

Report of: A joint report of the Director of Public Health and Director of City Development

Report to: Executive Board

Date: 17th December 2014

Subject: Building a 'Mentally Healthy' Leeds

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of Main Issues

1. Over the next 14 years, the city of Leeds will see considerable growth with an aim to provide 70,000 new homes, jobs, new open spaces and infrastructure such as health centres and schools.
2. Such a challenge cuts across the boundaries of many services and organisations, and is reflected in the ambitions of several of the council's 'breakthrough projects', especially 'housing growth and jobs for young people', 'making Leeds the best place to grow old', and 'reshaping health and social care'.
3. This growth was the context for an event in June 2014 entitled 'Mentally Healthy City', sponsored by the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Board and Public Health, Adult Social Care and City development departments. Building on the growing body of evidence indicating that issues such as the built environment, green spaces, liveability, community assets and connectivity have a large influence on mental and emotional wellbeing, a wide range of partners from health and other sectors came together to discuss the implications for Leeds residents.
4. The aim of this event was to galvanise the participants to *'improve people's mental health and wellbeing'* by building *'healthy and sustainable communities'* (two commitments in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy).

This report summarises the discussions, places them in their context of wider ongoing work around health and strategic planning that is currently being undertaken within Leeds, and makes recommendations for further cross-cutting work to promote wellbeing in a growing city.

Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to:

- recognise and support the positive outputs and ideas of the ‘Mentally Healthy City’ workshop, held with cross city partners in June 2014.
- recognise and support the extensive work currently taking place to integrate health and wellbeing considerations into future planning for the built environment and housing.
- recognise and support the benefits identified by this conference of Public Health and planning colleagues, applying a cross-cutting approach to issues in breakthrough projects (such as housing growth, making the City a good place to grow old, and reshaping health and social care), and building on the process of consultation and engagement outlined in this report.

1.0 Purpose of this report

1.1 This report uses the learning and outputs of the ‘Mentally Health City’ event held in June 2014 to inform members of opportunities to promote a collaborative approach to crosscutting themes and strategic priorities such as health and planning/urban design.

2.0 Background information

2.1 A key part of the Health and Wellbeing Board’s work is to galvanise the city to become a healthy and sustainable community – this is the fifth outcome in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. While mental ill health is sometimes viewed as a wholly medical problem, in reality the prevention, management and recovery from mental health problems is heavily influenced by social and environmental factors.

2.2 This event specifically asked how we can build a ‘Mentally Healthy City’ – one where the buildings, the streets, the parks, the leisure facilities, the quality of new houses, cycle paths, community assets, and social networks all work together to help foster good mental health. It followed another very successful workshop earlier in the year that was led by the Council’s Urban Design Team where David Sim from Gehl Architects was a keynote speaker, with his presentation entitled “*People Friendly Places.*”

2.3 The workshop was attended by a wide range of professionals in Leeds, with over 70 participants ranging from planning and urban design officers to mental health service leads, directors, lead health commissioners, active recreation specialists,

along with a large number of leaders from the 3rd sector specialising in 'place shaping' work.

- 2.4 The keynote address was given by David Rudlin, Director of URBED (Urbanism Environment and Design) and recent winner of the Wolfson Economics Prize 2014 (the largest global economics prize after the Nobel). The event was hosted by the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing and Chair, Leeds Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 2.5 As well as the keynote speech, the event included lightning talks from four third sector partners (Groundwork UK, Leeds Health for All, The Conservation Volunteers, and Leeds Housing Concern), table-top discussion, and a masterplanning session led by the council's urban design team based on three exemplar development areas in Leeds.

3.0 Main issues

3.1 *City growth, urban design and health*

The growth of Leeds will have important implications for the health and wellbeing of its residents, through the design of new houses and neighbourhoods, accessibility to jobs, green spaces and transport. When the Core Strategy was considered by Executive Board in September 2014, the accompanying report stated that

'a fundamental dimension of the Core Strategy is to plan for the homes and jobs the District (at the heart of the City Region) needs, in a sustainable manner and in locations which respects the local character and distinctiveness of the communities across Leeds. Within this context, the Plan also provides an important strategic framework for and range of cross cutting issues. These include environmental protection and enhancement, low carbon development, reducing social inequalities, place making and design quality, liveability and improving public health. Consequently, the Core Strategy needs to be considered as a whole, in planning the growth and development of the District to 2028'.

This commitment to cross-cutting considerations is currently bearing fruit in a number of areas.

Much of this work involves the principles of good planning and urban design, which have always been concerned with the wider aspects of liveability (thereby meeting the varied needs of different groups of residents) and sustainability, but increasingly concerns itself with health in our built environment. Although specific issues may arise in the context of planning for children's health, mental health, age-friendly initiatives, lifestyle-related health, access to services etc., the planning and urban design principles for the provision of healthy places are all broadly similar and are already embedded within the day to day work of the council. The application of principles set out in the Council's Local Plan and 'Neighbourhoods for Living' captures various elements of health through its design guidance for residential

development within Leeds, from the 'Lifetime Homes' initiative to advice on creating walkable, well connected communities and places. However, our aim is to improve current standards relating to the design of housing and neighbourhoods through the adoption of the new Leeds Standard.

Wellbeing (quality of life) is an underlying value within 'Neighbourhoods for Living'. The document sets design principles around Space, Movement, Use and Form. Many of these principles have important health and wellbeing overlaps (for example 'provide safe, convenient, direct and easy access to everyday facilities and employment locations on foot cycle and/or public transport to and through the site (principle 113)

Public health colleagues have recently conducted an extensive mapping exercise which demonstrates how closely the principles of the document align with key health improvement and population health outcomes. More recently, work on the Leeds Local Plan has seen specific wording around health and wellbeing needs inserted into the Leeds Core Strategy, referencing health inequalities, specific conditions, and the findings of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Examples of other links between design/planning and health in Leeds include:

- Work on the energy efficiency work stream of the Leeds Standard to ensure issues such as affordable warmth are included, together with increased room sizes
- Improvements to City Centre wayfinding and permeability to make the City Centre more workable and less stressful and the provision of a new City Centre park
- Health and Wellbeing training for planning officers
- links made with NHS England to map GP practices onto the site allocations plan
- Responses to specific planning applications and planning policies for significant housing developments (eg East Leeds Extension and Aire Valley Area Action Plan)
- Work around child obesity and child friendly cities
- Provision of new public open spaces and parks and integral points of growth in the City

Housing growth and implications for health

Our aspiration is to deliver quality houses and places are set out in the recent report on the Leeds Standard which was supported by the Executive Board in September 2014. The adoption of the Leeds Standard will help ensure the provision of better accommodation for people with physical disabilities (e.g. through larger room sizes), and part of the council's new build programme, and for better arranged houses and

neighbourhoods through the updates to the Neighbourhoods for Living guidance. When plans for the establishment of a Leeds Housing Standard were submitted to Executive Board in September 2014, the accompanying report stated that;

'the development and application of the Standard directly supports council policies and priorities in respect of being an age friendly and child friendly city. The principles of the Core Strategy require that issues such as access to community infrastructure, including health facilities and retail is taken into account in scheme design (Objectives – Place Making pg 18). It supports design which encourages physical activity including playing and walking and the use of public transport and cycling. It also encourages the delivery of highly energy efficient homes which are efficient and affordable to heat. This principle together with the design of spacious, flexibly designed houses which can meet the needs of residents at different stages in their lives, are further reinforced in the specification for the Council's own new build housing programme. It is recognised that over time the needs of residents change as a result of age, disability or health issues. To ensure that properties are sustainable and able to meet future demand and the needs of occupants, it is important that properties are designed in such a way that they can be easily and cost effectively adapted'.

Through this it is clear that the links between housing and wellbeing, including the effect of poor housing on emotional wellbeing and mental health problems, are strong.

3.2 *The Leeds Context - Mental health*

A significant proportion of Leeds residents will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives – 1 in 4 of us at any given time. The 2011 Leeds Mental Health Needs Assessment shows that Leeds is similar to other core cities in terms of overall prevalence of mental health issues except it has higher levels of psychotic disorders. Higher levels of poor mental health and wellbeing and mental illness are inextricably linked with deprivation within Leeds. Local mapping highlights these issues and emphasises the social gradient of mental health and wellbeing. Overall, mental illness costs the UK economy between £70bn and £100bn a year in lost productivity, benefit payments and absence from work. At a crude Leeds estimate, with the city accounting for 1.18% of the UK's population, this equates to an approximate cost to Leeds of around £1bn a year as a result of mental health problems.

Recent national research from Exeter University and published in the Journal of Environmental Science & Technology suggested that green space in towns and cities can lead to significant and sustained improvements in mental health. Analysing individual data over a five year period, the research has found that moving to a greener area not only improves people's mental health, but that the effect continues long after they have moved. The findings add to evidence that suggests increasing green spaces in cities - such as parks and gardens - could deliver substantial benefits to public health.

4.0 Outputs from the ‘Mentally Healthy City’ workshop

A write up of the ‘Mentally Health City’ event and its outputs are included as an appendix to this report. In summary, participants worked in ‘masterplanning’ groups to look at wellbeing and mental health implications for three exemplar parts of the city which reflect some current initiatives. The exercise was intended to stimulate thinking and creativity and to enable participants to draw out some of the issues affecting diverse parts of the city each with their own issues and opportunities. The areas chosen were as follows:

The South Bank of the city

The South Bank of the City is likely to experience significant growth in the coming years. Participants were asked to consider how such developments could affect mental health. They were prompted by the following list to stimulate their thinking:

- 1.The importance of local distinctiveness and heritage for this part of the city
- 2.The proposed city park
- 3.The role of the River Aire in this area
- 4.Connectivity – how to bring safe and attractive walking, cycling routes from areas such as Holbeck, Beeston, Armley and Richmond Hill into this area

Participants came up with a variety of ideas, of which recurring themes included:

- *‘Mentally Healthy’ could be used as a ‘Unique Selling Point’ for development in this area’*
- *“We need to build on the unique heritage (memory, sense of place) of the South Bank but create a uniquely new cultural space”*
- *“This community needs ownership over its own facilities, not just be dependent on the city centre (but also needs improved connectivity)”*
- *‘The area needs to recognise the importance of intergenerational living – we need to build lifetime family homes’*

‘Anytown’ new housing development

In the context of the target to build 70,000 homes in Leeds by 2028, participants considered what implications a hypothetical new housing development on the outskirts of Leeds would have on people’s mental health. They were prompted by the following list to stimulate their thinking:

1. Are ‘new towns’ the answer?
2. How important is local distinctiveness?
3. What are the implications of people travelling 10+ miles to work everyday?
4. How is loss of rural aspect mitigated and greenspace designed into new development?

and came up with a variety of ideas, of which recurring themes included:

- *'New housing styles need connecting and phasing in with old'*
- *'New developments need to work for the communities of 2100 as well as 2014'*
- *'Maximise view of green spaces (use crescent-shaped streets), build green routes of travel, and offer seamless integration into greenfield'*
- *'Getting new bus routes right first time – it's key for tackling social isolation'*

Dewsbury Road

Dewsbury Road is an inner city area of Leeds in Beeston/Holbeck. Participants considered various pre-set questions about this area:

1. How does the distinct housing in this area contribute to its identity?
2. How important are linkages to the city?
3. How can we harness the creativity and cultures that are here?
4. How does crime or fear of crime affect such areas?

and came up with a variety of ideas:

- *'Increase the number of play spaces for children – focus on creating good life experiences so that children stay into adulthood'*
- *'Keep the area tidy – there is a connection between poor mental health and litter'*
- *'There is a fear of crime, which increases isolation – we need to improve house and shop frontage'*
- *'The area has a high density population – how do we tackle claustrophobia and agoraphobia?'*
- *'The area needs more colours and to maximise view of green spaces'*

4 Conclusions

4.1 The 'Mentally Healthy City' event was a successful example of cross disciplinary-working, and since the workshop feedback has been very positive from a number of quarters. It is hoped that such events will help galvanize further cross disciplinary working between health and built environment professions.

4.2 The event identified a number of key messages that could be taken forward as positive steps towards building a 'Mentally Healthy City', including:

- encouraging a greater vibrancy through planning and urban design, and the creative use of landscape and design to improve wellbeing and the further recognition of how place-making principles can enhance liveable

and sustainable places and neighbourhoods for people of all ages including those with mental ill health and physical disabilities

- The importance of events such as these to enlighten and open discussion about such topics to a wider audience both within and without the Council.
- The importance of the involvement of a whole range of professions from the third sector to health professions, planning, design and landscape officers in ensuring a mentally healthy city is built, as well as Members and local residents.
- The importance of improved connectivity to new sites, primarily by making it easier to choose 'mentally healthy' ways of travel e.g. along green corridors, cycle routes, walkable neighbourhoods, access to countryside, bus and train travel.

4.3 As the council uses the new breakthrough projects to focus its cross-cutting efforts on building a growing, prosperous and fair city, this is an ideal opportunity to more closely integrate emotional health and wellbeing considerations into planning and design decisions.

4.4 Given the high cost of mental health problems to the economy, this would also be an opportune time to explore further how the whole-life cost of these problems can be built into planning, design and infrastructure considerations.

5 Corporate Considerations

5.1 Consultation and Engagement

This report builds on an event attended by a large range of professionals from across the health and wellbeing partnership in Leeds. Further consultation and engagement work would be necessary if any future aspects of the event are taken forward for implementation.

5.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

At present there are no direct implications arising from this report: the work laid out here would necessitate further regard to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration issues would be necessary if any future aspects of the event are taken forward for implementation.

5.3 Council policies and City Priorities

This report relates directly to the commitment within the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy to improve mental health and wellbeing in Leeds, and the fifth

outcome in the strategy that people will live in health and sustainable communities.

5.4 Resources and value for money

There are no direct resources or value for money implications arising from this report. However, were Health Impact Assessments to be commissioned on new developments, resources would need to be found.

5.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

There are no direct resources or value for money implications arising from this report.

5.6 Risk Management

There are no risk implications arising from this report.

6 Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to:

- recognise and support the positive outputs and ideas of the 'Mentally Healthy City' workshop, held with cross city partners in June 2014.
- recognise and support the extensive work currently taking place to integrate health and wellbeing considerations into future planning for the built environment and housing.
- recognise and support the benefits identified by this conference of Public Health and planning colleagues, applying a cross-cutting approach to issues in breakthrough projects (such as housing growth, making the City a good place to grow old, and reshaping health and social care), and building on the process of consultation and engagement outlined in this report.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.