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## Report to CABINET – PART A

# Economic Development and Regeneration Flexible Grant Acceptance

### Portfolio Holders:

Councillor Arooj Shah, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Building a Better Oldham

Councillor Abdul Jabbar, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Value for Money and Sustainability

**Officer Contact:** Emma Barton, Deputy Chief Executive (Place)

**Report Author:** Gail Aspinall, Capital Programme and Special Projects Manager

**23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026**

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### Reason for Decision

Cabinet Members are asked to approve and accept the Economic Development and Regeneration Flexible Grant Programme (ED&RFG) grant allocation, previously known as the Local Growth and Place Flexible Grant (LG&PFG), following confirmation of award from the Integrated Settlement Fund and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) in February 2026. The final allocation is to be confirmed however it could be up to £2,171,726.

### Executive Summary

Oldham's final allocation could be up to £2,171,726 grant from ED&RFG. The ED&RFG priority activity areas are:

- Improving public spaces to support vibrant communities
- Unlocking additional floorspace
- Enhancing cultural activity and engagement
- Driving business productivity to support local growth

Oldham's proposed activity programme is drawn from the Creating a Better Place strategy and action plan and will support a range of projects that will meet the core 3 interventions, namely:

- Accessible Oldham
    - Tommyfield Park Phase 1 – increase accessibility into and around the town centre park.
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- Town Centre Park Staff Members – facilitate the expansion of the town centre green space that has been created in the Town Centre
  - Town Centre Infrastructure and Cultural Events Programme
    - Co-design cultural events to support Oldham’s Place Marketing approach, a core element of the Cultural Strategy and will support the emerging Creative Improvement District and Night-Time Economy strategy and action plan. Creating a safe, welcoming and vibrant town centre with wayfinding and town centre wardens / ambassadors.
  - Town Centre Business Grants and Support
    - Providing financial assistance to owners and tenants. Supporting local business growth, improves the local shopping environment, and raises the town’s appeal.

## Recommendations

Cabinet Members are asked to:

- i) Approve the acceptance of an allocation up to £2,171,726 ED&RFG grant against the three interventions approved for funding by GMCA broken down as follows:
    - Accessible Oldham
      - Tommyfield Park Phase 1 – increase accessibility into and around the town centre park.
      - Town Centre Park Staff Members – facilitate the expansion of the town centre green space that has been created in the Town Centre
    - Town Centre Infrastructure and Cultural Events Programme
      - Co-design cultural events to support Oldham’s Place Marketing approach, a core element of the Cultural Strategy and will support the emerging Creative Improvement District and Night-Time Economy strategy and action plan. Creating a safe, welcoming and vibrant town centre with wayfinding and town centre wardens / ambassadors.
    - Town Centre Business Grants and Support
      - Providing financial assistance to owners and tenants. Supporting local business growth, improves the local shopping environment, and raises the town’s appeal.
  - ii) Note that as accountable body for ED&RFG, GMCA will issue a Funding Agreement in respect of the grant, which will be reviewed by the Council’s legal services.
  - iii) Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive (Place) to agree the terms of the Funding Agreement issued by GMCA in respect of the grant award in consultation with the Directors of Finance and Legal Services and approve appointments of professional teams and contract award in respect of the agreed budgets.
  - iv) Delegate authority to Director of Legal Services or their nominated representative to finalise and enter into the Funding Agreement issued by GMCA in respect of the grant award subject to the completion of any necessary due diligence on subsidy control compliance and authority to agree and complete any project change requests under the Funding Agreement.
  - v) Delegate authority to the Director of Legal Services or their nominee to formalise any necessary legal requirements including signing and/or sealing any documentation referred to and/or required to give effect to the recommendations and/or delegations in this report.
  - vi) Delegate authority to the Director of Economy or their nominated representative to agree approval of spend, works or individual grants for the Accessible Oldham projects,
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Town Centre Infrastructure and Cultural Events Programme projects and Town Centre Business Grants and Support project.

- vii) Delegate authority to the Director of Economy or their nominated representative to agree monitoring and evaluation of defined outputs and negotiations thereupon as required over the grant delivery period of 2026–2027.
- viii) Note and endorse that the internal governance and administration for the ED&RFG grant will be performed via the Creating a Better Place Programme Board (CaPB) structures.

## Economic Development and Regeneration Flexible Gant Acceptance

### 1 Background

- 1.1 As part of the Governments Integrated Settlement fund, GMCA were awarded £43.2m for the LGPFG for local investment from April 2025 to March 2026. The ED&RFG Programme will replace the LGPFG Programme.
- 1.2 GMCA are the accountable body for the ED&RFG Investment proposals. GMCA invited local authorities to submit proposals in March 2026 to ensure projects are compliant with Government guidance and will collectively meet the required outputs and outcomes as set out in the Integrated Settlement Investment Plan for the ED&RFG Investment Priorities.
- 1.3 The ED&RFG priority activity areas are:
- Improving public spaces to support vibrant communities
  - Unlocking additional floorspace
  - Enhancing cultural activity and engagement
  - Driving business productivity to support local growth
- 1.4 Oldham's final allocation could be up to £2,171,726 from ED&RFG. The proposed programme is drawn from the Creating a Better Place strategy and action plan and will support a range of projects that will meet the core 3 interventions, namely:
- Accessible Oldham
    - Tommyfield Park Phase 1 – increase accessibility into and around the town centre park.
    - Town Centre Park Staff Members – facilitate the expansion of the town centre green space that has been created in the Town Centre
  - Town Centre Infrastructure and Cultural Events Programme
    - Co-design cultural events to support Oldham's Place Marketing approach, a core element of the Cultural Strategy and will support the emerging Creative Improvement District and Night-Time Economy strategy and action plan. Creating a safe, welcoming and vibrant town centre with wayfinding and town centre wardens / ambassadors.
  - Town Centre Business Grants and Support
    - Providing financial assistance to owners and tenants. Supporting local business growth, improves the local shopping environment, and raises the town's appeal.

### 2 Current Position

- 2.1 Oldham's funding proposals will be submitted to GMCA in March 2026 after seeking the views of the Members and the Council's senior leadership.
- 2.2 GMCA will issue a Grant Funding Agreement setting out the terms of the ED&RFG Payment and Reporting requirements. The Council's legal services and finance officers will review this document.

### 3 Options/Alternatives

- 3.1 Option 1: Do nothing. Failure to accept the grant allocation of ED&RFG would reflect ~~negatively on the perception of the town and its ambitions. It would have significant~~

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implications for delivery of the project budgets and, therefore, the achievement of regeneration ambitions and objectives.

- 3.2 Option 2: Formally accept the ED&RFG allocation of up to £2,171,726 and enter into the Grant Funding Agreement as set out in this report.

#### **4 Preferred Option**

- 4.1 Option 2 is the preferred option to help ensure delivery of the projects to original timescales and budgets and, therefore, the achievement of regeneration ambitions and objectives.

#### **5 Consultation**

- 5.1 Views from Members and the Council's senior leadership will be sought before proposals are submitted to GMCA.
- 5.2 Consultation and engagement work has taken place over the few years with stakeholders, partners, Council teams and services, elected members, public sector organisations and different voices from our local communities to help clearly define regeneration ambitions, and to ensure that the projects referenced in this report align with local priorities, ideas and suggestions.
- 5.3 Specific detailed project consultation will take place at the applicable time in conjunction with standard practice for project development considerations.

#### **6 Financial Implications**

- 6.1 Details contained within Part B report.

#### **7 Legal Services Comments**

- 7.1 Details contained within Part B report.

#### **8 Equality Impact, including Implications for Children and Young People**

- 8.1 Yes (see Appendix 1)

#### **9 Key Decision**

- 9.1 Yes

#### **10 Key Decision Reference**

- 10.1 RBO-08-26

#### **11 Background Papers**

- 11.1 None

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#### **12 Appendix**

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12.1 Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment for Economic Development and Regeneration Flexible Grant