

Oldham Council – Elected Member Survey

Welcome to this survey for Oldham Council elected members. Thank you for taking the time to complete it. The reason we are asking you to contribute is because the Council needs to better understand elected members and their needs. Strengthening member–officer relationships has been identified as a priority.

The survey will provide:

- An understanding, for members and officers, of your current experiences and expectations, which we can compare with future results to show where Oldham Council is improving support for councillors.
- Evidence to inform the Council's Improvement Programme and support for members, including how the Council understands and supports councillors' roles in leadership, decision-making and robust oversight.

There are no right or wrong answers. Please be as candid as possible so improvement activity can be reflective of your needs, concerns and expectations—as well as those of officers and partners. Only on the basis of full, candid sharing will change be possible.

This survey supports ongoing cultural change work with officers and forms part of the Council's actions to stabilise and strengthen governance and member officer working relationships. The work is overseen by statutory officers, including the Monitoring Officer and involves the standards committee.

How will this information be used, and can I be identified?

Even if you do not provide your name and contact details, you may be concerned that you could be identifiable through your responses. If you wish to be wholly anonymous Individual responses can be returned in hard copy For the attention of Alex Bougatef, delivered to the JR Clynes building and you will not be identifiable.

In analysing the data, we will seek to identify themes and trends across the cohort, focusing on points of divergence and commonality rather than attributing views to groups. A short report summarising findings will be produced and made public. Initial insights may be shared with the relevant member body. At the end of the process, personal information will be removed, and an anonymised dataset provided to Oldham Council to support future comparative analysis.

About you

The first part of this survey gathers information about you and your time on the Council to help design support that best meets members' needs.

1. Your name and contact details (optional) – if you would like to discuss your answers, please provide details here.
2. What political group do you represent? (Labour / Oldham Group / Conservative / Liberal Democrat / Reform / Failsworth Independent Party / Independent / Other – please specify)
3. How old are you? (18–25 / 25–34 / 35–49 / 50–64 / 65–75 / 75+)
4. Do you consider that you have one or more of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010? (If so please detail- Optional)
5. Are you a care leaver? (i.e., were you at any point a child “looked after” by a local authority?)
6. What is your gender? (Male / female)
7. What is your ethnicity? (standard options)
8. For how long have you been an Oldham councillor? (If first elected in a by-election and/or you have had a break in service, please note below)

Under 2 years / Under 6 years / Under 10 years / Between 10 and 15 years / Between 15 and 20 years / Over 20 years

Further comments:

9. In your time as a councillor, please tick the formal roles you have held and those you hold now.

Leader / Deputy Leader / Cabinet Member / Cabinet Support Member / Scrutiny Chair / Planning or Licensing Chair / Standards Chair / Audit Chair / District/Area Committee Chair / Member of a scrutiny committee / Nominee or appointee to an outside body / Member Champion / Other (specify)

10. In respect of these roles, do you consider that you get the support you need to carry them out?

11. To what extent are you confident that you understand what is required of you in your current role(s)?

Very confident / Somewhat confident / Not very confident / Not at all confident

Your activities and time commitment

What kind of activities do you carry out as a councillor, and roughly how long each week do you spend on them? (Please estimate hours for each)

- Talking to senior officers about decision-making, service performance, etc.
- Group business (meetings/discussion within your political group)
- Party business (campaigning, doorknocking, leafletting, party meetings)
- Ward business (resident casework; community issues; local planning/licensing engagement)
- Executive/Cabinet business (including meetings and preparation)
- Scrutiny business (committee attendance, evidence giving, preparation)
- Regulatory meetings (planning and licensing; including preparation time)
- Quasi-judicial meetings (exclusion appeals and other panels)
- Other formal meetings (e.g., Full Council)
- Outside bodies (e.g., council-nominated roles; GMCA/Police & Crime Panel)
- Civic/ceremonial business
- Other activities (please specify)

12. Do you think that the amount of time you devote to council business has increased, decreased or stayed about the same in the past five years (or since you were first elected)?

Increased / Decreased / Stayed about the same

Further information:

Non-council commitments

13. How much time a week do you spend on the following (to understand non-council pressures)?

Caring responsibilities; Paid work responsibilities; Unpaid work/volunteering (please estimate hours)

Wellbeing and safety

14. To what extent does your work on the council impact your overall sense of wellbeing?

Very positively / Positively / Neither positively nor negatively / Negatively / Very negatively

15. Have you experienced harassment or victimisation connected to your role as a councillor? (personal experience)

Provide responses across sources: From other members / From officers / From the public / From someone else; and for each indicate: Experiencing now / Experienced in the past / Both past and present / Never

16. To what extent are you concerned that your role as an elected member puts you at greater risk of harassment and/or victimisation than you otherwise would be?

Very concerned / Quite concerned / Not especially concerned / Not concerned at all

Member–officer relations

17. How would you describe your overall working relationship with officers?

Very positive / Mostly positive / Mixed / Mostly difficult / Very difficult

Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree):

- ☐ I can easily access the officer support I need.
- ☐ Officers communicate with me promptly and professionally.
- ☐ Officers understand the role of elected members.
- ☐ Members understand officers' roles, responsibilities and limits.
- ☐ There is mutual trust between members and officers.
- ☐ Escalation routes are clear when something goes wrong.
- ☐ Officers are impartial, consistent and politically neutral.
- ☐ Member behaviour towards officers is generally respectful.
- ☐ Officer behaviour towards members is generally respectful.
- ☐ Briefings and reports are clear, timely and useful.
- ☐ Training and guidance on member–officer working is effective.

About the Council and your work on it

Please consider the following statements, and the extent to which you agree with them (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree):

- ☐ Governance is about having clear rules and sticking to them.
- ☐ I understand the Council's key rules for its formal business, including decision-making (as set out in the Constitution).
- ☐ It's important for councillors to have a direct line to officers on the front line.
- ☐ Councillors face almost impossible decisions about what to cut to set a balanced budget.
- ☐ When I have a concern about how something is being done (member or officer), I have a safe way to voice/escalate my concerns.
- ☐ The allowances I receive are sufficient to support me to be an effective councillor.
- ☐ When allocating resources, the Council needs to be better at deciding what is and isn't a priority.
- ☐ The Council understands the needs of local people.
- ☐ The Council is good at working with local people.
- ☐ I work well with members of my own party.
- ☐ I work well with members of other parties.
- ☐ I work well with officers.
- ☐ I worry that the work I do on the Council doesn't make a positive difference to local people.
- ☐ I feel able to scrutinise and oversee the work of Cabinet, Commissioners/assurance partners and senior officers.
- ☐ I feel overwhelmed with the responsibility and volume of work expected of me.
- ☐ The Council communicates with me, on matters relevant to my role, in a way I can understand.
- ☐ I feel informed about the steps the Council is taking to improve.
- ☐ I understand the role I can personally play in helping the Council to improve.
- ☐ Having the right structures, systems and processes in place leads to better attitudes, relationships and behaviours.

- ☐ I have the personal support I need to carry out my Council roles properly.
- ☐ I have the skills I need to carry out my Council roles properly.

Understanding and support needs

How well do you think you understand the following issues? (1 = do not understand at all; 5 = understand extremely well)

- ☐ How the Council makes decisions.
- ☐ How the Council enters into partnership with other bodies (including GMCA).
- ☐ How the Council enters into major contracts.
- ☐ How the Council monitors major contracts.
- ☐ How the Council understands, reviews and mitigates risk.
- ☐ How the Council plans and manages its finances.
- ☐ How the Council partners with other organisations.
- ☐ How the Council gathers and uses the views of local people.
- ☐ The role that external assurance/Improvement and Assurance Board activity plays in Oldham's improvement.
- ☐ The steps being taken to bring about that improvement.

Where could your skills benefit from improvement and development?

Tick all that apply.

Knowledge-based skills:

- ☐ Council knowledge – meetings, Councillor Code of Conduct, Constitution and committee roles, performance data, scrutiny reviews, etc.
- ☐ Understanding the role of officers – including key statutory roles (Monitoring Officer, s151 Officer, DCS, DASS).
- ☐ Subject knowledge – e.g., housing, education, planning system.
- ☐ System knowledge – “how things work here” and how to get things done.
- ☐ Understanding council finances – commercial context, budget mechanics, external funding.

- Knowing the local area you represent – ward data, surgeries, forums, engagement with community groups.
- Keeping up to date – horizon-scanning and awareness of future events.

Personal / practical skills:

- Personal resilience (e.g., stress management).
- Dealing with bullying and harassment.
- Personal safety (including de-escalation).
- Active listening.
- Communication skills (public speaking, media, digital).
- Leading/supporting diverse communities; awareness of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Working with officers.
- Making use of information, data and analysis.
- Meeting skills (including digital meeting skills and chairing).
- Being organised and tracking open issues.
- Time management and casework management.
- Prioritisation – focusing on activities with greatest impact.
- Taking advantage of learning and development opportunities, mentoring and peer support.

Final comments

18. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience as an Oldham councillor, or how the Council can better support you?