

**COUNCIL**

**11TH NOVEMBER 2020**

**UNANSWERED QUESTIONS LETTER**

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# Agenda Item 8



## Legal and Democratic services

Governance Services

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Our Ref: A61/kjt/quest

Date: 18 December 2020

Dear Councillor

## COUNCIL MEETING – 11<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2020

At the above meeting, the thirty minutes of Question Time expired with questions 6 to 38 unanswered. Council Procedure Rule 11.6 requires that each Member of Council is sent responses to such questions.

**Q6** Councillor S Firth - Does the Executive Member for Resources believe that there was a fair and transparent consultation process on the proposal to sell the East Lodge on the Temple Newsam estate?

**A** Councillor J Lewis (Executive Member for Resources) - The East Lodge at Temple Newsam was until 2017 part of the Council's Housing portfolio and let to a social housing tenant. The tenant vacated the property in 2017 at which time £70,000 of works were identified as being required to bring the property up to decency standards before another tenant could move in. This was not considered value for money at the time and would now be even more costly. As such the property was taken out of charge and since this time has remained vacant.

At the time, ward members and The Friends of Temple Newsam were involved in consultation discussions about the future of the property, where it was agreed that the property should be brought back into use and invest in, and whilst the preference was to find an alternative use which kept the lodge in the Council's ownership, this has not been possible in part due to the substantial refurbishment costs.



Since 2018 the building has therefore been considered for disposal, however, rather than disposing of the freehold of the lodge and in order to take on board the issues raised, the proposal is to dispose of a 250 year lease which will restrict the use to residential purposes and also ensure that the property is appropriately maintained and presented. This ensures that the Council retains an interest but equally given that the property was designed as a residential dwelling, this is consistent with its intended purpose and will reflect the continued use of West Lodge, which will be retained by the Council. Whilst the lease will protect the use and appearance of the property, given its listed designation, any external changes will require Listed Building Consent providing further safeguards against inappropriate development.

Given the nature of the property and the interest from the Friends of Temple Newsam, a further meeting is planned with the group along with ward members, prior to the property being entered to auction. Overall, the level of consultation undertaken is over and above that which would usually be undertaken for a property being brought forward for disposal and is recognition of the interest from local stakeholders and profile of the property.

**Q7** Councillor J Bentley - It is estimated that across the UK, welfare benefits to the value £16 billion remain unclaimed. Does the Executive Member for Communities know how much of this relates to Leeds and if so what is being done to ensure that our residents take up all that they are entitled to?

**A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) - The £16 billion to which you refer comes from a Department of Work and Pensions' report published in February 2021 that relates to the financial year 2017/18. Most of these are nationally administered benefits. We have sought a further breakdown for Leeds however the Department of Work and Pensions have confirmed that this information is not available locally.

There are two benefits which are administered locally, namely Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit. The amount of unclaimed benefit relating to Housing Benefit will have reduced significantly since 2017/18 as households who need support with housing costs would now claim Universal Credit from the Department for Work and Pensions. The Council are notified electronically by the Department for Work and Pensions whenever a citizen makes a claim for Universal Credit in Leeds and indicate that they need help to pay their council tax. In Leeds we have decided to treat this electronic notification as a claim for Council Tax Support rather than expecting a Universal Credit claimant to make a separate claim. This approach means that in Leeds potential Council Tax Support recipients who claim Universal Credit do not miss out.

More generally, the Council's Welfare Rights Unit continues to help maximise benefit take-up by providing an information and advice service covering the full range of welfare benefits. The service offers free, confidential and impartial advice to all residents of Leeds. Help can be given to complete benefit forms, make sure customers are getting the correct benefits or help with any benefit problems they are having, including help with an appeal to a tribunal.



**Q8** Councillor L Cunningham - What plans are in place to support people's mental health over winter?

**A** Councillor R Charlwood (Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adults) - The significant negative affect of the pandemic on mental health has been widely reported. According to Mental Health Foundation research, the majority of adults in the UK (69%) have said they feel somewhat or very worried about the effect of COVID-19 on their life. We know that people in our communities are feeling stressed and anxious and many are experiencing bereavement, financial worries and social isolation as a result of Covid. Positive relationships, good housing, employment, feeling connected to others, exercise and access to outdoor space, access to nutritious food are all key to good mental health and are all being severely challenged by the pandemic.

Evidence from the first lockdown indicates that we need to focus on the mental health of young people and people who are already affected by health inequalities due to poverty, ethnicity or stigma; anxious, lonely or socially isolated; traumatised / bereaved; living with mental ill health; at risk / experiencing substance misuse and at risk / experiencing domestic violence and coercion. This list demonstrates the complexity of the task ahead. The winter months can be particularly difficult for many of us and can impact negatively on our mental health. I am pleased to share the work that we are undertaking in relation to mental health and set out additional activity that we are developing for winter.

In Leeds we take a whole-city approach to mental health. The Mentally Healthy Leeds Vision approach has five priorities: improving mental health and wellbeing, reducing mental health inequalities, increasing resilience, reducing social isolation, and reducing stigma and discrimination. Our key programmes include:

- A Men's Suicide Prevention Grant Scheme – developed as a result of findings from the Leeds Suicide Audit. Public Health colleagues in Leeds City Council have been working in partnership with Leeds Community Foundation to develop this targeted community programme working directly with men and their communities most at risk in the city. The successful grants programme delivers work prioritised in the city wide Suicide Action Plan. To date, grants totalling £210,299 have been awarded to 11 local third sector community groups.
- Mentally Healthy Leeds – a programme commissioned by the Council and delivered through a third sector consortium that works in communities to combat mental health stigma and discrimination, increase resilience and reduce social isolation. The lead provider Touchstone, along with Community Links, the Conservation Volunteers and Oblong, bring significant expertise delivering services for BAME communities and communities most at risk of poor mental health, where inequalities in access and outcomes to mental health support are often the worst in the city. They all have decades of experience of working with communities and grassroots organisations who understand people's needs and preferences. Activities centred on social interaction or creativity (art, music, food, or exercise) are offered to help communities engage with underlying messages about keeping mentally healthy. Mental health awareness training is also delivered, and extensive engagement work to tackle stigma and discrimination is carried out in community spaces.



- Our Mindful Employer programme is embedded in over 400 local business organisations across the city. The Mindful Employer Co-ordinator and peer led network works to support employers and employees to keep mentally well.
- The Leeds Future in Mind strategy and action plan aims to improve the social, emotional, mental health and wellbeing of children and young people and make Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in. Our Public Health team works closely with the Council's Health and Wellbeing Team to support schools to encourage young people to talk openly about mental health and reach out for help when they need it. The MindMate Champion programme supports schools to self-assess and put in place actions to improve their provision; MindMate Lessons provides a comprehensive mental health curriculum; and the Resilience programme, provides evidence based group work for young people who are struggling.
- In 2019, the Council invested in a new bereavement service for children and families. Child Bereavement UK were commissioned to address the gap in support for children and young people following the death of a close family member. The service provided one-to-one and group family support to 147 bereaved children and young people in the first year.
- A Leeds app was commissioned to support adolescents resist or manage the urge to self-harm using an evidence-based therapy approach. The app was downloaded by around 1,500 young people in its first six months, 94% of whom reported it helped them manage their urge to self-harm.

Tackling inequalities is a priority which runs through the city-wide approach and the public health team and Mentally Healthy Leeds prioritises work in areas of high deprivation and low engagement and focuses on groups considered at highest risk. Public health grants focus on areas of the city where mental health problems are more prevalent and where there are higher levels of crime, social housing and unemployment.

During the pandemic, we have seen services adapt to meet new challenges and the flexibility of staff has been very much welcomed from our residents. Our Suicide Bereavement Service moved to remote counselling and developed a new art based engagement tool when working with people with autism; our resilient Third Sector have provided socially distanced support, as well as face to face for those who don't have digital access, and our Mindful Employer programme has supported many local businesses to keep their employees mentally well through these challenging times of furlough and home working. Working with Public Health and the wider health care system, the Mindful Employer Co-ordinator and peer led network have focussed on those who already experience health inequalities who have been at greater risk of stress and anxiety such as care home workers and food delivery drivers working in the 'gig economy'. Our Public Health team are also working with Mentally Healthy Leeds providers to explore and understand experiences of grief, loss and social isolation during Covid-19, and the wider impact this has had on communities.



Since late March, Community Care Hubs have been delivered in all thirty-three wards of the city by twenty-seven Third Sector partners. The Hubs have been on the frontline of supporting individuals and communities to respond to the challenges of Covid 19. In addition to food provision, prescription collection and tailored support including health promotion, the Hubs have also delivered check-in and chat support over the phone or on the doorstep to check in with citizens regarding their welfare. The Hubs have proved a critical part of the city's response to the pandemic and work to sustain them is ongoing.

We know that the initial lockdown had an adverse impact on the mental health of many residents. Children and young people were particularly affected across the city and 101 young people and 552 parents completed a survey between June and July 2020 to understand the impact of lockdown on their mental health. 32.7% of young people reported their mental health had got worse. 7.3% of parents reported that most of the time they struggled in lockdown and 49% reported that some of the time it was difficult. In April 2020, Kooth, an online platform which offers emotional and mental health support for children and young people aged between 11 – 24 years, reported child sexual abuse as amongst three issues showing the sharpest rise in self-reports and a 51% increase in self-reports of being the victim of violence in the home. New national funding will also allow us to increase the support we are offering to schools via additional training for staff so they are able to support young people who are struggling.

Government funding to support local authorities respond to the challenges of Covid will also enable us to deliver additional support over winter. £100,000 is available to alleviate the impact of the pandemic on mental health during the winter. This will be crucial in supporting the most vulnerable and put us in a better position to improve wellbeing going forward. The funding will be used to:

- Build on the interest in formal and informal volunteering generated by the pandemic focusing on enabling human, rather than digital, connections.
- Align with and contribute to the wider activity to stimulate community building through asset based approaches.
- Support citywide population health promotion messages and raise the profile of neighbourliness.
- Address inequalities by prioritising the most deprived areas.
- Embed and deliver Covid actions across the 8 priorities of the new Mental Health Strategy.

The funding will be guided by the principles set out in Leeds Covid 19 Outbreak Control Plan. It will be co-produced and take a proactive, preventative and positive approach, with an emphasis on what people can do to keep themselves safe and support others; focus on equity and need, taking a community-centred approach that reaches people and communities at greatest risk; take a one system approach engaging and communicating widely; and be guided by intelligence and data, evidence and best practice.



As well as using the evidence in relation to need, our approach to this additional funding has been informed by the learning that has emerged from the pandemic so far (including the recommendations of Forum Central's report 'Mental Health Emerging Themes in Leeds health and care Third Sector Organisations during COVID-19 April to July 2020) and the plans that are in place and in development (including the Time to Shine winter plan, VAL's proposal regarding the provision of locally led community support via the community care hubs, the Covid Outbreak Plan and the distribution of the Wellbeing Fund) to ensure the funding is used to address gaps and make the most impact. Officers from Public Health, Commissioning and Transformation and Innovation have been working in partnership with the Forum Central, VAL and Leeds Older People's Network to develop three areas of focus for the funding:

- Working in partnership with the Third Sector and wider health and care sector and building on the success of our ABCD programme, we will be supporting local communications activity with clear key messages that encourage neighbourliness. We are looking to work in partnership with health and care organisations to deliver a co-ordinated campaign that can be adopted by community organisations within neighbourhoods. Recognising that people are more inclined to act on positive inspiration than by statistics that are overwhelming and feel intractable, our aim is to focus on kindness, self-care and ways to build human as well as digital connections.
- Working in partnership with the Third Sector and learning from the experience of Covid to date, we are looking to continue and expand the activity that has made the most difference to people experiencing mental ill health. This will include micro grants that enable communities to access funding to support activity tailored to their needs, focussed community based suicide prevention activity, specific support for a diverse range of organisations working with older people (from Neighbourhood Networks, to small community groups and larger providers to build on and expand activities that improve people's mental wellbeing.
- We are also exploring how we can work with the Third Sector to reach those members of our communities that our current support offer has struggled to reach. Since April 2020, Leeds City Council, Forum Central, Voluntary Action Leeds and Healthwatch have been working in partnership alongside trusted community based organisations to ensure that the needs of communities of interest were being addressed during the pandemic. Communities of interest have been defined as groups of people who share an identity, for example, people with a learning disability, or those who share an experience, for example, the LGBTQ+ community. Colleagues in the public mental health team have shared modelling of mental health data so as a health system, we can understand the impact of Covid 19 on different population groups, in different settings in Leeds.

As a Mental Health Champion, I am committed to raising the profile of mental health and wellbeing in local communities and challenging the stigma surrounding it. I continue to advocate for mental health, ensuring it is considered in all decision making and meetings. I am really pleased to see Leeds' demonstrate our strong commitment to supporting mental health with focussed activity that will deliver for our residents at a time when it is needed most.





**Q9** Councillor S Field - Following yet another planning application passed for dwellings in a flood area in Swillington, can the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development explain why the concerns of local people and elected members continue to be ignored?

**A** Councillor L Mulherin (Executive Member for Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development) –

- All development in Leeds are subject to adopted policies of the Council on avoiding development in high flood risk zones and dealing with sustainable surface water flood risk and drainage, which have been informed by a technical evidence base, working with the Environment Agency.
- Where sites have been allocated for development, further detailed work and site requirements are applied to ensure that flood risk has been considered prior to the allocation.
- At any planning application stage there are further detailed considerations of flood risk to take account of specific issues, such as layout.
- Sites that come forward, that are not on allocated sites, are subject to their own assessment of flood risk and drainage at the planning application stage, including consultation with the Environment Agency and land drainage as part of the planning assessment.

Cllr Field has not raised this issue with me previously and is welcome to contact me directly if there are specific issues in her ward that she wishes to raise.

**Q10** Councillor A Marshall-Katung - Can the Executive Member provide an update on Black History Month in Leeds?

**A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) - Black History Month which took place during October is a time to learn and celebrate black history in the UK.

Leeds Civic Hall, Leeds Town Hall, and Leeds City Museum were lit up as the city began a programme of events to recognise the achievements and contributions of people of African and Caribbean heritage.

As part of the month's programme there was a focus on the huge contribution brought to the communities of Leeds and the UK by the Windrush generation. The positive contribution of people of African and Caribbean descent and the enormous cultural and artistic value they have brought to the city should never be forgotten. It's fantastic therefore that through Black History Month in our city their efforts are recognised.

The council have also set up an anti-racism steering group with black leaders within the community and elected members to look at the inequalities faced by our black citizens as well as other ethnic minorities. With this, we look to bridge the gap and create a fairer and more equitable society for us all.



Leeds City Council's BAME Staff Network delivered a wide range of events throughout October to celebrate and mark Black History Month 2020. Each week focused on a different theme, including Mental Health and Wellbeing, Education, Food & Culture and Being Black in the Council. Despite COVID restrictions, the Network successfully hosted an array of virtual events including with city partners, which covered key areas such as the impact of COVID-19 on older BAME communities, effective BAME allyship, career progression and development and supporting the annual Wear Red Day Event with a local virtual event for staff promoting anti-racism. Over 300 colleagues attended these virtual internal events. The month has also seen significant engagement over social media, particularly on Facebook via the council's colleagues and BAME Staff Network Facebook groups. Further highlights from the Month include the 'Local Heroes' series of short videos featuring Black figures who are making significant positive contributions in the city, family recipes shared by council colleagues and articles written by council staff on key themes such as black culture and fashion.

The Council's BME Hub is the consultation and engagement forum with BAME communities which is run by Voluntary Action Leeds. The Hub held an online event, in line with COVID regulations, on the 29th of October. The event included an online debate on racism.

Leeds Museums and Galleries service and Library service also had a great range of activity for people to learn more about black history locally and around the world. We were pleased to see a wide range of other activity taking place across education settings, the third sector and with the private sector. The council's communications team ensured that events and activity were widely publicised through the press and social media and Leeds Inspired had a page on their site dedicated to promoting activity during the month.

**Q11** Councillor M Robinson - With Mischief Night, Halloween and Bonfire Night 2020 fading in to the distance, can the Executive Member please outline the actions the Council will be taking to limit the impact of anti-social behaviour caused by a minority of Leeds residents with fireworks and Chinese Lanterns at New Year?

**A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) - Unlike the Halloween and Bonfire period when the anti-social use of fireworks is widely reported as a public nuisance and / or public safety concern neither the police nor the council typically receive anywhere near as many complaints about the use of fireworks and Chinese Lanterns (Sky Lanterns) over the New Year period. To put this into perspective the New Year period is traditionally one of the busiest times of the year for police calls to service with alcohol related incidents, domestic violence, other violent crime and other such issues being much more prevalent and prioritised accordingly - including ongoing pandemic related community safety matters this year.

**Q12** Councillor A Garthwaite - Please could the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport & Sustainable Development provide an update on the Neighbourhood Plans?



**A** Councillor L Mulherin (Executive Member for Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development) – In Leeds, there are 37 active neighbourhood planning groups. Of the 37 groups:

- 17 neighbourhood plans have been made (adopted) and are now being used to help determine planning applications within their respective neighbourhood areas
- 6 plans are either at or preparing for formal independent examination
- 9 plans are in draft
- 5 plans are at early stage community engagement and consultation

The neighbourhood planning website, [www.leeds.gov.uk/np](http://www.leeds.gov.uk/np) is regularly updated with neighbourhood planning progress information.

**Q13** Councillor S Field - Would the Executive Member for Learnings, Skills and Employment agree with me that the Council has a duty of care to ensure that private education providers must satisfy local authority standards on environmental protections against COVID-19 before they are allowed to operate?

**A** Councillor J Pryor (Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment) - The proprietor of any setting and/or the employer is legally obliged to look after the H&S of staff and people affected by their undertaking i.e. the children. This includes compliance with the Covid regulations and guidance published by the government, Public Health England and DFE.

Overarching responsibility for enforcing Health and Safety Standards in relation to Covid 19 lies with the Health and Safety Executive rather than the local authority. From a Leeds Council health and safety team aspect, if the LA is not the employer, there is no jurisdiction to take an advisory role or interfere generally. The Council's Environmental Health and Public Health Teams are able to provide support to any setting, whether private or public, experiencing a Covid 19 outbreak but are not able to proactively check or inspect settings prior to their opening.

Notifications of positive Covid cases within non-maintained settings are not automatically shared with the Council unless a setting has an SLA with our H&S team. Instead the notification go direct to DFE via the daily return.

The Council has promoted the welfare of children (regardless of the type of educational setting they attend) through sharing of good practice and providing access to bulletins and H&S Updates. These are shared with independent and private settings where we are aware of them.

Where issues have been raised in an independent setting and we have been made aware of them, we have enabled that setting access to the Health and Safety guidance and resources utilised to support the maintained sector.

The Environmental Health Team would also have involvement and contact with any private education establishment following an outbreak of CV19.



**Q14** Councillor D Ragan - Could the Executive Member for Environment and Active Lifestyles please update Council on the steps taken by the Council's Environmental Health team to keep Leeds workplaces and businesses Covid Safe?

**A** Councillor M Rafique (Executive Member for Environment and Active Lifestyles) - The Environmental Health Team continues to provide support and advice to businesses and workplaces across Leeds. In October the team provided guidance to 284 businesses including retailers, licenced premises, shops and offices. In addition weekly compliance patrols are undertaken by environmental health and licensing teams targeting specific areas of the city. To date patrols have taken place in Headingley, Armley, Woodhouse, Burley, Beeston and Garforth.

Enforcement action is taken if there are significant and ongoing breaches of Covid regulations. Eleven fixed penalties of £1,000 each have been issued to non compliant premises and five Direction Orders have been served prohibiting unsafe events taking place.

The Team also respond to Coronavirus outbreaks linked to businesses and workplaces. Officers have provided practical advice, visits and recommendations to around 50 workplaces to assist them to control and contain workplace outbreaks.

**Q15** Councillor P Wadsworth - Can the Executive Board Member please confirm how much has the council spent in opening and maintaining playgrounds since the Government relaxed the guidance and allowed playgrounds to re-open on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2020?

**A** Councillor M Rafique (Executive Member for Environment and Active Lifestyles) - The council has spent £396k on playgrounds since they commenced re-opening in line with government guidance on 23<sup>rd</sup> July. This includes measures to meet the guidance such as enhanced cleaning and signage along with routine aspects of playground maintenance such as regular safety inspections, sweeping, engineer's inspections and repairs.

**Q16** Councillor S Field - In light of COVID-19, can the Executive Member for Communities give assurances that elected members are given more autonomy over Community Committee budgets and spending?

**A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) - At the onset of the pandemic back in March, I (the Executive Member for Communities) approved the use of funds from the 2020/21 Wellbeing budgets to flexibly support COVID-19 related activities at the discretion of local ward members. Processes were put in place quickly to ensure that local ward members were able to provide an immediate and agile response to assist with local relief efforts. This was underpinned by a fit-for-purpose decision-making process, with members deciding on spend for each ward. Funding criteria has been relaxed to enable ward members to use their discretion and local knowledge to support local groups.

As of the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020, 154 grants have been awarded by local ward members, totalling over £218k. This is in addition to the hundreds of grants that have continued to be awarded through community committee budgets to support our 3<sup>rd</sup> sector partners and council services all of which have proved vital in assisting local people to stay safe and healthy through these most difficult of times.



I will shortly start discussions with the 10 Community committee chairs about how we might apply some further flexibility to the committee's delegated budgets on a temporary basis, in particular to support the city's children and young people many of whom had been impacted enormously through schools closers, social isolation and lack of digital connectivity during this time.

**Q17** Councillor B Anderson - Can the Executive Member advise me of the processes and procedures they have published for advertising how the £500m package to help fuel poor households via the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Fund is potentially going to be rolled out in the city?

**A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) - The £500m Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Fund (GHG LAD) splits into 3 packages:

- c£75m already competitively secured by local authorities via the GHG LAD **Ph1A** bidding process, through which Leeds secured £2.97m.
- An open call for bids for c£125m of GHG LAD **Ph1B** funding, with a deadline of 4<sup>th</sup> December.
- £300m of GHG LAD Ph2 funding to be allocated to local authorities via the regional energy hubs early in 2021.

Each of these packages will have slightly different government driven eligibility criteria and slightly different focusses of work. Each will therefore be promoted in different ways.

The PH1A funding secured by the council predominantly focusses on external wall insulation on mixed tenure estates. This will be promoted directly to residents via written and face to face communications. This package also has funding available for non-standard cavity wall insulation which is spread around the city. We will use our GIS enabled database to write directly to addresses that appear to be technically eligible.

It is worth noting that an additional £1.5bn of government funding has been made available to individual householders via Green Homes Grant vouchers. We have highlighted this scheme via a press release but there are on-going national issues with its delivery, making it difficult for the public to secure a contractor to undertake the work and this is impacting on its uptake.

**Q18** Councillor S Field - Would the Leader of Council agree with me that no frontline services should be cut, or service charges raised, whilst the Council still funds Leeds 2023 to the tune of millions of pounds per year in the run up to the event, and further agree that it is time to scrap the unnecessary vanity project?

**A** Councillor J Blake (Leader of Council) - The budget proposals for 2021/22 are subject to further consultation, no decisions have been made at this time.



**Q19** Councillor J Taylor - During the COVID-19 pandemic many vulnerable residents across Leeds have relied upon support such as shopping initially paid for by the Council, will the Executive Board Member responsible reassure concerned residents who have not yet been invoiced that they will not be receiving hefty bills during this difficult and challenging period?

**A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) - A process was put in place early on in the covid pandemic to support those people who could pay for their own shopping but were unable to get this themselves, through families or friends, or via supermarket deliveries. Under the council shopping service the individuals agreed to pay for shopping which was bought by volunteers acting on behalf of voluntary organisations across Leeds, who are working with the council to provide support. Customers were clear that they would be receiving an invoice for the shopping which took place between April and October 2020. Many voluntary organisations have provided reassurance to customers about the position of invoices, which have been delayed due to the speed at which the whole system needed to be established. The majority of invoices have now been sent out and the final batch is currently being processed. Although some of these are likely to be relatively high, customers are made aware that they can speak to the council about this and arrangements can be put in place to pay the bill in instalments, if necessary.

The council paid shopping service was withdrawn in October 20. Leading up to the cessation of the shopping service, voluntary organisations have supported customers to find other avenues to ensure they can get shopping, and the council is working with Defra who have provided 2,312 priority slots for Tesco and 2,300 slots for Iceland ie 4,612 in total. The service can be offered to anyone that presents at LWSS who can pay for their shopping. The customer does need to be digitally enabled to access this service. If they are not, LWSS will look to offer the customer other options. In addition many voluntary organisations have established their own paid for shopping services.

**Q20** Councillor S Field - Can the Executive Board member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development update Council on the proposed car park on George St and explain how this can be in line with council aspirations to reduce carbon emissions?

**A** Councillor L Mulherin (Executive Member for Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development) - The Council recognises the challenges it faces in addressing the climate emergency and to achieve its net zero target by 2030. Reducing the carbon impact of cars using fossil fuel technology will be a key part of our approach. We plan to outline our approach more fully in the draft transport strategy that we will be bringing forward for consultation in the near future.

With respect to Kirkgate Market, it is recognised that not all of our citizens are able to walk, cycle or easily travel by public transport particularly if they have a heavy load to carry. The Market is home to more than 200 independent businesses who are trading in an extremely challenging retail climate. We are therefore creating a limited 40 space car park that facilitates short stay for shoppers at the market. This will help them to compete with supermarkets that in most cases have dedicated parking facilities.



In accordance with Policy EN8 in the Council's Core Strategy there will be 4 spaces available from the outset for charging electric vehicles and the required infrastructure will be included to ensure that the number of charging points can be easily increased as more vehicles transition from petrol/diesel to electric energy. This will mean that the facility will be able to keep pace with the rate of transition to more sustainable forms of energy.

**Q21** Councillor R Stephenson - Could the Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment confirm whether any Local Authority maintained schools in Leeds have failed to comply with the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) over the last three years?

**A** Councillor J Pryor (Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment) - Maintained schools must submit the SFVS annually to the Council. The Council then uses this information to inform the programme of financial assessment and internal audit. The SFVS has been updated in recent years and now primarily consists of a checklist questioning governing bodies on areas of resource management and a dashboard showing how a schools data compares to DfE indicators of good resource management. During the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department for Education (DfE) has advised local authorities to exercise discretion on how and when to implement some of the usual annual requirements within their scheme for financing schools. One example for such use of discretion is the completion of the SFVS for the financial year 2019 to 2020, taking into account the current pressures on the Council and schools. Accordingly, no schools are deemed to have failed to comply with the relaxed requirements for 2019/20.

One school was non-compliant with the requirement to submit a self-assessment in 2018/19. A further 9 schools did not complete the SFVS because they had an exemption as the school had been issued with an academy order in the financial year.

In respect to the 2017/18 SFVS, initially 34 primary and 2 secondary schools were not compliant in that they did not return before the deadline and were therefore included on the Chief Financial Officer's return to the DfE as not having completed the SFVS. However, subsequent to the submission of the assurance statement the outstanding SFVSs were pursued and all but 2 SFVS were finally submitted so, ultimately, in 2017/18, two schools did not submit a self-assessment.

**Q22** Councillor S Field - Can the Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development update Council on the total spend progressing the now aborted Clean Air Zone?

**A** Councillor J Lewis (Executive Member for Resources)- The Council has not committed any of its own resources to the implementation of a Clean Air Zone.

The Council was awarded money by the government to assist those affected by the potential for charges to move towards cleaner vehicles. Over £1.8m in grants and loans has been provide to the taxi and private hire sector to upgrade their diesel vehicles to electric or hybrid. Over £5m has been allocated to coaches and HGVs to move to the latest diesel engine. As a consequence of the clean air zone proposal, nearly 50% of the taxi and private hire fleet has converted to hybrid and nearly 90% of



buses, coaches and HGV comply with the latest standards. The improvements to these sectors have made an important contribution to the air quality improvements which have been made in the city, which is now at a level which comfortably meets legal standards.

The Council received £6.3m funding to establish the camera network required to implement a clean air zone. The Council will retain the cameras paid for by government and seek to use them for other purposes.

The Council consulted the public and agreed a clean air zone to reach legal compliance with air quality standards. The Council was not in a position to disregard the law when it was not in compliance but neither can it continue to implement a zone, now that the legal limits have been met.

**Q23** Councillor N Buckley - Can the Executive Member for Resources confirm that there are no circumstances under which he would impose a congestion charge in Leeds?

**A** Councillor J Lewis (Executive Member for Resources) - As we develop our Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy in the coming months we are acutely aware of the climate emergency and our commitment for Leeds to be carbon neutral by 2030. We know, as the council, we can't achieve this without the support of government, regional partners, businesses and the people of Leeds.

A congestion charge is a crude tool and seems inappropriate to be introduced at a city level. As we set out in the executive board report responding to the climate emergency in January 2020 – *'the council will consider a workplace levy on car parking alongside other measures which may encourage a shift from the private car, maximise environmental benefits and generate investment in alternatives. We will explicitly need to consider the impact on both people who have no access to a reliable alternative to their car and those on lower incomes.'*

**Q24** Councillor S Field - Does the Leader of Council agree that the number of staff having left the authority on 30/10 means it is dangerously exposed in terms of undertaking core and statutory functions?

**A** Councillor J Blake (Leader of Council) - A total of 126 staff exited the council on the 2 November 2020 through the Early Leavers Initiative. This represents 0.86% of the council's workforce, with staff leaving from a wide variety of different core, support and administrative services.

The process for employees to exit the council was carefully managed via a submission of a written business case to a corporate panel. The business cases would not have been submitted or approved if essential service delivery had been compromised as a result of any exit. In addition, this group of employees has gained approval to exit a number of weeks prior to their departure, enabling services to appropriately manage handover and transition as and where necessary.

**Q25** Councillor M Robinson - Can the Executive Board member for Communities please confirm as of the 1st November, how many Covid Marshalls have been employed and are now working in Leeds?





- A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) - Funding for covid Marshals was received by the council on 5 November. Approval has been given to recruit 2 supervisors and 12 covid marshals. Numbers will be reviewed once the first cohort has been appointed. Intention is to appoint as soon as possible and the job descriptions are currently being assessed by the job evaluation team to agree the appropriate grades. Risk assessments are being considered by H&S and the Trade Unions. A variety of work has been identified for the marshals, working primarily for City Centre Management, Environmental Health, Licensing, Safer Leeds and the Communities team. As well as compliance and signposting work, the marshals will support local track and trace activities so can be employed during lockdown.
- Q26** Councillor S Field - Can the Leader of Council tell us what the Council's definition of a woman is?
- A** Councillor J Blake (Leader of Council) - The council follows the definitions outlined in the Equality Act 2010 and statutory guidance issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.
- Q27** Councillor B Anderson - The Government has allocated £25m for a Community Champions scheme to reach groups most at risk from Covid. Can the Executive Member responsible please advise if we have applied for this funding and if so, what areas are we going to spend this funding in?
- A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) - My officers have been exploring a range of contributions that can be delivered by local communities and the third sector and many of those contributions lend themselves to the concept of community champions. There has been lots of work carried out in Leeds in the past 6 months with communities of interest and specifically with those most at risk of COVID-19. Nevertheless, it remains our challenge to reach those groups most at risk at a time when COVID-19 has deepened and broadened social and health inequalities that already existed. Since Public Health England released their review of disparities on risks and outcomes in June and learning from our experiences in Leeds, we have been focused on taking action to improve the evidence base on the disparities and protecting those at greatest risk in Leeds. We are currently exploring the potential contribution of the 'community champions' role alongside our existing efforts to help us with that challenge and anticipate an application to the scheme to enhance existing strategies in the most at risk places and fund work with grassroots advocates and community groups from those communities that have been impacted.
- Q28** Councillor M Robinson - Can the Leader of Council inform Councillors how much of the discretionary business grant was awarded to the Taxi and Private Hire fleet in Leeds, either directly to drivers or via companies?
- A** Councillor J Blake (Leader of Council) - In line with the Government's guidance, the Discretionary Grant Fund was primarily and predominantly focused on supporting businesses with relatively high non-domestic fixed property costs. Accordingly, no grants were awarded to the Taxi and Private Hire fleet in Leeds via the Discretionary Grant Fund. Three applications were received but could not be supported. Two applicants were in receipt of the Retail Hospitality and Leisure Grant or Small Business Grant Fund.



Having received representation from the Taxi and Private Hire fleet along with many other businesses across the city we are considering our options in terms of how best to deploy the additional business grants which have been provided to Leeds City Council to support businesses through the current national and local restrictions.

Those who are self-employed can access Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) which has been extended through to March 2021.

**Q29** Councillor B Anderson - Can the Executive Member for Climate Change advise me if the Council have applied for any of the £9bn package for energy efficiency measures to support the pathway towards achieving net zero carbon in line with the Government's manifesto?

**A** Councillor L Mulherin (Executive Member for Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development) - The 2019 Conservative manifesto contained outline commitments to invest more than £9bn in energy efficiency in homes, schools and hospitals. This splits into the following promises:

- £6.3bn to improve the energy efficiency of 2.2 million disadvantaged homes. This will be delivered through a £3.8bn Social Housing Decarbonisation Scheme (SHDF) reducing energy bills by an average of £160 a year, and a £2.5bn Home Upgrade Grant which will replace boilers, and provide insulations to 200,000 existing homes. It will cover costs up to £12,000 and apply to fuel poor households, both private and social.
- £2.7bn clean funding for schools and hospitals.

Since the election last year a £50m SHDF national pilot has been announced with a closing date for bids to that funding of 12<sup>th</sup> November. The council intends to submit an application for a c£4m investment in maisonettes.

Other than that pilot no others have been formally launched as yet - although it is assumed that the recent COVID related £2bn Green Homes Grant (GHGLAD) funding and £1bn Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) form part of this manifesto commitment.

Our approach to these schemes is outlined below:

- The council has already secured £2.97m from GHGLAD Ph1A to support 385 homes, to be spent prior to end March 2021.
- The council intends to bid for further support from the GHGLAD Ph1B by the deadline in mid December, to be spent prior to end Sept 2021.
- We expect to be allocated around £4.1m from GHGLAD Ph2 to spend on fuel poor homes prior to end March 2022.

We will also be submitting a number of bids to PSDS over November and December to support the decarbonisation of our corporate estate as well as schools



**Q30** Councillor N Buckley - Given that it already takes years to have a footpath examined for validity as a public right of way, could the Executive Member for Environment and Active Lifestyles tell me how much longer this process would take if his administration goes ahead with its planned £100,000 cuts to the Public Rights of Way service?

**A** Councillor M Rafique (Executive Member for Environment and Active Lifestyles) - Enquirers who wish to claim public paths not recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement (the council's legal record of public rights of way) are advised to submit an application for a Definitive Map Modification Order. The service's target is to determine DMMO applications within 12 months of receipt, however there is no legal requirement to complete within any specified time frame.

Budget proposals linked to the public right of way service do not impact on the resources presently committed to carrying out this function and therefore the length of time taken to resolve a definitive map modification order will be unaffected.

**Q31** Councillor M Robinson - Could the Executive Member for Adults and Health outline what steps are being taken to raise awareness of Motor Neurone Disease and what provision is being made to assist those living with this illness in Leeds, particularly as it relates to getting timely access to support and services such as housing adaptations?

**A** Councillor R Charlwood (Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adults) - Leeds City Council has signed up to the MND charter.

Our Disability Services Teams keep cases open if the person has MND, even if there is no active work going on – so that they can get an immediate response when needed. Social Workers are required to do the same.

Our senior OT attends the MND steering group, led by the MND centre at Seacroft Hospital

Any adaptations requests are sent with a very high priority, and Health and Housing deal with them as a priority as are all requests for specialist equipment – they are fast tracked through as urgent.

**Q32** Councillor B Anderson - The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is inviting applications for further funding under the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme. Can the Executive Member responsible please advise whether apart from Otley, are there plans to target any other wards in the north of the city and can they please explain what criteria has been used for the estates within the Wards that have been identified in the city.

**A** Councillor D Coupar (Executive Member for Communities) - The estates included for external wall insulation within the GHGLAD Ph1A grant application were selected using a GIS enabled database that identified areas most closely fitting the specific eligibility criteria.

This included system built estates with a mix of tenures with relatively straightforward technical solutions, a high proportion of very inefficient properties (i.e. EPC rated E, F or G) and a high proportion of lower income residents.



The eligibility criteria has been slightly relaxed for Ph1B and we therefore intend to extend the work in the existing estates to also include D rated properties (which were not eligible for Ph1A) to maximise the effectiveness of the grant in those areas. We will also revisit the GIS enabled database to identify further estates that best fit the new grant criteria.

It is worth noting that the successful Ph1A application also includes grants for non-standard cavity wall insulation in private homes which can be undertaken anywhere in the city, so long as the resident meets income criteria.

**Q33** Councillor M Robinson - Will the Executive Member confirm what penalties are in place if ELOR construction work runs beyond the completion date of autumn 2022? And will financial penalties be ring fenced to be spent in the communities in my ward and those in East Leeds impacted by the construction work?

**A** Councillor L Mulherin (Executive Member for Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development) - The ELOR contract allows the council to claim from the Contractor its incurred daily costs should the highway works be unfinished by the agreed contract end date.

The amount of monies paid per day cannot be considered a penalty on the Contractor. These monies would be to offset the costs of maintaining staff on site longer than was anticipated to supervise any overrunning works. It is estimated this would be in the order of £2,000 per day.

For these reasons should there be a delay, no additional monies would be available from the contract mechanism to spend within wards.

**Q34** Councillor B Anderson - Can the Executive Member with responsibility for Climate Change advise me if the Council have applied for support on electric vehicles and sustainable travel through the Energy Saving Trust's Local Government Support programme which is fully funded by the Department for Transport and helps Local Authorities to deliver their ambitions on decarbonising transport and cleaner air?

**A** Councillor L Mulherin (Executive Member for Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development) - Support for electric vehicles is delivered through the On-Street Residential Charge Point Scheme (ORCS) that is managed by the Energy Savings Trust (EST) on behalf of the Office for Low Emission Vehicles. Leeds City Council's submitted a successful application for £97,500. Earlier in 2020 there was an opportunity to bid for funding to support uptake of E-Cargo bikes with a scheme funded by the Department for Transport (DfT) and supported by EST. A West Yorkshire bid led by Leeds City Council was submitted with support from WYCA and Bradford CC, however this was not successful. Leeds City Council has already supported E-Cargo provision through its own modal shift grants to local businesses to improve air quality and plans to utilise its Electric Vehicle Trial Centre to also provide E-Cargo bikes on loan to businesses despite the lack of DfT support for this in Leeds.



With regards to support for decarbonisation of transport and sustainable travel that is funded by the Department for Transport it can be advised that in partnership with West Yorkshire Combined Authority funding from the Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) to combat the COVID19 pandemic was applied for. The Department for Transport confirmed on the 2nd July 2020 that the West Yorkshire Combined Authority would Tranche 1 funding. Leeds City Council received £730,000 of this allocation. The focus of Tranche 1 funding is for quick and effective interventions that enable safe everyday walking and cycling. The timescales associated with the delivery of Tranche 1 schemes are challenging and will require rapid delivery through a multi-disciplinary project team from within Highways & Transport.

The key deliverables from this funding in line with government criteria are the rapid delivery of schemes that support active travel neighbourhoods, segregated cycle provision, widening of footways, cycle parking both short and long stay, school streets and bike purchases. A second tranche of funding will support delivery of longer term schemes.

**Q35** Councillor M Robinson - Can the Executive Member for Resources confirm if any member of the public offered to pay more council tax than they were billed for in the last municipal year, and can he confirm how members of the public can volunteer to pay more than they owe if they choose?

**A** Councillor J Lewis (Executive Member for Resources) - The council cannot legally pursue customers for more than their actual liability (plus any costs that they may have incurred), nor can we “increase” a person's liability above the relevant Council Tax band for their property. Therefore, it is not possible for people to pay more council tax than is legally due. Clearly, a customer can choose to pay more than their liability voluntarily, however, this would simply put that customer's account into credit. Periodically we review any credits on accounts and seek to refund the balance due. If the account was ongoing, then the “credit” would be automatically deducted from the following year's charge (if we hadn't already refunded). If a customer were to refuse to accept the refund then discussions would need to take place as to what would happen to the credit.

**Q36** Councillor B Anderson - Can the Executive member for Climate Change advise me if the Council has applied for any grant funding for electric vehicle charging points in residential areas for those with no off-street parking and advertised that free help is available and how much have they applied for as Local Authorities can apply for up to 76% of the capital cost through the Energy Saving Trust scheme?

**A** Councillor L Mulherin (Executive Member for Executive Member for Climate Change, Transport and Sustainable Development) - Leeds City Council has applied for funding for Residential Charge Points to support areas that typically lack off street parking, our application for this funding was submitted through the Energy Savings Trust to the Office for Low Emission Vehicles. We successfully received £97,500 (the scheme advises bids up to £100k can be submitted) based on our fully costed proposal from the government's On Road Charge Scheme (ORCS). This was awarded to LCC in October 2020 to provide 75% of the initial capital cost for the project, with work underway to agree a contract with an operator to supply, install and operate charge points in early 2021. The operator is proposing to provide additional capital towards this delivery as well as meet the ongoing revenue costs to maintain and service the units. As such this will be delivered with minimal initial or ongoing cost to the authority.



This funding will support delivery of charge opportunities across a range of locations that have been identified as supporting areas which lack off street parking with 15x dual 7kW Fast units due to be delivered, providing 30 charge bays that will be available to the public. These will supplement a growing charge infrastructure across the city and region that is supporting the already strong growth of EV and ULEV uptake in the city.

**Q37** Councillor M Robinson - Can the Executive Member for Childrens Services confirm that period products are an essential item and will be available to all those who need them during any lockdown measures?

**A** Councillor J Pryor (Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment) - Yes, period products are available for all students in the schools that have opted into Leeds City Council's scheme. In addition to this, products continue to be supplied to the community hubs that remain open for people to access them as required. These products are being delivered every month. In the event of lockdown related school closures, we will adapt the scheme as necessary, as we did over the first lockdown period, by distributing products through the emergency food scheme, Catering Leeds and key third sector partners. The council also refers any third sector organisations who require period products to Freedom 4 Girls, who have agreed to continue to supply products to the third sector.

**Q38** Councillor M Robinson - Will the Leader of Council confirm to children across Leeds that Santa Claus will be allowed to deliver presents this Christmas and won't be in contravention of local Covid restrictions?

**A** Councillor J Blake (Leader of Council) - Our understanding is Santa Claus is classed as a key worker so is able to continue with his essential work of delivering presents as normal.

Yours sincerely

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

