

A Consultation Document for the People of Leeds (Draft V- E.B. 2)

“Delivering Responsive and Efficient Services”

Challenging Times:

Everyone will be aware that local public services have to change as a response to reductions in public expenditure. For Leeds City Council, we estimate that we will need to reduce our budget by approximately £150m over the next four years – that sounds a large amount of money, equal to approximately 18% of our net expenditure. Whilst we have four years to address this issue, it is critically important to take action now as we know that we'll need to find at least £50m next financial year alone, starting 1 April 2011. Our biggest area of spend is on staffing. It is inevitable therefore that we will see a fairly large reduction in overall staffing. It's difficult to be precise on the actual number, but our current estimates would suggest that we're likely to have 2,500 to 3,000 fewer staff in four years' time. We currently employ approximately 17,000 people (excluding schools based staff), so that's approximately one in every six jobs. It's important that all residents, partners and Leeds City Council staff understand the challenge we face, understand the approach we are taking and help us to identify the specific actions that need to be taken forward. Please do take some time to read this consultation document carefully and feedback your thoughts and suggestions. If we tackle this together, in a responsible way, we can deliver responsive and efficient public services for the people of Leeds.

Our Response:

We firmly believe that cities like Leeds need strong civic leadership that cares about the city and its people. We also believe that we need a committed and ambitious public sector workforce. We do not agree with the concept that council's should solely be commissioners of services – so we're not proposing an easy-Council approach which is being adopted in some other councils across the country. We believe that we need an appropriate mix of service delivery provision. So, for example, where we can clearly demonstrate that efficiency and effectiveness can be provided by in-house service delivery, this is what we will do. Where we recognise that others can help us to deliver change at a faster rate or deliver better results, either through partnership arrangements or through direct delivery, then this will be considered. We are fully committed to the independent and voluntary sectors and recognise that there is much more that they could do to help us deliver better and more efficient services.

In delivering efficiencies, we recognise the importance of protecting those services provided to the most vulnerable in the city. We also recognise that we are a large city and sometimes don't think sufficiently local in determining priorities and in planning services. We are proposing to review the number of buildings we use across the city to provide services. Too many of them are in poor condition, too many are in the wrong location and some facilities are underused. This will mean that some facilities have to close whilst we make better use of other facilities. We very much appreciate that in such circumstances some service users might be inconvenienced, but we will work closely with service users to find alternative ways of accessing services. We also need to look carefully at funding provided to external organisations to ensure that they are delivering the outcomes required, as well as delivering efficiencies in the context of the reductions we are facing. We will prioritise new investment in initiatives where there is a clear case of saving money in the medium-term or in areas where we are supporting vulnerable people. And remember, the need to make efficiencies is not a new idea. Indeed, over the last 5 years, we have already delivered £100m of efficiencies. We've also developed a new set of values which are currently out for consultation. These are: Celebrating Diversity, Engaging Citizens Locally, Being Open and Honest, Working as a Team for Leeds and Spending Money Wisely. These new values are driving our improvement activity. For example, we are simplifying our partnership arrangements to make them more effective and are about to publish all spend over £500. Whilst this document talks about a general approach to making efficiencies, we will also consult on specific issues, where it is appropriate to do so, to engage citizens and service users in more specific changes when they are developed.

Question 1 : Do you support this overall approach and do you think there is anything missing that we should consider?

Limiting the Impact on Front-Line Services:

We are reviewing our office accommodation and working arrangements to reduce the number of buildings that we occupy as well as using technology better to support the delivery of more efficient ways of working. Through better contract management, negotiation and packaging we believe we can make significant savings on the £500m we spend on buying goods and services every year. We recognise that it is important to have a lean managerial structure and in this regard work is being progressed with the aim of securing a reduction in the number of senior managers we employ. We recognise that the council is large and complex and that it is not always easy to know where to go to get the services people need. We will make it even easier to contact and do business with the council, deliver on our promises, and communicate more clearly with you. We will also maximise the use of electronic means of service delivery (for example through the website) and encourage people to use these cheaper channels where they are comfortable in doing so. We will centralise and review further support services where it makes sense to do so to create economies of scale and deliver efficiencies in order to reduce the impact on front-line services.

Question 2 : What are your views on our proposals to limit the impact on front-line services and do you have any particular issues, ideas or concerns that you would like us to consider in progressing this work?

Safeguarding and Supporting Children and Young People:

Our vision is for Leeds to become a truly child friendly city. We wish for our children and young people to be safe from harm, to do well at school and be ready for work, to choose healthy lifestyles, to have fun growing up and to be active citizens who feel they have voice and influence. We recognise it can sometimes be difficult for children and families to get the services that they need, when and where they are needed. We are therefore reviewing how we deliver services to children and their families in the city. We will make services easier to access by providing them in the heart of communities, building strong services around strong schools, working better with partners in the health service to provide more things together. An example would be the integration of children's centres within schools to make this a strong model right across the city. We will also prioritise what services we provide and how we provide them, focusing on the children with greatest needs and that face greatest disadvantage, such as children with complex health care needs and disabilities and looked after children. We will do this by reviewing services that aren't effective, don't provide good value for money and that are duplicated elsewhere. We will also look for more opportunities for services to be provided by our partners, such as the voluntary sector, where this would deliver better outcomes for children and better value for money.

Question 3: Do you support our aspiration to become a truly child friendly city? Do you support proposals to improve access with more joined-up services based in local schools and communities? What are your thoughts on prioritising services for those most in need? Do you have any other thoughts on how we best support and make efficiencies in the way we support children and young people?

Supporting Older and Disabled People:

In adult social care, we are developing more personalised services. Our commitment is to make sure future services fit the needs and wishes of the individual as closely as possible. We will do this by ensuring services are flexible and by enabling people to choose from a wide variety of options, which are capable of being changed as people's personal needs change. Our aim is to enable people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible. In the future, we propose that our own council-run services will be smaller, more specialised and will target people with the greatest and most complex needs. We will continue to have a focus on safeguarding and quality and will provide a new service for people who need help to regain their independence after an accident or illness, to help them stay out of hospital or residential care. In future, some adult social care services are likely to be delivered by partner organisations such as the NHS and others in the public, private and voluntary sectors, with whom we will continue to work closely.

Question 4 : What are your views on proposals for the council to work more with partners to reduce the need for long-term social care, by helping people remain independent and supporting people with the most complex needs? Should we increase charges for adult social care services, for those people who can afford to pay? And, do you have any other thoughts on how we best support and make efficiencies in the way we support older and disabled people?

Clean and Safe Neighbourhoods:

We provide many key services which are crucial to the quality of life people experience in the city. We want to ensure that neighbourhoods are clean and safe. We recognise the importance of basic services such as refuse collection but also the significance of dealing with waste in a sustainable way. Anti-social behaviour is a blight on many people's lives and we are determined to tackle it. The costs of dealing with waste are rising, particularly as landfill taxes increase. You can help by reducing what you throw away and recycling as much as you can, which will reduce the disposal bill and make our recycling services more cost effective. We will also need to look at how we best encourage recycling with the funding limits we will have. We will try to preserve spending on keeping the streets clean. Residents, however, are paying largely for the council to pick up the litter thrown down by the minority. We want to try a new approach to dealing with the problem at source, working at a local level to tackle hotspots and with our police colleagues on issues such as fly tipping, graffiti and anti-social behaviour, combining our resources to have the maximum impact in local areas. The council plays a key role in ensuring people's housing needs are met. We know that there are not enough affordable homes and the council receives thousands of requests for help by people threatened with homelessness. We will continue to place an emphasis on trying to develop new homes and resolving people's housing problems.

Question 5: Do you support our proposed priorities for clean and safe neighbourhoods and do you agree with a need to tackle local hot-spots and for people to take greater responsibility for their own actions? And, do you have any other thoughts on how we best support and make efficiencies in these service areas?

Sustainable Economy and Jobs:

We want Leeds to be a vibrant and sustainable city that has a thriving economy, a rich cultural life and an attractive environment. To achieve this we need to be sure that new developments are appropriate and relevant for the area they are planned for, maintaining an appropriate balance between development to create jobs and investment and the need to look after the environment. We also need to have a greater focus on the low carbon economy as well as a focus on improving broadband access across the city. We need to ensure people can get to where they want to go, preferably using sustainable transport and we need to ensure that the city offers a rich variety of things to do and places to go. A key priority is helping people to find work in this current economic climate. We want to work closely with education providers and employers and to make sure that local people are able to take up opportunities as they arise. We will work to make sure that any investment the council makes includes a commitment to jobs and training. We will also encourage major businesses to remain in or relocate to the city to create and retain jobs. To meet our future challenges we are reviewing all of our services, seeking partners to help us deliver better services where appropriate, removing duplication where needed and questioning services which are underused. For example, there is a separate consultation currently underway on the provision of library services across the city. We will also need to consider charging for some of the events and services we currently provide free of charge.

Question 6: Do you agree that Leeds needs to be vibrant and sustainable and that a key priority for us is to encourage investment and help people into work? And, do you have any other thoughts on how we best support and make efficiencies in these service areas?

Please let us have your views by:

1. Visiting our website and completing the survey online at www.leeds.gov.uk/.....
2. Or completing the attached questionnaire.

The deadline for feeding back your comments is Friday 17th December 2010. If you have any questions please ring our Contact Centre on (0113) 222 4444 (or a number to be confirmed).