

Portfolio Report

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

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

Launch of Communities Regeneration Partnership Capital Funding:

Following my last portfolio update, the Communities Regeneration Partnership Capital Funding Programme, which represents a significant capital investment of £4.9 million, has now officially launched. This funding is aimed at supporting Voluntary, Community, Faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations across Oldham to improve and transform community spaces and create stronger, healthier, more vibrant neighbourhoods. The application window is open until 19 January 2026 and application support is being provided by Action Together to ensure organisations are well-equipped to submit strong proposals.

Street Cleansing:

We have taken delivery of two new compact sweepers. The units have been designed with an additional third brush which will allow them to carry a specially designed brush for removal of weed growth. This will then allow them to support the team carrying out boroughwide weed treatment.

Our sweepers have now moved into their busiest period of the year addressing leaf fall. This initially focuses on areas of high flood risk and then moves to areas with significant tree cover, moving around the borough. We aim to clear the bulk of leaf fall by January; however, the weather can impact operations. During leaf fall season, sweepers clear over one thousand tons of leaves. We have to date completed full second weed spraying treatment to Failsworth East, Failsworth West and the Hollinwood wards, and we have also focused on main road and District Centres across the Borough. With all Wards having well established hardy perennial weeds, progress has been slow owing to additional treatments with specialist herbicides being required to target them. This has in effect meant two treatments have been carried out during the first round of spraying.

The weather has now impacted spraying; however, as the cold weather kicks in, weeds are naturally dying back. The plan is for teams to commence highway weed spraying next year, as early as we can, to allow us sufficient time to carry out two full treatments.

Community Safety:

A robust media campaign to raise awareness of Hate Crime has been delivered along with hate awareness sessions to school governors and staff from frontline services. Further work is also being developed to develop community ambassadors to support victims of hate. The Council is also working with Stop Hate UK.

In response to reports of the Borough wide issue of firework nuisance, this year saw the return of the Operation Treacle multi-agency patrols. Over five key nights, which were determined by partnership intelligence, Community Safety Officers teamed up with GMP to patrol around the whole borough, engaging with members of the community of all ages, offering safety advice, and where necessary, issuing warnings or taking further action. This project was funded through the Community Safety Partnership, as part of problem-solving activity.

The 3-year review of the Open Moorland PSPO, which aims to educate individuals and prevent serious fires on the moorland, through prohibition of behaviours, such as, the possession of disposable barbecues on the land, has been undertaken and a new 3-year PSPO took effect on the 1st November. This is the 3rd extension of the Order and since being put into place, there have been no serious fires on the land.

Housing:

October saw the launch of the public consultation with regards to proposed changes we wish to make to the Allocations Policy. Key Stakeholders and Partners have also been consulted, including, members of Oldham's Strategic Housing Partnership. There will be a final workshop session with partners, following the results from public consultation. A report and draft policy will then be written up for consideration by Cabinet (currently scheduled for December).

We have over 8,200 households on the housing register with a defined housing need and we saw a spike at the end of September with almost 100 more housing applications received in that month than the month previous. The team continues to meet their service standards of registering and making all eligible housing applications live where all the information has been received within 10 working days.

The Housing Options Service re-design implementation is now well underway with several new posts being advertised and recruited too. We have seen some new starters in post and it is envisaged that the service should be fully staffed and operational before the Christmas break. The number of households in Temporary Accommodation remains stable with the current total standing at 575 households at the end of September. The main reasons for homelessness are friends and family no longer willing to accommodate, loss of private rented sector accommodation, release from custody and domestic abuse.

Housing Standards:

On 27th October 2025, Awaab's Law came into force. The law looks to implement the lessons learned because of the tragic death of a child in a property that had damp and mould.

The new law introduces a clear criteria and response times for social landlords when dealing with complaints regarding property standards. Specifically, social landlords must:

- Investigate emergency damp and mould hazards within 24 hours
- Investigate other reports within 10 working days
- Provide a written summary of findings within 3 working days
- Begin repairs within 5 working days of identifying a hazard

This will, hopefully, ensure tenants living in socially rented properties are living in good accommodation with any problems being dealt with quickly and effectively.

Planning:

Our Development Management Service has made two small but important changes to some of their processes this past month. The new Planning Application Validation Checklist was implemented on the 3rd of November after the recent consultation. The Checklist sets the required documentation that a planning application needs to include for the Planning Service to be able to validate the application to assess it. We have also introduced QR codes on neighbour notification letters to make it easier for residents to directly access details and documents on our website in order to make comments on the application from there.

The Development Management team have also been pleased to welcome two new graduates to the team in October, which will bolster capacity in this very busy service. Despite how busy the team is, performance stats submitted to government continue to exceed MHCLG's targets.

Our Strategic Planning team launched the consultation for the Article 4 Direction on HMOs, which runs until 16th November, with Local Plan Member Workshops taking place earlier this month.

Recommendations: Council is requested to note the report.