



SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

Meeting to be held in Civic Hall, Leeds, LS1 1UR on
Thursday, 7th December, 2023 at 10.30 am

A pre-meeting will take place for all Members of the Board at 10.00 a.m.

MEMBERSHIP

Cllr J Akhtar	- Little London and Woodhouse
Cllr B Anderson	- Adel and Wharfedale
Cllr S Golton (Chair)	- Rothwell
Cllr P Grahame	- Cross Gates and Whinmoor
Cllr A Hannan	- Headingley and Hyde Park
Cllr N Harrington	- Wetherby
Cllr A Khan	- Burmantofts and Richmond Hill
Cllr A Maloney	- Beeston and Holbeck
Cllr A McCluskey	- Farnley and Wortley
Cllr A Rontree	- Kirkstall
Cllr S Seary	- Pudsey
Cllr P Stables	- Wetherby
Cllr J Tudor	- Killingbeck and Seacroft
Vacancy	
Vacancy	

To Note: Please do not attend the meeting in person if you have symptoms of Covid-19 and please follow current public health advice to avoid passing the virus onto other people.

Note to observers of the meeting: We strive to ensure our public committee meetings are inclusive and accessible for all. If you are intending to observe a public meeting in-person, please advise us in advance by email (FacilitiesManagement@leeds.gov.uk) of any specific access requirements, or if you have a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) that we need to take into account. Please state the name, date and start time of the committee meeting you will be observing and include your full name and contact details'.

To remotely observe this meeting, please click on the 'To View Meeting' link which will feature on the meeting's webpage (linked below) ahead of the meeting. The webcast will become available at the commencement of the meeting.

[Scrutiny Board \(Environment, Housing & Communities\) - 7 December 2023](#)

Principal Scrutiny Adviser:
Rebecca Atherton
Tel: (0113) 37 88642

A G E N D A

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
1			<p>APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS</p> <p>To consider any appeals in accordance with Procedure Rule 25* of the Access to Information Procedure Rules (in the event of an Appeal the press and public will be excluded).</p> <p>(* In accordance with Procedure Rule 25, notice of an appeal must be received in writing by the Head of Governance Services at least 24 hours before the meeting).</p>	
2			<p>EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To highlight reports or appendices which officers have identified as containing exempt information, and where officers consider that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons outlined in the report. 2. To consider whether or not to accept the officers recommendation in respect of the above information. 3. If so, to formally pass the following resolution:- <p>RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as follows:</p> <p>No exempt items have been identified.</p>	

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LATE ITEMS

To identify items which have been admitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration.

(The special circumstances shall be specified in the minutes.)

4

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

To disclose or draw attention to any interests in accordance with Leeds City Council's 'Councillor Code of Conduct'.

5

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

To receive any apologies for absence and notification of substitutes.

6

MINUTES - 12 OCTOBER 2023 AND 6 NOVEMBER 2023

5 - 20

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the ordinary Scrutiny Board meeting held on 12 October 2023 and the Call In meeting held on 6 November 2023.

7

REDUCING POVERTY & IMPROVING FINANCIAL INCLUSION

21 - 62

To receive an update from the Chief Officer Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support in relation to work to reduce poverty and improve financial inclusion in Leeds.

8

LOCAL WELFARE SUPPORT SCHEME UPDATE

63 - 70

To receive an update from the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment on the progress of the Local Welfare Support Scheme.

9

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE REVIEW

71 -
88

To receive an update from the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment on the progress of the Community Committee Review.

10

WORK SCHEDULE

90 -
112

To consider the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the 2023/24 municipal year.

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DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next public Scrutiny Board meeting will take place on **25 January 2024 at 10.30am**. There will be a pre-meeting for all Board Members at **10.00am**.

THIRD PARTY RECORDING

Recording of this meeting is allowed to enable those not present to see or hear the proceedings either as they take place (or later) and to enable the reporting of those proceedings. A copy of the recording protocol is available from the contacts on the front of this agenda.

Use of Recordings by Third Parties – code of practice

- a) Any published recording should be accompanied by a statement of when and where the recording was made, the context of the discussion that took place, and a clear identification of the main speakers and their role or title.
- b) Those making recordings must not edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the proceedings or comments made by attendees. In particular there should be no internal editing of published extracts; recordings may start at any point and end at any point but the material between those points must be complete.

Public Document Pack Agenda Item 6

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

THURSDAY, 12TH OCTOBER, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor S Golton in the Chair

Councillors P Stables, B Anderson,
J Akhtar, P Grahame, A Maloney,
A McCluskey, A Rontree, A Khan,
N Harrington, D Cohen and R Jones

38 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

39 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exemptions.

40 Late Items

There were no late items.

41 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

42 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received from the following Scrutiny Board members: Cllr S Seary (Cllr Cohen attended as a substitute), Cllr J Tudor (Cllr R Jones attended as a substitute), Cllr A Hannan

Apologies were also received from Cllr J Lennox (Executive Member).

43 Minutes - 14 September 2023

The minutes of the meeting of 14 September were approved as a correct record.

44 Matters Arising

Further to minute 34, the Chair confirmed he had written to Alison Lowe (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime) to highlight member comments regarding the Mayor's Safer Communities Fund.

Cllr Golton had followed up on the question of whether community committees could apply for funding for local projects via the Mayor's Safer Communities Fund under current arrangements.

He had further asked for a response to the question raised by members regarding a potential future role for community committees in assisting with the assessment of applications to this fund to ensure the distribution of funds reflects community priorities.

45 Plans for Community Parks

The item began with a video summarising research by the University of Leeds, on behalf of West Yorkshire Combined Authority, about how to make women and girls feel safer in parks.

Those in attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Mohammed Rafique (Executive Member)
- James Rogers (Director Communities, Housing and Environment)
- Polly Cook (Chief Officer, Climate, Energy and Green Spaces)
- Emma Trickett (Parks Technical Manager)
- Geoff Turnbull (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager)
- Dr Anna Barker (Associate Professor in Criminal Justice & Criminology, University of Leeds)
- Helen Forman (Urban Design Manager, WYCA)

In reference to the guidance produced in response to the research by the University of Leeds, Helen Forman noted that 10 principles have been developed under 3 themes:

- Eyes on the park: reflecting that the presence of others makes women and girls feel safer.
- Awareness: addressing design issues in parks that can make women and girls feel more secure.
- Inclusion: considering the importance of belonging, bringing a diverse range of women and girls into the parks and designing spaces with their input.

The guidance includes case studies of good practice that show how the principles might be applied in practice. Helen welcomed the fact that the guidance has already been incorporated into Leeds City Council's access audits and 'plans on a page.'

Helen acknowledged that changes to design and management of parks are only part of the solution, and that societal change will also be required to ensure the women and girls feel safe in these spaces. She noted that plans on page are a useful tool to ensure that these issues are considered and that they provide an opportunity for women and girls to input into the design of these spaces.

Polly Cook reminded the Scrutiny Board that the 2022 Parks and Green Spaces Strategy included a recommendation that a 'Plan on a Page' should be produced for each of the city's community parks. Each plan will be produced in consultation with members and local communities and will set out a vision for each of those spaces, including addressing issues of accessibility and safety.

Emma Trickett provided an update on progress towards developing plans on a page for community parks and carrying out accessibility audits. She highlighted that a plan will be developed for all 65 community parks. Each document will show the current park on one page and the future vision on the opposite page – this is intended to be a simple and accessible format.

Emma confirmed that each plan will be based on extensive consultation with local people. She noted that 13 plans have been developed as part of the process of bidding for Levelling Up funding in several wards and 4 more consultations are underway.

Some concerns were raised in relation to the consultation process for the 13 plans developed as part of a bid for Levelling Up funding. Officers confirmed that consultation had to be delivered within a tight timescale to meet the funding application deadlines and therefore was not as extensive as the service would have liked. Future consultations will follow the process set out in the report.

'Access for all' is a priority in the Leeds Parks and Green Spaces Strategy, which aims to ensure parks and greenspaces are accessible for everyone who wants to use them. To achieve this the Council has committed to develop and undertake an access audit of all city and community parts within the lifetime of the strategy.

Geoff Turnbull confirmed that the service has taken a robust approach to the accessibility audits. He confirmed he is confident in the process from an equalities perspective and will continue to support the service to deliver the audits.

Scrutiny members sought to clarify what is deemed a 'community park.' Officers confirmed that there are different, historical definitions of greenspaces in the city – including city parks, community parks and recreation grounds.

The Chief Officer agreed to circulate the definitions of the different classifications of greenspace, noting that members could discuss any concerns about definitions relating to greenspace in their wards with the team.

The Scrutiny Board sought clarification about who would have responsibility for carrying out the accessibility audits and the timescales for doing so.

Information was provided about designated active travel routes, which enable cyclists to travel through certain parks.

Members requested that guidance about improving the safety of women and girls in parks is shared with Parish and Town councils to inform the development of green spaces for which they have responsibility. Officers also confirmed that they would be happy to share their methodology for developing plans on a page with Parish and Town Councils and/or other stakeholders but noted that resource restrictions prevent the service from extending its current planned activity to parks that are not directly controlled by the Council.

Members welcomed the costing of each plan on a page and acknowledged that funds are not in place to deliver all the desired works immediately.

The Scrutiny Board was informed that city parks that have a Green Flag Award have separate management plans in place to ensure those destination parks continue to meet the required standards. Such parks include Golden Acre Park, Otley Chevin Forest Park and Roundhay Park.

Members sought to clarify how CIL monies might be used to fund some of the work reflected in the plans on a page for parks. It was noted that Parish and Town councils will be the future recipients of CIL funding and there may be opportunity to work in partnership to use some of that money to improve local greenspaces.

It was further recommended that members raise the issue of CIL funding within the upcoming community committee review.

Cllr Rafique reassured the Board that all plans will involve detailed consultation with communities and local ward members. He noted that alongside CIL monies, some communities have already delivered change through local fundraising.

The need for expectation management was explored, with members noting that the plans contain both short- and long-term ambitions for local green spaces.

Emma Trickett set out the consultation process that will be used for each plan on a page. She confirmed the consultation documents will be shared online and that there will also be opportunities for in person consultation.

Members highlighted the need to ensure that plans on a page are also aligned with the neighbourhood development plans produced through neighbourhood forums.

Concern was raised that the introduction of charging could push people to park in places outside of designated car parks, which could undermine efforts to improve safety and accessibility for women and girls.

The Chief Officer noted that a consultation has been launched in relation to the potential introduction of parking charges at some parks. It is the intention that funding raised through any such charges would be directed to improve

the quality of parks. It was confirmed that there would be no charge introduced for disabled parking.

Members requested that consideration be given to how currently restricted S106 monies could be used in future to improve pocket parks.

Dr Barker provided an overview of the methodology used in the research conducted by the University of Leeds. She noted the importance of recognising the diversity of needs and interests amongst women, while also responding to the factors that are common across all groups.

Dr Barker highlighted work undertaken with women's centres in West Yorkshire, facilitated by WYCA, which enabled researchers to engage with women who do not use parks currently as well as those that do. Evidence was gathered through a combination of focus groups and individual interviews.

The Board queried at what stage of planning an equality impact assessment would be conducted and asked how that process would capture lived experience.

Members queried how an equality impact assessment might be updated in response to the experience of users – for example, if concerns about accessibility are raised following action to 'rewild' an area to increase biodiversity. Members also questioned whether recommendations regarding the maintenance of natural features would be part of an equality impact assessment.

Geoff Turnbull noted that consultation and engagement would provide an evidence base that may inform the development of a plan. However, a formal equality impact assessment would only be conducted when funding is established and the associated decision making processes initiated.

Members explored the issue of lighting in parks, with concern raised about the shadows created along very brightly lit pathways.

Helen Forman responded by acknowledging the difficulty of identifying lighting solutions that create gradients of light rather than stark contrasts. She also noted lighting is often a very expensive solution to safety concerns and a priority that creates tension with priorities around encouraging biodiversity. It is hard to make generalisations at a national level but where there is an 'anchor' such as a station linked to a greenspace lighting is regarded as especially important.

Reflecting upon the importance of the presence of others in a park to create a perception of safety for women, members explored the challenges of staffing in the current financial climate. Concern was also expressed about recommendations that staff should be available to supervise wheelchair friendly play equipment in parks given the limited resources within the parks service.

The Scrutiny Board explored the tension between enabling access to parks for mobility vehicles while also trying to create barriers for people using electric vehicles as part of anti-social behaviour. Officers confirmed that chicanes are recommended in most instances to deter anti-social behaviour but where there is a more significant problem more robust solutions may need to be explored.

The Scrutiny Board expressed thanks to the staff working to improve parks and greenspaces, and to Dr Barker and Helen Forman for taking the time to contribute to the debate.

The Chair proposed that the Board would produce a statement of its conclusions and recommendations having reflected on the discussion at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) produces a summary of its conclusions and recommendations having considered the report and reflected upon member discussion.

46 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy

In June 2023 the Scrutiny Board received an update on homelessness prevention activity as part of regular performance monitoring.

During this update members asked for more information about the development of a new five-year Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which followed the completion of a Homelessness Review in January 2023. It was confirmed that the new strategy would be presented to the Scrutiny Board for information to inform future consideration by members of KPIs included within regular performance monitoring data.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023 - 2028 was approved by the Executive Board in July 2023.

The following officers were in attendance for this item:

- James Rogers (Director, Communities, Housing and Environment)
- Gerard Tinsdale (Chief Officer Housing)
- Kerrie Murray (Head of Homelessness)

The Chair noted that Cllr J Lennox (Executive Member for Housing) had asked that her apologies be recorded in relation to this item.

Kerrie Murray introduced the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, highlighting that this is a legal requirement for the Council. The Council must publish a strategy informed by a homeless review in the district at least every five years.

The Strategy has been designed in consultation with the Homelessness Prevention Forum to capture the views of the wider sector and those with lived experiences.

Kerrie set out the four overarching ambitions of the strategy: universal prevention, targeted prevention, intervention and recovery through strong city partnership working, and a shared and integrated approach to building on our offer of Housing Options.

An update was provided in relation to a new single partnership assessment form to prevent people who are experiencing trauma from having to repeat their experiences to different organisations.

The Board was informed that the strategy includes a commitment to expand the Landlord Letting scheme and to increase engagement with landlords in Leeds.

Members noted the strong focus on prevention within the strategy and the ambition to minimise the use of temporary accommodation.

Members of the Scrutiny Board welcomed the strategy and the performance of the team, noting there has been national recognition for the Leeds approach.

The Scrutiny Board expressed concern about overall pressures on housing supply in Leeds, including within the private rented sector.

Specific concern was raised about a limited supply of permanent facilities for members of gypsy and traveller communities, and the impact of temporary sites on local communities. Board members sought clarification about the number of potential permanent sites identified for development as part of the site allocations process, along with the cost of clearing temporary sites.

Gerard Tinsdale noted that the Council had been unsuccessful in a recent bid to secure funding to develop an additional permanent site for members of the gypsy and traveller community. He acknowledged the need in the city but also highlighted the financial challenge of delivering further provision. He noted the different needs of gypsy and traveller groups with some people requiring permanent facilities, and others in need of temporary facilities as they pass through the city.

Further information was requested about those most at risk of homelessness and groups where there is a likelihood of under-reporting. Kerrie confirmed that there appears to be underreporting within the LGBTQ+ community, particularly amongst young people. Action had been taken to raise awareness of housing options with young people within the LGBTQ+ community and additional staff training has taken place.

Further information was requested in relation to the potential over representation of veterans within the number of people presenting as homeless. The Head of Homelessness noted that she will confirm this information outside of the meeting.

Members requested more information about accessing help for rough sleepers in their communities and noted particular concern from residents in multi-storey blocks where rough sleepers are found.

It was confirmed that the Council's outreach offer has been extended to support rough sleepers found during evenings and weekends. The Council works with partners to ensure those individuals can receive wrap around care, potentially including health-based services to address challenges with drugs and alcohol, as well as accommodation.

Members noted the rise in demand for temporary accommodation and queried whether plans to demolish several high-rise buildings in the city would further reduce the supply of accommodation for single households.

The Chief Officer for Housing acknowledged that removing 360 units will increase the pressure on housing services. He reassured members that the allocation policy is currently being reviewed to ensure the focus of allocation is on the needs of the most vulnerable citizens.

He noted that the Council has an obligation to ensure people are living in decent standards and does not have the funding to deliver the extensive changes required to improve the standard of these blocks. He informed the Board that the ultimate ambition is to replace these blocks with higher quality housing but that will take several years.

The Director also highlighted the broader context of investment being delivered as part of the housing growth strategy, which includes social and affordable housing and one-bedroom properties.

Further information was requested in relation to accommodation for those with struggling with addiction. The Head of Homelessness updated the Board on accommodation purchased with funding through the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (RSAP) for individuals who may require immediate wrap around support.

Members welcomed the inclusion of costs within the report and received clarity about performance in relation to other core cities.

RESOLVED:

Members noted and commented upon the contents of the report.

47 Work Schedule

Members noted the draft 2023/24 work programme.

The Executive Board minutes from the meeting of 20 September were also included at **Appendix 2** for reference.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the draft 2023/24 work schedule.

48 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next public meeting of the Scrutiny Board will take place on **7 December 2023 at 10.30am**. There will be a pre-meeting for all board members at **10.00am**.

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SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

MONDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor S Golton in the Chair

Councillors P Stables, J Akhtar,
P Grahame, A Maloney, J Tudor,
A Hannan, A Rontree, S Seary,
N Harrington, C Anderson, K Brooks and
E Thomson

49 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

50 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

Members were informed that Appendix C to the Executive Board report had been designated as being exempt from publication under the provisions of Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4 (3).

51 Late Items

Supplementary information had been provided by the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment in relation to item 7, Future of Six High Rise and Resident Rehousing – Bailey and Brooklands Towers, Ramshead Heights, Leaffield Towers, Raynville Court and Grange. This information had been published and distributed prior to the meeting.

52 Declaration of Interests

There were no late items.

53 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors B Anderson (signatory to the Call-in), A Khan and Councillor A McCluskey.

Councillors C Anderson, K Brooks and E Thomson were in attendance as substitutes.

54 Call In Briefing Paper

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report advising the Scrutiny Board on the procedural aspects of Calling In the decision.

Members were advised that the Call In is specific to the key decision in question, and issues outside of the decision, including other related decisions, were not to be considered as part of the Board's decision regarding the outcome of the Call In.

Members were also advised that the options available to the Scrutiny Board in respect of this particular called in decision were as follows:

Option 1- Release the decision for implementation

Having reviewed this decision, the Scrutiny Board may decide to release it for implementation. If the Scrutiny Board chooses this option, the decision will be immediately released for implementation and the decision may not be called in again.

Option 2 - Recommend that the decision be reconsidered

The Scrutiny Board may decide to recommend to the decision maker that the decision be reconsidered. If the Scrutiny Board chooses this option a report will be submitted to the decision maker.

In the case of this officer decision, the report of the Scrutiny Board will be prepared within three working days of the Scrutiny Board meeting and submitted to the relevant Director.

In reconsidering the decision and associated Scrutiny Board report, the Director may vary the decision or confirm the original decision. In either case, this will form the basis of the final decision and will not be subject to any further Call In.

Failure to agree one of the above options

If the Scrutiny Board, for any reason, does not agree one of the above courses of action at this meeting, then Option 1 will be adopted by default, i.e. the decision will be released for implementation with no further recourse to Call In.

RESOLVED – That the report outlining the Call In procedures be noted.

55 Future of six high rise and resident rehousing - Bailey and Brooklands Towers, Ramshead Heights, Leafield Towers, Raynville Court and Grange

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented background papers to a decision made by Executive Board at its meeting of 18th October 2023, which had been Called-In in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

The decision had been called in for review by Councillors Barry Anderson, Mark Dobson, Wayne Dixon, Robert Finnigan and Diane Chapman

The Scrutiny Board considered the following written information:

- Copy of the completed Call In request form.
- Report of the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment presented to Executive Board at its meeting of 18 October 2023.
- Extract from the draft minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 18 October 2023.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Barry Anderson, Lead Signatory to the Call In
- Councillor Jessica Lennox, Executive Member for Housing
- James Rogers, Director of Communities, Housing and Environment
- Gerald Tinsdale, Chief Officer – Housing
- Helen Jackson, Head of Business Development and Housing Projects

As the Nominated Lead Signatory to the Call In, Councillor B Anderson addressed the Board on the reasons for the Call-in.

The following concerns were raised:

- While it was acknowledged that the buildings were not fit for purpose, all signatories to the call in had concerns regarding the provision of Council, social and affordable housing.
- Further information was requested about the consultation process including in relation to individual concerns that had been raised by tenants and the details of the questions asked during the consultation.
- The signatories sought clarity about how many residents supported the proposals, how many had concerns and how many opposed the proposal.
- Lessons that had been learned from previous consultations.
- Cllr Anderson queried why copies of the consultation documents and FAQs had not been appended to the Executive Board report.
- Clarity was sought about whether people had been consulted about the proposed levels of compensation and been provided with information how this could affect their benefits.
- Whether independent legal advice was available for tenants.
- The impact on the housing register of including tenants within priority bandings, particularly for those who already have band A and A+ status.
- Housing supply – signatories queried how many lets per annum are made by the Council and how long would it take to adequately re-house the affected tenants.
- What happens if suitable accommodation is not found? Will the process be held up until the last resident had moved out of an existing block?
- What will be the impact of allocating affected tenants direct let status?
- Has there been a timescale set for re-investment on the sites?

- Have land swaps with developers been considered?
- Could a housing company be developed to take over these sites?
- Why has planning permission for the future use of these sites not been sought?
- What green priorities have been considered?
- Has WYCA funding or Government funding been sought for re-development?
- Could the sites be sold in their current state to a registered social landlord or developer?
- What works need doing in the interim to keep properties safe and secure?
- What assurances can be given with regard to measures being taken to prevent future investment programmes overspending?
- What would the carbon footprint of demolition be?
- What would the impact on the Housing Revenue Account be?
- This would take properties out of use in the same way as right to buy.

In conclusion it was felt that the original proposal should have been referred to scrutiny before submission to Executive Board so that further examination could have been undertaken by members.

In response to questions from the Board, the following was discussed:

- Further consideration needed to be given to the impacts of the decision rather than the decision being reversed.
- There was a need for these properties to be demolished and for the provision of new housing.
- Concern was expressed regarding the length of time it could take for blocks to be demolished following tenants vacating.
- Further information was requested regarding the future use of the land, what the blocks would be replaced with, the housing mix needed in the local area and the need for further consultation with Ward Members.

Councillor Lennox, Executive Member for Housing and James Roges, Director of Environment, Communities and Housing addressed the Board. The following was highlighted:

- Appendix B of the report set out various options for the blocks along with the associated costs. Doing nothing would not address the needs of residents or deliver improved energy efficiency. There was also a possibility that in future safety certificates may not be achieved.
- Full refurbishment would have required residents to move out of the properties and in those circumstances it could take up to 5 years for re-occupation. Refurbishment would not be financially viable – costs are projected to be around £485k per flat, which is higher than the current cost of providing new build housing units.
- Engagement has taken place with 85% of affected residents. Data collected had been analysed to ensure the necessary support could

be provided to tenants throughout the process of re-housing. Only 8% of households had shown any trepidation and one in five were already seeking re-housing.

- Repairs to improve the standard of accommodation would still require tenants to vacate the properties.
- Residents being placed on Band A would not necessarily penalise others already on the list, allocations would still be made to those with the highest needs.
- Tenants would be given a choice in terms of re-housing and it was expected that the vast majority would be allocated housing in the area of their choice.
- Council housing growth – there had been an additional 500 homes provided in Leeds over the past year but there were still pressures on finances and due to loss of properties under right to buy.
- The proposed approach would see demolition carried out ahead of options being developed for alternative delivery at these sites. It was too early at this stage to carry out any planning applications. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment was due to be updated which would give a clearer picture of housing demand across Leeds and the housing mix needed.
- It was not proposed to move residents on a short-term basis and most tenants have already expressed a preference in terms of area. Tenants could also apply for other social/private rented housing without affecting their home loss payments.
- The demolition would result in a loss of income for the Council due to the demolition. However, the substantial costs that would be incurred for necessary ongoing maintenance and repair costs mean it is not viable to continue to retain these blocks.
- The Council has a clear lettings policy, which has been agreed by Elected Members and is publicly available.
- There is a clear risk that future safety certificates may not be obtained without substantial works being undertaken on the sites.

In response to questions from the Scrutiny Board. Discussion included the following:

- A safety case for the blocks had to be submitted by 31st March 2024. If the Council cannot meet the necessary standards, it has to be demonstrated that a plan is in place to address those concerns. If the buildings are safe and secure, they could still be occupied.
- There are approximately 125 people currently on Band A+ and 5,300 on Band A. There are approximately 26,000 on the register. 3,100 properties were allocated last year. The number of people waiting with Band A status had been reducing.
- It was estimated that by 2026/27 everybody will have been successfully re-homed, with many in the same area.
- There has been a lower take up of engagement with residents of Ramshead Heights but efforts are continuing to engage with residents.
- There is only one leaseholder property across the six blocks and work is ongoing with the tenant.

- The Council could ultimately apply for possession of a property through the courts if someone refused to move out.
- The preference would be to replace the blocks with council housing which would be high quality and energy efficient. It is anticipated that work could commence in 2027 following demolition.
- There has been positive comments from residents regarding the decision to rehouse people and demolish the blocks.
- 673 properties have been lost through right to buy over the past year. During 2023/24 officers estimate around 200 additional properties for applicants from the building of new homes and acquisition.
- Information was requested on the number of families with children that would be affected and how it would affect school places.

Councillor Lennox thanked Members for their engagement and reiterated that the proposal aims to deliver a proactive, managed process to rehouse people in high quality housing across the city.

In conclusion, Councillor Anderson reiterated that the signatories agree with the decision to demolish the blocks but believe more detail should have been provided to members at an earlier stage with regards to future proposals and timescales to ensure more accountability. There is some concern over the need for a safety certificate and whether people should still be in these properties. He asked the Executive Member to involve scrutiny at all further stages of the decision.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report, along with comments from Members, be noted.

56 Outcome of the Call In

The Scrutiny Board considered whether or not to release the decision for implementation. A vote was subsequently held and the Scrutiny Board agreed (by majority decision) that the decision be released.

RESOLVED – That the decision be released for implementation.

57 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 7 December 2023 at 10.30 a.m. There will be a pre-meeting for Board Members at 10.00 a.m.

Reducing Poverty and Improving Financial Inclusion

Date: 7th December 2023

Report of: Chief Officer Community Hubs, Welfare and Business Support

Report to: Scrutiny Board Environment, Housing and Communities

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

As requested by the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board, this report provides an overview of the work to reduce poverty and improve financial inclusion in Leeds, focusing on the collaborative approach, local partner updates and Universal Credit.

Leeds City Council and partners across the city have been recognised for the work undertaken to reduce poverty and tackle inequality and address financial inclusion. This approach, which has been adopted since 2004 has been based on building a strong evidence base including local research, data analysis and engaging with services and organisations who work directly with people most impacted by poverty and inequality.

Linked to the Best City Ambitions breakthrough priority to develop an integrated city-wide welfare support approach, multi-agency strategic and operational groups have been meeting since September 2022 to coordinate actions to mitigate the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis. Work over the past year has focused on developing a coordinated and integrated approach to; communications, information, advice and guidance, practical support, funding, and evidence and reporting. Thematic meetings including housing, children's services, health, crime and community safety, third sector and crisis support, have also been discussed, with clear crossover and recurring issues highlighted.

Partner updates reveal public services and third sector organisations in the city are facing rising levels of demand, higher costs, and increasing financial uncertainty. Demand for advice services remains high due to inflation, energy costs and the inadequate levels of income available to many people - either through Benefits or employment.

Locally, funding opportunities have been used to reinforce and enhance existing actions and initiatives established through the partnership approach and work continues through the breakthrough Welfare Group to further coordinate and integrate the city's response to welfare and the cost-of-living.

Despite the successful citywide approach, it should be recognised that due to wider economic factors the work undertaken has not been enough to prevent increasing numbers of households from experiencing financial hardship across Leeds. The resources available are not sufficient to meet the scale of the need. As such, council and citywide efforts to target the root causes of poverty and inequality, providing people with the support and opportunities they need to earn a good living and enjoy a healthy, secure family life, are more important than ever.

Although inflation has started to fall, the longer term economic outlooks remains stagnant. To be able to make sustainable change, longer term national commitments and funding opportunities are required to prevent further deterioration of the citywide financial inclusion position and to tackle the long term and underlying issues driving poverty in the city.

Recommendations

- a) To examine the content of this report and to review the evidence and approach being taken in respect to reducing poverty, and improving financial inclusion in the city, with consideration as to the current cost of living crisis.
- b) To recognise that national economic factors and context are limiting the ability of the Council and financial inclusion partners to undertake actions and measures to reduce poverty in the city, thereby increasing the risk of more households experiencing poverty and destitution.

What is this report about?

1. Poverty and financial exclusion have been deep-rooted challenges for many years, but key factors affecting the financial climate since 2022 have further escalated the situation, leading to the 'cost-of-living crisis'.
2. In October 2022, The Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board last received an annual update on the approach undertaken by Leeds City Council and partners to reduce poverty and improve financial inclusion in Leeds.
3. This report provides an update on work undertaken over the last year with particular focus on local partner updates, including current information on Universal Credit and the 'Move to Universal Credit' programme.

Background information

4. Inflation reached 11.1% in October 2022, the highest reading since 1982. The latest CPI inflation figures published in November revealed UK Inflation of 4.6% in October 2023.
5. Food and drink prices are still a significant component to inflation at 10.1% as of October 2023 (down from 12.1% in September). The largest downward contribution to inflation was housing and household services which includes energy costs at -3.5%.
6. In November 2023, Bank of England interest rates were 5.25%, maintained from September, the first hold decision for nearly two years (and the highest rate for 15 years).
7. The main factors behind the fall in inflation has been attributed to the high Bank Rate and because the energy price cap been reduced further in October.
8. Since 2022, the Executive Board have received regular reports providing updates on the cost-of-living crisis, the specific impact on low-income households and details of actions undertaken locally to provide support in response to the cost-of-living crisis. (Latest Executive Board Report attached as **appendix 1** as additional context).

Main Issues

9. Although inflation has reduced since earlier in the year, it remains higher than the 2% target, increasing the overall risk and rate of poverty and pulling those already below the poverty line into deeper, more severe forms of financial crisis.
10. In Leeds, according to the latest available estimates;
 - 22% of the Leeds population is living in relative poverty (after housing costs) equal to 178,630 people in Leeds¹.
 - 22% of children in Leeds are living in relative poverty (before housing costs), equal to 32,933 children under the age of 16²
11. 2023/24 Client demographic data³ from Citizens Advice Leeds is also indicative of groups being disproportionately impacted in the current climate;
 - 58% of clients were women

¹ Poverty Estimates for Leeds – Leeds Poverty Factbook, <https://observatory.leeds.gov.uk/leeds-poverty-fact-book/relative-and-absolute-poverty/>

² DWP & HMRC Children in Low-Income Families: Local Area Statistics - <https://observatory.leeds.gov.uk/leeds-poverty-fact-book/section-2-child-poverty/> <https://observatory.leeds.gov.uk/leeds-poverty-fact-book/section-2-child-poverty/>

³ Citizens Advice Client Demographic Date - 2023/24 to date

- 51% had a long-term health condition or disability
 - 42% of clients were from ethnically diverse communities
 - 21% were single parents (compared to 8% of the Leeds population)
12. In addition to the pressure on households, the financial challenges faced by statutory and voluntary sector organisations including the local authority, NHS, third sector present further challenge and risk to the sustainability and operation of services, at a time of rising need.
 13. The Autumn Statement was presented on Wednesday 22 November 2023, with welfare support measures centred around cuts to the rates of National Insurance, confirmation that benefits will be uprated in line with inflation (6.4%, September 2023) and increasing Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates back to the 30th percentile of local rent levels.
 14. While these measures are welcome, longer-term support is required to ensure and enable meaningful support to low-income households. For example, increasing LHA rates will alleviate pressure for benefit claimants living in private rented accommodation, however if as anticipated the freeze is reinstated the following year, the pressure on households will be restored.
 15. Although changes to Universal Credit indicate increased levels of national employment support, this is alongside strengthened sanction regimes and changes to the Work Capability Assessment which risk reducing incomes and increasing barriers, particularly for disabled people and those with long-term illnesses.
 16. In addition, the Autumn Statement also made no reference as to whether Household Support Fund will continue beyond the current financial year.
 17. National charities including Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Barnardo's, and the Childrens Society have issued a statement expressing concerns that; 'The fund ends in March 2024 leaving a major hole in support which neither local government, nor the voluntary sector, will be able to fill.'
 18. On the 22nd November, Ofgem announced the new energy price cap of £1928 from January 2024. Previously, in January 2023, energy bills had been capped at £2,500 under the Energy Price Guarantee and due to the Government's Energy Bill Support Scheme, average energy bills were £142/month (instead of £208/month). The Energy Bill Support Scheme ended in March 2023, and under the new energy price cap, average households in January 2024, will be paying £160/month.

Leeds approach to Reducing Poverty and Improving Financial Inclusion

19. Leeds City Council and partners across the city have been recognised for the work undertaken to reduce poverty and tackle inequality and address financial inclusion. This approach, which has been adopted since 2004 has been based on building a strong evidence base which has included local research and data analysis but most importantly by engaging with services and organisations who work directly with people most impacted by poverty and inequality and ensuring community views guide the work.
20. As a city it is recognised that to achieve our Best City Ambition and ensure inclusive growth, we need to tackle poverty and inequality.
21. Collaboration and partnership working has always been central to the city's approach, proving critical in the city's ability to respond to both the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. However, it should be recognised that because of wider economic factors the work undertaken has not been enough to prevent increasing numbers of households from experiencing poverty and deprivation.
22. In terms of the response to the cost-of living crisis and linked to the Best City Ambitions breakthrough priority to develop an integrated city-wide welfare support approach, strategic and operational groups have been meeting since September 2022 to coordinate actions to mitigate in as far as possible the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis. Each regular meeting includes a wide range of representatives from key organisations and services across the city including Leeds City Council (cross council), NHS, Public Health, FareShare Yorkshire, Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL), Forum Central, DWP and the Leeds Food Aid Network.

23. Work over the past year has been focussed around developing a co-ordinated and integrated approach to; communications, information, advice and guidance, practical support, funding, and evidence and reporting. Full details of the current work are detailed in full in **appendix 2A**. In summary this has involved the following;

24. Communications:

- Review and update of the Together Leeds campaign site.
- Dedicated social media content including Welcome Spaces and winter health.
- Online content complimented by a range of offline activity and printed resources.

25. Information, advice and guidance:

- The Cost of Living google drive containing up to date messaging and resources for staff and volunteers.
- Leeds Money Information Centre (MIC) - website and printed materials including posters, flyers, booklets and concertinas.
- Bespoke training and awareness sessions for frontline services delivered by the Council's Financial Inclusion Team and partners.

26. Practical Support:

- Welcome Spaces - November 2023 to March 2024, hosted by LCC Community Hubs and Libraries, third sector and faith-based organisations across the city.
- Zero Waste Leeds' Winter Coat Appeal.
- British Gas Energy Vouchers for Housing Leeds tenants (Housing Leeds).
- Emergency Warm Packs – distributed via West Yorkshire Fire Service.
- Debt Relief Order Pilot by Ebor Gardens Advice Centre.

27. Funding:

- Funding prioritised to support people most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis (including via third sector partners in the city), whilst adhering to the criteria of the different funds and differing timescales for delivery includes:
 - Household Support Fund
 - Holiday Activity and Food Funding
 - West Yorkshire Mayoral fund
 - Allocations of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

28. Reporting and evidence:

- Attached as **appendix 2B** is the Leeds Cost-of-Living Dashboard, which brings together detailed data and analysis as of October 2023.
- Work to enhance the dashboard through migration and integration with an online interactive platform continues.
- Gathering evidence and understanding from a wide range of forums and services, to capture community experience and voice.

29. Building on this work, since June 2023 strategic meetings have focused on key themes, pressures and emerging issues, with updates provided by local expert speakers. To date; housing, children's services, health, crime and community safety, third sector and crisis support, have been discussed. Key points from each theme are included as **appendix 3**.

30. Across all themes, clear crossover and recurring issues have been highlighted. In particular, the quality, affordability and availability of housing, increasing levels of mental health, safeguarding concerns and worsening of health inequalities. Recognition of the increasing demand for services at a time where organisations are experiencing reduced capacity, particularly in the context of short term, reduced funding and budget cuts has also been a significant focus.

31. It is envisaged that the thematic meetings will contribute to greater understanding and strengthening of collaboration across the citywide partnership, in addition to the identification of local opportunities and practical support measures needed to tackle specific challenges.

32. Although strong local partnerships have underpinned and enabled the citywide approach, it is understood that secure funding opportunities and national lobbying is required to prevent further

deterioration of the citywide financial inclusion position and to tackle the long term and underlying issues driving poverty in the city.

Involving people with Lived Experience

33. The Council and partners across the city are keen to ensure that the work undertaken on tackling poverty and inequality involves those with lived experience. For many years now, both Members and Council Officer, plus civic and business leaders from across the city have been involved in furthering this approach through involvement in Leeds Poverty Truth.
34. Whilst Leeds Poverty Truth (LPT) are currently embarking on their 4th Commission, the Council has also started working with LPT colleagues as part of their Resourcing the City work, whereby the lessons and actions brought about through the various Commissions in the city are mainstreamed and amplified to the benefit of all.
35. The work commissioned by the Council will see the Poverty Truth approach to involving those with lived experience, become a key building block of 'how we do things in Leeds' to ensure a sustainable and consistent approach is adopted to involving those with lived experience.

Partner updates

36. As has been referred to partnership working is embedded across the city's approach to reduce poverty and improve financial inclusion. This section provides further evidence of the work undertaken across the third sector and advice services in Leeds.
37. The third sector continue to work with and support communities against an increasingly challenging backdrop for the organisations themselves, who face rising levels of demand, higher costs, and increasing financial uncertainty. The recently published [State of the Sector report](#) (jointly commissioned by Forum Central and Voluntary Action Leeds) highlights that between 2020 and 2022, the third sector in Leeds has experienced a;
 - 10% drop in the number of registered (charitable) organisations
 - 25% drop in the number of volunteers reported to the charity commission
 - 34% drop in the paid workforce
38. Alongside this report, the recently published [Third Sector Strategy](#) sets out a programme of work for the city, aiming to ensure all partners work together to ensure that the third sector is more diverse and resilient, and therefore better able to continue supporting communities.

Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL)

39. The work of third sector organisations in the city continues to be a critical part of the support offered to people and communities. As reported to Executive Board, many third sector partners are in receipt of an allocation of the Household Support Fund in recognition of their trusted role and reach into communities, particularly those less likely to engage with statutory services including allocations to VAL and Leeds Community Anchor Network, Forum Central and Leeds Food Aid Network.
40. Taking on board learning from last year's Warm Spaces network, the Welcome Spaces network has been developed for the autumn / winter period of 2023/24. This year, local groups and organisations wishing to offer a Welcome Space have been invited to make a central expression of interest, with the Leeds Community Anchor Network then taking a lead in coordinating local activity and holding and distributing funding. A total of 120 small and medium-sized third sector and faith organisations expressed an interest in being a Welcome Space and there is a good geographical spread of Welcome Spaces, as well as a good spread of organisations working with communities of interest including faith groups, women's groups and LGBT+.

Advice services

41. Access to advice is available in Leeds via several charities and non-for-profit organisations. Service offers vary depending on the organisation, but most offer a mixed provision of face to

face, telephone and digital support to any Leeds resident in need of free, impartial and confidential advice for a range of issues such as debt, benefits, housing, employment etc.

42. Key issues reported across advice partners in the city include:

- Claims to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) remain a significant and challenging area of work both in terms of new claims and appeals. Key issues are the length of time to determine the initial claims, and the high volume of claims which then go to appeal.
- Fuel and utility enquiries have remained exceptionally high, with affordability, debt and self-disconnection likely to be key issues in winter.
- The majority of clients seen for debt advice have deficit budgets, meaning solutions available are extremely limited.
- High levels of safeguarding and mental health concerns, including clients self-harming and expressing suicidal intentions.

43. The Council's Financial Inclusion Team continues to provide a range of training and briefings, particularly aimed at frontline services and volunteers. Feedback from attendees is collated as part of these sessions, to capture specific insights and experiences of those working in front facing roles, informing future training and development of work and projects. Examples of key concerns and challenges are included as **appendix 4**.

Citizens Advice Leeds (CAL) & Chapeltown Citizens Advice (CCA)

44. Demand for advice services has continued to escalate because of inflation, energy costs and the inadequate levels of income available to many people - either through Benefits or employment. Demand has increased particularly in the following areas since 2021/22:

- Utilities enquiries have nearly trebled.
- Demand for help from foodbanks and other crisis support has increased by 250%.
- Housing enquiries have increased by 50%, with most problems arising from the private rented sector.

45. Since 2014, Leeds City Council has funded the Leeds Advice Service contract, which Citizens Advice Leeds delivers, in partnership with Chapeltown Citizens Advice and Better Leeds Communities. Through the Leeds Advice Contract, from 1st October 2022 to 30th September 2023, 28,220 clients were helped with 61,189 enquiries. £2,981,307 income was generated for clients through measures such as benefit entitlement advice and grant applications, and £78,928 debts were written off.

46. Although the high demand and situations experienced by clients can be overwhelming, interventions still result in significant improvements for clients' financial and housing security, and for their health and wellbeing. Client feedback surveys found:

- 96% of clients were satisfied with the service they received.
- 42% reported having more control over their finances following advice.
- 49% reported improvements to their emotional wellbeing.
- 37% reported improvements to their physical health.
- Main areas of dissatisfaction were cited as 'difficulties in getting through on the phone' and 'unable to provide more specialist advice and representation especially in housing.'

47. Further funding has been sourced to increase capacity; funding from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority for the Leeds Advice Service has been used to increase staffing in the telephone team and recruit caseworkers to provide specialist advice in housing, benefits, employment and debt. CAL has also secured funding from Citizens Advice national donations to increase staffing in the telephone/digital team. Northern Powergrid have increased their funding for the Energy Affordability team at CAL and work is ongoing with Leeds MIND and Trussell Trust on one of six pilot projects in the country, to improve support for people experiencing mental health issues and financial difficulties.

48. As a result of increased capacity, the number of phone calls answered locally by Citizens Advice more than doubled in the first half of the year compared to the same period last year, and work is ongoing to increase this further in the second half of the year.

49. Cuts to legal aid and other funding over many years has resulted in virtually no access to specialist advice/representation for people who cannot afford legal advice. Citizens Advice are therefore utilising additional funding referenced to develop casework capacity and CAL is applying for legal aid contracts from 2024 to fill some of those advice gaps.

Burmantofts Community Projects (BCP)

50. Money Buddies (Financial Capability) and Ebor Gardens Advice Centre (Debt Advice), provide debt advice, financial capability, financial education, and income maximisation services from over 30 centres in Leeds, St James and LGI hospitals and 12 food banks across Leeds.
51. In 2023, over 4,000 clients have been helped, including via £76,195 worth of food/fuel vouchers distributed to date.
52. The debt advice service is over-subscribed and although capacity is static, demand has tripled since 2020/2021. This has resulted in the service being forced to cease operating a waiting list.
53. Key focuses for the organisation in 2023 are securing funding for projects and exploration of opportunities to expand including via training and development programmes.
54. BCP Chairs the Leeds and West Yorkshire Debt Advice Network, made up of multi-agency front-line debt advice colleagues working in Leeds. The network helps facilitate collaborative working relationships between front line advisers and plays a key role in working to manage demand across organisations in Leeds.
55. BCP also Chairs the Annual Leeds Poverty and Debt Forum, which is aimed at service managers and seeks to address issues in Leeds in relation to debt and poverty, funding challenges and identifying partnership led solutions.

Welfare Rights Unit (WRU)

56. WRU assisted 10,085 clients in the period April to October compared with 9,748 in the same period in 2022, reflecting the steady increase in work.
57. The biggest area of work continues to be disability benefits, particularly Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Latest DWP figures show again the number of new claims continues to increase and the quarter ending July 2023 saw the highest number of PIP claims since PIP was introduced in 2013, and an increase of 17% compared to the same quarter a year ago. Of awarded claims, 74% were for 2 years or less, giving little long-term stability for disabled claimants and increased pressure on WRU and other advice services.
58. It remains necessary that WRU support customers with initial PIP applications and comprehensive representation for tribunal appeals. In the 6 months commencing 1 April 2023, 158 requests for help with tribunals were received and with the continuing high numbers of new claims being made, high refusal rates and the length of time waiting for a decision, it is expected this number will continue to increase over the next year.
59. The service has noted an increase in 'cost of living' enquiries; with greater demand for benefit checks, help with council tax and information about cost of living schemes. Given current financial forecasts, it is anticipated this upward trend will continue.

Universal Credit- update from Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Housing Leeds and Help to Claim

60. As of October 2023, there were 80,073 people claiming Universal Credit (UC) in Leeds (compared with 71,344 at July 2022)

Housing Leeds

61. At the end of October 2023 19,389 Housing Leeds tenants were claiming UC full service. 47.9 % of these claims have a Managed Payment to Landlord (MPTL) in place (The Housing Cost element of UC is paid directly to the UC claimant by default, but a direct to landlord payment can be made where the tenant has more than 2 months arrears or where circumstances, as defined by DWP, make this appropriate to support the tenant).

DWP

62. 'Move to Universal Credit' is the next stage of the roll out of Universal Credit which is gradually replacing legacy benefits for people of working age. Nationally, DWP have been migrating legacy benefit customers to UC across an increasing number of Jobcentre Districts, since April 2023 and by March 2024, migration will have started in every Jobcentre District. Through 2023/24, the focus is on households receiving tax credits only. Migration Notices began to be issued to Tax Credit claimants in Leeds from August 2023. This only includes residents who are in receipt of Tax Credits and no other benefits.
63. In 2024, migration notices will start to be issued to households receiving other combinations of the six means tested benefits that UC replaces (i.e. Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) - income based, Employment Support Allowance (ESA)- income based, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Housing Benefit (HB), Working Tax Credits and Child Tax Credit), excluding those on ESA only and ESA with HB.
64. Eastgate Jobcentre closed in March 2023 with colleagues and services moved to nearby sites. Leeds Park Place re-opened after refurbishment 20th November 2023. The three temporary jobcentres opened in Leeds are due to close. Seacroft (Temple House); this closes 9th December 2023, Kirkstall closed earlier this year and City Centre (Albion Street) will close 9th January 2024 – Health Model Office will remain in Albion until then.
65. In April - Nov 2023, over 505 employers attended recruitment events in Leeds Jobcentres, offering an opportunity for customers to speak with employers. The established Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) programs were successful with 712 customers starting a SWAP, and over 700 customers have been able to gain work experience and a guaranteed job interview in their chosen field.
66. The Social Justice Team continues to be a key element of local delivery, supporting some of the most vulnerable customers in Leeds. Alongside key partners, the Social Justice Team also supported 171 families as part of Leeds Afghanistan Resettlement; completing claims for Universal Credit and supporting individuals and families to move closer and into the labour market.
67. The Youth Employability Coach (YEC) role works alongside the Social Justice team in Leeds - mirroring the offer and working with a range of partners and organisations to provide a tailored, focused and intensive level of support to youth customers with multiple barriers to work and complex needs, for 6 months depending on individual needs. YEC attends the Dewsbury Road Youth Hub on a weekly basis, alongside different providers, to reinforce wrap round support available. The YEC Team manage a caseload of 470 vulnerable under 24-year-olds, including 16/17 -year- olds with no parental support and Care Leavers.
68. Supporting customers through the Cost-of-Living issues is paramount to Jobcentres and includes;
- Promotion of the MIC (Money Information Centre) via the website and promotional materials, available in every Leeds Jobcentre.
 - Working with Better Leeds Communities to arrange a regular presence within a jobcentre for Work Coaches to refer customers for support, with a view to extending this offer to further local Jobcentres.
 - Upskilling Work Coaches to ensure customers are aware of crisis & welfare support options
 - Signposting customers to (and improving uptake of) other benefits.
69. Next steps focus on building on the already established relationships with external partners and providers, procuring new provision relevant to the city's changing demands and working collaboratively to ensure customers receive not only the correct benefit payments but appropriate upskilling, guidance, advice, and support.

Help to Claim (H2C)

70. The DWP funds a national Help to Claim service for Universal Credit claimants. H2C provides support for new claimants up to receipt of their first payment.

71. The H2C service is delivered through national telephone and digital channels only. Citizens Advice Leeds is one of the local offices contributing to the delivering the service, answering enquiries from across England and Wales.
72. The service was re-tendered this year, and the outcome of that process is still unknown.

What next

73. Leeds has maintained an effective, collaborative, and co-ordinated approach to tackling poverty for many years, but global and national factors have led to unprecedented demand on services and increasing numbers of households falling into low income and poverty.
74. Although inflation has started to fall, the longer-term economic outlook remains stagnant, and there are deep-rooted causes to poverty that need addressing. As stated by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation; ‘for those already skipping meals and going without hot water, the rate at which prices continue to rise is now secondary.’
75. While work continues through the breakthrough Welfare Group to further coordinate and integrate the city’s response to welfare and the cost-of-living, there are significant concerns that without long-term support, the sustainability of the approach is at risk and measures undertaken locally will not be enough to reduce poverty and destitution.

What impact will this proposal have?

76. The proposal will ensure that there is a strategic, coordinated, and collaborative response to tackling poverty and ensuring financial inclusion in Leeds.
77. The focus of this report is on poverty and inequality which is protected equality characteristic. It sets out the impact of the cost-of-living crisis will have on households living on the lowest incomes in the city, the actions currently being undertaken to mitigate the impact and the proposed citywide approach. Equality, Diversity, Cohesion, and Integration screening will be undertaken as appropriate for each future measure.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

- Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

78. The work of the Council’s Financial Inclusion and Welfare and Benefits teams contributes to achieving Leeds Best City Ambition, which sets at its heart the mission to tackle poverty and inequality and improve the quality of life for everyone who calls Leeds home.
79. The cost-of-living crisis will impact all key pillars of the Best City Ambition.
80. Supporting and enhancing the citywide welfare and support offer will not be enough, however, in the face of escalating challenges. The resources available are not sufficient to meet the scale of the need. As such, council and citywide efforts to target the root causes of poverty and inequality, providing people with the support and opportunities they need to earn a good living and enjoy a healthy, secure family life, are more important than ever. This is the basis for our Best City Ambition.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:		
Have ward members been consulted?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

81. Partner organisations referred to in this report have been consulted to provide relevant and up to date information about the projects, initiatives and services referenced.

What are the resource implications?

82. All the projects and services referred to in this report are being undertaken within current budgets, there are no additional resource implications arising from this report.

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

83. Low-income households and those already facing poverty and destitution are being disproportionately, and more severely impacted by the current economic climate. As the situation has prolonged, the risk of more households falling into hardship has been realised.

84. The ability of welfare support services – both statutory and third sector to meet demand and to make meaningful interventions that alleviate poverty and destitution is at further risk.

85. A corporate risk has been identified on Escalating Poverty. Further details of the risk can be seen in Cost-of-Living November Executive Board report in appendix 1.

What are the legal implications?

86. There are no specific legal implications or access to information issues with this report.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

87. No other options have been considered.

How will success be measured?

88. Success will be measured via update reports

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

89. Implementation is immediate and ongoing.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Executive Board Report 'Understanding & addressing the Cost-of-Living Crisis'
- Appendix 2: (A) Cost of Living Action Tracker & (B) Leeds Cost of Living Dashboard
- Appendix 3: Summary of strategic thematic meetings
- Appendix 4: Experiences/feedback from frontline officer/volunteers
- Appendix 5: Glossary of terms

Background papers

- There are no background papers to this report

Cost of Living- update report

Date: 22nd November 2023

Report of: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief Summary

This report provides Executive Board with an updated position on the cost-of-living crisis, national policy interventions and the Leeds City Council's response to addressing the crisis.

The Leeds cost-of-living dashboard detailing key data and analysis is attached at **appendix 1**.

This update follows the report to Executive Board in July 2023 and sets out any new developments, their potential impact, and any additional response required.

It is recognised that current local action alone may not be enough to mitigate the impact, and that in the longer-term greater focus will be required across all three pillars of the Best City Ambition in sustainably addressing deep rooted poverty and inequality within the city.

Recommendations

Members of Executive Board are recommended to;

- a) Note the content of this report and endorse the approach being adopted.
- b) Note that the Director, Communities, Housing and Environment will be responsible for overseeing and implementing any actions arising from this report.

What is this report about?

- 1 This report provides an update on the cost-of-living crisis and the actions being undertaken by the Council and partners from a welfare and financial inclusion perspective. The report follows on from the report received by Executive Board in July 2023.

Context

- 2 Poverty and financial exclusion have been deep-rooted challenges in Leeds for many years. Already exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and despite significant work to address these issues locally, financial pressures and widening inequalities continue to impact households in Leeds and across the country.
- 3 The Office for Budget Responsibility predicts the UK will avoid recession in 2023, but that the economy will still shrink by 0.2%
- 4 Attached as **appendix 1** to this report is the quarterly Cost-of-Living Dashboard Report for Leeds which brings together detailed data and analysis as of September 2023.
- 5 The latest CPI inflation figures published on 18th October reveal that the UK Inflation rate remained at 6.7% in September 2023. At 12.2%, food and drink prices were still the largest component to inflation, with the lowest contribution being transport at 0.7%.
- 6 In November 2023, Bank of England interest rates were maintained at 5.25%. In September, the Bank also kept rates unchanged at 5.25%, which had been the first hold decision for nearly two years.
- 7 Although inflation has reduced since earlier in the year, it remains higher than the 2% target. Combined with high interest rates, both mean that the cost of essential goods remains at an unaffordable level, and as stated by the JRF 'for those already skipping meals and going without hot water, the rate at which prices continue to rise is now secondary.'
- 8 Citizens Advice estimated that as of September 2023, 'One in four people in the UK are currently behind on at least one bill and the situation looks set to deteriorate in the coming months. Nationally, the level of household debt, covering things like essential bills and benefit repayments sits at £22bn'.
- 9 In a letter to the Prime Minister, health and care bodies including the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, alongside the NHS Confederation, British Medical Association and The Royal College of Nursing expressed concerns that 'as the price of everyday essentials like food and housing persist, too many people are expected to live with what can be devastating knock-on consequences. As well as not being able to afford enough food and other essential items, health and care practitioners say they see people forced to miss hospital appointments because they can't afford the bus fare. Others observed people missing or reducing their medication because they can't afford the prescription'.
- 10 Although the rising cost of living is affecting everyone, low-income households face a higher effective inflation rate because they spend a higher share of their income on energy and food, meaning they are disproportionately impacted. National and local research has further identified that women, ethnically diverse communities, large families, single parent households and disabled people/people with a long-term health issue, are groups being more severely impacted in comparison to the wider population.

Housing

- 11 Leeds Housing Options has seen an increase in customers approaching the service where their situation has worsened due to the cost-of-living crisis. Temporary accommodation placements have increased during the 2023/24 financial year, with 176 households in placements at the end of June 2023. Of these, 79 households were families with dependent children. Most families requiring a placement into temporary accommodation have been asked to leave accommodation by family and friends, partly due to the increased cost of utilities and food, with no other housing

available to them. The second highest reason for being placed into temporary accommodation is loss of private sector accommodation.

- 12 There has been a higher number of people experiencing rental liability increases, being unable to afford rent due to other essential living costs, and the housing market further stretching the gap between the average rent cost and the local housing allowance (the maximum a household can claim in a housing related benefit). Landlords are also reporting the impact of higher interest rates and the knock-on effect to tenants. According to the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors, 'the availability of homes to renters has already been squeezed, so higher costs – as well as the Renters Reform Bill¹ – is likely to continue that trend'.
- 13 This continuously changing backdrop is challenging the ability of Housing Options to prevent and relieve homelessness, particularly as the private sector has been a critical part of Leeds Housing Options' re-housing or staying put solution. In quarter 1 of 2023/24, Leeds Housing Options accepted duties to prevent or relieve homelessness for 1,117 households. 64% of these were threatened with homelessness where prevention options were still available. In 79% of these cases, homelessness was positively prevented.
- 14 Within Housing Leeds, the Housing Officer Income (HOI) team report that the cost-of-living crisis forms the basis for the majority of conversations they are having with tenants, with many stating they are finding it harder to make ends meet as neither benefit levels nor wages have increased. Issues of food and fuel insecurity are highlighted by most tenants the team engage with and an increase in referrals for tenants of pension age has also been noted.
- 15 During August and September 2023, the HOI team have worked with 841 Households in total and secured £233,186.74 in additional income with an average additional income per family of £277. This included 216 households with children (£69,720 of additional income, with an average of £323 per family).
- 16 **Key local statistics:**
 - 22% (178,630) of the Leeds population is living in relative poverty after housing costs are deducted from income².
 - 22% (32,933) of children in Leeds, were estimated to be living in relative low-income families before housing costs.
 - 76,446 people were claiming Universal Credit in Leeds in July 2023 - continuing the steady increase since January 2022.

Cost of Living Support Package 2023

- 17 As seen in 2022, the Cost-of-Living package of support from National Government for 2023 has focused on scheduled payments for eligible means-tested benefits claimants³. Some households receive a combination of payments, depending on their individual circumstances.
- 18 Cost of Living Payment Schedule:
 - £301 – First Cost of Living Payment – Spring 2023
 - £150 – Disability Payment – Summer 2023
 - £300 – Second Cost of Living Payment – Autumn 2023
 - £300 – Pensioner Payment – Winter 2023/4
 - £299 – Third Cost of Living Payment – Spring 2024
- 19 Energy support measures previously set by the Government in October 2022, ended in July 2023. This included:
 - The Energy Price Guarantee

¹ For further details of The Renters Reform Bill, please see - [Renters' Reform Bill, Second Reading, House of Commons, 23 October 2023 | Local Government Association](#)

² Poverty Estimates for Leeds, [Leeds Observatory – Leeds Poverty Fact Book – Section 1: Relative and Absolute Poverty](#)

³ For full details of Cost of Living Payment eligibility, please see - [Cost of Living Payments 2023 to 2024 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

- Energy Bill Support Scheme (EBSS)
 - Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSSAF)
 - Alternative Fuels Payment (AFP)
- 20 Low uptake of vouchers was reported across the various schemes, meaning some of the most vulnerable customers may not have accessed support they were entitled to.
- 21 From October 2023, the Ofgem energy price cap will be set at an annual level of £1,923 for a dual fuel household paying by direct debit based on typical consumption, which reflects recent falls in wholesale energy prices.
- 22 As the current price cap remains 60% higher than winter 2021, the average household is likely to pay the same, or more than last winter.
- 23 Cornwall Insight further predicts bills could increase in January 2024 to £1,996 under the official price cap set by the UK's energy regulator Ofgem.
- 24 Following an urgent enquiry by Ofgem into the practice of forced prepayment meter installations by energy suppliers, an updated Code of Practice was introduced in April 2023, banning the practice for highly vulnerable people i.e. those aged over 85 and living alone. Further to this, Ofgem has now expanded the vulnerability criteria and confirmed that from 8th November 2023, the Code of Practice will become a mandatory part of suppliers' licence conditions, subject to enforcement action and fines if breached. According to Ofgem, currently no suppliers are carrying out involuntary installations unless they meet strict criteria.
- 25 Many local and national organisations including think tanks, charities and advice services are calling for a new policy framework focusing on new social tariff arrangements, to ensure sustainable, targeted support is available to low-income households spending excessive proportion of their income on energy bills.

Universal Credit (UC)

- 26 Universal Credit was first introduced in 2013, with the aim of streamlining and simplifying the benefits system and better supporting those on low incomes. The DWP plan to complete the implementation of UC with a three-track approach – natural migration, voluntary migration ('choose to move') and managed migration. Migration is essentially the process of moving a claimant from their legacy benefit onto Universal Credit. Legacy benefits include Housing Benefit. Pension Age benefit recipients are not impacted.
- 27 'Managed migration' (also known as 'Move to UC') is the final phase of the rollout of UC, wherein the DWP is gradually contacting working age legacy benefit claimants to notify them that those benefits will be ending and informing them of the need to claim UC instead.
- 28 The focus throughout the 2023/24 financial year is on migrating households claiming tax credits only (working tax credit and/or child tax credit).
- 29 The DWP began issuing Migration Notices to tax credit claimants in Leeds from August 2023, and Managed Migration activity is planned in all Jobcentre Districts nationwide by the end of the financial year.
- 30 Concerns have been raised nationally about the approach to Managed Migration, with Child Poverty Action Group's analysis of DWP figures showing 'of those sent a migration notice between November 2022 and March 2023, 28% did not claim UC and had their current benefit payments terminated. By the end of this financial year, the DWP plans to have sent 500,000 tax-credit claiming households a migration notice, requiring them to claim UC. If the proportion of 'no-claims' stays at 28%, 140,000 households could have their current benefits stopped'.
- 31 Research by Trussell Trust (September 2023), highlights 32% of working families receiving UC reported struggling to heat their homes in the last six months, and 21% were unable to make essential journeys (for example, travel to work or school) because they couldn't afford the cost of fuel or public transport.
- 32 In addition, analysis from Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimates the weekly UC standard allowance is £35 less than the cost of essential items for a single person, and nine out of ten households are going without at least one essential such as food or heating.

33 Both charities are now leading a petition calling for the introduction of an Essentials Guarantee within Universal Credit to ensure that the basic rate at least covers life's essentials, such as food and bills.

34 **Local partner update**

35 Since the last Cost of Living Update report submitted in July 2023, the exceptional pressure on services, staff and customers has continued.

36 Advice partners locally have continued to report increased levels of safeguarding issues, particularly in respect to complex mental health issues and suicide. As reported in July 2023, customers affected by these issues are increasingly reliant and returning to advice services, with long waiting lists and difficulty accessing appropriate specialist support services cited as additional barriers.

37 Evidence from frontline advice services continues to demonstrate the growing trend of households approaching for help where there is no sudden or short-term emergency/crisis at play, but where the available income is simply not sufficient to meet the basic needs of the household. Being in a state of 'perpetual crisis' presents challenges to services as well as the individual as short term/emergency support is quickly exhausted and is not sustainable in the mid/long term as exemplified.

38 In addition to concerns raised nationally, health partners in Leeds recently provided evidence at strategic Cost of Living and Welfare Meetings of the increasing clinical impact of the cost of living.

39 Low-income working households, not entitled to support with prescription charges are being particularly impacted, as well as patients with multiple illnesses, that are unable to afford each separate prescription or the cost of prepayment cards. This has led to individuals trying to prioritise prescriptions i.e. short-term antibiotics or long-term medication.

40 Outbreaks of conditions such as scabies are indicative of deprivation and recent cases of a severe, recurrent and persistent nature has been directly attributed to people being unable to afford the necessary prescriptions and treatment.

41 While the links between specific issues such as money problems and mental health, fuel poverty, poor living conditions and respiratory health, as well as food poverty and malnutrition, are longstanding and well recognised, the cost of living is further compounding the situation and leading to locality related problems including:

- Correlations between cases of lead poisoning in areas of the city with poor housing stock, attributable to children ingesting peeling paint from old pipes.
- Increasing numbers of patients with malnutrition; unable to access hot meals except for takeaway food due to the cost of food and energy. This issue is particularly prevalent in areas densely populated by fast food takeaways offering cheap but nutritionally poor meals.

Local Action

42 As reported at March Executive Board and linked to the breakthrough priority to develop an integrated city-wide welfare support approach, strategic and operational groups have been meeting since September 2022 to coordinate actions to mitigate as far as possible the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis. The groups all have senior representatives from the Council, health, third sector and the Department for Work and Pensions and have expanded to include other key partners where appropriate, such as West Yorkshire Fire Service.

43 Regarding framing the response in the city, the work areas and actions emerging from the meetings have focussed on awareness and understanding of support available, developing practical support to enhance existing services, and ensuring funding available is coordinated and maximised. Please see **appendix 2** for full details of work undertaken, and **appendix 3** for the Equality, diversity, cohesion and integration screening.

44 As winter 2023/24 commences, these project areas are being reviewed and updated. Key upcoming workstreams include:

Communications and engagement

45 Review and update of the Together Leeds campaign site to ensure all cost-of-living information and advice is up to date and accurate for winter 2023/24. Dedicated social media content will be deployed, including winter wellbeing guidance. Online content is complimented by a wide range of offline activity such as radio advertising, outdoor adverts, posters, and leaflets, which signpost to both the website and the Council's Community Hubs and Libraries.

Information, Advice and Guidance

46 The Cost of Living google drive also continues to be shared with organisations across the city; containing up to date messaging, resources and training themed around money, energy, housing, food, and health etc.

47 Work to update the Leeds Money Information Centre (MIC) 'Managing your Money' booklet has now been completed. Printed copies have been distributed to all community hubs, libraries, and housing offices, and have also been made available to financial inclusion partners alongside the full range of MIC printed resources – posters, flyers, business cards and concertinas.

48 The Financial Inclusion Team are also continuing to provide training and awareness sessions for a range of frontline services including LCC children's services, customer services, as well as external partners and third sector volunteers. Future sessions are also being confirmed for LCC Gas Operatives and Housing Leeds.

Practical Support

49 Following the success of the 'Warm Spaces' project in winter 2022/23, the project will be resumed from November 2023 to March 2024. After consultation with organisations who hosted services about their preferred name, the project will operate under the name 'Welcome Spaces'. Host organisations include LCC Community Hubs and Libraries as well as third sector and faith-based organisations supported by Voluntary Action Leeds and other strategic partners. Funding for the scheme has been secured from the Household Support Fund and West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and Leeds Community Anchor Network (LCAN) will take a central role in awarding grants to third and faith sector host organisations, helping to coordinate the network at the local level.

50 Building on the project delivered in 2022/23, Zero Waste Leeds' Winter Coat Appeal will also resume this winter, with delivery expected to run from October 2023 to March 2024. The scheme collects and distributes good quality, clean coats across selected community locations including community hubs and libraries. Additional work is also being undertaken to link the project with Welcome Spaces.

Funding

51 Efforts have continued to focus on ensuring short term funding such as the Household Support Fund, Holiday Activity and Food Funding, the West Yorkshire Mayoral fund and allocations of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund are prioritised to support people most impacted by the cost-of-living crisis (including via third sector partners in the city), whilst adhering to the criteria of the different funds and differing timescales for delivery.

52 In terms of the Household Support Fund, which is part of the government's package of Cost-of-Living support focussed on providing food, fuel, and essential items to support vulnerable households, announcements are yet to be made on whether this will be continued beyond March 2023. The allocation for Leeds between April 2023 and March 2024 was £14.2m.

Reporting

53 Attached as **appendix 1** to this report is the Cost-of-Living Dashboard for Leeds which brings together detailed data and analysis as of **September 2023**. The dashboard is hosted on the Leeds Observatory, and work to enhance the dashboard through migration and integration with an online interactive platform continues.

54 Since June 2023, the 'City Operational Group' provided thematic meetings, concentrating on the impact of the Cost of Living on the following areas:

- Housing
- Child Poverty
- Crime & Community Safety
- Health inequalities
- Migration/Immigration & support for ethnic/culturally diverse communities
- Local Crisis Support
- Third Sector, Advice & Support

55 From October 2023, additional meetings for the group are now being confirmed to ensure new and emerging issues, workstreams and updates are captured and shared throughout winter 2023/24.

What impact will this proposal have?

56 The proposal sets out how the Council and partners are adopting a strategic, coordinated and collaborative response to the cost-of-living crisis. However, many of the projects and initiatives referenced are short term. The challenge for the council and partners is how this work can be used to make a substantial long-term difference to the people of Leeds, without significant change in national policy and adequate long term sustainable funding.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

- Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

57 The Leeds Best City Ambition has at its heart the mission to tackle poverty and inequality and improve the quality of life for everyone who calls Leeds home. The actions and initiatives set out within the report to mitigate the impacts as far as possible of the cost-of-living crisis, impact all three pillars of the Best City Ambition. A greater focus will be required across all three pillars of the Best City Ambition in sustainably addressing deep rooted poverty and inequality within the city.

58 Poverty and inequality are protected characteristics, and Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration screening are undertaken as appropriate for each measure, with the EDCI screening document for the 'Cost of Living and Welfare' strategic and operational arrangements attached as **appendix 3**.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

59 Partner organisations referred to in this report have been consulted to provide relevant and up to date information about the projects, initiatives and services referenced.

What are the resource implications?

60 All the projects and services referred to in this report are being undertaken within current budgets, there are no additional resource implications arising from this report.

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

61 The Corporate Risk Register houses the most significant and cross cutting risks facing the council and city. The register includes a risk on Escalating Poverty - 'The impact of poverty in the city escalates due to factors such as inflation, fuel, food and energy prices increases.' Should the council fail to play an effective part in tackling the risk, then the impact of the risk increases, and

it will have a more detrimental effect on the citizens and communities of Leeds. This could lead to a loss of public faith in the council and subsequent reputational damage.

62 The risk is managed through a range of activities as outlined in this report, including regular strategic and operational group meetings. The risk is regularly reviewed, updated and reported within the council, to the Communities, Housing and Environment Directorate Leadership Team and onto the Corporate Leadership Team.

63 An additional risk on Third Sector Organisation sustainability has been recently added the Corporate Risk Register – the risk that Third Sector Organisations will not be able to deliver due to reduced funding and increased demand. The key controls to manage this risk will be the development of a strategy based on the following principles:

- Working in a way that ultimately benefits people and communities living in Leeds
- The importance of delivering preventative measures where possible
- Investment in resilience
- The importance of working together in partnership
- A commitment to ‘one workforce’
- The third sector being an equal partner as part of both the West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership, ‘Team Leeds’ approach and West Yorkshire Combined Authority

What are the legal implications?

64 There are no specific legal implications or access to information issues with this report.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

65 No other options have been considered.

How will success be measured?

66 Success will be measured by update reports and the cost-of-living dashboard.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

67 Implementation is immediate and continuous

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Cost of Living Dashboard September 2023
- Appendix 2: Cost of Living Action Plan
- Appendix 3: Equality, Diversity, Cohesion & Integration Screening

Background papers

None

LEEDS STRATEGIC COST OF LIVING PLAN

This plan outlines the response to the Cost-of-Living crisis by Leeds City Council and partners. The aim of the plan is set out how as a city we are working together to harness the capacity and capability in Leeds, our communities and those with lived experience to develop a city solution to welfare provision and addressing the cost-of-living crisis.

This plan will ensure that the council maintains the infrastructure to respond to the immediate crisis and use collaborative approaches to build resilience for medium and long terms.

	Action Area	Progress update
1	Governance and oversight	
1.1	Strategic and Operational groups with cross sector representation	<p>The following strategic and operational groups with representatives from across Council, NHS, DWP, third sector and wider public sector, have been established and have been meeting since September 2022;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Cost of Living meeting- Directors and senior leaders meeting every quarter • Cost of Living and Welfare Board- Senior Officers and partners meeting every month. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Task and finish groups with specific focus on; integrated communication, information, advice and guidance, practical support, funding and reporting. ○ From May 2023 themed meetings on key subject areas have been planned covering: Housing, child poverty, crime, policy and community safety, health, local crisis support, and third sector, advice and support. ○ Additional meetings have now been planned from October 2023 to facilitate additional updates and planning for the winter months. • Financial Inclusion steering group- to ensure wider partners and services experiences have been considered and key messages disseminated.
2	Communications and engagement	
2.1	Webpages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Together Leeds Cost of Living webpage www.leeds.gov.uk/costofliving - updated to link to advice relevant for winter including Welcome Spaces, energy efficiency and health advice. • Warm Spaces webpage re-published with new Welcome Spaces branding and updated assets.

	Digital Promotions, PR and campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of free and low-cost activities for families during October and Christmas school holidays including Healthy Holidays • Promotion of Zero Waste Leeds Winter Coats Appeal • Further planned PR focuses will also include Fuel and energy, 16 days of action (including content about relationships, domestic abuse etc) illegal money lending/loan sharks and winter health.
2.5	Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community events being held across the city signposting people to relevant support and advice including via LCC Community Hubs, Local Care Partnership and Public Health teams in school settings • Financial Wellbeing Week: Held from 12th to 16th June, the weeklong programme of events aimed to give useful advice on a range of money to people working in Leeds. 13 sessions ran as part of the week with around 300 individuals signed up. Sessions were run by both Council services and partner agencies and covered a range of topics including money and mental health, menopause, and your money, reducing your energy bills and your carbon footprint and Yorkshire Water support schemes. Partnership work continues and plans are underway to prepare for another week of events early next year, alongside other partnership initiatives.
2.6	Cost of living campaign Housing Leeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications campaign/ social media promoting partner agencies events and general financial advice/ money saving ideas.
3	Information, Advice and Guidance	
3.1	Leeds Money Information Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leeds Money Information Centre resources provide up to date information on where to access free, independent, and confidential advice and support in Leeds. • Online integrated mapping tool includes all advice points, food aid map, digital services, and Leeds School Uniform Exchange. • Printed resources available including flyers (including translations), concertinas, posters and business cards. In addition, the comprehensive Managing Your Money printed booklet has been updated and redesigned, with 20,000 copies on order to be distributed to Community Hubs and Libraries, Housing Teams and external financial inclusion partners from October 2023. • In addition to this, a further 40,000 printed resources have been distributed to organisations including council services, NHS and health settings, DWP, third sector and universities since January 2023.

3.2	Google drive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost-of-living crisis google drive was created to ensure there is awareness amongst frontline services of resources and support available in the city as well as key messages around the cost-of-living. • There are themed folders on Communications, Money, Housing, Health, Food and Energy. There is also a folder with training and awareness videos on key themes and information on how to order physical resources. The link is sent out in the regular financial inclusion news bulletin and is also cascaded through training/briefing sessions delivered by the financial inclusion team.
3.3	Training and awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Inclusion Team continue to deliver training and awareness sessions to a wide range of council (including elected members) and health services, and city-wide partnerships since October 22 it is estimated that 6000 individuals have been reached. This has included; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adult Social Care- Better Lives Board, Better Together, Forum for Race Equality in Social care and Health ○ Childrens Services: Social care staff, Early Help & Directors Development session ○ Communities, Housing & Environment: Leadership forum, Housing Associations, Migration Partnership, Housing Leeds, Gas and Electric operatives ○ Elected members: Community Committees Chairs, Inner North East workshop, All members session ○ Health: Health and Wellbeing Board, Public Health Want to Know More About sessions, Public Health Conference, Local Care Partnership, Target conference video, Primary Care Network Fuel poverty and support ○ Housing: Gas and electric operatives ○ City partnerships: Leeds Debt Forum, DWP Leeds staff, Leeds Food Aid Network, Leeds Community Anchor Network, Age Friendly Board, Leeds Maternity Strategy Health and Wellbeing group, Armed Forces Covenant, LGBT+ hub ○ Leeds employees as part of Financial Wellbeing week, and Royal Mail staff ○ Resources: Shared services staff

3.4	Sharing practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council officers and partner organisations have had the opportunity to share our learning and practice in our response to the cost-of-living crisis with the following forums and organisations; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local Government Association Peer Review ○ Borough to Borough visit from Camden and Southwark Chief Executives ○ Local Government Association- Cost of Living (Webinar 2) and upcoming session on Warm Spaces ○ Bank of England Community Forum with the Chair of Court David Roberts, focussed on impact of the Cost-of-Living crisis on communities and third sector organisations.
4 Practical Support		
4.1	Debt Relief Orders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Debt Relief Order (DRO) helps low-income residents with unmanageable debts of up to £30,000 and often results in debts being written off completely. However, there is a £90 fee for the client to pay before they can apply for this process. During 2022, it was estimated that 47% of clients eligible for a DRO in Leeds disengaged with the application process and the £90 fee was believed to be a key factor in the disengagement. • The Financial Inclusion Team allocated £25,000 to Ebor Gardens Advice Centre to deliver the DRO pilot project, with the aim to reduce the disengagement of clients by providing the £90 fee. • Results from the third quarter of this project have revealed a positive impact, with clients accessing the funding to get their fee paid, leading to a reduction in housing repossessions and enforcement actions, ending harmful income deductions and relief to clients vulnerable to self-harm/suicide. As of Q3, 88 clients have had their DROs funded and over £1m in debts have been written off. The year to date disengagement rate by the third quarter was 5%. The average amount of debt owed across those being put forward for the DRO was £12,126.
4.2	Home Plus Leeds (Affordable Warmth)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Plus Leeds service provides energy efficiency and fuel bill advice to lower income vulnerable residents across Leeds, as well as referrals to grants for heating and energy efficiency improvements. • The scheme is targeted at supporting 900 households experiencing fuel poverty.
4.4	Welcome Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Winter 2022/23 over 200 organisations including all Leeds City Council Community Hubs and Libraries, faith-based, private and third sector stepped forward to become part of the Leeds Warm Space Project. At the project peak, over 200 Warm Spaces were registered on the Leeds Warm Spaces map, and over 65% of the Leeds population was within a 10-minute walk of a Warm Space.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has been re-established in winter 2023/24, drawing on learning from last winter and has been developed by LCC, Voluntary Action Leeds and the Leeds Community Anchor Network. Based on consultation with 2022 delivery organisations about their preferred name, the title of the project for 2023/24 has been changed to 'Welcome Spaces'. • We expect the majority of Welcome Spaces will be delivered by third sector and faith-based organisations, as well as Leeds City Council Community Hubs and Libraries. • Printed, digital and social media branded assets are included in the Cost of Living Google Drive. • Funding for the project has been secured via West Yorkshire Mayoral Fund and Household Support Fund. Voluntary Action Leeds have collated expressions of interest from third sector and faith-based organisations interested in hosting a Welcome Space, which was shared with the Leeds Community Anchor Network (LCAN) who (supported by VAL) are leading in both coordinating activity and distributing funding to support Welcome Spaces within their locality. • Further information on this year's approach can be found here: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Welcome Spaces - Guidelines for Winter 2023 organisations - Doing Good Leeds. ○ Welcome Spaces (leeds.gov.uk)
4.5	Winter Coat Appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alongside Welcome Spaces, the Leeds Winter Coat Appeal, coordinated by Zero Waste Leeds aims to collect and redistribute winter coats. This year the appeal will run from Monday 16th October to the end February 2024. • Requested items: Coats for adults, children, and babies, Waterproofs, Fleece, Baby cot sleeping bags, Snow suits for babies and young children, Pram footmuffs, Hats, scarves, and gloves • Community Hubs, Libraries, Welcome Spaces, and community groups will be operating as distribution and collection points. • In 2022, 6269 items of winter clothing were donated and redistributed, with estimated total savings of £132,803.
4.6	Housing Leeds – Housing Officer Income (HOI) Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Leeds Housing Officer Income (HOI) provide tenants with a range of financial support, including benefits and grant applications, as well as dealing with any rent arrears and referrals to other advice and support such as debt advice. • During August and September 2023, the HOI team have worked with 841 Households in total and secured £ £233,186.74 in additional income. with an average additional income per family of £277.

		This included 216 households with Children (£69,720 of additional income, with an average of £323 per family)
4.7	Leeds School Uniform Exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCC fund Zero Waste Leeds (ZWL) to bring a co-ordinated uniform reuse scheme to the city. • To date 223 schools covered by a uniform exchange (74 school led, 43 parents led, 23 school lost property schemes, 50 schools covered by Community exchanges and 33 Facebook exchanges). • Over the summer via events and pop-up shops 16,714 items were given out to 2,787 families. • £284,138 was saved by families not having to buy new uniform. This figure is based on the Department of Education's "Cost of School Uniform" report. • 60,170kg CO2 emissions were saved by reusing uniform rather than having to produce new.
5	Funding	
5.1	Household Support Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government funding of £14.2m to support vulnerable people with the costs of energy, food and essential items between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024. In Leeds the fund provided the following support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Direct support via council services- Welfare & Benefits, Housing & Childrens ○ Applications via the Local Welfare Support Scheme ○ Third sector support working citywide through a partnership approach involving Leeds Community Anchor Network (via Voluntary Action Leeds), Forum Central, Leeds Food Aid Network and advice organisations, with funding for Zarach and Leeds Baby Bank, and Hamara and Give a Gift for their work to coordinate the city's cultural food hub offer. ○ Winter support in collaboration with Public Health • For HSF 3 which was a 6 month funding pot between October 2022 and March 2023, 108,072 households in Leeds were provided support. Of these 45% were households with children, 32% were working age households with no children, 17% had a disabled person in the household, and 5% were pensioner households. • 39% of the funding was spent on energy, 35% on food, 19% on essential items, and 7% housing.

5.2	Holiday Activity and Food Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded by £3.5m from the Department for Education’s Holiday Activity Fund, the Healthy Holidays programme in Leeds provides activities and a healthy, hot meal for children in receipt of Free School Meals, over the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays. • Provision is a mix of third sector, schools based and through Community Hubs ensuring availability is varied and local to children and young people. • In 2022, 24,537 children and young people participated in the scheme, with 170,499 portions of food provided. • 107 providers have been funded in 2023, including schools, community hubs/ libraries and third sector organisations. • Over easter and summer 2023 17,198 children and young people have taken part in activities, 106,042 portions of food provided. • Over 100 organisations will be running Healthy Holidays programmes for children and young people over the Christmas holidays.
5.3	West Yorkshire Mayoral Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Yorkshire Mayoral Fund (£323,950 November 2022-April 2023) - Funding was primarily used to support the citywide network of faith based and third sector warm spaces, focused on helping those most at risk during the cold weather. • The funding also provided a necessary uplift to organisations delivering the Leeds advice contract to help mitigate the impact of the cost of living and inflation on service delivery. • Funding from May 2023 to May 2024 will be provided as a one off from the WYCA Mayoral Fund to; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintain and enhance the Leeds Advice Contract, both in terms of meeting current inflationary pressures and supporting specialist housing, debt and benefits and immigration advisors to provide specialist and casework advice. ○ Support for charities, and third sector organisations (including faith-based organisations with the delivery of Welcome Spaces in winter 2023/24 (in conjunction with funding allocated from Household Support Fund).
5.4	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LCC Financial Inclusion team has been allocated around £800k in UKSPF funding to cover three financial years on projects relevant to the cost of living: • During 2022/23: £400k of the funding was allocated to the Local Welfare Support Scheme and assisted 6,682 households impacted by the cost-of-living crisis with white goods or energy support.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2023/24: £125k has been awarded to Money Buddies for delivery of outreach sessions across Leeds, supporting households with issues relating to the cost of living, particularly around emergency debts, money management and fuel bills. • For 2024/25, a further £125k will be made available for the provision of additional advice and guidance services and £150k to support food infrastructure projects.
5.5	British Gas Energy Trust Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Gas Energy Trust, through their corporate social responsibility commitments have worked with Housing Leeds to provide tenants with £200k of energy vouchers for allocation between November and December 2023. • Eligible tenants can receive up to £147 worth of energy vouchers.
5.6	Home Upgrade Grant Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leeds City Council has been granted funding to improve approximately 750 mainly private sector households without gas central heating, with energy efficiency measures and renewable heating. This scheme is due to take place throughout late 2023 and 2024.
6	Reporting & Evidence	
6.1	Cost of Living Dashboard	Please see appendix 2B
6.2	Hosting and attending city boards, forums and networks	<p>In addition to the cost-of-living meetings referenced in the Governance and Oversight section, the Financial Inclusion Team routinely host and attend a wide range of city boards, forums and networks. This is to build understanding of the work undertaken and to ensure the approach adopted is collaborative and strongly influenced by communities across Leeds.</p> <p>Financial Inclusion Team led- Financial Inclusion Steering Group (established 2005), Food Insecurity Taskforce, Food Strategy Group, Leeds Gambling Harms Group, Healthy Holidays Steering Group.</p> <p>LCC led boards & groups - Age Friendly Leeds, Thriving Board, Better Lives Leeds, Leeds City Council Internal Food Group, Men's Health Network, Marmot City Programme, Financial Wellbeing Anchor Network</p> <p>Forums and networks- Leeds Debt Advice Network & Leeds Debt Forum, Leeds Food Aid Network, West Yorkshire Poverty Network, Welfare Rights Group, Job Centre Liaison meeting, Leeds Poverty Truth Commission, Regional Gambling Harms Community of Interest Group</p>

Cost of Living Crisis

Leeds Dashboard

Leeds - September 2023

Key Statistics:

The cost of living has been increasing across the UK since early 2021. Inflation reached 11.1% in October 2022, a 41-year high, before slowing to 6.7% in August 2023. Interest rates have remained at 5.25% since July 2023.

This dashboard brings together key national and local data to help provide an overview of how rising prices, particularly food, energy and fuel prices are having an impact in Leeds.

The data in this report is the latest available as of **26th September 2023**.



6.7%

Was the UK Inflation rate in August 2023, with food prices and household bills being key contributors to keeping inflation high.



5.25%

At its meeting on 20 September 2023, the MPC voted to maintain interest rates at 5.25%. Though it has stayed the same for 2 months, this is still the highest rate since 2008.



£230,000

The average house price in Leeds increased 6.9% between Mar 2022 to Mar 2023.



£825

Monthly Rental cost in Leeds up 19% to £825 in the 12 months to March 2023.



£330

Is the average weekly spend for low-income households, of which 25% is spent on fuel bills and rent and 14% on food and drink.



67,616

food parcels were given out informally without the need for referral in 2022/23, this is up 3% on last year.



£443

is the 2023 fuel poverty gap - the average additional income fuel poor households need be out of fuel poverty in 2023.



7.1

Full-time employees in Leeds earning £30,858 could expect to spend 7.1 times their annual earnings buying a home. The ratio has increased over time as wages have not risen in line with house prices.



£1.54

As of 18 September 2023, petrol was £1.54 per litre and diesel was £1.58 per litre.



76,446

people were claiming Universal Credit in Leeds in July 2023, this figure has increased steadily since January 2022.



241

Requests for benefit checks to maximise incomes to LCC's Welfare Rights Unit in August 2023, up 28% from 189 checks made in August 2022.



76.4%

Employment in Leeds has increased from 73.9% in the year to Mar 22 to 76.4% in the year to Mar 23.



85%

Increase in enquires to local Citizens Advice in relation to charitable and foodbank support in the 12 months to Mar 2023.



10,337

There were 10,337 applications to the Local Welfare Support Scheme in the 3 months to July 2023.



29%

Although employment levels are at their highest rate, 29% of adults are estimated to be in in-work poverty.



13.6%

Food and drink prices were 13.6% higher than in August last year and remains the largest component to high inflation.

Inflation and Impacts on Spending

Leeds - September 2023

Inflation:

Consumer Prices Index inflation has slowed since its peak in October 2022 of 11.1%, standing at 6.7% in August 2023. This is still above the Bank of England's 2% target. High inflation affects the affordability of goods and services for households.

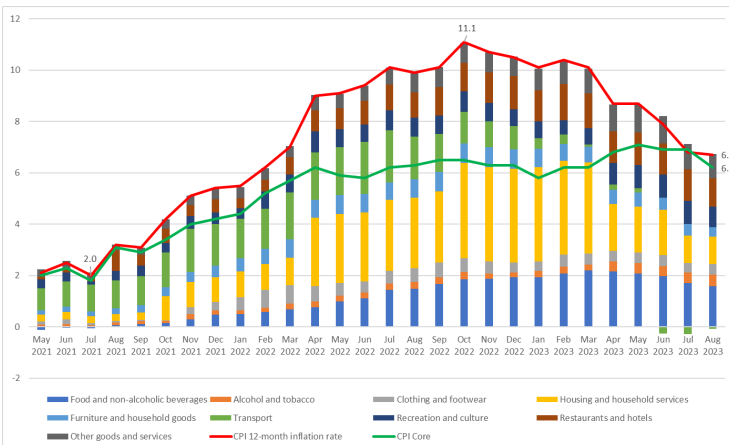
The chart below shows the monthly CPI rate along side the Core Inflation rate and also includes the component categories that make up the largest contributions to CPI.

CPI was last at its target rate in July 2021 as Lockdown rules were easing and spaces were starting to reopen. From that point supply and demand issues started to push up prices and the cost-of-living crisis began to take effect. In the 12 months to August 2023, food, housing and household services and restaurants and hotels have been the largest contribution to inflation increases.

Core inflation, which strips out the more volatile components such as energy, food prices and alcohol and tobacco prices, slowed slightly from its peak of 7.1% in May 2023 to 6.2% in August 2023. Higher core inflation is seen as a sign that price growth is more likely to remain persistently high.

SOURCE: ONS, CPI Inflation and Contributions, Monthly Data, September 2023

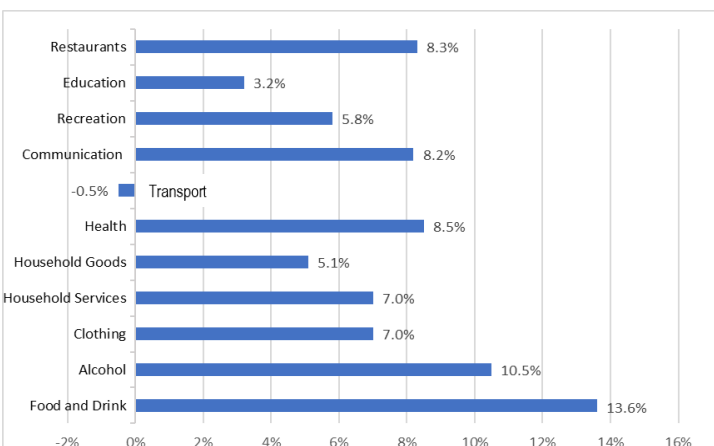
Contributions to the annual CPI inflation rate over time



Components of Inflation August 2023

At 13.6%, food and drink prices were still the largest component to inflation in August 2023. The lowest contribution was transport at -0.5%. However, rising motor fuel costs have meant that the low contribution from transport to inflation is up from -2% in July 2023 to -0.5% in August 2023.

SOURCE: ONS, CPI Inflation, Monthly Data, September 2023

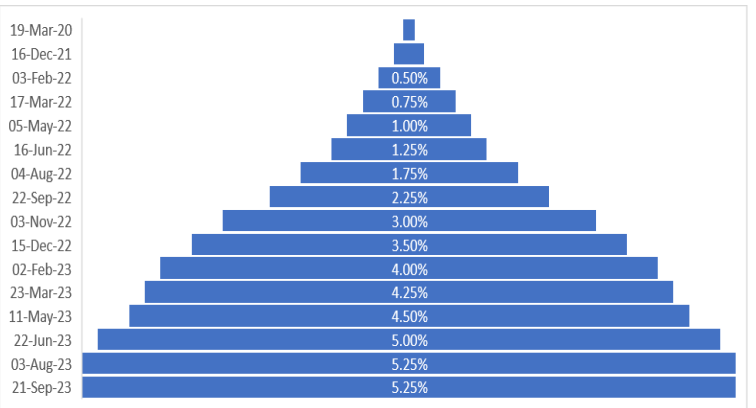


Interest Rates:

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) sets monetary policy to meet a 2% inflation target. At its meeting ending on 20 September 2023, the MPC voted to maintain Bank Rate at 5.25%. Although inflation is still more than three times the Bank's 2% target, the recent easing of inflation has influenced the decision to pause interest rate rises.

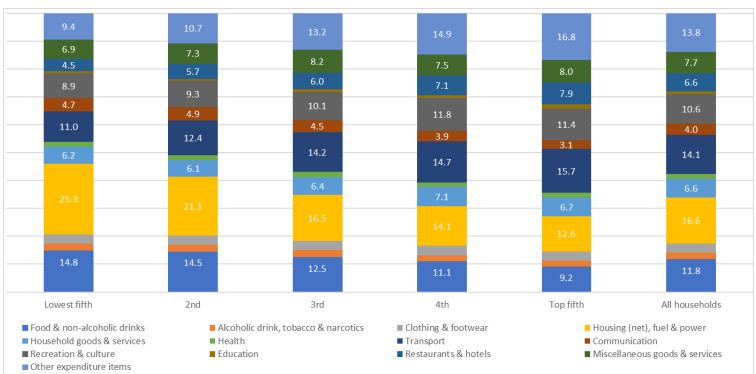
Higher interest rates will lead to higher repayments for people with loans and mortgages, but should also benefit savers if the rise is passed on. The economic intention behind the hike is to reduce spending, to reduce demand on goods and therefore bring down prices and bring inflation back down.

SOURCE: BoE, Bank Rate, Monthly data, September 2023



Household Expenditure:

National average weekly household expenditure was £528.80 in the financial year ending (FYE) 2022. After adjusting for inflation, this was a real terms increase in average weekly household spend of £28.80 (6%) in FYE 2022.



Please note: spending is categorised using classification of individual consumption by purpose (COICOP) categories. As such, mortgage interest payments, Council Tax and Northern Ireland rates are categorised as other expenditure items rather than housing (net) fuel and power. Housing (net) refers to housing costs minus council tax and mortgage payments. Household goods and services include household appliances and goods and services for household maintenance.

On average, the top fifth of households with high incomes spent a total of £811.20 per week, while at the lower side of the income scale the lowest fifth of households spent £329.80 per week. The chart above displays how spending patterns vary across income distribution.

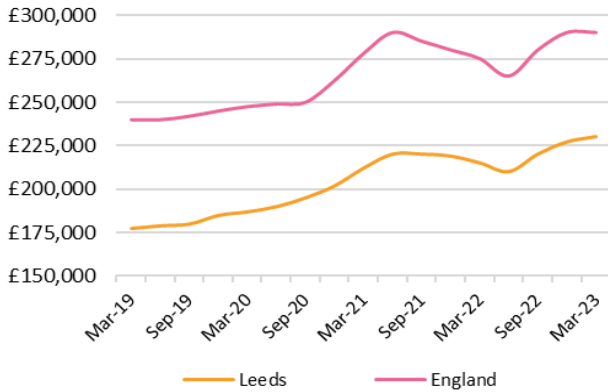
Out of the £329.80 per week, the ONS estimate that the lowest-income households spent around 25.3% on rent and fuel costs and 14.8% on food costs. When compared to the highest income group spending of the £811.20 per week, it's estimated 12.6% was spent on housing and fuel costs, 9.2% on food costs, but the highest proportion of spending for this income group was on Other expenditure items which mortgage and council tax at 16.8%.

SOURCE: ONS, Family Spending in the UK April 2021 to March 2022, May 2023

House Prices:

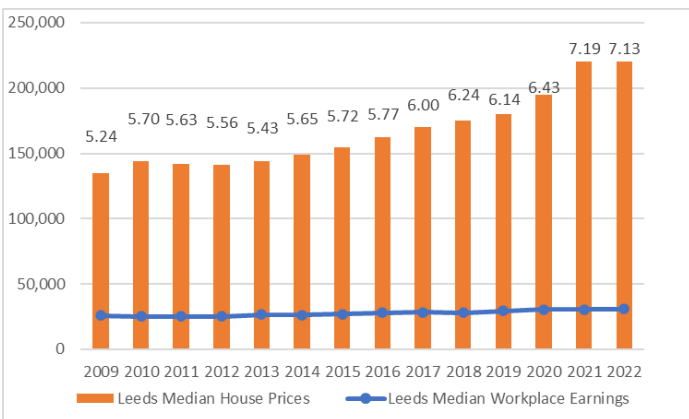
The ONS estimates that average house prices in Leeds rose above its previous peak of £220,000 in Jun 2021 to £230,000 in Mar 23, and up 6.9% on Mar 22. Average house prices across England rose 5.4% to £290,000.

SOURCE: ONS, House Prices, Quarterly Data, September 2023



Housing Affordability Ratio:

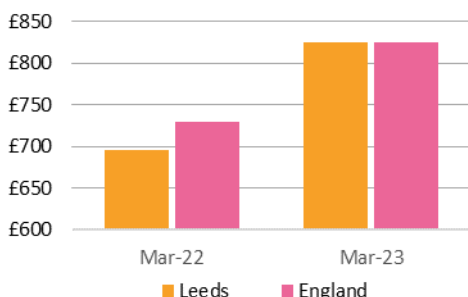
With data available to Sept 2022, the ONS produce a Housing Affordability Ratio. Full-time employees in Leeds earning £30,858/year could expect to spend around 7.1 times their annual earnings buying a home at £220,000. This is below the England and Wales rate where full-time employees spend up to 8.1 times their annual earnings buying a home. The chart below



Housing Rentals:

The median rent in Leeds was £825/month in March 2023; up 19% on the same time last year, when rents were £795/month. The median rent in England was also £825/month, up 13% on the same period in 2022, when average rents were £730/month.

SOURCE: ONS, House Prices, Bi-annual Data, June 2023



£825
Average Rental Cost in Leeds March 2023

Housing Leeds Rent Arrears:

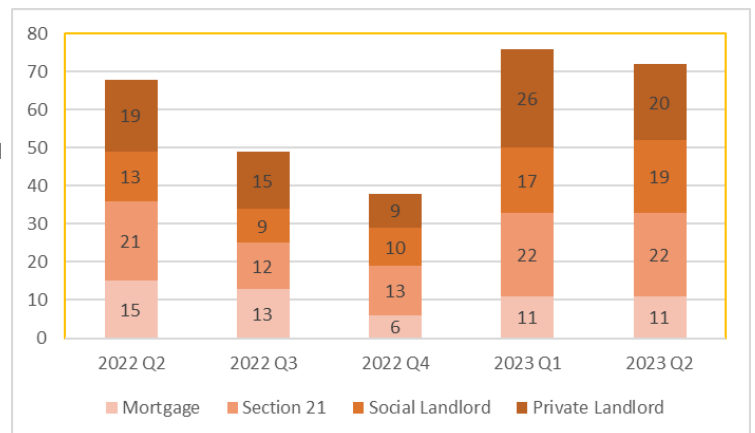
	Jul-22	Oct-22	Jan-23	Apr-23	Jul-23
Arrears	4.00%	4.26%	4.45%	4.40%	4.25%

As of July 2023, 4.25% of Housing Leeds Tenants were in arrears with their rent, increasing 0.25 percentage points on July 2022.

There were 52,348 council tenancies in Leeds, 35% of which are on Universal Credit and 33% on Housing Benefit. In July 2023, 18,412 Housing Leeds tenants were claiming Universal Credit, of which 46% (8,486) were on a managed payment to landlord. A managed payment to landlord is where the housing cost element of UC is paid direct to Housing Leeds as landlord, due to accruing rent arrears equal to, or more than two months or in defined circumstances to prevent arrears occurring. The proportion of tenants on a managed payment has increased 22% since July 2022. The figures are an indication of households in arrears or concerned they may fall into arrears and can partly be attributed to households struggling with the cost of living.

SOURCE: LCC Housing Leeds, Quarterly Data, August 2023

Housing Evictions:



In Leeds rental evictions by all landlords have risen by 15.1% on the quarterly period of Apr-Jun last year—up from 53 repossessions in Quarter 2 2022 to 61 in Quarter 2 2023. Nationally, rental evictions have risen by 18.5% in the year.

Mortgage repossessions are generally lower in comparison to the rental picture. In Leeds there were 11 during Q2 2023, down from 15 in Q2 2022. Nationally, mortgage repossessions have fallen by 17.7% in a year.

The chart displays the trend in Mortgage and Landlord repossessions from Q2 2022 to Q2 2023 for Leeds. The Landlord data is broken down into Landlords repossessing homes under Section 21, Private Landlords and Social Landlords.

Section 21 evictions, also known as 'no fault' evictions currently allow landlords to evict tenants without providing any reason. Between April to June 2023; there were 22 Section 21 evictions. Across England and Wales these type of evictions have risen by 47% (up from 1,651 to 2,430).

Parliament is currently reviewing the Renters Reform Bill which proposes to transform the private renting sector, including plans to scrap section 21 evictions.

SOURCE: MoJ, Quarterly Data, August 2023

Energy Bills:

Average UK energy bills based on fixed energy consumption in 2022 were estimated to be £2,294. This was an increase of 72% or £961 on 2021. The average Standard Electricity bill increased by 51% up £391 to £1,160 in 2022. The average Gas bill increased by 101% up £570 to £1,134 in 2022.



The 2022 combined electricity and gas bills are the highest on record. Households will have received around £200 (three payments of £66 / £67 in October, November and December) towards their bill from the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) in 2022. (These payments have not been included in or deducted from these bills estimates. Other cost of living support measures and payments are also not reflected in the bill estimates.)

SOURCE: DESNZ Quarterly Energy Prices Data September 2023

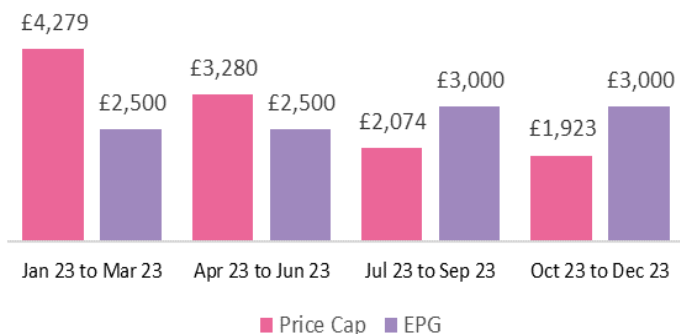
Energy Price Cap and EPG:

The Ofgem energy price cap is announced quarterly and sets a maximum price that energy suppliers can charge consumers for each kilowatt hour (kWh) of energy they use. The cap is a government protection, calculated by Ofgem.

The Energy Price Guarantee (EPG) was a Government policy introduced on 1 October 2022 to protect households from rising prices and was due to increase from £2,500 to £3,000 from April 2023. However, it's since been confirmed the Ofgem price cap will fall below the EPG from July, meaning for most households, the EPG will not be needed as customers will pay the lower of the two.

From October 2023, the Ofgem energy price cap will be set at an annual level of £1,923 for a dual fuel household paying by direct debit based on typical consumption, which reflects recent falls in wholesale energy prices. The price cap for July sees a reduction in last quarter's cap, and a reduction in how much customers will pay on their bills.

SOURCE: Ofgem, Quarterly Energy Price Cap Data, August 2023



Fuel Poverty:

An estimated 55,274 (15.8%) Leeds households were in fuel poverty in 2021 according to the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) measure.

The LILEE definition of fuel poverty states that a household is fuel poor if:

- They are living in a property with an energy efficiency rating of band D, E, F or G
- Their disposable income (income after housing costs and energy needs) is below the poverty line.

There is a two-year time lag for local fuel poverty data and the latest available data does not yet capture the impact of the energy crisis. The national fuel poverty rate for England just has a one year time lag and was at 13.4% during 2022.

Fuel Poverty Gap

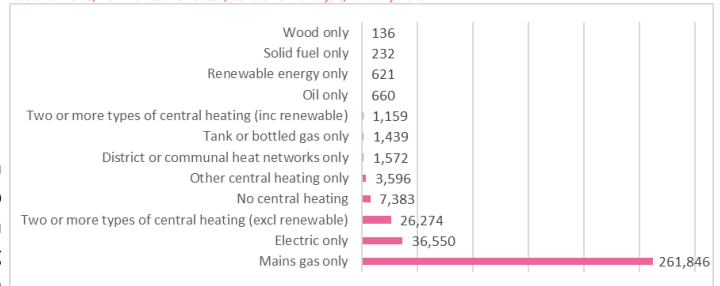
The LILEE definition also allows analysis of the depth of fuel poverty; known as the fuel poverty gap which measures the reduction in fuel costs a households would need to no longer be in fuel poverty. In 2022 the mean average fuel poverty gap was £338 per fuel poor household and is projected to increase to a record high of £443 in 2023 (previous record of £354 in 2010). This means in 2022, households in fuel poverty needed £338 more income to pay their fuel bills and forecasts expect this figure to be around £443 during 2023.

SOURCE: DBEIS and DESNZ Fuel Poverty data, Annual data, April 2023

How homes are heated in Leeds

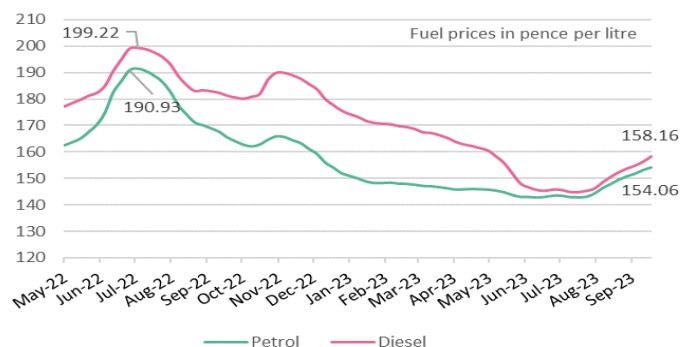
In Leeds, Census 2021 data reveals 77% of households used mains gas central heating, this compares to 74% of households nationally. 36,550 Leeds households had electric-only heating (10.7% of all Leeds households). 7,383 households in Leeds reported having no central heating at all (2.2% of Leeds households).

SOURCE: ONS, How homes are heated, Census 2021 analysis, January 2023



Road Fuel Prices

As of 18 September 2023, Petrol was 154.06 pence per litre and diesel was 158.16 pence per litre. Although considerably lower than their peak reached in July 2022 (£1.91 for petrol and £1.99 for diesel), road fuel prices have started to rise and have lead experts to believe this will be a factor in seeing CPI inflation rates rise in August. However, inflation rates did not increase due to slowing food costs.



People in Poverty

The Leeds Poverty Fact Book contains all the latest official data and insights relating to Poverty and its impact in Leeds. Key headlines from the latest Relative Poverty estimates published by the DWP in March 2023 reveal, after housing costs are deducted from income:

- 22% of people in the UK were in poverty in 2021/22 and is estimated to affect 178,630 people in Leeds.
- A couple with 2 children are in poverty if they earn £486/week or less
- A single adult with no children is in poverty on earnings of £174/week or less
- 71% of children in poverty are from working families
- 29% of working age adults in the UK live in households where at least one adult is in work but are still in poverty

Latest local estimates from HMRC & DWP estimate that 32,933 children under 16 in Leeds were in poverty in 2021/22 before housing costs are deducted from income.

SOURCE: DWP HBAI, Annual data, March 2023

Employment/Unemployment:

In the year to Mar 2023, 391,600 people were estimated to be employed in Leeds, at a rate of 76.4% of the working age population. This was just above the national rate of 75.5%. Employment in Leeds has been increasing steadily on a quarterly basis since Jan-Dec 2021, and is higher than its pre pandemic rate in Jan-Dec 2019 of 74.6%.

In the year to Mar 2023, 11,600 people were estimated to be unemployed in Leeds, at a rate of 2.9%, which is below the national rate of 3.7%.

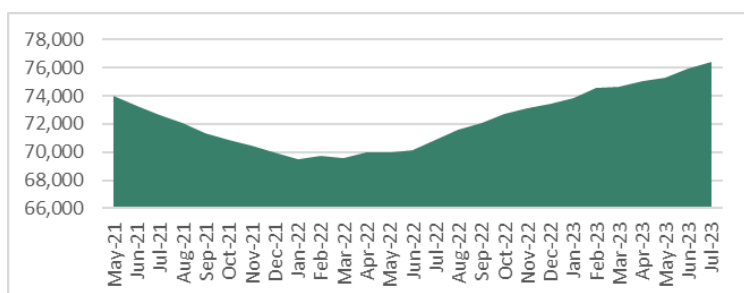
SOURCE: Nomis, Annual Population Survey, Quarterly data, August 2023



Universal Credit:

Latest data for July confirm there were 76,446 claimants in Leeds, up 8% on July 2022. 62% of claimants to UC in July 2023 were not in work, and 38% - over 28,700 Leeds claimants are in-work.

SOURCE: DWP People on Universal Credit, Monthly data, September 2023



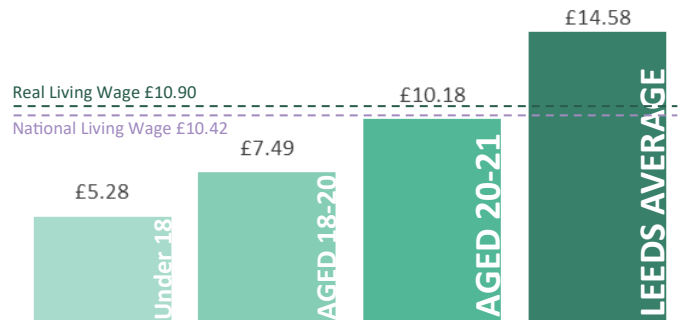
Minimum/Living Wages:

The Living Wage Foundation recommend employers outside of London pay £10.90/hour from April 2023, currently the Government's National Living Wage is set at £10.42/hour for all employees aged 23 and over.

Although the median average wage for Leeds residents is £14.58/hour, an estimated 40,258 FTE Leeds residents earned less than the Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage in 2022 of £9.90/hour.

SOURCE: Living Wage Foundation, Annual data, Oct 2022, and Low Pay commission, Annual data Nov 2022

Government National minimum wages



Wages and impact of inflation

After the recent uplift to the National Living Wage to £10.42/hr; UK wages have risen at their fastest rate in 20 years, but are still lagging behind the rate of inflation. Pay failing to keep up with price rises has led to many households to come under financial pressure in recent months.

The table below provides the inflationary impact on median weekly earnings for Leeds residents from official data published in November 2022 (before the increase in National Living Wage). Real term estimates have also been provided for Leeds' lowest 10% earners and top 10% earners.

	Lower 10%	Median	Top 10%
2021 Weekly Earnings	£184.00	£500.40	£984.80
2022 Weekly Earnings	£189.00	£536.60	£1,060.90
Nominal Change	£5.00	£36.20	£76.10
Nominal % Change	2.7%	7.2%	7.7%
Real Change	£-11.93	£-9.84	£-14.50
Real % Change	-5.9%	-1.8%	-1.3%

Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) report that for full-time equivalent (FTE) employees in the UK, median weekly earnings in April 2022 increased to £532.50 by 5.6% (£28.10) from a year earlier on a nominal basis, and when adjusted for inflation, it fell by 2.1% (down £11.24 per week).

In Leeds; resident FTE employees, median weekly earnings increased to £536.60 up by 7.2% (up £36.20) from a year earlier on a nominal basis, and when adjusted for inflation, it fell by 1.8% (down £9.84 per week). The real term impact on the lower 10% of earners, estimates that Leeds residents saw a weekly loss of 5.9% (£11.93) and the top 10% of earners are losing 1.3% of their income in real terms, (down £14.50 a week). This analysis highlights how it is those on lowest income being hit the hardest by the inflationary impacts and the cost of living. Analysis of data due to be published in November 2023 should reveal the impact on the increase the National Living Wage on the more recent inflation data.

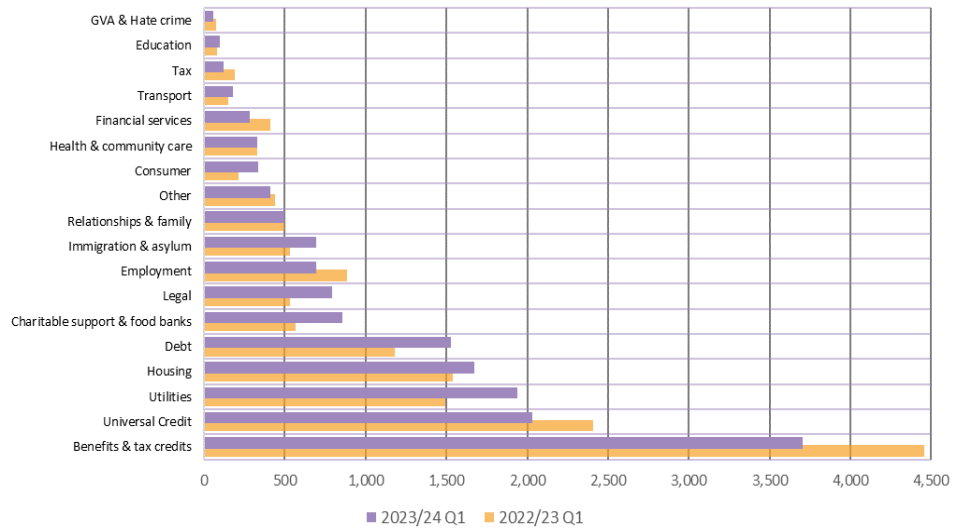
SOURCE: ONS, ASHE and the Leeds Poverty Fact Book, Annual data, Nov 2022

Citizens Advice:

Client data from Citizens Advice Leeds and Chapelton provides an indication on the demand for advice services and the type of enquiries being seen. In the quarter ending June 2023; total enquiries increased by 2%; from 15,971 in Q1 2022/23 to 16,228 in Q1 2023/24. Enquiries on Benefits and tax credits, Universal Credit, Utilities, Housing, Debt, and Charitable support/foodbanks were the most sought areas of advice.

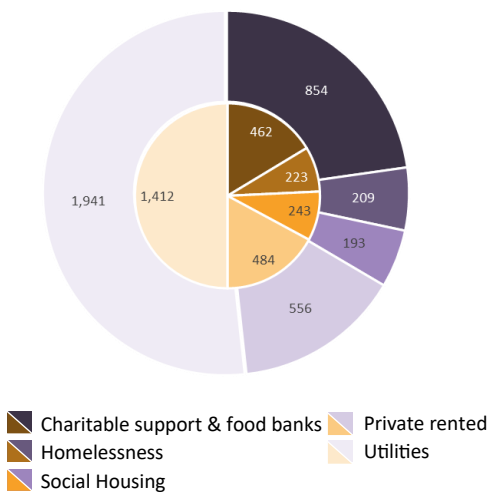
Although there has been a fall in benefits & tax credits enquiries in this quarter, it should be noted that this is due to the continued transitioning of new claims to Universal Credit. There is also a lower volume of Universal Credit enquiries compared to Q1 in 2022/23 due to staff training rather than a lack of demand.

Number of Clients and Advice Categories

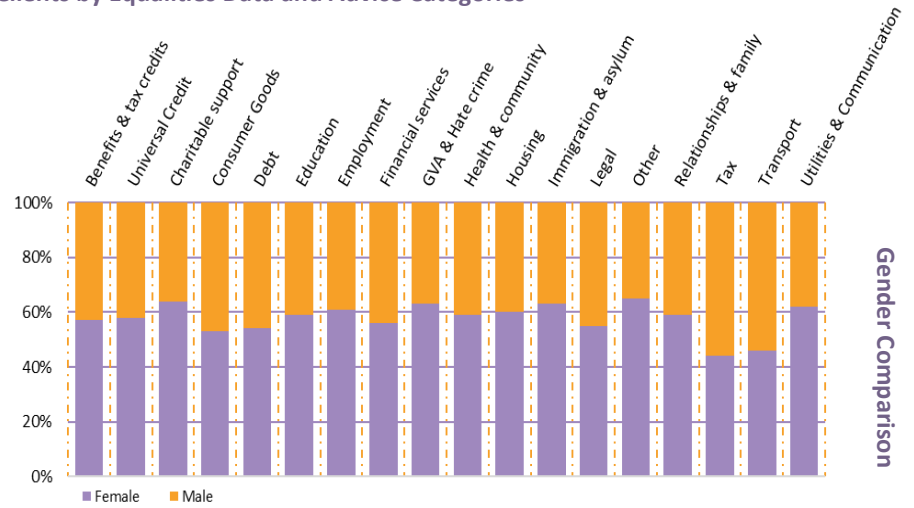


2022/23

2023/24



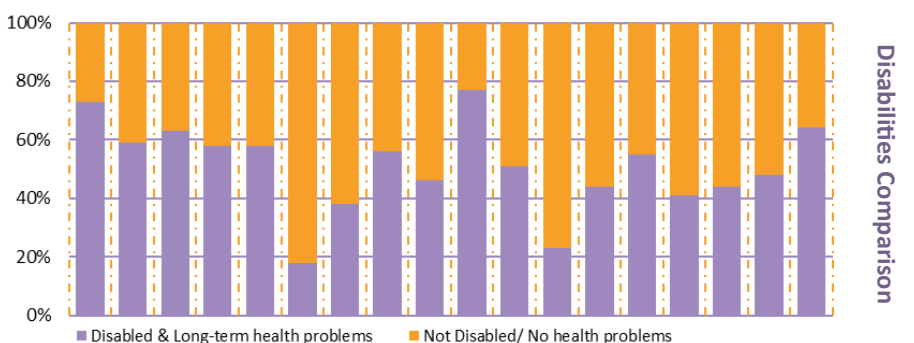
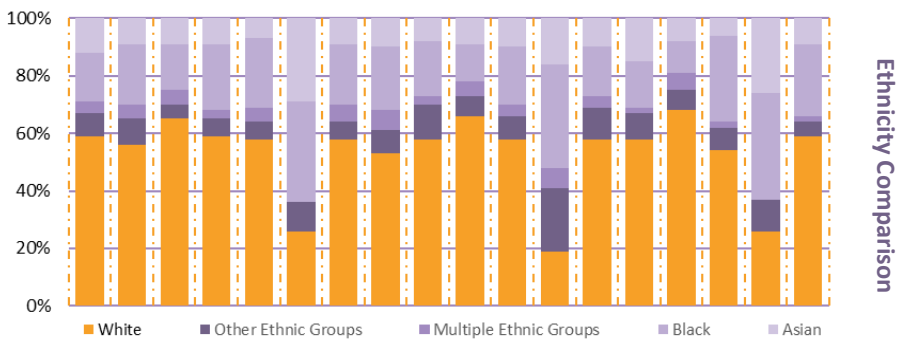
Clients by Equalities Data and Advice Categories



Cost of Living Comparisons

The pie chart above demonstrates how key advice areas have increased considerably between Q1 2022/23 and Q1 2023/24 in relation to the cost of living. Enquiries relating to Utilities such as energy bills have increased by 37% and Charitable and foodbank support has increased by 85%.

The demography of local Citizens Advice data reveals that women, ethnically diverse communities and disabled people/people with a long term health issue are all representing for advice at higher proportions than they are in the wider Leeds population. This indicates that these groups are being more severely affected by the cost of living crisis than the overall population. 38% of all clients in Q1 2023/24 were from priority wards which include the 1% most deprived neighbourhoods according to the IMD 2019.

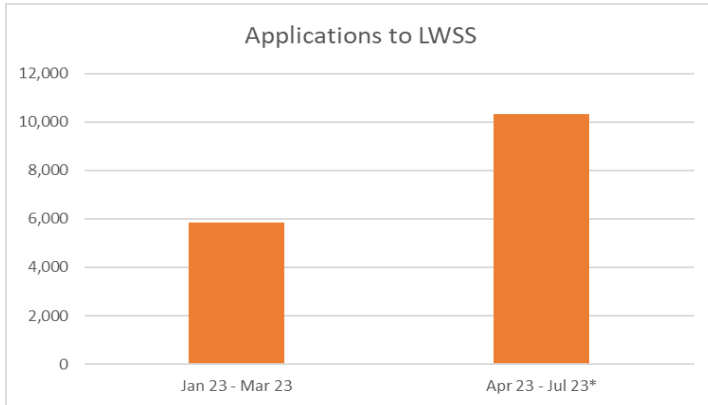


SOURCE: Citizens Advice Leeds and Chapelton, Quarterly data, August 2023

Local Welfare Support Scheme:

The Local Welfare Support Scheme (LWSS) is designed to support people who are experiencing an emergency or crisis position. The service offers food parcels, fuel support, supermarket vouchers, white goods, furniture and has recently trialled a cash grant scheme.

Applications to LWSS



Between April—July 2023, there were 10,337 applications, this increased by 77% from the previous 3 months to March 2023 when 5,829 applications to the scheme were made. The criteria for the scheme changed on 25th July 2023 due to the significant increase in applications for LWSS which meant there was a risk of a overspend this financial year if the position remained unchanged. From July 23 onwards, it is anticipated that there will be a reduction in both applications and awards.

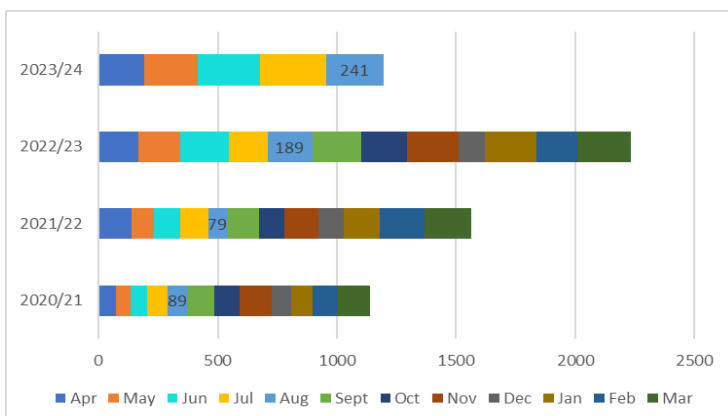
SOURCE: LCC LWSS Team, Monthly data, September 2023
*Please see notes and comments section about this quarter's data

Welfare Rights Unit:

The Council's Welfare Rights Unit provide advice and support on benefit entitlements to check eligibility and help clients access and claim benefits to maximise income. The number of benefit checks carried out by this team has significantly increased year on year from 2020/21—reflecting the cost of living crisis everyone is facing. In August 2023, 241 benefit checks were made by the service, up 28% from 189 checks made in August 2022.

SOURCE: LCC Welfare Rights Unit, Monthly data request, August 2023

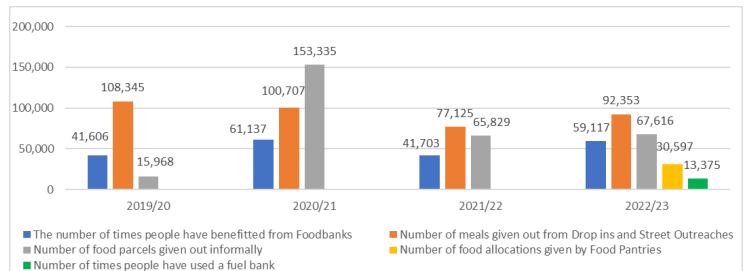
Number of benefit checks carried out:



Leeds Food Aid Network:

Leeds FAN helps bring different people, initiatives and institutions together who are involved in tackling food poverty in Leeds. This includes foodbanks, drop ins / soup kitchens, Street Outreaches, specialised services providing food for Asylum seekers / Refugees, informal parish pantries and certain forms of Social Enterprise run on a community café/pay as you feel models.

Latest figures reveal:

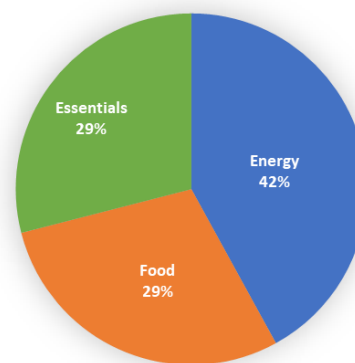


- 59,117 people have accessed a foodbank by referral in 2022/23. This is a 42% increase on the support level required during 2021/22.
- 92,353 meals were given out through a drop in or through Street Outreach, up 20% on last year.
- 67,616 food parcels were given out informally without the need for referral, this is up 3% on last year.
- New insights in 2022/23 also revealed that 30,597 allocations were accessed from Food Pantries, and Fuel Banks were used 13,375 times.

Source: Leeds FAN Annual Data, June 2023

Household Support Fund

Leeds has been allocated Government funding of £14.2m to support vulnerable people with the costs of energy, food and essential items between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024. In Q1 (1st April 23 and 30th June 23), 17,973 households were supported. *The spend over this period is £1,326,791 and reflects that work was being undertaken to evaluate proposed schemes through 3rd Sector and Council delivery partners including Housing Leeds, Housing Options, Public Health and Children's and Families. These schemes are now live or being established and many focus on the winter months which is accepted as the period of greatest pressure and need.



Of the 17,973 households supported in Q1, 75% were households with children, 2% were pensioner households, 14% had a disabled person within the household and 9% were households with working age adults without children.

42% was spent on energy, 29% on food and 29% on essential items.

25% of awards were in voucher form, 46% cash, and 29% received other/ tangible items.

SOURCE: LCC Financial Inclusion Team, September 2023

Cost of Living Crisis Dashboard

Data Sources

Leeds - September 2023

Data Source	Release Frequency	Latest Release	Next Release	Web link/access
ONS CPI Inflation and components	Monthly	20/09/2023	18/10/2023	Consumer price inflation tables - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
Bank of England Base Rate	Monthly	21/09/2023	02/11/2023	https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/the-interest-rate-bank-rate
ONS Family Spending in the UK	Ad-hoc	31/05/2023	TBC	Family spending in the UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
ONS House Prices	Quarterly	21/09/23	December 2023	Median house prices for administrative geographies: HPSSA dataset 9 - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
ONS Private Rental Market Summary Statistics	6 monthly	21/06/2022	20/12/23	Private rental market summary statistics in England - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
Leeds City Council, Housing Leeds	Quarterly	May 2023	August 2023	LCC data request
Housing Affordability	Annually	22/03/2023	March 2024	https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoworkplacebasedearningsforformerlocalauthorities
MoJ Repossessions Data	Quarterly	10/08/2023	November 2023	Mortgage and landlord possession statistics - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
DESNZ Quarterly statistical publication on energy prices.	Quarterly	June/July 2023	Sept/Oct 2023	Energy and climate change: evidence and analysis - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Ofgem Price Cap	Quarterly	25/08/2023	25/11/2023	https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/check-if-energy-price-cap-affects-you
BEIS Sub-regional fuel poverty 2022	Annually	27/04/2023	Feb-Apr 2024	Sub-regional fuel poverty 2022 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
ONS Weekly Road Fuel Prices	Weekly	18/09/2023	25/09/2023	Weekly road fuel prices - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
DWP HBAI Poverty	Annual	March 2023	March 2024	Leeds Observatory – Leeds Poverty Fact Book – Section 1: Relative and Absolute Poverty
DWP and HMRC Child Poverty	Annual	March 2023	March 2024	Leeds Observatory – Leeds Poverty Fact Book – Section 2: Child Poverty
DWP Universal Credit	Monthly	12/09/2023	17/10/2023	https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk
Annual Population Survey via Nomis - Employment	Quarterly	15/08/2023	17/11/2023	Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics (nomisweb.co.uk)
Annual Population Survey via Nomis - Unemployment	Quarterly	15/08/2023	17/11/2023	Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics (nomisweb.co.uk)
ASHE	Annual	November 2022	November 2023	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)
ASHE and Leeds Poverty Fact Book	Annual	November 2022	November 2023	Leeds Observatory – Leeds Poverty Fact Book – Section 3: Wages, Household Income and Employment
LCC Welfare Rights Unit	Monthly	September 2023	October 2023	LCC data request
Citizens Advice data from Leeds and Chapeltown	Quarterly	May 2023	August 2023	Local data request
LWSS	Monthly	September 2023	October 2023	LCC data request
Leeds FAN	Annually	May 2023	May 2024	Local data request
Household Support Fund	Quarterly	September 2023	December 2023	LCC data request

Cost of Living Crisis Dashboard

Glossary and Notes

Leeds - September 2023

Abbreviations

AHC—After Housing Costs
APS—Annual Population Survey
ASHE—Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
BHC—Before Housing Costs
BoE—Bank of England
CPI—Consumer Price Inflation
DESNZ—Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero
DWP—Department for Work and Pensions
FYE—Financial Year Ending
HSF—Household Support Fund
IMD—Index of Multiple Deprivation
LCC—Leeds City Council
Leeds FAN— Leeds Food Aid Network
LWSS—Local Welfare Support Scheme
MoJ—Ministry of Justice
MPC — Monetary Policy Committee
ONS—Office for National Statistics
UC—Universal Credit

Further information

LWSS data

Data between 1st—19th April 2023 was unavailable due to technical issues, these figures represent data from 20th April—25th July 2023.

For any queries or for further information on this report please contact financial.inclusion@leeds.gov.uk

Useful Definitions

Consumer price inflation — the rate at which the prices of goods and services bought by households rise or fall. It is estimated by using price indices and used in the government's target for inflation.

Relative poverty — individuals who have household incomes below 60% of the median average in the current year.

Absolute poverty— individuals who have household incomes 60% below the median average at a fixed point in time (currently 2010/11), adjusted for inflation.

Housing costs - Both relative and absolute measures are available before housing costs (BHC) and after housing costs (AHC) are deducted from income. The after housing cost measure is useful in the current economic climate as rising rents and property prices are a growing contributor to poverty.

Employment Rate—The number of people in employment expressed as a percentage of all people aged 16-64

Unemployment Rate—Unemployed as a percentage of the economically active population (i.e. people who are either in employment or unemployed and not the full working age population of 16 to 64 used for the Employment Rate)

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Appendix 3 – Strategic Meeting Themes

Since June 2023, strategic meetings have focused on key themes, pressures and emerging issues including housing, children’s services, health, crime and community safety, third sector and crisis support. Updates have been provided by local expert speakers. Highlighted points include:

Housing

- Issues stemming from rental liability increases, financial pressure from increased living costs, and the gap between the average rent cost and the local housing allowance (the rate of which hasn’t increased since 2020) are all increasing.
- Private landlords are also reporting the impact of higher interest rates with some withdrawing from the market.
- The private sector has been a critical element of Leeds Housing Options solutions, but the continuously changing backdrop is making the prevention and relief of homelessness exceptionally difficult.
- This is intensified by the limited availability of social sector housing, which is impacted by high levels of need, leading to significant wait times.
- In Leeds, temporary accommodation placements have increased during the 2022/23 financial year with most families requiring a placement due to being asked to leave accommodation by family/friends, partly due to the increased cost of utilities and food, with the second highest reason for being loss of private sector accommodation.
- Quality of housing stock across all sectors, particularly in terms of energy efficiency is also of significant concern. Issues of damp and mould are increasingly prevalent, in many cases compounded by households being unable to effectively heat and ventilate their homes.

Children & young people – Childrens Services

- Increases seen in the number of looked after children, safeguarding issues, and reported cases of children and young people being criminally exploited, including via organised crime.
- Shortages of social workers and difficulties with both recruitment and retention are compounding the scale of the challenge.
- Significant concerns relate to housing. Many families living in poor quality housing are frequently reluctant to report conditions, either directly to the landlord or via enforcement routes due to fears of eviction.
- Outbreaks of health conditions which have become severe and recurrent due to families being unable to afford the cost of treatment have been identified
- Government plans to increase childcare hours are unachievable with current levels of staffing/ funding.

Health

- Frontline health practitioners are reporting how cost of living pressures have added to existing issues such as mental health, loneliness, poor living conditions, fuel poverty, respiratory health, diet and malnutrition. Examples include;
- Skipping, missing or attempting to prioritise prescriptions from households not entitled to free prescriptions.
- Correlations between health conditions and poverty - lead poisoning in areas of the city with poor housing stock, attributable to children ingesting peeled paint from old pipes as well as recurrent and severe scabies, as families have been unable to afford deep clean/hot washing necessary to successfully treat the condition.
- Increasing numbers of patients with malnutrition; unable to access hot meals except for takeaway food due to the cost of food and energy. Particularly prevalent in areas densely populated by fast food takeaways offering cheap but nutritionally poor meals.

Crime & Community Safety

- Currently, more offenders without prior convictions and offending to protect or to provide for family – representing a change in local offender demographics.
- Elevated concerns and increased risks identified include exploitation (particularly women and young people), domestic abuse, child abuse, mental health incidents, and substance & alcohol misuse
- The Illegal Money Lending Team have reported Increases in illegal lending, linked to the cost of living, in conjunction with the decline of high-cost options.
- Concerns and increasing issues include illegal lending in workplaces, online lending via social media & gambling sites, individuals posing as legitimate lenders, use of tracking software on victim's phones, use of violence as enforcement.

Appendix 4 – Experiences/feedback from frontline officers/volunteers (anonymised)

During recent Financial Inclusion training sessions, attendees were asked: *What are you seeing/hearing from individuals/families? What challenges are you faced with? What are the key barriers to your individuals/families? What (if any) changes have you seen since last year?*

- Issues seem to be the same but increasing number of families needing support
- We are seeing more families needing food bank referrals, not being able to afford their energy, poor quality housing, overcrowded and mouldy. Cost of school uniforms for older siblings.
- Energy bills and having to choose between food or energy, which increases food bank reliance
- Low income families struggle to get across the city for necessary checks for children, time needed off work to make the big travel on many buses
- Food parcels increase, white goods and families without carpets, especially children's bedrooms
- I am accessing more food parcels for families which is taking me away from family therapy
- A family I visited yesterday, the eldest child working with Dad and not attending school, family in poverty
- Personal level I'm a single parent myself so I'm not immune from some of these issues.
- Issues we have with cost of living - baby milk, nappies, clothes and transport
- Food poverty, overcrowded homes, car transport, Mental Health decline.
- Our problem is usual resources we'd access for families: everyone is accessing so some being turned down for grants.
- DLA is absorbed into family income and not available for the specialist activities and services needed.
- Access to affordable housing- availability and cost.
- Families with Children with SEND (CYP with more complex needs) who have bigger bills from using specialist equipment or having to keep home at certain temperature at certain level - added pressure
- More working parents needing help, with food etc and not sure where they go for help
- Challenge of where to turn to if the families have already received support from services
- Young people being acutely aware of the financial challenges faced by the family, resulting in them experiencing stress and anxiety
- Issues with benefits, cost of transport, loss of council venues, accessibility to services reducing, Criminal exploitation to obtain money
- Learning need and mental health exacerbating access to support.
- Families are struggling with childcare provision. Costs rising, places reducing, no wrap around care. Providers are closing as costing too much and not enough funding. School appeals, families wanting closer schools, as they can't afford transport costs.
- People requesting removal of gas meters to save on standing charge. Impact to mental health depression, anxiety, aggression, sense of nowhere to go.
- We are finding more and more tenants that do not have gas or electric on, high debt on meters without the means to pay off the debt. Some of these are now long standing, over a year.
- We find that a lot of Damp and Mould enquiries come from fuel poverty and the fact that homes can't be heated
- Customers impacted through fuel poverty are less likely to allow access to undertake safety inspections due to the stigma of how they are living.

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Appendix 5 – Useful Glossary of Terms used in reports on poverty and the cost-of-living

Poverty Measures

Relative poverty - this measure provides an estimate of individuals who have household incomes below 60% of the median average in the current year. An increase in relative poverty is an indication of more households falling below the average household income and are not able to meet the financial costs of a basic standard of living.

Absolute poverty - this measure provides an estimate of individuals who have household incomes 60% below the median average at a fixed point in time (currently 2010/11), adjusted for inflation. This measure helps track whether current incomes fall below the poverty level in 2010. As general living standards increase over time, absolute poverty should fall.

The term 'absolute' can sometimes be confused to mean destitution, or not being able to afford basic material essentials such as food, clothing, and housing. However, when discussing official poverty data, it is important to remember the term 'absolute' refers to relative income at a fixed point in time.

Housing costs - Both relative and absolute measures are available before housing costs (BHC) and after housing costs (AHC) are deducted from income. The after-housing cost measure is useful in the current economic climate as rising rents and property prices are a growing contributor to poverty.

Some official measures of poverty are only available before housing costs are deducted from income; therefore, it is always best to understand BHC poverty figures are likely to be higher in this current climate of rising housing costs.

Relative poverty, after housing costs is the measure primarily referenced when discussing poverty estimates in official reports and documents produced by Leeds City Council.

The Leeds Poverty Fact Book includes all four measures (where available) for reference purposes.

Normally the Fact Book provides trend analysis on poverty data to show whether poverty levels have increased or decreased year-on-year. Unfortunately, during 2020/21 and 2021/22 survey sample size and methodology on official poverty data were impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown measures. This has meant the last two surveys were not comparable for year-on-year trend analysis and instead should be used to provide a snapshot on poverty levels in the respective year.

Cost of Living Indicators

Bank Rate - is the rate of interest set by the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC). The MPC aims to meet the 2% target that the Government sets to keep inflation low and stable. The Bank Rate determines the interest rate of commercial banks and influences the rates banks can charge to borrow money or pay on savings.

Consumer price inflation - the rate at which the prices of goods and services bought by households rise or fall. It is estimated by using price indices and used in the government's target for inflation.

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Local Welfare Support Scheme Update

Date: 14th November 2023

Report of: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Report to: Scrutiny Board for Environment, Housing and Communities

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief Summary

This report provides members of the Communities, Housing and Environment Scrutiny Board with an update on the progress of the Local Welfare Support Scheme (LWSS). The report details measures taken to ensure the scheme continues to support households in crisis whilst operating within budget and includes contextual information and updated eligibility criteria.

The LWSS is intended to support residents who may find themselves in an emergency or crisis, offering short term support to ease that position. In response to the cost-of-living crisis, the criteria for receiving a LWSS award was relaxed. The principal reason for relaxing the criteria was to open the scheme up to lower income households that were struggling to pay bills due to higher energy and food costs.

These changes saw the LWSS transform from a crisis support scheme designed to support relatively small numbers of households in a crisis to a fund available to lower-income households struggling to budget because of inflationary pressures. Despite additional funding from the Household Support Fund, it was recognised that the level of demand meant this model was unfortunately not financially sustainable.

During August 2023, the award criteria was changed to realign the LWSS with the original principal objective of crisis support. Furthermore, additional measures were introduced to help prevent fraud, improve consistency in decision making and ensure financial support was offered to those households who needed it the most.

Recommendations

Members of the Communities, Housing and Environment Scrutiny Board are asked to:

- a) Note the information contained within this report and the approach to delivering a financially sustainable LWSS.
- b) Note the contents of the enclosed eligibility criteria.
- c) Note the Action Plan and Next Steps set out at paragraph 29.

What is this report about?

- 1 This report provides the Scrutiny Board with an overview of the Local Welfare Support Scheme (LWSS) including contextual background to recent changes to the scheme in response to the cost-of-living crisis, and the current revised criteria and delivery model.

Background - Pre-April 2013

- 2 Before April 2013, emergency financial assistance was provided through the nationally administered Discretionary Social Fund. This included:
 - Budgeting Loans: Interest-free loans to help with costs that were difficult to budget for on a low income, such as furniture, clothing or removal expenses.
 - Crisis Loans: Interest-free loans to help with immediate needs in a crisis. 'Alignment Payments' were also provided to support claimants waiting for a first payment of benefit.
 - Community Care Grants: Non-repayable cash grants to help people leaving institutional care to resettle independently in the community, or to ease exceptional financial pressures facing a family.

Reforms in April 2013

- 3 The Government introduced reforms in April 2013:

Crisis loans (other than Alignment Payments) and Community Care Grants were abolished. Instead, funding was transferred to local authorities to establish their own Local Welfare Support Schemes.

Budgeting Loans remained nationally administered and are now called Budgeting Advances under Universal Credit. Crisis Loan Alignment Payments also remained under central control and became Short-Term Benefit Advances for those on legacy benefits or Advance Payments for those on Universal Credit.

Funding for Local Welfare Support Schemes

- 4 The Government determined that from 2015/16 onwards there would be no separate Local Welfare Support funding stream. Instead, it would become part of the general Revenue Support Grant that central government provides to councils to support spending on local services. This funding is not ring-fenced, and there are no statutory obligations for local authorities to provide a Local Welfare Support.

The base budget for Local Welfare Support awards in Leeds is £600k per annum. Recently this has been supplemented with funding available from the Government's Household Support Fund, however there is no guarantee this funding will continue, and the Government are yet to announce whether it will be available in 2024/25.

The National Picture

- 5 Nationally, there is significant variation in terms of how Local Welfare Support is delivered. In 2020 The Childrens Society reported that 1 in 7 local authorities did not run a Local Welfare Support Scheme, including 23 out of 151 'Upper Tier' Councils.

More recently, the Government's Household Support Funding has required all Local Authorities to deliver 'application-based' assistance with essentials such as food and fuel.
- 6 The different designs of Local Welfare Support Schemes nationally may reflect differences in local need and the emergency support which community and voluntary sector partners provide in each area.

Local Welfare Support Scheme in 2023/24

- 7 In response to the cost-of-living crisis, the criteria for receiving a LWSS award had been relaxed. The principal reason for relaxing the criteria was to open the scheme up to households that were struggling to pay bills due to higher energy and food costs. These changes saw the LWSS transform into a fund available to lower income households struggling to budget because of inflationary pressures. Despite additional funding from the Household Support Fund, it was recognised that the level of demand meant this model was unfortunately not financially sustainable.
- 8 The annual LWSS budget in 2023/24 is £2.1M. This includes a £1.5M contribution from the Household Support Fund. During June 2023, the total combined LWSS spend during April and May 2023 was reported as £874,041. This equates to an average of £437,020 per month and, at that time, a projected annual spend of £5.2M.
- 9 Given this, LWSS expenditure needed to be reduced in-year to ensure a budget continued to be available across the full financial year and this prompted a review of the scheme.

Key Principles of the Review

- 10 The LWSS scheme was originally established with the aim to help the most vulnerable households who are experiencing exceptional pressure, above the normal range of pressures. It was agreed that, to ensure the scheme remains within budget, eligibility for assistance was brought back in line with the original scheme intention.
- 11 The following principles were determined to be key in terms of the strategic success of the LWSS in Leeds and guided the review of the scheme:
 - **Accessibility:** Eligibility rules should be clear and widely available. Applicants should be able to apply online and provision should be available for residents who are digitally excluded.
 - **Administration:** Administration costs should be minimised where possible.
 - **Budget Management:** The scheme should operate within the allocated budget.
 - **Decision making:** Should be consistent and transparent.
 - **Protecting public funds:** Verification and cross checks should be used where possible to prevent fraudulent applications and to ensure support is given to those who need it most.
 - **Reporting:** Accurate management information should be available to enable effective budget management and effective regular appraisals of the scheme's success.
 - **Speed of awards:** Given that applicants are often in immediate need, awards should be processed quickly and ideally within 2 working days.
 - **Support:** Should meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in Leeds who are experiencing exceptional pressure. The scheme should strive to offer choice and dignity to residents receiving support.
 - **Team Leeds:** Delivery should include collaboration with, and referrals to, third sector organisations. A coordinated response is the most effective way to ensure all those households who require emergency financial support receive the help they need, and nobody falls through the gaps.

Outcome of the Review – Revised Criteria

- 12 In practical terms, as the focus of the new scheme is on crisis support only (full details of the revised LWSS criteria can be found in Appendix One), the review concluded that applicants will only be eligible for support if they have no savings, are in receipt of, or are applying for an eligible benefit, and are in a pre-defined crisis as follows:

- suffered a sudden loss of income due to a theft, benefits sanction, relationship breakdown, bereavement or other reason.
- recently diagnosed with an illness incurring additional expense and waiting for the outcome of a claim for Personal Independence Payments or another health-related benefit.
- a recent victim of a flood, fire or theft.
- fleeing violence or the threat of violence.
- moving from [supported or emergency accommodation](#) (as defined in the Housing Benefit regulations) into a property where they no longer receive support. For this situation, if the applicant has received a previous food or energy award in the last 12 months, they can still apply for support.

13 To compliment the revised scheme provision, officers have been Increasing awareness of, and signposting to alternative support provision available both nationally and locally, which includes:

- Budgeting Advances available under Universal Credit.
- Short-Term Benefit Advances for those on legacy benefits.
- Advance Payments for those on Universal Credit.
- National Cost of Living Payments
- Alternative provision available via the Household Support Fund
- Food Aid partners, such as food pantries, via the Leeds Food Aid map.
- Energy advice and support available via Green Doctor, Scope Disability Energy Support and the Citizens Advice Leeds – Energy Affordability helpline.
- Money and benefits advice services in the city via the Leeds Money Information Centre website and resources
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Support available from Childrens Services
- The Council Tax Support Fund

14 Applicants who are not successful for a direct award are always directed to appropriate alternative support, which means that every applicant to LWSS receives support whether that be a direct financial award, signposting or advice.

Outcome of the Review – Type of Support provided.

15 The review concluded that the types of support on offer to households in crisis should remain the same. The following section of the report outlines the direct support available to Leeds residents who meet the criteria for a LWSS award.

White Goods

- Applicants can request white goods, such as fridges, freezers, washing machines, microwaves and cookers where they do not have the funds to pay for these themselves.
- The scheme is currently out of contract with their white goods supplier and a full procurement exercise is scheduled for completion in February 2024, with a view to improving value for money and increased choice around energy efficiency.
- An innovative partnership with a domestic appliance manufacturer has been successfully piloted and implemented. High quality, refurbished goods, that have been fully cleaned, repaired (where necessary) and tested are donated to the scheme to allocate to customers. All items have a 12-month guarantee. The manufacturer has agreed to donate between 100-200 fridge freezers per year. This has the potential to deliver savings which will help reduce the burden on the LWSS budget.

Support with Energy Costs

- Applicants in crisis can apply for a one-off emergency cash payment to help them meet their short-term energy bill commitments. The value of the award will vary between £30 and £90 depending upon the size of the household. Award values are reviewed periodically in line with available budget and seasonal pressures.

Support with Food Costs

- Applicants in crisis can apply for short-term support to purchase food. The value of the award will typically vary between £100 and £250. Applicants can choose between cash awards and supermarket vouchers. Award values are reviewed periodically in line with available budget and seasonal pressures.

Furniture

- Residents can apply for the provision of essential furniture including beds, mattresses, bedding, sofas, armchairs and curtain poles. Items of furniture are supplied by Leeds and Moortown furniture store who are a furniture re-use charity. The scheme is now out of contract with Leeds and Moortown and a full procurement exercise is scheduled for completion before April 2024.

Removals

- The scheme offers assistance with removal costs for eligible applicants. The LWSS have recently started to deliver this service internally using the Council's Civic Enterprise Leeds (CEL). This has resulted in reduced costs as well as an improved service for residents.

Flooring

- Residents who meet the eligibility criteria can apply for flooring or carpets from the scheme. This is delivered internally through Leeds Building Services (LBS).

Accessibility

- 16 The full eligibility criteria along with details on how to apply and request a reconsideration have been published online: [Local Welfare Support Scheme \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://leeds.gov.uk)
- 17 Applicants continue to apply for support by telephoning the Council, however an online application is currently in production and is set to launch before April 2024. The online form will be embedded within the Local Welfare Support Scheme page at leeds.gov.uk and will offer improvements in terms of the customer journey, including the facility to upload supporting documents. Applicants without a telephone or access to the internet will continue to be able to visit a community hub and make a supported application.

Administration and Decision Making

- 18 Officers receiving telephone applications will determine whether the applicants meet the eligibility criteria. A significant change to the scheme is that potentially eligible applications are now referred to a back-office team within Welfare and Benefits (W&B) who will undertake verification checks, process applications and notify the applicant of their award by text message or email.
- 19 The W&B service, now manage the scheme using existing staff who are experienced in processing applications for benefits including Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Free School Meals and Discretionary Housing Payments.
- 20 Priority awards to provide support with food and fuel are being processed within 2 working days.

Impact

- 21 The measures introduced have been successful in terms of reducing expenditure. The LWSS is now forecast to remain within budget for the 2023/24 financial year.
- 22 The LWSS continues to provide support to households in crisis. Records show that 66 households received support with a total value of £33,489 during the period 13/10/23 to 13/11/23.
- 23 A reduction in applications to the scheme has reduced pressure on the Contact Centre who also no longer manage the scheme and have been able to assign staff to other work areas.
- 24 The W&B service, who now manage the scheme have absorbed the additional work using existing staff within the teams who are experienced in processing applications for benefit.
- 25 Measures introduced to secure the gateway to the scheme have proved successful with at least two fraudulent applications prevented and assurance that support is only being provided to households who are in financial hardship.
- 26 Following the rollout of the revised eligibility criteria, feedback from partners identified a potential gap in support for residents leaving supported or emergency accommodation. This issue was resolved immediately with an amendment to the criteria.
- 27 No significant issues have been reported by customer facing staff.
- 28 One Third Sector partner has reported an impact in terms of additional demand on their services, but this has not been quantified.

Action Plan and Next Steps

- 29 The following have been identified as key activities for the remainder of the 2023/24:
 - The introduction of an online LWSS claim form.
 - Ongoing engagement with partner services within the Council and community based third sector organisations, collaborating to ensure residents can access the support they need.
 - Careful budget monitoring to ensure the LWSS remains within budget.
 - Finalise outstanding procurement exercise for the provision of White Goods and Furniture.
 - Plan the scheme criteria/award values for 2024/25 in accordance with available budget. This will largely depend on whether the Government plan to continue with the Household Support fund in 2024/25.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 30 The LWSS has a citywide impact on residents facing financial insecurity and aims to support these residents through a period of crisis.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

- 31 The LWSS impacts all three pillars of the Best City Ambition. Health and Wellbeing – through the provision of welfare support that aims to tackle poverty and inequalities and provide improved wraparound support, linking to the wider determinants of health. Inclusive Growth – through working with the third sector around the provision of goods and tackling of poverty. Zero Carbon – through the focus on reuse and refurbished furniture and white goods.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

32 The service needed to act quickly to implement recent changes to the LWSS criteria to avoid significantly exceeding the allocated budget. Because of this, the opportunity for consultation and engagement was limited, however consultation included key services within the Council, including Customer Services and the Financial Inclusion Team in addition to the Chief Officer and Director of CH&E and the appropriate Executive Member for Communities.

What are the resource implications?

33 £1.5M of funding from the Household Support Fund was added to the LWSS budget for the financial year 2023/2024. This has now been spent. The current revised LWSS criteria and delivery model will be sustainable within the current base budget of £600K without additional Household Support Funding.

34 Further resource implications for the sustainability of a future scheme will be considered once the future of the Household Support Fund has been confirmed by Government.

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

35 The key risks relate to budget management and the welfare of financially insecure households within the city. These risks have been managed as outlined within this report by ensuring that the LWSS offer is sustainable and complimented with appropriate advice and signposting where an award is not possible. As the LWSS progresses, risks will be a consideration in line with the regular approach to risk management and reporting.

What are the legal implications?

36 There are no legal implications to this work as there is no legal requirement for local authorities to provide a Welfare Assistance Scheme.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

37 No other options have been considered.

How will success be measured?

38 Success will be continuously measured against the key principles outlined in section 9 of this report.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

39 Implementation is ongoing and subject to continuous review.

Appendices

- Appendix One – LWSS Eligibility Criteria

Background papers

- None

Eligibility Criteria for the Local Welfare Support Scheme 2023/24

To be eligible, the applicant or partner if they have one, must not have received a previous Local Welfare Support award in the last 12 months.

The applicant may be eligible for support if they:

- are a Leeds resident.
- are aged 16 years or over.
- have insufficient funds available for the support they require.
- are entitled to, or applying for, one or more of the following benefits:

Universal Credit	Guaranteed Pension Credit
Housing Benefit	Council Tax Support
Income Support	Child Tax Credit
Job Seekers Allowance	Working Tax Credit
Employment and Support Allowance	

The applicant must also be able to demonstrate that they meet one of the following crisis definitions:

- suffered a sudden loss of income due to a theft, benefits sanction, relationship breakdown, bereavement or other reason.
- recently diagnosed with an illness incurring additional expense and waiting for the outcome of a claim for Personal Independence Payments or another health-related benefit.
- a recent victim of a flood, fire or theft.
- fleeing violence or the threat of violence.
- moving from [supported or emergency accommodation](#) (as defined in the Housing Benefit regulations) into a property where they no longer receive support. For this situation, if the applicant has received a previous food or energy award in the last 12 months, they can still apply for support.

In extreme and exceptional cases, an officer may make an award where an applicant does not meet one of the above crisis definitions or has already received a LWSS award in the previous 12 months.

Support will be limited where an applicant or their partner have funds available to them as illustrated in the table below:

Less than £150	Eligible for all support
Between £150 and £400	Only eligible for support with up to 2 white goods, furniture and carpets £300 – single/couple & £600 families
Between £401 and £800	Only eligible for support with up to 2 white goods, furniture and carpets £300 – single/couple & £600 families BUT only eligible if impacted by fire, flood, fleeing violence or moving from supported/temporary accommodation.
Over £800	Not eligible for any support

Community Committee Review Update

Date: 6th December 2023

Report of: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing & Communities)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

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 City Ambition and the council's overall aim of creating safer and stronger communities.

The city's ten Community Committees provide the infrastructure through which the council executes one of its democratic functions and community engagement ambitions. As formal council meetings held in public, they are one of the few structures through which the council has delegated its decision-making powers to the local level.

Community Committees play a key role in helping to address a range of local issues by developing committee and ward level programmes of work that help to improve the places where people live. This includes work to improve the local environment or deliver activities that address specific local issues and/or create new opportunities which local people can benefit from.

Together, the committees create an invaluable city-wide network, through which communities are encouraged to engage and influence how the Council and its partners delivers it's business functions.

In June 2023, the Council's Executive Board supported a recommendation to undertake a full review of Community Committees involving all 99 Councillors, facilitated through the Council's Scrutiny structures. This report gives the Environment, Housing & Communities Scrutiny Board an update on the progress of the review, to date.

Recommendations

Scrutiny Board is asked to note the content of the report and:

- a) Support the review of Community Committees and their constitutional role in helping to shape and influence place.

What is this report about?

1. This report gives the Environment, Housing & Communities Scrutiny Board an update on the progress of the Community Committee Review as agreed by the Council's Executive Board in June 2023.
2. A further report to the Environment, Housing & Communities Scrutiny Board in July set out in more detail the work aligned to the review from September 2023, in which five specific workstreams were identified:

✓ **Executive Delegated functions:**

[S3Da Community Committee Executive Delegation - Issue 1 Last amended on 26th May 2022.pdf \(leeds.gov.uk\)](#), currently:

- Well Being; covers a range of delegated budgets
- Community Centres
- CCTV
- Neighbourhood Management and Coordination
- Street Cleansing & Environmental Enforcement Services
- Community parks, cemeteries, closed churchyards, recreation grounds, urban woodland, natural areas, maintenance of roundabouts, other floral features and local green space
- Community Infrastructure Levy; Neighbourhood Fund

✓ **Delegated budgets:** Wellbeing Fund and Youth Activity Fund.

✓ **Community engagement and Asset Based Community Development (ABCD):** linked to the Local Government Association Peer Review and Member Development.

✓ **Community Committee Champions:** review of current themes, with a proposal to change Jobs & Skills to Cost of Living, or link to Inclusive Growth.

✓ **Governance and Meeting Structure:** review of reports and agenda structure and review of links to other related locality working arrangements e.g., Local Care Partnerships and School Clusters.

3. This report updates specifically on the progress made on establishing a cross party Elected Member working group as well as the initial feedback from the two workshops that have taken place on the workstreams of the Community Committee Champions role and Delegated Budgets.

Elected Member Working Group

4. The role of the Elected Member working group will be to support the development of four member workshops as well as the development of recommendations on changes to the way that Community Committees operate from June 2024.
5. The 10 Community Committees sit within the portfolio of the Environment, Housing & Communities (CHE) Scrutiny Board. The CHE Scrutiny Board will play a key role to review the Review recommendations prior to being formally approved by Executive Board, support the review via representation on the Elected member working group and will receive progress update reports containing feedback from member workshop.

6. An Elected Member working group, chaired by the Executive Board Member for Communities, has now been established, with the first meeting taking place on the 20th October 2023. The Elected Member Working Group has cross party representation from all political parties (that meet the criteria for sitting on a Scrutiny Board), with representation as follows:

- ✓ **Labour Party Members:** 6 nominees.
- ✓ **Conservative Party Members:** 3 nominees.
- ✓ **Liberal Democratic Party Members:** 2 nominees.
- ✓ **Morley Borough Independent Party Members:** 1 nominee.
- ✓ **Green Party Members:** 1 nominee.

Specific representatives from each of the Scrutiny Boards are listed as follows:

- ✓ **Adults, Health & Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board:** Councillor Kidger & Councillor France-Mir.
- ✓ **Children & Families Scrutiny Board:** Cllr Cohen & Cllr Blackburn.
- ✓ **Environment, Housing & Communities Scrutiny Board:** Cllr Golton & Cllr B Anderson.
- ✓ **Infrastructure, Investment & Inclusive Growth Scrutiny Board:** Cllr Hamilton, Cllr Wilson & Cllr N Buckley.
- ✓ **Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Board:** Cllr Burke, Cllr Bithell & Cllr Chapman.
- ✓ **Corporate Governance & Audit Committee:** Cllr Wray and Cllr Bithell (already nominated via Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Board).

7. A 'Terms of Reference' document has been drafted for the Elected Member working group and this was discussed in the meeting on the 20th October. Further work on the document is now taking place, following feedback.

8. The 'Terms of Reference' sets out the proposed governance arrangements for the review and the role that the working group plays, including the frequency of meetings and reporting; the purpose of the Member Working Group; working methods; key milestones; the Chairs role in the working group, as well as the role of nominated Elected Members and council officers.

9. A second meeting of the Member Working Group took place on 27th November 2023. At this meeting, feedback from both the Champions and Delegated Workshops were discussed, and the agenda for the next workshop, which will consider how the committees can increase Community Engagement and Empowerment, was drafted.

Member Workshops

10. Following on from Full Council on the 13th September 2023 and the conversation that took place regarding the Community Committee Review, the themed committee review workshops will aim to engage and seek feedback and ideas from Elected Members.

11. All Councillors will have the opportunity to attend and participate in the workshop sessions, which will take place at the Civic Hall, Committee Room 6 & 7, before Full Council, on the dates below (the exception is the Community Committee Champions session which was restricted to members who currently hold themed Champion positions for their committee).

- ✓ **Workshop 1: Community Committee Champions, 25th Oct 2023 (10am)**
In the Community Committee Champions Workshop there was a proposal to look at:

- The role of the Champion.

- Support and focus for the Champion.
- Themes (option to change Jobs & Skills to Cost of Living or linked to Inclusive Growth).

✓ **Workshop 2: Delegated Budgets, 15th Nov 2023 (9.30am)**

As part of the Delegated Budgets Workshop, focus was on:

- Refining the criteria for wellbeing funding.
- The potential merger of the Wellbeing and Youth Activity Fund (YAF).
- Consideration on how delegated committee funds can better support local priorities, for example the impact of the cost of living crisis.

✓ **Workshop 3: Community Engagement & Empowerment, 17th Jan 2024 (10am)**

As part of the Community Engagement & Empowerment Workshop there will be focus on:

- The role of the committees in relation to community engagement and place shaping.
- Member development and Asset Based Community Development.
- How we make meetings more engaging.
- Other issues such as the meeting structure and committee reports.

✓ **Workshop 4: Delegated Functions, 21st Feb (10am)**

As part of the Executive Functions workstream there will be a focus on involving services and agreeing what is realistic in terms of delegations to the committees.

12. Since the last report to the Environment, Housing & Communities Scrutiny Board in July, two workshops have now taken place on the themes of the Community Champions role and Delegated Budgets.

13. Following input from the Elected Member working group a format was designed for the workshop sessions that fell into two distinct parts. Part one was a listening exercise to allow Elected Members the opportunity to download their thoughts on what works well and what doesn't and part two of the workshop allowed space for Elected Members to feedback their ideas on improvements and recommendations for the review.

14. Each workshop was organised and facilitated by the Communities Team and included inputs from the Executive Board Member for Communities and Leader of Council. Highlighted below, are some headlines emerging from both workshop sessions that will be fed into the Elected Member Working Group for consideration and further investigation.

15. The Community Committee Champions Workshop was held on 25th October 2023. **30** Elected Members participated:

- ✓ Not all Community Champions role are created equally, at present. Some function well; other roles could do with development.
- ✓ A consensus that there needs to be clarity on the role, the support offered, accountability and the relationship to the relevant services.
- ✓ Member development is a gap. Corporately, it is unclear who owns this space. A Champions peer support network was suggested.
- ✓ Appetite from existing champions do more, connect the strategic ambitions of the council with localities and have local intelligence shaping policy. A two way relationship.

- ✓ Elected Members want to be informed, communicated with and be seen as 'experts in their field'. There is a knowledge gap, specifically around data. The role of Social Progress Index needs exploration.
 - ✓ The current reporting framework at Community Committees can see some Champions passive or even bypassed in the delivery of messages and updates. The role needs to be pro-active and owned by the Elected Member, not officers.
 - ✓ The architecture to support the Champions varies by geography. Some Champion themes have dedicated some sub groups and a relationship with the relevant Executive Board Member. Others simply don't.
 - ✓ Champion Roles could evolve to better suit the council's strategic ambitions. Employments, Skills and Welfare suggested to change to Inclusive Growth (specially the People strand).
 - ✓ The Champions role is a way that Members can engage with local issues, so important there is representation from across the full committee area.
 - ✓ The Champions role is a voluntary one, so is hard to dictate 'the role' to volunteers/get buy in. Chairs could speak with committee members before the AGM to identify willing Champions. Service Leads could chat to prospective Champions regarding the Champion theme before appointments are made (would help in getting Champions that are passionate about the theme/role & want to become involved).
16. The Delegated Budgets Workshop was held on 15th November 2023. Approx. 40 Elected Members participated.
- ✓ A consensus that the Community Committees are good funders. Agile, flexible and play a significant role in local capacity building and targeting resource to address local need.
 - ✓ Discipline around the funding process could be improved. At times, Elected Members have too little information and too little time to make informed decisions.
 - ✓ Funding rounds linked to the Committee cycles is an option to explore. Would provide rigour to the process and time for scrutiny of applications but it is acknowledged there needs to be some flex for reactive issues.
 - ✓ Some existing funding streams – Housing Advisory Panel and Ward Based Initiative monies – allow for Elected Member influence but sit outside of the Community Committee decision making framework. Could this influence be systemised better? At present, it can feel ad hoc and varies by area.
 - ✓ Some appetite to take direct control over some funding streams. HAP being one possible example. Climate Action grants another. The rationale being reducing bureaucracy and the better targeting resources locally.
 - ✓ Those funds that are linked to development but not under Community Committee control like Section 106 and elements of the Community Infrastructure Levy (be that the central fund or the Neighbourhood Fund passported directly to Town and Parish Council) need joining up. A local vision or priorities statement could help that. Too often Elected Members aren't involved or influencing how these funding agreements are designed at the planning stage. Could that be looked at?
 - ✓ At present the criteria for Wellbeing funding is broad. Some Elected Members like that, others felt it could be more refined and a revisiting of Community Committee priorities could help inform that. Localised data and intelligence key to this.

- ✓ Providing value for money was seen as important, especially in the current climate. Monitoring of projects post-approval needs work. Also, some ideas around stipulating match funding and a tapering of funding, year on year, for repeat applications in a bid to encourage sustainability.
- ✓ The suggestion of amalgamating revenue funding pots i.e. Wellbeing and Youth Activity Funding (YAF) received a mixed response. Some resistance to the idea completely, some felt this could be revisited mid-year to encourage the spending of pots with a more rigid criteria YAF was seen as important to delivering for children and young people aged 8-17.
- ✓ Potential to explore the possibility of a Finance Sub Group operating in each committee (works well in one area). Would possibly provide rigour & robustness to the committee funding process?

Forward Plan

17. Some of the key milestones for the Community Committee Review are listed below:

- ✓ **July 2023:** Communities, Housing & Environment Scrutiny Board agree review.
- ✓ **October 2023:** 1st Member Working Group meeting.
- ✓ **February 2024:** Working group recommendations presented.
- ✓ **March 2024:** Scrutiny Board draft recommendations presented.
- ✓ **April 2024:** Executive Board report for approval of final recommendations.
- ✓ **May 2024:** Full Council Annual Meeting approve arrangements.
- ✓ **June 2024:** Some new Community Committee arrangements commence.

18. The Forward Plan is as follows:

- ✓ **July 2023:** Environment, Housing & Communities Scrutiny Board agree review scope and Member Working Group representative sought.
- ✓ **September 2023:** 1st Member Working Group meeting (Elected Member workshops TBC). Up to four member workshops to be developed between October 2023 and February 2024, to engage and seek feedback and ideas from Elected Members.
- ✓ **March 2024:** Working Group recommendations presented and approved via appropriate governance arrangements.
- ✓ **June 2024:** Some new Community Committee arrangements commence.

Other Considerations

19. The Community Committees provides an infrastructure through which the council executes its democratic renewal ambitions, by bringing Elected Members and service providers closer to residents, to help shape and influence the places they live.

20. They are formal council meetings held in public and form a key element of the councils constitution and hold devolved powers from the council's Executive Board. Public attendance however at committee meetings in some areas is low and there is a danger that opportunities are being missed to fully engage with the public about the issues that matter most to them, in the areas they live and work.

21. The review will need to consider therefore how the committee infrastructure can improve community engagement and better empower local people, so that they can become more involved in their community and influence how services are delivered.
22. Elected Members will be fully aware that the council is under increasing pressures due to a range of factors. This includes the ongoing financial challenge, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the current cost of living crisis, as well as demographic changes which bring increased demands upon local services. The Community Committee Review must also consider effective use of public resources to deliver better outcomes for communities.
23. For any Elected Member that is unable to attend any of the workshops, there will be other opportunities to engage with the Community Committee Review. The Safer Stronger Communities Team have offered individual briefing sessions to all Elected Members and a dedicated email address has now been set up to capture feedback and thoughts regarding the review: communitycommitteereview@Leeds.gov.uk
24. Further consideration is needed to consider how services and partners will be engaged in the review.
25. The review will support the delivery of actions identified through the recent Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review, specifically:

Theme

Locality and Community Working
Supporting our city ambition to tackle poverty and inequality

- Recommendation**
- Use the Peer Review recommendation to take stock of Locality and Community approaches with a focus on People, Assets and Governance, using this as the primary vehicle for delivering the Best City Ambition right across the city.
 - Consider how to further strengthen place-based networks.
 - In this context, review and develop the community committees and draw on the work of the Social Progress Index to measure progress.
 - Invest in member development on strengths-based community development. Councillors' ambitions for their communities are clear but as the council's resources reduce members have an important role to play in supporting communities to be able to do more for themselves.

What impact will this proposal have?

26. Community Committees play an important role in understanding and addressing issues of concern to local people. One of the many ways they do this is by funding projects that address local priorities. In 2021/22, this was once again apparent as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect Leeds. With it came some very specific and immediate needs for our communities; challenges that the Community Committees addressed by funding much needed projects that tackled the immediate effects of the pandemic in each of the 33 wards in the city.
27. The commitment to locality based working continues to be demonstrated in the broad range of projects that the Community Committees fund, spending nearly £1.8 million in 2021/22, totalling

just under 500 separate grants that were provided to local grass-root organisations, voluntary groups and charities, to tackle the immediate and specific needs of our communities.

28. Work takes place through our Community Committee structures proves invaluable in making sure our approach is tailored to meet the direct needs of our local communities in a responsive and effective way, therefore the review will need to take into consideration any impact that changes may have.
29. In addition to this, as the Community Committees have an engagement function, the review will need to consider how any changes will affect local communities in Leeds. The Community Committee Facebook pages and the social media activity that takes place through the Community Committee structures, ensure we reach a large number of residents every month through local stories and conversations.
30. During the pandemic our Community Committees 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.
31. A universal approach continues to be delivered using the city-wide Community Committee infrastructure, to ensure that all parts of the city continue to benefit from the learning, experience and improvements delivered through the model of Locality Working. As such, a new Communities Team structure is now in place, providing a more integrated and flexible approach to Locality Working around the citywide, targeted and seasonal and responsive work strands.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

32. The Best Council Ambition reflects the current post COVID-19 and cost of living context, while maintaining the three pillar priorities of inclusive growth; health and wellbeing; and climate change, under the overarching priority of tackling poverty and inequalities. These nationally significant issues continue to have a huge impact on all areas of the Best Council Ambition, with the economy, employment, education, community resilience and health and wellbeing all detrimentally affected by the pandemic, which will undoubtedly limit progress towards our ambitions.
33. Community Committees will be a key factor in guiding the response to the multiple challenges the city faces, particularly as we begin to better understand the long-term health, social and economic impacts of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.
34. Swings in climate and more extreme weather will create inequality, as financial disparity creates pressures between those able to invest in measures to maintain comfort, diet and activity that may be denied to those least able to afford it. A range of initiatives within the Community Committees supports the climate emergency agenda, including creating pocket parks, hanging baskets, planting additional trees, as well as creating areas of greater natural biodiversity that all help to improve air quality, by working with 'In Bloom' and 'Friends of' groups throughout the city; also work to improve greater energy efficiency in buildings.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

35. The Community Committee Review was approved by Executive Board on 21st June 2023. A meeting of the 10 Community Committee Chairs took place on the 3rd July 2023 to canvas their feedback on the scope and timescales for the review.

36. Consultation has also taken place with strategic leaders and service managers.

37. The review will seek to consult with both attendees of committees, including co-opted members, where these exist, and non-attendees. Further discussions will take place with the Member Working group to agree the best way to deliver this aspect of the review.

What are the resource implications?

38. The work articulated through the Community Committees and the Locality Working approach makes best use of existing resources already working in neighbourhoods and seeks to do things differently by making best use of the leadership role and knowledge of locally elected representatives; working with residents to shape their neighbourhoods and inform service re-design to address the needs of all our communities in Leeds. It also seeks to help communities to be more resilient and strengthen cohesion.

39. The council is under increasing pressures due to a range of factors. This includes the ongoing financial challenge, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the current cost of living crisis, as well as demographic changes which bring increased demands upon local services. A new Communities Team structure is now in place, providing a more integrated and flexible approach to Locality Working around the citywide, targeted and seasonal and responsive work strands.

40. The Community Committees review must therefore consider the effective use of public resources to deliver better outcomes for communities. Aligning the distribution of Community Committee funding to local priorities will help to ensure that the maximum benefit can be provided.

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

41. The city's community committee structure provides an infrastructure through which the Council executes its democratic renewal ambitions, by bringing elected Council members and services providers closer to residents to help shape and influence the places where they live. They are formal Council meetings held in public and form a key element of the Council constitution and hold devolved powers from the Council's Executive Board. However, public attendance at committee meetings in some areas is low and there is a danger that opportunities are being missed to fully engage with the public about the issues that matter to them most in the areas where they live and work. The review will consider how the Committee infrastructure can improve community engagement and better empower local people so that can become more involved in their local community and influence how services are delivered.

42. The Council has determined a risk to community cohesion, and it has established this risk on its corporate risk register. It has also been discussing a need to change radically the way we work in localities and implemented a new approach to locality working in November 2017. Pressures

in some of our most challenged and disadvantaged neighbourhoods are now greater than ever due to a range of factors. The communities of Leeds have changed rapidly over the past decade, this is much more apparent in the city's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. A failure to fully engage and be inclusive to all the communities of Leeds may result in increased tensions leading to a sense of alienation and isolation.

43. These fractures may increase the city's risk of becoming more susceptible to the influences of those who want to divide our communities, making them more polarised and vulnerable to extremism and other harmful influences. The locality working approach through the Community Committees, seeks to engage with all communities, with a strong focus of the work on strengthening communities and building self-reliance and resilience.
44. Resources in many front-line operations have already been deployed on a needs-led basis with limited capacity from simply shifting where staff work to another area. Additionally, the agility of organisations to respond in the context of broader economic changes could challenge the pace of improvement. Locality Working through the Community Committees cannot just be about addressing poverty but also about more effective use of resources with all our communities, delivering better outcomes. Aligning the distribution of Community Committee funding to local priorities will help to ensure that the maximum benefit can be provided.
45. Failure to fully engage and get 'buy in' from a range of partners and council services to support the work of the Community Committees and the delivery of the locality working approach will hamper the council's efforts to deliver significant and sustainable change in our neighbourhoods. It is therefore imperative that we maintain and build on the whole Council approach, working with local communities to drive change and much needed improvements. An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening document is included at **Appendix 1**.
46. Risk implications and mitigation are considered on all Community Committee funding applications. Projects are assessed to ensure that applicants are able to deliver the intended benefits.

What are the legal implications?

47. Community Committees are a statutory function of Leeds City Council. As such they are written in to the Council's constitution. Any changes to the way that the committees operate therefore, will need to be reflected in the Council's Constitution, under Article 10 (committee procedure rules and terms of reference).
48. There are no exempt parts of this report so there are no access to information issues.
49. There are potential legal implications for the work articulated in this report subject to any recommendations that the review makes. Officers from Governance services will be involved in the review and advise of any potential legal implications should they arise.
50. This report is eligible for call-in.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

51. The recommendation in the reports to the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board and Executive Board, is to evolve the way that we work through the Community

Committees, through a refreshed framework that enables greater impact and outcomes, delivered through a collective focus on all our communities in Leeds.

How will success be measured?

52. With IMD data only published sporadically, we have previously struggled to measure the impact of local intervention. However, with the publication of the Social Progress Index (SPI) for Leeds, this has changed. The Social Progress Index (SPI) is a tool that helps measure how well Leeds is doing in terms of Inclusive Growth. It helps us understand what's happening in different areas of the city, on a ward-by-ward basis and by looking at multiple indicators and offering us a clear and unbiased measure of overall wellbeing in the city. A link to Social Progress landing page can be found here: [The Leeds Social Progress Index | Inclusive Growth Leeds](#)
53. The SPI compliments the IMD data, allowing us to compare each ward against its peers, as well as allowing us to track change over time. The SPI is made of three main parts: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing and Opportunity. The various indicators measure specific outcomes, with the scores of each area showing on a scale from 0-100. This makes it easier to understand how well the city is doing and where our strengths and weaknesses lie.
54. In addition to this, each year the Community Committees produce an Annual Report. By listening to their local communities, the report has in the past, stated that the committees were able to allocate resources and funding where it was 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. It also references wherever possible, Leeds City Council's Best City Ambition and the 3 key strategic pillars; Inclusive Growth, Health & Wellbeing and Zero Carbon, by linking projects funded through the committees to the strategies: [Leeds Best City Ambition.pdf](#)

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

- ✓ **July 2023:** Environment, Housing & Communities Scrutiny Board agree review scope.
- ✓ **September 2023:** 1st Member Working Group meeting (Elected Member workshops TBC). Up to 4 member workshops to be developed between September 2023 and February 2024, to engage and seek feedback and ideas from Elected Members.
- ✓ **March 2024:** Working Group recommendations presented and approved.
- ✓ **June 2024:** Some new Community Committee arrangements commence.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening document.

Background papers

- None.

Appendix 1 Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening

Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening



As a public authority we need to ensure that all our strategies, policies, service and functions, both current and proposed have given proper consideration to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

A **screening** process can help judge relevance and provides a record of both the **process** and **decision**. Screening should be a short, sharp exercise that determines relevance for all new and revised strategies, policies, services and functions. Completed at the earliest opportunity it will help to determine:

- the relevance of proposals and decisions to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.
- whether or not equality, diversity, cohesion and integration is being/has already been considered, and
- whether or not it is necessary to carry out an impact assessment.

Directorate: Safer Stronger Communities Team	Service area: Communities
Lead person: Liz Jarmin	Contact number: 07891 278078

1. Title: Community Committee Review
Is this a:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strategy / Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Service / Function <input type="checkbox"/> Other
If other, please specify

2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening
<p>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.</p> <p>The committee's role and purpose have not been reviewed for a number of years, therefore the review of the Community Committee's role, purpose and governance arrangements, involving all 99 Councillors, will aim to use the scrutiny process as a mechanism for engagement and accountability.</p>

3. Relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

All the council's strategies/policies, services/functions affect service users, employees or the wider community, city wide or more local. These will also have a greater/lesser relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration.

The following questions will help you to identify how relevant your proposals are.

When considering these questions think about age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and any other relevant characteristics (for example socio-economic status, social class, income, unemployment, residential location or family background and education or skills levels).

Questions	Yes	No
Is there an existing or likely differential impact for the different equality characteristics?	x	
Have there been or likely to be any public concerns about the policy or proposal?	x	
Could the proposal affect how our services, commissioning or procurement activities are organised, provided, located and by whom?	x	
Could the proposal affect our workforce or employment practices?	x	
Does the proposal involve or will it have an impact on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminating unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment • Advancing equality of opportunity • Fostering good relations 	x	

If you have answered **no** to the questions above, please complete **sections 6 and 7**

If you have answered **yes** to any of the above and:

- Believe you have already considered the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 4**.
- Are not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration within your proposal please go to **section 5**.

4. Considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

If you can demonstrate you have considered how your proposals impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you have carried out an impact assessment.

Please provide specific details for all three areas below (use the prompts for guidance).

- **How have you considered equality, diversity, cohesion and integration?** (think about the scope of the proposal, who is likely to be affected, equality related information, gaps in information and plans to address, consultation and engagement activities (taken place or planned) with those likely to be affected)

Community Committees and use of the Social Progress Index

All Community Committee funded projects are assessed in relation to Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration. In addition, the Communities Team ensures that the funding process complies with all relevant policies and legislation.

From this year, 2023/24, we will also be using the Social Progress Index (SPI) for Leeds as an additional tool to measure impact and progress of our work with the committees. SPI is a tool that helps measure how well Leeds is doing in terms of Inclusive Growth.

It helps us understand what's happening in different areas of the city, on a ward-by-ward basis, by looking at multiple indicators and offering us a clear and unbiased measure of overall wellbeing in the city. The SPI compliments the IMD data, as it allows us to compare each ward against its peers, as well as allowing us to track change over time.

The SPI is made of three main parts: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing, and Opportunity. The various indicators measure specific outcomes, with the scores of each area showing on a scale from 0-100. This makes it easier to understand how well the city is doing and where our strengths and weaknesses lie.

Recent events, such as COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis, continue to have a hugely significant impact on all areas of the Best City Ambition, with the economy, employment, education, community resilience and health and wellbeing all detrimentally affected by the pandemic, therefore, research and development and effective monitoring of impact on equality will form a focus of work going forward.

As part of the delegated budget workstream in relation to the Community Committee Review, specific focus will be on refining the criteria for wellbeing funding, to include a greater emphasis on the cost of living crisis, as well as the equality, diversity & inclusion agenda, in addition to the cohesion agenda.

Communication and Community Engagement

The Community Committees currently utilise a variety of engagement methods/tools, including face to face meetings, online meetings, social media, local engagement plans and email distribution lists.

During COVID-19 all Community Committees had to amend their engagement approach, with varying amounts of participation, however COVID-19 has provided a real opportunity for the committees to look at how they actively engage in the future with a much wider audience and discussions are ongoing around future meetings, looking at alternative ways of engaging with the public.

The proposal through the Community Committee Review is that we will review our engagement approach through research/sharing good practice, to identify the most appropriate channels and platforms to use and how these could be incorporated to create more inclusive engagement work; looking at how 'in person' and digital approaches could blend together to make effective and accessible engagement.

We are also aiming to look at agendas and reports that are taken to the Community Committee meetings; looking at how we can re-shape the Update Report to be more engaging; how we can better demonstrate the value and impact of projects taking place in their respective wards in reports that go to the committee; how they can link up with

Priority Ward Partnership Plans and how they can look more attractive and visually appealing to encourage people to read them.

Identify potential barriers on who may be affected

Work continues to take place in Leeds to understand and get a picture of the disproportionate or differential impact on inequality that is happening due to COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis. However, the emerging evidence highlights that both of these have further exacerbated social and economic inequalities and we need to better understand what these impacts are on communities in Leeds. What it tells us so far mirrors national evidence and the local narrative that major events such as these do have a disproportionate and differential impact based on where you live, your gender, your ethnicity and your job.

The key issues pertinent to all communities of interest and the general public include:

- Navigating information & guidance: Challenges around accessing accurate, appropriate, and accessible information in a rapidly changing scene, littered with mis/dis-information and complex communications.
- Access to essential provisions and services: Challenges in gaining/maintaining access to food, essential personal and household items; and accessing support necessary to protect health, care, and wellbeing.
- Social isolation & boredom: Challenges around the loss of social bonds, relationships and contact; the loss of physical and intellectual stimulation.
- Mental Health – low level anxiety to crisis: Challenges around management of pre-existing mental health issues and the emergence of new concerns.
- Abuse, domestic violence and safeguarding issues: Challenges around imposed segregation of perpetrators and victims, accessing support whilst experiencing violence and abuse.
- Concerns about restrictions being lifted: Challenges around managing change uncertainty and the concerns and anxieties which this brings.
- Digital Exclusion: Communities and individuals having limited/no access to equipment and/or data thus exacerbated barriers to accessing information, support and social connection.

• Key findings

(think about any potential positive and negative impact on different equality characteristics, potential to promote strong and positive relationships between groups, potential to bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other, perception that the proposal could benefit one group at the expense of another)

The following paragraphs provide examples from the Community Committee Youth Summits to overcome inequality.

Youth Summits

A key objective for the Community Committees is that we engaged with a wide variety of young people and that this engagement reflected the true diversity of the city, not just young people who are academically inclined, or naturally engaged with these types of events.

With this in mind the Communities Team attended the SEND Youth Summit, alongside the Voice & Influence Team, to consult with young people that have special education needs & disabilities. At the SEND Youth Summit which took place in November 2022, the Community Committees engaged with 56 young people that have special educational needs & disabilities.

We're aware that at one of the Youth Summit events that took place, we had a small number of young people that were home schooled and this is an avenue we would like to explore for future events.

The Communities Team also delivered a Youth Summit to young people from the LGBTQ+ community and at this event in March 2023 there was 15 young people in attendance.

The Community Committee Youth Summits engaged with 57 young people that are identifiable as being entitled to free school meals (this number will increase as we are still awaiting data from events).

Youth Activity Fund Consultation

Alongside the physical Youth Summit, the Communities Team created a consultation survey for young people, as another objective is that we, "consult with as many young people as possible (hybrid approach), by ensuring that alongside the summits, other consultation is coordinated; for example, online consultation, Breeze Summer Events": <https://surveys.leeds.gov.uk/s/YouthActivities2022/>

The online survey had 2340 responses, with an additional online survey being created to engage with young people that have special educational needs and disabilities. In relation to this survey, we had 144 responses (in total = 2484 across both surveys).

• Actions

(think about how you will promote positive impact and remove/ reduce negative impact)

The Community Committees Annual Report covers some of the progress of all ten committees and demonstrates how they helped provide local residents with a voice. It also provides examples of 'real life' human stories and how some of the projects the committees have funded have benefitted local communities across Leeds, contributing towards the Best City Ambition and the council's overall aim of creating safe, strong communities.

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.

5. If you are not already considering the impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and integration you will need to carry out an impact assessment.

N/A

Date to scope and plan your impact assessment:

N/A

Date to complete your impact assessment

N/A

Lead person for your impact assessment

N/A

(Include name and job title)

6. Governance, ownership and approval

Please state here who has approved the actions and outcomes of the screening

Name

Job title

Date

Paul Money

Chief Officer - Safer
Stronger Communities
Team

???

7. Publishing

This screening document will act as evidence that due regard to equality and diversity has been given. If you are not carrying out an independent impact assessment the screening document will need to be published.

If this screening relates to a **Key Delegated Decision, Executive Board, full Council** or a **Significant Operational Decision** a copy should be emailed to Corporate Governance and will be published along with the relevant report.

A copy of **all other** screening's should be sent to equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk. For record keeping purposes it will be kept on file (but not published).

Date screening completed

13th June 2023

If relates to a Key Decision - **date sent to Corporate Governance**

N/A

Any other decision – **date sent to Equality Team (equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk)**

N/A

Work Schedule

Date: 7 December 2023

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

- All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work schedule for the municipal year. In doing so, the work schedule should not be considered a fixed and rigid schedule, it should be recognised as a document that can be adapted and changed to reflect any new and emerging issues throughout the year; and also reflect any timetable issues that might occur from time to time.
- The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules also state that, where appropriate, all terms of reference for work undertaken by Scrutiny Boards will include 'to review how and to what effect consideration has been given to the impact of a service or policy on all equality areas, as set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme'.
- Reflecting on the information in this report and information presented as part of other agenda items at today's meeting, Members are requested to consider and discuss the Board's work schedule for this municipal year.

Recommendations

Members are requested to:

- a) Consider the draft work schedule for the 2023/24 municipal year.

What is this report about?

1. A draft work schedule for the Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing & Communities) is presented at Appendix 1 for consideration and discussion. Reflected in the work schedule are known items of scrutiny activity, such as performance and budget monitoring, identified Budget and Policy Framework items and specific member requests for individual work items.
2. The Executive Board minutes from the meetings held on 18 October 2023 are also attached as Appendix 2. The Scrutiny Board is asked to consider and note the Executive Board minutes, insofar as they relate to the remit of the Scrutiny Board; and consider any matter where specific scrutiny activity may also be warranted.

Developing the work schedule

3. When considering any developments and/or modifications to the work schedule, effort should be undertaken to:
 - Avoid unnecessary duplication by having a full appreciation of any existing forums already having oversight of, or monitoring, a particular issue.
 - Ensure any Scrutiny undertaken has clarity and focus of purpose and will add value and can be delivered within an agreed time frame.
 - Avoid pure “information items” except where that information is being received as part of a policy/scrutiny review.
 - Seek advice about available resources and relevant timings, taking into consideration the workload across the Scrutiny Boards and the type of Scrutiny taking place.
 - Build in sufficient flexibility to enable the consideration of urgent matters that may arise during the year.
4. To deliver the work schedule, the Board may need to undertake activities outside the formal schedule of meetings – such as working groups and site visits. Additional formal meetings of the Scrutiny Board may also be required.

What impact will this proposal have?

5. All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work schedule for the municipal year.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

6. The terms of reference of the Scrutiny Boards promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the priorities set out in the Best City Ambition.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

7. To enable Scrutiny to focus on strategic areas of priority, it is recognised that each Scrutiny Board needs to maintain dialogue with the Directors and Executive Board Members holding the relevant portfolios. The Vision for Scrutiny also states that Scrutiny Boards should seek the advice of the Scrutiny officer, the relevant Director and Executive Member about available resources prior to agreeing items of work.

What are the resource implications?

8. Experience has shown that the Scrutiny process is more effective and adds greater value if the Board seeks to minimise the number of substantial inquiries running at one time and focus its resources on one key issue at a time.
9. The Vision for Scrutiny, agreed by full Council also recognises that like all other Council functions, resources to support the Scrutiny function are under considerable pressure and that requests from Scrutiny Boards cannot always be met.
10. Consequently, when establishing their work programmes Scrutiny Boards should consider the criteria set out in paragraph 3.

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

11. There are no risk management implications relevant to this report.

What are the legal implications?

12. This report has no specific legal implications.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Draft work schedule of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board for the 2023/24 municipal year.
- Appendix 2 – Minutes of the Executive Board meeting on 18 October 2023.

Background papers

- None.

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Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2023/2024 Municipal Year

June	July	August
Agenda for 22 June 2023 at 10.30 am	Agenda for 20 July 2023 at 10.30 am	No Scrutiny Board meeting
Annual reports: Co-opted Members (DB) Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference (DB) Potential Sources of Work (DB) Performance Update (PM)	Waste: Draft Waste Strategy / Route Review / future of waste services Proposed review of community committee infrastructure, following recommendations of LGA Peer Review Referral to Scrutiny: Impact of radon gas on social housing tenants (Cllr Dixon)	
Working Group Meetings		
Site Visits		

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Scrutiny Work Items Key:

PSR	Policy/Service Review	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring



Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2023/2024 Municipal Year

September	October	November
Agenda for 14 September 2023 at 10.30 am	Agenda for 12 October 2023	
Safer, Stronger Communities – Leeds Plan Update (PSR) West Yorkshire Police & Crime Plan 2021-2024 – Update (PSR) <i>ASB Ombudsman report to be attached to agenda for information.</i>	Parks – Development of ‘Plan on a Page’ for city parks, including safe access for women & girls Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28 update	<i>Call In Meeting – 6 November</i>
Working Group Meetings		
21 September – Budget Briefing (remote) for all Scrutiny members		
Site Visits		

Scrutiny Work Items Key:

PSR	Policy/Service Review	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring



Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2023/2024 Municipal Year

December	January	February
Agenda for 7 December 2023	Agenda for 25 January 2024 at 10.30 am	Agenda for 22 February 2024 at 10.30 am
Reducing poverty and improving financial inclusion (PSR) Local Welfare Support Scheme Review Update (PSR) Update on Community Committee Review	Performance report (PM) Financial Health Monitoring (PSR) 2024/25 Initial Budget Proposals (PDS)	Locality Working & Priority Neighbourhoods (PSR) Ensuring the future resilience of the Third Sector (PSR) Housing Activity Update (PSR)
Working Group Meetings		
2024/25 Initial Budget Proposals (PDS) – 15 December 2023 9.30am -11am (remote)		
Site Visits		

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Scrutiny Work Items Key:

PSR	Policy/Service Review	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring



Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2023/2024 Municipal Year

March	April	Notes
Agenda for 21 March 2024 at 10.30 am	No Scrutiny Board meeting	To be scheduled
Climate Emergency Update (PSR) Green Spaces - annual update on progress towards ambitions set out in the Parks & Greenspaces Strategy End of year statement		Graffiti working group
Working Group Meetings		
Site Visits		

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Scrutiny Work Items Key:

PSR	Policy/Service Review	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring

EXECUTIVE BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 18TH OCTOBER, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor J Lewis in the Chair

Councillors S Arif, D Coupar, M Harland,
H Hayden, A Lamb, J Lennox, J Pryor,
M Rafique and F Venner

- 45 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public**
RESOLVED – That, in accordance with Regulation 4 of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as exempt from publication on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information so designated as follows:-
- (A) That Appendix C to the report entitled, 'Future of Six High Rise and Resident Rehousing - Bailey and Brooklands Towers, Ramshead Heights, Leafield Towers, Raynville Court and Grange', referred to in Minute No. 49 be designated as being exempt from publication in accordance with paragraph 10.4(3) of Schedule 12A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 and be considered in private. This is on the grounds that it contains information relating to financial valuations of the land per site to support the options appraisal content (Appendix B to the submitted report). It is designated as being exempt from publication because disclosure would be likely to adversely affect the commercial interests of the Council. It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information at present; and
 - (B) That Appendices B and C to the report entitled, 'Accelerated Property Releases and Disposals', referred to in Minute No. 58 be designated as being exempt from publication in accordance with paragraph 10.4(3) of Schedule 12A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 and be considered in private. This is on the grounds that these appendices contain information relating to the financial and business affairs of the Council including valuation details for the properties included within the submitted report. It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information at present.

46 Late Items

Late Item of Business – Agenda Item 10 – ‘The Implications of the Network North Government Announcement for Leeds’

With the agreement of the Chair, a late item of business was admitted to the agenda entitled, ‘The Implications of the Network North Government Announcement for Leeds’.

This was due to the fact that the submitted report was in response to the recent Government announcement regarding Network North, and as such the report was not able to be included within the agenda as published on 10th October 2023. However, given the significance of this announcement, it was deemed appropriate for the matter to be brought to the attention of Executive Board at the earliest opportunity. (Agenda Item 10 and Minute No. 53 refers).

47 Declaration of Interests

Agenda Item 9 (Transpennine Route Upgrade – Transport and Works Act Order Representation)

Both Councillors J Lewis and M Harland drew the Board’s attention to the fact that, in their respective capacities as Ward Councillors, they have both had significant engagement on issues around Peckfield level crossing. However, Councillors Lewis and Harland both respectively confirmed that they were approaching the consideration of this report as part of the Executive Board agenda with an open mind.

Agenda Item 7 (Local Plan Update 1 (Pre-Submission Changes Consultation)

Councillor A Lamb drew the Board’s attention to the fact that he attended the recent Development Plan Panel (DPP) meeting that considered the Local Plan Update 1 (Pre-Submission Changes Consultation). However, Councillor Lamb confirmed that he had abstained from voting on this matter at that DPP meeting and was approaching the consideration of this report as part of the Executive Board agenda with an open mind.

48 Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th September 2023 be approved as a correct record.

HOUSING

49 Future of six high rise and resident rehousing - Bailey and Brooklands Towers, Ramshead Heights, Leafield Towers, Raynville Court and Grange

The Director of Communities, Housing and Environment submitted a report regarding the future of six high rise blocks within the Council’s housing estate. The report noted that as significant investment work would be needed to ensure the long term future of the blocks, including intrusive and costly strengthening works, an options appraisal had been undertaken. The report presented the recommendations arising from that appraisal, which were for all residents to be rehoused, with appropriate support for those who needed it, and for subsequent demolition to clear the sites. The report noted that this

would enable the development of new modern housing in the future on the sites, whether by the Council or other parties.

By way of introduction to the report, the Executive Member provided an overview of the key points within the report including the options appraisal work that had taken place and the recommended next steps.

In considering enquiries regarding the potential impact that the proposals may have upon the current demand for social housing and also regarding the potential future use of the sites, it was acknowledged that whilst there may be a short term pressure on demand as a result of the proposal, it was felt that this would be manageable as part of the Council's wider social housing estate. It was also noted that the ultimate aim of the proposals was to increase the number of social housing units available in Leeds for the longer term and also to deliver a beneficial outcome for the current residents of those blocks. Furthermore, it was noted that the considerable timeframes involved in the delivery of the proposals were with the aim of ensuring that a managed approach was taken, and that liaison with partners on the opportunities regarding the future use of the sites would be ongoing.

In response to a Member's enquiry, the Board received further detail on the consultation and engagement processes which have taken place with residents of the blocks to date.

As part of the discussion, a Member acknowledged that whilst action was needed and that refurbishment of the blocks was not a viable option, they confirmed that they could not support the recommendations without further assurance around the future plans for the sites, or that all residents were supportive of the proposals, and as such, recommended a deferral so that further detail could be obtained. In response, further information was provided on the timeframes involved and the reasons for the proposed actions, with it being reiterated that the intention was to deliver a greater number of social housing units on these sites in the longer term. It was undertaken that further information on such matters could be provided to the Member in question, if required.

Following consideration of appendix C to the submitted report designated as being exempt from publication under the provisions of Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3), which was considered in private at the conclusion of the public part of the meeting, it was

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the rehousing of residents of secure tenanted flats in the blocks (Bailey Towers, Brooklands Towers, Ramshead Heights, Leafield Towers, Raynville Court and Raynville Grange), be approved, and that approval be given for Home Loss and Disturbance payments to be made to qualifying residents; with this resolution being supported by ongoing engagement with residents during implementation;

- (b) That approval be given for the awarding of 'Band A' housing priority and direct let status to tenants of the blocks;
- (c) That the suspension of lettings to the flats and garages be approved, with any void properties being taken out of charge;
- (d) That approval be given for the negotiation and undertaking of the re-purchasing of any leasehold flats, with approval also being given for compulsory purchase to be pursued if a voluntary approach is unsuccessful;
- (e) That it be agreed that the buildings should be safely demolished, creating clear sites;
- (f) That it be noted that activity will be progressed to explore options for the sites - for example, for development by the Council, or with other parties, or for sale;
- (g) That spend of £5,267,600 from the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme, be authorised, to deliver rehousing and building emptying activity; and
- (h) That agreement be given for the Initial Demolition Notices and Final Demolition Notices to be served by the Council at the appropriate times.

(Under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.5, Councillor Lamb required it to be recorded that he abstained from voting on the decisions referred to within this minute)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

50 Local Plan Update 1 (Pre-Submission Changes Consultation)

Further to Minute No. 46, 21 September 2022, the Director of City Development submitted a report setting out a number of changes proposed to the Local Plan Update following detailed consideration of consultation responses to the publication draft policies. The report requested endorsement of the proposed Pre-Submission Draft changes and supporting paragraphs of the Local Plan Update 1 and sought approval to undertake a further period of public consultation.

The Executive Member introduced the report, providing an overview of the changes proposed and highlighting the key role played by the Plan in the actions being taken in response to the Climate Emergency.

Members extended their thanks to officers for the work which continued to be undertaken in getting the plan to this advanced stage.

A Member raised a concern regarding the proposed changes and how they could dilute the Council's existing commitments in relation to the Climate

Emergency, with it being acknowledged however that at this stage, the Board was being recommended to approve a further consultation exercise where the public could submit their views on such matters.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the proposed Pre-Submission Draft changes and supporting paragraphs of the Local Plan Update 1, as set out in **Appendix 1** to the submitted report, and as a schedule of changes in **Appendix 2** and the Sustainability Appraisal, as set out in **Appendix 3**, be endorsed;
- (b) That 6 weeks consultation of the proposed Pre-Submission Draft changes and supporting paragraphs, as set out in **Appendix 1** and **Appendix 2**, together with supporting technical information (comprising Sustainability Appraisal at **Appendix 3**, Habitat Regulations Assessment at **Appendix 4**, Report of Consultation at **Appendix 5** and Duty to Co-operate Statement at **Appendix 6**), be approved, with it being noted that that this will be accompanied by additional draft supporting consultation documentation, including the Council's evidence base and background papers alongside accessible summary material for consultation purposes;
- (c) That the necessary authority be delegated to the Chief Planning Officer, in consultation with the Executive Member for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure, to approve any detailed technical or drafting amendments to the consultation material in advance of public consultation;
- (d) That it be noted that the Chief Planning Officer is responsible for the implementation of the resolutions set out above.

(The matters referred to within this minute, given that they were decisions being made in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules, were not eligible for Call In, as Executive and Decision Making Procedure Rule 5.1.2 states that the power to Call In decisions does not extend to those decisions being made in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules)

51 Morley Town Deal grants and general project progress

Further to Minute No. 103, 16th December 2020, the Director of City Development submitted a report summarising the progress made on the Morley Town Deal since the Morley Town Investment Plan (TIP) was approved in principle by the Government in March 2021, with associated capital funding to invest in projects intended to deliver transformational regeneration of the town. The report outlined six projects which were now moving forward to delivery and sought the Board's approval of several associated recommendations.

In presenting the report, the Executive Member provided an overview on the key points within the report and highlighted the effectiveness of the Board and how it was regarded as an exemplar in terms of Town Deal Boards.

Gerald Jennings, Chair of the Morley Town Deal Board was in attendance to provide Members with an overview of the progress being made by the Board and an update on the most recent key developments. The ongoing work being undertaken to maximise the benefits from the Town Deal funding was highlighted, via initiatives including engagement with the private sector and also through the sourcing of other funding streams, where available. Regarding the Board's membership, it was noted that work had been successfully undertaken to develop the inclusivity and diversity of the Board. The good working relations between the Board and the Council were reiterated, with it being highlighted that work needed to continue at pace and with purpose in order to deliver the projects within the required timeframe.

Several specific enquiries were raised by a Member on the progress being made in relation to Morley Town Hall and in terms of the associated governance arrangements for the Town Deal Board and its decision making. Assurance was also sought that the projects were delivering the community's priorities. In response, Members received a detailed update on the Morley Town Hall project, and also received further information on the range and extent of public consultation and engagement which had been undertaken and which was planned moving forward, both for the Town Hall project and the others within the wider programme in order to inform the delivery of those projects.

Members thanked officers for the work that continued in this area.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the subsequent Town Investment Plan bid approval by Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which sets the context for the forward delivery of the capital projects, as outlined within the submitted report, be noted;
- (b) That approval be given for the Director of City Development to use delegated powers to approve all project capital spend, in consultation with the Executive Member for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure, and the Morley Town Deal Board;
- (c) That approval be given for the Director of City Development to use delegated powers to authorise entering into appropriate contracts or grant agreements required for delivery of the Heritage Investment Programme, White Rose Innovation Hub and Morley Learning and Skills Centre, in consultation with the Executive Member for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure, and the Morley Town Deal Board.

52 Transpennine Route Upgrade - Transport and Works Act Order Representation

The Director of City Development submitted a report providing an overview of the development of the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) and which set out the Council's response to the Secretary of State for Transport in respect of

a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) submitted by Network Rail for the TRU east of Leeds. The report referenced the 'holding objection' that had been submitted to the Secretary of State in response to the draft TWAO and noted that whilst the Council recognised and supported in principle the benefits of TRU, it detailed the reasons for the submission of the 'holding objection'. Further to this, the report also made a recommendation to Full Council to approve the submission of a formal objection to specific elements of the TWAO for the Leeds to Micklefield part of the TRU.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the Council's overall strategic support for the outcomes proposed from the Transpennine Route Upgrade, be noted;
- (b) That the contents of the submitted report, be noted; and that the 'holding objection' submitted by the Council to the Secretary of State in response to Network Rail's application for a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) also be noted, together with the justifications for this;
- (c) That Full Council be recommended to approve the submission of the formal objection to specific elements of Network Rail's Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) for the Leeds to Micklefield part of the Transpennine Route Upgrade, pursuant to s239 of the Local Government Act 1972;
- (d) That Full Council be recommended to delegate the necessary authority to the Director of City Development, to enable the Director to continue negotiations with relevant stakeholders in order to seek to agree the withdrawal of the objection should sufficient agreement on the issues raised be reached, in consultation with the Executive Member for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure;
- (e) That approval be given for the resolutions above to be exempted from Call In pursuant to paragraph 5.1.3, Part 4 of the Council's Constitution on grounds of urgency, as set out within paragraphs 35 - 38 of the submitted report.

(The Council's Executive and Decision Making Procedure Rules state that a decision may be declared as being exempt from the Call In process by the decision taker if it is considered that the matter is urgent and any delay would seriously prejudice the Council's, or the public's interests. In line with this, the resolutions contained within this minute were exempted from the Call In process, as per resolution (e) above, and for the reasons as set out within sections 35 - 38 of the submitted report)

53 The Implications of the Network North Government Announcement for Leeds

The Director of City Development submitted a report in response to the Government's recent announcement and publication of the Network North document, which cancelled HS2 Phase 2, HS2 East and the Integrated Rail Plan study into how to bring HS2 trains to Leeds, and committed to invest

£36bn in alternative transport schemes across the country. The report presented the references to Leeds within that document and considered the interfaces and impact that these may have upon existing infrastructure programmes, and also the operation and growth of the city.

With the agreement of the Chair, the submitted report had been circulated to Board Members as a late item of business prior to the meeting for the reasons as detailed in Minute No. 46.

By way of introduction to the report, the Executive Member provided an overview of the key points within it, including an update on the current position following the Government's Network North announcement on 4th October 2023, and highlighting that whilst the Network North document made reference to Leeds, further detail was required on such matters in order to better understand the implications for the city.

In terms of next steps following this announcement, emphasis was placed upon the importance of ensuring that a collaborative, cross-party approach was taken on such matters and when engaging with Government in order to deliver the strongest case for the city and the wider city-region in securing the required funding moving forward.

The Chief Executive provided an update to the Board regarding the National Infrastructure Commission, which had today launched its second national infrastructure assessment report, in which it had backed the case for major investment into England's largest regional cities, including Leeds, to improve public transport provision. It was also highlighted that the additional station in Leeds was still deemed to be crucial to the future of the city, and moving forward, emphasis was placed upon the Council's commitment to working closely with Government on such matters with the aim of delivering those key infrastructure improvements for the benefit of the city and the whole network.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the implications of the Department for Transport Network North (document as at Appendix A to the submitted report) Government announcement for Leeds, be noted;
- (b) That Government assurance be sought that the rail commitments in the Integrated Rail Plan and Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline will remain commitments apart from HS2 Phase 2; and that the Board's endorsement be given to the Council writing to Government seeking clarity regarding the proposed Leeds Area Study which incorporated a study into Leeds Station Capacity and which is still required to understand how to accommodate the revised services referenced by Network North, including whether a T-shaped station is required;
- (c) That the Board endorse a continued collaborative approach to development and implementation of the detail behind the proposals in the Network North document, the development of a new Leeds Station Integrated Masterplan and Integrated Transport Growth Strategy,

which is critical to ensuring that Leeds remains a resilient, globally competitive and investible city that continues to operate for all our businesses and residents.

- (d) That further reports be brought to Executive Board as more information becomes available, including safeguarding and future consenting strategies.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH AND ACTIVE LIFESTYLES

54 2022/23 Leeds City Council Local Account for Adult Social Care

The Interim Director of Adults and Health submitted a report presenting the 2022/23 Local Account of Adult Social Care for citizens in Leeds. The report noted that the Local Account reviewed the performance of the Council in its delivery of social care services and support to the adult population of the city.

In presenting the report, the Executive Member highlighted that this was the first Local Account publication following the pandemic, covering the period April 2022 to March 2023 and which detailed the progress being made, the Council's priorities moving forward and the challenges that continued to be faced.

The key nature of the Local Account document was highlighted, as it formed part of the suite of documents that the Care Quality Commission would consider when inspecting the Authority against its statutory duties.

In considering the report, a Member highlighted how, in this case, he felt that the representations made to Government regarding the funding of Adult Social Care were beginning to make a positive impact and which illustrated the benefit of a co-ordinated approach on such matters and which could continue to be applied to areas such as the resourcing of Children and Families services.

RESOLVED – That the production and publication of the 2022/23 Leeds City Council Local Account for Adult Social Care, as detailed within the submitted report and appendices, be agreed.

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

55 Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

Further to Minute No. 111, 8th February 2023, the Chief Executive submitted a report presenting an overview of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review report, which outlined the findings of the one-day follow-up visit made by the Peer Challenge team on 11th September 2023. Appended to the report was the full LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review report, and also a document presenting the recommendations of the LGA Peer Challenge, a progress update on those recommendations together with proposed next steps.

In presenting the report, the Leader noted that the proposal was to refer the progress review to the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board for consideration, and in welcoming the progress review, highlighted the importance of receiving and acting upon the outcomes from the external scrutiny of the Council by partners in Local Government.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the findings of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Report, as appended to the submitted report, which followed the Peer Challenge team's revisit on 11th September 2023, be noted;
- (b) That the progress made against the original LGA Peer Challenge recommendations from November 2022, be noted, together with the findings of the peers following their revisit in September 2023;
- (c) That the proposed next steps developed in response to the findings of the peers following their revisit in September 2023, as detailed within the submitted report and appendices, be noted;
- (d) That the findings of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review report be referred to the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board's December 2023 meeting.

RESOURCES

56 Financial Health Monitoring 2023/24 – Month 5 (August)

The Chief Officer Financial Services submitted a report presenting the Council's projected financial health position as at month 5 of the 2023/24 financial year in respect of both the General Fund revenue budget and the Housing Revenue Account

The Board was requested to note the following correction to the submitted report:

Regarding the reference on page 1396 of the agenda pack (paragraph 3.11.1 ('Reserves') of Appendix A) which read, '*...£0.8m Leeds Older People's Forum for delivery of the Age Friendly programme which is funded by Health*'. This was to be amended to, '*...£0.8m Leeds Older People's Forum for delivery of the Enhance Programme commissioned by Leeds Community Healthcare (LCH) and delivered by the Third Sector*'.

In presenting the report, the Executive Member provided an overview of the key points, which included the current forecasting of an overspend of £29.6m for the General Fund as at month 5 of the financial year. The Board was also provided with an update on the work that continued in respect of managing in-year pressures.

Responding to a specific enquiry regarding the refund of transport levy reserves, as one-off funding from WYCA (West Yorkshire combined Authority) to each of the 5 West Yorkshire Local Authorities. In Leeds' case this was a sum of £17.7m. It was noted that this sum would be returned to the Council's

General Fund. It was also noted that this sum would be factored into future Financial Health Monitoring reports submitted to the Board moving forward.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That, subject to noting the correction as detailed above, the contents of the submitted report be noted, and that it also be noted that at Month 5 of the 2023/24 financial year the Authority's General Fund revenue budget is forecasting an overspend of £29.6m for 2023/24 (5.2% of the approved net revenue budget) within a challenging national context, and with it also being noted that a range of actions are being undertaken to achieve a balanced budget position;
- (b) That it be noted that at Month 5 of the 2023/24 financial year, the Authority's Housing Revenue Account is forecasting an overspend of £3.0m for 2023/24 (1.09% of the approved gross expenditure budget);
- (c) That it be noted that known inflationary increases, including demand and demographic pressures in Social Care and known impacts of the rising cost of living, including the employer's 2023/24 NJC pay offer of £1,925 and the JNC pay settlement of 3.5%, have been incorporated into this reported financial position, with it also being noted that these pressures will continue to be reviewed during the year and reported to future Executive Board meetings as more information becomes available. That it also be noted that proposals would need to be identified to absorb any additional pressures;
- (d) That it be noted that where an overspend is projected, directorates, including the Housing Revenue Account, are required to present action plans to mitigate their reported pressures and those of the Council's wider financial challenge where possible, in line with the Revenue Principles agreed by Executive Board in 2019;
- (e) That following WYCA Members' approval of a refund of transport levy reserves to the five West Yorkshire Local Authorities on 12th October 2023, it be noted that this one-off injection will be used in Leeds to add to the Strategic Contingency Reserve.

57 Revenue Savings Proposals for 2024/25 to 2026/27

Further to Minute No. 40, 20th September 2023, the Chief Officer Financial Services submitted a report providing an update on the actions being taken in response to the Council's estimated revenue budget gap. Specifically, the report presented a number of savings proposals - a collective term used in this context to apply to efficiencies, income generation and accounting measures – to contribute towards addressing that budget gap over the three-year period (2024/25 to 2026/27).

In presenting the report the Executive Member highlighted the unprecedented financial challenges that continued to be faced across the sector and by this Council, and it was within this context that the submitted proposals were being presented to the Board as part of the wider approach being taken to manage

such challenges. The Board also noted the Council's recent issuing of a Section 188 notice, which was a process to instigate collective consultation with the Council's recognised Trade Unions to avoid, reduce and mitigate the potential risk and consequences of compulsory redundancies.

In considering the report, a Member highlighted the challenge that continued to be faced nationally in terms of the resourcing of services for Children and Families. Whilst the Member highlighted the importance of the Council continuing to take action in this area, it was acknowledged that this was a matter which required a national response and continued communication with Government.

In addition, as part of the consultative process on proposals around managing the financial challenge more generally, emphasis was placed upon the benefit of involving communities and Members across the Council on such matters.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the financial position for 2024/25 to 2026/27, as outlined within the submitted report, be noted, with it also being noted that further savings are required to deliver a balanced budget position for 2024/25 and to contribute to closing the projected gaps in the following two years;
- (b) That the 'Business as Usual' savings put forward, as detailed in the submitted report, be noted, with it also being noted that decisions to give effect to them shall be taken by the relevant Director or Chief Officer in accordance with the Officer Delegation Scheme (Executive functions);
- (c) That it be noted that additional savings proposals will be brought to Executive Board for consideration at its meeting on 13th December 2023.

58 Accelerated Property Releases and Disposals

The Director of City Development submitted a report which, in considering the Council's in-year budget position and medium-term financial plan, presented proposals regarding the potential to accelerate the release of a number of operational properties in order to deliver in-year additional capital receipts, and also with regard to proposals relating to further work being undertaken around the potential disposal of let out properties, as identified within the report.

Members welcomed the proposals within the submitted report.

Following consideration of appendices B and C to the submitted report designated as being exempt from publication under the provisions of Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3), which were considered in private at the conclusion of the public part of the meeting, it was

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the accelerated release of the properties set out in Table 1 of the submitted report, be agreed, and where identified, agreement also be given for their inclusion within the Capital Receipt Programme for disposal;
- (b) That agreement be given for further exploration being undertaken into the disposal of the properties identified in Table 2 of the submitted report;
- (c) That the necessary authority be delegated to the Director for City Development, to enable the Director, in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources and the Chief Officer Financial Services, to take decisions as to which of the properties identified from the Investment Portfolio in Table 2 of the submitted report should be progressed for marketing; and that subject to the value of the offers received, the final decision to sell be delegated to the Director of City Development in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources;
- (d) That the necessary authority be delegated to the Director for City Development to enable the Director to agree the terms of the disposals which are agreed as part of the submitted report;
- (e) That it be agreed that the receipts as set out in Table 2 of the submitted report be exempted from the Capital Receipt Incentive Scheme.

ECONOMY, CULTURE AND EDUCATION

59 The Annual Standards Report

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report presenting the Council's Annual Standards Report which provided an overview of the educational outcomes for Leeds following the statutory assessments and examinations which took place in 2022.

In presenting the report, the Executive Member highlighted that these statutory assessments and examinations were the first to be undertaken post-pandemic which weren't under teacher assessed grades. In addition, the Executive Member drew the Board's attention to a number of key progress measures featured within the report and extended thanks to the city's schools and school staff for the achievements recorded within the report.

Members welcomed the submitted report, with a suggestion that it may be beneficial for Scrutiny to consider the significant detail within it.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the performance against headline measures for pupils in Leeds in 2022 when compared with national data, as detailed within the submitted report and appendices, be noted;

- (b) That the actions taken by the Local Authority to improve outcomes in Leeds, be noted, together with the planned actions for the coming year.

60 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) - Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) - Review Process

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report providing an update on the current position regarding Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) both locally and nationally. The report noted that in relation to Leeds City Council, a 60% post-pandemic increase in applications for EHCPs had been experienced. Given this, it was noted that a review was being undertaken into the Council's approach towards EHCPs by external consultants in order to provide independent challenge and insight. The report also provided details of the related work which had been undertaken to date and further proposed as part of the review process.

In presenting the report, the Executive Member highlighted the significant increase in demand for EHCPs which had been experienced post-pandemic both nationally and in Leeds and highlighted the range of reasons why an individual may need an EHCP. The importance of the review process being undertaken by external consultants was emphasised in order to ensure that the process was as effective as possible, and it was noted that the submitted report was the first of two scheduled reports, with this initial report providing detail on the work done to date, emerging findings and opportunities for change. The second report is scheduled to be submitted to the Board in December 2023.

The Board welcomed the submitted report and the priority that was being given to this important area.

A Member highlighted how this process affected many young people and their families in Leeds and emphasised the importance of the Council's relationships with those key stakeholders. In response, the Director of Children and Families emphasised her absolute commitment to ensuring that improvements were made to the EHCP process and to the experiences and outcomes for young people and their families. The Director highlighted the integral role that key stakeholders, including young people, parents and carers would play in that improvement, alongside the external consultants undertaking the review. Emphasis was also placed upon the clear objectives for the next phase of the process, which included that the Council achieved full legal compliance in its statutory duties; and that moving forward clear performance metrics around timeliness of assessment and issuing of EHCPs were developed together with a robust management framework in order to measure and scrutinise progress in a timely way.

It was noted that the Children and Families Scrutiny Board was also considering these matters in parallel to the review work being undertaken, and that overall, the aim was to ensure that a 'Leeds approach' is established in response to the issues being experienced nationally in this area.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the prevailing situation nationally in relation to EHCPs, as detailed within the submitted report, be noted;
- (b) That the work undertaken to date to improve performance in Leeds, be noted;
- (c) That the review work instigated, as referenced within the submitted report, be endorsed; that it be noted that the review seeks to highlight areas of opportunity and improvement; and that the key lines of enquiry which the work to date has generated also be noted;
- (d) That the proposed 5 key principles, as referenced within the submitted report, which will form the basis of more detailed organisational and process design over the next six months, be agreed;
- (e) That a further report be submitted to the December 2023 meeting of Executive Board around detailed planning for future arrangements.

COMMUNITIES

61 Annual Update on Migration in Leeds

Further to Minute No. 74, 19th October 2022, the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment submitted a report which presented the key developments and progress on the migration agenda over the last 12 months by Leeds City Council and its statutory and non-statutory partners. The report also highlighted the challenges associated with delivering a range of migration programmes to families and individuals across the city.

In presenting the report, the Executive Member provided an overview of the key points within it, including the approach being taken in Leeds in response to national and international developments during the course of the year. Also, the Board noted the approach being taken by the Council in working towards joining the City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network, which followed a related deputation to full Council in September 2023.

Members extended their thanks to a range of Council officers and the third sector partners for the work which continued in this area.

Responding to a specific enquiry, the Board received further information on the actions which were being taken with partners around the promotion of access to employment for migrants and improving their employability.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the submitted annual update report on migration, together with the full overview and insight as presented at Appendix 1, be noted;

- (b) That it be noted that the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment is responsible for leading this work through the Council's Safer Stronger Communities programme;
- (c) That it be noted that the Chief Officer for Safer, Stronger Communities is responsible for leading the work of the Leeds Strategic Migration Board which oversees delivery on the strategic, co-ordinated and inclusive approach towards migration in Leeds, and the work of the Council's migration and resettlement team to provide strategic and operational direction for the city;
- (d) That the Council's approach towards becoming a member of the national Local Authority of Sanctuary Network, be endorsed;
- (e) That the issues raised in the submitted report which impact current and future Leeds residents as part of the review of the Best City Ambition, be noted.

DATE OF PUBLICATION: FRIDAY, 20TH OCTOBER 2023

**LAST DATE FOR CALL IN
OF ELIGIBLE DECISIONS:** 5.00PM, FRIDAY, 27TH OCTOBER 2023