

## Summary:

- The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) was introduced following the declaration of the Climate Emergency in March 2019. It is a cross party advisory committee authorised to consider and make recommendations regarding climate change and sustainability.
- This report provides an annual update on the work of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee and its working groups. The last report was published in January 2022. This report does **not** provide an update on all climate work undertaken by the council – this will be covered in the annual report that is taken to February’s Executive Board.
- The main committee has continued to host open forum, allowing members of the public to present on issues that they wish the committee to consider via video link, via pre-recorded video, or submitted text. This is considered an important aspect as it provides an opportunity for public engagement.
- The key themes that have been explored by the committee since the previous report updating on the Committee’s work are:
  - The work of the Future Fashion Factory, led by the University of Leeds
  - The council’s Employment and Skills Plan and how it considers the present and future ‘green’ economy
  - The development of a Climate Adaptation Plan for Leeds
  - An update regarding the development of new proposals to enhance environmental policies as part of the city’s Local Plan
  - How council projects are considering ‘embodied carbon’
  - An analysis of the contribution of Waste Services to Leeds’ carbon footprint
  - The development of the Leeds Food Strategy

- The council's Inclusive Growth Strategy and how it considers the present and future 'green' economy
- Climate Emergency Advisory Committee working groups allow elected members to explore issues in more depth, often hearing from external speakers as well as officers from across the council. The working groups provide a number of key benefits:
  - Supporting members to be well briefed on climate related areas, improving climate literacy and enabling them to engage in climate-related discussions in a more meaningful way with stakeholders including residents;
  - Providing a forum for 'check and challenge' of progress against a number of key themes as well as supporting the development of policy;
  - Developing cross-party national asks on key climate related issues;
  - Input collectively into local and national consultation responses
- Two of the four committee working groups have continued unchanged since last year:
  - Food and Biodiversity working group
  - Planning, Energy and Buildings working group
- The 'Transport and Behaviour Change' working group was amended to become the 'Community and Business Engagement' working group and has continued this year. This amendment reflects the Committees recognition of wider behaviour changes and engagement beyond transport choices required for Leeds to achieve net zero.
- A new 'Economy and Finance' working group was established this year in recognition of the importance, and growing work programme associated with this area.

### **CEAC Main Committee**

As the committee is not a decision-making body, the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee was not bound by the central government decision on returning to face-to-face meetings.

It was decided by this year's Chair that meetings would be a mixture of remote and in-person to improve accessibility and reduce carbon emissions associated with the travel of members. It also enables the committee to hear from a wider range of speakers from across the country as well as

ensuring that the meeting can be accessed by the community as it continues to be broadcast via YouTube.

Members of the public continue to be invited to speak at open forum. Those who have spoken in this municipal year are listed within Appendix A, alongside the responses they have received.

Over the course of 2022, the main committee met a total of five times. An additional September 2022 meeting was cancelled out of respect to the national mourning period of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

In recognition of the need for a whole council approach to the climate emergency, each of the council's directors has been invited to attend a main committee meeting on a rolling basis to provide an overview of how their directorate is supporting the city's response to the climate emergency. This ensures that the committee has insight into a wide spectrum of work and will help identify areas to explore in more depth as part of next year's work programme.

In November 2022, Leeds City Council was awarded an 'A' grade and recognised as one of 122 city authorities across the world leading the way on climate action in a new list published by renowned international authority, the Carbon Disclosure Project. To retain this grading and ensure that the city continues to lead on climate action in future years, the committee intends to use the feedback to identify further opportunities of development and areas of focus for the committee's agenda in the year ahead.

A summary of the key themes that were discussed at the main committee this year is included below.

#### Inclusive growth, employment, and skills

The CEAC recognises the importance of ensuring that the city's economy and labour force supports the transition to net zero as the city's economy recover from the effects of the pandemic. Taking this into consideration, this year the committee has welcomed several updates about the work being done to deliver inclusive growth, employment, and skills.

The committee heard from council officers in Economic Development regarding the work to refresh the city's Employment and Skills Plan, including work to train and promote green skills and to consider the changing demands for different jobs and skills going forward due to the net zero transition.

Committee members also received an update on the Inclusive Growth Strategy Refresh and The 'Leeds Social Progress Index' tool intended to help measure the impact of 'Inclusive Growth' including environmental factors.

The Economy and Finance Working Group will use the knowledge gained to explore opportunities as to how the green jobs and skills agenda can be supported throughout Leeds, supporting businesses, residents, and the city as a whole.

### Adapting to a changing climate

The CEAC remains focused on the city's work and plans to reduce the city's carbon footprint and to achieve net zero. However, the committee equally recognises the importance of Leeds being ready and 'adapting' to the changing climate as advised by the national Committee on Climate Change. This topic is even more important and timely, considering Leeds experienced its hottest day on record earlier this year. For this reason, presentations relating to climate adaptation were included on the agenda at several meetings this year.

In March, the committee heard presentations on adaptation activity from relevant external guests including the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water as well as council officers. Members fed back and informed the policy development of the council's formal approach to climate adaptation at an early stage.

The committee heard again from council officers involved in the development of the council's approach to climate adaptation in June, following research and mapping by council officers to understand in considerable detail how the climate-related risks identified by the Committee on Climate Change would affect Leeds as well as to understand what responsibilities and opportunities the council and city has to adapt.

Following the presentation, committee Members discussed some of the next steps needed to ensure services were involved in the implementation of climate adaptation actions from across the local authority. Members reiterated the importance of climate adaptation policies being integrated by all relevant services within their own decision making and operational policies.

At the same meeting, the CEAC also heard from council officers in Planning about planning policies that support adaptation and city resilience being proposed (subject to consultation and adoption) as part of the 'Local Plan Update' (LPU). Proposed policies have been grouped within

five key themes recognising the different ways that local planning can support a sustainable city. An emphasis on Adaptation and Resilience was at the forefront of the update.

As climate adaptation plans are developed at service levels, it will be important for all of the working groups to be involved in providing oversight of these plans to ensure they are appropriate in adapting to climate change.

### Reducing emissions from natural resources and waste

Over the course of the previous year, the CEAC heard many presentations and had many active discussions exploring the question of how to reduce emissions from buildings, energy, and transport—the main sources of ‘scope 2’ carbon emissions in Leeds.

This year, the committee wanted to expand the areas of focus and explore the city’s carbon footprint from some of Leeds’ ‘scope 3’ (indirect) emissions. Several presentations and discussions were held across the year identifying what both the council and city can do to better understand, and even more importantly reduce, our environmental impact from lesser understood areas including food and the use and disposal of resources.

In January, Members heard from representatives of—and considered a report introducing the work of—the Future Fashion Factory based at the University of Leeds. CEAC heard how its programmes were supporting the fashion and textile industry to reduce its overall environmental impact. The presentation set out several ongoing projects and areas for future development and Members participated in a thought-provoking discussion considering the opportunities and challenges to making fashion more sustainable.

‘Embodied carbon’—the term used to refer to the carbon emitted in producing materials—was the focus of a report and presentation by council officers in Highways in July. Council officers outlined the current practices undertaken and challenges being faced by the department to reduce the whole-life environmental impact of designs and materials being used. Officers detailed an internal ‘Climate Emergency Task Force’ had been created to support work examining how carbon is generated by the council through its use of asphalt, concrete, steel, other raw materials, materials sent to landfill, and construction vehicles and how these can be reduced. The report itself considered four main topics (carbon calculation, procurement, low carbon materials, carbon offsetting) which were discussed in detail.

At the same meeting, CEAC Members also heard from officers representing the council's Waste Services function. Officers provided an informative update on two pieces of work commissioned by the council to assist in the policy development of an updated Leeds Waste Strategy and associated Waste Management Plan to ensure it is supporting the city's carbon reduction targets as effectively as possible. A detailed analysis of household waste and the carbon impact and volumes of different types of waste was presented to the Committee. Multiple questions were raised by Members and answered by the Chief Officer for Waste Services.

In October, the committee discussed the draft Leeds Food Strategy as part of the document's formal consultation period. The presentation and discussion had a particular focus on the Sustainability and Resilience chapter of the strategy, which includes five objectives:

1. Empower residents to choose healthy diets by raising awareness of choices that are good for the planet
2. Tackle waste by reducing, redistributing, and utilising surplus food
3. Champion environmentally sustainable and resilient procurement
4. Support local farmers to transition to resilient and profitable agriculture which improves the environment
5. Encourage and enable innovative and community-led food production

As well as hearing from council officers involved in the development of the Leeds Food Strategy, Members also received an external presentation from Dr Michelle Morris of the University of Leeds to update on work with the council to develop a new carbon footprint calculator. The calculator was developed by the Consumer Data Research Centre in partnership with Leeds City Council and was one example of the type of collaborative work to empower residents raised by the Leeds Food Strategy.

Moving forward, and following previously discussions in the main committee, the Biodiversity, Food and Waste working group will explore the potential for growing the circular economy in Leeds, and further supporting the city's Waste Strategy by promoting reuse, reduced consumption, and recycling of materials.

### **CEAC Working Groups**

Climate Emergency Advisory Committee working groups allow elected members to explore issues in more depth, often hearing from external speakers as well as officers from across the council.

Each working group's activities and key outputs are summarised below:

#### Food and Biodiversity working group

The start of the year welcomed a discussion on the National Food Strategy, with reflections and feedback of members aiding the development of the draft Leeds Food Strategy throughout the year prior to the launch of its consultation in October 2022.

The insight and scrutiny from the Members within the Biodiversity, Food and Waste working group have been pivotal in the development of this strategy, shaping the framework and helping to identify some of the key elements of the strategy.

The draft strategy aims to ensure that Leeds has a vibrant food economy where everyone can access local, healthy, and affordable food that is produced in ways that improve the natural environment and embrace innovation.

Throughout the meetings and discussions of this working group, the detrimental impact of the cost-of-living crisis has remained prominent. The working group has remained sensitive to external factors, taking into consideration how this stream of work can still be achieved in the current economic climate, recognising the challenges Leeds residents and businesses continue to face.

#### Economy and Finance working group

The Economy and Finance working group session focused on 'Green Finance' and the types of investments that would be attractive to communities, considering the existing 'cost-of-living crisis' faced by many residents. Members provided insightful feedback, based on their daily interactions with their communities, that there is a lack of knowledge regarding the types of energy-saving improvements that would be suitable and effective for their properties. Members reiterated that financial savings would be the primary aim of their residents interested in retrofit works.

'Community Municipal Bonds' were highlighted as an investment and green financing opportunity that may be of interest to communities. Questions were asked by Members whether the interest in projects hyper-local to residents would be stronger than projects further away in the district. Council officers will take this into consideration when planning projects, depending on the right opportunities and resource requirements.

Members have also held discussions on the suitability of different low carbon heating solutions for properties, including conversations exploring where Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHP) are most appropriate and the feasibility of geothermal heating using old mine shafts in the district.

The working group has also received a briefing on the council's work with the Prime Minister's Business Council and the related pilot 'Leeds Retrofit Accelerator' project which would see a new retrofit model being developed that will enable homeowners to benefit from a streamlined and trusted customer journey with access to attractive, alternative funding sources. Members were supportive of the proposals and positive impact this could have on the city.

### Planning, Buildings & Energy working group

Within the working group, members have provided a sustained interest in multiple topics including:

- The development of a large-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) generation site on council land
- The work of Leeds City Council's 'Energy Saving Taskforce' to reduce the organisation's overall energy demand
- An update on work regarding the 'Leeds Retrofit Accelerator' project and the authority's joint work with the Prime Minister's Business Council
- An update on the council's plan for net zero housing

Members of the working group have acted as a valuable sounding board for the ever-changing and developing challenges that the Council and the wider city are facing, particularly in the example of the energy crisis.

Working group members were also engaged in the emerging LCC Energy Strategy ahead of its presentation to and approval by Executive Board in February this year, which set out the proposed approach to reducing energy consumption across the corporate estate, increasing energy efficiency and renewables generation, reviewing the approach to energy purchasing, and converting the Council's fleet from petrol/diesel to electric.

The last meeting of the year presented Members with an opportunity to discuss and scrutinise the work of the council's 'Energy Saving Taskforce' assembled in light of the energy crisis with an aim of taking actions to reduce overall energy demand across the organisation.

Working group members also discussed ideas to inform the development of the council's plan for net zero housing. Members reiterated the importance of trust in housing retrofit solution providers in order for people to commit and expressed their view that council-led schemes tended to be better trusted. This insight will be incorporated within the new plan.



Members also recognised that the pending Local Plan Update has created opportunity to better align planning policy with the city's net zero ambitions. However, the working group also discussed and recognised outstanding challenges in delivering net zero housing including the reliance on Government grant funding and lack of long-term investment. Discussions focused on key actions that could be taken to accelerate the retrofit of homes including the establishment of a 'Better Homes Hub' in the region, and proposals to create a map of retrofit opportunities across the city, to develop an engagement plan and to further develop the skills needed to achieve net zero.

Overall, the working group has been supportive of the council's retrofit work so far as well as of plans to pilot a 'Leeds Retrofit Accelerator' project in collaboration with some of the UK's largest companies through the Prime Minister's Business Council. Throughout the course of the year, working group meetings have provoked insightful and positive discussions. The suggestions provided and questions asked by Members have all been helpful to council officers in further developing these workstreams.

#### Communities and Business Engagement Working Group

Following the updated focus and terms of reference for this working group, the group met twice to explore and discuss different aspects of climate action communications. The updated terms of reference include city-wide communications, business engagement, local community engagement, and behaviour change initiatives. The group intends to cover each of these areas in turn on a rolling basis.

For the first meeting of the updated working group, Members received a briefing from council officers on the local authority's current approach to communicating climate action and informed of plans for enhanced engagement to coincide with the launch of a new 'Climate Action Plan' section of the council's website to better communicate the vision for mitigating and adapting to climate change with residents. Members raised many of their own suggestions for engaging residents and their communities including the potential for recognising climate action in award ceremonies, business ambassadors, utilising the council's email strapline, and closer working with the council's Localities team and Equalities Hubs to ensure that all communities are being engaged. A number of actions were logged and are being progressed by council officers.

An additional meeting was due to be held in September was cancelled out of respect to the national mourning period of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

In November, the working group met once again to explore how young people in the city were being engaged on climate action. Council officers from Child Friendly Leeds briefed members on their work with young people and business ambassadors in the city and how their work is informed by 12 'wishes' that have been chosen by young people to reflect their key issues, including action on climate change. As a result of the working group's ideas, council officers are now planning to introduce a new category at their popular Child Friendly Leeds awards to recognise climate action. Following this discussion, Members were also briefed on resources available to engage schools and young people including the Climate Action Route Map for schools and Leeds By Example Young Person's Toolkit. Finally, the working group discussed and developed actions and ideas, logged by officers, to help the council further raise awareness and increase uptake of these climate resources and engage young people on climate including a climate-focused presence at upcoming community Youth Summits.

## **Conclusion**

This year's Climate Emergency Advisory Committee has considered a wide range of issues at the main committee meetings, referring many issues to its working groups for further examination. The working groups have also evolved to better reflect the key topics that the committee wanted to explore. CEAC will continue to play a key role in ensuring that the net zero ambition is embedded across the council and will make recommendations for effective action.