

## **Being Our Best: our organisation plan 2024/25**

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## Foreword

Leeds is a vibrant and inclusive place to live, work and visit; a compassionate city, where we celebrate diversity and difference. We are a growing city, the second largest in England, and we have a growing and robust inclusive economy without extensive Government subsidy. The established driver of the region, a key player in the North and Core Cities, we are a global city attracting investment, cultural and sporting events, delivering crucial housing and major transport schemes.

We are ambitious and optimistic, with a track record of success, with a clear vision to be the Best City in the UK working with all partners and communities to make our city the best it can be and to improve outcomes for all.

Our role as a council leading the [Best City Ambition](#) and [Team Leeds](#) by convening and enabling is key. The voice of our communities and residents informs our service delivery, with our services touching the lives of everyone in our city, with our biggest impact often on those struggling the most. We safeguard vulnerable children, adults and elderly people and have a responsibility to provide early help services; support people to live in their own homes; keep the city clean and collect and recycle the city's waste; keep the city moving by building and repairing transport networks; support businesses to thrive and create good jobs; enable new homes to be built; and shape the city for of the city for future generations.

Like most organisations, we continue to face significant financial challenges due to prolonged austerity, a changing post-pandemic operating context and a cost-of-living crisis. This is creating more – and indeed more complex - demands on services; increased cost pressures; reduced income from our commercial services; and is placing an additional strain on our workforce. We will continue our work to reset our role and reshape our services to fit the financial envelope available, with a continued focus on high-quality, value-for-money services that make a difference. Our approach to transformation is a dynamic one so we stay agile in delivery.

We have delivered improved outcomes despite the challenges, for example Ofsted-rated 'Outstanding' Children's Services and Employment and Skills Service, various awards for services and projects and Local Government Association Peer Review feedback all illustrate a positive impact on our communities. We manage significant reductions in funding and workforce, without significant deterioration in performance, demonstrating our ability to improve productivity across the organisation.

This updated Being Our Best – our organisation plan 2024/25 sets out how we will continue to focus on having a growing and inclusive city delivering major projects with others, ensure high-quality public services within the financial envelope available, and be a well-run productive organisation. We do this by working in a Team Leeds way with our partners and communities and crucially by enabling our staff to be the best they can be in line with the values and able to see how they play their part in the bigger picture.

**Cllr James Lewis, Leader of Leeds City Council**

**Tom Riordan, Chief Executive Leeds City Council**

## Introduction

Welcome to the updated Being Our Best – our organisation plan 2024/25, our plan to be an efficient, enterprising, healthy and inclusive organisation.

Our first Being Our Best Plan, [published in 2023](#), set out our values and behaviours and responded to recommendations from the [Local Government Peer Challenge in 2022](#). It outlined our change priorities to help modernise and our manager expectations, recognising their crucial role in valuing staff and improving outcomes.

This updated Being Our Best plan maintains the focus on our values, manager expectations and main areas for organisational change. It has been enhanced to meet the UK Government's Productivity Plan requirements, which ask councils to outline the transformation of the design and delivery of their services to make better use of resources and how councils are taking advantage of technology and data to improve plans to balance council budgets.

We have focused this plan on three interlinked themes to enable everyone to understand the role and priorities of the council:

- **A growing, inclusive city** – describing Local Government's unique and engaging public service leadership role so that the council can make the greatest contribution to our [Best City Ambition](#).
- **High-quality public services** – describing the continuous improvement we strive to make in the services we deliver or commission, to improve outcomes, customer satisfaction and value-for-money.
- **Well-run organisation** – describing the importance of good governance in line with our values and behaviours to help us make the most of all the resources and assets we have at our disposal, especially our staff.

In each section we describe what we mean, set out some existing activities to deliver improvement, and examples of priorities going forward focused mainly on the major things that will affect most or all the organisation, rather than every change and transformation project that is being delivered. Greater detail describing these activities can be found in relevant Executive Board reports, including the Annual Corporate Performance Report and reports relating to council strategies, for example Safeguarding; Cost-of-Living; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Child Poverty; Transport; and Housing; and the Annual Risk and Resilience Report and regular financial monitoring reports. These reports will update about productivity in the future.

This Being Our Best – our organisation plan 2024/25 will inform the refreshed [Medium-Term Financial Strategy](#) (due in Autumn 2024), a key council strategy committed to the provision of services that meet the needs of people locally, that are financially resilient, stable and sustainable and that provide value-for-money. The financial planning process this year will aim to generate a three-year budget and workforce plan, together with a more visible and coherent transformation programme. to achieve those savings, with this reflected in the refreshed Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

The implementation of this plan will be progressed in line with the council's accountability framework and the constitution, with cross council working being a crucial part of the organisational culture to deliver success by working as a team

across directorate and service boundaries. Various Best Council Team meetings (including for example: Financial Challenge, People and Culture, Customer Strategy, Locality Working, Digital Board, Asset Management and Estates) provide a whole organisation approach with representatives from each directorate, with Corporate Leadership Team taking overall responsibility for working together as a team across the organisation.

Recognising that this is a transitional year for the council with changing national politics and given the General Election and fiscal context alongside changes at senior levels within the organisation, an annual review of Being Our Best will be undertaken with the updated organisation plan reported to Executive Board in Summer 2025.

## **Our direction of travel**

We are committed to focus on having a growing and inclusive city delivering major projects with others, ensuring high-quality public services within the financial envelope available, and to be a well-run productive organisation.

This plan describes a range of transformation and innovation delivered over an extensive period, not least because of the sustained financial pressures, with services and directorates delivering programmes and projects supported by corporate functions such as digital, HR or finance in an agile way. We are working to ensure better visibility and coherence of the overall change programme as we reset and reshape our services to fit the financial envelope, whilst not losing the advantages of agility and accountability in line with the council's constitution and delegation scheme.

Within context of Best City Ambition, the wider Team Leeds approach, the council values and behaviours, and the need to reset to fit the budget envelope available and be financially sustainable, in the coming years we expect our organisational shape to:

- Be more integrated at the front line (including with partners), with a clear and coherent quality offer to our customers that meets their needs and takes a 'digital first' approach.
- Have more integrated support services, with clear leadership and networked capacity.
- Be trading where it makes sense to do so, including full cost recovery.
- Be making more efficient use of a significantly reduced set of shared buildings, rationalised digital infrastructure and fewer vehicles.
- Have a proactive approach to workforce planning to ensure the right people in the right place with the right skills, with everyone able to be their best.
- Be smaller in size and bigger in influence to deliver the city and council ambitions.

Within that same context, we expect the key cross council workstreams to deliver the financial challenge and be financially sustainable, to be:

- Continuously checking and challenging budget pressures (e.g. demand, inflation etc).
- Using budget/service categorisation to help prioritise, including investment and retaining a preventative approach where possible.

- Improving procurement (e.g. contract management) and commissioning (e.g. more life-course).
- Maximising income (e.g. traded services, fees and charges, grants).
- Workforce planning (e.g. senior structures, vacancy controls, vacancy factors, agency & overtime, training & development, succession planning and EDI).
- Rationalising and making the most of our buildings and our digital estate.
- Rationalising and maximising use of our fleet of vehicles.
- Progressing the customer strategy and locality working agenda to deliver better integration and more efficient services.
- Reviewing our traded services.
- Making the most of opportunities for 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector to provide.
- Continuing to make good use of capital receipts and selling assets where it make sense.

# Plan on a page [to be refined in creative version]

**Plan on a page graphic, showing framework of the Plan, showing three interlinked themes:**



# A growing, inclusive city

*Leading the whole city, enhancing further **strong accountable relationships**, whilst **enabling and empowering organisations, communities and the front line to deliver the ambitions as Team Leeds.***

## An overview of the context.

- Leeds City Council has a unique democratically accountable role to encourage partners to work together to improve outcomes, ensure services are well-run, value-for-money and meet needs.
- Our enabling role is a strength, removing barriers and creating an enterprising and innovative culture to encourage collaboration between partners and communities across the system to improve outcomes.
- Our recent positive [joint targeted area inspection \(JTAI\) of the multi-agency response to serious youth violence in Leeds](#) is an example of high-quality services provided in an complex and challenging environment, successfully delivered through strong partnerships.
- We future-proof the city by delivering our [Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy](#) to create better-connected, greener and sustainable transport; [regenerating communities](#) that surround the city centres; and enabling [key development locations](#) across the city to deliver homes, jobs and inclusive growth.
- As part of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA), we collaborate with others to deliver the [West Yorkshire Plan](#); play an active role in the [West Yorkshire Integrated Care System](#) and the [Leeds Health and Care Partnership](#) to share resources, ideas and best practice to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities; and play a key role in the [West Yorkshire Resilience Forum](#) as part of our civil contingency responsibilities.
- We consistently invest, even in tough times, in the social infrastructure the city needs, working especially with Third sector organisations to build relationships, provide services to those who need it most and promote the lived experience, including from more marginalised communities.

## How we are leading a growing, inclusive city.

### Housing Growth

- Leeds is at the forefront of the country's housing growth, with over 17,000 new homes built over the last five years – 1.5% of England's overall housing supply – including the most affordable homes of any Core City.
- Cross-sector partnership and collaboration are key to our successes to date, with the Council playing a key role in engaging with development interests to problem-solve and enable development where it can. We have a strong relationship with Homes England, recognising our nationally significant scale of housing delivery and the opportunities to grow this further.

### Affordable Housing delivery

- A recent 10-year high for the annual total affordable housing delivery in Leeds, with just over 2,800 new affordable homes in the last five years through the Council's own direct development and acquisitions, the activities of Registered Providers and Third sector partners, as well as through the implementation of planning policy provision of affordable homes through Section 106 agreements.

- The [Leeds Affordable Housing Growth Partnership Action Plan](#) set the ambition to scale-up affordable housing delivery by all partners in the city between 2022 and 2025. The forecast projections for affordable housing delivery remains strong.

### Connecting Leeds

- We have invested over £750m in transport upgrades since 2018, including Park and Ride facilities and improving bus journeys. Our [Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy](#) sets out what we are doing to make Leeds into a city where you do not need a car, ensuring walking and cycling are the first choice for the shortest trips.
- Work continues on the transformation of Leeds Train Station, the busiest transport hub in the North. Meeting demand through to the mid-2030s will require more capacity than the existing station can provide and the only option remaining involves expansion and as a city we have planned our growth around this.

### Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme

- One of the largest river flood schemes in the UK, the first phase of the [Flood Alleviation Scheme](#) (FAS) has helped to protect 3,000 residential properties and 500 businesses who employ 22,000 people from flooding.
- Phase 2 of the scheme involves reducing the risk of flooding between Leeds Train Station and Apperley Bridge. Working with the Environment Agency, this phase will help to protect 1,048 homes and 474 businesses, by providing a one in a 200-year level of protection against flooding, reducing the chance of flooding to 0.5% in any given year, including an allowance for climate change.

### Leeds Anchors

- The [Anchors Network](#) brings together 14 of the city's largest employers to focus on areas where they can make a difference for people as an employer; through their procurement and spending in the city; through service delivery; and as a civic partner.
- This approach has now been expanded to include a [Business Anchors Network](#) and the [Leeds Community Anchor Network](#), led by the Third Sector, with this work complemented by our communications and engagement framework.

### Delivering on Net Zero

- [Leeds PIPES](#), a £49m district heat network, is providing affordable, reliable and low carbon heat to around 2,000 residential, public and commercial buildings and is continuing to expand and connect to new buildings.
- [Local Low Carbon Accelerator \(LLCA\) initiative](#) exploring how the public and private sectors can work together to speed the uptake of insulation and other technologies to make homes more environmentally friendly and cheaper to run.

### Leeds Full Fibre

- [Leeds Full Fibre](#) programme has completed full fibre connectivity to 1,398 buildings across the city, including schools and council- and NHS-owned buildings, accelerating a wider roll-out of faster, more reliable broadband across all Leeds postcodes, also providing commercial options for citizens to choose a broadband package suitable for their needs.
- Further connectivity layers are now being deployed using the fibre network as a backbone to future-proof the city's connectivity needs.



### 100% Digital Leeds

- [100% Digital Leeds](#) is nationally recognised for its community-based approach to digital inclusion, working with over 200 organisations and services across the city, securing over £2m of external funding to improve the digital inclusion infrastructure and engagement.
- As part of the Local Government Association's Digital Pathfinders Programme, 100% Digital Leeds has produced [a guide to its digital inclusion](#) approach that can be replicated and adapted by other councils.

### A fair and inclusive city

- Our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Vision and supporting Action Plan](#) articulates how we want Leeds to be a city that is fair and just, that recognises and embraces different needs, situations and ambitions. Our EDI Annual Report 2023-2024 ([add link to July report](#)) highlights progress.
- Our strategic, coordinated and inclusive [approach to migration](#) recognises diversity as key to the continued development of the city, ensuring that the contribution of migrants is valued and celebrated.

### Our Neighbourhood Improvement Journey

- Our Priority Ward focus enables us to establish what we can do differently, working with partners and local people, to improve outcomes, working in six Priority Wards, where at least one neighbourhood ranks in the 1% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally and many other neighbourhoods rank highly.
- Taking an asset-based approach, Local Partnership Plans identify key areas of delivery, covering a wide range of issues such as Community Safety, Health, Children and Families and the local environment, transforming the way we work at a neighbourhood level where communities, business and a range of public services work better together and foster greater trust and ownership between local people and council services, with greater community power.

### **Some current developments so we continue to have a growing, inclusive city.**

#### Leeds Transformational Regeneration Partnership

- A newly formed partnership with WYCA, Homes England and UK Government, this will provide a significant opportunity for the city to build on its nationally recognised track record of delivering large-scale infrastructure projects, sustained housing delivery and economic growth.
- The [Leeds Vision](#) sets out a 10-year programme of change and investment – a once in a generation opportunity. The partnership is focused on six 'city rim' neighbourhoods (Mabgate; Eastside and Hunslet Riverside; South Bank; Holbeck; West End Riverside; and the [Innovation Arc](#)), where there is the opportunity to enable significant new investment, to unlock new housing development and to use our unique cultural and economic assets to drive inclusive growth.
- These neighbourhoods have the potential to deliver more than 20,000 new mixed-tenure homes and to create new community and social infrastructure, to better connect the city centre with surrounding inner-city neighbourhoods.

#### Mass Transit

- Leeds and the wider region require an integrated transport system, including high speed rail, buses and a new Mass Transit system so, we can increase our productivity and bring jobs and opportunities closer to people. We are the largest city in Western Europe without a Mass Transit system; however plans are

developing with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to change this, with construction scheduled to start this decade.

#### Locality Working Services Review

- Using the learning from the Priority Ward model, the Locality Working Services Review will seek to consider how, through better service integration across the Council, key partners and the Third Sector, we can deliver better outcomes for local people, particularly for the city's most vulnerable residents.
- The Review will consider how the Council needs to redesign locality-based services, including structural, partnership and governance arrangements, to improve service delivery efficiency and effectiveness; strengthen accessibility and impact of local services to enable better community engagement and power; configure the Council's assets in communities to enable service integration and improved efficiency and effectiveness of use, whilst also acting as a regeneration catalyst; and to ensure community voice and engagement is strengthened, alongside maximising the role of Elected Members in championing community empowerment.

#### Community Committee Review

- Working with communities is a core value for the Council. Across the city, our 10 Community Committees, each made up of councillors from the wards in that area, have a yearly budget to award grants to community projects and youth activities that will benefit the local area.
- To modernise how Community Committees operate and ensure local participation and inclusive engagement, we are reviewing our Community Committee arrangements, focussing on the four key strands of the committees' work: community engagement and empowerment; the role of Community Champions; delegated budgets; and their delegated functions. The review is due to be completed in 2025.

## High-quality public services

*Delivering and commissioning **high-quality integrated services** that meet the needs of people and communities, with a focus on **continuous improvement, value for money and productivity**.*

### An overview of the context.

- We have a constant drive to keep evolving to continue to ensure high-quality services that support the most vulnerable residents in our city, allowing our communities to thrive and to support our [Best City Ambition](#).
- Relationships between people and communities is at the heart of our excellent services, embedding strength-and [asset-based approaches](#) into our Team Leeds approach to enable community power and improve outcomes, also making best use of data, user-centred design and technology to improve daily lives.
- We aim to work preventatively, early in the life of a problem, working in the heart of our communities often through [Community Hubs](#), [Clusters](#), [Community Connectors](#) and [Community Committees](#), creating an increasingly integrated service approach based on need and deprivation.
- Reflecting reduced resources, cost increases and demand pressures, with £794m of savings delivered between 2010 and the end of 2024/25, meaning approximately 3,430 fewer staff than in 2010, with at least £150m savings needed between 2025/26 and 2027/28.

### How we are delivering high-quality public services.

#### Strength-based social care

- Our [strength-based social care model](#) has reformed adult social care, reduced bureaucracy and improved social work practice, leading to service improvements for older people and people with a learning disability.
- Efficiencies in social care referrals have also been made through the contact centre by reducing the number of inappropriate referrals social workers receive.

#### HomeFirst

- [HomeFirst](#) aims to achieve a person-centred, joined-up, home-first model of intermediate care that promotes independence. Design processes have engaged experts and users to shape processes, culture and digital changes, trialling and innovating, getting feedback and assessing impact to embed a culture of collaborative decision-making and service delivery in the intermediate care space. There are five core projects to help save millions:
  - Active Recovery at Home: redesigning our home-based intermediate care offer to maximise capacity and deliver the best outcomes for people accessing these services.
  - Enhanced Care at Home: transforming preventive services to avoid escalations in need with a specific focus on avoidable acute admissions.
  - Rehab and Recovery Beds: transforming bed-based intermediate care to improve outcomes and minimise length of stay in short-term beds.
  - System Visibility and Active Leadership: Making best use of data in the system to produce system- and service-level dashboards, while establishing the right cross-partner governance to make effective decisions.
  - Transfers of Care: redesigning our discharge model to minimise delays and achieve the most independent outcomes for people leaving hospital.

### Transforming the way we work with children and families

- We are committed to rebalancing the children's social care system, through a strength-based, relational restorative practice framework, and our [Child Friendly Leeds ambition](#), which celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> year in 2022. Our Early Help approach supports children, young people and their families as soon as problems emerge, or re-emerge, on a range of individual social, health and educational issues.
- We have refreshed the [Children and Young People's Plan](#) and through our commitment to Voice and Influence, developed [12 Child Friendly Wishes](#), co-produced with children and young people from across the city.
- The [Children Looked After Sufficiency Strategy will ensure that we have the right mix and quality of placements to meet the needs of our children looked after](#). Focusing on a family first model, creating stable homes in the city, where children can be close to their local school, communities and support networks, reducing the number of children in external placements and aiming to provide the right support and provision at the right time, in the right place and within agreed budgets.
- [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) - Education, Health and Care Plans \(EHCP\) Review](#) detailed improvement plan is now being implemented to deliver improvements in responses to requests for EHCP assessments and provision, ensuring full compliance with legislation and relevant codes of practice, including meeting statutory timescales and delivering better outcomes for children and young people with additional needs.

### Family Hubs

- Family Hubs are being developed in line with national policy and our own local priorities, bringing together a number of different organisations to enable families to get the help they need more easily and to enable professionals to work together more effectively, using the network of Community Hubs where possible.

### Making the best use of data

- The Leeds Office of Data Analytics (ODA) helps make the best use of data to inform our service design, delivery and decision-making, bringing skilled data practitioners together to interpret, analyse and support services with data, using data from a multitude of sources to reveal the single version of the truth.
- This includes dashboards that offer near real-time intelligence to help the city manage transitional arrangements between acute services and adult social care and dashboards that track key challenges within our communities, for example the [Cost-of-Living Dashboard](#) and the [Social Progress Index](#).
- The [Leeds Observatory](#) and [Data Mill North](#) host a range of city, population, demographic and council service data publicly available, helping our partners and local residents understand the city and council.

### **Some current developments so we continue to improve public services.**

#### Customer Transformation Programme

- The Customer Transformation programme aims to deliver excellent, modern customer services that are digital first in nature across the council, including developing a Customer Strategy to provide the overarching customer vision and strategic direction and a customer front door blueprint to describe how the council will manage customer contact in the future.

### Community Health and Wellbeing Model – transforming home care

- Our new Community Health and Wellbeing model will transform home care by supporting holistic, person-centred care and address workforce and market challenges, aiming to recruit hyper-local staff who can connect users to local communities, friends and family.
- A new standard operating procedure with Trade Unions, care providers and the Leeds Community Health Trust has been developed, building closer relationships with a small number of high-quality providers and allowing them to use their discretion to adjust care packages within agreed parameters, allowing care workers to have more time with clients. In the phase one pilot, staff turnover fell from 36% to 18% as a result.

### Delivering on our Waste Strategy

- There will be a city-wide review of refuse collection routes in 2024/25, driving forward productivity improvements through more efficiently designed and delivered routes. This will enable 12,000 more properties to move from monthly to fortnightly recycling collections; 20,000 properties to move from monthly to weekly recycling collections; and the trebling of “hard to access” properties serviced by a smaller collection wagon and the future proofing of 15,000 properties with planning approval but yet to be built.
- This work will take account of the new national Simpler Recycling requirements, minimising the number of bins required for households to manage; providing residents with the additional ability to recycle glass and food at the kerbside; increasing recycling rates; and supporting waste reduction through greater re-use.

## Well-run council

***An efficient, enterprising and healthy organisation that is financially sustainable, with the right people in the right place at the right time. A well governed ambitious and optimistic council that is reshaping to continue to be resilient.***

### An overview of the context.

- We have a relentless focus on values to inform our organisational culture, combined with the broader Team Leeds approach in the city, informing governance, decision-making and organisational development.
- We also have a well-established focus on continuous improvement, benchmarking, engagement, response to changing demographics and manager expectations to inform service, workforce and financial planning, together with our budget accountability framework. This has all helped to achieve the improvements and positive ratings across a range of services.
- The Annual Risk and Resilience report ([insert link to July paper](#)) describes the main risks and how they are being managed in line with the [Council's Risk Management Policy and Strategy](#).
- The Annual Corporate Performance report 2023/24 ([insert link to July paper](#)) describes the main achievements and progress across all directorates and reports against our Best City Ambition strategic priorities and key organisation measures, with future reports reflecting additional performance metrics adopted by the [Office for Local Government \(OFLOG\)](#).
- The continually evolving communications and engagement framework ensures colleagues feel valued and engaged in developments and with consultation another key feature at service level and corporately.

### How we are running our organisation well.

#### Responding to the Financial Challenge

- We make use of financial flexibilities to fund transformation programmes to digitalise processes to realise cashable efficiencies; rationalise software applications to reduce maintenance and delivery costs; and productivity improvements in services.
- We undertake annual reviews of the capital programme to ensure alignment to priorities and deliverability.
- We employ consultants where workforce capacity and capability are not sufficient to meet priorities, whilst ensuring accountability and value for money, and explaining the rationale through financial monitoring processes.
- Our Financial Challenge savings programme involves a review of all council budgets within a prioritisation framework, considering whether a service is, for example, statutory, preventative (preventing additional costs and demand to the authority), traded (services provided and (re)charged to an internal and/or external market), or priority (services that we are important to the council but are not statutory or preventative). This results in a series of reviews and business as usual savings by reducing or stopping services on a planned basis over the coming years or integrating services to minimise duplication and management overheads and with traded services being required to recover their full costs where it makes sense.

## Good Governance

- Our [interim Annual Governance Statement 2023](#) includes details of our internal systems of control and how we are meeting our Code of Corporate Governance responsibilities including the arrangements that bring together the systems, processes and behaviour to ensure the council does the right things in the right way and is open and transparent.
- A review of the council's Constitution was completed in 2023 and has led to simplified decision-making whilst retaining the existing level of Member oversight, transparency and scrutiny of the most significant decisions made by the council. The Contracts Procurement Rules have also been updated to make them more user-friendly, whilst ensuring compliance with the new Procurement Act.

## Maximising the potential of our people

- [Our People Strategy](#) sets out our ambition to be the best place to work by giving our colleagues an outstanding employee experience, developing managers and leaders and a culture built on fairness, diversity, and collaboration.
- The Strategy focuses on developing capacity (through inclusive recruitment and workforce flexibility); improving potential (through staff, leadership and management development); productivity (through supporting health and wellbeing); and our commitment to our colleagues (through Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and employee engagement).
- The Strategy will be reviewed during 2024/25 to ensure it reflects our current context and workforce priorities, with key levers such as appraisal and staff satisfaction being retained as key to success.
- Our Being Your Best Development Framework provides a growing online peer support and learning community for managers and saw all 2,300 managers participate in a mandatory EDI training which was developed in-house. The core development offer for 2024/25 has been refreshed, based on feedback from our Staff Survey, the LGA Peer Challenge in 2022, our Trade Unions and Staff Networks.

## Our five workforce EDI priorities

- Focussed on Recruitment, Progression, Training, Zero Tolerance and Data Monitoring, our [five workforce EDI priorities](#) form a strong basis for our inclusive organisational culture.
- The council was the first local authority to appoint a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, a role well-understood in the NHS but new to Local Government, to support our efforts to tackle discrimination and improve EDI within the organisation. This role operates with some independence and autonomy, with direct links to the Chief Executive, reporting trends and significant concerns, whilst working through the best approach and solutions to ensure that voices are heard and that concerns and suggestions can be taken forward to ensure staff can perform their role and the organisation can achieve its ambitions.

## Maximising digital and technology opportunities

- By being data-led we uphold a high standard in terms of transparency, both regarding the decisions we take and the data that supports those decisions, ensuring we hold ourselves accountable.
- By taking a cloud-first approach that delivers best value-for-money, best technological approaches, the highest security standards and an open-standards approach for all software developments, we ensure the maximum potential for systems integration and interoperability by having fewer platforms.

- A trial of Microsoft Copilot with 300 licences deployed to cohorts of staff across various job roles is exploring the efficiency and productivity gains from the use of AI across the organisation.
- We are aware of barriers to digital inclusion facing some of our workforce. Our dedicated Digital Skills Team supports colleagues via an online training and support platform and are delivering training to ensure all colleagues have the right skills to facilitate the digital transformation the organisation requires.
- To supplement our own internal Digital and Transformation capacity, we have in place a Resource Augmentation Framework, a three-year contract with a spend of up to £20m. This allows our Integrated Digital Service to address capacity challenges and bring in additional specialist technical resources to deliver on major digital and transformational programmes and projects. There are three suppliers on the Framework and work is tightly managed through a robust process and formal contract management arrangements.

### Estate Management

- Having the right services in the right places and the right assets to support modern ways of work is important. The council is the largest property owner in the city and our [Estate Management Strategy](#) sets out guiding principles which support decision-making and shape our estate.
- Our investment portfolio and ability to make targeted acquisitions supports regeneration schemes that bring a wide range of benefits to local people, including improved job opportunities and physical improvements to the urban landscape.
- Building on our Changing the Workplace programme, which began in 2012 and was accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic and changes to office use, we are undertaking a programme to right-size our office estate, with a focus on ensuring we retain our best buildings and those with the most local importance, whilst providing an agile and hybrid office estate.

## **Some current developments so we continue to have a well-run organisation**

### Core Business Transformation (CBT)

- Our council-wide CBT Programme will make it easier to do business within the council, with more modern ways of working and user-friendly systems to help everyone be their best at work.
- The programme will transform Finance, Procurement, HR and Payroll activities to enable our workforce to meet growing demands for vital, modern services, providing staff with the right tools, training and technology that are more joined-up, cloud-based and easier for everyone.
- Over 2024 and 2025 new Recruitment, Finance, HR and Payroll, and Procurement systems will be introduced, supported by engagement and skills training across the workforce, with a network of CBT Champions to support the change.

### Re-sizing our operational locality assets

- A comprehensive review of the council's operational locality assets is being undertaken to make it more affordable and fit-for-purpose, including: Leisure Centres, Community Hubs, Community Centres, Children's Centres, Libraries, Museums and Galleries and depots.



- It is estimated that some locality buildings are utilised for less than 50% of their capacity during their existing opening hours, with a target utilisation rate of at least 80%.
- A working target of a 60% reduction in the number of locality buildings has been established based on intelligence to date, as well as affordability, with a focus on retaining properties which are in the best condition, are best located and are most flexible.
- Multi-use buildings will increasingly feature, providing a single front door to council services, allowing a more simplified navigation of services by customers and communities, with the integration of Family Hub services within Community Hubs an example. There is also a vision to open up more of our retained spaces for wider partner and community use with a simplified online booking approach.

#### Reviewing our Fleet estate

- We are aiming to rationalise council Fleet, ensuring that vehicles are replaced at the right time, with the right vehicle utilising the most appropriate finance models, and ensuring that the vehicles are then maintained and utilised efficiently and retained for the optimum time and contributing to Net Zero targets.
- Data- and service-based “deep dives” are being undertaken to determine opportunities for driving change in the way the Fleet asset is utilised, with an implementation plan based on the review recommendations to follow.

## **Monitoring the plan**

Monitoring of this plan will be in line with our performance management framework, with regular reporting to Corporate Leadership Team, Directorate Leadership Teams, Scrutiny Boards and Executive Board. This includes the Annual Corporate Performance report and regular financial monitoring reports that will cover aspects of the Productivity Plan requirements, as well as the full range of annual reports that feature at Executive Board, and assurance reports to Corporate Governance and Audit.

The Annual Corporate Performance report 2023/24 [\(include link to July paper\)](#) provides progress against our previous Being Our Best plan through the reporting against a range of key organisation measures. Over 2024/25 our standard performance framework will be reviewed to integrate [OFLOG measures](#) and along with our key organisation measures these will be reported in the next Annual Corporate Performance report 2024/25 in July 2025.