

Public Document Pack

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS LETTER

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 8



Legal and Democratic Services

Governance Services

1st Floor (West)

Civic Hall

Leeds LS1 1UR

Contact Name: Kevin Tomkinson

e-mail: kevin.tomkinson@leeds.gov.uk

Your ref:

Our Ref:

Date: 28 November 2022

To: All Members of Council

Dear Councillor

COUNCIL MEETING – 16th NOVEMBER 2022

At the above meeting, the thirty minutes of Question Time expired with questions 7 to 40 were unanswered. Council Procedure Rule 11.6 requires that each Member of Council is sent responses to such questions.

Q7 Councillor D Chapman - Could the Exec Member for Resources advise if there are any plans for a move to locality based caretaking of LCC buildings to:-

- minimise travel time during the working day
- maximise the amount of time actually spent doing the job
- reduce the cost of such travel and environmental impact

and if so will this takes into consideration employee home locations, where feasible, to improve the work life balance and job satisfaction of council employees?

A Executive Member for Resources

There has been a large decrease in the number of Facility Management Building Caretakers over the last four years as part of the effort for the Council to deliver a balanced budget. Where possible technology has been used to manage some of this activity such as remote locking and unlocking and management of heating systems.

Other processes have had to be put in place in areas such as the Community Centre Portfolio buildings, with users becoming key holders, managing the opening and locking of the centres themselves, to help ease the pressure on the budget and to keep hire prices at a reasonable level.



Having staff sited at buildings is not economically viable in the current economic climate and there are no plans to return to that delivery model.

The majority of remaining caretaking staff operate in a mobile way (except for the larger city centre buildings like Civic Hall). Looking after a number of buildings has proven to be a more productive and cost-effective way of delivering the service. Where possible staff operate in the same geographic area, to minimise travelling time. The majority of journeys are undertaken in LCC electric vans which limits the impact on the environment.

Q8 Councillor E Flint – Can the Executive Member update Council on his regular letters to the various Secretaries of State for Education and their responses concerning the children of Leeds?

A Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education

I have written to every single Secretary of State for Education, including Gillian Keegan, the seventh person to hold that role in three years.

In each letter I extend a warm invitation for the Minister to come and visit Leeds and see for themselves the fantastic work our schools undertake.

To date however, no one has taken me up on my invitation.

My letters go on to ask for the money Leeds children are due by the Government's own funding formula, but it is the money Leeds has consistently missed out on due to the Government's cap on gains within the High Needs Block.

None of the Secretaries of State for Education have replied to say that they will remove the cap and give the children of Leeds the funding they are due.

I am bitterly disappointed at the lack of action from successive Education Secretaries as I continue in my fight for Leeds children to receive the funding they are entitled to.

Q9 Councillor M Dobson – Can the Executive Board Member with responsibility for Public Health and Active Lifestyles explain to Council why bonfire night and Christmas have less cultural significance for the Administration than Leeds 2023 or the Eurovision Song Contest?

A Executive Member for Public Health and Active Lifestyles

The Council faces substantial budget pressures and the current cost of living crisis is having a significant impact on the demand for council services and support. We appreciate it is very disappointing for residents that the six annual council bonfire and firework events did not restart this year. We certainly did not take this decision lightly and hoped that the financial situation would improve. This is an issue across the UK, as Local Authorities in Manchester, Liverpool, Cardiff, Glasgow, Norwich, Dundee, Nottingham, Hackney and Lewisham all cancelled their events too. Notwithstanding, we communicated with local councillors and provided additional funding to Community Committees to carry out local events and diversionary activities.

The Council is committed to celebrating the festive season, and many areas and neighbourhoods are holding events for their Christmas lights switch on in the coming weeks. Christmas illuminations can be found in Roundhay Park, Temple Newsam and Lotherton Hall as well as all over the city centre. Santa Claus will be visiting the Merrion Centre and Abbey



House Museum and Mrs Claus will be at Lotherton Hall. This year also sees the return of the ever-popular Ice Cube, an outdoor ice rink in the middle of Leeds city centre, along with Christmas Markets at various locations. For more details on this and other events please visit: <https://www.visitleeds.co.uk/winter-season/>

Major events like LEEDS 2023 deliver significant economic and social benefits. Indicative impacts of LEEDS 2023 include: 1310 new jobs in the visitor economy rising to 1620 by 2030*; 10% growth in the Leeds visitor economy in 2023 and 4% growth thereafter*; £114m extra direct and indirect revenue to the Leeds visitor economy*; £49m annual boost to the West Yorkshire visitor economy*; 8 to 1 return on investment for West Yorkshire*; 6 to 1 return on investment for Leeds* ; £4bn direct and indirect gross value added from Leeds creative and tourism industries in 2019* (**BOP Consulting impacts analysis for LEEDS 2023 completed March 2021*)

Strong progress has been made by LEEDS 2023's fundraising team, which has brought in additional external fundraising to date of £5,951,373. A further £2.3m of additional funding is pending and bids worth another £5.8m are currently in the pipeline. Fundraising efforts will continue throughout 2022 and until the end of 2023, with experience of other Years of Culture suggesting that the majority of match funding comes within the year itself. Some ticketed events and branded merchandise will also generate income.

Q10 Councillor D Jenkins – Please could the Executive Member for Children and Adult's Social Care and Health Partnerships update on the Leeds response to the Government's proposals for early years settings?

A Executive Member for Children and Adult's Social Care and Health Partnerships

Thank you Cllr Jenkins. Members may be aware of the latest Government consultation on changes to the regulation of early years settings. A key element of this proposes to relax childcare ratios so that the number of two year olds an adult can legally be responsible for, would increase from four to five.

In Leeds, we have heard views from our own Little Owls nurseries and via the regular childcare provider meetings I Chair, which are attended by all types of providers that make up the early years sector in the city. There has been strong feedback from the private sector, as well as hearing from parents about their concerns and it is overwhelmingly clear - they do not want childcare ratios to be relaxed.

Where we do agree with the Government, is on the pressing need to fix the country's broken early years system. Parents in Britain pay the second-highest costs for childcare in the developed world, according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Costs have ballooned in the last decade - increasing at twice the rate of wages since 2012. Since the Conservatives took office, the cost of a fulltime nursery place for a child under two has risen by around £2,200 a year.

Raging inflation and the cost of living crisis is making the financial situation worse for many working families with young children. Just a couple of weeks ago, thousands of parents took to the streets of Leeds to shine a light on the UK's appalling record on childcare as part of the nationwide 'March of the Mummies' protest, organised by pressure group Pregnant Then Screwed.

Childcare providers are also feeling the squeeze from rapidly rising costs that are eroding the value of their budgets. Last week the IFS warned that providers, who have already seen costs



rise faster than inflation in recent years, can expect to face an even steeper rise in costs in the coming years – a rise of 16% by 2024/25.

But to suggest that this situation may be helped by having fewer adults caring for children in settings, after the disruption of the pandemic and when children need more support with their early language and communication, their social, emotional and physical development, is completely wrongheaded.

In the words of the petition put forward by Zoe and Lewis Steeper, who recently lost their son, Oliver, following an incident that occurred at his nursery; “There are surely better ways to reduce the cost of living – potentially endangering children in trusted care is not how it should be done.”

For these devastated parents, early years professionals and over 100,000 people angry enough to sign the petition which was debated in Parliament on Monday; the safety of children is paramount and is protected by the current adult – child childcare ratios.

The change would have serious consequences for the already exhausted and dwindling childcare workforce. Childcare providers in Leeds have warned that the suggestion of making the job of overstretched early years staff harder, is already damaging precarious recruitment and retention.

Our council submission to the consultation highlights this concern and emphasises the importance for children of quality conversations and interactions with skilled adults. Children need time to talk with adults one to one and in small groups to develop their skills, confidence and knowledge. Reducing the number of adults working with children will dilute the frequency and level of interaction and reduce learning opportunities.

The concerns raised in Leeds have been echoed across the country – with 98% of providers responding to a recent Early Years Alliance survey saying that cutting childcare ratios would not cut costs to parents.

Settings report not being able to reduce their fees and are in fact looking to increase them, due to cost of living increases, together with the historic and continued underfunding of this sector – especially the Government’s decision to underfund the ‘free’ childcare hours by over £2 per hour. Government proposals do nothing to address this gap, which is the primary cause of the exorbitant childcare costs faced by parents, and threatens the sustainability of providers.

A few months ago, Cllr Lewis and I raised our concerns in writing to the former children’s minister, Will Quince, who the next day, resigned his post! Since then, we’ve seen an array of deregulation proposals mooted for early years providers – from the removal of statutory requirements such as the Early Years Foundation Stage framework, to allowing private agencies to set standards and accreditation to become a childminder, to abolishing the requirement for staffing ratios entirely - none of which have been welcomed by the sector.

Now, two further ministerial resignations later, the fourth children’s minister of the year is fresh in post – but from recent record is unlikely to last long enough to remedy the chaos that this government have caused through their woeful efforts to address the childcare costs crisis. A crisis, that is of their own making.

After years of underfunding and neglect, this is a sector that is desperate for investment, not for corners to be cut on children’s safety.



Nationally, we need radical change, like Labour's commitment to deliver breakfast clubs for primary age children, as a first step towards enabling parents to access a modern childcare system that supports them to work the jobs and hours they choose.

As we've heard from the protestors on the streets of Leeds and around the country – parents rightly want childcare to be a national priority. To give families this hope for the future – we need to give them a Labour Government!

Q11 Councillor B Anderson – Can the Executive Member responsible advise what actions are the Council taking to identify and resolve the reason for increased complaints from residents including concerns about increased night flights and associated problems emanating from Leeds Bradford Airport?

A Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate

The local planning authority have received complaints and are aware of wider concerns, regarding alleged breaches in night flights at LBA, these matters are currently under investigation, via the protocols set out in our Local Enforcement Plan and it would therefore be premature to comment on the details at this stage, other than to say we are investigating. The City Council is working closely with LBA who are fully co-operating with the process, to obtain the necessary factual information, in order to assess the complaints and to ascertain if any breach has occurred.

Q12 Councillor D Chapman – Could the Exec Member for Communities advise how frequently key holder access to, and usage of, LCC community buildings is reviewed and how often does that result in access being removed?

A Executive Member for Communities

Key holding of community buildings is reviewed on an ongoing basis as individual long term lettings come to an end and are not renewed. A process is in place to retrieve keys where this is necessary. Keys are issued to named individuals within each hiring group and where nominated keyholders change, an established process is undertaken to renew key holding agreements with these new individuals. New groups hiring community centres must undertake a probationary period before keys are issued, to establish trust in each organisation and to ensure that an induction to the safety and security systems within the building is carried out. Keys will be withdrawn from organisations where there is a persistent breach of the terms and conditions of hire agreements.

A list of keyholders is maintained which is updated regularly.

Currently we have 23 groups where our system shows they have keys but a letting is not in place.

- 9 of these are LCC / internal
- 6 refer to closed buildings or where leases are in place
- 8 refer to external hirers, 2 of which are under enquiry. The other 6 are recent additions

Q13 Councillor A Khan – Could the Executive Member please update Council on the setting up of warm spaces in Leeds?

A Executive Member for Communities



LCC have worked with 3rd Sector and Faith partners to establish the warm spaces network with venues across the city. We are actively encouraging organisations to register themselves online through a quick and easy to use registration form, once completed the warm space will then be displayed on the ‘interactive map’ – please visit the following link for more info: [Together Leeds](#). To date 77 organisations have registered across Leeds, with a further 27 awaiting verification checks. We will be analysing the map moving forward to ensure we are plugging any gaps in provision.

The city will also shortly be receiving funding from the West Yorkshire Mayoral fund to help provide grants to 3rd Sector warm space providers via our partners Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL). We hope to have this up and running very shortly and can provide more information to you as soon as it’s available. We expect to be providing grants based on the number of days per week the venue is open (up to a maximum of £1500), and we also hope to ‘top this up’ with a second smaller round of funds in the new year. In addition to this, funding to support the delivery of the LCC warm spaces venues will come from the Council’s Social Inclusion Fund.

Q14 Councillor P Wadsworth - Will the Executive Member for Environment and Housing please update Council on progress with the refuse collection route reviews and detail how this will bring about more efficient use of public assets?

A Executive Member for Environment and Housing

The review of collection routes across the city has restarted following the suspension caused by Covid. The garden waste collection (brown bin) routes were completed pre-covid and so the main focus is now on the black and green bin routes. Over summer and early autumn separate ward member consultation sessions have taken place, to capture ward members ideas and views on issues such as moving more households in their ward to alternate week (fortnightly) collections and locations where access issues cause the greatest problems and so may be better suited to a smaller collection wagon or a different collection day.

110 separate crew meetings will now take place to capture their views and ideas too, with the scheduled standing down of garden waste collections from early December helping ensure the capacity to do this without risk to the delivery of the service.

Technical work has already taken place on the modelling of the new routes.

The modelling of the new routes will be categorised into three main areas:

1. High rise and other communal bin locations;
2. High density, terraced housing areas with transient populations
3. Remainder of the city

There will also need to be some consideration as to the impact of the Environment Act (2021) on the service, for example the requirement to collect glass and food separately and the introduction of Extended Producer Responsibility and Deposit Return Schemes; all of which will affect the amount of waste needed to be collected on routes. The twice delayed update from Government which will provide councils with the crucial detail on these new requirements is expected “late 2022”.



The successful implementation of the route review will ensure that all routes are achievable without additional support and are future proofed for known housing developments over the coming few years. The new routes will also be designed to be better aligned to Community Committee areas, enabling better performance information to be provided to drive up local recycling rates.

Q15 Councillor D Chapman – The recent and very late decision to cancel the LCC bonfires disappointed many people across the city and didn't allow sufficient time for some local communities to organise alternative events. Will the Executive Member for Public Health and Active Lifestyles confirm that this was a one-off decision and that the bonfire night events will be re-instated in 2023?

A Executive Member for Public Health and Active Lifestyles

A decision to not go ahead with bonfire and firework displays in 2022 was left as late as possible in the hope that the financial position would improve to enable the events to proceed. Unfortunately that didn't happen. A decision on whether displays will take place in 2023 has not yet been made and any decision would again need to take account of the budgetary challenges that the council continues to face.

Q16 Councillor R Stephenson– The Conservative Government has granted £2,567,501 to the West Yorkshire Mayor as part of the Rural England Prosperity Fund, of which £461,227 is intended for rural communities in Leeds. How can villages in the Harewood Ward get this cash out of the hands of the Mayor and into our rural communities?

A Leader of Council

Many people in Leeds and West Yorkshire were appalled to hear the comments of the current Prime Minister during the summer that areas like Tunbridge Wells in a wealthy Conservative shire county should receive more government money. A number of wards across the Leeds Council area are entitled to this funding.

West Yorkshire has been allocated £2,567,501 of Rural England Prosperity Funding which is a capital only fund. As Lead Authority, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority is required to work with partners to submit an Addendum to the main UK Shared Prosperity Fund Local Investment Plan by the 30th November 2022 and I hope the government signs this off promptly.

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority Board received an update on 21 October 2022 which set out how this work would be undertaken. The report can be read [here](#). The REPF will be administered by WYCA and will not be devolved to Local Authorities.

Q17 Councillor C Campbell – Officers have indicated that future plans for City Square involve the removal of the existing statuary. Could the Executive Board Member indicate where they will be re-sited?

A Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate

The Initial design and development work to "The Glade" concept, and agreed by Executive Board, has been concluded. There are no funds available in the Council's Capital Programme to progress any further design work and/or undertake the public consultations or formal processes, such as planning, that would be required to progress further. No decisions have been taken about the existing statuary in City Square in relation to "The Glade".



The existing work in City Square that is underway leaves all existing statuary in their current positions.

Q18 Councillor N Buckley – Would the Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate confirm to Council how much money has been saved so far this financial year through not mowing highway verges and central reservations, and if this figure is greater than the cost to install new signage highlighting the lack of mowing activity?

A Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate

Leeds has been involved in developing pollinator habitats as part of a national ‘Urban Buzz’ project involving 7 other cities. Around 35 hectares on 20 flagship sites has already been identified in Leeds with some as large as 0.5 hectares. In addition, 128 ‘buzzing hotspots’ have been created (areas rich in flowers or providing sheltering / nesting opportunities) involving a total of 1,250 volunteers. Pollinator habitats have also been introduced via relaxed mowing alongside much of the highway network, for example on parts of the Outer Ring Road and alongside other roads, typically where the speed limit is 40mph and above. Furthermore, roundabouts which previously had seasonal bedding displays have been transformed into wildflower areas to support pollinating insects.

The suite of signage and interpretation is part of a wider initiative to tackle climate change, improve habitats for wildlife and sustain biodiversity. They provide an opportunity for local businesses to get involved in supporting this initiative through sponsorship, with local businesses contributing over £300k each year (more than covering the initial cost of the signs). The signs promote messages about important climate change initiatives including woodland creation, relaxed mowing and creating pollinator friendly areas thus raising awareness and encouraging people to get involved. There is already a huge commitment to practical volunteering in parks and green spaces representing 24,000 volunteer days each year.

The woodland creation initiative is particularly ambitious and commenced in winter 2020 with 50 hectares of council land identified each year and 5.8 million more trees planted over the next 25 years. Seed gathering will commence shortly involving many volunteers who last autumn collected over 40,000 from local native trees which are grown on at the Arium – the council’s plant nursery. There are already around 600 volunteers registered for tree planting and other woodland tasks, including volunteers from local business organisations involved in sponsorship.

With regard to financial savings from relaxed mowing, the vast majority of these have been made by reducing the need for traffic management arrangements needed to accommodate regular mowing on higher speed roads away from residential areas. Savings include a £100k in the 2017/18 budget with a corresponding reduction in mowing frequency from 6 to 3 cuts, with a further £65k identified in 2021/22 to further reduce the frequency to 1 cut in late summer.

Q19 Councillor C Campbell – Ten years ago, following Ward Members comments, parks agreed to investigate the provision of a cafe in the Council’s sailing centre at Yeadon Tarn. Ward Members are regularly informed that this is progressing. Could the Executive Member update Council as to the present position?

A Executive Member for Public Health and Active Lifestyles



The Sailing and Activity centre was subject to a Service Review as part of the 2020/21 saving proposals, which resulted in an expressions of interest process to other organisations to operate the facility. Whilst there was some interest, this proposal wasn't taken forward and Active Leeds is now working through proposals to increase the viability of the centre. The Service has reengaged with Civic Enterprise about potential café provision at the sailing centre. Civic Enterprise is current revisiting the plans for a café that were developed before the pandemic. They aim to refresh these plans and get up to date costs before determining if the development of the café is viable. These plans will be shared with Ward Members and they will be kept up to date with the proposals as they develop.

Q20 Councillor S Firth – Residents are haunted by nuisance bikes and vehicles on our local roads and the new A6120 East Leeds Orbital Road. Can the Executive Member for Resources clarify when the results of the consultation about a proposed Public Spaces Protection Order for Leeds will be published?

A Executive Member for Resources

The public consultation survey for the Proposed Citywide Nuisance Vehicle PSPO closed on the 12th August 2022. These results formed part of the supporting documents which accompanied a report to Safer Leeds Executive on the 3rd October recommending that the proposal for a PSPO be approved. Safer Leeds Executive duly approved the proposal. We are now working through the internal legal and governance procedures to enable us to bring the "order" into force. Once this is complete there is 6 week period where the "Order" must be published to enable challenge by "interested parties" in the High Court, during this period the "Order" is not enforceable. That's part of the legislation that we must abide by.

Q21 Councillor C Campbell – Could the Executive Member inform Council who authorised the signing of a cycle route through the children's play area in Wharfemeadows Park, Otley?

A Executive Member for Public Health and Active Lifestyles

Following a meeting with Cllr Campbell to discuss the signing of a cycle route at Manor Garth, Highways & Transportation Officers were asked to consider the introduction of 'shared use' signage within Wharfemeadows Park. This request has been actioned and the signs have been introduced.

It is our interpretation the route runs adjacent, not through, the play area. The sign in question has been placed on an existing lighting column on the route to minimise clutter and prevent the need for a new pole to be installed. The sign wasn't intended to endorse cycling to take place within the children's play area, however, the layout of the route adjacent to the play area and the access via a narrow bridge does make it difficult to clearly make this distinction.

Because of the site constraints and the feedback, a meeting with Cllr Campbell will be arranged to discuss options.

Q22 Councillor M Robinson – Will the Executive Member outline what new policing and road safety measures have been taken in light of groups of cars meeting and racing along the East Leeds Orbital Road?

A Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate



A meeting has been held with West Yorkshire Police to discuss the ongoing concerns relating to the illegal car meet at The Springs and anti-social driving along the ELOR route.

To assess these concerns, speed and volume surveys have been undertaken and these are at the present time been evaluated. The outcome of this evaluation process will help clarify if speeding is taking place along the route, on what days and during which times. This information will then be shared with West Yorkshire Police so that they can deploy their resources effectively by specific targeted intervention. In addition to the above, the length is also been reviewed for mobile speed enforcement consideration. If the speeds on ELOR meets this criteria, Leeds will request that the West Yorkshire Safety Camera Partnership deploy their vehicles to this location to support compliance of the prescribed speed limit.

Additional lay-bys were installed for mobile speed enforcement vehicles at the behest of the Police during ELOR construction and unmarked police cars operated on ELOR when it was first opened.

It is envisaged that the outcome of the current reviews will be concluded within the next few weeks.

Q23 Councillor C Hart-Brooke – Recent changes around City Square have caused gridlock as traffic is shunted onto Whitehall Road and adjacent streets. Can the Executive Member confirm how many City Square bus gate fines have been issued since work started and what understanding there is of delays experienced by taxis and others dropping off at Leeds Train Station.

A Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate

Following through on a decision taken at Executive Board in April 2021, City Square was closed to traffic on the weekend of 3rd/4th September after several years of planning and business justification work to realise a long-standing ambition of the Council. The scheme will facilitate the creation of a world-class area of public realm that will act as a welcoming gateway to the city for visitors, residents and businesses, and a place where cultural events can be held.

City Square forms part of an ongoing transformation of the city centre, including recent works on The Headrow, Cookridge Street, Park Row, Corn Exchange and Meadow Lane, with the latter the gateway to a large new park on the former Tetley site in the South Bank.

Since the City Square bus gate CCTV enforcement camera became operational on 20th September, about 40,000 vehicles are estimated to have passed through the bus gate in contravention of the Traffic Regulation Order, despite increasing numbers of warning and information signs about the closure and a significant ongoing comms exercise including:

- Yellow & black on street signage, over 60 signs installed, and many permanent signs amended or replaced.
- Variable Message Signs around the city centre (and on the M621 for a period)
- Leeds City Council 'Plan Ahead' web page on Connecting Leeds website
- Updating scheme project website content on Commonplace
- Press releases August (one), September (one) and October (two).
- Paid social media advertising on Facebook
- Organic social media update posts
- Letter drops to over 3,400 individual/business addresses across the city centre
- Stakeholder 400+ emails to people and organisations
- Connecting Leeds email bulletin sent to over 18,000 subscribers



- Radio advertising from 19th August across Heart FM
- TV – Restrictions mentioned on BBC’s Look North on a number of occasions
- Bus back advertising on 40 buses across Leeds

To help get the message out to drivers of the changed circumstance, in addition to the above, Parking Services issued 13,455 warning letters up until 31st October, giving a ‘grace period’ of almost two months from ‘go live’ to allow motorists to notice the change and amend their route. Prior to 1st November, there was also some enforcement and issuing of a small number of PCNs by West Yorkshire Police. More than one in five letters were to repeat offenders. From 1st November to 10th November, 800 Penalty Charge Notices have been issued or prepared for issue.

Our current work to remove through traffic is enabling us to create high quality streets and public spaces which have been lacking to date compared with other northern cities. City Square itself is critical to the city’s bus network – the majority of city centre bus routes pass through it – and it is essential that we protect buses from congestion caused by general traffic during the construction of the scheme and afterwards, hence the requirement to effectively enforce the bus gate. The combination of city centre schemes also enable us to improve bus journey times (we have estimated a 10-15% reduction in the city centre once all works are complete) reducing the dominance of traffic in key areas for the benefit of pedestrians and to allow us to continue to develop our cycle network.

With regard to traffic delays on Whitehall Road and around the station area, officers in Transport Strategy who monitor schemes are aware of additional delays from site observations, comments from bus operators, correspondence from the public and feedback from councillors. The team is monitoring the traffic levels and has reviewed bus journey time data to help identify the amount of congestion. An increase in traffic was expected with the closure of City Square, but conditions are forecast to improve when the additional highway capacity is released upon completion of the road widening at Armley Gyratory, as this will relieve pressure on Whitehall Road. Bus automatic vehicle location data shows that average bus journey times between the inner ring road area (by Dunelm) and King Street (close to City Square) were between 8 and 10 minutes when averaged throughout the day in the 5 weeks up to and including half term, with fewer than 5% of trips taking more than 20 minutes. Given the feedback on conditions in this area, however, the team is also about to start more detailed monitoring of the congestion conditions along Whitehall Road at regular points through the day to supplement the live monitoring undertaken by the traffic signals team from the control room.

The speed of general traffic and taxis accessing the station rear entrance via Whitehall Road will be similar to that of buses noted above. We are aware that private hire vehicles, which have the same status as private cars in terms of traffic orders due to the high number of licensed vehicles versus hackney carriages (there are over 3,800 registered phvs within Leeds plus an estimated 2-3000 additional PHV vehicles that are registered in other districts working in Leeds on a regular basis, bringing the total number of active PHV vehicles in Leeds to circa 6000), are subject to the delays experienced by general traffic. Congestion around the station rear entrance on Princes Square is well known and has been like this for many years. Before the closure of City Square, the station congestion could cause queuing back into and through City Square affecting buses and general traffic. Network Rail has recently made some interim improvements to the pick-up / drop-off area, but these have not eradicated the issue of congestion within and approaching the rear entrance. Council officers are continuing to press Network Rail to pursue its ambition of a further, more significant remodelling of the rear entrance which requires use of some of the short-stay multi-storey car park which has the potential to improve its operation and reduce delays. Taxis (Hackney



carriages) predominantly use the main rank to the front of the station and make use of the network of bus lanes and bus gates in the city centre and their operation is less affected by the Whitehall Road congestion.

We believe that the end result of better accessibility and a higher quality city centre will be worth the short-term disruption which is currently being experienced as a result of the present roadworks. Traffic conditions have been exceptionally good for two years since the first Covid lockdown, which has made the present disruption seem worse. Pre-Covid, this time of year, October through to December was always a busy period. Leeds has some of the best traffic conditions of all the 'core cities' in the UK, and at last assessment was ranked second out of the 5 West Yorkshire districts for traffic speeds. Nevertheless, our traffic signals team and Network Management team (responsible for coordinating roadworks) are working to minimise disruption whilst the comms team is continuing to raise awareness and encourage motorists to Plan Ahead and use Park and Ride.

Q24 Councillor S Firth – Could the Leader of Council confirm when and how the Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin, will be scrutinised by elected members of Leeds City Council?

A Leader of Council

The West Yorkshire Combined Authority is the only mayoral CA in the country to reserve spaces for opposition members to provide political balance. This was agreed through the deal negotiations and three such opposition members sit on the Authority, one of whom is also from Leeds.

The Combined Authority has three scrutiny committees responsible for scrutinising the work of the Mayor and Combined Authority. Leeds has representatives on all three, as outlined below:

- Corporate Scrutiny Committee – three members including the chair.
- Economy Scrutiny Committee – three members.
- Transport/Infrastructure Scrutiny Committee – three members.

Furthermore, Leeds is represented on the Combined Authority's Governance and Audit Committee by an opposition member.

The Combined Authority has also responded to all requests to attend Leeds City Council's own scrutiny boards. Details of those appearances are below.

Following her appointment in August 2021, the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime – Alison Lowe - attended the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board to discuss priorities for policing and crime in the region, and the ongoing development of the Police and Crime Plan for West Yorkshire. Further information can be found here: [Scrutiny Board \(Environment, Housing & Communities\): 21 October 2021](#)

Subsequently, in July 2022 the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime provided a written update to the same Scrutiny Board in relation to the West Yorkshire Police and Crime Plan 2021-24. Julie Reid (Head of Policing and Crime) represented WYCA at the Scrutiny Board meeting, which was also attended by officers from Leeds City Council, West Yorkshire Police and the Chair and Vice Chair of West Yorkshire Police and Crime Panel (Cllrs Al Garthwaite and Amanda Carter). Further information can be found here: [Scrutiny Board \(Environment, Housing & Communities\): 21 July 2022](#)



The Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth) has had a long-standing interest in bus provision in the City. In November 2021 the Board scrutinised the Mayor's Bus Service Improvement Plan and most recently, in November 2022, a written update was provided by West Yorkshire Combined Authority as part of the ongoing Advancing Bus Services work item. WYCA was represented at the meeting of the Scrutiny Board by Dave Pearson (Director, Transport and Property Services) and the Deputy Chair of WYCA Transport Committee (Cllr Peter Carlill). Further information can be found here: [Scrutiny Board \(Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth\): 2 November 2022](#)

In December 2022, at the Scrutiny Board Resources and Strategy (the Board that has oversight responsibility for Devolution) the Chief Executive of WYCA will be in attendance to answer Members' questions - all Leeds Scrutiny Board Chairs have also been invited to that session to ensure engagement is as wide as possible.

Q25 Councillor C Hart-Brooke– Following reports of thefts of catalytic converters at Stourton Park and Ride, can the Executive Member give assurances on what measures are in place and if any further steps are to be taken to give users of our park and ride facilities confidence that their vehicle will be safe and secure.

A Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate

There are reports of 3 catalytic converter thefts at Stourton Park and Ride –2 on the 28th October and 1 on the 4th November. These incidents have been referred to the police and subsequently Leeds Watch have had a response from the police for a number of these incidents and are expecting a further request.

Stourton Park and Ride has extensive CCTV coverage, street lighting and a manned terminus building during operational hours to ensure the standard of security expected for a car park. Further to the physical infrastructure in place to deter incidents of this nature, regular partnership meetings have been set up with representatives from Police Crime prevention, local PCSO's, Leeds Watch and Leeds City Council aimed at preventing incidents of anti-social behaviour and theft from the site. The group is implementing increased police patrols, ensuring strong partnership working to achieve successful prosecution and are exploring other preventative measures that could stop future incidents of this nature.

Q26 Councillor M Robinson – What meetings has the Leader of Council had with Yorkshire Water and Government Ministers to discuss cleaning up rivers, streams and water ways across Leeds?

A Leader of Council

Communities across Leeds will struggle to comprehend why Cllr Robinson and other Conservative Group members present at the Full Council meeting on 16th November voted against a White Paper motion that called on the Government to do more to end the disgusting practice of private water companies discharging raw sewage into rivers in Leeds. The motion was passed as Labour Group members voted in favour and a communication will now be sent to the relevant Government minister to set out the council's position as outlined in the White Paper.

Q27 Councillor R Downes – A constituent recently had their bicycle stolen from the designated bike rack outside the Corn Exchange after the thief cut through two locks, however, the Police could not investigate as there is no CCTV covering this location. Can the



Executive Member assure Council that CCTV will be installed as soon as possible to address this obvious gap in City Centre coverage?

A Executive Member for Resources

A fixed camera was commissioned on Call Lane in October 2022, under the control of LeedsWatch. The fixed camera has a view of the bike racks outside the entrance to the Corn Exchange.

Q28 Councillor C Anderson – Can the Executive Member for Highways and Transportation please advise me what the current backlog for white lining refresh is across the city, how many sites are awaiting a refresh and the number of months the longest site has been waiting

A Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate

Highways & Transportation fully recognise the important contribution that effective road markings make to the safety and welfare of all road users. The introduction, amendment or refresh of road markings can occur due to resurfacing works, as part of a specific enhancement scheme or following a routine highway safety inspection or a defect report.

In July of 2019 a general maintenance survey of all 'safety critical' road markings including stop lines, crossing facilities and roundabouts, was undertaken and any faded or missing markings were renewed over the following months.

In order to keep road markings clear and visible, we aim to refresh our existing 'safety critical' markings as quickly as possible once they have been observed during any routine safety inspection or when reported by a member of the public. In recent years, given the road safety related benefits, both the budget provision and dedicated resource has been increased with regards to road markings.

More recently trials have commenced on the use of cameras mounted within the safety inspector vehicles which use Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to assist with the assessment and prioritisation of both faded and missing road markings.

Our aim is to undertake road marking refresh maintenance works within a maximum of 6 weeks (depending upon the type of markings) from when a works order is issued, however at present this has slipped to 8 weeks. We currently have a total of 374 requests for either new markings or for existing markings to be refreshed, the oldest of which was a request for an additional new slow marking in January 2022, however the site is under review. Of the requests received, only 37% relate to faded lines with the majority being new requests.

All requests for the introduction of new road markings, in particular 'non safety critical' are assessed, and work carried out, as required, on an ad-hoc basis.

All refresh works are of course subject to weather, road conditions and programmes can change with short notice.

Q29 Councillor S Golton – Does the Executive Member for Public Health and Active Lifestyles agree that the inclusion of a question associated with an individual's mental well-being would be a welcome inclusion in the NHS Health Check offered to adults in Leeds aged 40-74, especially given pressures associated with the current cost of living crisis?

A Executive Member for Public Health and Active Lifestyles



The NHS Health Check is primarily a cardiovascular disease prevention programme and is nationally mandated. Provision in Leeds is commissioned in accordance with the national NHS Health Check Best Practice Guidance. Currently there is no recommendation to include a specific question on mental wellbeing as part of the NHS Health Check. In line with this national guidance a 'Making Every Contact Count (MECC)' approach is taken in Leeds, which encourages holistic and Person-centred conversations to help support people improve their physical and mental wellbeing.

Additionally, the NHS Health Check contract in Leeds requires that clinicians should apply a 'Better Conversations' approach to the consultation in order to support people to make healthy behaviour changes and access support. The 'Better Conversations' approach supports professionals to work with people holistically with a focus on what matters to them. Our view is that the focus should be on encouraging a quality person-centred conversation as part of the NHS Health Check and ensuring this is happening consistently across Leeds. This should tease out any considerations or implications of an individual's mental wellbeing in the context of a cardiovascular disease health check-up.

Also to note, Public Health England completed a national review of the NHS Health Check programme in 2021. One of the recommendations put forward as part of the review was to consider adding other conditions in to the NHS Health Check including assessing risk of common mental health conditions (anxiety and depression). There is also a national Mental Health strategy due, of which, this recommendation may also feature. Conversations at a national level acknowledge that it would be a positive step to include, but consideration needs to be given to additional staff time, training and cost implications. In addition, what would be asked and the measure to use and also where primary care would signpost/refer depending on the outcome of a screen such as this would need to be agreed. We await to hear further steer on this nationally and will factor this in to the review of the NHS Health Check programme in Leeds we are currently undertaking to inform the re-procurement of this service.

Q30 Councillor S Firth – Would the Executive Member for Environment & Housing reconsider the Retirement LIFE communal room charges to ensure our non-profit community groups no longer have to consider their future viability?

A Executive Member for Environment and Housing

We have a significant number of Retirement LIFE schemes across the city (78 in total) that have access to a meeting space/lounge, kitchen and laundry facilities for use by residents living at that scheme. These spaces are viewed by residents as an extension of their home. There are substantial costs to the council of £1.7 million each year for running these facilities including heating and electricity, water, cleaning and providing kitchen equipment. This service operates within a 'ring-fenced account' in which all costs must be covered by tenant rents or other charges.

The Booking and Charging process for community and voluntary groups, or other members of the public who wish to use the facilities was reviewed in July 2021. This was at the time we reopened our centres/communal lounges and we needed to ensure charges are applied consistently at all schemes across the city. This did mean that for some groups that had historically used the facilities without charge, this position changed for them at that time.

The current charge for members of the public for 2022/23 (subsidised rate applicable to local community groups) is £12.02 per hour. Applying the charges ensures that these facilities are



sustainable for all groups to use, and is fairer and more equitable as more of the cost will be paid by those who benefit from the use of the facilities without tenants subsidising this use. If this process were to change Retirement LIFE residents would be paying for these facilities whilst non-profit community groups would be using them free of charge.

We do appreciate that non-profit groups will need to consider further how they can continue to pay these charges, for some groups we know they have introduced or increased charges for attendees as a contribution towards the cost (often £1-2 each).

Q31 Councillor B Anderson – Can the Executive Member responsible please advise why some wards in the city get a good or excellent bin collection service, yet some streets in some wards have regular issues and despite promises nothing is done to resolve the root causes of the bin collection failures?

A Executive Member for Environment and Housing

The refuse service successful bin collection performance/rate for the 25m bins schedule to be emptied across Leeds in 2021 was 99.86%. The year-to-date figure for 2022 is 99.88%.

The performance in the Adel and Wharfedale Ward for 2021 was slightly under the city average at 99.84%, and so far in 2022 is also at 99.84%. This ranks as number 23 out of the 33 wards.

Q32 Councillor M Robinson – Could the Executive Member comment on why Leeds was not able to make arrangements for the Christmas Market this year, whilst cities like Manchester have managed to host one for their residents?

A Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education

Leeds quite clearly has made arrangements for Christmas Markets.

As you can see from Millennium Square, the hugely popular Ice Cube@Christmas outdoor skating rink is back with a string of attractions and stalls around it, and also on nearby Victoria Gardens and Cookridge Street. Ice Cube@Christmas will be open every day (except Christmas Day and Boxing Day) up until New Year's Eve providing a wide range of festive experiences and opportunities for the families, residents and visitors to enjoy. For full details please refer to the recent [press release](#).

Many fantastic festive markets are held across Leeds, including the Artisan Winter Market at Harewood House, The Christmas Market at the Corn Exchange and in Otley with the wonderful Otley Victorian Fayre.

The German element of the Christmas Markets has not featured since 2019. This is following the pandemic, and combined with foreign travel work visa costs and complications that have increased since then. It was mutually agreed with our friends in Frankfurt that it was no longer feasible to bring the German market back to Leeds.

We are committed to making sure Christmas in Leeds is always an exciting and memorable time and work with our partners across the city on a programme of festive activities.



Q33 Councillor S Firth– Harewood Ward residents have reported a number of missed bin recoveries where household and recycling waste has been tipped into the same vehicle. Will the Executive Member for Environment & Housing work to ensure this does not continue, especially during the current cost of living crisis and wider climate emergency?

A Executive Member for Environment and Housing

There are rare occasions where we do collect a small amount of missed green bins together with a scheduled black bin collection. We will always try and recover missed green bins separately and take the contents to the city’s recycling sorting facility in Beeston. However, there will be some circumstances where in order to empty the missed green bins the only resource we have available is a crew collecting black bin waste in that area. On these rare occasions the waste would be taken to the Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility (RERF). No household waste collected in Leeds goes to landfill, which ever bin it is in, and although it is not as great as it would be if sorted and processed for recycling, there is still a net carbon benefit of this small amount of green bin waste being processed at the RERF.

Q34 Councillor M Robinson – Could the Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate outline what interventions residents in Wike can expect from the Council to tackle speeding through the village?

A Executive Member for Infrastructure and Climate

Last year, Traffic Engineering conducted some speed and volume surveys to assess the speeds through the 30mph section of the village and the following results were recorded:-

Wike Ridge Lane (West of Forge Lane) – 23rd Feb to 10th March 2021

Direction	Volume (24hr average)	Mean speed
Eastbound	1194	32.6mph
Westbound	1115	33.3mph

Backstone Gill Lane (East of Coal Road) – 23rd Feb to 3rd March 2021

Direction	Volume (24hr average)	Mean speed
Eastbound	888	37.3mph
Westbound	823	35.8mph

The result of these surveys showed that there are some drivers who are choosing to drive at a greater speed than the posted 30mph limit. A copy of these results have been forwarded to the Police to ask them to provide some targeted enforcement action.

As part of this request, the Police recorded injury collisions record for the section of 30mph speed limit through the village (on both Wike Ridge Lane and Backstone Gill lane) have also been reviewed. This has identified that the length has a very good injury collision record, with only one injury collision recorded in the last 3 year period which was a turning conflict collision between a car and cycle at low speed.

The practical measures which can be used to address excessive speed are complicated in Wike by the lack of street lighting, which precludes the provision of conventional traffic



calming which is effective at controlling driver speeds. As the elected member is aware, Highways & Transportation have recently supported the Parish Council in the implementation of 2 solar powered Speed Indicator Devices (SIDs) within the village to remind drivers of the posted speed limit, and training has been provided to enable the community to download speed survey data. This in turn can then be shared with the Police to support enforcement action.

The village gateway marking signs and road markings have been checked on site and are still clearly visible on each approach into the village to highlight the change in speed limit to approaching motorists. It was noted however that the presence of 30mph repeater signs was lacking along some sections and we will arrange for new repeater signs to be erected along the length.

The most effective deterrent to speeding through the village would be appropriate enforcement by the police and a further request to the Neighbourhood Policing Team and Roads Policing Team will be made for them to consider appropriate enforcement action at this location.

Ultimately, drivers in this area should be driving to the conditions of the road and the local environment. Regrettably, some drivers continue to choose not to.

Q35 Councillor S Firth – Could the Executive Member for Public Health & Active Lifestyles confirm what adaptations and repairs were made to protect Red Hall Playing Fields between the first two-week unauthorised Traveller encampment evicted on 8th July and a second two-week camp arriving on 14th August?

A Executive Member for Public Health and Active Lifestyles

Access to the site was gained by breaking down the boundary fencing. Following the first occurrence, new fencing was installed but unfortunately this was also broken down to gain access once more. Since then, an earthen mound has been put in place.

Q36 Councillor R Stephenson – Would the Executive Member for Communities please confirm to Council in which Wards where there are any budget underspends on wages/salaries in the Youth Service?

A Executive Member for Communities

All Youth Workers deliver youth work provision across a number of wards. Throughout the year, Youth Workers may also be deployed to other areas to respond to a specific community need and/or to maintain provision in areas where there are fewer staff due to absence or vacancies. It is therefore, not possible to provide this information on an individual ward basis. However, based on the current staffing levels, the projected total underspend on wages/salaries for 2022/23 is approximately £200,000. The Youth Service has an ongoing recruitment programme and consequently this figure is likely to reduce further by year end.

Q37 Councillor S Firth – Would the Leader of Council commit to make it a future requirement for council policy documents (including the Best City Ambition) to include appendices of relevant representations and requests for additional council funding or powers made to the UK government?

A Leader of Council



The council has ongoing dialogue with the UK government and its agencies across a broad range of issues, and these discussions take many forms. While in this context it may not be possible to capture every representation made about funding or powers, in response to Cllr Firth's question, effort will be made to include reference to such requests and representations wherever possible moving forward. These will in most cases be included in decision making reports when a policy document is considered.

Q38 Councillor M Robinson - Will the Executive Member set out how often each year the people of Leeds can expect to see a street sweeper cleaning their street, and can details of when streets will be swept be published online for 2023?

A Executive Member for Housing and Environment

The Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team (CNT) aim to sweep main roads, pavements and pathways not requiring specific traffic management or road closures every 8 - 12 weeks. This sweeping cycle is subject to change due to factors such as staffing levels (sickness and holidays), vacancies and vehicle breakdowns. Some roads and pavements are swept more often such as those in town centres or flooding hot-spots where frequencies may be daily, weekly or monthly dependent on specific weather conditions.

Ward members and community committees can always influence and prioritise approaches to sweeping in their areas through requests to the local CNT team or discussions at the community committee's environmental sub-groups which are attended by CNT staff. The service also responds to service requests raised by the public. The above cycle is also enhanced by the intense sweeping activity across the city during leaf-fall clearance between late October and early January each year.

Sweeping frequencies are not published online as they are subject to changes due to the numerous factors as highlighted above.

Q39 Councillor S Firth – Despite the 18.7% decrease in Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests received between January 2021 and March 2022, the number of requests responded to within the statutory timescales fell by 11.24%. To rectify this as soon as possible, can the Executive Member for Resources confirm when it is expected each council service will have a nominated individual in place who is responsible for processing information requests?

A Executive Member for Resources

Over the period of time specified, the Information Management and Governance Team struggled to maintain performance at pre-covid levels due to a few factors, including high Council wide absence levels, significant changes to the team and processes, as well as other competing demands. The same issues with performance were common across the public sector.

However, following root and branch reviews, as well as the natural passage of time needed to embed a new structure and new ways of working, we have seen performance improve and are very close to target. Acknowledging that we still have further changes to make over the coming months, we do expect to see performance consistently back at pre-covid levels in the new year.



Q40 Councillor S Firth – What evaluation process has been put in place by the Executive Member for Resources to ensure the continued flexibility on remote working for council employees is not detrimentally affecting the career development of our future leaders and workforce?

A Executive Member for Resources

The Council has a range of co-ordinated systems and processes in place:

1. All colleagues have annual and mid-year appraisal. Personal development planning is a central part of this, and we are confident that this works well, enabling all employees to discuss current and future development needs and career ambitions.
2. Via our Hybrid Working principles, we ask all employees to spend regular time in the workplace, to support personal and team development, particularly for new and junior members of the team.
3. As part of our annual staff survey (the next one of which is due to take place in spring 2023) we invite all employees to indicate how satisfied they are with their personal and career development. The results will enable us to consider any issues and outliers in comparison to the pre-covid period.
4. We continue to invest in major cross council Leadership Development – through our new Be Your Best offer. Feedback on this is positive, and it is open to all 2,200 appraising managers who work different and varied patterns, in line with service and role requirements. We have purposefully provided flexibility in delivery approach in recognition of this.
5. We have recently augmented our support to new and existing managers, offering core three day in person programmes of support.
6. We have also re-introduced a half day induction session for all new starters (hosted by Tom Riordan and Cllr Lewis). As part of the content we set out the importance of personal development, and our commitment to it. We signpost people to the wealth of support available.
7. Directorates, services and teams have their own training and improvement plans – to ensure that the necessary development needs are met. These are monitored locally.
8. We are creating a new leadership community so that our managers can provide peer support to one another, and share resources and ideas.
9. We continue to closely monitor the wellbeing of our colleagues through our Wellbeing Pulse surveys.
10. We continue to invest in IT systems and infrastructure to give our employees and managers the tools that they need to operate successfully in a modern, hybrid organisation. This is supported by specific training and support.
11. We undertake internal and external checks such as our recent LGA Peer Review assessments and Audit of Organisational Culture conducted by the internal audit team. Both have given positive feedback on our approach to organisation and employee development.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Tomkinson
Deputy Head of Democratic Services

