

## Portfolio Report

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Arooj Shah, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Growth.

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

### **Pride in Place:**

I'm delighted to update Council on a new government-funded programme will provide significant investment for local community-led projects in Oldham. We have secured a £1.5 million Pride in Place Impact Fund grant to improve community spaces and high streets, with the Alt neighbourhood also receiving a £20 million investment for long-term neighbourhood transformation over the next decade.

This new programme builds on the previous Long-Term Plan for Towns initiative which aimed to give local residents a stronger voice on identifying and delivering projects that strengthen communities. The ultimate goal of this refreshed programme of activity is to create places that residents are proud to live in, support local businesses, make areas more vibrant and welcoming, and give communities more control over the future of their neighborhoods.

### **Oldham Town Centre Shop Front Grants:**

We are continuing to work with businesses on the shop front grant scheme where businesses can apply for up to £10,000 to improve their facade. Already there has been a great response from businesses in the eligible areas including both Yorkshire and Union Streets. We are keen to see the improvements happening as soon as possible to complement all the other work that is taking place in the town centre so we hope to have the first tranche of offer letters out to businesses as soon as possible.

### **Housing Delivery:**

The positive progress I updated on housing delivery last month has continued, with 123 new affordable homes delivered in the first half of this year. I was also pleased to see the planning application coming in from Vistry and First Choice Homes Oldham for the Southlink development last month, hot on the heels of the application from Rowland Homes on the former South Chadderton School site that was submitted in August. The two developments will provide 297 new homes, including 207 affordable homes, on two vacant council-owned sites.

### **Creating a Better Place:**

Building on the successes to date, Cabinet recently approved using the Community Regeneration Fund to purchase and subsequently demolish a vacant property on Yorkshire Street, which has struggled to attract any commercial interest in over 2 years. This has been an aspiration for some time as part of the wider masterplan for the area, and will significantly uplift the cultural area surrounding the Coliseum Theatre.

The new home for Oldham Archives was officially opened by the Mayor, Cllr Eddie Moores, on Saturday 27th September alongside activities for the well-attended Nostalgic Oldham event. Visitors were welcomed into the archive space for the first time to take a look at some of the items in the collection, see maps, photos, listen to some of our history, and had the chance for a behind-the-scenes tour. It is the first time all the collections will be on site together in one area, making them much more accessible for our residents and visitors.

Work has commenced on the latest phase of the Town Centre Park. The second phase, on the eastern edge of the park, has now started on site to provide further green space for residents and visitors to enjoy alongside the greening of the Town Centre as part of our Accessible Oldham scheme making it easier, safer and more enjoyable to travel around the town centre which

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includes Snipe Gardens completed earlier this year creating a much improved and stronger connection between the bus station and the Town Centre.

As part of the ongoing development at Hollinwood Junction a start on site has commenced for the new 192,000sq ft Industrial units that will create hundreds of jobs. A new LIDL store is currently under construction, linking in with our Get Oldham working programme, and is expected to be open prior to Christmas. In addition, the site will be key to delivering much needed new homes.

Building on the success to date of Broadway Green in creating new homes and hundreds of new jobs we have now commenced the latest phase of housing with 102 affordable homes. The linear park which borders the development is programmed for completion in December 25.

As part of our ongoing commitment to retain, invest and ensure the future sustainability of historic buildings for local communities, the town and future generations a launch event was held at Foxdenton hall to mark the start of the initial phase of work to restore the 200 year old building that has been closed to the public for 14 years. The Chadderton Together group has secured a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £228,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund is matched with £119,000 from the Council to create an initial plan for the renovation that we hope will lead to a capital grant to complete the restoration of this much-loved building. This is building on the preservation of other historic buildings including Failsworth Town Hall, Royton Town Hall and the Old Library now renamed the J R Clynes building.

### **Strategy, Policy, and Performance:**

This month I was proud to speak at the Greater Manchester launch of National Living Wage Week, which Oldham was chosen to host. It was a fantastic opportunity to demonstrate our leadership on fair employment and the difference a real Living Wage makes to residents and local businesses. I shared Oldham's commitment to tackling in-work poverty and building an economy that works for everyone and I was encouraged by the dedicated support from employers and regional partners in the room.

Oldham is also a key partner in Manchester Metropolitan University's Place-based Circular Society Innovations programme – a major international initiative exploring how towns and cities can lead the transition to a greener, fairer circular economy. At the recent keynote event in Manchester, Northern Roots was highlighted as an example of how circular approaches can create local jobs, reduce waste, and strengthen communities. This partnership is helping cement Oldham's reputation as a borough at the forefront of social and environmental innovation – something I am incredibly proud of.

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