

Oldham Borough Council



Council Meeting
Wednesday 12 November 2025

OLDHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

**To: ALL MEMBERS OF OLDHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL,
CIVIC CENTRE, OLDHAM**

Published on Friday, 14 November 2025

Item 9. Questions to Leader and Cabinet

Responses to Member questions to the Leader and Cabinet enclosed.

Question	Response
<p><i>Cllr Shoab Akhtar -</i> <i>Can the Cabinet Member responsible for The Hive please update the Council on the strategies being implemented to promote this fantastic community space across the borough?</i> <i>Additionally, what specific actions are being taken to engage and support all Councillors in promoting The Hive to their local residents, and how can we collectively ensure this valuable resource is maximised for the benefit of our community?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Fida Hussain -</p> <p>The Council is working with Upturn Enterprise Ltd to promote the space. Tools being used to promote the Hive include a new website, digital marketing, campaigns, coverage in print media including Hello Manchester, community and business events and new signage.</p> <p>Print and digital PR media is available to Councillors to help them promote the Hive to residents via hive@upturn.org.uk and more on information on the Hive is available at www.hiveoldham.co.uk</p> <p>We can collectively ensure that this valuable resource is maximised for the benefit of our community by working together to promote the Hive whenever possible.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Shoab Akhtar –</i></p> <p><i>The Hive's trading platform is a game-changer for local businesses in Oldham, providing a digital space for companies to interact, source services locally, and promote economic growth. This innovative platform, launched by Upturn, is believed to be the first in the nation to encourage big companies to source services locally</i></p> <p><i>Can the Cabinet Member responsible for The Hive please update the Council on the uptake and utilisation of the trading platform launched</i></p>	<p>Cllr Fida Hussain -</p> <p>The Oldham Trading Platform (OTP) currently has 148 member businesses and 180 to be onboarded in December.</p> <p>The Council and the developer of the OTP, Hive based IMS Technologies Ltd, are working to encourage a number of businesses to promote the supply chain opportunities on the platform including Muse and Willmott Dixon. We are hoping that these opportunities will be on the platform very soon.</p>

<p><i>by The Hive for local business procurement purposes? Specifically, how are the Council and its major partners, such as Muse, Willmott Dixon and Green New Deal actively using this platform to support local businesses and promote economic growth in Oldham?</i></p>	
<p><i>Cllr Mark Kenyon –</i></p> <p><i>With ref to cabinet on 20th October and revenue monitor report forecasting 23M overspend this year, is this administration contemplating applying for Emergency Financial Support? If so, when, how much and under what conditions?</i></p>	<p><i>Cllr Abdul Jabbar –</i></p> <p>The Council is eagerly awaiting the Policy Statement from Government due late November/early December. The Local Government Provisional Finance Settlement is expected to be received the week commencing 15 December when a full understanding of the impact will be known. In the meantime, the Council is undertaking an assessment of the likely level of budget gap based on current and projected demand and costs, and sector analysis of the impact of the Fair Funding 2.0 consultation.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Mark Kenyon –</i></p> <p><i>With ref to cabinet on 20th October and revenue monitor report forecasting 23M overspend this year, did this administration get its budget wrong when it was set back in March?</i></p>	<p><i>Cllr Abdul Jabbar –</i></p> <p>No, the Council did not “get its budget wrong”.</p> <p>The Council, like many other councils across the country, continues to feel the dual impacts of rising demand and complexity and rising prices – particularly in the adult and children’s social care services. For example, children’s placement costs have risen by nearly 300% - a rise that can only be described as unprecedented.</p> <p>While the Council works hard to determine the likely costs of delivering services the scale and pace of increased demand and the speed of rising prices could not be predicted to this degree.</p> <p>This year, like every year, the Council has exercised a rigorous approach to Budget Monitoring which forecasts any budget challenges for the full financial</p>

	<p>year based on the position in each quarter. In the first quarter of this year the forecast was an adverse position of £2 m – last year at this point it was £26m which after substantial work throughout the year was reduced the £10.1m - a pattern which is likely to be replicated this year.</p> <p>Our latest budget monitoring shows that the actions/spend controls we have already put in place to address this projected overspend are taking effect and the financial position has improved.</p> <p>Oldham is not an outlier. Several councils around the country are continuing to battle the cost and demand for essential services. Within GM, there are significant challenges regarding statutory services such as Adults and Children’s Social Care.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Umar Nasheen –</i></p> <p><i>What progress is being made in achieving the outcomes of reducing mental health attendance at A&E, avoiding admissions, and supporting people to stay safe in the community by the work being done in adult mental health crisis services?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Barbara Brownridge –</p> <p>Reducing attendees at A&E:</p> <p>Listening Space, provided by TOGS Mind, is a drop-in crisis service offering 56 hours of weekly support. It provides an alternative to attending A&E for individuals experiencing mental health distress. The service is well-utilised and offers specialist support to help people remain safe within the community.</p> <p>A new referral pathway has been agreed and will be circulated to GP practices. This will enable GPs to refer patients directly to the extended Listening Space service, providing an alternative to A&E attendance.</p> <p>Reduce hospital admissions:</p> <p>To reduce hospital admissions, the NHS Greater Manchester has been working to strengthen community mental health services in Oldham. Following</p>

	<p>recent pressures on PCFT, which impacted services, focused efforts have led to significant improvements, these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Community Mental Health Team has exited business continuity.• Recruitment has successfully filled many vacant posts.• Community provision has improved, enabling more people to be supported at home and reducing the need for hospital admissions. <p>The Greater Manchester Move On Service (GMMOP) was established over two years ago to provide five units of temporary accommodation for patients ready for discharge but with housing needs. This provision is now also being used to prevent admissions. When appropriate, patients are supported in short-term accommodation rather than being admitted to acute wards.</p> <p>Work is underway to develop a business case for a crisis bed in Oldham. This bed would offer short-term community support for patients in distress, providing an alternative to hospital admission. Listening Space could refer patients to this facility when closing, ensuring continuity of care for individuals awaiting an acute bed who may not require one if supported in the community.</p> <p>Supporting people to stay safe in the community:</p> <p>Winter Senior Gatekeeper post, this is a post that is being recruited to by the end of the calendar year, to support the system, to ensure we are offering least restrictive interventions for our service users. The post will divert many service users from being admitted to an inpatient ward.</p> <p>Where community options cannot be utilised the senior clinical gatekeepers will ensure people who require admission will have a clear purpose of admission, with an estimated discharge date.</p>
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	<p>Senior clinical gatekeepers will work with staff in local services to improve the decision making through training, coaching, consultation and direct face to face support.</p> <p>All the above mentioned initiatives collectively strengthen Oldham’s community mental health offer, reduce pressure on hospitals, and provide safe, effective alternatives to admission.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Josh Charters –</i></p> <p><i>Is the Council planning any publicity to inform renters of their new rights under the Renters’ Rights Act?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Elaine Taylor -</p> <p>The Renters’ Rights Act 2025 received Royal Assent on 27 October 2025, making it law, however, implementation is not immediate. Most provisions will come into force during 2026, via secondary legislation and commencement regulations.</p> <p>Central Government has promised a clear timeline soon, suggesting a phased rollout starting mid-to-late 2026 for new tenancies, with existing tenancies transitioning into 2027.</p> <p>Publicity will be produced when the guidance and timescales for implementation are known.</p> <p>On top of this legislation, Awaab’s Law was also introduced on the 27th October to cover housing conditions in socially rented properties and the speed of response to the issues reported.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Nadeem Iqbal –</i></p> <p><i>Can the Cabinet Member outline the public consultation process planned for the Local Transport Plan and how Oldham residents can take part?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Chris Goodwin –</p> <p>The new Local Transport Plan is being developed by Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) in collaboration with all ten Greater Manchester districts. Oldham Council has been actively involved throughout the process, ensuring that the borough’s unique transport needs and priorities are well represented.</p>

	<p>We are now working closely with TfGM to design a comprehensive public consultation plan that will enable as many Oldham residents as possible to take part in shaping the future of transport in our borough.</p> <p>Details will be shared with all members when that plan has been finalised and events arranged.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Umar Nasheen –</i></p> <p><i>Can the Cabinet Member give any estimate of how long it will take to complete gully repairs, and remind residents that work can only be completed if the road is clear of parked cars?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Chris Goodwin –</p> <p>The gully cleansing programme commenced late September 2024 to progressively work through all 47,500 gullies in the borough using two gully wagons, one being brought in additionally just for the task.</p> <p>After just over a year, out of the 20 wards in the borough, the programme has visited over half of these, currently progressing in the 11th ward, achieving an initial clearance rate of between 70 & 80% on average.</p> <p>The aim of the programme was to clear as many gullies as possible as quickly as possible. Gullies that have been found to be either more solidly blocked or inaccessible are now being dealt with, with one team currently going through the first ward on the programme again. Some gullies need digging out, others repairing, and some accessed by removal of parked cars – this process is happening in parallel. Members are helping operatives where possible ensure cars are moved in advance. Teams will inform ward members when a revisit to the ward is made.</p> <p>In accordance with the Council's stated policy on the website, ad hoc visits to clear gullies where there is a significant risk of internal flooding or highway safety will take place as part of the routine reactive highways maintenance service.</p>

<p><i>Cllr Nadeem Iqbal –</i></p> <p><i>Can the Cabinet Member preview any significant changes proposed in the new Housing Allocations Policy following the public consultation?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Elaine Taylor -</p> <p>Thank you Cllr Iqbal for the question.</p> <p>Making the best use of the social housing stock available in the Borough is clearly a critical element when it comes to addressing our current housing needs. In order to do this, the Council has reviewed its allocations policy, looking at good practice from elsewhere, and there are a number of important changes proposed. I will happily provide Cllr Iqbal with a full breakdown, but some of the key proposals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downsizing incentives- this will involve a commitment within the policy to provide practical support to those who want to move from larger properties (thus freeing-up a home for a family in need), including financial incentive. • Allowing homeless households who are found accommodation in private rented housing to remain on the register. This will promote speedier homelessness resolutions, reduce demand for temporary accommodation and increase the availability of social housing by incentivizing people to accept private rented sector offers. • People who own a share of a property in the UK or abroad will be disqualified. • More restrictive income and capital thresholds- people with savings in excess of the DWP threshold for Universal Credit entitlement will receive the lowest priority, as will people with net household income of over £60,000 (£35,000 for those without children)
<p><i>Cllr Ken Rustidge –</i></p>	<p>Cllr Barbara Brownridge –</p>

<p><i>The self-assessment produced for the Care Quality Commission inspection is very positive – has the inspection finished and did the CQC agree with it?</i></p>	<p>The CQC inspection process is continuing, and we are now at the stage where CQC are determining our rating. This is worked out by reviewing the information they have collected through the assessment process and scoring us on a set of evidence requirements against a number of quality statements. The scores are then quality assured by a calibration panel, consisting of CQC and external organisations, that compares our score to all other local authority reports, before reaching a final score.</p> <p>The self-assessment forms part of the evidence they look at and was submitted as part of our information return in June. Although they have not specifically commented on the self-assessment, CQC provided daily updates while they were on site and did not raise any ‘red flags’ where they thought there were significant issues. They are due to give initial verbal feedback to the DASS on Monday 17 November with the draft report expecting in February or March 2026</p>
<p><i>Cllr Garth Harkness –</i></p> <p><i>At the last meeting was adjourned to seek further information. A special meeting had been arranged, and this item was due to be taken in a meeting beforehand. The meeting was originally scheduled before the usual 6pm start. After I raised objections the committee agreed to stick to the original usual times of 6pm. The meeting in August was scheduled for this time.</i></p> <p><i>Why is this meeting at 4.30pm when we clearly said at a previous meeting earlier meetings were not suitable for some members of the committee and agreed to 6pm starts?</i></p>	<p><i>Cllr Abdul Jabbar –</i></p> <p>My understanding is that a communication was issued by officers explaining the reason why this meeting was scheduled for 4:30pm, and on that basis I don’t intend to revisit the matter.</p> <p>Could I remind Councillor Harkness that the previous two attempts to hold this meeting had to be adjourned because his group were looking to put the council at financial risk and potentially costing taxpayers more money by giving bidders a heads-up on how much to put in for a tender - when we had already committed to publishing the spend on the projects once the tenders had been let. This would have been detrimental to our borough and not in the interests of residents. Plus, this being the third attempt to resolve this matter and the delays already incurred by the opposition members which have added costs because of time delays on decisions.</p>

<p><i>Why was the last meeting cancelled in August and last months meeting also cancelled?</i></p> <p><i>Why is this on the same day as planning?</i></p> <p><i>I am on Planning Committee and finish work in Manchester at 4pm so cannot attend.</i></p> <p><i>We agree dates of meetings and times at annual council. Groups allocate onto committees taking account times councillors can make.</i></p> <p><i>Will the committee agree that the constant changing without any valid reason why and the lack of communication is just not good enough?</i></p> <p><i>Will they agree to stick to 6pm starts and if a meeting is to be cancelled or amended this communicated to members. Will it also be agreed that availability of members a new date is canvassed before the date being arranged.</i></p>	<p>I would also ask Councillor Harkness to take advantage of his entitlement to reasonable time off from his employment to undertake council duties, including attending meetings, which is set out in legislation, so that he could have left work slightly earlier for the meeting.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Naseem Aslam –</i></p> <p><i>Could the Cabinet Member tell us more about what has been planned, and has already taken place, during November’s National Care Leavers Month?</i></p>	<p><i>Cllr Shaid Mushtaq –</i></p> <p>There is a significant amount of activity taking place this month to celebrate the achievements of our care leavers and raise awareness of corporate parenting responsibilities. We are very proud of our young people have a record number of care leavers in university currently. Well done to the team of Personal Advisers working with young people.</p> <p>Key highlights of Care Leavers Month include a care leavers consultation event in which young people have participated in the co-production of the updated Care Leaver Offer, participation events kayaking with young people,</p>

	<p>holding a cookery class and fitness sessions at the local gym. Also, we are launching our co-produced new pathway plan and launching a partnership offer with First Choice Homes.</p> <p>We are also celebrating young people's successes with representation at the GM Care Leaver Awards, the National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum Awards and congratulations to the Care Leaver Football Team who have attended Coram Voice's 'A National Voice Awards' in London and won 2nd Place in the category of Participation Awards.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Abdul Malik –</i></p> <p><i>How will Oldham Council ensure that Oldham's diverse cultural sector benefits from a fair share of the £25m Creative Places Growth Fund investment?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Peter Dean –</p> <p>Thank you for your question. This is a very exciting opportunity for Oldham to secure significant funding to support the creative and cultural sector in Oldham. Senior officers are attending GMCA's briefings about the Creative Places Growth Investment Fund. Once further information is available, along with Oldham's Cultural Partnership Board, we will be seeking opportunities to bid for funding and supporting local cultural organisations to bid.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Naseem Aslam –</i></p> <p><i>Can the Cabinet Member pick out the key issues contained in the new Education and Skills Strategy?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Mohon Ali –</p> <p>Thank you Cllr Aslam for the question. The Council has worked with our partners, stakeholders and the business community to shape a new and bold strategy which will deliver better outcomes for Oldham residents increasing economic activity in line with the National Get Britain Working policy. The key issues that we are seeking to address is additional improvements the educational and skills attainment levels, especially with more young people needing Maths and English. We will increase the range of growth sector based skills provision, including supporting initiatives such as Sports Town providing a vital link between sport, health and employment.</p>

	<p>We will work with local and sub-regional employers to make sure residents have a good understanding about growth sectors where there will be good, well-paid work and support businesses to innovate and grow.</p> <p>Finally, the strategy will work with the voluntary and community sector and the livewell programme to help residents re-engage with employment support programmes such as Get Oldham Working or access training support such as The Oldham college or our Lifelong Learning service.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Abdul Malik –</i></p> <p><i>Is it too early to say if the Pension Credit take-up work is having an effect? Is there any data to tell us what the average increase in income is for new Pension Credit claimants in Oldham?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Abdul Jabbar –</p> <p>Thank you for your question Cllr Malik.</p> <p>This Autumn we are working in partnership with Citizens Advice Oldham in delivering our Pension Credit campaign. We wrote to 251 residents who will think may be eligible during late October. Since then, we have been making following up phone calls encouraging Pensioners to check their eligibility and to support them to make an application if help is needed. We also have a communications plan in place running alongside the DWP campaign to increase awareness and reduce any stigma in applying.</p> <p>DWP have a target processing time of 50 working days once a Pension Credit application is received. We would hope therefore to have the information and data we need to understand the positive impact of our campaign during the Spring.</p> <p>Based on data from our campaign in late 2024, the average amount awarded for each pensioner living in Oldham per year was £3,494. We will capture the same figures following this campaign.</p>

	<p>My message to residents this Autumn is simple – do not hesitate to claim Pension Credit if you are eligible. There is help available once again to make an application and I urge you to come forward for support.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Junaid Hussain –</i></p> <p><i>Does the Cabinet Member know if there is a timetable for the migration to Universal Credit to be completed, given the reported reduction in backlogs?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Abdul Jabbar –</p> <p>From April 2025, the Move to Universal Credit programme was formally ended. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) began sending migration notices to Employment Support Allowance (ESA) claimants in September 2024 with plans to notify the entire cohort by September 2025. This is in line with government's aim to move all legacy claimants to Universal Credit by March 2026.</p> <p>The DWP say that they have made good progress on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) cases to date, with over 200,000 already successfully transitioned to UC, so a decision has been made to increase the volume of Migration Notices issued each month to 83,000. This will allow a little more time before the end of March 2026 to provide support for more vulnerable claimants and complete the migration of ESA cases to UC. More than half of households migrated to universal credit have been awarded transitional protection.</p> <p>We continue to offer support to residents having difficulty with the migration process to ensure that they receive the correct amount of benefits.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Mark Kenyon –</i></p> <p><i>With reference to the Cabinet Meeting (20/10/25), with the revenue monitor report forecasting £23 million overspend this year, how many new decisions about changes to council</i></p>	<p>Cllr Abdul Jabbar –</p> <p>The simple answer is none. The Council Constitution is clear about the processes and procedures for decision-making in the council and no formal decisions have been made that would make significant changes to council services. Instead, the Executive Team has implemented enhanced controls on expenditure. These actions include:</p>

<p><i>services have been introduced in order to try and reduce this deficit?</i></p>	<p>Enhanced controls for expenditure – with all Directors or Executive Directors approving for non-critical spend.</p> <p>Recruitment freeze implemented – only essential posts will be recruited to and assessed on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>The senior leadership team is implementing additional controls to reduce spend and protect essential services for the residents of the borough and this work is already paying dividends with the projected budget variance down in our latest monitoring.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Helen Bishop –</i></p> <p><i>The Pots and Pans Memorial in Greenfield was earmarked for refurbishment over two years ago. Funding was identified and other memorials across the borough were duly repaired. Despite having been offered assistance with access to the memorial from local landowners, the site is still in a dangerous state of disrepair. Why?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Peter Dean –</p> <p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>We recognise the importance of the Pots and Pan’s memorial to the residents of Oldham but it is important that we make sure we give an honest view of its condition.</p> <p>The memorial is not “in a dangerous state of disrepair”. The memorial is inspected routinely, and annual maintenance work is completed in the run up to Remembrance Day events – this involves cleaning of the memorial, maintenance and graffiti removal.</p> <p>Two years ago, in anticipation of money becoming available through grants or other funding pots, work was undertaken to determine potential costs for the refurbishment. Works costed included repointing the extensive stonework, new fixings for the bronze plaques and wreath retention wire. Additionally, there were proposals to re-set the perimeter wall and surrounding steps. However, for the record, this work was never funded and no money had been allocated to carry out these works.</p>

	That said, we continue to try and identify possible sources of funding and will share further details if or when this is secured.
<p><i>Cllr Alicia Marland –</i></p> <p><i>The Visit Oldham website has been missing for several months. Requests for information have not been forthcoming. Where has it gone? Why? And when will it return?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Peter Dean –</p> <p>Information for tourists is hosted on the Visit Manchester website which has a better Search Engine Optimisation and higher amount of site visits. The What's on website hosts information which is more targeted at residents.</p> <p>These changes were implemented as part of previous year's budget savings from the communications function.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Dave Murphy –</i></p> <p><i>Local Environmental Enforcement Officers, who deal with littering, fly tipping and dog fouling, as well as green spaces, have been cut by more than a third since 2019. Dog fouling enforcement orders have been allowed to lapse and there have been no dog fouling penalties issued this year.</i></p> <p><i>When is this council going to admit that the environment service cuts are having a massive impact on local services? When is the council going to address this issue?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Elaine Taylor –</p> <p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>Environmental enforcement remains a priority for the council. However, it is also important to recognise that the council has faced systematic financial reductions over the last 15 years which have impacted the Council's ability to dedicate necessary resources to enforce all aspects of environmental legislation. Enforcement around wider environmental protection and housing standards has been prioritised to protect residents in their homes.</p> <p>Focus remains on speedy removal of flytipping, which, unfortunately, has remained consistent across the borough. All fly tips are still inspected, but evidence is rarely found as those responsible as removing identifiable information. Where evidence is found, we do take enforcement action and issue fines/prosecute.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Garth Harkness –</i></p> <p><i>Will the Cabinet Member ensure that all Deeds of Trust relating to use of public land or assets</i></p>	<p>Cllr Abdul Jabbar –</p>

<p><i>are made available to members of the Charitable Trusts Committee?</i></p> <p><i>Presently, councillors are being asked to make decisions without sight of Trust Deeds which relate to the intended use of some of our assets – as was recently the case with tree planting on Clayton Playing Fields.</i></p>	<p>Yes, this will be done. I understand that the relevant Deed has now been provided to Trust Committee members and officers will ensure that any other relevant documents are provided to members in advance of meetings.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Garth Harkness –</i></p> <p><i>The recent delay to SEND reform is disappointing. Does the Cabinet Member share my view that plans to abolish EHCPs for children in mainstream schools is unacceptable.</i></p> <p><i>Will the Cabinet Member write to the government on behalf of this Council to ask that Ministers:</i></p> <p><i>- Ensure that rights to SEND assessment and support are maintained and the voices of children and young people with SEND and that of their families and carers is put at the centre of the reform process?</i></p>	<p><i>Cllr Mohon Ali –</i></p> <p>Thank you for raising this important issue. The Council remains committed to supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities across all schools and settings. We recognise the concerns surrounding the delay to national SEND reform and the speculation regarding potential changes to EHCPs in mainstream schools.</p> <p>While we await further clarity from the Department for Education in early Spring 25, we continue to advocate for a system that protects statutory rights, promotes inclusive practice, and ensures that the voices of children, families, and carers are central to any reform. We also support calls for improved funding and capacity to meet assessed needs effectively and equitably.</p> <p>We will work closely with elected members, Parent Carer Forums, and our education partners to ensure that any representations made to government reflect the priorities and values of our local area.</p>

<p><i>- Improve specialist capacity and support local government local authorities including through national government funding to support any child whose assessed needs exceed a specific cost?</i></p> <p><i>- Build a SEND funding system which properly incentivises schools both to accept SEND pupils and to train their staff in best practice for integrated teaching and pastoral care.</i></p>	
<p><i>Cllr Dianne Williamson –</i></p> <p><i>The Eton star project has been delayed: a pet project of our former chief executive, who was on the board is clearly not fit for Oldham. The existing sixth form provision in Oldham is good. We should be trying to give people who have barriers to success the opportunity to achieve, not just giving more opportunities to people who already will do perfectly well within our existing provisions.</i></p> <p><i>Does the Cabinet Member agree that Eton Star was wrong for Oldham from the start; and does she agree that we should now drop this scheme and look at something more sensible for the Tommyfield Market site?</i></p>	<p><i>Cllr Mohon Ali –</i></p> <p>Firstly, I think it is disrespectful to call a project that aims to provide world class educational opportunities for Oldham’s young people a ‘pet project’.</p> <p>Secondly, nobody in this council has ever said that the college provision for young people in this borough is anything but good – but we have ambition to provide more, more options, more choice and access, for those who want it to learn in a different environment with access to everything both Star and Eton, with their incredible successes in education, can bring. Why would we not want that for our young people?</p> <p>There is also a fundamental misunderstanding about what this college aims to do – its is not – as the question implies – going to just take pupils who would ‘already do well’. The college and its admissions criteria will be designed to attract and admit those for whom the opportunity will make the biggest difference – those from more deprived backgrounds, those with care</p>

	<p>experience. Again I ask, why would we not want that for our young people? What is lost by having more options for our own?</p> <p>So the simple answer is no, I do not agree and we continue to work with this government to get this vital project over the line for the people of this borough.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Alicia Marland –</i></p> <p><i>It has recently been suggested that the government could introduce reforms which allow developers to ‘sell-off’ affordable housing projects that they are unable or unwilling to see through. It is already incredibly difficult to hold developers to affordable housing targets.</i></p> <p><i>Does the Cabinet Member agree that giving developers even more ways to back out of their commitments is not the answer? And does the Cabinet Member share our view that the way to deliver affordable homes is to fund councils properly so that we can deliver them, not to auction off the responsibility for building them to whoever can do it on the cheap, for the biggest profit?</i></p>	<p>Cllr Arooj Shah –</p> <p>Thank you for your question Cllr Marland. I’m not familiar with the proposed reform you refer to, so I’d welcome more information on what you’ve read about it so we as a council can input on the proposal, but I can say that this administration is committed to seeing more affordable homes delivered in the borough, particularly homes for social rent.</p> <p>We know that national planning policy allows developments to come forward without providing the full affordable housing contribution where that would make the development unviable, but we are actively working with housebuilders and housing associations to overcome this and to deliver more social homes in new developments.</p> <p>Council’s building (and managing) such affordable homes is one option – though it is not without its challenges – but it is not the only option and so, ultimately, the answer to our affordable housing crisis is going to be working through a variety of mechanisms to deliver new social homes, not just councils building their own housing stock.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Dianne Williamson –</i></p> <p><i>Council recently announced plans to purchase the site of Harry’s Bar in Oldham Town Centre in order to demolish the building.</i></p>	<p>Cllr Arooj Shah –</p> <p>I am fully aware of the nonsense relating to this project that is being spread online and am more than happy to address it head on.</p> <p>So for absolute clarity, despite what you have heard online or from other elected members in this room, this plan is part of a longstanding ambition to</p>

<p><i>The site is reportedly valued at £470k, but the project is reported to be costing Oldham Council £1 million.</i></p> <p><i>Can the Leader provide councillors with a full breakdown of how the money will be spent? And is she seriously confident that the way to rejuvenate the town centre's night-time economy and boost footfall is to demolish retail and hospitality units at a cost to the taxpayer of £1million, before the Oldham Coliseum has even reopened its doors and returned passing high street trade to the area?</i></p>	<p>create a more suitable immediate environment for the refurbished and redeveloped coliseum theatre.</p> <p>The owner is not a friend of mine and no, I have had no involvement in the council's procurement of this building - a task always left to officers and carried out using the proper decision making processes. Now that my rebuttal of the online nonsense regularly spread about this council and its business is out of the way I can answer your specific queries.</p> <p>The planned acquisition and demolition of a property on Yorkshire Street marks a significant step in our commitment to revitalising the area around the Coliseum and more widely our plans for a rejuvenated Yorkshire Street that better supports local businesses.</p> <p>Tell me, what can be lost by making the Coliseum more visible, better lit with a more welcoming entranceway? In creating more community and public space around one of our most treasured assets? The alternative was the continuation of the status quo – an empty building, in a state of considerable disrepair, unsold for many years and unlikely to be repurposed in the near future.</p> <p>The scheme is currently in development, and we are in the process of completing our plans so it would be inappropriate, and unhelpful from a commercial perspective, to share the full details of pricing at this point. I can confirm the costs referred to include the costs of demolition and the works to create the public space as well as the price of the building in question. However, as always full details will be made available as the scheme progresses.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Lewis Quigg –</i></p>	<p>Cllr Arooj Shah –</p> <p>The Council would ideally like to provide toilets in all public places and where it can it does. For clarity Local authorities in the UK are under no statutory</p>

<p><i>Q. Can the relevant cabinet member please confirm:</i></p> <p><i>When the toilets at Tandle Hill Café will be fixed. I have been awaiting a report from the Chief Executives office, presumably from another officer on the toilets being fixed. I would remind the Council that they have a duty to provide the toilets under the 1936 Public Health Act which stated toilets should be available in public buildings and parks. Can a temporary public convenience be installed?</i></p> <p><i>Residents have contacted me about this after complaints of people using the woods to defecate in and it has caused issue with dog walkers and others.</i></p>	<p>obligation to provide public toilets in parks or elsewhere. The provision of public conveniences is a discretionary power, not a mandatory duty. The Public Health Act 1936 gives local authorities the power to provide public toilets in "proper and convenient situations" if they choose to, but it does not compel them to do so. Critical is the budget situation and the financial pressure to keep them open. However, the Council does absolutely see the benefits of having them. The Council is reviewing all its current provision including Tandle Hill Toilets where there has been an ongoing issue with the condition of them that resulted in a closure. The toilet is connected to the cafe and is integral to the operation of the cafe.</p> <p>The whole building (toilets and cafe) is in a poor state of repair and the cafe operator has expressed concern around the economic viability of the cafe operation in Tandle Hill Park. The future of the tenancy is being assessed along with the future options for the building.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Lewis Quigg –</i></p> <p><i>Q. Can the relevant cabinet member please confirm:</i></p> <p><i>When the grids/gullies on Middleton Road where a large body of water has formed adjacent to Hindle Drive will be cleared. They have not been cleared and the residents who live there have issues with the large amount of water being deposited onto their property when vehicles pass.</i></p>	<p><i>Cllr Chris Goodwin –</i></p> <p>The gully cleansing programme commenced late September 2024 to progressively work through all 47,500 gullies in the borough using two gully wagons, one being brought in additionally just for the task.</p> <p>After just over a year, out of the 20 wards in the borough, the programme has visited over half of these, currently progressing in the 11th ward, achieving an initial clearance rate of between 70 & 80% on average.</p> <p>The aim of the programme was to clear as many gullies as possible as quickly as possible. Gullies that have been found to be either more solidly blocked or inaccessible are now being dealt with, with one team currently going through the first ward on the programme again. Some gullies need digging out, others repairing, and some accessed by removal of parked cars – this process is</p>

	<p>happening in parallel. Members are helping operatives where possible ensure cars are moved in advance. Teams will inform ward members when a revisit to the ward is made.</p> <p>In accordance with the Council's stated policy on the website, ad hoc visits to clear gullies where there is a significant risk of internal flooding or highway safety will take place as part of the routine reactive highways maintenance service.</p> <p>The gully programme about to move into the Royton wards for the next few weeks starting with Royton South - as so gullies on Middleton Rd will be visited in the near future.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Lewis Quigg –</i></p> <p><i>Q. Can the relevant cabinet member please confirm:</i></p> <p><i>What action is being taken to prevent fly tipping at New Coin Street in Royton. The area is plagued by fly tipping, and I am aware that recent costs of removing rubbish are now in the tens of thousands of pounds. This is clearly a drain on the taxpayer for the selfish and criminal behaviour of an ignorant few.</i></p>	<p>Cllr Elaine Taylor –</p> <p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>I can confirm that officers continue to respond to reports of flytipping at this location. All reports of flytipping are responded to and if evidence of those responsible is found, fixed penalty fines and/or prosecutions are pursued. This location seems to attract large scale commercial fly tips ranging from small van loads to several large quantities.</p> <p>Officers have, in the past, installed cameras but these have had little effect in catching the offenders as individuals who do this are wise to cameras and the vehicle identities are either on false plates or cloned. The teams will continue to respond to reports of flytipping and look to gather evidence and take action where appropriate.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Lewis Quigg –</i></p>	<p>Cllr Chris Goodwin –</p> <p>Thank you, Cllr Quigg, for your question.</p>

<p><i>Q. Can the relevant cabinet member please confirm:</i></p> <p><i>What actions will be taken to resolve the dangerous and chaotic parking outside Oldham Academy North. Many residents are angry that they cannot exit their properties and that the Council is not clamping down on dangerous parking, when compared to other parts of Royton such as on Market Day. Can the Council confirm that they have a tough action plan in place to deal with the dangerous parking outside Oldham Academy North?</i></p>	<p>The Council recognises residents' concerns about instances of inappropriate parking outside Oldham Academy North. We understand the frustration caused when vehicles block driveways and can create unsafe conditions for pedestrians. To address this, Oldham Council carries out the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict enforcement of School Keep Clear markings with penalty charge notices. • Regular patrols at peak school times • Consistent standards across the borough, including Royton on Market Day <p>We work actively with schools to promote safer travel alternatives for students, to promote well-being and reduce congestion.</p> <p>We will continue to monitor the situation closely and take firm action against illegal parking.</p> <p>Since the start of the September term, the school has had 4 visits, and officers have moved on in excess of 185 vehicles , issuing 3 PCNs . As it is a secondary school, parents invariably are waiting with the vehicle and will move on when approached by the officers.</p> <p>Residents are encouraged to report incidents so enforcement officers can respond promptly.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Lewis Quigg –</i></p> <p><i>Q. Can the relevant cabinet member please confirm:</i></p>	<p><i>Cllr Arooj Shah –</i></p> <p>Thank you Cllr Quigg for your question. We continue to support the market traders and the wider businesses within Royton with investment and various projects in Royton including the very successful refurbishment of Royton Town</p>

<p><i>If they have a plan to install power -points for the market stall holders at Royton Market, so that stalls have access to lighting and power without having to use generators?</i></p>	<p>Hall and Library. We don't have any immediate plans to install power points however we will continue to review the position moving forward.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Lewis Quigg –</i></p> <p><i>Q. Can the relevant cabinet member please confirm:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. The status of the Eton Star Academy given the Secretary of State of Education pausing any further free schools from being built.</i> <i>2. Does the relevant Cabinet Members have confidence that this school will ever be built?</i> <i>3. Confirm the catchment area of the school?</i> 	<p><i>Cllr Mohon Ali –</i></p> <p>Thank you Cllr Quigg for your question.</p> <p>The facts are that there has been no change since the last time this question was asked in the chamber.</p> <p>We are awaiting a decision from the Secretary of State and we remain hopeful of a positive outcome.</p> <p>Yes I'm confident in our plans, the catchment area and admissions criteria have never been agreed as we've not reached that stage in the process. But as I said earlier, the admissions criteria will be designed to attract and admit those for whom the opportunity will make the biggest difference – those from more deprived backgrounds, those with care experience.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Lewis Quigg –</i></p> <p><i>Q. Can the relevant cabinet member please confirm how Oldham Council was named the Most Improved Council at the 2025 by the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards, given the following:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. The failure to stop the overpayment of Councillors since 2022.</i> 	<p><i>Cllr Arooj Shah –</i></p> <p>Thank you for your question.</p> <p>No one in this chamber would suggest that everything in Oldham is perfect. I am open about our challenges and determined to keep improving this council and the services we provide every day to our residents.</p> <p>However, the Local Government Chronicle Most Improved Council award was not about claiming that every issue is fixed. It was recognition – from our peers across the local government and the broader sector – of the significant progress Oldham has made over recent years, including significant</p>

<p><i>2. Is struggling to balance the books with a £20 million black hole increasing by a further £3 million since, whereby non-essential spending has now been paused including a recruitment freeze.</i></p> <p><i>3. A 10-year-old boy ended up in hospital amid 'potentially life-threatening' neglect following a shocking 'oversight' by Oldham council, a report has found.</i></p> <p><i>Does the relevant Cabinet member believe that any one of these damning issues merits the Council slapping itself on the back when there is still in the eyes of so many much, much more to fix and do?</i></p>	<p>improvements in children's services, our fantastic town centre regeneration programme, and our commitment to improving services for all our residents. The award reflects the hard work of our staff and partners who, despite real financial pressures, continue to deliver for our residents every day.</p> <p>So yes, I fully accept that there is more to do, but we should also take some pride in how far Oldham has come.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Lewis Quigg –</i></p> <p><i>Q. Can the relevant cabinet member please confirm:</i></p> <p><i>If the Council is aware of the abandoned vehicle on Bleasdale Street which has been there for some time. It seems that it is a growing issue where vehicles are abandoned and if the relevant Director will work with myself to help make sure these vehicles are moved?</i></p>	<p><i>Cllr Elaine Taylor –</i></p> <p>Thank you for the question.</p> <p>I can confirm to the Councillor that the issue of abandoned vehicles across the Borough is growing, with a reported 1,099 incidents in 24/25 compared to 334 in 23/24.</p> <p>Officers have to ensure the vehicle is abandoned and that it fits certain criteria before taking legal action to get it removed.</p> <p>In this particular case on Bleasdale Street, I can confirm that the team received a report of an abandoned vehicle on this street on the 31st October - The officer attended on the 5th November and no vehicle matching the</p>

	description was present. Officers will continue to respond and take action where vehicles meet the criteria.
<p><i>Cllr Sandra Ball –</i></p> <p><i>Can the relevant cabinet member please confirm and explain why the two Failsworth Councillors who sit on the Planning Committee (Cllrs Hobin and Davis) were not updated regarding an appeal which was overturned by the planning inspectorate, on the previously rejected planning application regarding installing a renewable energy battery storage unit on greenbelt in Medlock Vale?</i></p> <p><i>As reported by Charlotte Hall in the Oldham Chronicle on the 9th of November 2025 "councillors rejected what they described as an 'ironic' application in May, which they believed would 'destroy greenbelt land in the name of environmental benefits.'"</i></p> <p><i>Are OMBC going to challenge the decision to build on one of the few pieces of greenbelt left in Failsworth at a Judicial Review?</i></p> <p><i>If not, why not, as this could set a precedent across the borough for other greenbelt areas.</i></p>	<p><i>Cllr Elaine Taylor –</i></p> <p>Thank you for your question, Cllr Ball.</p> <p>As was explained at the Planning Committee meeting on 5th November, planning committee members are notified of all new appeals received by the council through the Planning Appeals Updates, which are noted at every planning committee meeting. This appeal was included in those updates.</p> <p>In addition, where an application, such as the one in Failsworth, has been refused against officer recommendation, officers would normally notify the member of planning committee who had been nominated to support any appeal process when the application was refused – in this case, Cllr Hobin. Due to an oversight, this did not occur on this occasion, and the Assistant Director for Planning, Transport & Housing Delivery did apologise to Cllr Hobin for the error at the meeting on 5 November.</p> <p>Notwithstanding that, as the appeal was handled by the Planning Inspectorate through written submissions, officers would not have required any input from Cllr Hobin on this occasion, as written representations merely collate the written submission, setting out the justification and reasons for refusal.</p>

	<p>Whilst councillors may find the decision by the Planning Inspectorate “ironic”, it does align with the recommendation originally made on the application by officers to Planning Committee in April 2025. This is because national planning policy and caselaw does set a clear precedent that the development of Battery Energy Storage Systems in the Green Belt can meet the very special circumstances test for inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Such systems are supported in national energy policy for low carbon infrastructure to assist in achieving net zero, energy security and energy flexibility.</p> <p>As a result, it is not intended to challenge the Inspector's decision in the High Court, as the council would have no robust basis for such a challenge and it would be highly likely to fail.</p>
<p><i>Cllr Mark Wilkinson –</i></p> <p><i>Could the relevant cabinet member confirm if improvements are going to be made to the Higher memorial Park, in Failsworth.</i></p> <p><i>Information was passed by the Failsworth east Independent Councillors to a constituent and member of the bowling club at the park, that the Tennis Court and Bowling green was going to be subject of an overhaul.</i></p>	<p>Cllr Elaine Taylor –</p> <p>As was said last time, we are aware that a number of groups Boroughwide are developing plans to make improvements to their neighbourhoods as part of our district funding.</p> <p>However, any application coming forward will be subject to a panel hearing, which will be administered by Action Together. As no panel hearings have yet been convened or taken place - I have no information on any bids that have been submitted at this stage.</p> <p>There is no council funding available for any park projects – other than the District Funding, which I have just referenced, and which has been provided by Government.</p>

<p><i>My colleague Councillor Ball was going to ask the question at full council but time elapsed. A written reply was received as follows,</i></p> <p><i>Your question, relating to ‘Higher Memorial Park, Failsworth’ was for Councillor Taylor to answer and the response that she would have provided, if time had permitted, is copied below:</i></p> <p><i>“Thank you for your question councillor.</i></p> <p><i>The Council is aware of various ambitious plans for many of the borough’s parks and green spaces as there are many Friends Groups who are keen to improve and enhance the green spaces and facilities available for residents and communities.</i></p> <p><i>I’m not aware that there is any council funding aligned to these plans at this time, and I have the officer teams for an update on any / all discussions on emerging plans for community spaces.”</i></p>	<p>I am making the assumption that this may be a route that they are looking to pursue, as it is an open process, available to all community organisations.</p> <p>To be absolutely clear, no decisions have yet been made in relation to any of this funding, but we will, of course, share more details with elected Members in due course.</p>
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<p><i>Can the cabinet member confirm if the Councillors were correct or incorrect with the information passed to the constituent.</i></p>	
<p><i>Cllr Luke Lancaster –</i></p> <p><i>Bonfire Night took place recently, and you cannot begrudge residents some fun with fireworks. Indeed most firework displays, both private and public, are conducted with courtesy for the community.</i></p> <p><i>However, there remains too many reports of firework displays running past the late night curfew. Furthermore, firework displays seem to be increasingly held in the days around Bonfire Night. This unpredictable, prolonged activity has particularly adverse effects on pets and young children.</i></p> <p><i>Appreciating that this is a difficult issue to deal with, can the Cabinet Member please update on how Oldham Council responds to reports of inappropriate firework displays? Have lessons been learnt from last week, and can more be done in future?</i></p>	<p><i>Cllr Elaine Taylor –</i></p> <p>Thanks for your question.</p> <p>Unofficial firework displays past the 11pm cut off are illegal regardless of where they occur with the exception of Bonfire Night (where the cut off is midnight) New Years Eve, Diwali and Chinese New Year (where the cut off is 1am), so GMP remain the enforcing body in terms of the law.</p> <p>The Operation Treacle mutli-agency patrols that ran this year were out and about until 1am, on all but the last date which was Sunday the 8th November, when it finished at midnight. There was a lot of engagement and advice given, and a number of warnings were issued as a result. Fireworks were also seized.</p> <p>The team responded to reports as they came in dynamically and visited locations based on intelligence reports which had been received previously.</p> <p>If there are any particular locations where firework displays took place, we can review the intelligence to see if these were included and add these to locations to consider next year.</p>

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