### Minutes

### MEETING: Oldham Town Centre Board DATE: 12 September 2023

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VENUE: Crompton Suite, Civic Centre, Oldham TIME: 13:00

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| **PRESENT** | Ali, Councillor Mohon | Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Oldham Council |
|  | Ashraf, Kashif | President of Oldham Chamber of Commerce, Greater Manchester Chamber / Co-Founder and Co-Chair, Asian Business Leaders |
|  | Bennett, Katie | Manager, Spindles Town Square Shopping Centre |
|  | Bloor, Jon | Assistant Director for Economic Growth, Oldham Council |
|  | Clifford, Paul | Director of Economy, Oldham Council |
|  | Cotton, Chris | Interim Town Centre and Markets Manager,  Oldham Council |
|  | Da Silva, Anna | Chief Executive Officer, Northern Roots Charity |
|  | Fletcher, Rebecca | Director of Public Health, Oldham Council |
|  | Hughes, Margaret | Owner, Zutti Fashion **(Vice-Chair)** |
|  | Hussain, Councillor Fida | Cabinet Member for Business, Employment and Enterprise, Oldham Council |
|  | Jordan, Simon | Principal, Oldham College |
|  | Kipling, Shelley | Assistant Chief Executive, Oldham Council |
|  | Lees-Jones, William | Managing Director, J.W. Lees & Co. **(Chair)** |
|  | Lockwood, Stuart | Chief Executive, Oldham Community Leisure |
|  | Penn, Jennifer | Regeneration Officer, Oldham Council |
|  | Popplewell, Grace | Greater Manchester Deputy Area Lead,  Cities and Local Growth Unit |
|  | Riley, Michelle | Owner, Cob and Coal Tap / Fox and Pine |
|  | Robinson, Joanne | Regeneration Officer (Technical),  Oldham Council |
|  | Rogers, Stuart | Project Director, Muse |
|  | Shah, Councillor Arooj | Leader, Oldham Council |
|  | Shaw, Alex | Principal Engineer (Consultant), Oldham Council |
|  | Wharton, Jake | Communications Officer, Oldham Council |
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| **APOLOGIES** | Abrahams, MP Debbie | Oldham East and Saddleworth Constituency |
|  | Aspinall, Gail | Capital Programme and Special Projects Manager, Oldham Council |
|  | Barton, Emma | Executive Director for Place and Economic Growth, Oldham Council |
|  | Beckett, Jessica | Communications Manager, Oldham Council |
|  | Beverley, Dr. Delroy | Chief Executive Officer,  First Choice Homes Oldham |
|  | Catherall, Harry | Chief Executive, Oldham Council |
|  | Courtie, Pete | Relationship Manager, Arts Council England |
|  | Craig, Dr. Alistair | Chief Officer, Northern Care Alliance |
|  | Dad, Nasir | Director of Environment, Oldham Council |
|  | Fraser, Nigel | Regeneration Team Leader (Capital Projects), Oldham Council |
|  | Garrick, Jesse | Greater Manchester Area Lead,  Cities and Local Growth Unit |
|  | Henshaw, Luke | Representative, Oldham Youth Council |
|  | Knowles, Aaron | Greater Manchester Area Coordinator,  Cities and Local Growth Unit |
|  | Lewis, Chris | Senior Youth Work Manager, Oldham Council |
|  | Lewis, Christopher | Strategic Lead for Creating a Better Place, Oldham Council |
|  | Lightfoot, Andrew | Deputy Chief Executive,  Greater Manchester Combined Authority |
|  | McMahon, MP Jim | Oldham West and Royton Constituency |
|  | Nicholson, Leo | Representative, Oldham Youth Council |
|  | Patterson, John | Chief Clinical Officer, NHS Oldham CCG |
|  | Rahim, Fazal | Project Coordinator, Oldham Interfaith Forum |
|  | Rayner, MP Angela | Ashton-under-Lyne Constituency |
|  | Roberts, Paul | Spindles Programme Director, Hive Projects |
|  | Rothwell, Frank | Managing Director, Manchester Cabins / Chairman and Owner, Oldham Athletic F.C. |
|  | Windsor-Welsh, Liz | Chief Executive, Action Together |
|  | Yousaf, Adnan | Real Estate Manager, The Cross Group, Chambers Business Centre |

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| ITEM |  |
| 1 | **Introductions and apologies for absence (William Lees-Jones)**  Introductions were made and apologies were noted. Best wishes were extended to MP Jim McMahon, who had recently stepped down from his frontbench role due to illness. |
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| 2 | **Welcome (William Lees-Jones)**  Housekeeping items were covered and new and returning members were welcomed. |
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| 3 | **Notice of any urgent business to be accepted onto the agenda and reasons for that urgency (William Lees-Jones)**  None. |
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| 4 | **Declarations of Interest (William Lees-Jones)**  Anna da Silva: Chief Executive Officer, Northern Roots  Stuart Lockwood: Board of Directors, Northern Roots |
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| 5 | **Minutes of the previous meeting (William Lees-Jones)**  The minutes dated 22 May 2023 were agreed as a true record and approved for publication online at oldham.gov.uk. |
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| 6 | **Review of actions from the previous meeting (William Lees-Jones)**  Terms of reference, membership list, and member roles / responsibilities / training opportunities to be reviewed and tabled during the next meeting: *agenda item seven*  Arrange a session to enable Oldham Youth Council to inform the design of the greenways, in recognition of its recent motion about green, brown and blue infrastructure: *date TBC*  Bring an update to the next meeting about town centre occupancy levels and targets for the high street and shopping centre: *agenda item nine*  Bring the Place Marketing Strategy to the next meeting: *agenda item nine*  Develop some communications for businesses around fair energy prices and deals: *being progressed with The Growth Company*  Paul Roberts to provide an in-depth review of the flexible workspace: *agenda item ten*  Towns Fund monitoring and evaluation returns for Q3 and Q4 of 2022/23 to be signed by the Chair and Section 151 Officer and submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by 9 June: *completed* |
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| 7 | **Procedural business and any items accepted as urgent business**  **(William Lees-Jones)**  The Board Terms of Reference are online at oldham.gov.uk and were last reviewed at the AGM in January. They must be reviewed annually or, in any event, be submitted to the AGM for reaffirmation.  Board member names, positions and roles have been checked and updated to reflect changes in personnel and comply with Towns Fund guidance about transparency of membership (see oldham.gov.uk/info/201088/regeneration/2438/towns\_fund/2). Some Town Deal Boards have published additional, optional information about members, including photographs and details of background / experience. The Leader of the Council and other Board members expressed a preference for doing something similar with support from the Council’s Information Management and IT Teams.  **ACTION:** Jennifer Penn to coordinate the publication of Board member profiles online. |
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| 8 | **Town centre update – regeneration**  The Chair and Vice-Chair had recently toured Spindles and been very impressed with the work to date, especially the new offices for Oldham Council staff.   * **Future High Streets Fund**   **Prudential Building (Paul Clifford):** an update was provided in respect of the current position of the Compulsory Purchase Order.  **Egyptian Room (Paul Clifford):** fit out works will conclude in spring. The opening date is TBC (provisionally 2025).  **Accessible Oldham (Alex Shaw):** the overarching Creating a Better Place programme has multiple highways elements involving many partners and funders. The value of each element can be provided upon request.  The Snipe Inn has been acquired using funding from the Future High Streets Fund. It will be demolished to create an open, public realm scheme improving connectivity between the bus station and the town centre. The aim is to secure planning permission by Christmas and start demolition in early 2024.  Phase 1 of the Growth Deal 3 works on Albion Street and Henshaw Street is complete.  Designs for the town centre linear park (Jubilee Park) will be commissioned soon.  Work is underway on West Street and Cheapside to improve access for pedestrians and cyclists and improve connectivity between the town centre, Oldham Leisure Centre and Oldham College. The improvements will include the construction of a new cycleway into the town centre, updated footways, and sustainability features including rain gardens and tree planting. On 25 September, the link between the Cheapside and West Street bus stations at Oldham will be closed for approximately six months for improvements.   * **Town Centre Strategic Partnership with Muse (Stuart Rogers)**   Oldham Council has confirmed Muse as its development partner for a multi-million-pound town centre scheme to create 2,000 new homes, extra jobs and new public green spaces. The partnership will transform Oldham town centre, complementing both the redevelopment of Spindles and the introduction of an Eton College involving the Department for Education and Star Academies.  Muse is a multi-award-winning nationwide placemaker with a passion for delivering long-term, sustainable outcomes with and for partners. The firm employs 100 people and is the regeneration division of Morgan Sindall. Housing developments account for half of the firm’s work and Muse holds regular meetings with national partners and funders including Historic England. Live projects include the Passivhaus housing scheme in Salford and support for the Oldham College T-Levels programme.  Muse renewed its focus upon sustainability during the Covid pandemic and today seeks to define sustainability metrics for projects through a data framework. Muse and the Council share ambitions for sustainable development and long-term, measurable social benefits, as evidenced by both organisations working with the Social Value Portal.  During the bidding phase, Muse and the Council had detailed dialogue about legal agreements, meaning that the agreements have been finalised for the delivery of 2,000 units (mixed tenure apartments and town houses). Muse has already worked with the Council, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and others to secure £3m for remediation / preparatory works for the town centre housing sites (funder details currently embargoed). There will be a hybrid planning application in due course.  As work gets underway, Muse will consult specialists including economic consultants for advice on housing type and density, and architects for CGIs and designs for the main sites (Civic Centre, former Magistrates’ Court, and former leisure centre). Oldham is ahead from a programming perspective because its highways schemes are in progress.  The Leader of the Council commented on the visionary nature of the partnership and thanked officers and Muse for their shared commitment to forming a partnership capable of transforming the lives of local people. The procurement exercise had been extensive and robust, and the passion of Muse’s Phil Mayall, himself an Oldhamer, had been clear from the outset.  Kashif Ashraf commented that the demolition of the Snipe Inn would improve an already popular pedestrian route. He also congratulated Stuart Rogers on the appointment of Muse as strategic development partner, commenting that the firm had gone above and beyond to engage stakeholders like Oldham College before its appointment was even confirmed. He and other Board members commented that the early CGIs showing possible water features in the linear park looked exciting. |
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| 9 | **Town centre update – general**  The Chair explained that Sara Hewitt had left the position of Markets and Town Centre Manager after 13 years and put on record the Board’s thanks for her efforts. Sara’s interim replacement is Chris Cotton, former Strategic Lead for Markets and Town Centres at Kirklees Council.  **Place Marketing Strategy; events, unit occupancy and footfall; and communications (Jon Bloor)**  The Place Marketing Strategy is a clear and concise document setting out Oldham’s unique characteristics and selling points for multiple audiences.  There is growing interest in Oldham and the Oldham Way from ‘Filming in England’.  Earlier this year, the Council had a stall at the UK Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum event, generating positive feedback from potential investors.  Looking ahead to autumn/winter, there will be the usual seasonal events for Bonfire Night, Remembrance Day and Christmas, plus the Halloween half-marathon. The Council funds events from its own budget and external grants like the UK Shared Prosperity Fund grant for Illuminate Festival. The Council conducts economic assessments to demonstrate return on investment from town centre and borough events like the recent Tour of Britain.  **ACTION:** Shelley Kipling to bring an economic assessment of town centre and other major events from the past year to a future meeting, including footage / photos.  The Towns Fund and Future High Streets Fund are designed to boost footfall and put town centres at the heart of regeneration. Oldham town centre retail unit vacancies stand at 22% and footfall is approaching 500,000 visitors per month. The Council is exploring options for improving footfall data collection in the town and district centres, to address the current reliance upon door counters in and around Spindles. |
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| 10 | **Substantive business – Towns Fund**  **1) Flexible workspace (Paul Clifford)**  The office space for Council staff will be developed by December and occupied by March. Other office space will be used by partners including the NHS.  The workspace being funded through the Towns Fund will be called The Hive and provide space for foundational economy and social enterprise start-ups. It will be opposite the Council offices on the upper floor of the mall and include rooms of different sizes, such as offices for two and offices for eight. The workspace is attracting interest thanks to facilities including an entrepreneurial kitchen, conference/media facilities, meeting rooms, and a communal area of 5,000ft2. The workspace will be completed by November and will open in March.  **2) Relocating Tommyfield Market (Paul Clifford)**  Site investigations have concluded. TJ Hughes has been demolished and the site remediated. Piling works are ongoing and the project should conclude in December 2024, ready for traders to move in during Q1 of 2025.  The Council has begun meeting traders to outline and consult on the relocation process into Spindles. Michelle Riley welcomed the meetings, saying traders have heard many rumours and have unanswered questions about rents, contracts and more following a meeting last autumn.  The Leader of the Council commented that the market remains a busy and unique part of the town centre offer, even though retail has changed dramatically in recent years. The Council and traders have a shared commitment to making the market profitable and attractive to shoppers.  The Chair commented that Bobby Arora and Sacha Lord began their careers as market traders, demonstrating the value of markets as routes into business. The success of Tommyfield depends on retaining and attracting traders, maintaining the trader liaison group, and maximising unique selling points like the Saturday textile market.  The Vice-Chair reported shoplifting and drug dealing near to town centre HMOs. Incidents are affecting shoppers and retailers, despite excellent work by Greater Manchester Police. Michelle Riley voiced similar concerns about anti-social behaviour at a property being used to house vulnerable male adults, close to the Fox and Pine. There can be fighting, drug dealing and drinking on the street, especially after the property warden leaves at 6pm each day.  The Leader of the Council noted that HMOs require planning permission and can provide much-needed support to vulnerable people. If HMOs generate anti-social behaviour, however, the Council can work to hold irresponsible landlords to account and, more generally, have conversations with partners and MPs to ensure an appropriate mix of town centre accommodation and land uses.  **ACTION:** The Leader of the Council to discuss tackling anti-social behaviour in Oldham town centre with Greater Manchester Police.  **3) Northern Roots (Paul Clifford / Anna da Silva)**  The Board agreed to submit a formal project adjustment request to Government for the bike hub. The Board will seek to reallocate the Towns Fund capital allocation of £427k from the bike hub to the Northern Roots visitor centre and external works. The Northern Roots Charity remains committed to delivering the bike hub in the future by some other means. The bike hub cannot be progressed in its current format, meaning there have been some abortive works funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund capital grant.  **ACTION:** Paul Clifford and colleagues to progress the Northern Roots bike hub project adjustment request in consultation with the Chair of the Board and Section 151 Officer (Oldham Council’s Director of Finance).  The Charity is animating the site whilst the Council engages a contractor for works to the visitor centre and events / forestry / training spaces (2024-spring/summer 2025). Work to date includes:   * Phase one of the urban farm involving students and volunteers: regular produce sales; work on a retail strategy for the visitor centre; and work on the potential to engage local producers. Planning permission is needed for phase two. * Social prescribing partnership trial with Hilltop Surgery, helping residents of Fitton Hill to manage chronic anxiety. * Weekly forest school for nursery children from Lees. * Weekly conservation days for young people at risk of exclusion from mainstream education (second cohort). * Cultural activity planning work with Shelley Kipling’s team to transform the site into a visitor destination. * Ongoing business modelling and monitoring/evaluation activity.   **4) Flexible performance space (Paul Clifford)**  Planning Committee will consider the planning application in November. Victoria Firth has joined the Council as the Cultural Partnerships Manager, providing further support for the project and the implementation of the Cultural Strategy.  Oldham Coliseum Theatre has a new management team and is being supported to refresh the business plan and co-design the new space. |
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| 11 | **Action review / next steps**  See individual actions within main body of minutes. |
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| 12 | **Any other business**  Anna da Silva explained that Frank Rothwell had provided support for Northern Roots. She asked for her thanks to be recorded in the minutes and gave the produce she’d brought for him to the Vice-Chair for distribution. |
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| 13 | **Time and date of next meeting(s)**  TBC (provisionally 1-3pm on Mon, 4th December in the Crompton Suite, Civic Centre) |
|  | **ACTION:** Jennifer Penn to consider scheduling meetings for Thursdays and Fridays to accommodate MPs and others with commitments at the start of the week.  The meeting closed at 14:35. |
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