



## SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

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Meeting to be held remotely on  
Thursday 25 March 2021 at 10.30 am

*(A pre-meeting will take place for Members of the Board at 10.00 a.m.)*

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### MEMBERSHIP

B Anderson (Chair)	- Adel and Wharfedale;
J Akhtar	- Little London and Woodhouse;
J Bentley	- Weetwood;
A Blackburn	- Farnley and Wortley;
K Brooks	- Little London and Woodhouse
D Collins	- Horsforth;
M Dobson	- Garforth and Swillington
A Gabriel	- Beeston and Holbeck;
P Grahame	- Cross Gates and Whinmoor;
P Gruen	- Cross Gates and Whinmoor;
A Khan	- Burmantofts and Richmond Hill
L Mulherin	- Ardsley and Robin Hood
N Sharpe	- Temple Newsam;
T Smith	- Pudsey;

Note to observers of the meeting: To remotely observe this meeting, please click on the 'View the Webcast' link which will feature on the meeting's webpage (linked below) ahead of the meeting. The webcast will become available at the commencement of the meeting.

[25 March 2021: Environment, Housing & Communities Scrutiny Board](#)

**Principal Scrutiny Advisor:**  
**Rebecca Atherton**  
**0113 378 8642**

# A G E N D A

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
1			<p><b>APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS</b></p> <p>To consider any appeals in accordance with Procedure Rule 25* of the Access to Information Procedure Rules (in the event of an Appeal the press and public will be excluded).</p> <p>(* In accordance with Procedure Rule 25, notice of an appeal must be received in writing by the Head of Governance Services at least 24 hours before the meeting).</p>	
2			<p><b>EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To highlight reports or appendices which officers have identified as containing exempt information, and where officers consider that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons outlined in the report.</li> <li>2. To consider whether or not to accept the officers recommendation in respect of the above information.</li> <li>3. If so, to formally pass the following resolution:-</li> </ol> <p><b>RESOLVED</b> – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as follows:</p> <p><b>No exempt items have been identified.</b></p>	

3

### **LATE ITEMS**

To identify items which have been admitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration.

(The special circumstances shall be specified in the minutes.)

4

### **DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

To disclose or draw attention to any disclosable pecuniary interests for the purposes of Section 31 of the Localism Act 2011 and paragraphs 13-16 of the Members' Code of Conduct.

5

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES**

To receive any apologies for absence and notification of substitutes.

6

### **MINUTES - 25 FEBRUARY 2021**

5 - 12

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2021.

7

### **UPDATE ON FUEL POVERTY IN LEEDS**

13 -  
22

To receive a report from the Sustainable Energy and Air Quality team, updating members on fuel poverty within Leeds.

The report provides a further overview of recent government policy announcements and their impact on the Leeds City Council's work to tackle fuel poverty in the city.

8

**ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK**

23 -  
30

To receive a report from Director of Resources and Housing updating members of the Board on progress to support the decarbonisation of council housing stock since February 2021.

The report also provides further information on current and pipeline energy projects, and future investment needs.

9

**CARBON REDUCTION IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR**

31 -  
38

To receive a report from the Director of Resources and Housing detailing ongoing work to address carbon reduction in the private rented sector.

10

**WORK SCHEDULE**

40 -  
72

To consider the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the 2020/21 municipal year, the draft schedule for 2021/22 and the final River Cleanliness inquiry report.

11

**DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

This first meeting of the 2021/22 municipal year is currently scheduled for 17 June 2021 at 10.30am. There will be a pre-meet for members at 10am.

## SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

THURSDAY, 25TH FEBRUARY, 2021

**PRESENT:** Councillor B Anderson in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, J Bentley,  
A Blackburn, D Collins, A Gabriel,  
P Grahame, A Khan, P Gruen, N Sharpe,  
K Brooks, T Smith, M Dobson and  
N Dawson

### 81 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

### 82 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no exempt information.

### 83 Late Items

There were no late items.

### 84 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Although there were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests made at the meeting, Councillor Khan required it to be recorded that he had an interest in Agenda Item No. 7 (Standards in the Private Rented Sector) because he held a selective license for a property in Beeston and Harehills.

### 85 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mulherin. Cllr Dawson attended as substitute.

### 86 Minutes - 14 January 2021

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021, be confirmed as an accurate record.

#### Matters Arising

*Minute 78 – Initial Budget Proposals and Financial Health Monitoring.*

Following the publication and consideration of the final budget proposals, members were informed that the board had recommended that ward based information be provided to the Executive Board in order to inform decision making about specific proposals and that no reference was made to this in the final documents. This had also been highlighted in a joint note from all Scrutiny Chairs to the Chief Officer (Financial Services), which provided some

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting  
to be held on Thursday, 25th March, 2021

initial feedback on the consultation process between September 2020 and February 2021.

## **87 Private Sector Housing - Update**

The report of the Director of Resources and Housing submitted a report, which provided members with an update on the Council's interventions to address housing conditions and the quality of accommodation in the private rented sector.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Coupar, Executive Member for Communities
- Neil Evans, Director of Resources and Housing
- Mark Ireland, Head of Private Rented Sector
- Gerard Tinsdale, Chief Officer Housing
- Gavin Dick, National Residential Landlords Association

The Head of the Private Rented Sector introduced the report, and provided the Scrutiny Board with an overview of the following:

- The increase in market growth in the PRS and the quality of housing - the inner city areas having the poorest quality;
- The Council's vision to improve private homes by supporting landlords and owner/occupiers to provide good quality homes;
- The Council's vision will be achieved by working with landlords via the Leeds Rental Standard and targeting landlords who fail to meet their legal obligations. Further measures would include implementing selective licensing in Beeston and Harehills and considerations around other areas, proactively targeting long term empty homes and supporting homelessness prevention;
- The Leeds Rental Standards scheme;
- The Reactive Service including the number of inspections, notices served and people benefitting from improvements to their home;
- HMO activity and the need to address space standards - a Supplementary Planning Document is currently being consulted on;
- Rogue Landlord Unit and the ongoing partnership work to target criminal landlords and sharing intelligence to improve outcomes;
- Leeds Neighbourhood Approach (LNA) and the Exit Plan for Holbeck;
- Selective Licensing figures in terms of licenses applied for, fees paid, unlicensed properties and cases;
- Homelessness prevention in terms of support mechanisms and new cases;
- Empty homes including net reduction statistics since March 2012 and COVID-19 implications.

Members' discussed a number of matters including:

- Whether sufficient legislation has been made available for private rented sector interventions, including measures around enforcement. Members heard that one of the main issues included difficulties around identifying which properties are private, rented and unoccupied. It was

noted that the service continue to lobby the Government to license the private rented sector as a whole. Currently legislation means that there is a need for a business case to be developed for discretionary licencing and it is unlikely that this could be successfully achieved for a city wide scheme;

- Clarity on whether Selective Licensing would be broadened. Members were informed that options moving forward would be dependent on criteria laid down by the Government. It was noted that no further areas have yet been identified, and next steps for the service would continue processing and issuing licences as part of the Beeston and Harehills scheme and to commence property visits as soon as the pandemic allows the service to do so safely;
- It had been acknowledged that the PRS required improvements on access to the service, and Members were informed that investment had been secured to provide a better service for customers;
- Clarity was sought on the mechanisms in place for empty HMOs. Members were informed there is a target of 6 months, before measures are taken with the landlord to encourage bringing the property back into use. Additionally, the Council can use its Compulsory Purchase powers as a last resort;
- Whilst acknowledging the decrease in empty homes, clarity was sought on how the Council can incentivize landlords in bringing their properties back in use. It was noted that partnerships such as the Empty Homes Doctor are able to act independently of the Council to focus on returning long term empty properties back into use and there are options the Council can offer in terms of equity release and personal loans. Additionally, Leeds Housing Options can link accredited landlords with people;
- It was requested that ward specific data in relation to empty homes be circulated to Board Members. The Head of the PRS informed Members there are limitations in terms of the data regarding private rented properties being put in the public domain via Council mechanisms. However, data can be published in terms of how many empty homes there are per ward and listing those belonging to companies / Local Authorities and Housing Associations.

The National Residential Landlords Associate was of the opinion that the Council's targeted approach had been doing well in terms of tackling homelessness and issues in the housing sector, and broadly outlined his concerns with city wide schemes. Challenges were set out post covid, particularly in relation to perception that the student market is moving away from the city centre, and financial pressures. Additionally, the proposed change to minimum efficiency standards by 2025, would pose significant challenges in all parts of the UK and in particular, pre-1919 building stock. It was noted that there was further work that can be done to support home owners and the PRS.

The Executive Member for Communities highlighted the importance of partnerships to ensure good quality housing across the city, and informed

Members of the Board that the matter on Selective Licensing will continue to be lobbied to the Government.

The Chair thanked those in attendance.

**RESOLVED –**

- a) To note the contents of the report;
- b) That information be made available to Board Members in relation to empty homes on a ward basis;
- c) Requested that the successor Scrutiny Board schedule a space on the work programme in the 2021/22 municipal year, and be minded that the following matters be considered:
  - i. Broadening Selective Licensing;
  - ii. The role of the Private Rented Sector in meeting housing needs;
  - iii. Resourcing available to landlords in terms of financial mechanisms;
  - iv. To monitor and identify issues in relation to empty properties;
  - v. Post COVID considerations in terms of homelessness;
  - vi. To receive an update on the Strategic Housing Board;
  - vii. To seek clarity on the location of private rented properties, and identification of landlords;
  - viii. The effectiveness of the available legislation;
  - ix. That a joint letter from the Scrutiny Boards be sent to ministers outlining concerns as stated above.

**88 Climate Emergency: Annual Climate Emergency report & CEAC update**

The report of the Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that provided the Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) an update on the work of the Council's Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, and provides an opportunity to explore the Annual Climate Emergency report.

Appended to the report included copies of the Executive Board Annual Report on the Climate Emergency, the Leeds Climate Commission Annual Report 2020 and the Annual Report to Full Council.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Hayden, Executive Member for
- Councillor Walshaw, CEAC Chair
- Neil Evans, Director of Resources and Housing
- Polly Cook, Chief Officer Sustainable Energy and Air Quality

The Chief Officer Sustainable Energy and Air Quality introduced the report, providing a general overview of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (CEAC) in terms of its public engagement, ongoing work with businesses and community events, as well as the strategies and policies being looked at by the various working groups with the climate emergency being a main priority. It was noted that 45 million pounds had been secured to deliver retrofitting on housing.

Members were provided with a short presentation setting out the Council's responses to questions on behalf of the Local Government Association. The following had been highlighted:

- The understanding of the Council on the need to take action locally;
- The declaration of the climate emergency and the appointment of a Cabinet Member with responsibility for climate change;
- The Council's plans for the climate emergency and the main adaptation work of the Council being the Flood Alleviation Scheme;
- The Council's commitment in embedding the climate emergency in every procurement process and the benefits to Leeds from a piece of West Yorkshire consultancy work to Build Carbon Reduction into Local Authority Procurement Processes;
- Plans such as the large scale district heating system and addressing the carbon footprint to integrate sustainability and resilience into the Council's transport and energy plans;
- The measures in place to promote climate education, diversifying the labour market and focusing on sectors that are sustainable;
- The creation of a vulnerability index to monitor those who are at most risk of climate change the flood prevention measures taken;
- The Leeds Climate Commission brings together key organisations, providing advice on steps towards a low carbon and climate resilient future.

Members' discussed a number of matters including:

- The latest position on replacing gas with hydrogen. Members heard that money has been set aside from the Government to undertake testing, and work is ongoing nationally to ensure it is safe; there would be a pilot scheme in Gateshead around a number of homes. Further work would focus on renewable electricity, carbon capture and storage;
- The mechanisms in place to support residents lacking off street parking through the expansion of the charging network across the city. Members heard that discussions are ongoing with the Highways and Transport Service to develop an approach to further community hub charging provision for those households without off street parking. It was noted that Leeds had successfully secured funding towards charge infrastructure;
- To consider how the Council will engage its residents on climate-related issues, particularly in terms of tree planting initiatives. Concerns were raised in relation to site maintenance / ownership of new public forestry. It was noted that whilst trees had the capability to look after themselves, long terms considerations were required;
- Planning considerations around water surface run off and including minimum conditions as a standard. Members were informed that the Local Plan Review would consider climate emergency issues, and a report will be considered at Executive Board in March 2021 and subject to agreement, this will go out for consultation.

Councillor Collins provided the Scrutiny Board with an update on progress of the Biodiversity and Food Working Group. Members were informed that the

initial meetings focused on biodiversity projects and shared support of the White Rose Forest Strategy. It was acknowledged there would not be enough council land to plant a sufficient number of trees and support from the Government would be required in finding private land; additional work to be considered around incentivizing land owners. The working group had more recently moved onto food, and further work was required around educating people on growing their own. The group had heard from the vertical farming community to explain the process in more detail; future work with partners to consider developing a food action plan for Leeds.

The Director of Resourcing and Housing reiterated the ongoing challenge with retrofitting housing stock and minded the successor Scrutiny Board to look at:

- The Council's housing stock and district heating;
- The Private Rented Sector and owner occupation;
- The immediate effect to changes on the economy as greener energy is delivered and to consider those vulnerable to that change.

The Climate Emergency Advisory Committee Chair confirmed that a developers working group had been set up to help influence the planning process, particularly on retrofitting issues and to set good practice for future developers.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- a) To note the contents of the report and appendices;
- b) To request that the successor Scrutiny Board be minded to receive an update on the progress every 6 months and monitor issues in relation to the retrofit of housing stock and planning legislation changes;
- c) To notify and request that the successor Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth) schedule a space on their work programme in the 2021/22 municipal year and be minded to consider green economy matters.

## **89 Work Schedule**

The report of the Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that invited members to consider the Board's Work Schedule for the remainder of the current municipal year. Copies of the Board's draft work schedule were appended to the report and the remote minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 10 February 2021.

The Board discussed items on the upcoming work schedule, noting that March would be the last meeting of the 2019/20 municipal year. It was also noted that an upcoming working group to be held 10 March, would consider an item on the anti-social use of fireworks.

**RESOLVED –** That the work schedule for the remainder of the municipal year be noted.

**90 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

To note the date and time of the next meeting as 25 March 2021 at 10.30 am (pre-meeting for Board members at 10 am).

(The meeting concluded at 12:40 pm)

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**Report of the Sustainable Energy and Air Quality Team**

**Report to the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Subject: Update on fuel poverty in Leeds**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- The council remains committed to tackling fuel poverty and the last available data saw numbers of people in fuel poverty continue to fall.
- The council has a strong track record of delivering both broad domestic energy efficiency programmes and focused fuel poverty alleviation projects. This year has seen a significant increase in the amount of government grant funding available to address fuel poverty, which the council has been very successful at securing. This funding is welcome, but the timescales are extremely tight, the conditions are restrictive and there is no ongoing pipeline of work, meaning contractors are unable to invest in training or new staff.
- At the same time, the newly introduced PAS 2035:19 standard for retrofit work is creating significantly higher admin costs whilst making each property take longer to deliver. A new specification has also been introduced for thermal insulation, however, the specification is inflexible and there is a very real risk that some priorities in Leeds, including street-lined back to backs, become undeliverable.
- The council is engaging with funding partners and government to highlight and address these ongoing concerns.
- The council is undertaking further work to understand the likely investment needed to address fuel poverty and achieve net zero in the domestic sector, which indicates that costs are likely to be over £5bn.

## **2. Best Council Plan Implications** (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- The fuel poverty programme contributes to the Best Council Plan by improving the health and wellbeing of residents through enabling them to live in warm homes. The work programme contributes to the energy efficiency and quality of homes, as set out in the Leeds Housing Strategy and contributes to the Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy 2017-2030.
- The overarching aim of the Best Council Plan is Tackling Poverty and Reducing Inequalities and work to tackle fuel poverty plays a key role in achieving this ambition. The activities set out in this report support the Best City priority of Safe, Strong Communities through:
  - a. Keeping people safe from harm, protecting the most vulnerable.
  - b. Helping people out of financial hardship.
  - c. Being responsive to local needs, building thriving, resilient communities.
  - d. Promoting community respect and resilience.
- The projects and initiatives outlined in this report also contribute towards the Best City priority of Inclusive Growth through a targeted approach to tackling poverty in priority neighbourhoods. The actions also contribute to the priorities of Health & Wellbeing, Child-Friendly City, Age-Friendly Leeds and Housing.
- The fuel poverty programme plays a key role in helping the council to respond to the climate emergency by improving domestic energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions.

## **3. Resource Implications**

- The projects and initiatives described in this report are fully funded within current budgets and there are no additional resources implications arising from it.

## **Recommendations**

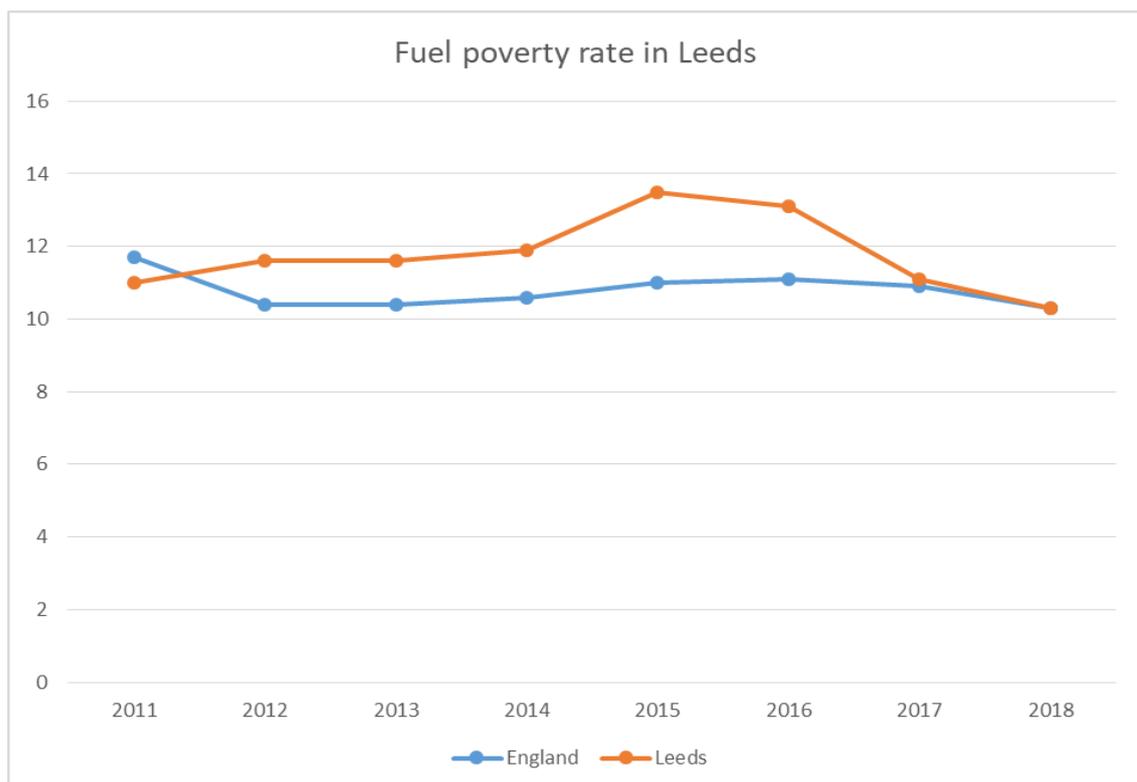
- The Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board is recommended to note the content of this report.

## 1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To update members of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board on fuel poverty within Leeds.
- 1.2 To provide an overview of recent government policy announcements and their impact on the council's work to tackle fuel poverty in the city.

## 2. Background information

- 2.1 A household experiencing fuel poverty is one with required fuel costs that are above the national median and for whom spending that amount would leave them with a residual income below the official poverty line. When people are in fuel poverty, they often struggle to afford hot water or electricity to run appliances for day-to-day living such as cooking, washing, charging, and so on.
- 2.2 Leeds's approach to fuel poverty is underpinned by the Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy 2017-2030. It consists of the following objectives
  - i. Increase energy efficiency
  - ii. Reduce fuel poverty
  - iii. Improve health and wellbeing through affordable warmth
  - iv. Enable residents to benefit from renewable energy
- 2.3 Government data indicates that fuel poverty in Leeds has declined in recent years, from a recent high of 13.5% of all households in 2015 to 10.3% in 2018 - the most recent year for which figures are available. This puts Leeds in line with the average for England overall, and is the first year Leeds has not performed worse than the national average since 2011, when the current low income, high cost definition of fuel poverty was first put into use.



- 2.4 Leeds has a comparatively high proportion of low income residents and a large proportion of the city's housing has characteristics that are more likely to result in residents having higher than average fuel costs, for example post-war system built housing or early 20th century solid-wall terraced housing. As well as being hard to heat efficiently, this housing stock tends to be concentrated in areas where low income households are concentrated, making fuel poverty particularly likely. Furthermore, treating these types of houses to make them more energy efficient often requires interventions such as external wall insulation that are much more expensive than those that can be used on more conventional property types, meaning that they are highly unlikely to be improved without intervention from the state or other external agencies.
- 2.5 In early 2019, Leeds declared a climate emergency with a commitment for the city to become carbon neutral by 2030. A major part of meeting this challenge will be the decarbonisation of domestic heating, which in 2019, across the UK, accounted for 65.2 megatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, or 19 per cent of all the country's carbon dioxide emissions. In the same year, domestic gas consumption in Leeds totalled 4,639 gigawatt hours (GWh) or around 14 megawatt hours (MWh) for each domestic metered property.
- 2.6 We have been working hard over the last year to try to understand the likely costs of retrofitting existing homes to a standard that should both eradicate fuel poverty and contribute to achieving net zero by 2030. This is a considerable challenge, and relies on:
- 2.6.1 Improving fabric thermal efficiency to minimise heating requirements;
- 2.6.2 Replacing fossil fuel based heating (i.e. gas central heating) with renewable based heating or heat pumps;
- 2.6.3 Significant decarbonisation of the grid, to a near zero carbon standard.
- 2.7 In our 2020 scrutiny report, we estimated that to increase the average SAP (energy efficiency) rating of housing in Leeds to band C, would cost c£803m and to ensure that no properties are below band E would cost up to £190m more.
- 2.8 We also estimated that to achieve net zero across the whole housing stock would cost between £1.1 and £2.4 billion, depending on the form of heating chosen.
- 2.9 However, more recent work has shown that, whilst the cost is still not finalised, our previous calculations look likely to be an underestimate:
- 2.9.1 The Leeds Climate Commission produced an updated *Net-Zero Carbon Roadmap for Leeds* in early 2021 which estimates costs to be £5.5bn to reduce emissions to c200,000 tonnes pa. This figure includes all emissions from homes, including lights, appliances and heating & hot water.
- 2.9.2 Arup have been appointed by BEIS to work with Leeds on the *City Deep Decarbonisation Programme* which initially estimated that to achieve net zero across the whole housing stock in Leeds would cost £9-£15bn, depending on the level of insulation applied to the homes.
- 2.9.3 This figure is currently being refined and looks to be an overestimate, as a more granular estimate is that all 54,000 Housing Leeds properties could be made near net-zero (assuming grid decarbonisation) for c£862m.
- 2.10 However, it is fair to assume that the minimum cost is likely to be over £5bn; a level of investment that is currently unbudgeted for locally or nationally.

### **3. Main issues**

- 3.1 In July 2020, the chancellor's summer statement included substantial new investment to improve the energy efficiency of UK buildings. The announcement was part of a package of measures intended to help the economy recover from the effects of the Covid pandemic and included support aimed at promoting a green recovery that would also help meet the government's carbon targets.
- 3.2 £3 billion was announced to improve the energy efficiency of buildings overall, with £1 billion for public sector buildings and £2 billion for domestic properties. The majority of this £2 billion was allocated to the Green Homes Grant voucher scheme, through which homeowners can apply for vouchers for up to £5,000 (or £10,000 for certain low income households) to spend on insulation or other low carbon measures to improve the energy efficiency of their property.
- 3.3 The remaining £500 million of GHG funding was set aside for the Local Authority Delivery scheme (GHG LAD). This operates differently to the voucher scheme, with local authorities bidding for grants from this pot to spend on projects in their areas. Bids had to meet a number of criteria to qualify; they had to be targeted at households with annual income below £30,000, the total cost of works had to be below £10,000 per property and each property had to have a starting EPC Band of E or lower (this was later raised to D) which would be improved as a result of the works. The funding also came with very tight restrictions on when it could be spent, with initial funding allocations for phase 1 of the grant announced in September 2020 with all works to be complete by March 2021.
- 3.4 Leeds made a successful bid for this funding, with a proposal to improve 385 properties. These were primarily focused on the installation of external wall insulation to properties in three areas with large numbers of post-war system built properties - the Westons estate in Otley, the Bodmins in Middleton and a large area of Swarcliffe and Seacroft. The bid also included 100 hard to treat cavity properties and 25 Home Plus Leeds grants.
- 3.5 This initial round of bids saw the government failing to allocate the majority of the funding it had set aside and it launched a follow up bidding round with slightly relaxed eligibility criteria that also allowed EPC band D properties to benefit, with a requirement to spend funding by September 2021. Leeds was successful in this round of funding as well, with a project that will treat a further 180 properties in the areas mentioned above along with 100 more cavity walls and 25 more Home Plus Leeds grants. In total these grant awards have a value of more than £5.6 million and will improve around 700 properties in the city.
- 3.6 There is a second phase of GHG LAD funding for which Leeds has an indicative allocation of £5.3 million and which is being administered by the North East, Yorkshire and Humber Energy Hub, rather than by BEIS. This is also subject to a further bid which will be submitted by the 26th March 2021, with works to be completed by December 2021.
- 3.7 Along with the Green Homes Grant, the 2020 summer statement also saw the government announce the pilot of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. This is initially worth £50 million and is first phase of a manifesto commitment to £3.8 billion of new funding. It aims to find innovative approaches to installing measures that will secure a much greater reduction in energy demand from social rented properties than is achieved by standard insulation schemes at a cheaper cost and at greater

speed. The idea is to find approaches that work at scale and that can be rolled out across the country to allow much deeper decarbonisation of social rented stock than can be achieved at present.

- 3.8 Leeds successfully applied for this funding, with a bid to improve 190 properties in the Holtdales estate near Cookridge. These homes will receive extension decarbonisation measures including external wall insulation, Solar PV, air source heat pumps, smart meters and thermostats and new ventilation systems. The total value of the project is £8.87 million, with £4.18 million of this coming from government grant. The government announced a further £60 million for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund in its Autumn Spending Review.
- 3.9 The council also secured £2.6m from the Getting Building Fund to deliver energy efficiency improvements to 94 private sector back to backs in Holbeck, building on the successful Holbeck phase 1 project. This is now on site.
- 3.10 A further fund was announced in November 2020 to support low income households in off-gas-grid areas to move onto cheaper, more efficient, low carbon heating systems than are currently available to them. Full details of eligibility and the bidding process are yet to be released but the fund is scheduled to commence in early 2022. Leeds has a large number of low income off-gas properties, particularly in high rise flats so could potentially stand to benefit substantially from this fund.
- 3.11 Leeds has so far secured a total of £12.4 million from funding announced by the government over the last 12 months, with a further £5.3 million available pending submission of a successful bid to GHG LAD phase 2. Works resulting from these will benefit over 1,000 properties making a sizeable contribution to the city's efforts to tackle fuel poverty.
- 3.12 While this investment is undoubtedly extremely welcome, there are substantial associated challenges. Chief among these is undertaking works at this scale at the pace required by the government. Works for GHG LAD phase 1a must now be complete by June 2021 (recently extended from the original deadline of March), phase 1b must be completed by September and all work for phase 2, must be completed by the end of this year. Working at this pace is proving a major challenge for contractors across the country, who are reporting problems with securing sub-contractors to carry out works, little time to train new staff to meet the increased demand and a subsequent knock-on effect on costs within the sector.
- 3.13 However, the biggest issue is that there is no tangible long-term commitment to delivering low carbon housing retrofit, particularly in the able to pay sector. This means that the industry are unable to invest in training or apprenticeships as there simply isn't a pipeline of work that can be relied upon.
- 3.14 The widely publicised problems with the voucher element of the Green Homes Grant, culminating in the decision by Treasury to withdraw underspend funding which is only underspend as the government fundamentally mismanaged the programme, has drawn industry fury. This further undermines confidence in the long term sustainability of the sector, with concerns that a more stable, longer term base of government support is needed to allow the building industry to sustainably grow to meet the challenge of upgrading the country's housing stock.
- 3.15 At the same time, the newly introduced PAS 2035:19 standard for retrofit work is creating significantly higher admin costs whilst making each property take longer to deliver. A new specification has also been introduced for thermal insulation, designed to address some instances of poor workmanship by contractors.

However, the specification is inflexible and does not work well with some archetypes, meaning that there is a very real risk that some priorities in Leeds, including street-lined back to backs, become undeliverable.

- 3.16 There is also a possibility that this new PAS2035:19 standard will impact on ongoing publically funded work, such as ERDF projects.
- 3.17 There is therefore a risk that despite securing significant investment for domestic retrofit, we will not be able to deliver the full amount of funding secured or meet our targets.
- 3.18 In addition to the above funding streams, Leeds City Council continues to target assistance towards residents in, or at risk of fuel poverty through the Home Plus Leeds service, which provides energy efficiency and fuel bill advice to low income and vulnerable residents. Home Plus Leeds is delivered by Care & Repair Leeds, Groundwork Leeds and Age UK Leeds, and is funded by Adults and Health, Public Health and SEAQ.
- 3.19 Private residents who are on a low income and who suffer from a cold related illness or are elderly and frail, can be provided with heating and insulation improvements through the Warm Well Homes scheme, funded by Housing and Health. The scheme is administered through Home Plus Leeds and improvements are installed through Better Homes Yorkshire.

#### **4. Corporate considerations**

##### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 The Affordable Warmth Partnership, which includes council members as well as representatives from the health, housing and voluntary sectors, is our main vehicle for consulting on and developing affordable warmth policy. This meets on a quarterly basis.

##### **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

- 4.2.1 A key focus of the work outlined in this report has been to support people struggling against fuel poverty in particular, as well as broader issues of hardship, poverty and inequality. Many of the projects in this area also look at communities holistically, thereby strengthening cohesion and integration too.
- 4.2.2 An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Impact Assessment was undertaken in conjunction with the adoption of the Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy 2017 – 30.

##### **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

- 4.3.1 The fuel poverty programme contributes to the Best Council Plan in terms of improving the health and wellbeing of residents by enabling them to live in warm homes. The work programme contributes to the energy efficiency and quality of homes, as set out in the Leeds Housing Strategy and contributes to the Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy 2017-2030.
- 4.3.2 The work to tackle fuel poverty plays a key role in achieving the Council's ambition to build a compassionate city and tackling poverty and reducing inequalities. The overarching aim of the Best Council Plan is 'Tackling Poverty and Reducing

Inequalities'. The activities set out in this report support the Best City Priority of Safe, Strong Communities through;

- Keeping people safe from harm, protecting the most vulnerable.
- Helping people out of financial hardship.
- Being responsive to local needs, building thriving, resilient communities.
- Promoting community respect and resilience.

4.3.3 The projects and initiatives outlined to tackle fuel poverty in this report also contribute towards the Best City Priorities of Inclusive Growth through targeting interventions to tackle poverty in priority neighbourhoods. The actions also contribute to the priorities of Health & Wellbeing, Child-Friendly City, Age-Friendly Leeds and Housing.

#### Climate Emergency

4.3.4 The above fuel poverty programme helps to reduce the city's emissions of greenhouse gases by improving the overall energy efficiency of the housing stock.

4.3.5 In Leeds, as globally, it is the poorest people and communities who are most affected by the negative impacts of climate change and extreme weather, and who have the fewest options available to them in order to respond. The council has a crucial role to play in assisting these communities wherever possible by reducing fuel poverty and improving affordable warmth.

#### **4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money**

4.4.1 All of the projects and services referred to in this report are being undertaken within current budgets, there are no additional resource implications arising from this report.

4.4.2 However, it is clear that the wider drive for net zero carbon housing to meet the climate emergency requires very considerable additional funding and new approaches to financing able to pay households. This will be addressed in the forthcoming Low Carbon Housing Strategy.

#### **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

4.5.1 There are no specific legal implications or access to information issues with this report.

#### **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.1 The most significant risk relates to the specific grant conditions and tight deadlines, combined with the newly introduced PAS2035:19 standard which is making delivery extremely challenging.

### **5. Conclusions**

5.1 The council remains committed to tackling fuel poverty and the last available data saw numbers of people in fuel poverty continue to fall.

5.2 The council has a strong track record of delivering both broad domestic energy efficiency programmes and focused fuel poverty alleviation projects. This year has

seen a significant increase in the amount of government grant funding available to address fuel poverty, which the council has been very successful at securing.

- 5.3 This funding is welcome, but there are a number of challenges related to timescales, specific grant criteria and the newly introduced PAS 2035:19 standard for retrofit work which are combining to make delivery extremely difficult.
- 5.4 The council is engaging with funding partners and government to highlight and address these ongoing concerns.
- 5.5 The council is undertaking further work to understand the likely investment needed to address fuel poverty and achieve net zero in the domestic sector, which indicates that costs are likely to be over £5bn.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 That the Environment, Housing and Communities Board notes the content of this report.

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 Leeds affordable warmth strategy 2017-2030

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

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Report author: Nahim Ruhi-Khan  
Tel: 0113 3781346/ 07712 214044

**Report of Director of Resources and Housing**

**Report to Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)**

**Date: March 2021**

**Subject: Capital Programme Investment to Improve Energy Efficiency in Council Housing Stock**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

Over the last 12 month period housing revenue capital investment has taken a step change, increasing its programme of activity to improve the thermal efficiency of council housing and installation of renewable energy. The drivers underpinning this shift include re-programming due to the pandemic, and the availability of external funding. At the same time we have moved to a ‘whole building’ approach combining major Health and Safety driven work with thermal insulation to improve both the appearance of, and living environment for people living in council owned accommodation.

**2. Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)**

The Housing Investment programme contributes to the Best Council Plan in terms of improving the health and wellbeing of residents by enabling them to live in warm homes. Reducing heating costs increases disposable income for local communities. The investment programme contributes to the energy efficiency and quality of Council homes and aligned to the Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy 2017 -2030

Reducing fuel poverty plays a key role in achieving the council's ambition to build a compassionate city, tackling poverty and reducing inequalities. The Best Council Plan particularly emphasises improving energy performance in homes whilst reducing fuel poverty.

The capital investment programme is responsive to priority neighbourhoods and therefore supporting local needs and building thriving and resilient communities.

Improving energy efficiency within the City Housing Stock does improve customer satisfaction and has a regeneration effect. The HRA capital investment programme will contribute to building community pride and resilience.

The HRA investment programme plays a key role in helping the council to respond to the climate emergency by improving domestic energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions.

### **3. Resource Implications**

Internal staffing resources are currently lower than required for the delivery of this programme, however a proactive round of recruitment has commenced. Inward investment includes revenue funding for staffing however it has been difficult to source technical staff through external recruitment and some skills and experience have been lost through the organisations voluntary redundancy scheme. There is also a question about the markets capacity to cope with the added demand arising from government funded schemes that have to be delivered in a relatively short period of time.

### **Recommendations**

It is requested that Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities): note the contents of this report.

### **Purpose of this report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide:

- An update on progress to support the decarbonisation of council housing stock since the last report in February 2021.
- Information on current and pipeline energy projects
- Information on future investment needs

### **2. Background information**

Leeds City Council owns over 54,000 homes in the city and invests over £80m annually through its HRA capital programme through which it delivers a range of investment including fire safety, H&S, energy efficiency and lifecycle replacement. This activity varies in scale and complexity and provides the Housing Authority with an opportunity to contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of our tenants, through better living environments, improved thermal comfort savings in utility costs.

Alongside investing in the fabric of the buildings the projects aim to bring about a regenerative effect, extending work to include the immediate environment to improve the perception of place and community.

Following the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in March 2019 the current asset management strategy has been reviewed and is due for presentation to Executive board further into 2021. The revised 5 year strategy is a forward-looking plan that sets out the investment priorities for council housing stock, including a shift in emphasis to support the council's ambition to reach carbon neutrality by 2030. This emphasis on renewable energy and thermal efficiency will require significant inward investment. At the same time the council remains responsible for, and must strike a balance with other priority works funded through the HRA programme, including H&S, fire safety, maintaining decency standards and statutory compliance.

### **3. Main Issues**

3.1 Since the last report in February 2020 there has been a noticeable increase in the volume of activity directly contributing to the decarbonisation of council housing stock. This has been made possible due to the following:

- Following the pandemic and the subsequent reduction of planned activity inside buildings there has been an acceleration in the planning and delivery of decarbonisation projects. The current planned programme of activity in mobilisation/ design/procurement phase totalling £132.4M with £31.1M of activity currently on-site schemes.
- Securing external funding for projects supporting the decarbonisation agenda. A total of £21.2M has been successfully secured for projects included within the programme, with a further £6.9M awaiting confirmation.
- Taking the opportunity created by the asset portfolio having reached 98% decency to re-direct a greater proportion of the HRA capital investment to decarbonisation projects
- A shift in the strategic approach and planning process, moving to a whole building approach. Essential H&S work such as concrete repairs to high rise buildings are now being undertaken in conjunction with energy improvement works to the fabric of the building such as roof replacement and external wall insulation.

3.2 The service has undertaken a joint project with the University of Leeds (UoL) to make better use of its asset management data. A model has been developed which supports investment planning process by providing information that enables investment to be targeted to make the biggest gains in energy performance. For the purpose of this report the council housing portfolio has been organised into three broad categories: high rise building, non-traditional (system build) and traditional build.

## Category 1 High Rise Buildings

The HRA portfolio is currently responsible for 107 high rise buildings, (eight of these have gas). Renewable heating has been installed to 35, leaving 64 with electric shortage heating.

Of these, 52 are currently onsite or at design stage, leaving 12 blocks to be planned/ budget allocated for.

Table A\_– Energy Projects in High Rise

High Rise	Finished	On Site	Pipeline	In Planning			Househol
Project Name	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	2025+	
Shakespeares Project							297
GSHP Ph1 (Heights East & West)							120
GSHP Ph2 (Westerly Rise & Croft)							92
Roofing							471
High Rise Thermal Efficiency Works - Phase 1							60
District Heating Network - Leeds Pipes							1,200
GSHP Phase 3							92
High Rise Thermal Efficiency Works - Phase 2							99
High Rise Thermal Efficiency Works - Phase 3							60
High Rise Thermal Efficiency Works - Phase 4							297
District Heating Clusters							1,483
GSHP Phase 4							274
High Rise Thermal Efficiency Works - Phase 5							480
GSHP Future phases							1,366

## Non-traditional Housing

This category includes 9,931 homes (18.9% of HL total stock - 72.3% are SAP band C or above and 27.7% are SAP band D and below. There are a total of 26 archetypes in this category with 10 archetypes performing at level D.

Planned Investment projects – there are several retrofit measures being installed to improve thermal efficiency including new roofing, external wall insulation and solar panels. The projects are set out below.

Table B – Energy Projects in Non-traditional Properties

Non-Traditional Archetypes	Finished	On Site	Pipeline	In Planning			Households
Project Name	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	2025+	
Air Source Heat Pumps							25
Bodmins & Westons							20
Holtdales							190
Fitting the Future							250
Low Rise Thermal Efficiency Works - Phase 1							60
Low Rise Thermal Efficiency Works - Phase 2							56
Cavity & Loft Insulation							4,000

Traditional build -this category includes 35,265 traditional built homes- equating to 67.1% of total stock and includes 18 archetypes. 71.4% are SAP band C or above and 28.6% are SAP band D and below.

Planned Investment projects - The lowest performing archetype are back-to-back properties - TIBB1 (Transformational insulation in back-to-back) project will bring 750 up to Grade C. The remainder will be picked up through TIBB2.

Table C – Energy Projects in Traditional Build Properties

Traditional Archetypes	Finished	On Site	Pipeline	In Planning			Households
Project Name	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	2025+	
Back to backs Insulation - Phase 1							750
Back to backs Insulation - Phase 2							650

### 3.3 Current investment and Future ambition

3.3.1 Within the HRA asset management strategy there is commitment to improve the energy performance of the council housing portfolio and to increase the use of renewable energy sources for the benefit of the environment and council tenants.

3.3.2 The benefits to tenants of investment in renewable heating and measures that improve thermal efficiency of buildings include the following:

- Improved thermal comfort through increased control over heating temperatures
- Improved supply of hot water
- Radiators installed into all rooms within the dwelling
- Reduced utility costs, up to 50% reduction in bills
- Reduced damp and condensation in homes

3.3.3 The LCC housing portfolio has an average SAP rating of C which is higher than the private rented sector and homes in private ownership in the city. 82% of council stock is at level C and above. There were 1,692 properties rated at E,F&G. Following investment into some of our poorest performing properties this number has reduced to 1,538 (across a range of archetype). Planned improvement works will reduce this figure by 208.

3.3.4 The model enables the service to estimate the cost of improving the lowest performing homes (from the SAP group D,E,F,G) to an average of SAP C is circa £32.5 million. The majority of properties could be retro-fitted to this standard with only 0.06% (25 properties) unable to reach this standard with current treatments available.

3.3.5 In order to reach SAP level B the model indicates that a budget of circa £1.1bn is required. This will only upgrade 58% of council stock to band B, the remaining 42% can only achieve a maximum SAP C based on affordability, practicality and availability of current efficiency measures.

### 4.4 Partnership Work

The service is working with a range of partners to deliver energy projects into council housing, this includes:

- Groundwork Yorkshire - engaging Green Doctor services to enable tenants to access advice on fuel tariffs and other energy efficiency measures.
- Leeds Beckett University –measuring levels of embodied carbon to inform the option appraisals process and the fitting of heat/humidity sensors to capture the benefit of energy projects
- Connecting environmental schemes with cycle routes through joint working with Highways
- Installing Electric Charging points in council homes
- A review of green spaces and gardens to increase tree planting, biodiversity and food growing.
- Replacing all lighting with LEDs, offering discounts on the most efficient appliances, creating ‘tool libraries’ for individuals to use, etc.
- Sustainable Energy and Air Quality Team– to secure additional funding / grants
- Joint working with Parks and Countryside- identifying HRA land for tree planting initiative - tree canopy data now included in the GIS mapping portal to inform Solar PV installation.

#### **4. Corporate considerations**

##### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

The annual budget for the capital programme was approved by the Executive board in February 2021. In the main the investment programme is data led based on stock conditions data and the Leeds decarbonisation model. Tenants and elected members are consulted on and kept updated on the delivery programme. All procurement of external resources to support delivery of the capital programme is undertaken in line with the Council’s contract procedure rules and governance framework.

##### **Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

##### **4.1.1 Equality impact assessments are undertaken for all projects and major schemes of work.**

The cash savings to tenants will vary depending on the nature of scheme, tenant lifestyle and affordability. There are wider, less measurable benefits including income, improved health and wellbeing and more sustainable tenancies. Installation of renewable energy also addresses high levels of dissatisfaction in high rise blocks with electric storage heating as identified in the STAR survey.

##### **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

##### **4.3.1 Climate Emergency**

The Capital investment programme for the council housing portfolio will support the climate emergency agenda by:

- Improving the SAP rating of all council homes, therefore, reducing the carbon footprint.
- Encouraging a mixed economy of energy solutions better quality homes and standards which will help reduce energy consumption.

- Utilising external funding to install innovative energy efficiency measures.
- Improving energy awareness for council house tenants across the city.

#### **4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money**

- 4.4.1 All procurements are undertaken in accordance with the council's contract procedure rules.
- 4.4.2 All contractor costs are subjected to rigorous financial review by in-house quantity surveyors to ensure value for money is achieved.

A key focus has been on employment and skills outcomes, including apprenticeships and work experience or visits for people at school or college, and we have a positive relationships with Employment and Skills colleagues who provide excellent support for many of our bid evaluations. Where we use external procurement frameworks we work closely with them on these commitments, tying in with any framework requirements. During the tender process contractors are expected to make a commitment on:

- Creation of jobs and apprenticeships and work experience opportunities
- Improving the local environment and tackling the climate emergency
- Using local SMEs and suppliers, being Mindful Employers, sponsoring community events
- Waste management targets
- Planning transport and logistics and site activity to minimise carbon impact
- Providing residents with low energy or resource saving devices and advice
- Woodland creation and improving green spaces.

#### **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

- 4.5.1 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

#### **4.6 Risk management**

- 4.6.1 The following are the main risks associated with this programme of activity:
- Risk to inward funding if delivery timeframes are not met
  - Risk that the level of resourcing is insufficient to meet programme demands and expectations of stakeholders
  - Risk of balancing other programme priorities including fire safety, H&S
  - Risk of the procurement process slowing down the delivery expectations of external funders

### **5. Conclusions**

A number of programmes are currently onsite and in the pipeline to support decarbonisation of council housing. Further work is planned to ensure council housing stock contributes to the ambitions of carbon neutrality by 2030 our investment plans moving forward will be clearly to this strategic priority and energy efficiency which will be key theme in the revised asset management strategy. This

will include stretch targets to ensure that the SAP ratings continue to improve in council housing stock.

**6. Recommendation**

It is requested that Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) note the contents of the report.

**7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

None

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

**Report of Director of Resources and Housing**

**Report to Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Subject: Carbon reduction in the private rented sector**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	Yes	X No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	x No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	x No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	Yes	x No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	x No

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- Reducing carbon emissions from the private rented sector is complex and difficult for the Council. Landlords will invest in basic maintenance and the provision of amenities but are unlikely to incorporate carbon reduction measures into their business and investment models.
- The sector has always had the lowest simple SAP rating compared to others. In Leeds the private rented sector has a simple SAP rating of 55 compared to 58 for owner/occupiers and 60 for the social sector. This is not a surprise given that over 50% of the sector is located in the hard to treat pre-1919 housing stock. We have also seen a rise in the level of the private rented sector in areas such as Armley, Beeston and Harehills over the last decade such that in some areas it is now the dominant tenure.
- The report to Scrutiny Board in February 2021 detailed the work that is on-going in the sector to address the issues of carbon reduction. This included:
  - a. Working with landlord associations to educate and support the sector
  - b. The use of the Housing Act 2004 to enforce standards
  - c. The requirement for all privately rented properties to be EPC E and above in order to be rented out
  - d. The investment in areas such as Cross Green and Holbeck to support the private sector and help reduce carbon emissions

- e. The lobbying of Government to make changes to legislation to improve the understanding of the legislation for the sector and improve the enforcement of standards
- The Council continues to try and reduce carbon emissions from the sector by education; the enforcement of standards; lobbying for changes to the complexity of the legislation and the need for long term investment into the sector to achieve the carbon reduction targets required if the changes required are to be made.
- Since the report to the board last year, the Council has been successful in a bid to the Get Building Fund for £2.65m for further works in Holbeck to provide an additional 150 homes with energy efficiency works and improvements. This continues the work undertaken previously in Cross Green and Holbeck. This work will help to reduce fuel bills by 25-30%; improve properties from a SAP rating of F to B/C and help to reduce carbon by 1400 tonnes per year.
- In January of this year, the Government closed a consultation on energy efficiency in the private rented sector. One of the considerations being proposed was that all private rented properties have an EPC rating of C by 2025 in order to be legally rented out. The Council has responded to the consultation and we are awaiting the Government's response to their consultation with interest.

## **2. Best Council Plan Implications** (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- The investment in the area has contributed to providing homes of the right quality, type and affordability in the right places and minimising homelessness.
- The way of working in the area contributes to keeping people safe from harm and promotes community respect and resilience.
- The investment contributes to tackling poverty helping everyone benefit from the economy to their full potential
- The investment helps to reduce health inequalities and support active lifestyles

## **3. Resource Implications**

- There are no additional resource implications associated with this report.

## **Recommendations**

- a) Scrutiny Board are requested to note the contents of the report.

## **1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to update the Scrutiny Board on carbon reduction in the private rented sector, and the Council approach to addressing carbon reduction as part of the Climate Emergency in order to achieve the targets set by Government to meet the 2050 target.

## **2. Background information**

- 2.1 The reduction of carbon in the private rented sector is a complex and difficult one to achieve. Being private, the ability for the Council to make significant changes in the market is difficult and limited as the priority for investment for most landlords is basic maintenance and the provision and maintenance of amenities which is what customers of this market expect. Until such a time that carbon reduction is either made a legal requirement (which is enforceable) or there is a financial incentive to achieve carbon reduction in the market or it is market driven, there is little incentive for landlords to consider this as an investment option.
- 2.2 The Government has made it illegal for landlords to rent properties below an EPC rating of E. This level will be systematically increased over time to improve the quality of people's homes but also help to reduce carbon emissions. By 2030 the level required to be able to rent is proposed to be an EPC Rating of C. However recently Government consulted on a proposal to move this to 2025.
- 2.3 To achieve an EPC rating of E at the moment, simply installing a gas central heating system would be sufficient. This means that, whilst compliant, gas heating systems emit more carbon than other heating sources. However, to use electric heating systems would increase fuel costs to the resident resulting in an increase in fuel poverty in the sector. This makes the reduction in carbon emissions a real issue for the sector and its residents
- 2.4 To achieve the proposed EPC rating of C by 2030 (or 2025 if the recent consultation changes this time frame) will require considerable more structural works to the fabric of the building. This requires significant investment in and by the sector.
- 2.5 Over 50% of the sector is in the pre-1919 housing stock of the city. Most of this stock is of solid walled construction which makes it hard to treat, hard to improve thermal efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. Being of solid walled construction they have no cavities to fill so making them hard to insulate. This is demonstrated by the fact that nearly 70% of the sector has a simple EPC rating of D or E and 15% having a rating of F or below. Based on the cost of the works undertaken in Cross Green and Holbeck then it will be around £20/30k per property in terms of the investment needed.
- 2.6 The 2017 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey showed that the simple SAP rating for the sector was on average 55 compared to 58 for owner/occupiers and 60 for the social sector. However this is an average for the city – the lowest SAP levels tend to be in the inner city areas with higher levels of low income families; poorer housing stock conditions and increasing levels of the private rented sector. The marked increase in the private rented sector in these area is a challenge for the city if it is to reduce the level of carbon emissions in the sector as a whole.
- 2.7 Prior to 2010 the Private Sector Renewal Grant ring-fenced money to address improvements in the private sector. Whilst not a significant amount in terms of the overall needs of the city, it did provide money to address issues such as carbon reduction. This allowed area-based improvements in areas such as Beeston and

Cross Green. Post 2010 there has been no monies directly ring fenced to this area of work making it more difficult to develop a programme of works to help improve properties. As detailed in the February 2020 report to the board, to achieve the improvements in Cross Green and Holbeck the Council has had to look to put packages of funding together, including significant amounts of its own Capital Programme, to try and help fund such works. However funding tends to be irregular and there is no constant investment available to allow improvements

- 2.8 Part 1 of The Housing Act 2004 places a duty on the Council to address hazards, one being excess cold. Excess cold is always in the top three hazards found by officers as part of the inspections that are undertaken by the service. However to address this hazard, landlords are more likely to install gas central heating which will increase not decrease carbon emissions.

### **3. Main issues**

- 3.1 Whilst a difficult area for the Council to make a difference this does not mean that programmes of work and initiatives have not tried to address carbon reduction and improve the private sector stock in the city.
- 3.2 As with everything the Covid-19 pandemic has affected the ability of the sector to address this issue. However, as guidance and restrictions have allowed, work has continued. The service has continued to address requests for service and has undertaken inspections where we have been able to safely do so. This has allowed us to continue to address hazards - such as excess cold - and help to improve the standards of people's homes.
- 3.3 Working with the sector and its national associations, the Council has and continues to try and educate landlords. This has involved various landlord forums; the provision of help and advice via mailshots and information on the Council's website as well as working with the associations to try and better engage with the sector as a whole. Part of the approach is to look at the development of a potential property passport that identifies the type of works required and the efficiencies needed to ensure compliance with targets and also reduce carbon in the sector.
- 3.4 As part of the educational approach, it is intended to use the opportunity that Selective Licensing has given us in both Beeston and Harehills to work better with landlords in general and to use the opportunity to help landlords understand their responsibilities, educate them as to the future changes they will need to make and if appropriate enforce standards.
- 3.5 The Government has recently started a review of Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004. This is an opportunity to include carbon emissions and to take into consideration the overall cost to tenants as part of the assessment of the works required rather than just removing excess cold by putting in a gas central heating system. This could then help with carbon targets but minimise the potential for increased fuel poverty. The review also needs to link legislation together so that achieving the minimum SAP rating by a particular year could be included and could therefore be enforceable. Unfortunately, as with legislation affecting the sector, there is a disconnect between different Acts which makes it difficult for landlords to understand their responsibilities and for Councils to enforce.
- 3.6 Since 2010, despite the loss of the Private Sector Renewal Grant, the Council has invested in making improvements to the private rented sector as part of the overall settlement it receives from Government. The two main areas that have benefitted have been Cross Green and Holbeck. The report to the board in 2020 detailed the

outcome of that investment with 25-30% reduction in fuel bills; improvements in homes to an EPC B or C and a reduction in carbon of around 1400 tonnes of carbon per annum.

- 3.7 In September 2020 the Council was successful with bids for the Government's Get Building Fund. This has provided £2.65m towards a further improvement of 100 homes in Holbeck. By adding to the monies we have been able to provide a fund of up to £3.9m to improve a total of around 150 homes. Improvements will include new roofs; windows; doors and external wall insulation as per previous schemes. This needs to be completed by March 2022 as part of the funding agreement.
- 3.8 In addition the Government has provided Green Home Grants to support the improvement of energy efficiency across all tenures. This provided up to a maximum of £10k worth of work to reduce energy consumption with the Government contributing a maximum of 66% up to a maximum spend of £10k.
- 3.9 The Council has supported and will continue to support the work of the Community Housing Led sector. Organisations such as LATCH; Canopy and GIPSIL have undertaken considerable work to bring back empty homes and retrofitting extensive energy efficiency works as part of the renovation. The Council has supported this work by helping with financial assistance such as Right to Buy Funds to make projects viable and to allow works which otherwise would not have been affordable such as solid wall insulation to be a viable option.
- 3.9 The Council has continued to lobby the Government for changes as well as other bodies, such as the Private Housing Officer Group (Core Cities) and the LGA, to provide financial incentives such as the reinstatement of funding such as the Private Sector Renewal Grant; tax changes to make it a viable business option for landlords to undertake works; the linkage of public money such housing benefit to housing conditions (including the SAP rating) and making the legislation around this matter less complex and more enforceable. This would not just allow Councils to enforce and improve standards but also make it more understandable for landlords and what they need to do to comply with their responsibilities.
- 3.10 By working in a wider partnership with other local authorities we are also looking at best practice across the city. Recently a number of cities were pilots for MEES enforcement and we are currently discussing their experiences with them and to try and understand what benefits they have achieved and how we can learn from them in Leeds
- 3.11 Empty homes remain a priority for the service and the Council as part of the housing supply available within the city to provide quality accommodation for people. When dealing with returning empty homes back into use, owners are encouraged to incorporate energy efficiency measures as part of their renovations. This is the best and most effective way to incorporate such works as they can be disruptive to any future occupiers. It is also cheaper and will provide a home that is better value and more attractive to rent out and that , in the longer term saves costs on updating to meet future legislative changes and reduce maintenance costs as part of a landlords business plan.

## **4. Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 Consultation has occurred with all stakeholders and continues to occur based on the initiatives undertaken to address carbon reduction

## 4.2 **Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

4.2.1 A full Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Assessment for all the initiatives has been undertaken on an individual activity by activity basis.

## 4.3 **Council policies and best council plan**

4.3.1 The initiatives contribute to the compassionate city agenda, improving housing and helping to improve communities.

### **Climate Emergency**

4.3.2 The initiatives above have and will help with issues affecting the climate:

- Better quality homes and standards will help to reduce energy consumption.
- Empty homes in the city have been and will continue to be targeted to reduce the numbers in the area city but also to contribute to an overall net reduction in the city preventing the need for new build and in many cases reducing the carbon footprint these create compared to renovating the existing stock.
- Education of both tenants and landlords to help reduce waste and improve recycling
- Better engagement with landlords to improve education specifically around the changing energy legislation requirements which affect the sector
- By investing in improved and more energy efficient homes via the capital investment has will help to reduce energy consumption and reduce carbon emissions.

## 4.4 **Resources and value for money**

4.4.1 All initiatives have been or will have to be considered in relation to the resources available and value that they have or will give.

4.4.2 Currently all initiatives have been assessed against this criteria as part of any decision making process.

## 4.5 **Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

4.5.1 The report is eligible for call in

4.5.2 All initiatives have been subject to reports detailing any legal implications.

## 4.6 **Risk management**

4.6.1 All initiatives have their own risk management in place

## 5. **Conclusion**

5.1 Addressing carbon reduction in the private rented sector is a complex and difficult for the Council to achieve. Landlords priorities for investment tends to be basic repairs and the provision of amenities not carbon reduction measures.

5.2 The sector is found mainly in the pre-1919 housing stock which is hard to tackle and costly due to its solid wall construction. This means that the sector has and continues to have the lowest average simple SAP rating at 55 of all sectors in the

city. However lower SAP ratings can be found in the lower rental markets of the inner city which have also seen an increase in the level of the sector in general in these areas.

- 5.3 The Council has and continues to address the issue of carbon reduction via supporting and educating landlords; the new investment in Holbeck and working with partners in the Community Housing sector to improve properties and empty homes.
- 5.4 The Council has worked with others to try and lobby Government for changes in the legislation and policies, including financial incentives to help landlords address carbon reduction in their properties and to consider the issue of carbon reduction in the review of Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004 around excess cold. The current review of the guidance for hazards may give us an opportunity to try and influence this.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 Scrutiny Board are requested to:
- 6.2 Note the content of this report

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

None

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

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**Report of Head of Democratic Services**

**Report to Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)**

**Date: 25 March 2021**

**Subject: Work Schedule**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**1. Purpose of this report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the Scrutiny Board’s work schedule for the remainder of the current municipal year.

**2. Background information**

2.1 All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work schedule for the municipal year. In doing so, the work schedule should not be considered a fixed and rigid schedule, it should be recognised as a document that can be adapted and changed to reflect any new and emerging issues throughout the year; and also reflect any timetable issues that might occur from time to time.

**3. Main issues**

3.1 The latest iteration of the Board’s work schedule for the remainder of the municipal year is attached as Appendix 1 for consideration and agreement of the Scrutiny Board – subject to any identified and agreed amendments.

3.2 A draft work programme for the 2021/22 successor board is attached at Appendix 2. Members are asked to consider the schedule in the context of information provided in paragraphs 3.10 – 3.18, with a view to recommending it to the successor board – subject to any agreed amendments.

3.3 The final River Cleanliness Report is attached at Appendix 3 for the consideration and approval of the Board. Helen Gray who supported the inquiry will also be in attendance at the meeting.

#### Developing the work schedule

3.4 When considering any developments and/or modifications to the work schedule, effort should be undertaken to:

- Avoid unnecessary duplication by having a full appreciation of any existing forums already having oversight of, or monitoring a particular issue.
- Ensure any Scrutiny undertaken has clarity and focus of purpose and will add value and can be delivered within an agreed time frame.
- Avoid pure “information items” except where that information is being received as part of a policy/scrutiny review.
- Seek advice about available resources and relevant timings, taking into consideration the workload across the Scrutiny Boards and the type of Scrutiny taking place.
- Build in sufficient flexibility to enable the consideration of urgent matters that may arise during the year.

3.5 In addition, in order to deliver the work schedule, the Board may need to take a flexible approach and undertake activities outside the formal schedule of meetings – such as working groups and site visits, where necessary and appropriate. This flexible approach may also require additional formal meetings of the Scrutiny Board.

#### Developments since the previous Scrutiny Board meeting

3.6 Following a referral to scrutiny the Board held a working group in March 2020 to explore the impact of an increased anti-social use of fireworks on communities in Leeds. Due to the impact of the covid-19 pandemic, particularly for those in both the Council and partner organisations involved in the response, the second session was significantly delayed until March 2021.

3.7 The second working group took place on 10 March 2021 and sought to examine:

- Examples of operational good practice across local partnerships which could inform the future city and regional response to the anti-social use of fireworks.
- The development of recommendations to national legislators with a view to influencing change that mitigates the harmful consequences of an increased private and/or anti-social use of fireworks.

3.8 A draft summary report will be circulated to the Board in the coming weeks with a view to the formal approval of a final report being sought at the first meeting of the successor board.

#### Developing the work programme for the new municipal

3.9 Scrutiny Boards are subject to an annual review and appointment process as part of the overall governance arrangements presented and agreed by Council at its annual meeting each year.

- 3.10 Scrutiny Boards have often adopted different approaches to planning for the new municipal year and providing a 'handover' of issues to be considered by the appropriate and newly constituted Scrutiny Board.
- 3.11 Historically, at the first meeting of the municipal year, Scrutiny Boards have been presented with an outline of proposed formal meeting dates, alongside a draft work schedule that reflected recurring and known items of scrutiny activity, such as performance and budget monitoring, identified Budget and Policy Framework items and recommendation tracking. Specific scrutiny inquiries have tended to be identified at the initial meetings in June / July each year.
- 3.12 However, in order to bring these matters together earlier and to adopt a longer-term approach to planning Scrutiny Board work programmes; each Scrutiny Board is being presented with the following items in its final meeting of the municipal year:
- (a) A draft schedule of planned meeting dates for the municipal year (2021/22)
  - (b) A draft work schedule that includes known items of scrutiny activity, such as performance and budget monitoring, identified Budget and Policy Framework items and recommendation tracking.
  - (c) Details of specific areas / matters to be recommended for consideration by the appropriate Scrutiny Board, as part of the overall 2021/22 work programme.
- 3.13 The draft work schedule is presented at Appendix 2 for consideration. This also outlines planned meeting dates. For consistency, as far as is possible, it is proposed to maintain the Board's current pattern of meeting arrangements for the new municipal year.
- 3.14 Members should be aware, however, that work is still ongoing to finalise the overarching corporate meetings calendar in the context of the limited availability of webcasting facilities and additional post-pandemic requirements in relation to the cleaning of rooms between meetings. There may be future changes to this timetable when there is greater clarity about the impact of those restrictions on the calendar as a whole.
- 3.15 In considering the details presented at Appendix 2, Members of the Scrutiny Board are reminded to consider the information outlined in paragraph 3.3.
- 3.16 In terms of any specific areas/ matters to be recommended to the successor Scrutiny Board, the draft work schedule already reflects the Board's commitment to continue its scrutiny of a number of ongoing areas of interest. However, the Scrutiny Board is invited at this stage to also recommend any other matters for the successor Board to consider.
- 3.17 In agreeing to recommend any specific matters for consideration by the successor Scrutiny Board, members should recognise the future work schedule will:
- Become the responsibility of a successor Scrutiny Board (subject to the arrangements agreed by Council in May 2021).
  - Remain flexible and adaptable to reflect any new and emerging issues or changing priorities identified in the new municipal year.
  - Need to reflect any timetabling issues that might occur from time to time.
- 3.18 Nonetheless, setting out proposed meeting dates and a draft work schedule for the new municipal year will provide a foundation that will not only help with the initial

planning for next year's Scrutiny Board, it also has the potential to help with planning the work programme in the longer-term.

#### **4. Consultation and engagement**

4.1.1 The Vision for Scrutiny states that Scrutiny Boards should seek the advice of the Scrutiny officer, the relevant Director(s) and Executive Member(s) about available resources prior to agreeing items of work.

#### **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

4.2.1 The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules state that, where appropriate, all terms of reference for work undertaken by Scrutiny Boards will include 'to review how and to what effect consideration has been given to the impact of a service or policy on all equality areas, as set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme'.

#### **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

4.3.1 The terms of reference of the Scrutiny Boards promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the best council objectives.

#### Climate Emergency

4.3.2 When considering areas of work, the Board is reminded that influencing climate change and sustainability should be a key area of focus.

#### **4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money**

4.4.1 Experience has shown that the Scrutiny process is more effective and adds greater value if the Board seeks to minimise the number of substantial inquiries running at one time and focus its resources on one key issue at a time.

4.4.2 The Vision for Scrutiny, agreed by full Council also recognises that like all other Council functions, resources to support the Scrutiny function are under considerable pressure and that requests from Scrutiny Boards cannot always be met.

Consequently, when establishing their work programmes Scrutiny Boards should:

- Seek the advice of the Scrutiny officer, the relevant Director and Executive Member about available resources;
- Avoid duplication by having a full appreciation of any existing forums already having oversight of, or monitoring a particular issue;
- Ensure any Scrutiny undertaken has clarity and focus of purpose and will add value and can be delivered within an agreed time frame.

#### **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

4.5.1 This report has no specific legal implications.

## **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.1 This report has no specific risk management implications.

## **5. Conclusions**

5.1 All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work schedule for the municipal year. The latest iteration of the Board's work schedule is attached as Appendix 1 for consideration and agreement of the Scrutiny Board – subject to any identified and agreed amendments.

5.2 Also attached as Appendix 2 is a draft work schedule for the next municipal year (2021/22) for Members to consider and to also identify any other specific areas/ matters to be recommended to the successor Scrutiny Board.

5.3 A final version of the River Cleanliness inquiry report is attached at appendix 3.

## **6. Recommendations**

6.1 Members are asked to

(a) consider the matters outlined in this report and agree (or amend) the overall work schedule (as presented at Appendix 1) as the basis for the Board's work for the remainder of 2020/21.

(b) consider the draft work schedule as presented at Appendix 2 and make recommendations as deemed necessary.

(c) consider the final River Cleanliness inquiry report and recommend its publication – subject to any agreed amendments.

## **7. Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

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## Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2020/2021 Municipal Year

June	July	August
<b>Meeting Agenda for 18 June 2020</b>	<b>Meeting Agenda for 9 July 2020</b>	<b>No Scrutiny Board meeting scheduled.</b>
<p>*REMOTE SESSION*</p> <p>Outcome of the consultation on the proposals for the land currently occupied by Temple Newsam Golf Course</p> <p>Safer Leeds (verbal update)</p>	<p>*REMOTE SESSION*</p> <p>Volunteer Hubs – learning lessons to ensure the future resilience of the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector</p> <p>Referral to Scrutiny: Nitrous Oxide (Cllr Robinson)</p>	
<b>Working Group Meetings</b>		
	Discussion re: parameters of River Cleanliness Inquiry	
<b>Additional Notes</b>		
	Request for detailed Nitrous Oxide Report	

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**Scrutiny Work Items Key:**

PSR	Policy/Service Review	RT	Recommendation Tracking	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring	C	Consultation Response



## Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2020/2021 Municipal Year

September	October	November
<b>Meeting Agenda for 24 September 2020</b>	<b>Meeting Agenda for 15 October 2020</b>	<b>Meeting Agenda for 12 November 2020</b>
<p>Waste Management Services: update on the recommendations of the 2018 scrutiny inquiry [PM]</p> <p>LASBT Review: update following the introduction of changes to the service in early 2020. [PSR]</p> <p><i>Work programme to include: update on River Cleanliness inquiry &amp; Statement regarding volunteer hubs to be noted</i></p>	<p>Housing Activity Update [PM]</p> <p>Budget consultation – review of September proposals</p> <p><i>*Nitrous Oxide report to inform discussion around work programming in response to referral*</i></p>	<p>Locality Working and Priority Neighbourhoods [PM]</p> <p>Voluntary Sector: reflections on lessons learned from the Covid 19 experience [following July 2020 discussion]</p>
<b>Working Group Meetings</b>		
Budget – Early Consultation - 25 September 10am-12pm	28 October 2-4pm River Cleanliness	25 November 2-4pm River Cleanliness  16 November 1.30-3.15pm Budget Consultation [Oct/Nov Proposals]
<b>Additional Notes</b>		

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PSR	Policy/Service Review	RT	Recommendation Tracking	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring	C	Consultation Response



## Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2020/2021 Municipal Year

January	February	March
<b>Meeting Agenda for 14 January 2021</b>	<b>Meeting Agenda for 25 February 2021</b>	<b>Meeting Agenda 25 March 2021</b>
Reducing Poverty and improving Financial Inclusion – update report, including impact of Universal Credit. (PSR)  Financial Health Monitoring and Initial Budget Proposals [PDS]  Performance monitoring	Standards in the Private Rented Sector – update report [PSR]  CEAC update on progress and activity  Parking Strategy and Management update [PM]	Fuel Poverty Update / Energy Efficiency in Council Housing Stock / Carbon reduction in the Private Rented Sector [PM]  Final Report: River Cleanliness Final Report: Anti-Social use of Fireworks
<b>Working Group Meetings</b>		
		10/3/21 – Anti-Social use of Fireworks
<b>Site Visits</b>		

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PSR	Policy/Service Review	RT	Recommendation Tracking	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring	C	Consultation Response



## Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2020/2021 Municipal Year

For follow up:

Universal Credit Update: Service user experience as per discussions in January 2020 – *deferred in light of CV19 impact*

Best Council Plan [PDS] – *deferred until Sept 2021 EB*

PCC



## Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2021/22 Municipal Year

June	July	August
<b>Agenda for Thursday 17 June 10.30am</b>	<b>Agenda for Thursday 15 July 10.30am</b>	<b>No Scrutiny Board meeting scheduled.</b>
Performance Update  Parking Strategy and Management update [PM]  LASBT Review: update following the introduction of changes to the service in early 2020. [PSR]	Safer Leeds: including Community Safety & Antisocial Behaviour Strategy Updates  Domestic Violence – update including impact of CV19 and Domestic Abuse Bill.	
<b>Working Group Meetings</b>		
<b>Additional Notes</b>		

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**Scrutiny Work Items Key:**

PSR	Policy/Service Review	RT	Recommendation Tracking	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring	C	Consultation Response



## Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2021/22 Municipal Year

September	October	November
<b>Agenda for Thursday 23 September 10.30am</b>	<b>Agenda for Thursday 21 October 10.30am</b>	<b>Agenda for Thursday 25 November 10.30am</b>
Waste Management Services: update on the recommendations of the 2018 scrutiny inquiry [PM]  Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Licensing Policy  Strategic Housing Board Update	6 monthly climate change update: Reducing carbon emissions across the Council's estate including an update on Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funded projects (due for completion Sep 2021) & retrofitting of council housing  Housing Activity Update [PM]	Locality Working and Priority Neighbourhoods [PM]  Ensuring the future resilience of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> sector Update (following 2020/1 volunteer hub)
<b>Additional Notes</b>		

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PSR	Policy/Service Review	RT	Recommendation Tracking	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring	C	Consultation Response



## Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2021/22 Municipal Year

January	February	March
<b>Agenda for Thursday 20 January 10.30am</b>	<b>Agenda for Thursday 24 February 10.30am</b>	<b>Agenda Thursday 31 March 10.30am</b>
<p>Reducing Poverty and improving Financial Inclusion – update report, including impact of Universal Credit. (PSR)</p> <p>Universal Credit Update: Service user experience as per discussions in January 2020 [deferred due to CV19]</p> <p>Financial Health Monitoring and Initial Budget Proposals [PDS]</p> <p>Performance monitoring</p>	<p>Standards in the Private Rented Sector – update report [PSR]</p> <p>Climate emergency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ CEAC update on progress and activity</li> <li>▪ Annual Climate Emergency EB report</li> </ul>	<p>Fuel Poverty Update</p> <p>Energy Efficiency in Council Housing Stock</p> <p>Carbon reduction in the Private Rented Sector [PM]</p>
<b>Working Group Meetings</b>		
<b>Site Visits</b>		

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PSR	Policy/Service Review	RT	Recommendation Tracking	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring	C	Consultation Response



## Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) Work Schedule for 2021/22 Municipal Year

For follow up:

Early Budget Consultation

Road safety

Decarbonisation of owner occupied housing

Best Council Plan (approach to be determined – Autumn 2021)

DRAFT



Leeds  
CITY COUNCIL

# scrutiny



Environment, Housing  
and Communities

## 'River Cleanliness' Draft Inquiry Report



[leeds.gov.uk/scrutiny](https://leeds.gov.uk/scrutiny)



@ScrutinyLeeds



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# Outcomes and Recommendations

## **Desired Outcome – To Enhance Public Awareness through signage**

Recommendation 1 – To consider a method to identify access points to water within LCC ownership where appropriate signage could be erected to advise the public of the suitability of recreational use of the water at that site.

## **Desired Outcome – To Enhance Public Awareness, Responsibility and Involvement**

Recommendation 2 – To consider developing a public awareness campaign/local information campaign to ensure a commonality of messaging and to reinforce education on 'what is in your water' and build an understanding that for people to enjoy the water there are areas of responsibility for them.

## **Desired Outcome – Enhance local decision making**

Recommendation 3 – Enhance local decision making through supporting good working relationships between water operators and Local Residents/Interest Groups.

## **Desired Outcome – Working with local landowners to encourage planting on river banks**

Recommendation 4 – Work with local landowners to encourage planting on river banks to mitigate effects of run-off and /or possible pollutants entering the water and to provide natural soak away.

## **Desired Outcome – Raise the profile of the issue with our local authority partners**

Recommendation 5 – Share the Inquiry Report with our colleagues in neighbouring authorities.

## **Desired Outcome – National focus on public health in waterways**

Recommendation 6 – Encourage Central Government to place a greater focus on water monitoring to support public health and safety at sites used for recreation.

## **Desired Outcome – Consideration of whole drainage and sewer system network within the planning application process.**

Recommendation 7 – Support opportunities to review existing sewer and drainage infrastructure during the new build planning process.

## **Desired Outcome – Accountability and collaboration at a national level**

Recommendation 8 – Engage with central Government to encourage a place for local representation on national decision making and advisory bodies.



# Introduction and Scope

## Introduction.

1. Leeds City Council was first alerted to local concerns relating to river cleanliness in November 2019 when a meeting of full Council received a deputation from Mr M Barrow on behalf of Beneath British Waters which focussed specifically on plastics and rubbish entering the River Wharfe and more broadly, river cleanliness. The deputation raised the issue of raw sewage being pumped into the river at Wetherby and Boston Spa and the potential health impacts that has on those using the river as well as referencing issues experienced in Ilkley, Addingham and Otley.
2. Leeds City Council's Director of City Development published the Council's response to the Deputation on 21st January 2020. ([decision details and documents here](#)).
3. On 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020, Wetherby ward Councillors made a request to the Scrutiny Board Environment, Housing and Communities to investigate issues related to river cleanliness in Wetherby; and on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020 the Board determined to hold an Inquiry to provide Scrutiny Board Members with an opportunity to take an overview of river cleanliness – using the River Wharfe as a focus both for Leeds and neighbouring Districts.
4. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, work to commence the inquiry paused, but in July 2020 a scoping meeting took place to shape future work sessions and determine appropriate invitees – the findings and queries arising from that meeting informed the

Terms of Reference for the River Cleanliness Working Group.

## Best Council Plan.<sup>1</sup>

5. When embarking on the Inquiry, the Board kept in mind the strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the best council objectives and sought to ensure that the work of the Group promoted the ongoing engagement with communities and individuals, as well as with the Councils strategic partners.
6. The Board also acknowledged that Leeds' Best City ambition has the Leeds Climate Emergency declaration as a key driver and locality working as a core principle. The work of the Group aimed to sit within the Sustainable Infrastructure priority – seeking to support work on:
  - Improving air quality, reducing pollution and noise; and
  - Improving the resilience of the city's infrastructure and the natural environment, reducing flooding and other risks from future climate change

## Scope of the inquiry.

7. The purpose of our inquiry set out in the Working Group's Terms of Reference, was to establish an understanding and make an assessment of the issues and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:

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<sup>1</sup> [Best Council Plan 2020-2025](#)



# Introduction and Scope

- Can the amount of sewage discharged be quantified/measured in order to determine whether too much waste is discharged into the rivers? (In effect, above the limits permitted by relevant licences) (referencing the Wharfe at Wetherby and Boston Spa but recognising the regional network as well). Can we receive assurance regarding the prescribed limits and data/information on the causes of any specific incidents?
- Consideration of what a modern society would expect of river cleanliness and what is tolerable from a public health point of view;
- Rivers for the future –
  - discuss what could be done differently from the current arrangements;
  - identify reasons for change or no change; and
  - indicate a reasonable and achievable timescale for change and progress.
- To consider the water testing information anticipated through the Ilkley Rivers Group and to understand the work required, agencies involved and a likely timeframe to support the request for bathing status made by the Ilkley Clean Rivers campaign group.

## Desired Outcomes, Added Value and Anticipated Service Impact.

8. The overarching aim of our Inquiry was to better understand the issues raised in the Deputation and by local ward Councillors; to achieve a broad understanding of the roles of the

responsible authorities tasked with managing our local water ways; to understand the parameters in which responsible authorities work; and to identify what support the Scrutiny Board could provide to achieve the best outcomes for users of the River Wharfe.

9. We heard from our valued partners who manage the local water ways; and from local Ward Councillors and senior officers of the council.
10. We also felt it was essential to hear from local action groups and residents to present their view of the current issues and future work to secure litter and waste-free waters.
11. We were very fortunate to receive a wealth of evidence from external participants and wish to record here our thanks to them for sharing pertinent and timely documentation to support the Working Group, their engagement provided invaluable support to the Inquiry process.
12. The Scrutiny Board was pleased to note the issues remain very much live, with a further question tabled at Council on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2020 *“Will the Executive Board Member for Environment & Active Lifestyles commit to improving river cleanliness throughout the Leeds district?”*
13. The Scrutiny Board also welcomes the news that since the conclusion of the Working Group, Bathing Status<sup>2</sup> was granted on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020 to that area of the River Wharfe which runs between Ilkley Main Bridge and

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<sup>2</sup> [DEFRA 22 12 2020](#)



# Introduction and Scope

Beanlands Island at Ilkley. It is a popular swimming and paddling spot for both local residents and visitors to the area.<sup>3</sup>

## Equality and Diversity.

14. The Equality Improvement Priorities 2016 to 2020 have been developed to ensure that the Council meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. The priorities will help the council to identify work and activities that help to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity to achieve its ambition to be the best city in the UK.
15. Equality and diversity issues have been considered throughout this scrutiny inquiry and the individual, organisation or group responsible for implementation or delivery of the recommendations arising from this inquiry should also give due regard to equality and diversity and where appropriate, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

## Discussion and Findings.

16. The Working Group recognised two main threads of the work and issues discussed relating to river cleanliness; firstly health – both human and ecological and secondly, rubbish and sewerage. Acknowledging the scale of work required by multiple partners, agencies and the public, discussions concentrated on short term wins and long term aims to seek to address the issues raised.

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<sup>3</sup> [Ilkley Clean River Campaign](#)

17. In general terms, everyone recognised the problems of rubbish and pollution entering the river, whether that be from agriculture, industry, careless disposal of rubbish by the public or from regulated discharge from water treatment works permitted within national legislation. Discussions acknowledged that the public is less aware than the Group would like.
18. The Group acknowledged that technically, rivers and water courses were cleaner now than the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries; however we considered the question “does it feel right”? The Group considered evidence showing rubbish/sewage in flowing waters but learned that no laws are being broken; however we considered the questions “are the laws right – and in the Twenty First Century, can we develop a better way for dealing with sewage?”
19. The Group felt there was disconnect between the responsible authorities/water companies and the public/river users. The Group agreed that more should be done to raise public awareness, working with partners to develop key standard communications.
20. We are determined that the work undertaken in these sessions should make a difference in the long term. The Group was keen to promote the idea of building for the future; to ensure that rivers were restored as blue space features in residents lives and for them to be protected in much the same way as Greenspaces and that the work of the Group could be used as evidence



# Introduction and Scope

to promote greater consideration nationally of those two themes.

21. During the Inquiry, we considered documentation provided by invitees as detailed at page 17 of this report and received a wealth of verbal evidence supported by the documentation.

## Current Position

22. The Group discussed the current sewer and drainage infrastructure; noting that some of the issues experienced could be attributed to parts of the infrastructure dating from the last century. The Group was surprised to learn that, although new residential developments are required to install sustainable drainage systems as part of the planning application approval process, often that new system connects at the development boundary straight into an existing and old drainage network. The Group discussed how that could be seen as a design weakness and contribute to ongoing issues in existing drainage networks.
23. Importantly, the Group discussed funding a new approach to connecting new to old in order to upgrade old networks at the point that new build drainage systems connected. We also discussed opportunities for collaborative working between developers and service providers to upgrade existing infrastructure to ensure it is future proofed with the capacity to support new developments. Consideration was given to the use of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Section 106 funding and the current criteria for that spend at Leeds and Bradford Councils. The Group was

mindful that CIL monies supported other city priorities and that a change to the CIL priorities would require consultation and agreement. Additionally the Leeds CIL priorities would be reconfirmed by Executive Board on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

24. We learned that most of the country is supported by a Combined Sewerage Network – where household, industrial and agricultural uses utilise the same sewerage system. When an event occurs – such as high rainfall, that system and the Combined Sewer Outlets (CSO's) can be overwhelmed. There are approximately 2000 permitted storm overflows in Yorkshire, 98% have had Event Duration Monitoring (EDM) monitoring installed by Yorkshire Water which monitor spill frequency, not volume monitoring. The Group noted the report from the LCC Flood Officer that although an obvious answer would be to separate sewage systems supporting household, commercial, industrial, and agricultural sources; that task would be enormous involving huge, expensive engineering requirements. Work to alleviate the pressure on CSOs remained a focus for YW however investment was guided by legislation and for investment in the rivers, the triggers are either poor water quality or the number of spills.

## Legislation and Framework

25. The Group heard the view that all English rivers failed to meet quality tests for pollution amid concerns over the scale of sewage discharges and agricultural and industrial chemicals entering the water system. Figures released by the Environment Agency



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show for the first time that no river has achieved good chemical status, suggesting pollution from sewage discharge, chemicals and agriculture are having a huge impact on river quality; just 14% of English rivers are of good ecological standard. Water companies in England discharged raw sewage into rivers on more than 200,000 occasions last year – revealing that untreated human waste was released into streams and rivers for more than 1.5m hours in 2019.

26. Countries are legally obliged to treat sewage before it is released into waterways and the European Court of Justice has ruled that discharges of untreated human waste are permitted only in “exceptional circumstances”<sup>4</sup>. In the first session the Group heard that local Wetherby ward Councillors and Mr Barrow had undertaken a trip to a sewage works where they saw first-hand the processes involved and an incident of sewage being discharged into the water course in what they termed as a non-exceptional circumstance. We also viewed underwater footage from Beneath British Waters documenting the discarded rubbish and objects which it was suggested could only originate from sewage discharge.

27. This reinforced our desire to ensure existing messages raise public awareness that everything flushed away from domestic properties can

and does at times end up in our precious rivers.

28. We received evidence that the Environment Agency worked within the existing legislative framework. Within the regulations, EA set parameters to review the ecological status of the rivers. Importantly, public health issues would only be reviewed if a stretch of water received Designated Bathing Status – as sought by the Ilkley Clean River Group.

29. The Group acknowledged the criteria for assessing river cleanliness had changed over time, developing to take into account new ways of working and new chemicals/environmental threats. For example, the mark of clean rivers used to be the number of variety of healthy fish, now the mark of clean rivers is recreational use. The Group acknowledged that for investment in rivers and water courses, monitoring had to take place against the current criteria – the triggers being poor water quality or the number of spills recorded.

30. We noted that two key pieces of European Union (EU) legislation governed the work of YW - the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive and noted the example provided of the removal of phosphorous being a key driver for YW investment at water treatment works, the solution being pipe based and not necessarily an ecological outcome. We received reassurance that the Water Industry will be governed by existing legislation post 31 January 2021; but noted that any changes to the standards will be open to the Government to amend,

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<sup>4</sup> [CaseC-301/10 European Commission v United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland \(Council Directive 91/271/EEC — Collecting systems — Urban waste-water treatment — ‘Sufficient performance’ and ‘best technical knowledge not entailing excessive costs’\)](#)



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once the UK has left the European Union.

31. In order to place greater focus on the recreational use of Britain's water ways, the Scrutiny Board would welcome discussions with Central Government to place a greater focus on water monitoring to support public health and safety at sites used for recreation. The Scrutiny Board note that a welcome consequence of this would be improvements to the ecological health of the water way.
32. We welcomed the undertaking provided by representatives of Yorkshire Water to take forward issues around public health and safety as far as they could as landowner, noting that a financial commitment would need to be included within Yorkshire Water's future budget plans. Engagement with Central Government specifically on this matter would raise the profile of the issue and we noted the support for sharing the findings of the Working Group with Central Government to inform any future discussions on what could be achieved with the right funding in place and the benefits and improvements to overall water quality.
33. The Working Group supported the suggestion this Scrutiny Board write to local Leeds MPs to advise them of the findings of the Working Group and to seek their support for the actions outlined in this report.
34. Discussion focussed on the complexity of the issues of responsibility and ownership. Members were keen to understand where responsibility for implementation would lie if initiatives or recommendations were identified or proposed.
35. Infrastructure responsibility falls to the service provider, in the case of the River Wharfe, Yorkshire Water owns the infrastructure. However the river itself tends to be in the private ownership of whoever owns the bank at either side or both sides of the river.
36. The Water Framework Directive sets out the responsibilities and the plans within the WFD are essential to bring organisations together and work collectively.
37. In the second session the Group received a presentation from the Environment Agency on the Yorkshire Water Framework Directive – which provided the latest picture of Yorkshires water quality. The WFD provides the framework to assess the environmental quality of water bodies. The EA produces a river based plan every 6 years and we considered monitoring information from 2019 and were able to compare it with data from 2016, noting the range of ecological evidence gathered and the method of classification informed by all the elements measured. Over time, the classifications are updated to ensure they remain fit for purpose and include modern chemicals. It was noted that all rivers within Yorkshire & the Humber fail their classification.
38. The Group heard that all the actions necessary to address water quality were contained within the regulations governing the water industry. The EA set out its aim for Yorkshire's water courses to achieve a Good/Moderate rating by 2027. To achieve that



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Good/Moderate rating the EA works on water quality assets and improvements. The presentation outlined several programmes of works, including environmental programmes working with partners, and a catchment programme working with the farming community.

39. Discussions revealed that the WFD did not equivocally include the requirement for the monitoring of faecal bacteria in water courses, which is important to achieve Bathing Status and for the safety of recreational bathing.

## Advisory Signage

40. Noting that local water courses were popular for recreation, we considered the merits of ensuring additional advisory signage is erected at popular water access points. We noted that, where LCC was owner of sites which included the river banks, then the Council as landowner would be responsible for the erection and maintenance of signage. We noted that should Ilkley be granted Bathing Status, DEFRA would determine the signage to be erected at the relevant sites. We then considered appropriate wording for additional signage at other sites – not only to advise of the health risks associated with wild swimming in very cold water, but to also reference the possible impact of entering water which may not be rated ‘Good/Moderate’ and may contain harmful bacteria.

## Ilkley Bathing Status

41. The application made for Bathing Status on a stretch of water in Ilkley was used to provide a real example of

how legislation provides the framework for managing the river, its recreational use and public perception of our waterways. Representatives of the Ilkley Clean Rivers (ICR) Group and the Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust provided detail on the scientific monitoring undertaken through the [i WHARFE project](#) to assess the quality of the water – against different criteria to that used by YW/EA under the legislation they are governed by.

42. The Group heard that the UK is atypical in the EU as other EU countries are peppered with inland bathing sites which are regulated, the UK has 6. However there were hundreds of unregistered sites being used for bathing – if they were registered they would have to be monitored and regulated and made fit for purpose.
43. For the Bathing Status application, the ICR Group had to demonstrate public usage at Ilkley, this ranged from 40 to 1600 people using the river, then consultation took place with 520 responses being received. The testing work showed that every time it rained; sewage had been released into the water.
44. The stretch of water at Ilkley in question was described as a steep sided catchment with infiltration from Ilkley Moor and Ilkley Tarn. Solutions to support the grant of Bathing Status were discussed – if that infiltration was removed and done through surface water, spills could be reduced by 15-20%. As the Tarn is a Bradford Council asset, YW would need to work with Bradford and the EA. In Ilkley, YW believes there may be opportunities to



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move flow from CSOs – but it would require funding, modelling, appraisals and very complex work. YW works to a 5 Year Plan which is approved by OfWAT and the EA, and customers have to support any proposals for investment.

45. A solution could also be to separate the sewage system in order to take household water away from surface drainage.
46. We learnt that the river spill framework provided a tool to indicate problems. For example, if 60 spills per year were recorded at a site, this would provide the EA with a reason to investigate, but the outcome of that investigation would take into account whether the water receiving the spill maintained good ecology.
47. Anything that runs off the land or from storm drains will get into the river. The investment for bathing status will be in the region of £50m for farming to move livestock away from the river and £200m for water companies to get the bacteria levels down.
48. The Group heard that although a 20% reduction in spills would bring the number of raw sewage discharges from 201 to 161, this was still considered to be over the amount permitted within the Storm Overflow Assessment framework. So infiltration is the start but only the start. Reference was made to the Urban Waste Water Directive which sets out that it is only legal to put raw sewage into the river under exceptional circumstances. In Ilkley, the public understood that to mean real storms a couple of times a year. The Group

were provided with the European Court Ruling to support a view expressed that Article 10 should be construed as requiring that the treatment plants should, as a rule, be capable of treating all of the waste water produced, in normal conditions, in a given locality.

## Monitoring and Testing

49. We were very grateful to the representatives of the i-WHARFE Project who shared a pre-publication report “Improving water quality on the River Wharfe from Oughtershaw to the Ouse: a citizen science project” at the first session. The report detailed the faecal bacteria data from samples collected during the Big Science Check at the River Wharfe on the 24th August 2020. The report detailed the 60 sampling sites, the river flow and levels on the day at each site and the evaluation process testing for E. coli and Intestinal Enterococci (IE) undertaken. Only designated bathing areas have faecal monitoring.
50. The conclusions of the report informed discussions on four issues:
  - The proposition that the high concentrations of faecal bacteria found in the main river were caused by proximity to the outflow of treated effluent from Sewage Treatment Works (STWs) rather than to the outfall from Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs). The treated effluent from the sewage works does have a high concentration of bacteria and highlighted the need to treat the final effluent - perhaps with UV disinfectant or UV light beds similar to those used to deal with sea effluent. The grant of Bathing Status would drive YW investments in the area.



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- The evidence suggested faecal bacteria in the river were also derived from diffuse agricultural sources. Discussions acknowledged the costs involved in locating other land to move cattle away from water sources and considered other measures which could be implemented to provide protection to the water – such as planting on river banks.
- The evidence which suggested that downstream decreases in faecal bacteria concentration recorded between some sample sites indicated bacterial die-off occurring in the water. The Group was keen to understand more about the faecal bacteria die-off rates and how that occurred as bacteria travelled through the water, it was noted that further work was needed to identify where on the system die-off controls could be located.
- The data showed that on the sampling day some of the sites popular for recreation had high levels of faecal bacteria contamination.

51. We discussed how this investigative work could be supported in the future, particularly to undertake a repeat citizen testing day further along the Wharfe.

## Public Interest and Awareness

52. Having considered the Ilkley case study and technical evidence, discussions naturally highlighted public awareness – both in terms of careful disposal of rubbish at home and outside and when using rivers and water courses for recreation. Despite work undertaken by the operators to increase public awareness; we found that there appeared to be some gaps in public understanding/use of the

rivers and we felt the Council was ideally placed to promote awareness of what residents can control themselves and how to report pollution or incidents to the Environment Agency hotline. Equally local Parish and Town Councils could be a source of support.

53. Appropriate signage at favourite sites would be useful, not just advising of cold water (for wild swimmers) but to advise that sites were not designated for bathing status so that the public can make an informed choice to use a site.

## Climate Change and Impact

54. When considering the evidence relating to the impact of weather conditions on spills and the Ilkley case study we concluded that as the climate becomes warmer and wetter for longer periods each year, the ability of the existing drainage and sewer infrastructure will be degraded. In reaching that conclusion, we referenced the evidence which had shown spills occurring in light rain and we drew on our own experiences of incidents of very localised flooding in the city's wards.

55. The work of the Inquiry would aim to support measures to improve the current situation and if appropriate, guide consideration of how to future proof the infrastructure to preserve the rivers and water courses and avoid incidents of localised flooding.

56. We were also mindful of the city's growing population; which acted as a driver for the very real need for new-build housing. We were however keen to highlight the impact of residential and commercial building on the city's



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flood plains and adjacent to or on river banks. As we experience a warmer and wetter climate, the natural ability of floodplains and rivers to accommodate run-off and heavy rain can be undermined by increased areas of hard-standing associated with new build residential or commercial premises.

## Collaborative Working

57. We were pleased to learn that with the Ilkley Bathing Status application, good working relationships were already established between all interested parties. Legislation requires close liaison between YW, the EA and DEFRA and we were pleased to note the level of engagement with local residents supported by YW and EA. Additionally, the Wharfe Flood Partnership looks at Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs) and involves all relevant Councils and the Partnership arose out of the work on flooding. At Addingham, the Wharfe Flood Partnership is working on SUDs and a farm water management plan and we noted the opportunity to consider expanding that work to include Otley and Ilkley.
58. Although we were assured that the right officers with the right experience and remit were involved in the day to day work, one weakness was identified – the need to raise the profile of the issue amongst senior Members and Officers of Councils to ensure that improving and protecting water courses in our districts became an ambition to match the ambition of the EA and YW.

## Governance and Accountability at a National Level

59. Whilst acknowledging the collaborative working already undertaken between the responsible authorities and local interest groups, our discussions identified one area where it seemed critical that local voices should be heard – governance and accountability. We learnt that DEFRA has a Storm Overflow Task Force, with oversight within the remit of the EA; however the Task Force membership contains only representatives of the EA and water industry, but no Local Authority or public representatives. We would encourage central Government to consider expanding the membership of such bodies to include representatives of local authorities and the public.
60. We felt that through our discussions, to implement a collaborative approach, we identified an important role for the public to play in the scrutiny of decisions on resource allocations. Whilst acknowledging that legislation provides the framework for funding priorities, we felt that at a national level, public scrutiny would be an important step in real accountability. We also had to have regard to discussions during the Inquiry on whether the costs of long term infrastructure improvements, such as those outlined to achieve Bathing Status throughout Yorkshire, should be passed onto the public.



# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Recommendations.

61. When looking to the future, we were each tasked with answering the question “what should our priorities be?” The Working Group recognised two main threads running through our discussions on river cleanliness; firstly health – both human and ecological and secondly, rubbish and sewerage. Acknowledging the scale of work required by multiple partners, agencies and the public, we identified two main groups of actions – “Short term wins” and “Long term aims” and these have shaped our recommendations.

## ‘Short Term wins’ – Signage and advice

### **Recommendation 1 To Enhance Public Awareness through appropriate signage**

- a) The Directors of City Development and Communities and Environment to consider a method to identify access points to water within LCC ownership where appropriate signage could be erected to advise the public of the suitability of recreational use of the water at that site; and
- b) The Directors of City Development and Communities and Environment to seek to identify informal, popular river access points not in LCC ownership and where possible, to identify and engage the landowners to consider the erection of appropriate signage advising the public of the suitability of recreational use of the water at that site.

## ‘Short Term Wins’ - Focussing on the issues at large

### **Recommendation 2 To Enhance Public Awareness, Responsibility and Involvement**

The Directors of City Development and Communities and Environment to consider developing a public awareness campaign/local information campaign to ensure a commonality of messaging and to reinforce education on ‘what is in your water’ and build an understanding that for people to enjoy the water there are areas of responsibility for them.

A public awareness campaign/local information campaign, developed in conjunction with LCC Communications Team, relevant service providers, partner authorities and WYCA would ensure a commonality of key messages either through a new approach or through the promotion of existing campaigns run by Yorkshire Water/the Environment Agency.

Additionally, consideration to be given to the role of Community Committees and the Environmental Champions in encouraging residents’ interest in the blue spaces in their locality.



# Conclusions and Recommendations

## 'Short Term Wins'- Enhance Local Decision Making

**Recommendation 3 – Enhance local decision making through supporting good working relationships between water operators and Local Residents/ Interest Groups.**

To ask the Director of Communities and Environment to consider how the Community Committee network and locality Environment Champions can support local involvement early in the decision making process by emphasising the lines of communication between decision makers (Industry operators and the Environment Agency) and residents/local interest groups; and encourage connection with Town and Parish Councils where appropriate.

## 'Short Term Wins' - Raise the Profile of the issue with our Local Government Partners

**Recommendation 5 – Share the Inquiry Report with our colleagues in neighbouring authorities.**

Although we are reassured that the right officers with the right experience and remit are tasked with the day to day work, we seek to raise the profile of the issue amongst senior Members and officers within our local authority partners. To ensure that our ambition to support improvements and protect the water courses in Leeds and the wider district matches the ambition of the EA and YW, we intend to share this Inquiry Report with our colleagues in neighbouring local authorities.

## 'Short Term Wins' – working with landowners

**Recommendation 4 - Working with Local Landowners to encourage planting on River Banks.**

To ask the Directors of Communities & Environment and City Development to identify sites of run-off not in LCC ownership and to build on existing relationships with landowners to encourage planting on water banks to mitigate effects of run-off and /or possible pollutants entering the water and to provide natural soak away.



# Conclusions and Recommendations

## **'Long Term Aim' – National focus on public health in waterways**

**Recommendation 6 – Encourage Central Government to place a greater focus on water monitoring to support public health and safety at sites used for recreation.**

- a) In order to place greater focus on the recreational use of Britain's waterways, the Scrutiny Board would welcome discussions with central Government to place a greater focus on water monitoring to support public health and safety at sites used for recreation. The Scrutiny Board note that a beneficial consequence of this would be improvements to the ecological health of the water ways.
- b) Engagement with central Government specifically on this matter would raise the profile of the issue and the Scrutiny Board would welcome the opportunity to share the findings of the Working Group with the Minister to inform any future discussions on what could be achieved with the right funding in place and the benefits and improvements to overall water quality.
- c) Additionally, the Chair of Scrutiny Board Environment Housing and Communities to write on behalf of the Board to local Leeds MPs to advise them of the findings of the Working Group seeking their support for the actions outlined in the Inquiry report.

## **'Long Term Aim' – Consideration of whole sewer and drainage system network within the planning application process**

**Recommendation 7 – Support opportunities to review existing sewer and drainage infrastructure during the new build planning process.**

To ask the Director of City Development to consider the Working Group's view that new housing developments; although they include Sustainable Drainage Systems should provide opportunities to review the existing connecting drainage system and improve connections to or improve the existing connecting sewage system to ensure it has the capacity necessary to support the new build. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems currently feature as a requirement for new developments but developers should be encouraged to place a greater focus on the existing infrastructure and connectivity and consider collaborative working with service providers/operators to upgrade existing infrastructure to ensure it is future proofed with the capacity to support the new development.

Additionally, the Director of City Development to consider whether the existing Leeds Local Plans sufficiently address the Working Group's concerns relating to the impact on water quality of commercial/agricultural activity and building on or near to river banks and water courses.



# Conclusions and Recommendations

## 'Long Term Aim' – Accountability and Collaboration at a National Level

### **Recommendation 8 - Engage with Central Government to encourage a place for local representation on national decision making and advisory bodies.**

The Directors of Communities and Environment and City Development and/or the Chair of the Scrutiny Board to formulate an approach to Government expressing the Inquiry findings that

- a) Collaboration with and inclusion of the public, water users and interested parties within the national decision making framework would benefit and strengthen future decision-making processes.
- b) Expansion of the membership base of the existing national scrutiny bodies (or taskforces such as the Storm Overflow taskforce set up by DEFRA with the Agencies and the water companies) to include the public, water users and interested parties. This would enhance the visibility and therefore transparency of those bodies.
- c) A mechanism for decision makers to engage with the public and action groups would ensure that the public have a voice in decisions, priorities and funding priorities affecting them and the water in their locality.



# Evidence

## Monitoring arrangements

Standard arrangements for monitoring the outcome of the Board's recommendations will apply.

The decision-makers to whom the recommendations are addressed will be asked to submit a formal response to the recommendations, including an action plan and timetable, normally within two months.

Following this, the Scrutiny Board will determine any further detailed monitoring, over and above the standard quarterly monitoring of all scrutiny recommendations.

## Reports and Publications Submitted

### ➤ LEEDS CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSIONS

- Deputation to Council November 2019 – speech of Mr M Barrow
- Response to the Deputation from the Director of City Development 21st January 2020
- Extract from the minutes of the Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) held 9th January 2020; 6th February 2020 and 5th March 2020.

### ➤ BENEATH BRITISH WATERS SUBMISSIONS

- Beneath British Waters – documentation from Mark Barrow
- Film footage – the River Wharfe (session 2)

### ➤ ILKLEY CLEAN RIVERS/i-WHARFE PROJECT

- iWharfe project – Project description
- iWharfe project – Count - counting people paddling, playing and swimming in the Wharfe
- iWharfe project – Zone 5 Big Health Check
- iWharfe project – Project flyer
- Statistical analysis

### ➤ ENVIRONMENT AGENCY SUBMISSION

- Environment Agency – “Regulating for people, the environment and growth, 2018”
- Environment Agency - Water and sewerage companies' performance 2019
- Environment Agency Water Framework Directive – Yorkshire – session 2

### ➤ YORKSHIRE WATER

- Report to the Working Group 28<sup>th</sup> October - Yorkshire Water's interaction with rivers
  - • The wastewater treatment process
  - • Environment Agency rating
  - • Appendix A - Yorkshire Water's response to Ilkley bathing water consultation
  - • Appendix B - Copy of EDM Return Yorkshire Water Annual 2019
  - • Appendix C - Copy of Wharfe 12-24 data
  - • Appendix D - Pollution Incident Reduction Plan 2020-25



# Evidence

## Dates of Scrutiny

Scrutiny Board Meeting – Agreeing terms of reference/Session 1 – ‘date’  
Scrutiny Working Group Meeting – Session 1 - 28<sup>th</sup> October 2020  
Session 2 - 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020  
Scrutiny Board Meeting – March 2021

## Witnesses Heard

Councillor Mohammed Rafique (Executive Member for Environment and Active Lifestyles) (session)  
Councillor Linda Richards, Wetherby ward (session1)  
Councillor Alan Lamb, Wetherby ward  
Councillor Norma Harington, Wetherby ward

Mr David Parrish, (Flood Risk Management Team), LCC City Development (session 1)  
Mr Jonathon Moxon, (Flood Risk Management Team), LCC City Development (session 2)  
Ms Kirsty Breaks-Holdsworth, Flood Risk Officer, City of Bradford MDC (session 2)  
Mr Mark Barrow, Beneath British Waters (session 1)  
Mr Tim Myatt, Corporate Affairs Adviser, Yorkshire Water  
Mr Richard Emmott, Director of Corporate Affairs, Yorkshire Water  
Mr Graham Weston, Wastewater Treatment and Sludge Manager, Yorkshire Water (session 1)  
Dr Martin Christmas, Area Environment Manager - Environment Agency  
Professor Rick Battarbee, Ilkley Clean Rivers Group/ i-Wharfe Project  
Kathleen Roberts, Ilkley Clean Rivers Group/ i-Wharfe Project (session 1)  
Professor Becky Malby, Ilkley Clean Rivers Group/i-Wharfe Project (session 1)  
Charlotte Simons, Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust / i-Wharfe Project

**Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities)  
Inquiry Report River Cleanliness  
March 2021  
Report author: Helen Gray**



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