

**Report of Chief Officer (Highways and Transportation)**

**Report to Director of City Development**

**Date: 11<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

**Subject: A STREET CHARTER FOR LEEDS - RESPONSE TO THE DEPUTATION FROM PAVEMENTS ARE FOR PEOPLE**

Are specific electoral wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible 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

**Summary of main issues**

1. A Deputation from Pavements Are for People was received at the meeting of the Full Council on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The Deputation asked Leeds City Council to commit to a Street Charter that puts a clear street policy at the heart of local decision making.
2. This report summarises what a Street Charter is, highlights issues affecting blind and partially sighted people when navigating the street environment and asks for the authority to work jointly with Pavements are for People towards developing a potential Street Charter that is appropriate for Leeds.

**Recommendations**

3 The Director of City Development is requested to:

- Thank the Deputation for their engagement work with Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police;
- Note the contents of the report and agree this as a response to the Deputation;
- Grant approval for further work to investigate and, if appropriate, develop a Street Charter for Leeds; and

- Receive a further report summarising the outcome of that work in due course.

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

- 1.1. The report is written in response to a Deputation from Pavements are for People which asked Leeds City Council to commit to a Street Charter that puts a clear policy at the heart of local decision making.

## **2. Background information**

Pavements are for People

- 2.1. Pavements are for People are part of a working group set up with the help and support of the leader of Leeds City Council & the Police and Crime Commissioner, comprising leading blind people's organisations, including RNIB, Guide Dogs and National Federation for the Blind.

### Key concerns / issues

- 2.2. The ability of blind and partially sighted people to go out and actively participate in their communities is linked directly to the environment of streets and other public spaces. The RNIB Street Charter toolkit highlights the key issues for blind and partially sighted users around obstructions involving pavement parking, A-boards, shared surface, street cafes, lack of pedestrian crossings / inaccessible crossings and overgrown vegetation.
- 2.3. Pavements are for People have engaged with Leeds City Council officers in a bid to highlight those key issues and develop a way forward for tackling these. They had held joint action days and focus groups, visited waste crews, given talks to raise awareness and looked at different ways in which footpaths can be kept safe and clear for all pedestrians. However, the group feel that the city should commit to the principles of keeping the pavements free of obstruction at a public and corporate level and sign up to a Street Charter, in line with the national aims of the RNIB campaign for clear pavements.

### Street Charter

- 2.4. Street Charters are part of the national campaign led by RNIB to remove and reduce obstacles to blind and partially sighted people being able to safely navigate their local streets. These are aimed at local decision makers (in this case a local highway authority) and are, in part, a tool for raising awareness and engaging with local campaigners. Several cities, including Hull, Liverpool and Newcastle, have launched Street Charters, with York expected to follow suit.
- 2.5. Following the Deputation to the Council in September 2018, officers have engaged with the lead organisations representing Pavements Are for People. The examples of other cities' Street Charters as well as a draft potential charter for Leeds were received in November. The draft explains the issues affecting blind and partially sighted people and their impact on their ability to negotiate the street environment independently and lists a range of potential actions that Leeds City Council could take to help address them.

### **3. Main issues**

- 3.1. The Deputation have asked that Leeds City Council commit to a Street Charter that would put a clear street policy at the heart of local decision making.
- 3.2. The Deputation have highlighted everyday issues that affect blind and partially sighted people who use the city's streets and public spaces. These relate to the need for clear, unobstructed and navigable pavements which in turn are affected by the need for street furniture (lights, traffic signs, resting places), temporary street works, parked vehicles, street cafes and refuse collection.

#### The current position

- 3.3. Leeds City Council has a legal duty to ensure that highways and public spaces are accessible to all road users and free of obstruction. Part of the solution is good street design from the outset so that streets can accommodate, as much as possible, the varied demands on space on the public highway. The Council is currently reviewing and redrafting its Supplementary Planning Document on Transport that sets out the principles for delivering streets and public spaces as part of new developments; the authority is also consulting on 'Our Spaces' strategy for the expanded city centre. Recent best practice has highlighted the need to try and create 'healthy streets' which provide interest, shade, seating and space for social interaction as well as minimise negative effects of traffic.
- 3.4. Under the umbrella of the Connecting Leeds programme, transport schemes are evolving with unprecedented levels of public consultations and engagement, including involvement with equality hubs and disabled people. These create an opportunity to address 'historic' street infrastructure that may not be fully accessible or attractive to non-motorised users, including pedestrians and disabled people. However, even well designed street or public space may become inaccessible through misuse if it is not well managed.
- 3.5. Steps are already being taken towards addressing some of the issues identified in the RNIB's Street Charter Toolkit. The Council has a zero tolerance policy on A-boards in the City Centre and manages and licences street cafes in accordance with an agreed policy. In some residential areas an 'opt in' approach to recycling has been adopted to reduce issues around wheelie bins being left out on the public highway. In high occupancy areas communal bin stores and recycling containers are being introduced in off-highway areas to reduce street clutter.
- 3.6. The Council has also engaged with disabled groups on co-designing a shared space area on Little Neville Street around the Southern Entrance to Leeds railway station, as advocated by the disabled community to accommodate blue badge pick-up and drop off. The Council has developed a demand-responsive approach to addressing issues affecting disabled people using the public highway which involves direct engagement with users and has a small dedicated budget to address access issues raised by disabled residents.

#### Potential for a Street Charter

- 3.7. A Street Charter has the potential to bring together those elements of the above projects, programmes policies and guidance that are crucial for making our streets more inclusive as part of a single, simple and easy to follow document which would

foster understanding of the needs of disabled people and the barriers they face. Rather than being another technical document, it would help establish core principles that apply to how the street space is actually used. It would also help expand key principles of Our Spaces strategy beyond the city centre. A Charter (and its launch) could also help raise awareness of how certain types of use of the street (pavement parking, A-boards or overgrown hedges) affect and prevent other types of use, including the ability of disabled people to safely navigate the street environment. Above all, it would highlight the needs of disabled users of our streets and public spaces and, as such, be the first port of call for scheme designers and promoters, or for enforcement officers.

- 3.8. However, care needs to be taken to ensure that the Charter does not create false expectations that all issues will be automatically addressed or does not commit the Council to actions on which it will be unable to deliver. It will take time and resources to deliver on commitments contained in a Charter.

### Proposed actions

- 3.9. Further to the engagement that has taken place with Pavements Are for People, it is proposed to:
- Jointly review current practice and procedures in respect of key areas of concern identified in the Street Charter Toolkit
  - Understand where there are gaps in provision and how these could be addressed
  - Set up a series of topic-based meetings with Pavements are for People and key service representatives to understand the issues, develop a way forward and agree key recommendations for the Street Charter
  - Make recommendations concerning the options for, and potential content of, a Street Charter for Leeds for further consideration.
- 3.10. If adopting a Street Charter is the recommended option would this would be the subject of a follow-up report and wider consultations and engagement.

## **4. Corporate considerations**

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

- 4.1.1. No external consultations have taken place in respect of this report beyond engaging with the deputies to understand the 'ask' and internal consultations with Council departments and officers. If agreed, work to develop and progress a Street Charter for Leeds would follow a collaborative approach, involving Council officers, Pavements are for People and Equality Hubs, and would be subject to public consultations.

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

- 4.2.1. An Equality and Diversity Cohesion and Integration (EDCI) screening has been prepared, and is included in Appendix 1. As the report recommends further work on a potential Street Charter for Leeds, no specific impacts have been identified at this stage.

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

4.3.1 Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy emphasises Leeds as Best City for Health and Wellbeing. In order to become one, the city has to be able to 'support healthy, active lifestyles to enable people of all ages to fully realise their social, educational and economic potential'. The 2023 Vision states: 'investment and leadership in communities will have strengthened their resilience and cohesion, improved neighbourhoods and regenerated places'.

A Charter could potentially contribute positively to the key areas of the Inclusive Growth Strategy by helping support more healthy, active lifestyles and reduce inequalities in terms of access and health.

4.3.2 Leeds has the ambition to be the Best City for Health and Wellbeing. The Leeds *Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2026* aims to get more people more physically active more often in a bid to become the most active big city in England and it recognises that active travel is one of the best ways of incorporating physical activity into daily lives. It means 'making active travel the easiest and best option wherever possible, with lots more walking and cycling due to good infrastructure' as well as behaviour change programmes.

4.3.3 The *West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040* envisages that inclusive growth will be enabled by engaging with those not currently connected to economic growth because of their transport needs to create connections that ensure that good jobs are accessible to everyone with the potential to work, including the most disadvantaged groups and those with disabilities. It will encourage healthy, active travel with improved walking and cycling facilities and aim to ensure that health benefits of increased active travel are not compromised by increased risk of injury on the roads.

4.3.4 The *West Yorkshire Transport Strategy 2040* is thus 'seeking to reduce isolation through improving road safety and encouraging pedestrian friendly environments, paying particular attention to the safety and accessibility needs of older people and those with disabilities'.

4.3.5 The *Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy 2018-2023* echoes these aspirations in its three key themes: People -supporting healthy, active lifestyles through the provision of green and transport infrastructure; Place –includes infrastructure such as transport, green infrastructure and low carbon; and Productivity - connecting people to jobs, transforming the role of local centres as economic and service hubs.

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

4.4.1. There are no specific implications for resources or value for money resulting directly from this report, beyond staff time. If the approval is granted to develop a Street Charter, this would require further staff time.

4.4.2. Should a Street Charter ultimately be a recommended course of action, the resource and value for money implications would be the subject of review and advice at that time.

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

4.5.1. Nothing contained in this report, or attached appendices, is deemed confidential.

## **4.6. Risk management**

4.6.1. The main risk is around raising expectations that the local authority will then be unable to meet, through over commitment. The issue of what the authority can commit to needs to be carefully explored in further engagement work.

4.6.2. Careful balance will need to be struck so that the Charter is a fully inclusive document that also reflects existing Council policies and commitments, especially those developed with public engagement and support.

## **5. Conclusions**

5.1. The subject of the Deputation has been considered supported by engagement with the Pavements are for People group. This report identifies further work and engagement to completely understand the potential benefits and implications for the Council that adopting a Street Charter that would have. Initial examination suggests establishing clearer principles of streetscape management and bringing these together in a single simple document that is easily understood could bring added benefits. Such a Charter could also help to strengthen engagement and cooperation between the Council and blind and partially sighted groups.

## **6. Recommendations**

6.1. The Director of City Development is requested to

6.1.1. Thank the Deputation for their engagement work with Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police

6.1.2. Note the contents of the report and agree this as a response to the Deputation;

6.1.3. Grant approval for further work to investigate and, if appropriate, develop a Street Charter for Leeds

6.1.4. Receive a further report summarising the outcome of that work in due course.

## **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.