

## Best City Ambition: Consultation and Engagement summary report

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### Best City Ambition: Consultation Summary

In September 2023 the Executive Board agreed that the Best City Ambition should be updated. This was considered in the context of Leeds emerging from the pandemic and responding to the cost-of-living crisis, as well as managing the significant financial challenge of the council and other partner organisations. The update is also appropriately timed to reflect the changes made recently to supporting strategies and plans.

A range of consultation took place both formally and informally from September 2023, and concluded alongside the formal public consultation which ran from 14 December 2023 to 10 January 2024. Throughout this time the approach taken was that this update was an opportunity for refining the Best City Ambition and was not intended to reinvent or introduce major change. A wide range of groups and individuals were consulted, including the ten community committees, representation from the third sector through various groups such as the Leeds Community Anchors Network and Third Sector Leeds Leadership Group, insights were gathered from key partnerships including the Leeds Inclusive Anchors Network, Leeds Youth Council, and perspectives were shared by the Staff Network Chairs. Whilst the format of consultation varied to suit the audience, it typically included a 10-minute presentation followed by a discussion that broadly fell into the following themes:

- Looking back on progress made since adopting the Ambition in 2022, with particular emphasis on progress monitoring tools such as the Social Progress Index.
- Sense checking the priorities underpinning the three pillars of Inclusive Growth, Health & Wellbeing, and Zero Carbon.
- Developing the concept of Team Leeds and how this is realised differently across Leeds.

**Consultees were generally confident in the framework proposed for measuring the success of the Best City Ambition**, agreeing that a combination of the Social Progress Index, Community Voices, and Joint Strategic Assessment were appropriate. During consultation with the community committees the Social Progress Index tool was demonstrated, and members recognised that this could have a positive impact on local decision making and progress monitoring at a ward level. Whilst reception was overwhelmingly positive, some practical suggestions for improvement were made to support the tool's capability and effectiveness, and its role in decision making. These suggestions will be considered as part of future development of the SPI.

Whilst wider consultation reaffirmed that people are happy with the overall approach to monitoring success, few comments suggested that this **needed to be more clearly articulated in the Best City Ambition**. For instance, illustrating that it will be a process of continuous monitoring through the Social Progress Index and Community Voices that will be reviewed every three year through the JSA. Some feedback from the Chairs of the LCC Staff Networks highlighted a need to be transparent about the current challenges in the city, setting a starting point from which to monitor progress.

**Consultees strongly welcomed the openness of the proposed monitoring framework**, including that they can interrogate the SPI directly themselves. Community committees, which had identified progress monitoring as an area requiring improvement back in 2021/22, were generally supportive of the approach and suggested a range of opportunities to strengthen it going forward.

**Consultation confirmed the need to update the three pillars and their underpinning priorities and endorsed the proposed draft with only a few minor wording alterations suggested.** The draft had been developed with consideration to existing knowledge and engagement gained through the launch of the new Health & Wellbeing and Inclusive Growth strategies. Building on this work, the underlying priorities also reflect insights gathered from engagement with key partnerships including the Health & Wellbeing Board, Leeds Inclusive Anchors Network, and senior officers from across the local authority. Coming out of these discussions were a few broader points on the framing of the three pillars, indicating the need to better highlight their intersections and recognise the position that this is the cities overall approach to tackling poverty and inequality in Leeds, with Team Leeds being the method of delivery.

Throughout the consultation period there has been extensive discussion around Team Leeds and community empowerment, gathering insights to how these concepts are understood. From these engagements, it was understood that **Team Leeds needed to be better communicated to capture the diversity of the city and to be made meaningful to people across the city in different communities, organisations and with different lived experience**. Proposals were made on how this could be done, with many recommending that the Best City Ambition be used as a platform for showcasing some of the work happening in Leeds. Consultation was therefore dually used as an opportunity for sharing examples and case studies that have informed the development of Team Leeds in Action. As the Best City Ambition has evolved, drafts have been shared with key groups including Third Sector Leadership Group and Leeds Inclusive Anchors Network to sense check the content.

Some broader feedback gained through the consultation which has informed the final proposals being submitted to Executive Board included:

- Encouragement to ensure the Best City Ambition reflected key issues in all parts of Leeds, not just the city centre.
- Guarantee that the language is inclusive and accessible to ensure everyone has a meaningful connection to Leeds, regardless of background or locality.
- Test and develop new approaches to monitoring progress and build confidence in using insight tools.

## Public Consultation

The Best City Ambition public consultation ran as part of the wider Leeds City Council Budget Consultation 2024-25, between the 13 December 2023 and 10 January 2024. The following focuses on the questions that specifically targeted the Best City Ambition and the city's strategic priorities. Throughout the consultation period this survey has been promoted as an opportunity for people to share their thoughts on the direction of the Best City Ambition priorities and the development of Team Leeds and community engagement. The survey has been promoted more broadly through various communication channels including staff emails, social media platforms.

To gather meaningful insights on the core changes within the update to the Best City Ambition, the survey was divided into the following three sections:

- 'Team Leeds' and community engagement.
- Three pillars and strategic priorities.
- Open comment.

## Survey Outcomes

As part of the Best City Ambition public consultation, respondents to the survey were provided with the full draft of initial proposals to inform their responses.

The survey received a total of 1722 responses, of which 362 left open comments.

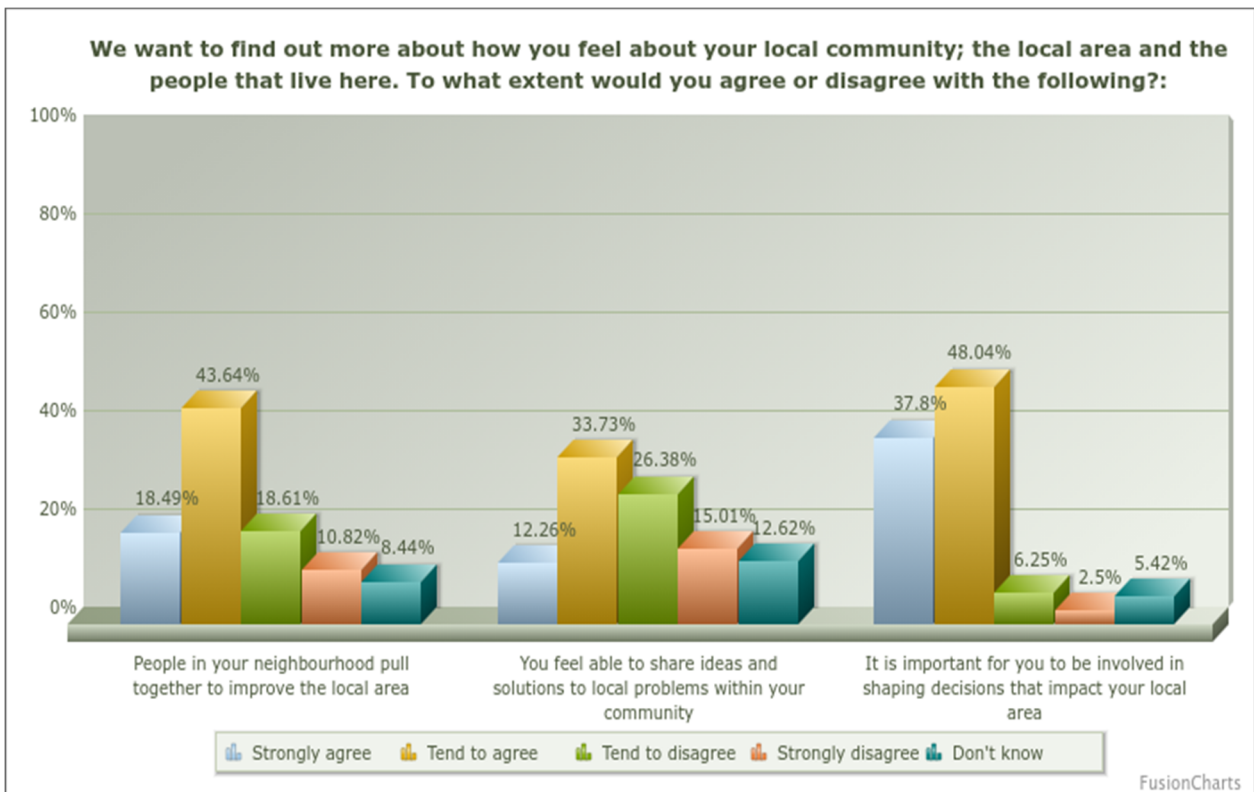
### Best City Ambition: Team Leeds and Community Engagement

Respondents were asked to reflect on their experiences of community their level of agreement with three separate statements.

Figure 1 shows how people responded to each prompt. In sum:

- Of 1682 responses, 62.1% strongly or tended to agree that people in their neighbourhood pull together to improve the local area. Less people (29.4%) disagreed with this statement.
- An 85.8% majority of the 1680 respondents agreed that it is important for them to be involved in shaping decisions that impact their local area. Only 8.8% or 147 people disagreed with this.
- When asked if respondents felt able to share ideas and solutions to local problems within their community, 56% agreed whilst 41.4% disagreed.
- These responses reinforce the importance of a sense of community and a desire for collective action towards solving local problems for resident (85.8%). However, a lower rate of 56% felt able to share ideas and solutions suggesting a need to strengthen community empowerment.

Figure 1: Team Leeds and Community Engagement

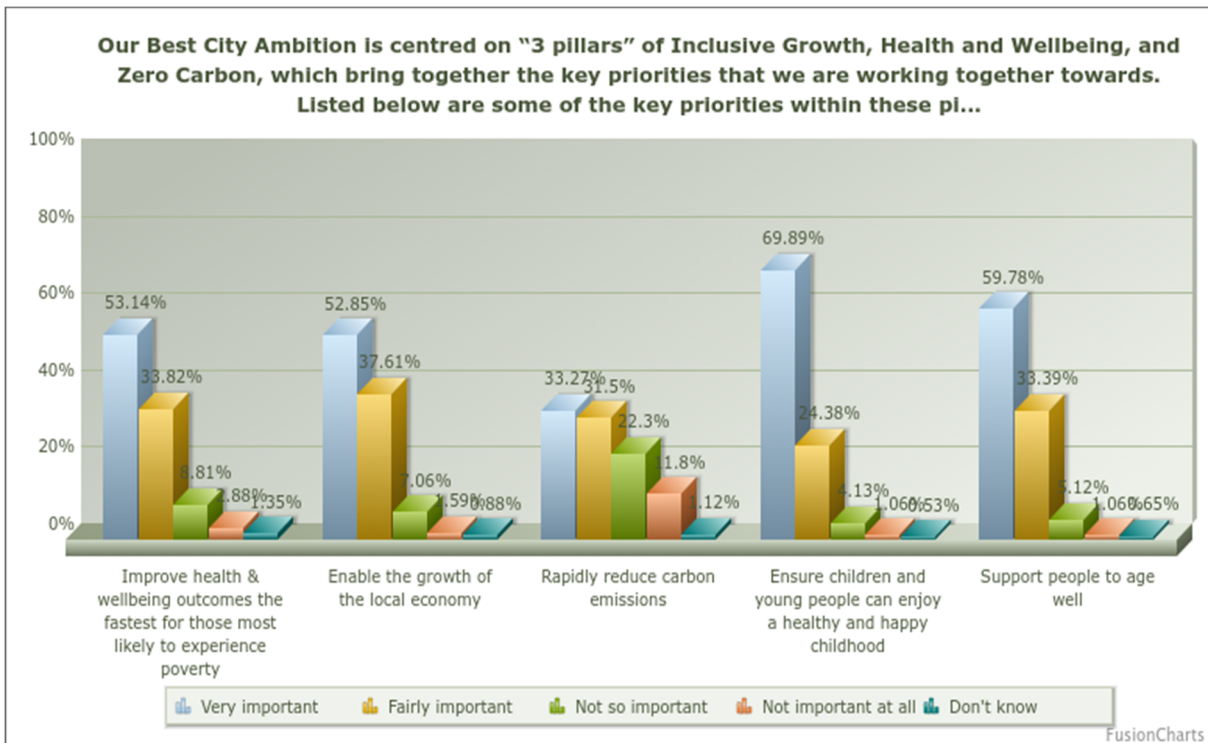


### Best City Ambition: Three Pillars & key priorities

Respondents were presented with a draft of the Best City Ambition and asked to rank the importance of the three pillars and key priorities, as shown in Figure 2. The data show:

- Ensuring children and young people enjoy a healthy and happy childhood, and supporting people to age well are the two leading priorities, having received 94.3% and 93.2% people stating this is important, respectively.
- Respondents agreed that the three pillars were important, at the following rates: Inclusive Growth (90.5%), Health & Wellbeing (86.9%), Zero Carbon (64.8%).
- Zero Carbon was the only pillar to receive an observable number of respondents voting not so important or not important at all (34.1%).

Figure 2: Three Pillars and Key Priorities



### Best City Ambition: Open Comment

This section of the public consultation aimed to enable respondents to build on their answers, share any other priorities that are important to them, and to add additional comments.

This open-ended question asked: "Are there any other priorities you'd like to see in the Best City Ambition or anything else you'd like to add about your responses above?"

In response, we received a total of 362 comments of which 53 were coded as miscellaneous with the remaining being grouped thematically to show how various topics were weighted. The five major themes that emerged were:

- Improving public transport and road infrastructure (55)
- Reducing emissions and protecting green spaces (48)
- Community engagement and empowerment (45)
- Health & Wellbeing (42)
- Support for children and young people (38)

The comments made by members of the public have been considered along with the findings from the wider engagement and been used to shape and draft the content of the updated Best City Ambition. Some of the key highlights from contributions from the public are noted before for the Board's information.

## Key highlights

- Health and wellbeing emerged as a key priority, with some people noting that this needs to be for everyone in all parts of Leeds. There was, for some, an impression that the Ambition was more focused on the city centre and concern that this could have negative implications for resource allocations to other parts of Leeds.

**Response** – different views about language can often be at the root of these concerns, with for example a perception that reference to “the city” concern only the city centre rather than the whole of Leeds. While complete consistency here is tricky, edits have been made in the draft Ambition to seek to address this point.

- Contrasting with the quantitative data, local economy was mentioned less than both health and wellbeing and zero carbon. Respondents did associate growth with improving health outcomes, and improving resilience however, some constraints included: poor transport infrastructure, accessibility in and around the city.

**Response** – these comments have informed the underpinning priorities set out in the three pillar sections of the draft Ambition, where improved transport infrastructure, ease of mobility, and inclusion of and access to essential services are all highlighted.

- Support and development of children and young people in Leeds is key, with links to successfully growing the local economy, employment, alleviating crime and anti-social behaviour. Some recommendations and challenges include:
  - Investing in childcare, youth activities and clubs, and vocational skills development.
  - Tackle inequalities amongst young people, and ensure services exist to support them.

**Response** – ensuring children have the best start in life was already included as a key priority, and we have further strengthened the draft with more detail on Child Friendly Leeds and the 12 Wishes, which were designed and set by children and young people themselves.

- Community empowerment & engagement is amongst the top priorities for people living in and around Leeds. Some respondents recognised that Team Leeds can enable people to deliver meaningful solutions to local problems, alleviate pressures on local authorities and build collective ownership and shared responsibility over place. Some of the key challenges constraining this progress include:
  - Lack of community and volunteering activity or a need for these to be better communicated.
  - A sense of inequality and treatment of people from different backgrounds.

**Response** – the Team Leeds principles in the updated Best City Ambition put “community power” at the heart of the way we will work as a council and with partners. This includes tackling systemic inequality and injustice. Furthermore, there is better connection across to voluntary and community organisations and alignment with the new Leeds Third Sector Strategy.

- People draw connection between health & wellbeing, mental health and the need to protect and develop our green spaces without raising accessibility cost i.e., carpark charges at local parks.

**Response** – comments captured through the consultation which relate primarily to the budget and decision the council may make will be picked up through the budget consultation summary.