The library was opened by the Mayor and families enjoyed craft activities and were overjoyed with their new library.

Oldham Library is also in the middle of refurbishment – with funding secured from Round 3 of the LIF fund from ACE. The ground floor of the library is being reconfigured with new flexible shelving, study and workspaces with pixel power units embedded into desks, a new reception area, modernized shop, improved wayfinding signage and digital screen promoting the cultural offer. These changes will ensure we adapt our library spaces to meet changing and demanding needs for flexible performance space, increased partnership working and study space. Works will be completed by 8<sup>th</sup> September.

In July, the library service delivered StoryFest, bringing together authors and illustrators to inspire the next generation of storytellers from Oldham. On the 12<sup>th</sup> July, the Summer Reading Challenge was also launched, encouraging children to sign up and read over the summer holidays. A range of events have taken place over the summer on the SRC theme of Story Garden, with over 1,700 children signing up for the challenge.

**Arts:** Khushi Festival was delivered at Oldham Library and Northern Roots on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Aug, showcasing outdoor performances, family friendly workshops and live music. Presented in partnership with Women's CHAI project and Oldham Coliseum, Khushi is a celebration of South Asian Talent.

Oldham Theatre Workshop delivered their summer show 'Chasing the Wind' at Oldham Library Performance Space. The show was a heartwarming theatrical production which centred around the poignant story of a young person who selflessly donates their heart to another. The show was sold out and had outstanding feedback. BBC Northwest Tonight did a feature on the show, highlighting the importance of organ donation.

**Culture:** Jubacana, Oldham's youth-led percussion and dance project based at Gallery Oldham performed 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.

BBC Radio Manchester covered the Time Trek Heritage Trail in August which we launched at the start of the summer. The trail is a free augmented reality adventure featuring 12 stops and hidden characters waiting to be discovered around the town centre. Families step back in time and discover Oldham's history by taking selfies with characters, reading stories, and solving mini puzzles. Along the way, visitors will step into the shoes of local hero Annie Kenney, spot elephant head carvings, and interact with charming animals. Those who visit all 12 stops and solve a word puzzle will receive a free digital children's prize and earn a treat\* from the Waterstones inside The Spindles

A new artist commission has been launched to create a statement artwork for The Loom, our new events venue in the town centre. This artwork will reflect the legacy of the cotton industry in Oldham and the forward-looking ambition of this new venue.

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