

## Community Committees Annual Report 2020/21

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Report of: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Report to: Council

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### What is this report about?

Community Committees were set up in June 2014 to improve the way the council works locally. They form part of our commitment to involving our residents more closely with the priorities for their local area and decision-making on funding and services, contributing towards the Best Council Plan and the council's overall aim of creating safe, strong communities.

Over the last twelve months as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic they have responded proactively to the key themes that have emerged in the city; listening to all our communities and allocating resources and funding where it has been most needed; helping to protect the most vulnerable, helping to keep people safe from harm, assisting people with financial hardship and helping tackle social isolation and inequality.

The Community Committees' Annual Report looks at the progress made over the last twelve months. It outlines the changes which have taken place during 2020 to 2021 and gives examples of some of the work the Community Committees have carried out within their communities to improve the lives of local people of all ages and backgrounds. The report also looks at Wellbeing and Youth Activities Funding (YAF) and the impact it makes, as well as the role the Community Committees undertake in bringing communities together.

In addition to this the report also outlines the social media activity that takes place through the Community Committee structures, which ensures we reach a large number of residents every month through local stories and conversations. During the pandemic our Community Committees have also played an essential role in providing a responsive information service to all our diverse communities in the city, by being a key source of reliable and up to date information. The Coronavirus Help Facebook Groups were set up as a way of promoting services, supporting communities and cascading information in an attempt to tackle the pandemic. The pages were also there to generate discussion and debate but also facilitate conversations around being neighbourly during the national pandemic and assist in some of the volunteering efforts in the city.

As well as looking back over the last 12 months, the report looks forward and mentions the significant challenges but also opportunities that the Coronavirus pandemic has and will present committees with, including:

- The substantial and ongoing financial challenges, as well as the immediate response that the committees provided to local communities by allocating £10,000 per ward to tackle the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic from available wellbeing funds.
- Spend of the Government COVID-19 monies.
- The response from local communities in relation to the pandemic.
- The opportunity to take learning and good practice from the ways in which we have worked differently throughout the pandemic to inform the way we work going forward.
- The momentum brought about by the pandemic to ensure that the local leadership provided through our Elected Members and Community Committees continues to be at the heart of developing local and city-wide structures.

The report says that Community Committees will continue to play a key role in addressing some of these challenges in our local communities in Leeds and the programmes of work that they develop over the next year, will form a key part of the recovery work that is being undertaken in each of the 33 wards throughout the city. This, alongside delegated budget spend for each committee will help to address a further widening of the inequalities gap that has been identified by COVID-19.

### **Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions**

Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, the response from local communities has been unprecedented, with over 5,000 people inducted by VAL to volunteer their time, expertise and experience to support local relief efforts. The sense of pride in being a citizen of Leeds and supporting local people brought about a new sense of civic responsibility and engagement. Key to the mobilisation of our communities has been the civic leadership that's been demonstrated through our elected leaders, who have worked diligently to ensure that local communities have been kept safe and furnished with the things they need, when they need them.

It is also clear that strong, effective partnerships have been developed during the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of this work. These partnerships have flourished and in many cases are continuing to progress, with some now offering wider support to meet local needs, contributing towards the Best Council Plan and the council's overall aim of creating safe, strong communities.

### **Recommendations**

Members of council are asked to:

- a) receive the annual report; and
- b) note the work now being progressed to further improve the effectiveness, community engagement role and improvement work of the Community Committees.

### **Why is the proposal being put forward?**

Members of council are asked to:

- receive the annual report; and
- note the work being undertaken to take the learning and good practice from the ways in which we have worked differently throughout the pandemic to inform the way we work going forward.

## What impact will this proposal have?

### Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

Community Committee Chairs have been consulted on their respective Community Committee story contained with the Annual Report.

## What consultation and engagement has taken place?

The Community Committees have previously been consulted on projects and Chairs have been consulted on Community Committee stories contained within the Annual Report.

## What are the resource implications?

Aligning the distribution of Community Committee funding to local priorities will help to ensure that the maximum benefit can be provided.

## What are the legal implications?

There are no legal implications or access to information issues. This report is not subject to call in.

## What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

Risk implications and mitigation are considered on all funding applications. Projects are assessed to ensure that applicants are able to deliver the intended benefits.

## Does this proposal support the council's three Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

Projects submitted to the Community Committee for funding are assessed to ensure that they are in line with Council and City priorities as set out in the following documents:

1. Vision for Leeds 2011 – 30
2. Best City Plan
3. Health and Wellbeing City Priorities Plan
4. Children and Young People's Plan
5. Safer and Stronger Communities Plan
6. Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy
7. Climate Emergency

## Options, timescales and measuring success

### What other options were considered?

In recognition of the need to have an immediate and agile response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Executive Member for Communities and Director of Communities and Environment in March 2020 approved the use of 2020/21 Wellbeing funds (£10,000 per ward) to support COVID-19 related activities. This was underpinned by a fit-for-purpose decision making process, with committee members deciding on spend for each ward.

Following Leeds being moved in to Tier 3 in November 2020, all 33 wards in the city were allocated an extra £10,000 from central Government to tackle the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic in their communities (this was additional money to the Community Committees Wellbeing ring-fenced COVID-19 monies). In an attempt to ensure that the money was spent before the end of the 2020/21 financial year, given the short timescales that applied to this funding, this was once again

underpinned by a fit-for-purpose decision making process, with committee members deciding on spend for each ward.

All projects that are funded by the Community Committees are measured for outcomes, in accordance with localised priorities that have been agreed with each individual committee. Aligning the distribution of Community Committee funding to address local priorities helps to ensure that the maximum benefit can be provided.

Feedback and monitoring information is gathered upon completion of each project that is funded by the committees and this is provided as updates to Elected Members in their respective Community Committee meetings. Case studies are also regularly obtained from partners in various service meetings.

This report is meant as an update in relation to the work of the Community Committees over the last 12 months.

### **How will success be measured?**

In 2021/22 Community Committees will continue to play a key role in addressing some of the key challenges in our local communities in Leeds and the programmes that they develop will form a key part of the COVID-19 recovery work that is being undertaken in each of the 33 wards throughout the city. This, alongside delegated budget spend for each committee will help to address a further widening of the inequalities gap that has been identified by COVID-19. Each year an Annual Report is produced that outlines the work and progress of the Community Committees.

### **What is the timetable for implementation?**

Each year an Annual Report is produced that outlines the work and progress of the Community Committees.

### **Appendices**

Attached at appendix 1 is a copy of the Community Committees Annual Report 2020/21, associated with this paper.

### **Background papers**

There are no background documents associated with this paper.