Report to the Chief Executive

Sustainable Rainwater Management donation

Officer Contact: Emma Barton – Deputy Chief Executive - Place

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30th Nov 2026

Reason for Decision
The report seeks approval to accept a donation of £360,100 (split into two milestone payments of £200,000 & £160,100) from United Utilities Plc's Sustainable Rainwater Fund and for the Council to enter into a Donation Agreement to receive the funding. Signing of the donation agreement and site mobilisation to use as a contribution to the construction and long-term maintenance costs of the sustainable urban drainage and soft landscaping infrastructure at George Square.

Recommendations
1. Option 1 is to accept the donation of £360,100 from United Utilities Plc's Sustainable Rainwater Management Programme recognising it as a contribution to the construction and on-going maintenance of the sustainable urban drainage and soft landscaping aspects of the George Square scheme.
2. Option 2 is not to accept the donation of £360,100 and forgo the additional funding contribution to the construction and future maintenance costs of the scheme.

Pre-Decision Scrutiny Meeting **19th Nov 2026**
Leaders' Consultative Session **30th Nov 2026**

Sustainable Rainwater Management donation

1 Background

1.1 In 2023-25 Oldham Council collaborated with United Utilities Plc on delivering five sustainable rainwater management projects in Oldham Town Centre through the United Utilities Green Recovery Fund.

The Council received £2.6m of funding used in the construction of sustainable urban drainage solutions (SUDS) in Oldham Town Centre supplementing capital highway improvement projects. The infrastructure is designed to reduce, eliminate and/or manage rainwater to United Utilities' combined sewerage system from Council land and/or adopted highway catchment areas.

Following the successes of the Green Recovery programme, United Utilities Plc have actively fortified the partnership working relationship with Oldham Council's Highways & Engineering Team and Lead Local Flood Alleviation Officer (LLFA) in the pursuit of identifying future projects that are eligible for similar funding through the Advanced WINEP Rainwater Management Programme.

This iteration of funding focuses on unlocking rainwater management solutions in Oldham's storm overflow catchment areas which go beyond their requirements set out in their 2025 – 30 environmental programme.

The programme drives £281m of investment (£231m through UUW and £50m leveraged from Partners) for delivering wider environmental outcomes by removing conventional regulatory barriers of timeframes, geography and penalties to allow Oldham Council to flexibly co-plan and co-deliver with United Utilities as partners.

The donation offer is a precursor to an emerging partnership agreement that offers the Council access to £50m of the £281m budget through the Sustainable Rainwater Programme. Dialogue continues with Key Internal Stakeholders from both Parties with the aim of amicably agreeing a set of separate legal agreements tailored to specific circumstance and infrastructure on the assumption that it leads to significant investment in Oldham.

The donation offer is a standalone opportunity in the 2026/27 fiscal year and is a contribution to a scheme that provides benefits to the United Utilities Plc owned combined sewer asset by removing and managing surface water run-off effectively.

The donation has been the subject of an application process led by the Highways & Engineering Team in collaboration with United Utilities that demonstrates the removal and therefore unnecessary transportation and treatment of surface water at source that that in turn increases capacity to accommodate additional discharging of treatable effluent synonymous with new developments i.e. housing, businesses and buildings.

The mutually beneficial infrastructure installed at George Square significantly contributes to both Parties and in Oldham Council's case the wider Creating a Better Place programme i.e. development.

Oldham's inaugural Sustainable Rainwater Management scheme is the first contribution to a much larger initiative, as United Utilities seek to reduce the number of combined sewer overflow spillages and the negative impact they have on both local and regional environments and rivers.

The donation can be considered as an enabler for the Council to begin implementing policies outlined in Oldham's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Oldham and the Oldham Green New Deal Strategy through Third Party funding.

2 Current Position

2.1 UU have sent OMBC a letter of success for the total donation of £360,100

3 Options/Alternatives

3.1 Option 1 is to accept the donation of £360,100 from United Utilities Plc's Sustainable Rainwater Management Programme recognising it as a contribution to the construction and on-going maintenance of the sustainable urban drainage and soft landscaping aspects of the George Square scheme

Option 2 is not to accept the donation of £360,100 and forgo the additional funding contribution to the construction and future maintenance costs of the scheme.

4 Preferred Option

4.1 Option 1

5 Consultation

5.1 Finance & Legal have been consulted and feed is stated below.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 The Council has been awarded £360.100 from United Utilities, which is to be used as a contribution to the construction and long-term maintenance costs of the sustainable urban drainage and soft landscaping infrastructure at George Square. This report outlines the acceptance of the donation.

The preferred option is to accept the donation of £360,100. This will be initially treated as revenue grant.

Further work is required to determine the cost of the ongoing maintenance of the sustainable urban drainage and soft landscaping aspects of the George Square scheme.

A proportion of this donation is expected to be utilised within the Capital Programme.

Any proportion of the grant to be spent on capital works will be transferred to the Capital Programme as a Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO).

If capital projects are identified for funding, a report will be required to set out the proposed works to ensure they meet the criteria to be capitalised

This donation will be closely monitored to ensure compliance with the donation agreement and that all expenditure is maintained within the allocation.

(John Edisbury/Leonnie Wharton-Brown)

7 **Legal Implications**

7.1 Legal Services have reviewed the Donation Agreement and are satisfied that the terms agreed with United Utilities are acceptable. The Agreement provides for the donation funding to be paid in instalments linked to the achievement of specified project milestones, with the funding being released in separate stages as those milestones are met.

Any works commissioned using the donated funding must comply with the Procurement Act procurement rules.

Pamela Nsofor (Solicitor)

8. **Procurement Implications**

8.1 N/A

9 **Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People**

9.1 N/A

Please do not embed the assessment here. Attach it separately as an appendix.

10 **Key Decision**

10.1 Yes

11 **Key Decision Reference**

11.1 KDD reference number is: KDD-26-34

12 **Appendices & Background Papers**

12.1 Donation Agreement - Works - George Square-Oldham Council-August 2026
12.2 SWF letter of success - George Square

Please do not embed the appendices here. Attach separately.

Approved by the Chief Executive following consultation with the political group leaders who were in attendance as follows:- Councillors:

Decision made under the authorisation contained in Section 9C (5) Delegations of Specific Officers of Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) and Section 3.6 of Part 4 (Executive Procedure Rules) of the Council Constitution for the Chief Executive to take emergency decisions in respect of the Council's executive functions.
Signed: Shelley Kipling, Chief Executive Dated:
Date of Leaders' Consultative meeting:
Summary of feedback from the political group leaders