

# Community Committee Review Update

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024

Report of: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

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

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

## Brief summary

Community Committees were established in June 2014 to improve the way the council works locally. They form a part of the Council's Constitution and play a key role to give local people a greater say in Council affairs. All of the City's 99 Councillors sit on one of the 10 Community Committees, which operate across a geography covering 3 or 4 wards, covering inner and outer parts of the city.

The Committees provide the infrastructure through which the council executes one of its democratic functions and community engagement ambitions. As formal council meetings held in public, they are one of the few structures through which the council has delegated its decision-making powers to the local level, and they play a key role in helping to address a range of locally identified priorities that help to improve the places where people live.

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

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

## Recommendations

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

- a) Support the review of Community Committees and their constitutional role in helping to shape and influence place.
- b) Provide their endorsement of the recommendations and accompanying work programme, as set out in appendix 1.

## What is this report about?

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

✓ **Executive Delegated functions:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. This report updates specifically on the progress made on the three workshops that have taken place so far: Community Committee Champions Role, Delegated Budgets and Community Engagement & Empowerment. It also provides next steps following these workshops, as well as providing an update to the Environment, Housing & Communities Scrutiny Board on proposals for Workshop 4: Delegated Functions.
4. In addition, the report clarifies timescales for implementation of all new committee arrangements for the Community Committee Review, following detailed work taking place on review workstreams, via Task & Finish Groups (made up of Elected Members & council officers).

### **Elected Member Working Group**

5. The fourth meeting of the Member Working Group took place on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024. At this meeting, 'draft' recommendations were supported, which are attached as Appendix 1 of this report.

## **Member Workshops**

6. Following on from Full Council on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and the conversation regarding the Community Committee Review, the themed workshops in relation to specific workstreams aimed to engage and seek feedback and ideas from Elected Members.
7. All Councillors have had the opportunity to attend and participate at the workshops, which have taken place at the Civic Hall, Committee Room 6 & 7, before Full Council (exception is the Community Committee Champions session which was restricted to members who currently hold themed Champion positions for their committee).
8. Each workshop was organised and facilitated by the Communities Team and included input from the Executive Member for Communities, Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Active Lifestyles and Leader of Council. Highlighted below are some headlines that have emerged from workshop sessions. These comments have been fed into the Member Working Group for consideration and further investigation.

## **Community Committee Champions Workshop**

9. The Community Committee Champions Workshop was held on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023, with 30 Elected Members participating = 60% participation rate (only Champions were invited to the session). The themed table discussions were led by the relevant Executive Member, supported by senior Officers from the theme service (Children and Families, Environments, Community Safety and Health and Wellbeing). The feedback from the workshop and from the Elected Member Working Group highlighted some key areas of focus:
  - ✓ Review of the Champion role profiles.
  - ✓ Review the Champion themes of work.
  - ✓ Review the themed sub-groups.
  - ✓ Review the learning and development available for Champions.

## **Delegated Budget Workshop**

10. The Delegated Budgets Workshop was held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023, with 40 Elected Members participating = 40.40% participation rate. The feedback from the workshop, conversations with Elected Members and from the Elected Member Working Group highlighted some key areas of focus:
  - ✓ A need to review the customer experience in applying for funding and support from Community Committees.
  - ✓ To consider the possibility of some delegated budgets, namely Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), taking place at ward level.
  - ✓ Develop and strengthen links with other external funders.
  - ✓ Consider the implications of merging the Youth Activity and Wellbeing Funds.
  - ✓ Consider how Community Committees can influence other Council funding streams.
  - ✓ Consider how Community Committees can income generate within wards.

## **Community Engagement & Empowerment Workshop**

11. The Community Engagement & Empowerment Workshop was held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024, with 45 Elected Members participating = 45.45% participation rate. Key themes included:
  - ✓ Need to be clear from a community committee perspective, what the engagement 'offer' is to local communities and how can we support them to feel more empowered locally. There

was an acknowledgement that we need to listen to our communities & support residents to do the things that interest them. In doing this, we need to consider what the current barriers are which may restrict or prevent local involvement and engagement.

- ✓ Acknowledgement that engagement comes in many different forms & committee meetings are just one aspect of engagement with our communities. Some basic principles for engagement to be developed, so that Elected Members can determine which engagement approach is best suited to their committee. It will never be 'one size fits all', as Leeds is a diverse city, with many different communities.
- ✓ The structure of Community Committee meetings should be reviewed, with the potential for the 'Open Forum' at Community Committee meetings to be changed. Participants felt that the formality of committees can 'put some people off'.
- ✓ Community Committee reports to be redesigned, in particular the Update Report. Review the use of language for the reports (use plain English, with no technical jargon), with better use of pictures & social media to promote, as well as sharing success/good news stories.
- ✓ Consensus that priority setting with committees will assist with 'forward planning' and the funding of projects throughout the financial/municipal year.
- ✓ Better use of technology to increase engagement with the committees i.e., webcasting of meetings, 'hybrid' meetings, as well as use of the SMART Survey technology, as a potential wider engagement platform with our communities in Leeds.
- ✓ ABCD is being used in some parts of the city already, however not all. Some Elected Members are not aware of ABCD, so if we are serious about the ABCD model/approach being used across the city, we need to invest in Member Development. There was an acknowledgement however that 'true ABCD' has its challenges, particularly when working in the public sector.
- ✓ Consideration to be given to developing a Chairs Role profile (along the lines of the Champions Role profile). The Chairs role is a key leadership role, so Chairs need to know that they have responsibilities. Member development/training is a key element of this.

12. The feedback from the workshop, conversations with Elected Members and from the Elected Member Working Group highlighted some key areas of focus:

- ✓ Create some clear engagement principles for Community Committees.
- ✓ Consider how the current format of the Community Committee could alter to allow more flexibility and meaningful community conversations to take place.
- ✓ Consider the current agendas for Community Committees and the relevance and importance of the reports presented.
- ✓ Create a role profile for Community Committee Chairs.
- ✓ Provide ABCD training for all Elected Members and relevant frontline Council services.
- ✓ Hold an annual Community Committee Summit for all Elected Members.

### **Delegated Functions Workshop**

13. The Delegated Functions workshop was held on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024 with good attendance from Elected Members numbers to be confirmed. Key themes included.

- ✓ Improved communication and engagement with key services at an earlier stage when looking at a particular issues or service improvement.

- ✓ Services particularly Planning to have an officer resource dedicated to each Community Committee to improve links and a single point of contact.
- ✓ Following the Housing Advice Panels being disbanded there needs to be a place for Elected Members, Housing and residents to continue to work together to continue to support and improve communities.
- ✓ S106 funding discussion felt the rules around spend to be too prescriptive and not flexible enough to respond to changing local needs.
- ✓ All current Community Committee delegations need to be reviewed and if no longer relevant be removed.
- ✓ All delegations should be robust and accurately reflect the scope of influence of the Community Committee
- ✓ Lettings for Community Centres could be better managed at a local level with more opportunity for advertising and promotion.
- ✓ CCTV costs are increasingly significant when viewed in relation to a reduced budget, How can Community Committees better understand the impact of the cameras and how they might be resourced.
- ✓ Where services are funded jointly both internally and by Town and Parish Councils to deliver key services i.e., bin collections how can this be done more cost effectively.
- ✓ How can services ensure the right conversations are happening at a local level before the implementation of a new initiative or strategic change to delivery, working with the Community Committee.

14. The feedback from the Delegated Functions Workshop will reviewed in more detail to present to the Member Working Group for their consideration and comment then to agree some key recommendations for the Community Committee Review.

### **Feedback/comments regarding the Community Committees**

1. The workshop sessions have been well attended and Elected Members have provided excellent feedback on how they have been engaged and listened to throughout the review process. Further opportunities to comment through ward and specific briefings with officers have been offered to those members who were not able to attend the scheduled workshop sessions.
2. Elected Members have also fed back that they have welcomed and enjoyed the opportunity to get together with other Elected Members from other Community Committees and share good practice, as well as the opportunity to listen to new ideas and different approaches.
3. In the interests of being open, honest & transparent, all comments/feedback regarding the Community Committee Review (over 574), have been recorded from workshop sessions, emails to [communitycommitteereview@Leeds.gov.uk](mailto:communitycommitteereview@Leeds.gov.uk), as well as other meetings and these have been shared with the Member Working Group.
4. Over and above the forward work programme outlined in appendix 1, which will help to modernise many of the committee's current processes, systems and practice, feedback from the 3 workshops has highlighted a strong desire for the committees to work differently.

A summary of verbal member feedback includes:

- Community Committee agendas should be focused on local issues
- The current structure of Community Committees does not encourage resident participation, and the formality of the meetings is not always engaging for local people.
- Housing Advisory Panels - Members feel that committees may have a role to play to engage with Council tenants.
- Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) – Members feel that ABCD could be a focus for committees, but more work is required to ensure that the relevant Council services adopt these principles and ways of working.
- Leadership – Members want to provide greater local leadership and be better engaged. Many highlighted that they do not feel that services fully engage with them on local issues which can result in missed opportunities to deliver better local services and support better use of local resources.
- Community Committee Chairs – Committee Chairs are keen to see the meetings operate differently but recognise that more training and support is required to enable them to step in to a new leadership role.
- Delegations – Members want meaningful delegations given to committees where they can add value, and which better uses their local knowledge.

### **Draft Recommendations**

5. Draft recommendations are attached as Appendix 1 with this report. These recommendations have been agreed with the Member Working Group on the 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024, (recommendations have also discussed with Community Committee Chairs on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024).
6. Agreement has enabled further work to be undertaken via Task & Finish Groups, so that a detailed plan of change can commence. The proposal is that these changes will be brought back for discussion and approval in the next municipal year.

### **Workshop 4: Delegated Functions**

7. At the Member Working Group meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2024, it was agreed that the date of the Delegated Functions Workshop would change to avoid a clash with full council which took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024, as Elected Members would be discussing annual council budget/s. The session was rearranged for the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024, 1.30 – 3pm.
8. The Member Working Group agreed to a Phase 1 (workshops 1, 2 & 3) outcomes to be reported and recommendations made to support the delivery of some operational changes to the way that the committees function. Phase 2, workshop 4 will enable more detailed work to take place with services to identify and work through what service/function-based delegations can be meaningfully brought forward to support a more detailed conversation with Elected Members in the next municipal year.

### **Next Steps**

9. Proposed next steps for the Community Committee Review, which have been discussed with the Member Working Group are as follows:
  - ✓ Agree draft recommendations.
  - ✓ Form 'Task & Finish Groups' with Elected Members and council officers to work through the recommendations from each workshop.

- ✓ Agree a forward work programme with timeline to agree recommendations, seek relevant approvals and plan implementation.
- ✓ Member development opportunities to be discussed with Governance.
- ✓ Organise an annual summit for the Community Committees to meet and discuss topics of interest.

## Forward Plan

10. A Forward Plan for this municipal year, 2023/24, is attached as Appendix 2 with this report.
11. A Forward Plan for the next municipal year, 2024/25, is attached as Appendix 3 with this report.

## Other Considerations

12. The Community Committees provides an infrastructure through which the council executes its democratic renewal ambitions, by bringing Elected Members and service providers closer to residents, to help shape and influence the places they live.
13. They are formal council meetings held in public and form a key element of the council's constitution and hold devolved powers from the council's Executive Board. Public attendance however at committee meetings in some areas is low and there is a danger that opportunities are being missed to fully engage with the public about the issues that matter most to them, in the areas where they live and work.
14. The review will need to consider therefore how the Community Committee infrastructure can improve community engagement and better empower local people, so that they can become more involved in their community and influence how services are delivered at a local level.
15. Elected Members will be fully aware that the council is under increasing pressures due to a range of factors. This includes the ongoing financial challenge, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the current cost of living crisis, as well as demographic changes which bring increased demands upon local services. The Community Committee Review must also consider effective use of public resources to deliver better outcomes for the residents of Leeds.
16. For any Elected Member that has been unable to attend any of the workshops, there have been other opportunities to engage with the Community Committee Review. The Safer Stronger Communities Team have offered individual briefing sessions to all Elected Members and a dedicated email address has been set up to capture feedback and thoughts regarding the review: [communitycommitteereview@Leeds.gov.uk](mailto:communitycommitteereview@Leeds.gov.uk)
17. The review will support the delivery of actions identified through the recent Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review, specifically:

**Theme**

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

**Recommendation**

Use the Peer Review recommendation to take stock of Locality and Community approaches with a focus on People, Assets and Governance, using this as the primary vehicle for delivering the Best City Ambition right across the city.

- Consider how to further strengthen place-based networks.
- In this context, review and develop the community committees and draw on the work of the Social Progress Index to measure progress.
- Invest in member development on strengths-based community development. Councillors' ambitions for their communities are clear but as the council's resources reduce members have an important role to play in supporting communities to be able to do more for themselves.

### **What impact will this proposal have?**

18. Community Committees play an important role in understanding and addressing issues of concern to local people. One of the many ways they do this is by funding projects that address local priorities. In 2021/22, this was once again apparent as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect Leeds. With it came some very specific and immediate needs for our communities; challenges that the Community Committees addressed by funding much needed projects that tackled the immediate effects of the pandemic in each of the 33 wards in the city.
19. The commitment to locality-based working continues to be demonstrated in the broad range of projects that the Community Committees fund, spending nearly £1.8 million in 2021/22, totalling just under 500 separate grants that were provided to local grass-root organisations, voluntary groups and charities, to tackle the immediate and specific needs of our communities.
20. The work that takes place through our Community Committee structures proves invaluable in making sure our approach is tailored to meet the direct needs of our local communities in a responsive and effective way, therefore the review will need to take into consideration any impact that changes may have.
21. In addition to this, as the Community Committees have an engagement function, the review will need to consider how any changes will affect local communities in Leeds. The Community Committee Facebook pages and the social media activity that takes place through the Community Committee structures, ensure we reach a large number of residents every month through local stories and conversations.
22. During the pandemic our Community Committees played an essential role in providing a responsive information service to all our diverse communities in the city, by being a key source of reliable and up to date information. The Coronavirus Help Facebook Groups were set up as a way of promoting services, supporting communities and cascading information in an attempt to tackle the pandemic. The pages were also there to generate discussion and debate but also facilitate conversations around being neighbourly during the national pandemic and assist in some of the volunteering efforts in the city.
23. A universal approach continues to be delivered using the city-wide Community Committee infrastructure, to ensure that all parts of the city continue to benefit from the learning, experience and improvements delivered through the model of Locality Working. As such, a new Communities Team structure is now in place, providing a more integrated and flexible



approach to Locality Working around the citywide, targeted and seasonal and responsive work strands.

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

Health and Wellbeing       Inclusive Growth       Zero Carbon

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

### What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted?       Yes       No

27. The Community Committee Review was approved by Executive Board on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023. A meeting of the 10 Community Committee Chairs took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023 to canvas their feedback on the scope and timescales for the review.
28. Consultation has also taken place with strategic leaders and service managers.
29. The review will seek to consult with both attendees of committees, including co-opted members, where these exist and non-attendees. Further discussions will take place with the Member Working group to agree the best way to deliver this aspect of the review.

### What are the resource implications?

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

31. The council is under increasing pressures due to a range of factors. This includes the ongoing financial challenge, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the current cost of living crisis, as well as demographic changes which bring increased demands upon local services. The Communities Team structure provides an integrated and flexible approach to Locality Working around the citywide, targeted and seasonal and responsive work strands.
32. The Community Committees review must therefore consider the effective use of public resources to deliver better outcomes for communities. Aligning the distribution of Community Committee funding to local priorities will help to ensure that the maximum benefit can be provided.

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

33. The city's community committee structure provides an infrastructure through which the Council executes its democratic renewal ambitions, by bringing elected Council members and services providers closer to residents to help shape and influence the places where they live. They are formal Council meetings held in public and form a key element of the Council constitution and hold devolved powers from the Council's Executive Board. However, public attendance at committee meetings in some areas is low and there is a danger that opportunities are being missed to fully engage with the public about the issues that matter to them most in the areas where they live and work. The review will consider how the Committee infrastructure can improve community engagement and better empower local people so that can become more involved in their local community and influence how services are delivered.
34. The Council has determined a risk to community cohesion, and it has established this risk on its corporate risk register. It has also been discussing a need to change radically the way we work in localities and implemented a new approach to locality working in November 2017. Pressures in some of our most challenged and disadvantaged neighbourhoods are now greater than ever due to a range of factors. The communities of Leeds have changed rapidly over the past decade, this is much more apparent in the city's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. A failure to fully engage and be inclusive to all the communities of Leeds may result in increased tensions leading to a sense of alienation and isolation.
35. These fractures may increase the city's risk of becoming more susceptible to the influences of those who want to divide our communities, making them more polarised and vulnerable to extremism and other harmful influences. The locality working approach through the Community Committees, seeks to engage with all communities, with a strong focus of the work on strengthening communities and building self-reliance and resilience.
36. Resources in many front-line operations have already been deployed on a needs-led basis with limited capacity from simply shifting where staff work to another area. Additionally, the agility of organisations to respond in the context of broader economic changes could challenge the pace of improvement. Locality Working through the Community Committees cannot just be about addressing poverty but also about more effective use of resources with all our communities, delivering better outcomes. Aligning the distribution of Community Committee funding to local priorities will help to ensure that the maximum benefit can be provided.
37. Failure to fully engage and get 'buy in' from a range of partners and council services to support the work of the Community Committees and the delivery of the locality working approach will hamper the council's efforts to deliver significant and sustainable change in our

neighbourhoods. It is therefore imperative that we maintain and build on the whole Council approach, working with local communities to drive change and much needed improvements. An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening document is included at **Appendix 1**.

38. Risk implications and mitigation are considered on all Community Committee funding applications. Projects are assessed to ensure that applicants are able to deliver the intended benefits.

#### **What are the legal implications?**

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

#### **Options, timescales and measuring success**

##### **What other options were considered?**

43. The recommendation in the reports to the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board and Executive Board, is to evolve the way that we work through the Community Committees, through a refreshed framework that enables greater impact and outcomes, delivered through a collective focus on all our communities in Leeds.

##### **How will success be measured?**

44. With IMD data only published sporadically, we have previously struggled to measure the impact of local intervention. However, with the publication of the Social Progress Index (SPI) for Leeds, this has changed. The Social Progress Index (SPI) is a tool that helps measure how well Leeds is doing in terms of Inclusive Growth. It helps us understand what's happening in different areas of the city, on a ward-by-ward basis and by looking at multiple indicators and offering us a clear and unbiased measure of overall wellbeing in the city. A link to Social Progress landing page can be found here: [The Leeds Social Progress Index | Inclusive Growth Leeds](#)
45. The SPI compliments the IMD data, allowing us to compare each ward against its peers, as well as allowing us to track change over time. The SPI is made of three main parts: Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing and Opportunity. The various indicators measure specific outcomes, with the scores of each area showing on a scale from 0-100. This makes it easier to understand how well the city is doing and where our strengths and weaknesses lie.
46. In addition to this, each year the Community Committees produce an Annual Report: [2 Annual Report 2022 23.pdf \(leeds.gov.uk\)](#). By listening to their local communities, the report has in

the past, stated that the committees were able to allocate resources and funding where it was most needed; helping to protect the most vulnerable, helping to keep people safe from harm, assisting people with financial hardship and helping tackle social isolation and inequality. It also references wherever possible, Leeds City Council's Best City Ambition and the 3 key strategic pillars; Inclusive Growth, Health & Wellbeing and Zero Carbon, by linking projects funded through the committees to the strategies: [Leeds Best City Ambition.pdf](#)

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

- ✓ **July 2023:** Environment, Housing & Communities Scrutiny Board agreed review scope.
- ✓ **September 2023:** 1<sup>st</sup> Member Working Group meeting (Elected Member workshops TBC). Up to 4 member workshops to be developed between September 2023 and February 2024, to engage and seek feedback and ideas from Elected Members.
- ✓ **February 2024:** Working Group recommendations presented and approved.

### **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Community Committee Review Recommendations.
- Appendix 2 – Forward Work Programme 2023/24.
- Appendix 3 – Forward Work Programme 2024/25.

### **Background papers**

- None.

## Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening

### Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening



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

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

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

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

#### 1. Title: Community Committee Review

Is this a:

Strategy / Policy

Service / Function

Other

If other, please specify

#### 2. Please provide a brief description of what you are screening

Community Committees were set up in June 2014 to improve the way the council works locally. They form part of our commitment to involving our residents more closely with the priorities for their local area and decision-making on funding and services, contributing towards the Best Council Plan and the council's overall aim of creating safe, strong communities.

The committee's role and purpose have not been reviewed for a number of years, therefore the review of the Community Committee's role, purpose and governance arrangements, involving all 99 Councillors, will aim to use the scrutiny process as a mechanism for engagement and accountability.

### 3. Relevance to equality, diversity, cohesion and integration

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Community Committees and use of the Social Progress Index**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Communication and Community Engagement**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Identify potential barriers on who may be affected**

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

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

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

### **• Key findings**

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

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

### **Youth Summits**

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



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

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

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

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

### **Youth Activity Fund Consultation**

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

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

#### **• Actions**

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

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

All projects that are funded by the Community Committees are measured for outcomes, in accordance with localised priorities that have been agreed with each individual committee. Aligning the distribution of Community Committee funding to address local priorities helps to ensure that the maximum benefit can be provided.

Feedback and monitoring information is gathered upon completion of each project that is funded by the committees and this is provided as updates to Elected Members in their respective Community Committee meetings. Case studies are also regularly obtained from partners in various service meetings.

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

N/A

Date to scope and plan your impact assessment:	N/A
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Date to complete your impact assessment	N/A
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Lead person for your impact assessment (Include name and job title)	N/A
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## 6. Governance, ownership and approval

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

Name	Job title	Date
Paul Money	Chief Officer - Safer Stronger Communities Team	June 2023

## 7. Publishing

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

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

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

<b>Date screening completed</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> June 2023
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If relates to a Key Decision - <b>date sent to Corporate Governance</b>	N/A
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Any other decision – <b>date sent to Equality Team (equalityteam@leeds.gov.uk)</b>	N/A
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