

Portfolio Report

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Elaine Taylor, Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods

Housing

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

Oldham Council owns around 2,000 homes, most of which are managed on our behalf through two long-term PFI contracts. As the landlord, we are now inspected under the new national housing regulations introduced in April 2024.

The Regulator of Social Housing has now completed its inspection. The findings show that we need to strengthen how we oversee and check the work carried out by our housing management partners. The main gaps identified were:

- We do not have consistent, detailed internal reporting on how the contracts are performing.
- We need stronger checks to verify the performance information we receive from contractors.
- We need to involve tenants more in shaping and scrutinising the service.
- Different contracts are being managed in different ways, and this needs to be more consistent.

Importantly, the Regulator confirmed that safety surveys are up to date and that tenant satisfaction is good.

We will now work closely with the Regulator on a 12-month improvement plan. Some of the changes needed were already underway before the inspection, some are already being implemented, and this plan will help us complete them.

To support this work, the team responsible has now moved into the Communities Directorate so it can sit alongside our wider housing functions. We will also be increasing capacity in the team to ensure we can meet the higher level of oversight required under the new regulations.

Housing Needs

At the end of October, we recorded 555 households in temporary accommodation (TA). This is the lowest number of households in TA since December 2023. At this moment in time, we have no families placed outside of the borough, apart from those who need to be, because of their individual circumstances. Additional arrangements will be put in place to assist families in hotel provision over the Christmas period.

The Renters' Rights Act received Royal Assent on the 27th October 2025 and is a major reform of England's private rented sector - designed to give tenants greater security and protections while imposing new obligations on landlords. We expect these changes to have a positive impact on the numbers of households facing eviction and potential homelessness.

Community Safety and Cohesion

Building on the success of the summer town centres initiative, the winter action plan involves multiple initiatives that are being implemented by the Council in partnership with Greater Manchester Police and others, to ensure that those accessing the town centre during the winter period can enjoy themselves in a safe manner, whether accessing the town centre to shop, enjoy food, or visit the night time economy. The plan will focus on challenging those who engage in retail crime, violence, aggressive begging and anti-social behaviour, and we will see an increased police presence in the town centre to ensure a safe, enjoyable time for residents and those who are visiting the town centre from other areas.

As part of the longer-term work linked to Operation Vulcan, work funded by the Community Safety Partnership starts in December to the bowling green in Stoneleigh Park. The green which has been subject to serious criminal damage over a long period of time, will be secured with access controls to ensure only those using it for its intended purpose are able to gain entry.

Waste, Cleansing & Greenspace

Residents have welcomed the return of the Council's flagship neighbourhood clean-up campaign – Don't Trash Oldham. The campaign plays a crucial role in maintaining public health & safety, and environmental quality by removing litter, debris, and hazards from streets and clearing fly tipped waste from public spaces and alleyways to reduce pest infestations and enhance the appearance of local neighbourhoods.

Our teams commenced work to improve adopted alleys in Alexandra Ward on Monday 17th November, moving onto Werneth Ward and Medlock Vale. To date our crews have cleared nine tons of fly tipping and detritus.

Our crews continue to work tirelessly 7 days a week dealing with the fly tip issues which we continue to see affecting our town. To date this year, there is a forecast increase of 14% in the number of fly tip incident reports compared with the period of January to December 2024.

The service is developing plans for collection of Bulky Waste when the existing contract expires next financial year. It is designed to minimise fly-tipping, by ensuring that the service is readily accessible to as many residents as possible by balancing cost and service waiting times.

Arboriculture and Countryside:

Storm Claudia has dominated our attention since 14th November. It is turning out to be one of Oldham's most devastating storms in terms of tree loss and tree damage.

The combination of heavy rain, waterlogged soil and gale force winds have combined to make this a very damaging storm, with well over 1,000 trees being lost to date. So far, the clear-up operation has cost in excess of £50,000.

Contractors worked long into the early hours of Saturday the 15th November in terrible conditions, and since then, we have been working full-time alongside 4 arboricultural teams to clear roads and footpaths, remove trees from houses and cars, and make safe dangerous unstable standing trees.

Tree planting has subsequently been delayed by about 4-6 weeks while the same contractors are dealing with the aftermath of the storm.

Over the last 3 years we have planted in excess of 1,500 new young trees, which incidentally looks to be about the number of mature trees we stand to ultimately lose to Storm Claudia.

Recommendations: Council is requested to note the report.