

# Public Document Pack

Unanswered Questions Letter – 13 November 2024

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## Legal and Democratic Services

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Date: 25th November 2024

To: All Members of Council

Dear Councillor

### **COUNCIL MEETING – 13<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

At the above meeting, the thirty minutes of Question Time expired with questions 11 to 44 were unanswered. Council Procedure Rule 11.6 requires that each Member of Council is sent responses to such questions.

**Q11** Councillor R Stephenson – Does the Executive Member for Children & Families agree with the Labour government's decision to increase university tuition fees, which have been frozen at £9.250 per annum for the last eight years, and what assessment has she made on the impact this will have on disadvantaged pupils in Leeds?

**A** Executive Member for Children and Families

The tuition fees increase reflects the £22bn blackhole left by the previous government, and the need to address concern within the neglected higher education sector about the state of university finances, and warnings that some institutions could face bankruptcy without more government support.

The Education Secretary has confirmed that students already at university will not see higher monthly repayments as a result of the changes. She also announced that the Labour Government will boost support for students with living costs by increasing maximum maintenance loans in line with inflation, giving them an additional £414 a year in 2025-26.

**Q12** Councillor C Hart-Brooke – Many, many of my residents are experiencing persistent problems with brown bin collections in comparison to green and black bins. Can the Executive Member explain what challenges the brown bin team face compared with the black/green bin team and given the numerous missed collections, will there be a commitment



to keep collections going longer if necessary to ensure all eligible residents get one final collection before winter?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Spaces

The garden waste kerbside collection service provided by Leeds City Council is the largest delivered by a single council in the UK. The service currently delivers to 221,000 (about 60%) households across Leeds, and, unlike the majority of councils, Leeds does not charge for this service.

In terms of garden waste collections up to August this year, despite a slightly delayed start to collections and some resourcing issues experienced in early summer, the service collected about 4,000 tonnes more garden waste than the 3-year average and just over 1,700 tonnes more compared to the same period last year.

As with previous years and in line with waste collection policy, when the service has difficulties crewing a full complement of staff (75 crews) on a given day, priority is given to ensuring all the statutory black and green bin collection routes are completed. If we need to stand a brown bin route we will normally choose the route with the least amount of garden waste due to be emptied that day based on previous tonnage records. This results occasionally in a garden waste collection route being stood and/or recovery plans for missed brown bin collections cancelled.

Where that happened in later spring/early summer this year, the majority of those missed collections were made within a few days, and where that was not possible the service made sure their next collection was prioritised. An analysis of that period showed that 99% of scheduled brown bin collection routes were completed; with 98% on the scheduled day, 1% with a delayed collection and 1% where a collection was not possible until the next scheduled day

Since August 2024 the complaints and reports of missed bins by customers have reduced back to the levels of previous years. The proportion of brown bins reported as missed in October 2024 was 0.18%; or put another way a success rate of 99.82%. This is a marginal improvement on the performance at the same time in 2023 when the brown bin collection rate was 99.81%.

As stated, the service collected significantly more garden waste in the first few months of the season, indicating that any effect of the delayed restart had more than been caught up. The last collections for 2024 stop as usual at the end of November, with the last scheduled collections made on 30<sup>th</sup> November. The city's eight Household Waste and Recycling Centres remain open 7 days a week, all year round, for any garden waste to be disposed of for free.

**Q13** Councillor J Dowson – Please can the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space provide an update on improvements to parks?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Spaces

One million pounds of discretionary capital has been allocated for this financial year to support the improvement of parks. The fund has been used to tackle some of the basics such as installing refreshed goal posts, 256 replacement bins, new signage across 7 sites and investment in required environmental improvements. There has also been support for projects to address women's safety. The same discretionary fund has been used to leverage match funding which will mean 20 playgrounds will have some form of investment to deliver



improvements and essential safety works with investment in play amounting to close to £600k in total in this year via this fund.

Additional investment received for tennis specifically will mean that before the end of 2024, 42 tennis courts at 8 sites will have been improved, with conversations progressing for a further 11 courts to be improved at 4 further sites early in 2025 which would represent a total investment of over £900k. With a commitment to a further £1m of discretionary capital in 2025/26 coupled with ongoing investment via the Morley bid and the announcement in the budget that the Heart of Holbeck levelling up fund, which includes investment in Holbeck Moor, has been supported this will mean continued capital investment for greenspace moving forward through the coming years.

**Q14** Councillor W Dixon – What actions are the Council Administration taking (if any) to support the UK's Hedgehog population that has fallen 75% since the year 2000?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Spaces

The State of Britain's Hedgehogs 2022 did conclude that urban hedgehog populations have been found to be stabilising, although rural populations are continuing to decline. See SoBH-2022-Final.pdf for more information

The council is a proud supporter of hedgehog heroes:  
<https://www.britishhedgehogs.org.uk/hedgehog-heroes-roll-honour/>

As a service we are following an increasingly ecologically driven approach to management of our parks and greenspaces including maintaining and enhancing green infrastructure corridors, reduced use of pesticides and relaxed mowing throughout the city.

Through the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), we are also implementing the 30-year management of a variety of habitats across the city with the sole aim of improving biodiversity. The BNG work to date includes the creation of deadwood piles which will provide habitat features for hedgehogs.

This year we have begun a 'Managing Greenspaces for Wildlife' programme which aims to educate colleagues on the importance of wildlife-friendly management of parks and greenspaces. For example, less tidying up of leaf litter throughout the winter and creation of deadwood piles.

The service has also previously worked with a hedgehog rehabilitator to locate ideal locations for the re-release of rescued hedgehogs (e.g. away from major roads and disturbance).

In regard to the rural population decline, Temple Newsam is managed in line with best practice guidelines and includes / is adjacent to certified woodlands. The Council is also intending to introduce a hedgehog specific area within Lotherton's wildlife world to promote hedgehog conservation and support the rehabilitation of injured hedgehogs.

Although we don't have a specific planning condition relating to hedgehogs, however the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) condition covers wildlife in general- for example 'Measures to avoid or reduce impacts during construction'. Based on the ecological information provided at planning stage, hedgehogs might then be specified in the wording of the CEMP condition. Enhancement and / or creation of habitats is also a planning requirement through BNG.



**Q15** Councillor D Cohen – Does the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Active Lifestyles and Culture share my concern that the Chancellor has withdrawn £10 million, committed by the previous government, for the British Library North scheme at the former Temple Works site?

**A** Executive Member for Communities, Customer Services and Community Safety

In March 2024, the Government at the time announced a £10m contribution - to be payable to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority - towards the proposed British Library North scheme at Temple Works. This funding was part of a £100m levelling up cultural fund for nationally significant culture projects. Whilst this was announced, it is our understanding that this was funding that was never formally committed within the relevant Government department's budget and no funding agreement was entered into with the Combined Authority. As such this funding was, and remains, under review.

At this stage, the Government has indicated that it is minded to withdraw this specific fund for all previously announced nationally significant culture projects, subject to a 6 week consultation period. Working with partners, the Council will respond and engage positively with the consultation exercise.

Notwithstanding this announcement, there remains commitment between Council, British Library, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Government to progress the British Library North project as a truly transformational project for the North of England. The project retains £25m of devolution funds and is able to take steps forward.

**Q16** Councillor R Downes – Given that the National Living Wage will rise by 6.7% to £12.21, with younger workers' rates up by 16.3% to £10 and apprenticeships by 15.2% to £8.60 and that Employer National Insurance (NI) contributions will increase by 1.2%, with a lowered threshold of £5,000 (equivalent to 8 hours at the new NLW rate). Can Cllr Arif confirm that these additional wage costs, starting in April 2025, will be fully funded by the Council's commissioned services to support the care sector's stability?

**A** Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Active Lifestyles and Culture

We have already begun discussions with Care Sector representatives, including the Leeds Care Association, and with our Third Sector providers about the impact of the increase in the National Living Wage and the changes in the NI Employers Contributions. We understand that these additional cost pressures need to be considered and addressed.

In relation to the changes in NI Employers Contributions, discussions are underway with government departments to advise them of the implications of these changes on the whole of the care sector and we are awaiting the details of the local government settlement due in December. In the meantime, we are aware that care providers themselves, both locally and nationally, are communicating with central government on the impact of these changes.

**Q17** Councillor W Dixon – Will the Council's Administration ring fence funds for new car parks on our Council estates?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Spaces

Increasing car ownership means in some areas of the city, demand for car parking outstrips dedicated space available, leading to ad hoc parking on the public highway, concerns over



access for emergency vehicles and public transport services, blocking of accesses, and damage to grassed verges. As a consequence, requests are often made to provide specific parking provision for residents, to harden grass verges to allow vehicles to park off the carriageway or to construct laybys on the public highway.

Verge damage on the public highway is a common occurrence, across the city. Currently, the highway authority position is that we have a duty to maintain the highway, and presently budgets have been set to address the outstanding highway maintenance backlog in the city, circa £288m. There is no budgetary provision to carry out verge or layby works of this nature. Furthermore, the removal of any grass verges or soft landscaping areas without suitable mitigation works in place would not be recommended because the hardening of verge areas with tarmac significantly increases the volume of water entering the drainage system. This results in an increase in flooding problems as the drainage is having to cope with volumes of water it was not designed for.

As a result, the removal of verges in future schemes will only be done in very exceptional circumstances and only when external funding is secured. The cost of reconstructing verges can be prohibitively expensive as it may require the relocation of underground services.

With regard to car parking provision in housing estates, whilst we accept that car ownership has grown considerably since the majority of our council estates were built, the service is currently focusing on the repair and improvement of council homes including heating and insulation. For this reason, there is no ring fencing of limited budgets for additional car parking. However, should any regeneration take place on our estates then additional parking provision will be considered as part of wider estate improvement measures.

**Q18** Councillor B Flynn – Does the Leader of Council agree with the Chancellor of the Exchequer when she says above- inflation public sector pay awards are only affordable, over the medium term, if they can be funded from improved productivity, and can he set out where he'll make further savings from productivity within the council?

**A** Leader of Council

The position on this will be included in the budget papers to Executive Board later this year.

**Q19** Councillor R Downes – Could Cllr Pryor advise what the Council will do in response to the latest update complaint submitted by GALBA regarding their concern that LBA have broken night flight rules this summer by 820 flights more than their allowance and this breach is the third year running?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

The LPA is currently reviewing GALBA's complaint and undertaking its own analysis of the night-time data received last week for BST 2024, to ascertain if and at what level, any breach has occurred.

A BCN is in place at LBA and this remains a live enforcement case and any necessary action will be taken at the appropriate time. Council will be aware, that following refusals by the LPA, 2 Certificate of Lawfulness refusal decisions and appeal against non-determination are to be considered by an independent Government appointed Planning inspector at a public inquiry in March 2025. These relate to the interpretation of Planning Conditions of night-time flights.



**Q20** Councillor R Chesterfield – Would the council administration consider to allocate/ring fence funding to ensure that children's playgrounds across the city are brought back into full use and accessible to children and families in these neighbourhoods where current facilities have fallen victim to vandalism and disrepair?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The greenspace service manages and looks after over 4000 hectares of land across 7 major parks, 63 community parks naturalised and local spaces. Within this there are circa 170 playgrounds that constitutes approximately 8200 fixed assets that require regular inspection both independently and using inhouse resource. It is anticipated that these sites as a whole have circa 8 years on average in terms of remaining effective use. Playground improvements are funded from a variety of funding sources which supports in undertaking repairs and addressing damage following vandalism. In both this and the following financial year one million pounds of discretionary capital has been provided to support the overall improvements of parks. In terms of playgrounds the discretionary fund has been used to leverage match funding which will mean 20 playgrounds will have some form of investment to deliver improvements and essential safety works with investment in play amounting to close to £600k in total in this year via this fund.

**Q21** Councillor N Buckley– What representation has the Executive Member for Economy, Transport & Sustainable Development made to the new Transport Secretary following her decision to increase rail fares by an inflation-busting 4.6 per cent, thereby breaking the last government's plan for fares to increase by 2.6 per cent, pinned to RPI inflation?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

This matter was referred to WYCA as the transport authority who responded as follows:

We are aware that there will be 4.6% increase in rail fare which is one percentage point above July's Retail Price Index. Changes to fares will come into force on March 2, 2025. Rail fare increase is determined by national policies.

We are sorry to hear of the concerns raised over the planned March rail fare increase. West Yorkshire Combined Authority is committed as a region to advocating for affordable and accessible rail travel, as outlined in the West Yorkshire Rail Strategy. While national policies largely dictate fare increases, the Combined Authority is actively working to keep rail travel viable for all, with measures like integrated ticketing to reduce overall travel costs and concessions for key passenger groups. The strategy also aligns with the region's broader goals of reducing road congestion and carbon emissions by promoting rail as a sustainable transport option.

**Q22** Councillor C Hart-Brooke – In 2024 brown bin collections started later than many expected. Can the Executive Member confirm when collections for 2025 will commence next spring?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Spaces

The date of the first brown bin collections in 2025 has not yet been confirmed. The exact day may depend on the current year's financial pressures and/or the consequences of potential changes to the service in 2025 to add food waste as an option for residents and expand the service to more households and to deliver all year-round collections.





**Q23** Councillor E Carlisle – Would the Leader of Council agree that all Deputations to Full Council should be followed up within a set period of time (perhaps 3 months), and that all members of Council should receive brief updates regarding the status of these?

**A** Leader of Council

Council Procedure Rules set out the requirement in terms of the administration of Deputations that are to be considered by the Council Meeting.

When a deputation is made in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.13 and by resolution of the meeting the subject matter is referred to the relevant Director for consideration. Leeds City Council's Constitution does not give specifics about the nature of the response and follow up monitoring and reporting.

**Q24** Councillor R Stephenson – Can the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Active Lifestyles and Culture confirm whether the last government's award of £5 million for a new National Poetry Centre in Leeds has now been scrapped by the new government?

**A** Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Active Lifestyles and Culture

As yet there has been no firm decision to remove the £5 million funding award for a new National Poetry Centre, however this is subject to a six week national review with the consultation period closing on 9<sup>th</sup> December. The council is supporting the National Poetry Centre (as the lead organisation for the project) to develop an informed consultation response to ensure that the benefits and outcomes both locally and nationally are fully understood. Once the consultation is complete and the responses considered by MHCLG, the Council and the National Poetry Centre will be notified of the outcome.

It is important to highlight that the £5m award was only a portion of the funding required to deliver the National Poetry Centre. The current high level cost estimate for the scheme is c£15 – 20m, which would need to be secured through a fundraising strategy led by the NPC in partnership with LCC to the likes of Heritage Lottery, Arts Council and others as appropriate, therefore significant additional funding would be required to bridge the gap.

**Q25** Councillor C Hart-Brooke – At a recent residents meeting, it was flagged to me the reliance that residents with some medical conditions (stomas etc) have on available toilets. Would the Executive Member consider taking steps to ensure that in all our commercial centres, such as Rothwell, there are publicly available toilets for all?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Spaces

Due to financial constraints over a number of years, public toilet provision has decreased in Leeds in common with such provision in many other local authorities. However, in their place Changing Places toilets have been introduced to assist people with mobility and medical conditions. There is a network of Changing Places toilets around the country, and in Leeds, the council and partner organisations have developed facilities across the city.

Following a consultation with parents / carers of disabled children and young people to ask them where they would want Changing Places to be developed, preferred locations were identified in community settings including the city centre, shopping centres, leisure facilities,



sport centres and parks. In Leeds, we have opened more than 35 Changing Places in these preferred locations including Trinity Centre, Leeds Arena, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds Bradford Airport, Emerald Headingley Stadium, White Rose Centre, Leeds Art Gallery, several sports centres and some of our larger parks. Leeds City Council has also purchased a mobile Changing Place to be used at some of our larger outdoor events throughout the year.

We are currently working very closely with the recently set up Leeds Stoma support group to improve the provision of colostomy shelves in our public accessible toilets. This includes all our hubs and libraries throughout the city. All our changing places toilets also have colostomy shelves and there are over 50 of these in Leeds. They can be found using the find a toilet tool here [Changing Places Toilets](#).

**Q26** Councillor D Seary – Will the Executive Member for Children and Families join me in condemning the Labour government's decision to cut funding to state-school Combined Cadet Force units, which have trebled since 2012 and enhanced the life chances for thousands of young people in Leeds?

**A** Executive Member for Children and Families

We are tremendously proud of our Cadets in Leeds. Nationally, I understand that the government, through the Ministry of Defence, provides in the region of £180 million to support cadet schemes. Education Minister, Stephen Morgan MP, has confirmed that the Cadet Expansion Programme will continue to be delivered and receive £3.6 million in government funding for this academic year and through to the 2033/34 financial year. This goes to the single Service (i.e. Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force) cadet organisations, to provide funding for cadet expansion in schools.

Despite the £22bn blackhole left by the previous government, I welcome the announcement this week of a new, National Youth Strategy to rebuild local authority youth funding, which fell by 73% under the last government. This has been widely welcomed by the youth sector and will strengthen a range of out of school opportunities for young people in Leeds.

I further understand that as part of reforms, the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport has also committed to look at the specifics of increasing funding streams to some uniformed groups, and I look forward to these plans being developed.

**Q27** Councillor C Campbell – While Council welcomes the announcement from the Secretary of State for Energy, Security and Net Zero that he will require all Council and Housing Association social homes in England to achieve an energy performance certificate rating of at least C by 2030, would it be possible for the Leader of Council to contact the Secretary of State and ask him to extend the proposals to include the private rented sector?

**A** Executive Member for Housing

The government has already confirmed their aim that private landlords renting homes in England and Wales must ensure their property is at the band C level according to the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating by 2030 and will consult on these proposals by the end of the year. Upgrading private and social housing regulations is expected to mainly occur through the Warm Homes Plan. This plan will aim to increase insulation and low-carbon heating systems for millions of homes. The government's plan aims to boost investment in energy-efficient measures, the benefits of which will mainly be better insulation and low-carbon heating systems. Further information on this is available



here <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-upgrade-revolution-as-renters-set-for-warmer-homes-and-cheaper-bills>

**Q28** Councillor D Cohen – Will the Executive Member join me in welcoming the Chancellor's decision not to scrap the last Conservative government's Theatre Tax Relief in the budget, and will she commit to giving financial support to Leeds Heritage Theatres, the Carriageworks, Leeds Playhouse, Phoenix Dance, Northern Ballet, Opera North and others who will now experience financial strain as a result of the government raising employers' national insurance?

**A** Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Active Lifestyles and Culture

We welcome the Chancellor's decision to retain Theatre Tax Relief in the budget, which will continue to benefit independent cultural organisations locally and nationally. The independent organisations referenced, aside from Leeds Heritage Theatres, are all National Portfolio Organisations which means that they receive regular funding from Arts Council England. Alongside this, all the organisations referenced are supported by the Leeds Cultural Investment Programme (LCIP) in recognition of the important cultural offer they provide for the city.

The LCIP funding, which is secured through gainshare, UKSPF as well as LCC contributions is typically used by organisations to leverage additional investment from other sources for capital projects or revenue support bringing greater benefits to Culture and organisations across Leeds. LCIP is one of a range of measures the Council provides to support the city's cultural organisations. In recent times this has been leveraged by Leeds Heritage Trust and Leeds Playhouse to undertake large capital refurbishments which will help to support their organisations and protect their assets for the future.

**Q29** Councillor S Firth – Will the Leader of Council join the National Farmers' Union in objecting to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Family Farm Tax announced in the Autumn Budget, putting the future of 342 family farms in Leeds and our national food security at risk?

**A** Leader of Council

At the budget the Chancellor announced that agricultural property relief (APR) and business property relief (BPR) will be reformed.

Agricultural property relief (APR) is a type of inheritance tax relief. It reduces the amount of tax that farmers and landowners must pay when farmland is passed to the next generation.

Business property relief (BPR) is similar, but for business assets that are part of the estate.

The budget announced that the full 100% relief from inheritance tax will be restricted to the first £1 million of combined agricultural and business property.

Above this amount, landowners will pay inheritance tax at a reduced rate of 20%, rather than the standard 40%. This tax can be paid in instalments over 10 years interest free, rather than immediately, as with other types of inheritance tax.



This is on top of all the other spousal exemptions and nil-rate bands that people can access for inheritance tax too. This means that two people with farmland, depending on their circumstances, can pass on up to £3 million without paying any inheritance tax.

The Government says it is making this change to better target these reliefs to make them fairer, protecting small family farms.

The reforms will apply from 6 April 2026. Most estates will not be affected by the changes.

**Q30** Councillor L Buckley – Does the Executive Member for Economy, Transport & Sustainable Development agree with me that when groups apply to have streets closed off for hours at a time for play or other some such reason, Ward Members should be consulted before a decision is made?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

Leeds City Council has strengthened its commitment to play and the play sufficiency principles which are based around making sure children have enough time, space and permission to play. Play has become embedded in strategic plans and priorities, including the refreshed Best City ambition which includes having an explicit statement around children's right to play, with the priority around health, wellbeing and inclusion of the Child Friendly Leeds Wishes as a cross cutting ambition enabler.

Play Streets have operated successfully in Leeds since 2014 following the Big Lunch initiative with circa 61 play streets permitted this year. A good proportion of these (circa 50%) are repeat events.

The refreshed Children and Young People's Plan (2023-28) includes a new priority around play linked to the Child Friendly Leeds wish, which focuses on children and young people having safe places to play and have fun. Play streets are a key part of providing children and young people with more time, space and permission to play on their doorsteps and in their local communities.

The Leeds Play Street application process is operated by the Children and Families Directorate, with Highways and Transportation offering advice and when supported, facilitating the processing of the legal notices to temporary close roads. This process does not currently include consulting or informing Councillors about applications from residents who apply for street closures for Play Streets. Residents who apply for play streets are advised to consult residents on their street, so unless councillors are a resident on their street they would not be consulted as part of the process.

Recently Children and Families Directorate has been asked by an elected member if they can be provided with more information about playstreets and if they can be included in the consultation process. Children and Family Directorate colleagues are therefore planning to deliver an awareness raising session on play streets to Children's Champions early in 2025, and further awareness raising session is being planned for the spring where all councillors will be invited.

In respect of the specific request that elected members be part of the consultation process, a meeting has been convened in mid-January by colleagues within the Children and Families Directorate with the Play Champion and Lead member for Children and Families and the portfolio holder for Child Friendly Leeds to consider.



**Q31** Councillor B Anderson – Can the Executive Member advise Council on changes in policy they are considering as a result of the cross party walkabout with the Thomas Pocklington Trust. In terms of an appreciation of the challenges met by blind and partially sighted people when accessing bus services and trying to cross streets in the city?

**A** Executive Member for Equality, Health and Wellbeing

We are advised a Sim Spec walk for Scrutiny members took place at the request of the chair of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board on 9 October 2024 and included Members from Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth Scrutiny Board. The walk provided a learning exercise for Members, to improve the knowledge and understanding of citizens with regard to some of the day-to-day challenges that affect people with sight loss. This was not a formal scrutiny inquiry and the department/ service was not involved. As such there were no formal recommendations to decision makers (as there might be for matters discussed at a formal public meeting), or invitations to other officers. Officers from the department will of course engage in a positive and collaborative way in any future scrutiny activity which Scrutiny wish to undertake.

Notwithstanding the above, our approach to designing such facilities for visually impaired people has been informed by over a decade of engagement and consultation with groups representing disabled people, since we delivered our first protected cycle infrastructure on Regent Street. This has included liaising with groups such as the Access and Usability Group, the National Federation of the Blind, RNIB, Guide Dogs and the Deaf Forum and the Council's Disability and Wellbeing Network (DAWN). Our approach has evolved over the years in response to feedback from users, including disabled people. Significant engagement was undertaken as part of the Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme including site visits; such feedback has informed the schemes currently under development.

In addition to feedback from local users and stakeholders, our design approach is informed by national design guidance and guidance from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Active Travel England, the government's executive agency, responsible for walking, cycling and wheeling, as well as Inclusive Mobility and best practice guidance issued by Guide Dogs.

Ensuring the highway is safe for our most vulnerable users is one of our most important tasks as a highway authority and we will continue to refine our approach based on feedback from users and data from scheme monitoring. We understand that the Pocklington Trust engaged with members of two scrutiny boards in a walk providing a taste of lived in experience of visual impairment, showcasing features that are helpful and unhelpful in navigating the city centre environment. We understand there was no formal recommendation as the result of the meeting.

Below are some of the adjustments made as the result of engagement with multiple disabled people organisations in recent years:

- Policy decision to provide cycling infrastructure on the Inner Loop (where there are no bus services) as a way of accommodating cycle journeys across the City Centre instead of within the public transport box. This was due specifically to the issues of provision around dense bus stop infrastructure.
- *On one way streets providing 'contraflow' cycling infrastructure which negates the need for bus stop bypasses*



- *60mm kerb upstand advocated by RNIB considered as standard to help visually impaired pedestrians differentiate between the footway and the cycle track – e.g. City Square, where a flush cycle track was replaced by a kerb segregated provision.*
- *Segregating pedestrians and cyclists whenever practical – includes replacement of Toucan crossings with parallel crossings.*
- *Straight across crossings – where pedestrians cross the carriageway and the cycle track in one movement – as the preferred design option*
- *Formal (Zebra) crossings to assist visually impaired pedestrians crossing the cycle track*
- *Inclusion of pedestrian crossings in any active travel schemes*

We are specifically engaged with the Thomas Pocklington Trust on potential improvements to bus stop bypasses and on any alternative arrangements currently available to designers and their implications.

**Q32** Councillor A Lamb – Will the Leader of Council please update Council if there are any plans for the Mayor of West Yorkshire to revisit this chamber as she did in July 2023?

**A** Leader of Council

I am happy to raise this request with group whips on a cross-party basis as a first step.

**Q33** Councillor M Robinson – Would the Executive Member for Economy, Transport & Sustainable Development agree with me that Yorkshire Water’s communications to residents about planned works affecting access on the highway in my ward have been woefully inadequate, and could he explain what more the Council can do to encourage Yorkshire Water to improve their approach?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

All utility and telecommunication companies are responsible for communicating their works to stakeholders including residents. The role of the Network Management team within Highways and Transportation is to coordinate the works with others taking place across the public highway, and process other requirements that enable such work, for example processing road closures.

Notwithstanding this, while our role is not to communicate for such companies, providing or ensuring good communications happen for our residents is a priority for the service. The service has invested in its own communications with the Connecting Leeds team and encourages the same standard of utility and telecommunication companies. The service does challenge works promoters where improvement is considered necessary, and this has included Yorkshire Water.

The service has a dedicated Network Management team that deals with the permit requests of all utility and telecommunication companies wishing to carry out work to install, maintain or repair their apparatus. These companies have statutory powers to carry out such work, and they are also responsible for their own customer services and engagement with affected customers and the traveling public.

Despite these statutory powers, the council’s permit scheme allows important controls over the timing and management of works and enables the team to request that proper engagement takes place with those affected by works.



This is an ongoing challenge as the service deals with around 40,000 permit requests and modifications on our streets each year and most of these are associated with utility and telecommunication companies ensuring essential supplies are maintained to our residents and businesses. Of these 40,000 permits, a significant number are unplanned, for example the result of a burst water pipe or gas leak, where prior engagement has not been possible to warn of disruption. In the case of these urgent/emergency activities where immediate action is required to maintain essential services, prevent damage, or ensure safety, utilities can commence work before applying for a permit but even then, they apply for a permit within 2 hours of commencing.

Where significant disruption is anticipated from planned works the service (in addition to any promoter consultation and engagement that has been requested) will pro-actively advise key stakeholders in advance of works. The only exception being urgent and emergency utility works which happen unexpectedly.

Significant efforts go into minimising the impacts of both planned and unplanned works and to identify mitigation measures to resolve consequential impacts, including communications. In addition to the c40,000 permits, the Network Management team each year also grant around 11,000 highway licences, process c1200 road closures, carryout c12,000 inspections and answer c8000 general enquiry phone calls.

In the case of Yorkshire Water, officers have already raised performance issues with the company and established an escalation process intended to address communication and engagement problems. This process involves an extra level of engagement where disruption is likely to be significant. This escalation process is to be used for both planned and unplanned works. Messaging and communications that flow from this process can, where appropriate, be amplified through the council's own channels and communication teams such as Connecting Leeds and our dedicated Plan Ahead campaign.

Recent Yorkshire Water sites where engagement by them with local stakeholders could have been better includes works at Morris Lane in Kirkstall, Main Street East Keswick and works in Collingham. In these cases officers have identified that engagement with residents could have been better, and timely information improved. Despite the acknowledged complexities in these example cases, officers are working positively with Yorkshire Water to bring about improvement, and this will be an ongoing priority. These recent examples while frustrating, have allowed officers to establish greater consistency in the different parts of the Yorkshire Water company that deals with clean water and sewers. Going forward the improved escalation process will be used by both parts of the company.

The success of this process will be monitored, and officers would be happy to investigate individual cases that are brought to our attention.

Where individual sites, planned or unplanned, raise concerns the service tries to address such concerns with the work promoter promptly. This includes sites that are raised with the service by residents, ward councillors or any other stakeholder such as bus operators.

In addition, the Network Management team holds quarterly performances and quarterly co-ordination meetings with all works promoters where poor performance can be raised, including engagement, and any requirement for improvement.



**Q34** Councillor N Buckley – Understanding that utility companies have statutory powers for installations and repairs, what clout does the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space have to make such organisations make good any damages to woodlands, regardless of landowner in pursuit of those activities, and if he has none, will he commit to writing to Government to lobby for such powers?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Spaces

Statutory undertakers are in regular dialogue with the authority regarding work to support infrastructure and equipment for both maintenance and installation purposes. With regards to woodlands, statutory undertakers liaise with officers in advance of coming to site and each case is considered in isolation with an individual method statement. Should damage occur, this would be discussed with the company in isolation along with engaging with any subcontractor. Should it be considered necessary to formalise these arrangements officers are able to regularise landlord's consent to enter Leeds City Council land. Any such agreement to, could then include an obligation to address any damage caused to land whilst works are being undertaken

**Q35** Councillor N Harrington – Can the Executive Board Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space please update Council on how many people have been recruited for parking services and parking enforcement over the past six months and how many vacancies still remain open?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Spaces

Since 1<sup>st</sup> May we have recruited 8 additional enforcement officers and we are currently advertising for a further 4. We have had 4 leavers in this period so the net change will be plus 8. There are no plans to recruit more at the moment.

**Q36** Councillor N Harrington – Can the Executive Board Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space please confirm whether the long awaited black and green bin route review has actually been concluded?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Spaces

Changes to black and green bin collection routes across the city are necessary due to the increases in households and population since they were last designed many years ago. In addition, there have been changes in what people throw away and recycle, as well as more options for households to recycle more through their green bin; the most recent example being the recent successful introduction of glass bottles and jars in the green bin resulting in a forecast of 12,000 tonnes per year of glass to be collected from green bins.

The implementation of the new routes is underway, and will be delivered in 3 main phases. The first phase has been successfully completed, seeing over 10,000 households moved from 4-weekly to fortnightly recycling (green bin) collections. Phase two is ready to start, and will see 20,000 households in the most densely populated/housed parts of the city move from 4-weekly green bin collections to weekly green and black bin collections, and the remaining 20,000 households still on a 4-weekly collection move to a fortnightly recycling collection. This phase is expected to start in December 2024 and be completed in early 2025. At this stage, for the first time it will mean that every household in Leeds has a minimum of a fortnightly recycling collection and everyone still gets a minimum fortnightly black bin collection.





The final phase of the route updates will be to the remaining households citywide. That will be completed following the conclusion of phase 2 and will take into account the revised amounts of waste being collected following the introduction of glass for the green bin and potentially the introduction of the option for households to put food waste in their brown bin for composting, rather than in the black bin.

**Q37** Councillor N Harrington – Can the Executive Board Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space please tell Council when the mapping of routes for street cleaning will be concluded?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Spaces

The Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team (CNT) are constantly reviewing local cleansing schedules including sweeping programmes/maps and litter bin emptying schedules, as part of ongoing service improvement and to meet fluctuating service and seasonal demands (for example leaf clearing).

In general, the approach taken to allocating resources on a programmed basis for street cleaning (mechanically sweep, litter pick and empty litter bins) is determined by the areas of greatest footfall and therefore, usually, demand. Typically these are neighbourhood/town main streets/shopping areas. In addition, mechanical sweeping of an agreed list of locations most prone to flooding is undertaken, as are the main/arterial routes. Some capacity is created though to enable a reactive service to issues as they are reported/arise, whether that be from ward members or from public service requests.

The service regularly discusses requests for changes to programmed work with ward members and attends Community Committee sub groups to provide a wider overview of how resources are being allocated/used.

Separately, a review of the responsibility for the road sweeping of arterial roads is being undertaken between CNT and highways services, to consider whether that would be better sat and managed within highways to better coordinate/complement activity with gully cleansing. That work is expected to be concluded shortly and recommendations made to the relevant Chief Officers.

**Q38** Councillor R Stephenson – To ask the Executive Member for Children & Families, how much the authority spent in each of the last three years with:

- a) Booking.Com;
- b) AirBnB; and
- c) all other online accommodation booking services combined,

to acquire temporary accommodation for children and families, and separately for unaccompanied asylum seeking children?

**A** Executive Member for Children and Families

Social workers use booking.com or AirBnB as a last resort when a family is homeless but are identified as intentionally homeless by Housing under housing legislation or have no recourse to public funds and we have no other accommodation available.

Such sites are only used as an absolute last resort as we would always look to using approved landlords firstly in discussion with Housing. Each family's situation is different and



there are often complex factors and issues that lead to homelessness even if the family are intentionally homeless under housing legislation.

To address the respective parts of your question;

- a) We only have data for 23/24 and this financial year. 23/24 was £7949 . This year to date; £16456
- b) as above re data 23/24 £14158 and this financial year to date £5938
- c) none

We do not book through booking.com, AirBnB or other online services for unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

**Q39** Councillor R Stephenson – Can the Executive Member for Housing explain why the in-house Leeds Building Services recently quoted £38,187.32 for the installation of LED lighting at Harewood Church of England Primary School, when private sector providers charged half the cost (£19,940.16)?

**A** Executive Member for Housing

Leeds Building Services (LBS) pride themselves on providing a quality job which meets exacting standards of both products and workmanship. It is important when undertaking any comparisons of costs that the scope, design and specification are considered and consistent as differences in these elements can have real impact to the final cost of the job. In this specific example LBS provided a quote based on a design developed in conjunction with our lighting design specialist and included the installation of high quality products.

The design developed is specific to the site, includes the building plan and also details the proposed savings for energy and the reduction of Carbon. Without a like for like specification/design and detailed work it is impossible to undertake this comparison and furthermore the whole life-cycle cost also needs to be considered rather than just the up front cost.

**Q40** Councillor S Firth – Could the Executive Member for Economy, Transport & Sustainable Development confirm how many damaged or dead trees and plants have been replaced on the A6120 East Leeds Orbital Road since it opened in August 2022, as well as any costs involved that have fallen to Leeds City Council instead of our contractors?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

Some 30,000 plants and shrubs were planted along the East Leeds Orbital Route with an element of routine over planting to accommodate plants that will fail. Many positive comments have been received regarding the quality of landscaping that has been undertaken to enhance this important highway link and the supporting cycling, walking and horse-riding facilities.

The maintenance period for defects expires at the end of 2024 when a full audit of all failed and damaged trees and plants will be undertaken before fully handing over to parks (Climate, Energy and Greenspaces). Ongoing defect Notices for failed trees have been issued to the Principal Contractor and the Sub-Contractor will be replacing these as part of their final sweep. Some of these were identified a number of months ago but have not been addressed due to being outside planting season.



It is very disappointing to note that a significant number of trees that were planted as part of the ELOR scheme have been vandalised and sad to report that even replacement trees have been destroyed shortly after being planted.

Once the maintenance period is over, the Principal Contractor and or landscape Sub-Contractor cannot be responsible for elements out of their control. And sadly, it may be the case that resources will not allow the continuing replacement of landscaping into the future should vandalism continue.

Members of the public who have knowledge of such acts of vandalism are encouraged to ring the Police on 101.

**Q41** Councillor S Firth – Would the Executive Member for Economy, Transport & Sustainable Development provide an update on the solution design and works promised for this financial year to tackle the spring water damaging Long Lane in Barwick-in-Elmet?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

Although not entirely unusual to experience water run-off from the verge, Officers from Highways & Transportation have inspected this location and confirmed that the water which is running on to the highway from the verge opposite Richmondfield Avenue is then flowing down the hill to the nearest gully, which is approximately 60 metres away, just above the junction with Gascoigne Avenue.

The water is entering an existing gully; however it is accepted that this current installation is not ideal.

A design is nearing completion which is intended to ensure that the water enters the drainage network much quicker. The intention is to ensure that these works are completed in this financial year, although a date has still to be programmed. I am assured that the Highways Asset Manager will provide regular updates, until such time as the work is complete.

**Q42** Councillor S Firth – Can the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment & Green Space confirm how much Collective Events Ltd paid the council to host their Northern Lights event at Temple Newsam Park on 2nd November?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The event held at Temple Newsam on 2nd November was Autumn Lights. The amount paid to the Council for the event is commercially sensitive.

**Q43** Councillor S Firth – Will the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment & Green Space comment on the adequacy of the transport management plan and its implementation for Northern Lights at Temple Newsam on 2nd November that led to mass congestion and traffic chaos?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Spaces

As with all large scale events that take place in Leeds, they are subject to scrutiny from Leeds Safety Advisory Group, where event and traffic plans are discussed with blue light partners and highways colleagues to ensure they are fit for purpose. Temple Newsam has a tried and tested traffic management plan that is utilised for events, many with larger capacities than



Autum Lights. However, unfortunately there were a number of local factors on this occasion that led to congestion.

**Q44** Councillor R Stephenson – Can the Executive Member for Children & Families confirm that the Secretary of State's announcement to halt all Free School funding announcements made by the last government puts at risk the future of the approved Delta Sixth Form College in her own ward?

**A** Executive Member for Children and Families

The DfE are currently reviewing all Free School Bids currently in train, and meeting with local authorities to discuss the associated sufficiency need for places. Once these reviews have taken place, a prioritisation exercise will be carried out by the DfE.

Yours sincerely

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

