Reason for Decision

The purpose of the report is to seek formal approval for the receipt of section 31 grant funding to resource the Opportunity Area programme, to agree that the grant payments will be ring-fenced locally to the Opportunity Area Programme and to note and endorse the recommended spending priorities identified in the Opportunity Area Plan.

Authorisation is also sought to delegate authority to agree all spending decisions related to the Opportunity Areas programme to the Director of Education and Early Years, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education, noting the role of the Opportunity Area Partnership Board in this process.

To give authority for the Director of Education and Early Years, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education to authorise the first major investment of the Opportunity Area programme, a scaling up of the already established “Making it Real” programme.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- The attached report be approved by members noting and endorsing the spending priorities, and targets identified in the Opportunity Area Plan and outlined below.
• Authority to make all spending decisions relating to the Opportunity Area (including key decisions) be delegated to the Director of Education and Early Years, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education
• Authority to the Director of Education and Early years to award contracts stemming from a compliant procurement process and authority to the Director of Legal Services to sign/seal such contracts and any necessary incidental and/or ancillary documents.
• Formal update reports be provided quarterly to the Cabinet Member for Education and that an annual report on progress and spending be provided to Cabinet and the Department of Education confirming the activity has taken place or has been funded.
Oldham Opportunity Area

1 What are Opportunity Areas?

1.1 Oldham is one of twelve Opportunity Areas that are receiving a share of £72 million to boost opportunities for young people in these communities. The Opportunity Area programme is a key part of the Government’s priority of boosting social mobility.

1.2 Oldham’s share of this investment is likely to be in excess of £6m.

1.3 As an Opportunity Area, Oldham will also receive a share of a further £22 million through a new Essential Life Skills programme. This funding (allocated proportionate to school age population in each area) will be targeted toward helping disadvantaged young people to develop life skills such as resilience, emotional wellbeing and employability.

1.4 Oldham’s share of this investment is likely to be in excess of £2.5m.

1.5 In addition, Oldham will receive support from national partners, for example The Careers and Enterprise Company, and be prioritised for other government initiatives. We estimate total investment in Oldham via the Opportunity Area to be around £10m over the next three years.

2 Why is Oldham an Opportunity Area?

2.1 The purpose of Opportunity Areas is improving social mobility; using education as a key driver to achieve this. Therefore the Social Mobility Commission’s Social Mobility Index was used as the starting point to identify these areas. The 12 areas selected were all in the group of Local Authority’s with the greatest challenges and fewest opportunities.

2.2 Although, Oldham was amongst the areas identified as most challenged (294/324) it has also been identified for Opportunity Area investment, as it has been recognised as already having built the necessary momentum and capacity for improvement.

3 The Opportunity Area Partnership Board

3.1 The Oldham Opportunity Area partnership board brings together local school and council leaders, businesses and community organisations with an understanding of the area and a commitment to making Oldham a better place to learn and achieve.

3.2 Decisions about what investments will need to made based upon the priorities and activities outlined in the plan and will be determined by the Partnership Board in consultations with key stakeholders. The Boards role is to work with schools, early years and post-16 education providers, employers, young people and parents and carers, to:

- Developing the Opportunity Areas Plans
• Determine spending priorities, ensuring they are evidence based and represent value for money
• Ensure plans are delivered in a robust and effective way

3.3 The Board’s membership is as follows:
• James Kempton - Independent Chair - senior non-executive director of Ofsted, former Chief Operating Officer of the Chartered College of Teaching and leader of Islington Council.
• Helen Lockwood: Executive Director, Oldham Council,
• Jayne Clarke: Executive Principal of Pinnacle Learning Trust (multi-academy trust)
• Antony Hughes: CEO of the Harmony Academy Trust,
• Craig Dean: CEO of Web Applications UK and trustee of Oasis Community Learning,
• Clare Hutchinson: Opportunity Areas Lead - Careers and Enterprise Company,
• Dr Cathy Hamer: Lead for the North West Regional SEND network,
• Dr Joanne Pearson: Research Lead for the Oldham Research School,
• Nicola McLeod: 14 to 19 education and skills Lead GM Combined Authority,
• Raz Mohammed: Assistant Chief Executive at Mahdlo Youth Zone.

The meetings are also attended by the Regional Schools Commissioner for Lancashire and West Yorkshire and by officials from the Department for Education.

4. The Oldham Plan

4.1.1 The first six Opportunity Area plans, including the Oldham plan were launched on Monday 09 October 2017. Justine Greening, Secretary of State for Education launched the plans in Oldham at North Chadderton School. Oldham’s plan, sets out a series of ambitions to support parents to improve early literacy at home; build high performance across the school system; and boost support for mental health.

4.1.2 The Oldham plan identifies three priorities for action over the next three years and subsequent targets for improvement. The plan also provides the detail about what will be done this year and what investments will be made. Further detail about the priorities and commitments for this year are included below:

Priority One: Ensuring all children are school ready by the age of five

When we met school leaders at Oldham’s 2017 Headteacher conference, they strongly encouraged us to prioritise early intervention through the Opportunity Area. Headteachers talked about the challenge teachers face in introducing formal learning to children who have not reached a ‘good level of development’ through early years education. For this reason the first significant investment in Oldham will be targeted towards tackling the gap that exists in the early years, helping young children start school ready for formal learning. This year we are committed to:
• Rolling out ‘Making it REAL’ in at least 30 nursery settings and Children’s
   Centres (through ‘Right Start’) across the eight highest need wards in Oldham.
   This is our first significant investment and will support, directly and indirectly,
   more than 950 children.
• Developing in partnership, with local and national partners a ‘whole-area’
   strategy for improving children’s speech, language and communication.
• Harnessing support from ICAN, the children’s communication charity, to
   support Oldham in improving children’s language skills.
• Running an early education conference in Oldham, in 2018, with a focus on
   literacy and parental/carers’ involvement and celebrating local practice.

Priority Two: Raising attainment for all, and raising it fastest for
   disadvantaged pupils

The plan will give school leaders and teachers the tools to set every school in
Oldham on the path to becoming good or outstanding school, a target set by
Oldham’s Education Partnership, who will continue to be the key partner driving
improvement across Oldham’s school system. *This year we are committed to:*

• Providing fully funded access for 150 school leaders to NPQ in middle
  leadership, senior leadership, headship and executive leadership.
• Rolling out; a 2 year training and support programme from TeachFirst, for senior
  leadership teams and 12 months of coaching, training and support for leaders in
  primary schools.
• Developing and delivering; ‘whole-school’ phonics training and development
  package, from Ruth Miskin Training and a two-year package of support to
  improve the quality of teaching, and inspire pupils to get involved in science,
  technology, engineering and maths, from ‘STEM Learning’ and the Institute of
  Physics.

Priority Three: All children and young people to be ready for life, learning
   and work

In shaping this plan, we have spoken to young people, Headteachers and college
leaders, health and support workers and employers. The same concerns have
been put forward: we need to understand young people’s lives better, be aware of
the factors that limit their resilience. Of the factors that hold back young people,
the concern they raised most often was the increasing impact of poor mental
health and wellbeing on learning. *This year we are committed to:*

• Boosting the capacity of those supporting schools to; complete mental health
  impact and needs assessments and baseline data for Oldham schools by end
  2018; and support schools to develop mental health plans, and work to embed
  the whole school and college mental health framework by the end of 2018
• Offering needs based support to schools and colleges between 2017 and 2019
  to allow them to source additional mental health support.
• Training at least one staff member in every school to deliver robust, classroom
  based programmes to promote resilience and mental health.

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1 As it is included in detail in the Oldham Plan - commissioning “Making it Real” is therefore an expectation of
the monies received. The value of this commission is likely to be in excess of £700k over three years.
Making a significant investment in the Oldham Pledge

As well detail about what will be delivered in support of these priorities the plan also identifies the support available to Oldham from national organisations, including The Careers Enterprise Company, National Citizen Service and the Education Endowment Foundation. The value of this investment is estimated to be c.£1m. A copy of the plan is included at Appendix A to this report.

5. How will the Opportunity Area Programme complement work already underway?

5.1 The Opportunity Area plan recognizes that “The scale of the challenge in Oldham is matched by the determination of its education leaders, teachers, employers and the council to making Oldham a better place to grow up, learn and work.” (OA Plan p.16)

5.2 The programme is a partnership, between Oldham Council, the Oldham Education Partnership and the Partnership Board. We will harness the momentum and capacity which was generated by the Oldham Education and Skills Commission. The Oldham Education Partnership, will continue to be the key partner driving improvement across Oldham’s school system.

5.3 The first place we will look to for answers is Oldham. We will scale up investments in existing good practice wherever possible. We will recognise, celebrate and invest in the most effective individuals, organisations and partnerships in Oldham, so that they can, in turn, help others to improve.

6 How will Oldham receive this investment?

6.1 The Department for Education (DfE) have confirmed, via a Grant Determination Letter received by the Council on 10 October 2017, they will devolve funding as a “Grant under a Section 31 non-ring fenced transfer (Local Government Finance Act 2003).” Furthermore they confirmed that their “expectation is that the Oldham Council will use the funds to support the aims of the Opportunity Areas programme.”

6.2 This financial year, we expect at least two non-ring-fenced grants to be paid. The first we have already received in October (£500k) and a second in January 2018.

6.3 A copy of the Grant Determination Letter is attached at Appendix B to this report.

6.4 Officers have also held initial discussions with DfE officials about Essential Life Skills funding and have confirmed with them that this funding will be provided in the same way. We anticipate that we will account for the funding internally as part of the Opportunity Area budget, but expect to report spending to the DfE separately to support their monitoring arrangements.

7. Investments and Procurement

7.1 As outlined by the DfE in their grant determination letter. Funding is provided to the LA to:
implement the recommendations of the Opportunity Areas delivery plans to improve the social mobility outcomes of children and young people across all life stages;
offer targeted support and fund activities that address social mobility barriers locally across all life stages;
coordinate through the OA partnership board regional activities with the intention of improving system capacity in school leadership, teacher quality, curriculum programmes and school clubs;
support activities that seek to improve personal development, raise aspirations, provide opportunities for career experience and skills development and participation in volunteering and social action projects;
establish pilot interventions and programmes focussing on areas which might include (but would not be limited to) the home learning environment, teacher workload, international teacher recruitment, children and young people’s mental health, training for SEND practitioners, pathways to employment for young people, and speech, language and communication needs in early years.

7.2 We will also utilise this funding to cover its reasonable expenses incurred by the Council in helping to administer the OA programme, this may include support for procurement, project management and communications.

7.3 We anticipate that the OA Programme in utilising its budget over the next three year (cash £8.5m) will make a number of significant investments. Many of these investments will be substantial in excess of £250k and will affect more than 1 ward in Oldham. As such these will be key decisions. We will work with colleagues in both finance and commercial services to schedule, plan and administer these procurement process.

7.4 In order to ensure efficiency in our decision making and to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the Partnership Board and the Council are co-ordinated, we propose that the authority to agree all spending decisions related to the Opportunity Areas programme, including for key decisions, is delegated to the Director of Education and Early Years, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education

7.5 To ensure transparency and accountability in these decisions we propose that an annual report be provided to cabinet which should include but not be limited to: information about; total income and investments; the impact of these investments against targets and future plans and likely spending priorities. In addition we propose that formal update reports be provided quarterly to the Cabinet Member for Education.

8 Consultation

8.1 Consultations have taken place with a range of stakeholders in order to develop the Oldham Opportunity Area Plan, explained in more detail on page 17 of the plan.

9 Financial Implications
9.1 The Opportunity Area funding and other associated funding streams are expected to total around £10m over the next three financial years and is a grant from the Department for Education. This includes in excess of £6m for the main Opportunity Area grant, in excess of £2.5m for Essential Life skills funding with the remainder made up of support from national partners and prioritised funding for other government initiatives. This investment will be across the entire Education sector in Oldham and not all of the funding will pass through the Council. Whilst section 31 grants are not required to be ringfenced, it is proposed that the Council will ringfence the Opportunity Area grants to Opportunity Area schemes.

9.2 The exact costs of the proposals to support the three priority areas are currently being developed. It is currently expected that all Opportunity Area related expenditure will be met from the grant available and there will be no call on the Council’s general fund.

9.3 Specific initiatives will be reported in line with Council procedures as they are developed. (James Postle)

7 Legal Services Comments

7.1 The grant funding is not ring fenced and there are no conditions attached to the grant. However, in accepting the funding the Council commits to providing the Department of Education with an annual report, on a voluntary basis, confirming that the activity has either taken place or has been funded. (Elizabeth Cunningham-Doyle)

8 Co-operative Agenda

8.1 As a Co-operative Council we are committed to improving education and skills outcomes for all our young people, giving them the best possible preparation for adulthood and the world of work. Oldham’s Opportunity Area Plan supports these priorities and will complement and enhance current policy (School Improvement) and partnership activity (OEP). The opportunities provided by significant Government investment and support should enable an acceleration of improvement. (Andrew Sutherland)

9 Human Resources Comments

9.1 None

10 Risk Assessments

10.1 None.

11 IT Implications

11.1 None.

12 Property Implications
12.1 None

13 Procurement Implications

13.1 Procurement Activity will need to be undertaken in accordance with the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules. Based on the values mentioned in this report, sufficient time would need to be allocated to enable the implementation of OJEU Compliant Procurement processes. Commercial Services understands that there may be grant specific award criteria attached to some of the priorities which may preclude the option to undertake a competitive exercise, as these conditions may stipulate which suppliers must be used in the delivery of services. In the event that there are no conditions, Oldham Council Contract Procedure rules would apply.


14 Environmental and Health & Safety Implications

14.1 None

15 Equality, community cohesion and crime implications

15.1 None.

16 Equality Impact Assessment Completed?

16.1 No

17 Key Decision

17.1 No

18 Key Decision Reference

18.1 None

19 Background Papers

19.1 Time For Change: An Assessment of Government Policies on Social Mobility 1997-2017
Opportunity Area Selection Methodology

20 Appendices

20.1 A - Oldham Opportunity Area Plan
B - Grant Determination Letter 10.10.17