Reason for Decision
The purpose of the report is to ask Cabinet to receive the final report from the Oldham Education and Skills Commission and to give approval for £1m to be invested towards the implementation of the key recommendations.

Executive Summary
There has been a history of low educational standards in Oldham for too long. Significant investment has been made in the facilities young people are taught in and with the exception of, Royton & Crompton, Hathershaw and the current Saddleworth school, the secondary estate is one which most towns would envy.

The quality of education in many schools across primary and secondary has improved in pockets and there are some good examples of schools working well. There is no doubt however that there is a great deal to do.

In 2014, the Leader of the Council invited Baroness Estelle Morris to lead a Commission of education and skills experts to consider the future direction of education in Oldham. The attached report contains 19 key recommendations which have emerged from the Commission’s extensive research, investigation of best practice in Oldham and elsewhere and from the many contributions made by the stakeholders who have been engaged in the Commission’s work. Importantly, this included visiting schools and gathering the views of some of our children and young people. A summary of the recommendations is at Appendix 1.

It is important to read the full report in order to understand the full extent of the report’s recommendations. However, all of the recommendations sit within the context of the
formation of a **self-improving education system** which recognises that schools are best placed to support each other in terms of achieving the improvement we all want for the education and attainment of our children and young people. At the moment, there is insufficient capacity across the system in Oldham to be able to quickly and flexibly support schools that need help so the Commission has suggested the need for a new education partner to be commissioned to provide this capacity.

The Council recognises that in order to begin implementation which is in the spirit of the Commission’s report, it is important that schools are enabled to take a lead in identifying the type of model that would work most effectively in Oldham. The Council will therefore work side by side with Oldham schools to facilitate the design of the new model for a self-improving education framework. Importantly, the Commission suggests that all members of the self-improving system should take responsibility not just for the education of the learners within their own establishment, but should also take on a joint responsibility for the education of all Oldham children and young people. This is considered by the Commission to be a fundamental principle if the new system is to operate effectively.

Furthermore, the Council will assign £1m to facilitate the changes required to implement the recommendations in the report. This funding will be split over 4 financial years with £100,000 assigned with immediate effect to enable schools and the Council to begin working towards the introduction of the new model for the start of the 2016/17 academic year in September. The Director of Education and Early Years will agree appropriate governance of the spend with the Cabinet Member together with the schools. This will include the identification of an appropriate partnership body which should include the Cabinet Member for Education and the Director of Education and Early Years, to manage the implementation phase and the development of an action plan agreed by the Council which will be monitored quarterly.

The Commission has made recommendations that recognise the importance of providing a child with a great start in their early years so that they arrive at school on their first day **school ready**. Ensuring that children and young people also get a wide range of experience during their education that helps them to be **work ready and life ready** is recognised as equally essential if they are to reach their full potential in helping Oldham’s economy to grow and to play their full part in society. The Commission has therefore identified the need for further reviews of vocational education, higher skills and worklessness including ensuring that there are much clearer pathways and advice and guidance for our young people to help their choices and transition from education into higher and further education and into vocational training and into employment. This work will need to take the emerging Post 16 Area Wide Review findings into account.

The Commission has also suggested that Oldham should embark on a campaign making **education everyone’s business** and has provided a series of recommendations that explain the expectations of and what can be expected by the Oldham learner, parent, teacher, education leader and governor. The campaign should also mobilise employers and non- education partners to do their bit to support an aspirational and high achieving education system.

It is important to note that some of the Commission’s recommendations are already being implemented. There have also been a number of notable improvements in Oldham’s education system with six schools and the Council’s Lifelong Learning Service judged outstanding in the past twelve months and an increase in the number judged at least good.
Recommendations Cabinet is recommended to welcome the Oldham Education and Skills Commission report and to:-

- allocate £1m towards the implementation of the recommendations of the report over 4 financial years;
- allocate £250,000 with immediate effect subject to appropriate governance being established; and
- Ask the Director of Enterprise and Skills to work with partners to commission the additional reviews recommended by the Commission in respect of vocational education, improving higher skills and addressing worklessness.
Oldham Education and Skills Commission Final Report and Future Implementation

1 Background
1.1 In 2014, the Leader of the Council invited Baroness Estelle Morris to lead a Commission of education and skills experts to look into the future of education in Oldham. A high performing education system and – critically – successful schools underpins all our ambitions for Oldham as a vibrant and successful place for people to live and work. It is pivotal to our plans for future economic redevelopment, regeneration, housing, health and wellbeing and community cohesion.

1.2 The Commission has conducted an extensive series of meetings, interviews, visits and engagement with a variety of stakeholders, including children and young people in order to understand the current educational position and to identify key recommendations that can build a high performing education system. These have been further informed by research and analysis and understanding of best practice from both within and outside Oldham.

2 Current Position
2.1 Attached is the final report of the Commission which identifies a new vision for education in Oldham including 19 specific recommendations. The work of the Commission is founded on a number of important guiding principles which are as follows:-

1. Education is a powerful force for change and the future prosperity of Oldham and its citizens; depends in part, on the quality of its education system.

2. All children and young people should develop a life-long love of learning.

3. A good education should prepare people for study, for work and for life. The curriculum should meet the needs of all young people and inspire and stretch all learners. It should build links with the economic regeneration of the town.

4. People must be supported to gain the qualifications they need and that give them the chance to progress

5. Every child is of equal worth. Oldham schools and colleges want the best for their own pupils and students but accept a wider collective responsibility for all children and young people in the town.

6. Schools and colleges need both to be independent and interdependent. They need the freedom to lead but they make most progress when they learn from and challenge each other.

7. The education system must build strong and effective partnerships with parents and carers.

8. Excellent teaching and school leadership are essential for success and investing in good professional development should be a priority.
9. Schools and colleges should be supported by the wider community – employers, sports and cultural organisation civic leaders and local citizens.

10. Oldham must build on the strengths it has and celebrate its success. It must continually look outwards for new ideas and good practice and have the confidence to compare itself with the best.

11. Oldham’s education system must be underpinned by high expectations, mutual challenge and high quality support.

2.2 The 19 recommendations are made within the context of a vision of a self-improving education system. This is based upon the belief that the best support to enable school improvement comes from the schools themselves. However, although there is some best practice and other support that could be exchanged between Oldham schools, the Commission recognises that our schools lack the capacity to play an active role in such a system and that this also prevents Oldham from looking outwards for its best practice and support.

2.3 The report therefore recommends that a new education partner is commissioned to provide that additional capacity and to become part of a new model of partnership where the Council and Oldham schools operate side by side to lead educational improvement. This new model of self-improving education will then form the basis of a system where all schools take joint responsibility for the education of each child and young person in Oldham. The design of this system will therefore need to be led by schools and facilitated by the Council.

2.4 The report recommends a focus upon supporting children and young people to be school ready, life ready and work ready. Therefore the new model of partnership will also need to ensure that it has firm links and engagement with early years provision and the provision of further and higher education and vocational skills provision to ensure that the choices and pathways to work are made clearer.

2.5 The Commission has recommended two overall targets for the new partnership model to focus upon so that success can be measured and monitored:-

- All national performance indicators to be at the national average or beyond by 2020
- All Oldham education providers to be judged as good or better by OFSTED by 2020

2.6 The Commission recognises that there will need to be a series of other indicators of success that support the achievement of the above targets and the effective performance monitoring of its 19 recommendations and invites Oldham to develop measures in relation to:-

- Achievement in the Early Years and Foundation Stage
- Phonics and Key Stage 1
- Secondary phase progress and achievement
- Key Stage 5 attainment for vocational qualifications
- Permanent exclusions
- Higher skills
2.7 In addition, targets should be set to close the gaps for the following under-performing groups:—

- Looked After Children at key Stage 4
- Higher ability children achieving higher grades
- Children eligible for the Pupil Premium and free school meals
- Children from ethnic minority groups especially Asian and mixed groups
- Boys as compared to girls
- Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

2.8 The Commission has identified a need to run a campaign that makes education everyone’s business. This is suggested as a measure to galvanise support and focus on developing a high performing education system because there are a wide range of partners and organisations that can play an active role, such as employers and non-education partners. In support of this under the description of “The Oldham Offer” the report suggests what the Oldham learner, parent / carer, teacher, education leader and governor can expect of the Oldham system and, importantly, also what is expected of them.

2.9 There is a need for further review to ensure that education is better aligned to the economy and the Commission has advised of the need to have an independent commissioned review of vocational education in Oldham, including pre and post 16 routes and pathways. This recommendation has to some extent been over taken by the inception of the Post 16 Area Wide Review across Greater Manchester. This review commenced after the work of the commission had concluded. The review will run until potentially Autumn 2016. Early indications are that no change is not an option; however a degree of local determination is to be encouraged. This review is limited in its scope as it only embraces General Further Education Colleges and 6th Form colleges. School Sixth Forms and other post 16 providers are not included in the review. There will be a need to re-engage wider provider network during the implementation phase of the OESC recommendations to ensure that there is good alignment between the findings of the review and the OESC recommendations to ensure that more Oldham residents to gain higher skills and for a review and removal of barriers to enable a reduction in worklessness.

2.10 Baroness Morris has committed to return to Oldham in the Autumn of 2017 to review what progress has been made in the implementation of the report.

2.11 In respect of implementation, the Council will need to work alongside schools’ representatives and the following outline steps are being discussed:—

- Full dissemination of the report to Oldham schools and colleges, early years providers and other key partners
- A facilitated discussion with schools, colleges and other partners in order to agree the fundamental principles of a self-improving education system
- Identification of existing good practice and partnership mechanisms that the new system can be built upon
- The design of the Oldham model
- Identification of recommendations that can be implemented in parallel with the design of the new model
- The agreement of the model by June/July 2016 so that full implementation can begin at the start of the 2016/17 academic year in September
2.12 It is important to note that improvements in the education system have been taking place during the life of the Commission. Indeed, many of the recommendations in the report are already being implemented, with further development stimulated by the evidence gathering and involvement of various stakeholders by the Commission. In addition, there are important improvements, as illustrated by inspection results in the past twelve months, in which:-

- Three further schools have been judged outstanding (Corpus Christi, St Thomas Moorside, and The Radclyffe)
- Nine schools moved up by one or more grades, while only one moved down
- A total of seven schools were judged outstanding, with only two judged less than good. (Schools judged outstanding in the last 12 months were Coppice, Corpus Christi, Glodwick, Kingfisher, New Bridge, Radclyffe and St Thomas Moorside)
- The Council's Lifelong Learning Service retained its SFA rating of Outstanding at a time where most community and adult learning services are being downgraded.

2.13 The Leader has already pledged £1m to enable the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations. In order to achieve the above outline steps, funding will be required immediately to enable the process to be effectively facilitated. It is suggested that £250,000 be allocated with immediate effect in 2015/16 and that £250k be allocated in each of the years 2016/17; 2017/18 and 2018/19.

2.14 Appropriate governance will need to be agreed that ensures that the schools and the Council remain accountable for this funding. It is suggested that the Director of Education and Early Years takes the lead in discussing this and agreeing a form of governance with schools. The governance should satisfy the following principles:-

- An appropriate partnership body (existing or to be formed) will be required to lead on the implementation of the OESC report
- The partnership body must include the Cabinet Member for Education and the Director of Education and Early Years as members in addition to representatives from the school community who have been given a mandate from the schools to lead the process
- The development of a costed action plan with milestones and targets that is approved by the Cabinet Member for Education
- Quarterly monitoring of the action plan including financial monitoring of spend

3 Options/Alternatives
3.1 Do nothing – not accept the report or the recommendations. This is not considered an acceptable way forward as this report contains sound recommendations, many of which are already being implemented.

3.2 Accept the report and not provide any additional funding for its implementation The report recommends a major change across the entire education system in Oldham. Without funding to aid that transition it will take far longer to achieve or may lose momentum altogether and fail to take place.

3.3 Accept the report and provide funding for its implementation
This will enable the provision of the additional capacity required to support Oldham schools to work with the Council to design, agree and introduce the self-improving system and will also enable the implementation of some of the recommendations that can be achieved alongside the development of the new model.

4  Preferred Option
4.1 Accept the report and provide funding for its implementation

5  Consultation
5.1 The Commission consulted extensively with a wide range of stakeholders including regular engagement with Oldham schools via conferences and schools visits. The Commission ran a Grow Campaign which used a dedicated website to enable the public to make comments and engaged children and young people via vox pops and other activities to secure their aspirations for the future. Questionnaires were also used to consult with Head Teachers, Teachers and Governors.

6  Financial Implications
6.1 The Council is currently holding a Learning and Attainment earmarked reserve of £1m that can be utilised to finance the costs associated with the implementation of the Oldham Education and Skills Commission over the 4 financial years from 2015/16 to 2018/19, with £250k to be allocated each year.

6.2 The total costs and commitments incurred in relation to the implementation of the Education and Skills Commission currently stand at £70k in 2015/16.

6.3 The governance arrangements agreed between the Director of Education and Early Years and the Cabinet Member and schools will need to ensure that the costs of the implementation of the Education and Skills Commission are met from within the available allocation as the proposals are developed.

6.4 Once implemented the Council will need to consider if there are any ongoing revenue or capital requirements and ensure that they are included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Strategy as appropriate. (James Postle)

7  Legal Services Comments
7.1 No legal comments (Paul Entwistle)

8  Co-operative Agenda
8.1 The Commission has drafted its recommendations in a way that reflects the co-operative agenda. See 2.6

9  Human Resources Comments
9.1 None

10  Risk Assessments
10.1 N/A

11  IT Implications
11.1 None

12  Property Implications
12.1 The Commission’s report includes recommendations for the establishment of Free Schools to provide additional capacity for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and for alternative provision to tackle behaviour and exclusions. These will be considered as part of the Council’s Capital Strategy for Education.

13 Procurement Implications
13.1 None

14 Environmental and Health & Safety Implications
14.1 None

15 Equality, community cohesion and crime implications
15.1 The Commission’s report has paid full attention to the issues of equality in education and has made recommendations relating to specific under-performing groups and also regarding international new arrivals.

16 Equality Impact Assessment Completed?
16.1 N/A

17 Key Decision
17.1 Yes

18 Key Decision Reference
18.1 Agreed under Rule 16 of the Constitution

19 Background Papers
19.1 None

20 Appendices

Appendix 1: The Commission’s Recommendations - summary