

**COUNCIL**

**15<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2020**

**UNANSWERED QUESTIONS LETTER**

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# Agenda Item 8



## Democratic & Central Services

Governance Services

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

Civic Hall

Leeds LS1 1UR

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

To: All Members of Council

Your ref:

Our Ref: A61/kjt/quest

Date: 7 August 2020

Dear Councillor

### COUNCIL MEETING – 15<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2020

At the above meeting, the thirty minutes of Question Time expired with questions 7 to 32 unanswered. Council Procedure Rule 11.6 requires that each Member of Council is sent responses to such questions.

- Q7** Councillor J Bentley - In view of the recent press speculation that the Council is facing “bankruptcy” as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and a section 114 notice was imminent, would the Leader of Council inform Members of the options available to Council to deal with the funding gap that has arisen.
- A** Councillor J Lewis (Executive Member for Resources) - The Council has received additional support from Central Government which was announced on 2nd July however this additional funding is not sufficient to enable a balanced budget to be achieved for this financial year. The Council has already taken steps to reduce expenditure in the current financial year and is identifying further areas where spending maybe reduced. The Council is in dialogue with MHCLG and depending on the outcome of these discussions a decision will be made whether an Emergency Budget is required.
- Q8** Councillor S Arif - What has the impact of Covid-19 been on child poverty been and how have we sought to alleviate this in Leeds?
- A** Councillor F Venner (Executive Member for Children and Families) - We have seen mounting evidence of the heart-breaking impact that the Covid-19 crisis is having on low income families with children, especially those who were already living below the poverty line before the crisis, and those from BAME backgrounds.



At the end of April, the Office of the Children's Commissioner estimated that 88,000 children had seen a parent lose their job, 1.2 million children were in families where a parent had been furloughed, and 2 million children were in families where a parent's working hours had been reduced.

The IPPR also predicts that as a result of Covid-19, the total number of children now living in relative poverty is 4.5 million – an increase of 200,000 from 2018/19.

Here in Leeds the dedicated staff of our outstanding children's services have acted quickly to limit the impact of child poverty during lockdown. The strength of Thrive, our child poverty strategy, is that many of the workstreams and initiatives already in place could be modified by our fantastic staff to respond to the needs of children and families under lockdown.

Our commitment in Leeds to retain our children's centres has again proven its worth. 13 children's centre Little Owls settings remained open throughout lockdown. I am pleased to report that, where private nurseries were forced to close, capacity offered by Little Owls nurseries allowed us to pick up those childcare places needed to support keyworkers. A dedicated enquiry point was made available on the council website, in addition to enquiries that came through elected members. This resulted in about 50 childcare places being provided this way. I am also proud to report that some of our staff went and worked in the Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust Nursery when they did not have enough staff to care for the children of their keyworkers.

Right from the outset, our partnerships have stood us in good stead to meet the unpredictable needs thrown up by the crisis and the frankly predictable fact that many families who were just about coping on zero hours contracts and low wages fell off a financial cliff during this crisis. Our staff have responded to families' needs in a variety of ways, including offering deliveries of essentials like nappies and baby milk. Early Help Hubs, schools and Clusters have worked together to ensure that families have been given the practical and emotional support they have needed during this period of crisis.

Nationally, the government's free school meals scheme has been beset by problems. And only the intervention of the footballer Marcus Rashford shamed the government and forced a u-turn over the extension of the scheme into the summer holidays, though as Cllr Blake said new claimants won't be eligible. I am proud that here in Leeds, the council has not hesitated in the support it has provided. Through strong partnerships with internal and external partners we were able to act swiftly to provide emergency food, fuel and shopping vouchers in the city.

In Leeds we will do all we can to tackle the limitations that poverty presents for children and young people. But we do not control the levers to lift people out of poverty; to do this requires a national political will that this government clearly lacks, as did the previous Tory government who in 2016 abolished the target to eradicate Child Poverty by 2020.

In order to prevent more children being plunged into poverty, there must be a national strategy and target. Funding should be allocated to each Local Authority to mitigate the impact of poverty. Schools should receive additional funding to support children's physical, mental, emotional and developmental needs, which may have been negatively impacted as a result of the pandemic and the measures to contain it.



In Leeds we back Labour's national calls for government action; for the two-child limit on child benefit and the benefit cap to be lifted, and for an end to the 5-week wait for Universal Credit, so that parents can afford the basics without going into debt.

Unfortunately, this government cannot even accept the reality of the worsening outlook for child poverty, even before the pandemic hit. Just last month, the Prime Minister refused to accept the findings of his own government's Social Mobility Commission report that showed an increase in child poverty of 600,000 since 2012, arguing instead that there had been a decrease.

This was followed by an unprecedented correction issued by the Children's Commissioner. Yet, instead of retracting his statement, the next week the Prime Minister went on to make further claims that simply do not stand up to scrutiny.

Council, as a Labour led local authority we will continue to do all we can to mitigate the impact of child poverty, recognising that the economic impact of the pandemic will last a lot longer than the virus itself. Disgracefully, though, our efforts will be hampered by the lack of compassion and shocking state of denial from the current government.

How can we expect much needed action on child poverty from a government that has its head buried so firmly in the sand?

**Q9** Councillor S Field - Can the Leader of Council comment on the magnificent work of the neighbourhood networks, especially those who have taken on the extra responsibility of being organisational hubs during the COVID-19 crisis? Can she also confirm that this excellent work will be rewarded by the Council keeping faith with the networks through the remainder of the current funding round and beyond, irrespective of any financial position in which the Council may find itself?

**A** Councillor R Charlwood (Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adults) - The Neighbourhood Networks have been at the forefront of helping older people in communities across the city during the COVID-19 pandemic as part of the strong third sector here in Leeds. From the outset, the Networks were prompt to lock down services and rapidly repurpose their offer to best support people safely and effectively as people observed Government guidance, both generally but also for shielding.

During the pandemic, the Networks have helped support people to secure access to food, medicine and other essential items and to have access to social and emotional support. Contact has been maintained through wellbeing calls, digital access projects, socially distanced groups brought to people's doorsteps.

The Neighbourhood Networks have also been quick to pick up local partnership working opportunities. For some this has involved linking in with the joint Voluntary Action Leeds/Council-led volunteer drive with many networks acting as local hubs and helping connect recently recruited volunteers with people in their local communities.

Whether acting as a local hub or not, the challenges presented by COVID-19 has seen many scheme managers, staff and volunteers put in hours of support far above and beyond the usual run of business.



Many Neighbourhood Networks are now more visible within their communities and to other local public services. This visibility has driven an increase in referrals, with new members joining their local neighbourhood networks, as well as an increase in new volunteers.

The Council's challenging financial position means that all commissioned services will be considered in terms of opportunities to maximise efficiencies, reduce duplication and to deliver services more cost effectively. This will of course be in the context of recognising that the Neighbourhood Networks play a significant role in supporting people to remain living independently in their own homes. Their work is highly valued, as is the range of other care and support services being delivered by our diverse and vibrant third sector partners across Leeds.

**Q10** Councillor A Smart - Would the Executive Member for Communities join me in thanking our fantastic volunteers who have been supporting some of our most vulnerable of residents throughout the Covid-19 pandemic?

**A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) - I am delighted to join Cllr Smart, and I hope Councillors from across the virtual chamber in congratulating and thanking all the volunteers who have helped residents in need over the last few months.

The pandemic meant that people were stuck at home, often with no resources and in need of basic supplies, of access to medicine, to have someone help with shopping or to have a reassuring chat on the phone.

Our volunteers met that need supporting over 12000 households in the period till early July.

It was a pleasure to participate in the discussion at Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny, chaired by Cllr Barry Anderson, where we heard first hand from the hard working Community Care Volunteer hubs about the work. The city will always be grateful for that work.

We also thank the Council staff who did such great work to make a success of this work, changing roles to answer the phone to residents in need (and sometimes distress), managing an incredible food warehouse, and distributing support to residents. We thank them all.

**Q11** Councillor N Buckley - Is the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development concerned that a Spatial Development Strategy from a new West Yorkshire Mayor would create tensions with existing Leeds development policies such as the Core Strategy, Site Allocations Plan and local Neighbourhood Plans?

**A** Councillor L Mulherin (Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development) – The Spatial Development Strategy is a high level strategic Plan, which will need to be prepared for the WYCA area following Devolution. The SDS is not a Regional Spatial Strategy and will have a different focus from previous regional plans. Environmental Policy and the need for carbon reduction will be key priorities, with Housing Policy addressed through existing local authority adopted local plans.



The SDS would need to be agreed by the unanimous vote of the five constituent local authorities. The Strategy will also be subject to full public engagement, consultation and subsequently, examination by an independent Inspector, prior to adoption. Consequently, these provisions provide the opportunity to address any potential issues at an early stage and within the context of available evidence.

**Q12** Councillor J Bentley - At a recent INW Community Committee meeting, the Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment stated that the Council had a scheme whereby young women could access free sanitary products via community pharmacies. Would the Executive Member please confirm the existence of the scheme and provide details to members.

**A** Councillor J Pryor (Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment) - The voices of the children, young people and parents who live in poverty every day are at the very heart of our approach to child poverty, and help guide our work to ensure it is effective, sensitive and best meets identified need.

Our approach, which was in the process of being rolled out prior to the worldwide pandemic, was the result of extensive consultation and designed in collaboration with young people. The scheme is for children, young people and adults in the city who struggle to access period products, was developed in true partnership and funded by the council, private sector organisations and most community committees. City wide coverage, through hubs and schools, was being provided and an App, which shows where free products can be accessed from, is in the process of being developed. A council officer is part of a government taskforce to look at tackling stigma and shame around periods.

Due to the worldwide pandemic and national lockdown, schools being closed, working from home arrangements and high levels of sickness absence, unfortunately there has been a delay in the further rolling out of the scheme.

Despite this, officers have worked tirelessly to ensure there is provision for those in urgent need of products. There are multiple ways that products are being distributed, with a referrals process joined to the emergency food process. This can be a self-referral, or key organisations can use a referral form to request support for people in need of supply due to lack of funds or self-isolation. The schools that had requested products received a supply prior to lockdown for them to distribute as required. Schools can also access the government's scheme for products.

In addition, 8,000 packs of products have been sent out via Catering Leeds hampers; 2,400 packs of products are being sent out through the central warehouse, and products have been distributed to Community Cares Hubs, who are providing them through the emergency support scheme.

In total, since October 2019, through our period product scheme, Leeds has distributed over 20,000 packs of period products to children, young people and adults who struggle to access products due to finance or other reasons.

We will continue to explore the possibility of providing free products, where there is a need in a particular area, with other partners to ensure we have increased coverage throughout the city.



**Q13** Councillor P Carlill - Can the Executive Member give an update on the Emergency Active Travel interventions being made across the city?

**A** Councillor L Mulherin (Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development) – Priority has been given from the outset of the health crisis in March to ensure the safety of Leeds residents and visitors, especially in terms of promoting safe social distancing to support mobility in all our communities. To this end over 3 kilometres of barriers have been provided at key locations in the city centre and in our local district centres and this work continues to support the city recovery planning for safer spaces and a return to business.

Bids have been made for the Government’s Emergency Active Travel funding and Leeds will receive £710,000 as part of the phase 1 initial allocation. Planning has been aided by a major online Connecting Leeds Covid-19 Transport engagement platform which has received over 25,000 responses from the public which will inform a forthcoming bid in August for a phase 2 release of funds from the scheme from which it is anticipated West Yorkshire will receive c£10 million. Meanwhile, as part of phase 1 a trial scheme of Orca Wand delineators to improve cycle safety and movement on the A65 corridor is being progressed and evaluated prior to further use elsewhere. Proposals for School Streets have been progressed with pilot schemes implemented at 6 primary schools to support sustainable travel during the summer term and plans for a second round being developed to support schools in the new school year. Plans for a number of Active Travel Neighbourhoods have been prepared and are being progressed for delivery during the summer.

Looking beyond the “emergency” measures it is worth noting also that the cycle superhighway measures on Wellington Street have now been progressed and are ready for final completion alongside works to the Majestic building and the A6120 cycle superhighway works are also due to complete shortly. Meanwhile work to establish the new cycle superhighway on Clay Pit Lane have been rapidly advanced since being brought forward at the end of May. Further works are now approved for progression of complementary works on the Elland Road route which are due to start shortly and for Dewsbury Road due to start later in the summer.

**Q14** Councillor K Brooks - What has been Leeds’ local approach to Infection Control and Prevention Services?

**A** Councillor R Charlwood (Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adults) - Leeds City Council Public Health commissions Leeds Community Healthcare to delivery infection control and prevention (IPC) services to the population of Leeds. LCC PH has always sought to embed a proactive, preventative model of IPC in the city and ensured appropriate investment in the service as demonstrated in a PHE audit of infection control models across Y&H in 2018. The audit clearly demonstrated that Leeds retained an IPC capacity that other areas did not benefit from enabling proactive work and innovative practices that contribute to keeping the population of Leeds safe. This can be evidenced in the ability of the team to step up service in response to a specific incident for example contributing to the management of the measles outbreak in 2017 and more recently during the current pandemic. Routine outbreak data for gastrointestinal infections in care homes such as norovirus have also shown a year on year reduction in both the number of outbreaks identified in care homes and also the duration of an outbreak when they do occur which demonstrates the clear benefits of the proactive infection control approach in place within Leeds. From April 2019 a cooperation agreement was developed between LCH and LCC PH which provides a



framework for the two organisations to work together to ensure the IPC responsibilities and priorities of both are delivered. The excellent partnership working across LCH and LCC laid the foundations for the response to Care Home covid-19 outbreaks in the city.

- Pre covid-19 the IPC team delivered IPC training to care homes using a range of resources including bespoke training provided within the care home setting. This enabled more care home staff to receive training and an additional 1600 staff to be trained during 2019-20. The traditional training models were also delivered by IPC. Other initiatives included each care home having an IPC champion and an LCH managed website to ensure care homes had access to evidence based policies and practice. Every care homes in Leeds had an infection control audit undertaken annually which included a report and follow up audit if required. The sustained engagement of IPC specialist within care homes means they are a trusted resource and have excellent insight and relationships with Leeds care homes.
- LCC PH and IPS have excellent partnerships working in place across the adult health and social care economy which meant that the networks for escalating concerns and managing risk were already well established pre pandemic. In reality these relationships with the care homes, GP's, CCG and ASC meant single cases of suspected Covid-19 were identified early and acted upon reducing the reliance of national reporting systems. This was particularly important at the start of the pandemic when testing was limited. Leeds now has a Care Home Silver and Care Home Bronze meetings in place led by ASC which consider all the challenges being faced by care homes including IPC priorities.
- Leeds has a well-established process for the management of outbreaks of infectious disease within care homes, most commonly norovirus or seasonal influenza. These methods of reporting were able to be quickly adapted for outbreaks of Covid-19. The process includes initial assessment by PHE and daily support for care homes from IPC. This support was based on a risk assessment of how well a care home was managing an outbreak and throughout the pandemic the IPC team maintained the ability to physically visit a care home of concern using appropriate PPE in order to provide face to face training and support.
- A system was established with PHE to call incident meetings for care homes of concern either due to a high infectivity rate or mortality rate. These were valuable to ensure that all partners across the system were able to share concerns, intelligence and find innovative solutions which in turn led to improvements.
- The NHS launched an infection control Covid-19 training package for care homes which was delivered by IPC and due to the existing relationships between the IPC team and the care homes the approach was flexible to targeted to those care homes with the greatest need. The national target of delivering in 100% of care homes was met in Leeds.



- As more testing options became available to care home staff and residents LCC PH and IPS engaged with the process to ensure timely testing within care homes. Pillar 2 whole Home testing was rolled out nationally during May 2020 initially this was only available to care homes registered with CQC with a population over 65. Many care homes experienced challenges with the national testing system. In order to overcome these LCC PH reached an agreement with LTHT pathology services to introduce local testing arrangements which continues to operate today. Once care homes with over 65's had completed whole home testing the local process is now working with LTHT pathology to test in Working Age Adult homes, sheltered housing and domiciliary care.
- During the pandemic IPC services were able to activate quickly to support care homes and through the wide range of support the team were able to offer Leeds was able to reduce the impact of Covid-19 on our care home population. At the peak Leeds had 47 care homes with active outbreaks and the IPC team were able to support every one of them to reduce the impact of Covid-19 and keep residents safe.
- The positive impact of the IPC team within the care homes has been demonstrated through the feedback from care homes throughout the pandemic. The strong and trusted relationships built through proactive engagement pre-pandemic meant the care homes were well equipped to prevent outbreaks and implement measures to reduce the impact early on in an outbreak.

**Q15** Councillor B Anderson - Can the Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment please explain why some of my residents have not had dates for their school appeals despite the school term nearly finishing and there being only a minimum amount of time before the school year starts again in September?

**A** Councillor J Pryor (Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment) - The regulations for School Admission Appeals require that a meeting be scheduled that the parents can attend in person. Due to Covid restrictions we had to await changes in the Regulations to be brought forward. The new emergency legislation was released on 24 April 2020 permitting appeals to be heard through video, by phone or in writing only. It also relaxed the timelines for hearing appeals.

The local authority were then required to equip and train the independent appeal panel members, and the clerks, to hear appeals through Skype or phone. This meant that all appeals began much later than is usually the case. By 15 July all parents who have submitted their appeal by the required deadlines will have received an invitation to their appeal hearing so they have plenty of notice when that will take place. Appeals will be carried out throughout the summer holidays to ensure that as far as possible they are completed before the start of term. Leeds has been proactive in its response to this situation and have the appeals service up and running ahead of a number of regional authorities, due to the complexities involved.

**Q16** Councillor D Jenkins - Can the Executive Member set out the financial impact of Covid-19 on Leeds City Council, and what support the Council has received from the government?



**A** Councillor J Lewis (Executive Member for Resources) - **2020/21: Unfunded COVID financial pressure £90.7m – reducing to £64.9m based on assumed allocation of newly announced funding**

The June report to Executive Board detailed a projected overspend of £197.6m as a consequence of COVID. A further COVID return has since been submitted to MHCLG and will be reported to the Executive Board in July. The total projected overspend is now **£173.4m**.

This overspend position includes Collection Fund income shortfalls of £41.6m which will be held in the Collection Fund and carried forward as a deficit into 2021/22.

To date the Council has received **£43.7m** of Government funding towards the costs of COVID-19, of which £2.6m has been applied in 2019/20. Applying the remaining £41.1m in 2020/21 reduces the unfunded COVID financial pressure to **£90.7m**.

Government announced further financial support on 2nd July:

- A further £500 million to cover local authority spending pressures;
- A co-payment mechanism for irrecoverable Sales, Fees and Charges income;
- Phased repayment of Collection Fund deficits over the next three years;
- A commitment to determine what support is needed to help councils meet the pressures of irrecoverable council tax and business rates income at the 2020 Spending Review.

Further detail is awaited on the allocation of this funding but we estimate that Leeds may receive in the region of £25.8m **which would further reduce the 2020/21 funding gap to £64.9m**.

**2021/22: Unfunded COVID pressure of £133.9m**

The report to June's Executive Board identified a funding gap of **£117.8m** in 2021/22. The assumed impact of the announcements above would be to increase this gap to **£133.9m**:

- Spreading of Collection Fund deficits for 3 years rather than provision of additional funding (£13.9m)
- Assumes the Council will capitalise the remaining £64.9m 20/21 funding gap at a revenue cost of £2.2m each year.

The financial support provided by Government is currently not sufficient to meet the Council's full projected financial pressures in 2020/21 and 2021/22. The Council has written to the Government and has implemented a number of management measures to mitigate the projected overspend. If further support from Government is not forthcoming or is insufficient then an emergency budget to be agreed by Full Council will be required in the summer. If, in the professional opinion of the Chief Officer - Financial Services, the actions proposed are insufficient to enable there to be sufficient resources to fund services following an emergency budget, then a Section 114 report would be issued.



**Q17** Councillor R Stephenson - Can the Executive Board Member for Learning, Skills and Employment confirm to parents and pupils across the city that the official position of the Council will be that school should re-open to all pupils in September, unless the Department for Education instructs otherwise?

**A** Councillor J Pryor (Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment) - As we did in preparation for schools opening to more pupils in June, we are continuing to work in partnership with our schools to ensure pupils and staff can return in a safe fashion.

Regular Zoom calls with head teachers across the city have meant a co-ordinated approach based on sound principles has been able to take place.

Our approach has been welcomed by schools and parents, our priority is, and always has been, to enable children to return to school safely.

This measured approach is based firmly on risk assessments and was developed jointly with schools, it has been shown to have worked and the return to school in Leeds in June was incredibly smooth. We fully expect the same, measured approach to work in September.

**Q18** Councillor M Robinson - Will the Executive Member for Resources confirm if the Operational Debt limit has ever been reduced by a Council administration in their budget?

**A** Councillor J Lewis (Executive Member for Resources) - The Prudential Codes requires Councils to annually set 4 debt limits for general fund and separately for the Housing revenue account These are set for the current and next 3 years and are:

1. Operational boundary for External Borrowing (Council borrowing to fund capital schemes)
2. Operational Boundary for Other long term Liabilities (PFI schemes and Finance leases)
3. Authorised Limit for External Borrowing
4. Authorised limit for Other Long term Liabilities

These limits are set in February as part of the annual treasury management strategy report. Since 2009/10 the general trend has been to increase the limits to reflect the capital investment needs however there are the following exceptions:

1. In Feb 15 (16/17 Strategy) operational boundary and authorised limit for borrowing reduced from the limit set the previous Feb 14 report
2. Other Long term Liabilities has been reduced each year since 2016/17 due to natural repayment of these PFI liabilities

Limits were increased in November 2016. (The reason for the increase was principally due to the purchase of Sovereign Square that generated an income stream and revised lower estimated revenue balances.)

**Q19** Councillor B Flynn - Could the Executive Member for Children and Families please advise me why the Council did not apply to UNICEF for Child Friendly City status?



**A** Councillor F Venner (Executive Member for Children and Families) - The concept of child friendly originates from UNICEF, who originally focused on initiating small projects across the world such as building playgrounds, improving access to education etc. At the beginning of the Leeds improvement journey in 2011, the concept of a 'child friendly city' was adopted as our approach to bringing together everyone in the city to improve outcomes for children and young people. It provides a real focus for our ambition for Leeds to be the best city for children and young people in the UK, as outlined in the Best Council Plan and the Leeds Children and Young People's Plan.

When we were developing the approach to Child Friendly Leeds we worked closely with UNICEF over a period of three years. We supported the development of the child friendly criteria with UNICEF, in partnership with other local authorities across the country. When the UNICEF child friendly status was formalised there was a significant cost to become a UNICEF Child Friendly City of over £30,000.

We have well established principles of the voice of the child being at the centre of everything we do and consulted with over 14,000 children and young people about what a child friendly city means for them. This led to the children's 12 wishes, which underpin our child friendly ambition. We developed a clear vision of improving outcomes for all children and young people in the city and established our Child Friendly Leeds approach, which is embraced by our partners in the city.

We use Child Friendly Leeds in many contexts and our 900 plus Child Friendly Leeds ambassadors use the term and our logo on their websites to demonstrate their support for the ambition to improve outcomes for all children in the city. This has never been challenged by UNICEF. We have shared our child friendly message and whole system approach to over three quarters of local authorities in the country, who are interested in how we have brought together the 'commonwealth of the city' to improve the lives of children in Leeds, no matter where they live in the city.

The UNICEF Child Friendly City status has all of these elements, and are well established and embedded in Leeds. We took the decision not to apply for CFC status due to the cost, and because the approach we have taken meets the UNICEF requirements.

**Q20** Councillor B Anderson - Can the Executive Member for Environment and Active Lifestyles explain to the residents of the Holtdales in my Ward why, despite past promises, you have not been able to deliver the new refuse collection days and also the introduction of individual green bins where appropriate?

**A** Councillor M Rafique (Executive Member for Environment and Active Lifestyles) - The Service has been providing updates on progress to review routes across the city to the Scrutiny Board for Environment, Housing and Communities; of which Cllr Anderson is Chair.

As the Covid19 pandemic took hold, the review was concluding the first part of the citywide route redesign, which was for the garden waste collection service (brown bins). Despite the pandemic and unprecedented effect and demands on the service, that work was completed in time to enable the new brown bin collection routes to be successfully implemented when the service resumed collections at the end of May. Under the circumstances that was an extraordinary achievement.



The main remaining task is to complete the review/redesign of the black and green bin routes. This is a huge technical task, but also heavily relies on the involvement of managers and front line staff. The focus of these staff since lockdown has been the continuity of the front line service for residents, and to support staff throughout the pandemic. This continues to be the case as the additional demands on the service have not reduced yet – the amount of waste being collected in black and green bins has not significantly reduced, and almost 10% of front line staff remain off work shielding.

As soon as capacity allows, work will resume on the review and the redesign of the black and green bin routes in particular. This will include, as it did with the brown bins, consultation with Ward Members.

**Q21** Councillor N Buckley - Could the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development outline what implications there are for bus usage in the city, given First Group's warning of an 'uncertain' future, and particularly given that many of our climate change goals are predicated on increasing public transport use?

**A** Councillor L Mulherin (Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development) – We are very aware of the current situation with respect to all bus services and the precarious situation the operators may face as a result of the present Covid-19 crisis, notwithstanding the support they are receiving from both the Government and the Combined Authority to support services so essential to our communities and the economic recovery. It is anticipated that the further relaxation of the social distancing requirement and the additional uplift in capacity this will provide will allow bus services to provide more attractive service offers to a wider number of people whilst remaining safe and attractive to all users. The effective management of the transitional process from a reliance on public support to commercial viability through the fare box will of course be a critical step in the recovery process.

Whilst it is not possible to comment on the commercial position of the operators we consider it vital that they remain viable and able to deliver services for the many people who will need them as we move further into the business and community recovery plans. Bus and rail services that are viable for the long term will remain a crucial element of our climate change strategy, as alongside the role active travel modes and the electrification of the private vehicle fleet play they are integral to our pathway for dealing with the Climate Emergency. We are evaluating the intelligence and monitoring of travel and business behaviours on a continuing basis to understand what the medium to long term picture may be. But at this stage, as the uplift in travel continues, including for public transport, it will be some time before we can make a full judgement on our trajectories for the future of bus and rail use and indeed other aspects of the pre-Covid travel patterns and behaviours. In the meantime First Group have confirmed their ongoing commitment to Leeds, including introducing electric buses into Leeds with an order for new vehicles being readied for delivery in the autumn.

**Q22** Councillor B Flynn - Could the Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment please provide details on when payments from the government grant for Reopening High Streets Safely will start?



- A** Councillor J Pryor (Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment) - Re-opening High Streets Safely scheme is not a government grant scheme. No financial payments are permitted to individual businesses or organisations under the scheme, and the fund cannot provide direct financial support to businesses.

It is an allocation of ERDF criteria fund where the Local Authority can make a claim for its revenue spend on 4 specific areas of expenditure that assists re-opening of high streets safely. The Council can make claims against the scheme for its projects in specific areas of expenditure, where these meet ERDF regulatory requirements. There 4 areas are:

1. The COVID-19 Action Plan
2. Public Information campaign
3. Business Facing campaign
4. Physical temporary Highway interventions to support safe re-opening

The timeline for the Council to make claims are for projects up to March 2021.

- Q23** Councillor B Anderson - The Council have been successful in developing initiatives for more affordable housing, Council housing, family housing and meeting the needs of students and also the development of private rented schemes but can the Executive Member explain what initiatives, other than what is in the Core Strategy, the Council have done to meet the housing needs of older people excluding Extra Care Housing i.e. housing to purchase or rent on the open market?

- A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) - The Council has focused its older people's housing programme on a major programme of direct investment and delivery of Extra Care housing, which is delivering 246no 1 and 2 bed homes with Home group (a Registered Provider of affordable housing) and 226no homes directly, comprising 2-4 bed houses, bungalows and 1/2 bed apartment dwellings. These are all to be let at affordable rents. In addition the Wharfedale View extra Care scheme in Yeadon was completed in 2017 and comprises 45no 1 and 2 bed homes, 35 of which are let at affordable rents and 10 of which are shared ownership.

The Council also works directly with developers of older people's housing (for rent and sale) through its capital receipt disposal programme. Such developers have specific site and location requirements depending on the markets they seek to serve and not all of the Council's available sites receive bids from such developers. Examples of current sites in the process of disposal for these uses include Bramham House (Bramham), which is a disposal due to approach completion at the end of August and will enable a development of a 40 bed market sale/rent, care home in an existing building; Ashfield Works (Otley) is a sale due to complete imminently for a 60-bed extra care facility for market sale/rent; and Breary Lane (Bramhope) will be developed for 8no. over-55's apartments.



Aside from this direct delivery the Council has ensured that the planning framework for the city fully reflects the housing needs of its older people. The Site Allocations Plan proactively identified sites with good access to services that would be appropriate for the delivery of elderly accommodation, without restricting this to any particular tenure. The Core Strategy also sets out policies that address accessible and adaptability in designs and layout of sites and individual dwellings - Policy H8 seeks to deliver housing for independent living in order to meet the housing needs of the elderly and people with impaired mobility; Policy H10 establishes accessible housing standards that seeks to ensure that more dwellings in Leeds can meet the accessibility needs of disabled people, older people and families with young children; and Policy H4 seeks to achieve an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes on sites. As part of the development management process, these policies are implemented to help meet older people's housing needs taking into account such factors as housing density, minimum space standards and placemaking. The Council is also reviewing the validation checklist to ensure that developers submit details on how they comply with Policy H10 at the time of submitting a planning application.

- Q24** Councillor B Flynn - Could the Executive Member for Communities please advise me when payments from the government grant for Local Welfare Assistance Fund will start?
- A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) - The Council has yet to receive its grant allocation of £1,051,565.15, however having now received the DEFRA guidance, and in anticipation of receiving the grant allocation, the Council is currently looking to how this funding can be used to best affect across its range of welfare provisions across the city. It is anticipated that much of the funding will go to existing support mechanisms to meet the additional demand created from COVID 19 and it is anticipated that some of this money could be allocated from as early as the beginning of August, in line with when Government intend to release the funding.
- Q25** Councillor B Flynn - Could the Executive Member for Children and Families please advise me how many current historic child abuse legal claims are being made against the Council?
- A** Councillor F Venner (Executive Member for Children and Families) - There are currently 12 live claims for historic child abuse in progress.
- Q26** Councillor B Flynn - Could the Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment please advise me on how many Education, Health and Care Plans were in place for Leeds children on 1 March this year?
- A** Councillor J Pryor (Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment) - The latest official figure for the number of EHCPs for children in Leeds is 4339 (January 2020).
- Q27** Councillor R Stephenson - Further to my letter to the Leader of Council dated 21st April, which remains unanswered, can she confirm if she has reappointed the position of Deputy Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment?



**A** Councillor J Blake (Leader of Council) - In discussion with the Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment I can assure Cllr Stephenson that the work of the Deputy Executive Member has been adequately covered by the team of Members supporting his position.

**Q28** Councillor M Robinson - Will the Leader of Council confirm all the members of the Council's city wide statue review body and which directorate budget will be used to support their work?

**A** Councillor J Blake (Leader of Council) - Councillor J Blake (Leader of Council) - There is no review body as such, but Honorary Alderwoman Alison Lowe has asked individuals with particular historical expertise to assist her in the work. Those individuals are as follows:

Dr. Emily Zobel Marshall	Leeds Beckett University, School of Cultural Studies and Humanities
Dr. Simon Morgan	Leeds Beckett University, School of Cultural Studies and Humanities
Martin Hamilton	Leeds Civic Trust, Director
James Rhodes	Historian
Dr. Stephen Basdeo	Assistant Professor, Richmond American International University (Leeds RIASA)

Following the public consultation process which will be launched this week the final report will be Alison's.

There is no Council budget allocated for the review and neither Alison nor those assisting her is being paid. Alison is being supported by the Chief Officer for Culture and Sport, and other Council officers as appropriate.

**Q29** Councillor M Robinson - At a recent Environment and Communities Scrutiny Board meeting in a discussion about Nitrous Oxide concerns were raised about the use of SPICE (K2) in Leeds. Could the Executive Board Member for Communities set out what steps have been taken to curb the use and abuse of synthetic cannabinoids?

**A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) – It is well documented that the use of synthetic cannabinoid products can be unpredictable and harmful, even life threatening. As a result, people who use these products can react with a number of side effects, for example; feelings of light headedness and dizziness, leading to nausea and vomiting, increased rapid heart rate, feelings of excitement, agitation, confusion and aggressiveness, they can also suffer from mood swings, anxiety and paranoia, suicidal thoughts, memory problems and amnesia. Research suggests that you can become dependent on synthetic cannabinoids, especially if you use them regularly. The effects can be prolonged and for those more vulnerable populations, they could find it difficult to stop using and might experience psychological and physical withdrawals when they do stop.



The Leeds Drug and Alcohol Social Marketing Group (S-MAP), a collaboration between Leeds City Council and Forward Leeds is currently running a **summer harm reduction campaign** on recreational drug and alcohol use. The campaign focuses on the harms associated with drug and alcohol use, and particularly the increased risk of mixing drugs with other drugs and/or alcohol, as well as looking after ‘your friends on nights out’ and ‘not being scared to seek help’ if needed. Due to the current pandemic, the campaign is online (comprising of animations and videos), and utilises a number of social media channels, particularly those popular with younger people, including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

In addition, the S-MAP group also have developed a SPICE / Synthetic Cannabinoid Receptor Agonist campaign and this has been running, successfully since the summer of 2018. The campaign includes dedicated leaflets aimed at both current/potential users and also professionals (including GPs, Pharmacies, Police, PCSOs and other key workers). The leaflets include:

- dispelling myths associated with synthetic cannabinoids
- the effects of intoxication
- the symptoms of withdrawal (and for current/potential users) also specific harm reduction advice
- management of someone with SCRA intoxication or overdose

These leaflets have been distributed widely across Leeds. To accompany the leaflets, short-intensive briefings have been delivered to a wide range of professional groups. In response to recent insight from providers working with vulnerable people in Leeds, a “SPICE refresher webinar” was delivered on the 21 July by Forward Leeds to a wide range of professional groups.

Forward Leeds (the city’s commissioned integrated drug and alcohol service) has an experienced Workforce Development team which provides training and information to increase confidence, skills and knowledge of professionals around talking about and supporting people who drink and/or use substances. The training is underpinned by harm reduction approaches and is free of charge, and is aimed at Social Care staff and similar organisations; Leeds City Council teams and Charities and third sector organisations. One of the courses is dedicated to Novel Psychoactive Substances and includes content on and synthetic cannabinoids including SPICE. Forward Leeds also have a Young People’s Service which includes one to one support, group work, outreach and event work. The team are specially trained to work with young people and understand the problems they may face.

Of note, Forward Leeds has also received national acclaim for its innovative SPICE detox programme (a first nationally) and have been speakers at an international SCRA conference in the Netherlands.

**Q30** Councillor M Robinson - Could the Executive Member for Communities outline what steps the Council has taken to support members of the Leeds community whose family may be threatened by the new security law in Hong Kong?

**A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) - Head of Equalities and I discussed it and we are not aware of any approach having been made by the Leeds community whose families have been impacted by the new security law in Hong Kong.



On checking the Governments guidance posted on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office site, British nationals are advised against all but essential international travel and information and includes a statement **on the risk of heightened tensions** in light of the new national security legislation.

Recently through our work on Covid19 we have established good links with local Chinese community locally and via the university, and can follow up with support if required.

**Q31** Councillor R Stephenson - Could the Executive Member for Children and Families set out what actions she has taken to ensure that mobile phones provided by the Council to staff within the Directorate are being used solely for business purposes; can she provide Council with the total cost associated with usage of mobile phones in 2019/20; and the monthly cost for November 2019, February 2020 and May 2020?

**A** Councillor F Venner (Executive Member for Children and Families) - All staff are expected to adhere to the council's Acceptable Use Protocol with regard to mobile phone use.

The total cost associated with mobile phone usage by the directorate for 2019/20 was £40,674.

The monthly costs as requested were:

November 2019: £3,159  
February 2020: £4,470  
May 2020: £6,463

**Q32** Councillor J Taylor - Can the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development clarify if delivering the Parkway Station on the Harrogate Line is dependent on Leeds Bradford Airport being granted permission for the proposed new terminal?

**A** Councillor L Mulherin (Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development) – Proposals for a rail station are well established and pre-date the current airport planning application. It remains the view that proceeding with the provision of a new station, that will serve the airport and provide for local access and park and ride remains a key element of the strategy for reducing the carbon footprint in this part of the city.

Yours sincerely

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



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