

**Legal and Democratic Services**

Governance Services

1<sup>st</sup> Floor (West)

Civic Hall

Leeds LS1 1UR

Contact Name: Kevin Tomkinson  
e-mail: kevin.tomkinson@leeds.gov.uk  
Direct Line: (0113) 37 88659

Your ref:

Our Ref:

Date: 26 September 2023

To: All Members of Council

Dear Councillor

**COUNCIL MEETING – 13<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023**

At the above meeting, the thirty minutes of Question Time expired with questions 8 to 44 were unanswered. Council Procedure Rule 11.6 requires that each Member of Council is sent responses to such questions.

**Q8** Councillor J Tudor – Can the Executive Member for Housing update Council on the proposal to ban No Fault Evictions?

**A** Executive Member for Housing

The UK Parliamentary tracker shows that the renters reform bill which was first introduced on the 17th May 2023 has made limited progress through parliament and is still awaiting its second reading. When this bill was introduced the housing secretary Michael Gove told the BBC he hoped to see the bill in place “as quickly as possible”. Despite parliament now being back from summer recess there is only a short window before going back into recess for party conferences.

At this rate it could take up to 18 months for the renter’s reform bill to become law, meaning we will be well into 2024 before tenants see any benefit. There is also likely to be a 6 month notice period before the implementation date from which point all new tenancies will need to abide by the Bill. A further 12 months' notice will then be provided to retrospectively govern all tenancies.

**Q9** Councillor D Blackburn – Does the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space agree that it's important to have suitable seating at appropriate places on our streets, for the benefit of people who have walking difficulties, are disabled, elderly or have young children?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The provision of seating plays a positive role in contributing to a sense of place, encourages social interaction and rest points.

The following published information about seating provision on streets include the Department for Transport's 'Manual for Streets', the street environment design guide 'Inclusive Design for Getting Outdoors', DfT (2002) Inclusive Mobility 'A Guide to Best Practice' and British Standard BS 8300 are all used by designers/officers to inform the development of schemes whether through permitted development rights or through the planning process.

The guides set out an approach whereby seats 'should be provided at intervals along long routes or where waiting is likely and at transport interchanges and extra seating should be considered in pedestrian areas where people congregate such as local shops, schools and squares. This approach is also necessary to provide rest points for pedestrians, particularly those with mobility or visual impairments.

In Leeds City Centre, there are hundreds of seats and benches, and the volume of seating is increasing all the time. Through the delivery of a number of public realm and transport schemes across the city there have been many recent improvements and interventions to the number and variety of seats being provided. All of the recent improvement schemes delivered in the city centre have included seating, whether they are 'on-highway' projects like the LPTIP scheme on the Headrow, Cookridge Street, the Corn Exchange, Park Row & Infirmary Street; or in green spaces like Playhouse Gardens.

Officers also carried out an audit of spaces in 2019 and installed more seating to plug the gaps in provision, in the city centre.

The recent Local Centres Programme also saw the introduction of new greenspaces and seating areas across those schemes delivered and there are more planned as part of schemes currently under design development.

As well as the volume of seating, design is also important in accessibility terms. The Council ensures that we have a variety of different seating types, using different materials, seating heights and combinations of armrests, backrests and wheelchair transfer space. In order to be attractive to children, we also have some seating that is climbable and colourful, like the colourful seating rings on Millennium Square, and the tactile bronze sculpted armrests on Lands Lane.



**Q10** Councillor H Bithell – Has the Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education had a response from Government to his letter outlining the unfair treatment of pregnant staff members who take part in school strike action?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education

Earlier this year I wrote to the Government to highlight the unfair treatment of school staff who are pregnant and who take part in strike action during the period of time which is used to calculate their maternity pay.

Under the current rules, maternity pay is calculated by looking at the average pay in the eight week period running up to the 15<sup>th</sup> week before the baby is born.

As we know and accept, anyone who takes part in strike action is not paid by their employer for the period they are on strike, but for people who are pregnant and who strike during this period they lose not only their immediate pay, but it will also impact and reduce their level of maternity pay.

I wrote to the Government in July asking them to look into this and change the rules.

The response from Government recognised that average weekly earnings can be affected by reduced earnings over the qualifying period, and that taking part in strike action could lead to this, the letter then went on to say:

“We believe however, that the current calculation balances the need to achieve a representative reflection of a woman’s earnings in a way that is consistent for all, whilst ensuring a straightforward calculation for employers.”

The letter goes on to say that the current method ‘avoids the need for complicated rules around which earnings should be used’ and concludes that the Government does not plan to change the method of calculating entitlement to, and the rate of, statutory maternity pay.

I am incredibly disappointed that, while recognising the issue, it will not be addressed to avoid “complicated rules”.

**Q11** Councillor M Robinson – Can the Executive Member for Housing confirm how many registered sex offenders are currently occupying a Leeds City Council home?

**A** Executive Member for Housing

The management of sex offenders is done in partnership with several statutory partners including West Yorkshire Police, Probation and Leeds City Council departments, including Housing.



There are a number of different accommodation types utilised to accommodate sex offenders, including owner occupied, private rented, housing association and local authority housing.

In each instance, Probation sends a request to Public Protection Unit (PPU) in WYP asking if the address is suitable as part of the MAPPA process, as an assessment will be made using all relevant information and intelligence. WYP PPU have additional safeguarding measures in place with visits and risk assessments. If intelligence is received that a nominal is not safe in a particular location, PPU link in with the council (And probation if still on licence) and seek alternative accommodation as quickly as possible.

For MAPPA nominals Leeds City Council Housing are a statutory member of the Panel and are involved in the decision-making process. The local authority housing team identify potential addresses and the suitability is assessed jointly by Probation and PPU.

There is no single database that captures records relating specifically to registered sex offenders and council accommodation or indeed any other specific housing types where registered sex offenders reside, but appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure consideration is given to the type of behaviour they have been convicted of, the accommodation setting and the location of schools and parks for example. There is then an ongoing management process where risks are monitored with regular reviews to ensure behavioural compliance in line with the threat, harm and risk.

**Q12** Councillor C Hart-Brooke – With the rise in number of predominantly home-made e-bikes/motorcycles in our city centre. Can the Executive Member advise what our approach is as a city to ensure riders from Uber, Deliveroo, Just-Eat and others are operating in a safe and legal way in our city?

**A** Executive Member for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure

Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police are working together on this matter. It is for the Police to enforce against dangerous cycling and illegally modified cycles. To this end, West Yorkshire Police carried out an operation on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023, seizing a number of bikes which were illegally modified. One of these bikes was tested as capable of travelling at 45mph.

This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> operation of this nature this summer.

From a Leeds City Council perspective, our on-street teams are tasked with asking riders to slow down where we see them riding too quickly, and we regularly liaise with Deliveroo. The Deliveroo liaison has resulted in notices being sent out by Deliveroo to their riders, asking them to ride more carefully in pedestrianised areas. In addition, multi-agency 'Rider Engagement Events' have been held in Leeds, where Leeds City Council, the Police and Deliveroo attend and have the opportunity to talk and listen to riders including engaging on information and training related to Vision Zero.



**Q13** Councillor A Scopes – Could the Executive Member for Children’s Social Care and Health Partnerships please update on the Council’s work to support Early Years’ settings in Leeds?

**A** Executive Member for Children’s Social Care and Health Partnerships

Leeds City Council is taking action to support the sector by extending its discretionary business rate relief scheme to nurseries, offering much-needed relief from rising costs and the impact of the post-COVID-19 downturn.

The changes to the business rate relief scheme are providing targeted support to those facing financial pressures. This move comes in response to the government's withdrawal of statutory rate relief in 2022, leaving nursery providers in need of breathing room to sustain their operations.

The scheme, set to reopen in October, will enable nurseries to apply for support, offering up to £15,000 off their annual rate bills. This financial relief will go some way to ease the growing pressures on providers operational costs.

This council is both demonstrating support for the sector and the employment it provides, and recognising the crucial role that childcare plays in supporting children's development. We are helping parents enter or continue in employment and education, and offering a helping hand to a much beleaguered sector so that all of our children have the opportunity to benefit from high quality early years education.

Business rates are one of the issues that local providers frequently raise in the regular childcare provider meetings that I Chair for our early years providers. But they also tell me about the broader national issues that need urgent attention – and affect the whole sector, whether they are private, voluntary and independent settings, childminders, or maintained nurseries.

The extension of the discretionary business rate relief scheme is a testament to the council's commitment to the well-being of its community. However, we must also advocate for greater engagement and support from the Government to address the systemic challenges faced by early years providers and families nationwide. It is only then that we can ensure that all families have access to high-quality, affordable early education.

**Q14** Councillor P Stables - Whilst the Government continues to consider whether to make pavement parking illegal outside London, would the Executive Member consider conducting a review to make pavement parking illegal across Leeds?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space



I very much appreciate and share the concerns about adverse impacts inappropriate parking on footways can have for residents and users, especially those who may be visually impaired or who might have mobility difficulties or use wheelchairs or prams. The practice of parking on footways is one which the Council does not encourage in any way and especially where this poses specific issues for road safety we will work with the parking service, police and local communities to deter the practice and where necessary take enforcement action.

Whilst I understand the frustration and annoyance that some pavement parking can generate, in the vast majority within the Leeds district, often but not always this takes place in residential areas where the roads are narrow and therefore residents really struggle to park their vehicles as they try to avoid obstructing other traffic and pedestrians. It is not an offence to park on the footway, but it is to obstruct one. Everyone has their own view of this problem and so the police generally will only act if the obstruction physically prevents the passage of either pedestrians or vehicles.

For these reasons using formal pavement parking bans can be fraught with difficulties on our crowded residential streets and sometimes could well contribute to more problems than are solved, for example by displacing parking which could result in the creation of different problems elsewhere or obstructing access to for residents or even the emergency services. Generally in Leeds we have sought to avoid pavement parking bans by the careful management of problem parking at hot spot locations by using traffic management measures and other Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) restrictions. The council promotes many TROs annually and whilst cost are always an important factor to consider, the costs are not prohibitive in delivering a TRO if it is considered the most appropriate restriction. This approach can be successful because rather than moving the problem parking elsewhere it leads to better facilities for parking and thus manages the situation in the affected locality to everybody's advantage.

Nevertheless, I fully understand the frustration of pedestrians, particularly our vulnerable road users who need to be able to use the pavement but are obstructed from doing so by thoughtless parking and that additional legislation might well be helpful in some situations.

However, any such changes should be well considered and framed in the context of the situations local Councils and their communities are faced with. In the meantime, I believe the key to successfully accommodating the movement and mobility needs of local people is through careful dialogue and work to understand the problems and craft the right solutions which are often possible using existing legislation and sensitive enforcement to achieve agreeable outcomes in what are often delicately balanced situations in terms of residents' views and aspirations.

The management of parking forms a major part of the Council's transport planning activities and we continue to keep this important issue under review. I very much support your ambition to see conditions improved and remain open to creative suggestions as to how new national regulation changes may assist and we will continue to use and consider alternative traffic regulation orders, other than blank pavement banning order to help support us improve access for all in our local areas.

I trust the above explain our current approach and why we need to wait for the national guidance in this regard which is currently under review.



**Q15** Councillor K Dye – Can the Executive Member please give an update on the expansion of Leeds Pipes?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

Leeds PIPES now counts 14 commercial buildings as customers as well as 1800 social housing tenants in the council's multi-storey flats. Our latest phase of works, phase 3, has been underway since summer 2022 with the vast majority of works now completed across five city centre zones, including extensions to St James Hospital and the Lovells multi-storey flats. Three private sector developments have signed up to the network over the summer period, our first private sector connections to the network.

The latest Executive Board update on the project was provided in July of this year and outlined our proposals to further expand the network. Applications will be made to the government grant scheme, the Green Heat Network Fund, at the end of September to part-fund two extensions:

- South Bank. The team are working with a consultant on the design of a network to supply heat to customers in South Bank, capitalising on the pipeline of development for the area. The network would utilise new, low carbon, heat sources in the area, whilst ultimately connecting into the existing Leeds PIPES network. This adds resilience for customers across the entire network, and reduces the usage of gas boilers which currently supply heat during outages at the RERF. The scale of the South Bank extension is significant, and the business case will be brought to Executive Board in 2024 seeking authority to proceed with the construction of the network.
- Wellington Street. We have identified a number of customers in the Wellington Street area of the city, with sizable heat demands. As such an extension is planned to be able to connect these customers to the network.

We have a pipeline of c45 customers with whom we are currently engaged, varying from public sector partners to office, residential, and student accommodation developments, and as the profile of the network continues to grow, so does the list of new enquiries received from prospective customers.

**Q16** Councillor R Stephenson – To ask the Leader of Council, when he welcomed the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China into Leeds Civic Hall in July, did he raise, on behalf of Hong Kongers seeking refuge in Leeds, the issue of Beijing's authoritarian actions in Hong Kong, and did he also raise the genocide committed against Uyghur Muslims in China's Xinjiang region?

**A** Leader of Council



In July the Chinese Ambassador to the United Kingdom came to Leeds to attend the China-Northern England Cooperation Forum in Leeds. The forum was organised by the China-Britain Business Council and China Chamber of Commerce in the UK, with about 50 business representatives joining the forming.

In advance of his visit to Leeds the Chinese Ambassador expressed a desire to explore business links and make a civic connection. Having taken advice from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DHLUC) the Chinese Ambassador was welcomed to Leeds Civic Hall to meet the Leader and the Lord Mayor to discuss our Leeds / Hangzhou twinning and economic links between the region and China. Leeds and Hangzhou have been partner cities since 1989 and celebrated 30 years of partnership by signing an MOU in 2018.

Matters relating to the Hong Kong and other political matters were not discussed as it would not be appropriate for an individual Local Authority to enter into discussions with the Chinese Ambassador on such matters on an individual basis. Such matters of international diplomacy are matters for the UK Government to lead in line with the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) bill which was introduced in Parliament by Felicity Buchan MP Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in June 2023

As a compassionate city, the Migration team, and Employment and Skills teams are providing support to the Hong Kong community. For example, the council has built positive relationships with community organisations supporting the Hong Kong community including Strings of Life Church, Health 4 All, Café Connect, PATH Yorkshire and the Be More Project. The Hong Kong Friendship Festival was held in January and the council supported this event through promotion, linking the organisers with key contacts, and guidance around risk assessment to accommodate over 800 people attending.

We maintain contact with several third sector organisations who are supporting the Hong Kong community in Leeds and across Yorkshire, holding regular meetings to share learning, and provide support for the delivery of their programmes.

Following partnership work with Employment and Skills, Leeds City Council has now opened up ESOL classes for Hong Kong BNO learners to support their integration into the city.

**Q17** Councillor R Downes – Could the Executive Board Member responsible advise what Inclusive public playground equipment there is in Leeds and in which parks are they located?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

There are over 170 children's playgrounds in Leeds provided by the council for children to access, and in 2019, Leeds Commitment to Children's Play includes a reference 'to increase opportunity to play'. Integrated facilities catering for all needs and abilities are important in developing local playgrounds. As each playground is developed, improved or refreshed, inclusivity and accessibility is considered, and this is then reflected in the equipment installed.





Newly refurbished sites at the Arium and Woodhouse both include inclusive play elements and accessible equipment such as roundabouts and swings are installed extensively across the city. The 2022 Parks and Greenspace strategy includes a commitment to undertake an audit of quantity, location and quality of play facilities across the city to allow effective prioritisation as well as the establishment of a checklist to allow the assessment of quality and accessibility of our playful spaces. This is identified for completion by 2025.

**Q18** Councillor W Dixon – Does the current administration have any plans to invest in repairing and replacing broken equipment in children’s playgrounds, in the Middleton Park ward specifically and more generally across the City?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

Working with members in various wards, officers are frequently seeking opportunities to support investment in children’s play facilities. Using developer contributions, external funding and other sources, over £500k will be invested in play in 23/24 financial year which is likely to increase further as additional plans come forward. Officers are available to discuss with Middleton members specifically regarding ward based priorities for play improvements.

**Q19** Councillor B Anderson – Can the Executive Member with responsibility for Climate Change comment on the recent study by the University of Leeds on the potential effects of Electric Vehicles on our roads?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

A study has been conducted by the University of Edinburgh (lead author John Low) into the impact on road maintenance due to the increased weight of battery and hydrogen trucks and buses, but appears to have been linked in error to Leeds in this case. This study sought to determine if there was a relationship between axle load and road wear due to the additional weight of zero emission vehicles. The report found that increased road wear may be associated with battery and to a lesser extent hydrogen vehicles, but that this impact would be caused by large class vehicles – buses or heavy goods vehicles. The report found that smaller vehicles make a negligible contribution to this. The report recommended that governmental bodies may wish to consider weight limits on roads, set requirements for additional axles on heavier vehicles, or fund construction of new roads to a higher standard to mitigate the issue. The report also noted that the decarbonisation of transport emissions is essential to meet climate targets and did not make a recommendation of retaining ICE vehicles. John Low PHD is a researcher in Hydrogen and its role in decarbonisation of heat and transport.

In Leeds the Connecting Leeds strategy has a target to reduce car use and increase active travel and use of public transport. As such this would in turn reduce the frequency and



volume of vehicles on the road which would both reduce the wear and tear of the road surface and would support improved air quality and decarbonisation of transport.

In summary if roads are properly constructed and maintained with appropriate levels of funding the advent of electric vehicles will not create issues.

**Q20** Councillor C Campbell – Could the Executive Member please inform Council when emergency work to fill the pot holes in the airport tunnel (A658) will be undertaken?

**A** Executive Member for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure

Victoria Avenue(A658) is recognised as being of particular strategic importance, being a key route to Leeds Bradford Airport and beyond.

For many people, in particular those arriving at the airport and visiting the region for the first time, this is the first major road that they experience in Leeds.

Unfortunately, the logistics of accessing the areas in the tunnel required to carry out the repairs, is likely to require a contraflow and discussions are taking place to ensure suitable access, so that these interim repairs can be carried out in a safe manner whilst minimising disruption to the public.

Arrangements are currently being made to carry out some temporary patching works of the affected areas by the Highways Services Team within the coming weeks and as soon as a date for the works has been agreed with the Network Management Team and the Airport, the Highways Asset Manager will ensure that you are advised.

In the longer term, Highways have confirmed that a full carriageway resurfacing scheme is included in next year's (24/25) annual programme. But as stated already, because this is the main access to the Airport it will be necessary for them to arrange with the Airport and Network Management when it is operationally most sensible to carry out the works and inevitably, some disruption will occur.

**Q21** Councillor B Anderson – Will the Executive Member for Housing please confirm to Council they are happy with the performance of the computer system used by Housing Leeds?

**A** Executive Member for Housing

Housing Leeds upgraded its housing management system in summer 2021, migrating from multiple systems to a system provided by a single supplier, Civica. As one of the largest local authority landlords in the UK and contractual arrangements with a number of different



inhouse and external contractors it was inevitably a complex transition to the new system with some impacts on system performance due to the scale of operations.

The transition has required new interfaces being developed with contractor systems, reviews of business processes in order to simplify and standardise approaches aligned to the system, new reports to be written etc. The rollout of the system, and in particular the training out of the system for front line staff was made more complex by COVID restrictions in place at that time. The rollout of full functionality has progressed since go live, overseen by senior officers. 2 years later we have made a number of systems and business process improvements and the system is working much more effectively for us.

An upgrade is planned for the autumn which will deliver a series of further benefits, which will improve system efficiency and functionality. Housing Leeds will continue to work closely with IDS colleagues beyond the upgrade to ensure that system improvements continue, particularly how the system aligns to our mobile working potential.

**Q22** Councillor C Hart-Brooke – Councillors are getting consistent feedback from internal and client sources that the coordination and communication between LCC housing repairs teams and stakeholders (residents and housing officers) could work a lot better than it does. Can the Executive Member for Housing advise of any plans to improve information sharing on job tracking for timings, completion and signoff?

**A** Executive Member for Housing

The tracking of job status on repair orders is an issue we are aware of and we have been working with partners in IDS to resolve. The job status is updated in Connect but until relatively recently the information has not been updating Cx until the repair has been completed. This meant that Housing staff didn't have full visibility of the status, with the exception of the Repairs Team who were able to access Connect.

Improvements have been made and we are confident that the availability of this information moving forward will be greatly improved. In the near future this will also include an improved Customer Portal allowing tenants direct access to view the status of any repairs ordered.

More generally, our repairs team works extremely closely with colleagues and stakeholders across the service and fully understand the need for communication to be proactive and regular. The demand for the repairs service remains extremely high and the Repairs Team is fully engaged with both internal and external service providers to identify service improvements where needed. This includes periodic reviews of our communications strategy.

**Q23** Councillor P Alderson – Does the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space agree that it is unacceptable for Members in Guiseley & Rawdon to be first made aware of large woodland creation proposals in our Ward on the same day that the public consultation is launched, and if so can he offer some reassurance that this will not be repeated in the future?



**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

Since launching the woodland creation scheme, 229 sites have been planted across the city. Thus far planting sites have been proposed by officers, members, residents, and local groups. For the 23/24 planting season, 119 locations were identified as possible planting sites. 38 were considered viable with consultation closing on the 17<sup>th</sup> September. The views of all stakeholders are welcome through consultation and members are advised when the consultation goes live and again on completion of the consultation process. Should sites receive negative feedback then the service will either seek to amend and adapt the scheme or not move it forward. We regularly seek to improve and adapt the process for identifying sites for woodland creation and will ensure ward member engagement occurs prior to the commencement of public consultation.

**Q24** Councillor D Chapman – Could the Executive Member advise if any progress has been made in developing the use of geo-thermal mine water energy as a sustainable heating source in ex-mining areas?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The council is fortunate that all our low carbon energy needs for the district heating network are currently met by heat from the RERF. The RERF can supply up to 20MW of heat at any one time but our maximum demand in 2022/23 rarely went above 8MW.

However, we do have ambitious expansion plans for the network and are actively investigating other sources of heat.

One area is mine-water: early indications are that there is significant amounts of heat, at useful temperatures, within mines in East Leeds. This could help the network expand eastwards in due course.

To better understand the amounts of heat available and how we can best exploit it, we are working closely with the new Geosolutions team that has recently been set up by the University of Leeds. We anticipate that we will have concluded this scoping phase by 2025 and expect to use this knowledge to help deliver district heating zoning using mine water heat from 2025 onwards.



**Q25** Councillor M Robinson – A Labour Party document released this summer, "Make Britain a clean energy superpower" promised the party would be "backing the builders not the blockers so Britain gets the cheap, clean power we need". Could the Leader of Council explain how this aim is consistent with his opposition to battery storage facilities in his own ward?

**A** Leader of Council

My opposition to the applications is on material planning matters.

**Q26** Councillor C Campbell – Could the Executive Member inform Council when or if the Parks Department will apply for planning permission for the roller shutters installed on Council property (the cafe in Wharfe Meadows Park) in Otley?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The leaseholder undertook the works so it would be them rather than the parks and countryside service that would need to obtain planning permission.

**Q27** Councillor B Anderson – Can the Executive Member with responsibility for Climate Change advise on which of the following actions the Council are currently doing, or going to do in respect of small and medium enterprises to help them decarbonise: Energy Efficiency Assessments, Grants, Training, Provide opportunities to network and share information and develop partnerships with other organisations?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

1. Leeds City Council recognises that, in addition to being a legal and environmental imperative, climate action is also a significant economic opportunity for businesses: the UK Government claim that supplying the goods and services necessary to reach global net zero emissions is estimated to be worth up to £1 trillion to British businesses by 2030. Many experts predict that 'early mover' businesses that lead the way will be especially well-placed to capitalise on these economic opportunities.

2. The Inclusive Growth Strategy 2023-2030 is due to be discussed by the council's Executive Board next week. Reflecting Council's 'Climate Emergency' declaration, the updated strategy recognises that responding to the climate emergency will be a citywide effort in which a key aim will be to support businesses to understand the importance of decarbonisation, whilst also helping them to realise the economic opportunities of the net zero transition and green economy.



3. There are several different initiatives currently available to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to decarbonise. A non-exhaustive list of these is set out from paragraph 6 onwards.
4. While some of the support detailed below is directly managed or facilitated by the Council itself, other schemes are provided by council partners or by other official bodies but are actively promoted via the local authority's own networks and communications channels to ensure local businesses are aware and can benefit.
5. SMEs in Leeds (and West Yorkshire) operating in almost any sector can access a wide range of support through the Business Sustainability Service, which was launched by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) in July. Eligible businesses can benefit from a free resource efficiency review, plus grant support for capital investment to help reduce carbon emissions, environmental consultancy, and/or flood resilience measures. The WYCA has future plans to launch a net zero business network spin-off from the service to help facilitate knowledge sharing and networking of like-minded businesses.
6. The Business Sustainability Service is the successor project to the Resource Efficient Businesses (REBIZ) programme, which previously provided energy efficiency audits, grant support, and consultancy advice to SMEs in certain sectors. 145 Leeds-based SMEs were supported over the lifetime of the programme, with £0.37m in grant support distributed to the city's participating businesses. Most of this funding was used to fund energy-saving lighting, heating, and machinery upgrades.
7. Leeds City Council has been actively involved in the development and promotion of both of the above schemes to help ensure that SMEs in Leeds are aware of the opportunity so that they can benefit from the support available. The council has promoted the new Business Sustainability Service via a range of business-facing networks and communications channels, in addition to hosting business events and featuring the scheme in the monthly Leeds Climate e-newsletter. Since launching in the summer, the scheme has already received 65 enquiries from Leeds-based businesses.
8. Eligible businesses, including SMEs, can also receive grant support of up to £10,000 from the WYCA to fund digital projects as part of the Digital Enterprise Scheme. The funding can be used towards a number of digital carbon-reducing initiatives, such as enabling home working (thereby reducing unnecessary travel) or reducing the use of paper through digitalisation, among others. The Council's Economic Development service has regularly promoted the scheme.
9. SMEs classified as social enterprises can also access grant funding for climate-related projects of up to £50,000 through the Council's 'Community Climate Grants' programme. The programme is administered by Leeds City Council with funding from the Mayor of West Yorkshire and West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Since launching at the end of July, the council has received around 30 expressions of interest to date.
10. Leeds City Council's Influencing Travel Behaviour (ITB) team actively promotes a number of support schemes available to businesses, including SMEs, to promote sustainable travel. This includes:



- a. The Council's 'E-Cargo Bike Trials' scheme, which allows any organisation in Leeds (including SMEs) to borrow an electric cargo bike free-of-charge for up to three months to find out whether it is right for their business.
- b. The LEP's 'West Yorkshire Travel Plan Network', which enables any organisation in the region (including SMEs) to access a range of benefits including employee discounts on travel passes and season tickets, support with car sharing, access to networking and knowledge sharing events.
- c. The LEP's 'Bike Friendly Businesses' scheme, which helps any organisation in West Yorkshire (including SMEs) to apply for support including grants of up to £5,000 towards infrastructure to support cycling.
- d.

11. In addition to signposting to the above schemes, the ITB team also offer bespoke travel planning advice to businesses (including SMEs) that are required to submit annual Travel Plans for monitoring, working with businesses to encourage more sustainable travel.

12. As well as the above *support* opportunities available to SMEs, the Council is also taking action to promote business *engagement* with the climate emergency.

13. Three seminar-style events aimed at supporting local SMEs to plan for a greener future are being hosted in the coming months by the Council's Employment and Skills service in partnership with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Leeds Beckett University, and Knowledge Exchange. The 'Business sustainability: how to build a greener future' events will enable interested businesses to find out more about the support options available to help them become greener locally as well as learn from, and network with, other businesses on the journey to net zero. Events are due to take place on 28 September, 26 October, and 23 November.

14. More than 2,000 local business subscribers, the majority of which representing SMEs, receive weekly updates from the Council's Neighbourhood Centres Coordinator. The email updates regularly promote the LEP's Business Sustainability Support service (see above) and the UK Government's official SME Climate Hub online toolkit as standing weekly items.

15. Finally, the Council has supported business-focused events delivered by third parties aimed at encouraging networking and knowledge-sharing among sustainably minded businesses, including SMEs. Leeds City Council was a headline sponsor of the inaugural Yorkshire Sustainability Week, which saw more than 1,200 people attend a mix of events across the conference.

**Q28** Councillor D Chapman – Could the Exec Board Member provide details of the average fee paid by Ice Cream vendors for pitches in Leeds Parks in 2023/24 and also 2018/19?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space



The number of ice cream concessions varies from year to year and there is a wide range of fees paid, sometimes allowing more than one pitch in a large park.

In 18/19 the average fee per site was circa £17,000 per year and in 23/24 it was £25,000.

In the procurement process a guide price is listed but ultimately market forces determine how much is paid for each site.

**Q29** Councillor B Anderson – Does the Executive Member for Housing welcome the Renters Reform Bill and can she confirm that, irrespective of the time taken to take the Bill through the house, which measures is she going to implement because the Council want to or need to because they make sense?

**A** Executive Member for Housing

Any additional security for tenants in this sector is welcomed but will bring interim pressures for local authorities. The council will continue to work hard to support both tenants and landlords, we have designated resources within the Housing options service to work with the sector and provide support to both landlord and tenants.

The Renters Reform Bill has ascended through due parliamentary process and the council will deliver on the requirements within when it comes into force. In general the bill proposes greater support for the security of tenants in the sector which is a good thing but will require support for both tenants and landlords to make it work.

Leeds Housing Options will also continue to work closely the private sector housing team to work with landlords on the New Decent Homes Standard. This is something we are already doing with properties let through the private sector scheme being inspected and any tenant complaints around disrepair being addressed through inspection and enforcement work. We will continue to strengthen our private rented scheme by hopefully introducing a 'Rent Guarantee Scheme' to encourage the right landlords to work closely with us to provide homes for the customers most in need.

**Q30** Councillor C Campbell – Bin collection on Rufford Close (along with the other "Ruffords") in Yeadon is often prevented by inappropriate parking. What steps will the Council take to ensure a regular collection service for this estate?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The Council is aware that bin collections have been a challenge on Rufford Close due to poor parking preventing safe access by the collection wagon. The black and green bin collections





have been moved to the route of smaller sized wagon and work is ongoing to also move the brown bin collections to a smaller sized wagon.

The refuse service often works with ward members across the city to assist in communication with residents where poor parking is preventing their bins to be emptied on scheduled collection days, and has supported the introduction of yellow lines where it is agreed that would help.

**Q31** Councillor M Robinson – Does the Executive Member for Sustainable Development & Infrastructure agree with me that all streets in Leeds should be swept on a regular basis and residents should be able to know when it's scheduled to happen?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green space

The responsibility for the sweeping of the streets/roads of Leeds falls to the Cleaner Neighbourhood Teams, and so sits under the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space.

In Leeds there are 11,600 roads that the council are responsible for; covering about 3,000 kilometres. Not every street/road in Leeds requires or will receive a regular sweep. Instead a programme of mechanical sweeping exists for the main streets/roads with more regular sweeping scheduled for those locations that are more prone to flooding.

Additional seasonal sweeping happens on paths and roads that are prone to leafing issues.

The dates when the above programmed sweeps take place will vary depending on a number of factors, mainly related to weather conditions.

Ad-hoc sweeps are done in response to service requests received from members of the public and ward councillors and in response to road traffic accidents and spillages.

Roughly about 80% of the capacity is used for programmed sweeping, about 20% for the reactive work.

Ward councillors have for a number of years now been able to influence the sweeping programme through their Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team's relationship with the Community Committee, within the resources/capacity available.



**Q32** Councillor D Chapman – Could the Executive Member advise when Leeds will achieve a 65% recycling rate?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The Government recently set a 65% target for recycling of household waste by 2035 in its Environmental Improvement Plan published this year. The national resource and waste strategy was launched in 2018, which included proposals to introduce an Extended Producer Responsibility scheme as a key part of how to incentivise producers of packaging to improve the recyclability of their waste and to pay councils to collect and process materials for recycling. The introduction of EPR has been put back further to late 2025.

The Government also introduced legislation in 2021 through the Environment Act that set out new requirements for councils to offer separate kerbside collections of food, garden waste and glass. Again, the detail and commencement date for those requirements and associated new burdens funding has been delayed by DEFRA, with no specific dates set for each.

Similarly, Councils and the whole waste management sector across the country await news of the proposed introduction of a national Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) for plastic and metal drinks containers that has also been delayed.

The Council looks forward to the critical detail and funding promised by Government to deliver improvements to recycling rates, including how this will be supported by the necessary improvements to the recycling and processing infrastructure/capacity. For example, the government's own environmental consultancy WRAP estimates that over 2,000 new refuse wagons will be required nationally, yet the current production capacity is 200 wagons per year.

In the meantime the council's focus on reducing the environmental impact of household waste in Leeds has seen the amount of household waste sent to landfill reduce to 0.8%, the best performance of any major city in the UK.

The council's waste management services are delivered through refuse collections, bulky collections, household waste and recycling centres, support for re-use organisations, extensive network of glass banks and Cleaner Neighbourhood Teams. Thanks to how these services are provided and how Leeds manages the waste that is collected through re-use, recycling and creating energy, household waste in Leeds creates a net annual carbon benefit of 31,258 CO<sub>2</sub>e tonnes to contribute towards the city's ambition to make Leeds carbon neutral by 2030.

**Q33** Councillor B Anderson – Can the relevant Executive Member advise what communication with Ward members there has been to help them support submitting Bids to the Government's Community Ownership Fund which is intended to help local communities rescue prized local assets?



## **A** Executive Member for Resources

As the Council reviews its locality buildings to ensure that they are properly utilised, Asset Management will work with the Safer Stronger Communities Service to ensure the review meets community needs, but also raise awareness and promote the Community Ownership Fund to Local Members and Community Committees. This fund will potentially assist the Council in working with local community groups to protect, enhance and preserve local community assets and facilities where appropriate and feasible. In addition, there is work underway with Voluntary Action Leeds through which the fund can be promoted and other support offered to community organisations seeking to bring forward proposals to take over community based assets.

**Q34** Councillor C Campbell – Last year a number of streets in the centre of Otley were resurfaced. Following completion of the works there were a number of "snagging" issues particularly around street gullies. Despite repeated requests for works to be carried out nothing has happened. Could the Executive Member inform council when the contractor will return and make good the works.

## **A** Executive Member for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure

In the 2022/23 year a total of 22 highway resurfacing schemes were delivered within the Otley & Yeadon ward, using both external contractors and the Highway Services Team.

It is expected that all works are delivered to the highest possible standards. However, on occasions some defects occur on schemes that require remedial works.

All schemes are inspected, and the relevant contractor has been made aware of the remedial work required. Some remedial works, relating to the street gullies, were carried out last week.

Arrangements are currently being made to attend to some further defects, which will be completed at the earliest opportunity.

The Highways Asset Manager will contact you directly to provide you with a further update.

**Q35** Councillor N Buckley – Is the Executive Member aware of the deaths and injuries caused by e-bikes being ridden on pavements and public areas, and that Paris has now cancelled its scheme owing to unlawful behaviour?



## **A** Executive Member for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure

The Executive Member for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure is aware that following a public referendum in April 2023 the city of Paris voted to ban e-scooters with effect from 1 September 2023. The ban relates to public hire e-scooters only, and does not cover private e-scooters or bicycles including public e-bike hire. The public vote was very clear – 90% of those who voted wanted the ban, only 8% of the population eligible to vote actually voted. The mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, campaigned for the "no" vote, stressing that the removal of these scooters would reduce "nuisance", with concerns having been raised in relation to use of e-scooters on busy pavements and indiscriminate parking of the dock-less scheme.

Leeds did not proceed with a government e-scooter trial so there is no public hire scheme for e-scooters in Leeds. Unless and until the government changes the rules on e-scooters, then the use of e-scooters on public roads and places in Leeds is illegal and an enforcement matter for West Yorkshire Police.

In relation to the riding of e-bikes in Leeds, the Leeds Safe Roads Partnership monitor collision and injury trends in Leeds. In relation to cycle collisions overall, the total number of collisions and the number of those killed or seriously injured (KSI) in collisions has fallen in the last year from the baseline of a 2017-2019 (pre-covid) average. For collisions relating to e-bikes in the pedestrian core of the city there has been one recorded collision involving an e-bike and a pedestrian resulting in a serious injury in the last 5 years.

Liaison between Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police about the use of illegal and anti-social e-bike use in Leeds continues. It is for the Police to enforce against dangerous cycling and illegally modified cycles. To this end, West Yorkshire Police carried out an operation on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023, seizing a number of bikes which were illegally modified. This was the 2<sup>nd</sup> operation of this nature this summer.

From a Leeds City Council perspective, our on-street teams are tasked with asking riders to slow down where we see them riding too quickly, and we regularly liaise with Deliveroo. The Deliveroo liaison has resulted in notices being sent out by Deliveroo to their riders, asking them to ride more carefully in pedestrianised areas. In addition, multi-agency 'Rider Engagement Events' have been held in Leeds, where Leeds City Council, the Police and Deliveroo attend and have the opportunity to talk and listen to riders and information and training on safe riding as part of the Leeds Safe Roads Vision Zero Strategy 2040 is promoted.

**Q36** Councillor D Chapman – Could the Exec Board Member advise if there is a 'profit cap' included in Ice Cream vendors contracts for pitches in Leeds Parks?

## **A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

At the time of applying for a pitch, we do not set a profit cap but the vendors are asked to submit their current price lists which is taken into consideration during the evaluation process. We also stipulate that pricing must be on display.



**Q37** Councillor B Anderson – Does the Executive Member with responsibility for Planning support the principle that Councils should have the flexibility to set planning fees at a local level to cover their costs?

**A** Executive Member for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure

Planning fees are currently set nationally and a promised increase is still awaited. Setting them locally, as was suggested a number of years ago by Government but ultimately not introduced, would potentially allow for full actual costs of service provision to be recovered. This however would be complex to calculate, and has to be balanced with the need to ensure development is still brought forward and ensuring the fees set are not significantly misaligned compared to for example, other core cities.

**Q38** Councillor S Golton – Would the Leader of Council, as a board member of West Yorkshire Combined Authority, agree with me that the contract to deliver bus services from the Stourton Park and Ride facility is not delivering the benefits for patrons that were intended at its inception, with: the frequency and operational timetable significantly reduced; Sunday services cancelled; and fares increased? If so, would he further agree to work with me to find a solution that would allow the current contract to be ended as soon as possible to allow the possibility of ‘through’ services between Wakefield and Leeds to service the Park and Ride, thereby increase the frequency of services for both Park and Ride users, and bus users in Rothwell and Ardsley and Robin Hood wards?

**A** Leader of Council

The route to improving our bus network is intrinsically linked to the bus reform that the Mayor and Combined Authority are progressing. This will give us more control to specify the services our communities need. Integrating park & ride with other services would be a more deliverable option under these reformed operating conditions.

In terms of the specific proposal, WYCA and LCC were approached in March this year by Arriva with such a proposal.

Stourton Park & Ride service was awarded to First in 2021 for 5 years after a competitive tender exercise. The fare increase (the first since Elland Road Park and Ride was opened in July 2014) and service changes have been implemented within the contract framework to minimise financial risk on all parties given that demand is unlikely to return to the levels envisaged when the original business cases for P&R were developed. Throughout this process, we have sought to retain the frequency levels at Stourton.



The operation of two parallel services from the site is not feasible as the current contract is based on a revenue guarantee. A review of the contract arrangements for the park and ride services will take place in 2025 prior to the end of the current arrangements.

The current reduction to weekend services (with Stourton operating on Saturdays but not Sundays) is on the basis that they can be reinstated for special events and periods of anticipated higher demand. Continued marketing and promotion of park & ride will rebuild growth and restoring the Sunday service within the current contract is a priority for the CA and LCC.

We are aware of the current challenges in the network in Rothwell, Ardsley and Methley as bus operators have made some reductions to services over the years. WYCA are continuing to press bus operators to enhance services in the area and we have identified the area for some support through our BSIP.

We also continue to secure developer funding from housing developments to fund additional buses in the network which will help to improve service provision.

**Q39** Councillor B Flynn – Can the Executive Member for Resources please advise me how many Elected Member’s queries in the council year 2022/23 and so far in 2023/24 were not responded to by Directorates within the stipulated timetable, in numbers and %s of the total number of queries received in those periods?

**A** Executive Member for Resources

This information is not recorded centrally, as enquiries are dealt with as closely as possible by the service with the relevant expertise. It will be appreciated that particular departments receive a large number of contacts from Members, such as Planning – these are responded to routinely as part of day-to-day service provision. If all were to be recorded, it is felt that this would take a disproportionate amount of time to do consistently across services, as it would require a high level of resource that would be more appropriately used to ensure the high standard of service delivery we strive for.

**Q40** Councillor B Anderson – Does the Executive Member for Housing agree with me that the Private Landlord Section of Housing are to be congratulated for the recent success of various Prosecutions and Appeals? What is she going to do to ensure these successes are “built on”?

**A** Executive Member for Housing

Thank you for those comments and I agree it’s great to note the recent success this team have had in ensuring the private rented stock in Leeds meets current legislation and also that



criminal activity within these properties is tackled and addressed through collective partnership working with the Police and other services.

I am also keen to see this work built on and am currently working with my officers to expand Selective Licencing within the city and am looking forward to bringing more detail to Executive Board early in the new year.

**Q41** Councillor B Flynn – Can the Executive Member for Resources please advise me by directorate, how many queries in the council year 2022/23 and so far in 2023/24 requiring a response within a statutory timeline were not responded to within that timeline, in numbers and %s of queries received in those periods?

**A** Executive Member for Resources

This information is not captured centrally, as all enquiries are dealt with as closely as possible by the service with the relevant expertise. It will be appreciated that each public-facing department receives a large number of contacts from the public – these are responded to routinely as part of day-to-day service provision. If all were to be recorded, it is felt that this would take a disproportionate amount of time to do consistently across services, as it would require a high level of resource that would be more appropriately used to ensure the high standard of service delivery we strive for.

**Q42** Councillor B Anderson – What revised procedures and improved communication is the Executive Member for Housing going to introduce as result of the recent prosecution in Harehills due to the role the landlord played in the death of a young man due to the lack of smoke alarms and inadequate landlord instructions to the tenant?

**A** Executive Member for Housing

Following the tragic death in Harehills of a young man who was living in a poorly converted basement without planning consent, issues were raised by the coroner as to why housing benefit payments were made to him when the property was dangerous and lacked basic fire prevention measures.

West Yorkshire Police subsequently took a successful prosecution against the landlord who was jailed. Since the Coroner's report was produced the Private rented team and Benefits have put in place a data sharing agreement to share where Local Housing Allowance payments are made across the city. This information is now available and being used to help identify basement flats and other rented housing.



**Q43** Councillor B Anderson – Can the Executive Member with responsibility for the Social Progress Index advise when detailed Ward briefings are going to be given on the effective use of this innovative tool?

**A** Executive Member for Communities

The Leeds Social Progress Index was introduced last year and represents the first comprehensive framework for measuring social progress that is independent of traditional economic indicators, but complementary to them. The SPI will be a key tool used to underpin work in support of our Inclusive Growth Strategy and the Best City Ambition.

Since the launch of the first version of the SPI, the following engagement with members has been delivered:

- An initial session for members of the Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth Scrutiny Board in January 2022.
- An offer was made to a small group of members from across the city to take feedback, refine and test the tool. These took place during 2022.
- A wider information sessions for all Scrutiny Board Members which was delivered in November 2022.
- Finally, as part of discussions with community committees about updating the Best City Ambition through Sep-Dec 2023 elected members will be shown a brief demo of the tool including how they can use it themselves.

As well as enabling members themselves to use the tool, we are also working to enable a wider group of officers to understand and interrogate it to support work on the ground. For example, the Communities Team have had a briefing from the SPI project manager and have been using the tool in their work with communities where it makes sense to do so.

A second version of the SPI will be available in the Autumn of 2023 and once this is available officers will deliver a programme of engagement and communications for elected members to share the updated tool, new features and key headlines. Furthermore, consideration is currently being given to how best to incorporate the SPI, and others similar tools, into the ongoing member development offer.

**Q44** Councillor M Robinson – Would the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space like to say anything to the residents of Church Lane, Collingham in my ward, who have experienced repeated missed bin collections over the hot summer, and who have read with interest reports that Birmingham City Council had to pay out compensation for the poor standard of their refuse collection service?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The service has experienced problems accessing a small number of houses at one end of Church Lane in particular. Where missed collections have been reported the service has





arranged recovery collections as soon as resources have allowed. That end of the street has now been permanently moved to a smaller wagon's route and so we hope that the access issues will not prevent future collections being made. The service is sorry for any inconvenience that has been caused to residents.

The majority of missed collections have been in relation to brown bins. Although the council offers a garden waste collection service to those 70% of households who qualify for one and wishes to deliver the best service possible, it is offered as a discretionary service and we do not guarantee collections will always be made. Garden waste can be taken to any of the 8 Households Waste and Recycling sites across the city and disposed of for free.

Yours sincerely

**Kevin Tomkinson**  
**Deputy Head of Democratic Services**

