



# Oldham Council Corporate Plan 2022–2027





# Foreword

It has been my privilege to represent Royton South as a councillor since 2012, and now to serve the borough as Council Leader. In the last decade I've learned some important lessons.

**Our residents are proud of the place they live but want it to be the best it can be.** They understand that things take time, and that after years of austerity there are limits on what the Council can do. They want to see us investing for the future and being ambitious, but are often sceptical about whether that investment will deliver results. They know that Oldham's best chance is our young people. They want to be involved, to play their part, and to have their views respected.



I'll be holding these lessons close as leader. **This Corporate Plan is the Council's contribution over the next five years to creating Our Future Oldham.** When you take a long-term approach it's obvious that you have to start by getting things right for children and young people. That's why making sure Oldham is the best possible place to grow up is a central element of this plan.

However, we can't ignore the immediate challenge that the cost of living crisis presents. With energy bills going through the roof and wages being stretched by inflation, even relatively well-off people are having to cut back, and more and more people are going to be forced to make really hard choices. Like with Covid, we'll need to work together to get through it. Having brought people together for a Cost of Living Summit this summer, I'm determined that we'll have a range of support services in place before the costs really start to bite when people's boilers start to come back on in the autumn.

Whatever your situation, but particularly when you're struggling, **being able to rely on excellent service from your local council makes a big difference.** That's why, as well as developing specific support for people feeling the impact of rising prices, this Corporate Plan is a declaration of intent: **every council service will be a good service, every experience for residents will be a good experience.** We've made "Residents First" a key operational priority, so every member of staff is thinking first and foremost about how best we can serve our communities. I'm committed to ensuring that residents will see improvements in their interactions with the Council, and we'll also be building on the Big Oldham Conversation to bring residents much more into the decision-making process. Oldham Council will be an organisation that works with residents, not one that does things to them.

A frustration I often hear from residents is that they feel like we're always looking to the next project or plan, before the previous ones have been completed. This Corporate Plan is about making sure we deliver on those vital regeneration projects that are finally making a difference in Oldham. Projects like Spindles, Northern Roots and the new performance and theatre space will be transformational and we have to see them through to give us a base from which to grow.

There's huge amounts to do. This plan represents only a fraction of what the Council and our fantastic staff do every day. **Alongside our residents, and with a clear focus on our aims, I know we can achieve great things for Oldham.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Chadderton', followed by a long, horizontal, wavy line that extends to the right.

**Councillor Amanda Chadderton**

# Delivering Our Future Oldham

The single best thing we can do to create the future we want for our borough is investing in our children and young people. Every young person in Oldham has the potential to do great things, to live great lives and to improve the lives of those around them, if we support them to do so.

Over 300 young people participated in focus groups and surveys prior to the development of this plan, and they shone a light on the many diverse things that make Oldham a great place to grow up. Amongst other things they highlighted the parks, the take-aways, the netball and their friends and neighbours. We can't shy away, though, from the reality that currently Oldham's young people face many challenges.

On average, a child in Oldham gets lower grades than their equivalents across Greater Manchester and nationally. Mental health issues for young people are a prominent and growing concern, particularly in the aftermath of the pandemic. Young people report worries about personal safety. When they leave education, they find it harder than peers elsewhere to secure that crucial first job.

Of course, many of the challenges faced by young people are also experienced by the older residents of Oldham. Focusing on the next generation, then, also means making life better for the current one.

After more than a decade of annual budget cuts, we can only achieve results by focusing on what is most important and where the Council can have most impact.

## In Oldham this means:

- Healthy, safe and well supported residents
- A great start and skills for life
- Better jobs and dynamic businesses
- Quality homes for everyone
- A clean and green future

Delivering against these priorities means the Council can help residents and make Oldham the best place it can be. Our experience during the pandemic showed what a difference we can make. It also showed the power and leadership of our residents. A key learning for the future is that by empowering residents to take the lead, amazing things can happen.

This plan sets out the Council's priorities, with specific actions for the next three years. It works in parallel with the **Our Future Oldham** vision – a blueprint for the next decade.

Residents tell us that they feel more and more a part of Greater Manchester, and as the Combined Authority acquires more powers through devolution it is vital that we take advantage of our place in the city region. Earlier this year the GMCA published a GM Strategy which prioritises growth, equality and the climate. We will do best for our residents by aligning our efforts to these priorities.

**Our Future Oldham: A Shared Vision for 2030** sets the direction for our borough as a whole, based on extensive consultation with residents and partners. It shows what we're trying to achieve overall, and specifically the minimum expectations every resident should have by 2030. This Corporate Plan is the Council's contribution.



**GM Priority:**

- A Greener Greater Manchester

**Our Future Oldham Aim:**

- A clean, green and healthy environment

**Corporate Plan Priority:**

- A clean and green future

**GM Priority:**

- A Fairer Greater Manchester

**Our Future Oldham Aims:**

- A clean, green and healthy environment;
- Diverse opportunities to get together, with regular activities to boost physical and mental health and community spirit;
- A home that is affordable, well maintained, and appropriate

**Corporate Plan Priorities:**

- Healthy, safe and well supported residents;
- Quality homes for everyone

**GM Priority:**

- A More Prosperous Greater Manchester

**Our Future Oldham Aims:**

- The opportunity to get a decent job that pays well and offers security and flexibility;
- A local area that meets people's needs and makes them proud;
- Quick, cheap and easy transport to every part of the city region;
- A well-rounded, enriching, life-long education

**Corporate Plan Priorities:**

- Better jobs and dynamic businesses;
- A great start and skills for life



# Our Priorities





## Healthy, Safe and Well Supported Residents

The Council's biggest responsibility is the effective safeguarding of our most vulnerable residents, and this continues to be a top priority.

Our approach to safeguarding and supporting residents has become increasingly embedded in communities, so that we're close at hand when people need us. This "place-based" approach has allowed us to act faster, and to work more closely with partners to provide more wrap-around support. Utilising procedures and processes that are regularly tested and reviewed internally and by external bodies, and through continuous improvement, we will continue to do everything possible to keep people safe. This includes actions to intervene as early as possible before risk develops. Where people suffer abuse, our victim strategy is in place to ensure they get the best support possible.

The pandemic showed our health services at their best, working closely with residents to keep people safe and respond to outbreaks. Recent innovations such as advanced health checks to include mental health support and the announcement of a new specialist diagnostic centre show that we're moving in the right direction. However, health inequalities remain a huge challenge in Oldham. We work closely with NHS colleagues to ensure residents can access services when they're unwell and are investing in better support to help people live healthy, active lives. This reduces the need for more costly and impactful interventions later down the line. Health and social care in Greater Manchester is changing, and we have the opportunity to make it more responsive to the needs of our local communities rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

The next couple of years are likely to see households under particular financial stress through the cost of living crisis. This creates tensions and stresses, and increases the risk of people falling into substantial difficulty. Therefore it is more important than ever that the Council and our partners are working closely with residents to provide support as quickly and efficiently as possible to keep people healthy, safe and supported.

### In 2022–25 we will...

- Deliver health and social care services that are more joined-up through the delivery of the new integrated care model
- Deliver significant changes to Adult Social Care services to ensure the support we provide to local people is good quality and meets national guidelines
- Achieve a good Ofsted rating for our children's social care services, so residents can be confident that Oldham is a place where our children and young people are safe and supported
- Develop and deliver a health inequalities plan for Oldham
- Increase the uptake of local and national health checks, screenings and immunisations
- Increase levels of physical activity and usage of leisure facilities
- Develop and deliver a new three-year community safety and cohesion plan, tackling crime and ensuring people feel safe across the borough
- Develop a thorough response to the cost of living crisis to ensure every Oldham resident has the support they need, building on the outcomes of the Cost of Living Summit.

### Why this matters for children and young people...

A young person born in Oldham today has a shorter life expectancy than elsewhere in the country, and even within Oldham the difference in areas is stark. Mental health and safety are two of the biggest concerns for Oldham young people. Addressing this is crucial if we're to give young people the best start possible.

## A Great Start and Skills for Life

In the pandemic our amazing teachers and schools responded in the most trying circumstances, continuing to support our children and giving them the best chance to succeed against all odds.

Recent years have seen improvements in outcomes, with progress in early years, primary and A-level results before the pandemic. We've also seen the creation of new places at our best schools, including a whole new site for Saddleworth School, the brand new Brian Clarke Academy, and the announcement of a new sixth form supported by Eton College. Clearly, however, there is more to do to give all our young people the education they deserve.

Outside of schools, young people need opportunities to gain new skills and experiences, and to socialise. Mental health remains a pressing priority for young people in the face of mounting pressures.

### In 2022–25 we will...

- Improve outcomes and increase the number of quality school and college places by:
  - Working with partners in the education sector to drive improvement, led by teachers and schools
  - Creating new, quality school and college places where there is need
- Develop and deliver a strategy for SEND provision and services to identify and meet the needs of local children and young people
- Increase opportunities for young people to engage with our youth activities and support
- Develop and deliver a strategy for post-16 education and training that equips residents to access great jobs
- Develop a new, improved model for early years services and support including health visiting, family nursing and children's centres

### Why this matters for children and young people...

There is no more effective way to improve someone's life chances than supporting their development in their early years. Giving every child a great education is a moral responsibility, and it's also vital if we're to boost wealth and productivity in the local economy and make Oldham an attractive place for families.



## Better Jobs and Dynamic Businesses

The link between decent work and better life chances is clear. As an employer, the Council reflects this by ensuring all our staff and suppliers are paid at least the real living wage. We also promote the GM Good Employment Charter to businesses across the borough.

We are investing in Oldham's future, with a £306m regeneration strategy to create town centres that are great places to live, work and spend time. This programme is moving forward at pace, in part thanks to our success bidding for funding from the Towns Deal Fund and Future High Streets Fund.

The Council supports businesses and jobs through our employment programmes, schemes for business start-ups and growth, creating space for building and service provision. We work with employers and training providers to ensure local residents can access the skills they need to progress into well paid employment. The Council is committed to a more inclusive approach to employment, with a focus on supporting those who face barriers to work.

Our Future Oldham is a place where every resident can get a job that supports a lifestyle that works for them. As the Independent Economic Review demonstrated, there is an entrepreneurial drive in Oldham, but there is more to do to ensure that Oldham is seen as a great place to start, grow or locate a dynamic business.

### In 2022–25 we will...

- Deliver on our plans for a renewed purpose for Oldham Town Centre as a creative place with a vibrant night time and cultural economy, more jobs and homes, including:
  - Redevelopment of the Spindles to include a new market, retail space, office and events space
  - A new performance and theatre space for Oldham
  - A new Town Centre Park
  - A new community purpose for the Old Library
- Improve the approach to supporting and engaging local businesses
- Increase the amount the council spends with local companies and suppliers
- Deliver a more ambitious and proactive approach to place marketing
- Support residents into work through our range of Get Oldham Working initiatives
- Deliver a transport strategy to open up a wide range of jobs and other opportunities for Oldham people across the city region and beyond
- Develop a new employment and skills strategy and Oldham Skills Plan for the borough

### Why this matters for children and young people...

Our consultation with young people showed that most want to build their future careers in Oldham if they can, but they are split on whether the jobs they want will be available to them. By making Oldham a more attractive place for business, we create opportunities for people today and make it more likely that the next generation will stay here to help our borough thrive.

## Quality Homes for Everyone

Oldham's Housing Strategy, published in 2019, sets out a clear approach to deliver the homes we need, including those for young people and first-time buyers, homes suitable for older residents and those with additional needs, and social and affordable housing. The selective licensing scheme introduced to improve the quality of private-rented housing had a significant impact in the worst-affected areas. The recently published Mills Strategy shows how we'll use Oldham's heritage assets to provide more brownfield housing and protect the borough's green spaces. Creating A Better Place includes the provision of 2,000 homes in the town centre, revitalising our high streets, addressing shortages and removing the need to build on green belt.

While the plans are in place, there is still work to do. The lack of affordable, accessible and appropriate housing is a top issue raised by residents in consultations. While lower than the national average, house prices remain unaffordable for many, and others struggle to find a home that fits their needs. For renters, standards in the private rented sector are often not high enough.

The "A Bed Every Night" programme has significantly reduced the amount of people sleeping rough in the city region, but many still find themselves reliant on temporary accommodation. The future of housing delivery in Oldham will partly be established by the introduction of Places for Everyone (a spatial plan for Oldham and eight other Greater Manchester boroughs), and our own local plan, but housing must continue to be a key area of focus.

### In 2022–25 we will...

- Deliver new, high-quality homes across the borough to meet a wide range of local needs from affordable to aspirational
- Finalise Places for Everyone to identify the land we need to meet our local housing need and to support business growth whilst continuing the review of our own Local Plan, focusing on using brownfield land wherever we can
- Roll out our tenants charter and landlord licensing schemes to improve the quality of rented homes across the borough
- Deliver our Warm Homes Oldham scheme to protect those most vulnerable from rising energy prices, and ensure more of our homes are well insulated
- Work to reduce homelessness by reviewing and improving our temporary accommodation and building on the successful A Bed Every Night project

### Why this matters for children and young people...

The sense that home ownership is out of reach is particularly acute for young people, who face the prospect of living longer with their parents, using a large chunk of their salary on insecure rent, or moving elsewhere. Building more home, including town centre apartments, increases the chances of our young people staying in Oldham as they get older.

The need for appropriate accommodation was particularly felt by young people during the pandemic, where many were forced to try to study in overcrowded spaces at home.



## A Clean and Green Future

Oldham has committed to Green New Deal targets to make the Council carbon-neutral by 2025 and the borough carbon-neutral by 2030. This is important for the borough as a way of making Oldham a more pleasant and healthier place to live in the short term, while protecting the borough and planet from the worst effects of climate change in the long term. There are also commercial opportunities for the borough from the green agenda, with a growing green technology industry, and potential for green tourism. Oldham is already seen as a leading green borough, and Northern Roots has the potential to put Oldham on the map as a key visitor destination in Greater Manchester.

People should be proud of their local area and feel good when they're walking around it. Nothing makes that harder than when there's rubbish all over the place. Through "Don't Trash Oldham" we've been cleaning up our streets, removing more than 150 tonnes of litter. We'll be going further with that, prosecuting more fly-tippers and redesigning streets to make them easier and more pleasant to spend time in.

### In 2022–25 we will...

- Support Oldham's growing green industry, creating more green jobs and opportunities
- Boost our position as the greenest borough in Greater Manchester by improving and better promoting our amazing green spaces
- Create new green spaces and opportunities through Northern Roots and our new Town Centre Park
- Support the development of Greater Manchester's plan to deliver cleaner air
- Deliver cleaner neighbourhoods and streets through the roll out and further development of Don't Trash Oldham
- Increase enforcements for those who litter and flytip
- Support increased recycling for homes and businesses

### Why this matters for children and young people...

Young people around the world have been the driving force behind the climate agenda in recent years. In our consultation, young residents indicated a very strong preference for a shift towards greater reliance on public transport over private vehicles to protect the climate. They are also, like older residents, very conscious of the impact of litter and how it makes them feel about their neighbourhood. Don't Trash Oldham remains an important programme if we are to help residents young and old to feel prouder of where they live.



**How we work**



The Council is constantly looking at how we can work more effectively and efficiently in the interests of residents. As a Cooperative Council, we work in partnership with residents, businesses and other major organisations across the borough. Further detail of this approach is set out in **Our Future Oldham**.

Over the next five years, we will look to embed some core values and behaviours to ensure every interaction with the Council is a good experience for residents.

We will also take forward four transformational changes to our service delivery:

- residents first;
- place-based working;
- digitisation; and
- a preventative, collaborative approach with communities.

## Residents First

The commitment to making every service a good service and every experience a good experience means constantly working with residents to improve our performance. This will be achieved in part through new measures and metrics that allow us to monitor the resident experience of our services more effectively.

Alongside improvements to how we measure our performance, we will build on the work already underway to ensure the resident voice is at the heart of our decision making. This takes traditional forms, such as consultation on key projects and decisions and the Big Oldham Conversation meetings that took place across the borough throughout 2021–22, and more innovative forms. One example of this is the Oldham Poverty Truth Commission, where residents with experience of poverty come together with decision makers from the Council and other public bodies to explore how we can better serve people in poverty. Another example is the Oldham Independent Economic Review, where leaders from business, the skills sector, the voluntary sector and Greater Manchester received expert evidence before producing a series of recommendations on the future of the Oldham economy.

## Place-based Working

Feedback from residents has been clear: as much as possible, people want services close to home and tailored to the specific needs of their community. While some services will always need to be delivered centrally, we aim to deliver more and more locally, across the five-district footprints agreed with our partners.

Services delivered by the Council in districts include early help for residents who are struggling, violence prevention and financial inclusion. Each district also has a dedicated local team focused on the needs of the community, reaching out to residents and coordinating actions.

As well as bringing more Council services to local areas, we aim to more deeply integrate with other public bodies like the NHS, schools, housing associations and the police. By strengthening the ties between us we can provide more holistic support to residents. Establishing community hubs in each district means every resident can access services and support without having to travel far.

We will also be building our relationship with the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector, as set out in the Greater Manchester VCFSE Accord. The sector provided so much to Oldham during the pandemic, demonstrating its deep understanding of and links into our communities. Working more closely with the sector will be vital, particularly as residents are affected by the cost-of-living crisis.

**Our Future Oldham** sets out the place we want the borough to be, somewhere that uplifts every resident. But residents have told us that the challenges and opportunities that matter most to them are often those closest to home. So we'll be tailoring **Our Future Oldham** with local residents and partners to meet the needs of individual districts, putting emphasis and priority on what's most important in each neighbourhood.

## Digital

Not everyone is equipped or comfortable with accessing services digitally, so it's important that the support is always there for those who need it. More and more, however, residents want and expect the convenience of being able to apply for services or solve problems through their computer or phone.

We're implementing a digital strategy so that, where it is possible and there is resident demand, end-to-end digital services are available. Whether paying council tax, reporting fly-tipping or applying for a school place, services should be available at the click of a button, without having to wait in a queue or leaving the house. This is more convenient for residents and more efficient, enabling more resource to be focused on resident priorities. We'll be focusing website improvements on those things residents need the most, and making accessing Council services easier than ever.

For the digital strategy to be a success, though, we need to strengthen Oldham's digital fibre infrastructure, so that homes and workplaces can access digital connections that reflect current and future demand. This will be achieved in part through the GM One Network project, bringing high speed networks to the city region.

Digital skills development opportunities will be available to residents, to equip them with skills that are increasingly vital for work and life. We will also be providing greater support for those who lack the equipment and connectivity for the digital world.

## Working with Communities to Reduce Need

Taking a community-centred, preventative approach to public services is better for everyone. For the public purse, it's better to help people stop smoking than treat lung cancer, and it's far better for the person too.

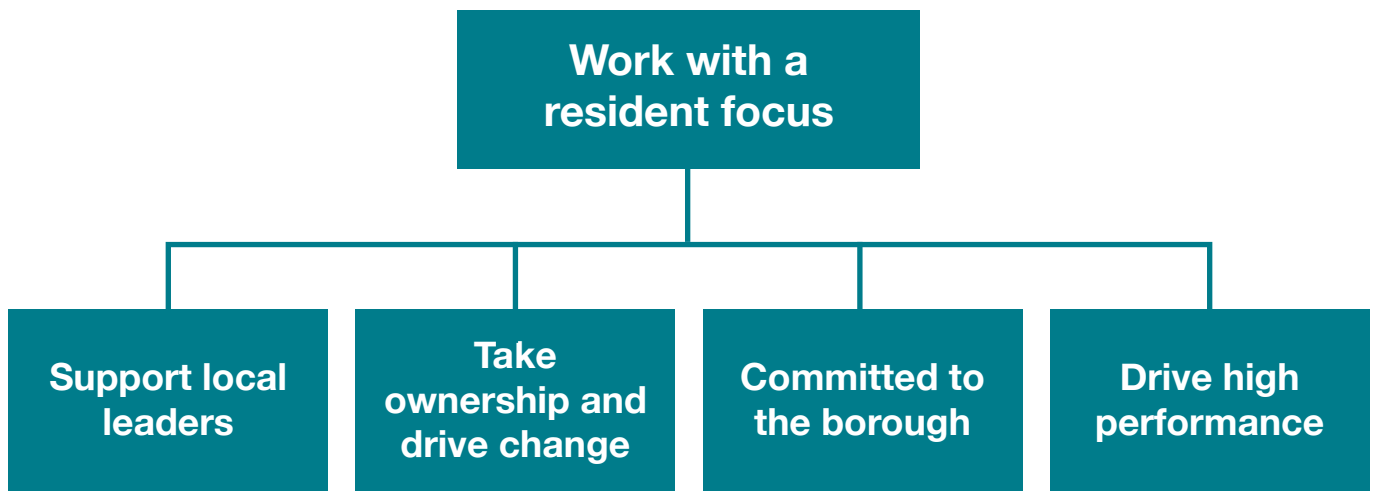
We are happier and healthier when we exercise regularly, eat well, have an active social life and support network, with enough money coming in and a home that meets our needs. That means that, for the Council, by focusing resources on early help to support people it's better for everyone.

What early help looks like will be different in different places, as to be effective it requires genuine partnership between services and residents. For some areas it may be more community events to help get people out of the house, for others extra support for families under stress.



## Core Behaviours

Every day we interact with thousands of Oldham residents. Our councillors and staff bring their skills, experience and personality to work every day to make Oldham a great place to live. We're all different, and this diversity is a real asset, but there are some core behaviours that we expect throughout the organisation.



As described above, everything the Council does, and every action our staff take should have a focus on residents. This is the central behaviour that will ensure every experience residents have of the Council is a good one, and ultimately what will mean every service we provide is a good one in the eyes of the people we work for.

We have a commitment to working closely and collaboratively with partners and residents. We **support local leaders** because in many cases the Council is not best placed to act. Oldham is full of talent and passionate people, so it's important that wherever possible we look to empower residents to take the lead.

Where the Council is best placed though, it's vital that we **take ownership and drive change**. Our staff are constantly looking for ways that we can improve services or solve problems, and are supported to take responsibility, acting boldly and with courage in the understanding that they will be supported to succeed.

In everything we do, we consistently demonstrate that we are **committed to the borough**. The Council is full of born and raised Oldham people, and everyone who works for us knows that their responsibility is first and foremost to Oldham and its residents. We will always do what's best for Oldham, and fight for more for Oldham regionally and nationally.

Finally, we are determined to **drive high performance**. Our staff are supported to do excellent work, and we conduct rigorous and continuous performance analysis to ensure we squeeze everything out of our budget, and are constantly improving.

