

FIDA IS TOUCHED BY THE WARMTH SHOWN BY THE PEOPLE OF OLDHAM

What a mayoral year...

OLDHAM'S business community was out in force to support a dinner to raise cash for the Mayor's Appeal Fund.

by **ROBBIE MacDONALD**
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Hundreds of business people attended the fundraising Asian Business Leaders Dinner at the Eastern Pavilion on Featherstall Road South.

The event raised cash for The Christie in Oldham, Dr Kershaw's Hospice, Mahdlo youth zone and the Action Oldham Fund. Guests included representatives of the Pakistan and Bangladesh commissions and consulates in the UK.

The event came just four days after this year's highly successful Oldham Business Awards, which had a record attendance of over 500.

At the Asian Business

Leaders dinner, Mayor of Oldham Councillor Fida Hussain gave an emotional speech about his year in office with his wife and Mayoress Tanvir Hussain.

He said: "My aim was to reach every corner of Oldham, every town. People have shown great warmth to me.

"I remember visiting a school in Saddleworth during very wet weather. I was 15 minutes late but over 200 children waited for my arrival in the playground, standing in the rain.

"The head teacher said the children wanted to see the mayor getting out his car. Where else do you get this warmth?"



FUND-RAISING dinner . . . from left, businessman Zahid Akhtar, Philomena Cheng from UK Trade and Investment, Mumtaz Bashir, Brian Sloan, North-West deputy agent for the Bank of England, Farhana Rahman, Mayor Councillor Fida Hussain and Dave Benstead

"On another event when I visited a church, one woman came running across the road in her bare feet. I told her to take care because she might hurt her feet but she simply wanted to meet the mayor.

"These type of events illustrate the warmth shown to me by the people of Oldham. We should be very proud of this borough."

He added: "Tonight I feel sadness and happiness. I'm sad that I won't meet people in this role again. But I'm happy because I will have a little rest after all this hard

work. I want to thank everyone for their support shown to me and the Mayoress in the past year."

The event was hosted by Dr Basma Ellahi, from the University of Chester, and Martyn Torr, former business editor of the Oldham Chronicle.

Speakers included Mumtaz Bashir, an engineer who later worked in sporting events including the London Paralympics and Glasgow Commonwealth Games; digital businesswomen Farhana Rahman, Dave Benstead from Oldham Business Leadership Group and

Muzahid Khan. Mr Khan said: "This night is supporting the Mayor's Appeal Fund for charities which do fantastic work in Oldham.

"We also want to thank the Mayor for his fantastic work. He will be a hard act to follow."

Entertainment came from dancer Deeba Amin and Hulme Grammar School pupil Saskia Edwards, who sang songs from "Les Miserables" and "The Phantom of the Opera".

Saskia is due to be the next Youth Mayor of Oldham.

Martyn Torr received a

special lifetime achievement award for his services to Oldham business presented by Ed Stacey, former head of Oldham Enterprise Agency and Business Link and author of the Cotton, Curry and Commerce book documenting Asian business in Oldham.

There were also awards for design business owner Ansar Ali, of DSGN UK, and former Oldham PC Philip Buckley for their work and community activities. Mr Buckley's charity activities have included a 350-mile cycle ride in Bangladesh.

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£43,000 goes to his charities



MAYOR Councillor Fida Hussain handed over £43,000 from his year in office to his four selected charities.

The money was handed over to Mahdlo, The Christie, Action Oldham

and Dr Kershaw's in a presentation at the Civic Centre. It was one of his last acts as mayor before handing over the chains to Ateeque Ur-Rehman and wife Yasmin Toor in the Mayor's parlour later today.

Pictured with the Mayor are, from left, Clare Taylor (Action Oldham), Kashif Ashraf (Mahdlo), Teresa Novotny (Dr Kershaw's) and Julie Davies (radiographer at the Christie).

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