

## Portfolio Report

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Elaine Taylor, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods.

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

### **Districts:**

The Government funded Community regeneration fund is due to launch later this month. The fund aims to support the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector to embed community-based decision-making, ensuring residents and the voluntary sector play a role in shaping local investment priorities. The fund will support community capital investment projects that have a direct and positive impact on local communities and facilities. Each of the 5 Districts of Oldham will have up to £1million to be allocated to Community regeneration projects.

District Community Councils are continuing to deliver against agreed priority plans informed by local insights and community voices. Work is now progressing to develop stronger resident links to community councils with a consistent approach across all 5 districts to deliver partnership led resident engagement events linked to the work of the community councils.

In August we saw regional and national interest in the work of the Operation Vulcan initiative and the Community HAF events delivered in the Derker neighbourhood of East Oldham. Visits from the Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester, Kate Green, and from the Government Home Office were hosted in the Community to showcase and share the positive partnership work with GMP and to demonstrate the community impact.

### **Community Safety & Cohesion:**

Operation Vulcan has continued to operate in the Derker area, achieving positive results with vehicle, drug and weapon seizures. The Vulcan Partnership Team are also regular attendee at the HAF events in Stoneleigh Park, engaging with residents of all ages.

The Community Safety Partnership has continued supported funding for two key prevention and intervention projects. Early Break has a Specialist Young Persons Advocate which includes a street-based outreach offer for young people who may be involved in an ASB or using substances in the community. Through Positive Steps and TOG Mind, a Wellbeing Coach delivers trauma informed wellbeing sessions. This project has been hugely successful in reducing reoffending.

Operation Wembley is the GMP force response to the protests relating to the housing of asylum seekers in hotels. In Oldham, GMP, the Council and Serco, which is the organisation which manages asylum accommodation, have worked together to engage with local residents and businesses and to ensure the protests take place in a safe and coordinated way.

### **Public Protection:**

According to the RAC, in 2021, 50 Councils across the UK declared that there were 21,000 vehicles abandoned within their districts. These vehicles are either left on public roads, in rear alleyways/highways or on private land and it is the Council that is obliged to remove them when they fit the criteria set out in legislation.

Since 2023 the Council has seen a significant increase in the number of complaints about abandoned vehicles. I can report that the number of abandoned vehicles reported to the Council increased from 334 in 2023/24 to 1099 in 2024/25. This year in the first quarter of 2025/26 we have already received 397 referrals (more than the whole of 2023/24). This shows that the issue of abandoned vehicles across the Borough is a real and growing problem, but we are committed to using the legislation available to us, in order to remove them.

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**Planning:**

Our Development Management Service continues to be a busy service, as exemplified by some of the stats officers collated in June – approximately 8,000 hits on our planning application webpages, mainly around residents wanting to view and comment on planning applications. In addition, the service receives around 200 phone calls each month to the general planning phone line from residents. The service also received 29 reports related to enforcement concerns in June. We are currently engaging in a review of how we can improve the way residents and applicants can contact the service and to ensure that we respond in a timely fashion.

Our Strategic Planning team continues to progress our Part 2 Local Plan that will provide Oldham specific planning policies to help determine planning applications that will sit alongside Places for Everyone (PfE) as part of our joint development plan. We will be further engaging with Members in Autumn before we go out for the final round of consultation on the Local Plan in the New Year.

**Waste Cleansing & Greenspace:**

Waste: QR codes are now available for new/replacements household bins across the borough.

The QR code will link directly to the Council's rubbish and recycling web page so residents can easily access the online page to report a missed bin collection, check which rubbish goes in which bin, find out their collection schedule, request an assisted collection and find out about recycling services.

Cems & Crems: All headstones due to be safety checked in the annual inspection for 2025 have now been inspected. (NB approximately 35,000 headstones throughout the 7 cemeteries in Oldham and 7,000 are inspected every year to ensure the HSE recommendations of a 5 yearly inspection is carried out).

An external company, Cemetery Development Services, is about to be engaged to carry out an environmental feasibility study to extend a burial area in Chadderton Cemetery, with the intention to extend the cemetery capacity for a further 20 years. Two cremator manufacturers have now submitted draft plans to replace the 3 cremators at Hollinwood Crematorium. The next stage of the project will be to tender for the works

Arboriculture and Countryside: Ash dieback works are ongoing with over 200 diseased trees removed this year. A full tree planting program is being developed for the winter period with at least 400 new standards being planted and at least 2 hectares of new woodland.

The species survival project at Leesbrook is progressing well with in-channel weir works commencing on 15th September. 2km of footpath and access improvements are ongoing with tree planting due to commence in November.

Borough-Wide Seasonal Planting: Summer maintenance operations are in full swing across the Borough and our bedding programme is nearing completion, with floral beds, barrier planters, and hanging baskets installed across key town centre and community locations. Planning and preparation for the borough's winter/spring bedding allocation is currently underway.

Sports Pitch Reinstatement: Reinstatement works on the borough's natural turf sports pitches have now been completed following the winter and spring playing seasons, ensuring pitches are ready for the new season.

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