



**Report of Director of City Development**

**Report to Executive Board**

**Date: 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020**

**Subject: Our Spaces Strategy – Outcome of Engagement and Strategy Update**

Are specific electoral wards affected?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s): Little London and Woodhouse, Hunslet and Riverside, Beeston and Holbeck		
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:		

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- The Our Spaces strategy is the first of its kind in Leeds, setting out the vision, ambition and benchmark for the design of city centre public realm. Since the publication of the draft document in November 2018 it has been hailed regionally and nationally as an innovative and forward thinking approach to placemaking, bringing together the challenges for the city, the design principles to best address those challenges and an assessment of the opportunities for change. It responds directly to the Council's ambition to be the **best city in the UK**, recognising that the look and feel of a city is central to its social and economic success. Core to the Our Spaces strategy is the commitment to put People First, reflecting one of the key strengths of our city identified in the Best Council Plan.
- Our spaces are often people's first encounter with the city. They are our 'front door' to visitors, businesses and residents. Ensuring we design, deliver improvements and maintain our spaces to the highest standards possible, is essential to our city's profile locally, nationally and internationally.
- Through its implementation the Our Spaces Strategy:-
  - a. Sets out our vision and ambition for the creation of green space within the city centre;

- b. Uses the Our Spaces Principles as a benchmarking tool against which the quality of public realm schemes can be considered;
  - c. Assesses the ability of individual public realm schemes brought forward by any stakeholder to overcome the challenges identified within the strategy and ensure these are fully integrated with the wider public realm vision and ambition;
  - d. Reflects upon the current public realm offer in the city centre and identify opportunities to improve it;
  - e. Sends a clear statement of intent to the people of Leeds how we want our city centre to evolve and grow over time to incorporate placemaking as a key priority and provides the opportunity to lever in funding to support its delivery.
- The Council's two main cross-cutting strategies, the Inclusive Growth Strategy (IGS) and Health and Wellbeing Strategy, both recognise the value of green infrastructure and welcoming, inclusive public spaces. One of the 12 big ideas (in the IGS) to deliver 21st century infrastructure commits to the improvement of green infrastructure, whilst high quality public spaces will also contribute to a number of the other big ideas. One of the key priorities within the health and wellbeing strategy is for housing and the environment to enable all people of Leeds to be healthy, social and active, where green space, leisure provision and walking and cycling opportunities promote health and happiness.
  - In the context of the Leeds Climate Emergency declaration, greening our spaces (particularly where traffic is removed) will provide opportunities to reduce carbon and other pollutants, improving air quality. Trees and planting will also attract new animal and plant species, delivering biodiversity net gains at a time when many species are at risk, and supporting the creation of green corridors across the city.
  - Our Spaces can also deliver outcomes to support the Leeds commitment to Children's Play and an Age Friendly Leeds by providing places for people to be active, play and rest supporting healthy, active lifestyles. Spaces also contribute to the city's cultural, retail and leisure offer, providing event space, a more appealing setting for businesses and greater street trading opportunities. All of these benefits make the city centre more attractive and support the city's visitor economy.
  - In September 2018, Executive Board noted the content, vision and ambition for the draft Our Spaces Strategy and approved the request to commence stakeholder engagement with a view to seeking its formal adoption once consultation was complete.
  - Public engagement on the draft Our Spaces strategy commenced in November 2018 following an event at KPMG offices with a range of stakeholders and pupils from Carr Manor School. The primary method of engagement was an online survey via Commonplace, complemented by focus groups, events and street surveys to reach a broader demographic. There were over 900 respondents to the engagement with a hugely positive response to the strategy, confirming its relevance and importance, supporting the principles and including insightful feedback on new areas of focus for the document.
  - The Our Spaces strategy has now been updated in response to public feedback and we are seeking Executive Board endorsement to publish the final strategy.

- Following the publication of the final strategy, an exciting street art project will commence with local artists producing art in various city centre locations to reflect the Our Spaces strategy vision, ambition and principles. This launch celebrates the connection between art and public spaces and will aim to bring people into the city centre to watch the artists create live artwork.
- Alongside the strategy update, a number of Our Spaces projects have been delivered with a new under 5's city centre play area at Queens Square, greenspace at Playhouse Gardens to complement the stunning new Leeds Playhouse building and a new space for rest and interaction at Claypit Lane (Woodhouse Gardens).
- In addition the Our Spaces team, working with Connecting Leeds, have supported the proposals for the Headrow Gateway as part of the Leeds Public Transport Improvement Programme (LPTIP) where a number of key streets will bring forward enhancements to the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. As a result of this Executive Board gave approval to provide a new public space at Cookridge Street. Improvements to the Corn Exchange Gateway will also include cycling and pedestrian infrastructure improvements as well as new additions to the city's public realm to the frontage of the Corn Exchange (one of the city's greatest heritage assets) and will provide new public realm at Meadow Lane linked to the north of the river by Sovereign Square footbridge to be delivered next year. There are proposals being developed in relation to City Square, the city's premier area of public realm, which seek to provide a world class 'front door' to the heart of the city centre.
- A complementary report relating to progress on the longstanding city ambition to deliver a new 3.5 hectare green city centre park in the South Bank and new public realm at Meadow Lane will be presented at this March Executive Board meeting, as well as a report seeking approval to commission a design competition to determine design options for the redevelopment of City Square.

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

- reducing health inequalities and supporting active lifestyles
- improving the city's transport and digital infrastructure and tackling climate change risks
- making Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in
- making Leeds the best city to grow old in
- improving the quality of lives and growing the economy through cultural and creative activities

## 3. **Resource Implications**

- There are currently no specific resource implications arising from this report. The development of the strategy, however is likely to result in the requirement for future additional resources/funding requirements from the Council that are both revenue and capital in nature. As and when these requirements are identified they will be need to be assessed in the context of the Council's financial position and the prioritisation of competing capital and revenue resources.

- Approvals relating to individual schemes will be sought from Executive Board or the relevant delegated decision making powers as schemes are brought forward. Where it is intended that schemes will be funded from the capital programme and are not currently funded at this time, for example City Square, this will be considered in future years' budget rounds.

## **Recommendations**

- a) Note the outcome of the public engagement undertaken on the draft Our Spaces Strategy and the changes made to the strategy to reflect the feedback.
- b) To approve the final version of the Our Spaces Strategy, which is appended to this report, and endorse the publication of Leeds: Our Spaces Strategy (city centre version).
- c) Note the Our Spaces projects delivered over the last year since the launch of the public engagement and those in the pipeline for delivery at a future point in time.
- d) Note that the Director of City Development is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the Our Spaces strategy and related Leeds City Council projects. It is anticipated that proposals for public realm at the Corn Exchange, Meadow Lane and City Square will be presented to Executive Board in 2020/21.

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

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Executive Board with an updated position on the Our Spaces Strategy including:
  - 1.1.1 Sharing the key findings from the public engagement on the draft strategy and confirming what has changed in response to that feedback;
  - 1.1.2 Seeking endorsement to publish the final strategy; and
  - 1.1.3 Providing an update on Our Spaces projects delivered to date and those in the pipeline

### **2. Background information**

- 2.1 The draft 'Our Spaces Strategy' was developed as the Council's strategic document to bring together and set out the ambition for the development of public realm within the City Centre to be world class, vibrant and inclusive.
- 2.2 The Our Spaces Strategy was developed in recognition that our city centre is changing rapidly and the development of the Our Spaces Strategy is vital to support the Council and stakeholders in transforming the quality and quantity of the city's public realm. The Our Spaces Strategy is much more than a public realm focussed project however. It is a call to action to ensure that the creation of green infrastructure is at the forefront of all new development proposals being brought forward. In doing so it supports our ambition to become carbon neutral by 2030; to improve the lives of our citizens by improving air quality, providing spaces to relax and safe places to walk and cycle; and improve the environment for our wildlife by increasing biodiversity.
- 2.3 It is a catalyst for sustainable regeneration, inclusive growth and city resilience. It takes account of the changing needs of the city centre, recognising that more people will be living in there in the future and their requirements from the youngest children to the oldest people need to be considered in our spaces. In so doing we will transform the fabric of our city centre and create a place that feels as good as it looks.

2.4 Within the draft strategy, key challenges were identified that need to be overcome in relation to city centre spaces, if it is to meet its vision for the creation of world class, vibrant, inclusive public realm. These include

- The Identity of Leeds – How does Leeds present itself?
- The Experience of Leeds – How does it feel to be in the city?
- Crossing Leeds – How easy is it to move around Leeds city centre?
- Leeds in Green and Blue – Does Leeds have a Green city centre with the River at its heart?
- Growing a Leeds – How is Leeds expanding?

2.5 Seven principles were developed to overcome the various challenges identified above. Our Principles are ambitious but present a realistic picture of what Leeds will look like as a world class city. Leeds will be a substantially greener and better connected city that is more accessible to more people and recognisable as a unique place to be. The principles have been developed in consultation with Leeds City Council and the Quality Spaces and Places Forum of the Leeds Chamber of Commerce. The principles are:

- People First - Our spaces will be designed for people. They will be comfortable, stimulating, relaxing, healthy and safe
- This is Leeds - Our spaces will celebrate Leeds' built and natural assets, from the edges of the River Aire to the magnificent architecture of the city centre
- Everyone Welcome - Our spaces will be inclusive, designed for all ages, abilities and reflect Leeds' diverse communities
- Better Connected - Our spaces will be highly connected, considering pedestrians first, clearly legible and easy to navigate
- Greener Future - Our spaces will be resilient to climate change, with green environments cooling the air, sustainably managing surface water and absorbing carbon
- Bring it to Life - Our spaces will be places for cultural activity, from small interactions to major events
- Economic Sense - Our spaces will be valuable economic infrastructure that supports businesses and provides a canvas for new investment

2.6 The development of the ten specific city centre drawings in the Our Spaces Strategy were developed to give a high level impression of how some of these key areas would look based on developer led proposals (Aire Park, Monkbridge CEG sites in South Bank etc), LPTIP schemes (Headrow and Corn Exchange gateways), Housing Infrastructure Fund bid submissions, HS2 and Leeds integrated Station Masterplan, South Bank or public realm schemes specific. These drawings bring the strategy to life and give a positive message to the people of Leeds about the Council's ambition with regards to its public realm creation. During all of the engagement these axonometrics have captured people's imagination and encouraged wider thinking around the city centre, town and district centres and communities and how placemaking could play a more central role.

2.7 In September 2018, Executive Board noted the content, vision and ambition for the draft Our Spaces Strategy and approved the request to commence stakeholder engagement with a view to seeking its formal adoption once consultation was complete.

2.8 The draft strategy was released for engagement in November 2018 with a launch event at the KPMG offices in Sovereign Square with a group of key stakeholders including the Leeds Business Improvement District (BID), Child Friendly Leeds, developers, Leeds Civic Trust and the Quality Places and Spaces group as well as a group of pupils from Carr Manor School.

### 3. Main issues

#### 3.1 Our Spaces Strategy - Public Engagement

3.1.1 The Our Spaces conversation started on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018 following the release of the draft strategy. The primary method of engagement was an online survey via Commonplace allowing greater reach and access to respondents. This was complemented by focus groups, events, a youth survey and street surveys (at Playful Anywhere events) to reach a broader demographic. There were over 900 respondents across the various methods of engagement with 470 confirmed respondents to the online survey (with over 6000 visitors to the website and over 3700 people who engaged with content). The engagement was promoted through positive media coverage and social media presence.

3.1.2 Young and older people’s views were sought through attendance at the youth voice summit, a youth council survey and an older people’s focus group, in addition, a focus group session was held with the Council’s Access and Usability Group.

3.1.3 There was also engagement with Members and other key stakeholders such as Council services, staff networks, equality hubs and the cycle forum and with a number of key partners such as the Quality Places and Spaces group, Leeds BID, Leeds Hotels and Venues (particularly those impacted by proposals such as the Radisson, Queens Hotel and Dakota), the NHS and universities, and businesses across the city. A breakdown of the engagement methods and related number of respondents is below:

Method of engagement	Number of respondents
Commonplace online survey	470 ‘confirmed’* respondents
Focus groups	36
Access and Usability Group	7
Youth Council survey and Youth Summit Conference	194 respondents aged from 8 to 25
Playful Anywhere – events and street survey	Over 200 respondents

\*There was a total of 542 unique contributors, 72 of which did not fully complete the GDPR verification process. This leaves 470 ‘confirmed’ survey respondents that we can use.

3.1.4 The online survey asked respondents to provide either quick feedback on how they feel about public spaces in Leeds City Centre, or to provide feedback on the strategy in relation to the ambition, challenges, its application or the seven principles. The focus groups also considered what good public realm looks like, how they felt about public spaces in Leeds and their thoughts on the principles. The youth council survey focused on what young people currently use the city centre for and what would make them more likely to use the city centre. The youth council summit and playful anywhere respondents were asked to choose ‘what would make you more likely to use the city centre’ from a range of options.

3.1.5 Robust analysis of feedback from the various forms of engagement has been undertaken by the Council's Intelligence and Policy Team. A report has been produced and the findings have been used to confirm what works well in the draft strategy and what should be changed in the final version.

3.1.6 Key findings from the engagement are:

#### The Strategy – Our Ambition, Challenges and Application

- 94% of 377 online survey respondents agreed that it is a good idea to have one single plan for better streets and places.
- 86% of 420 online survey respondents agreed they would be more likely to visit the city centre if there were better places and spaces designed for everyone.
- 71% of 53 online survey respondents agreed that we have identified the five greatest challenges for the city centre, a relatively low number of respondents commented on this.

#### The Strategy – Our Principles

Online survey respondents were asked to rank the principles and also how they felt about the proposals relating to the principles. The comments were recorded as having positive, neutral or negative sentiments (this could be about the strategy, or generally about public realm and the experience of the city centre).

- In total, 80% of 480 online survey respondents that made a comment around the 7 principles, made a positive response (including those that didn't fully complete the survey, which could not be identified and removed). The focus groups were also generally positive around the 7 principles.
- When asked to rank the principles 'Peoples First' ranked highest, with 91% of online survey respondents saying this should be high or very high. This was also the highest ranked principle from the focus groups.
- The 2nd highest ranked principle was 'Greener Future', supported by 90% of online survey respondents. When considering the comments made around 'Greener Future' (76%), this had the most positive sentiments of all the principles.
- The 3rd highest ranked principle was 'Better Connected' supported by 82% of online survey respondents. However, 'Better connected' also attracted a high proportion of comments with negative sentiments at almost 1 in 4 comments (24%). Negative comments related to the improvement of public transport being adequately reflected within the strategy, insufficient facilities for cyclists and a lack of confidence in the Council to deliver the strategy.
- The principle that ranked lowest in the survey was 'Economic Sense', supported by 62% of online survey respondents. This was also the principle with the least positive comments (59%).

#### General Comments

A total of 383 comments were made in the Quick Feedback section of the online survey, which were categorised into one or more overarching theme.

- The highest proportion of survey comments referred to the need for more public space and greenery (25%). At youth forums this represented 67 (9%) of the comments and it was the 2nd most popular theme raised at Playful

Anywhere with 89 (10%) of responses. It was also a key area raised by the focus groups.

- The second highest proportion of survey comments was around the importance of the public realm (12%). This theme was also strongly reflected in key comments made by the youth forums and at Playful Anywhere, including 'People friendly spaces' and 'Outdoor spaces for all'.
- The next highest proportion of survey comments was around the need for less traffic and vehicles (11%), this theme also had the highest number of comments from Playful Anywhere with 95 (11%) of the comments and was a primary concern of the focus groups. This was also one of the highest reported comments from the youth forums with 63 (9%) of the comments.
- A further area of concern from the survey comments was around the need for better public transport (5%) and the focus group of older people mentioned the unreliability of public transport several times This was also seen as an issue with Playful Anywhere attendees, who ranked it 4th with 71 (8%) of the comments.
- The most popular themes from the focus groups were:
  - Lack of connectedness and signage
  - green space and more trees (Leeds was described as a grey city)
  - More toilets, accessible toilets and seating
  - Walking – safe green corridors for walking and more guided walks and trails
  - Fun - Leeds was described as a city that lacked fun and activities for children (youth forums highlighted the need for more playful and fun features, ranked 4th with 56 (8%) of comments. This was also a key comment from the Playful Anywhere sessions, with 63 (8%) of comments)
  - Not a destination. Leeds needs to have something to draw people in.
  - Welcoming and inclusive for all
  - Street cafes – areas where it doesn't have to be about alcohol
  - Tackling beggars and homelessness.
- The need for more culture and art in the city was a further key theme from the online survey comments (5%).
- Separately, the youth forums and attendees at Playful Anywhere referred to a need for more street art and for more events on the streets.
- A further key area of interest for the 7% of online survey respondents in the quick feedback section had little confidence that the strategy would be delivered.

3.1.7 Many respondents provided detailed comments which convey the passion that people have for improving our streets and spaces. One respondent felt that “the strategy is long overdue. Cities were designed for people but they have become dominated by traffic.” and another wanted “Simply more fun! Somewhere to paint, create, play football. Feel like the spaces belong to the people, rather than we are just passers-by”. The importance of greening our spaces was high on the agenda with a young person commenting that it would “be great to see nature reflected

much more in the city centre, with wildlife areas and trails as well as more year round greenery, vertical gardens and grassed spaces to relax in". There were a number of commenters who did not have confidence that the strategy will be delivered, therefore it is important to publicise the successful projects delivered to date and those in the pipeline.

- 3.1.8 The engagement response has been hugely positive, confirming the importance of having a single strategy for our streets and spaces and demonstrating that the principles are broadly in keeping with public sentiment. There are some clear messages such as retaining People First as our highest priority, placing a greater focus on the environment and our response to the climate emergency through more greenspace and fewer cars, supporting better public transport and demonstrating strong links to health and wellbeing. Also, there is a need to review and update the challenges in line with the feedback. Culture including arts, events, playful / fun and activities featured highly, reflecting a need to link closely with the Culture Strategy and plans for tactical and temporary public realm interventions.
- 3.1.9 Since the launch of the Our Spaces Strategy draft engagement one specific area of challenge has emerged at the forefront of all considerations for the ongoing growth and success of the city. This is the Climate Emergency alongside the Council's commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030.
- 3.1.10 In response to public feedback, and the climate emergency a number of changes have been made to the strategy so that it better reflects our thoughts and requirements for Our Spaces as a growing and evolving city. These are:
  - An updated Executive Summary and Foreword to strengthen references to the Climate Emergency and biodiversity;
  - More emphasis on the role of Our Spaces in responding to the climate emergency and species extinction within the wider document to demonstrate the important role our spaces have in ensuring that Leeds is a resilient city, that is proactively bringing in measures through greening our city centre to remove carbon and other harmful particulates to improve air quality and reduce carbon. This has resulted in a challenge being added – A resilient Leeds – How ready is Leeds city centre to address the Climate Emergency and the health and well-being of the city and its people;
  - A greater focus on our existing spaces and how we can repurpose them to deliver biodiversity net gains in the city centre through increasing the variety of habitats on offer, the use of more native species and a change in management regimes;
  - Make clearer links between the public realm environmental improvements around key transport hubs, bus waiting areas and connections to and from these alongside and highways improvements and cycling/walking opportunities to encourage an increase the use of public transport and active travel;
  - Weaving the importance of culture and community throughout the strategy and consideration of interventions and programmes that can be staged on a more regular basis that appeal to a broader audience;
  - Stating how we will measure the success and benefits of the Our Spaces projects as they are developed and delivered is a really important element of the strategy as it moves from the Our Spaces Strategy into its work programme. Having identified high level benefits is a really important area

that has been reviewed and scrutinised with support and input from Leeds University;

- Includes more focus on the city centre rim and how this area can be better reconnected to the city centre through both events and infrastructure.

3.1.11 The updated Our Spaces Strategy is attached at appendix 1.

### **3.2 Our Spaces Projects**

3.2.1 Alongside the strategy update, a number of Our Spaces projects have been delivered with a new under 5's city centre play area at Queens Square, greenspace at Playhouse Gardens to complement the stunning new Leeds Playhouse building and a new space for rest and interaction at Claypit Lane (Woodhouse Gardens).

3.2.2 In addition the Our Spaces team, working with Connecting Leeds, have supported the proposals for the Headrow Gateway as part of the Leeds Public Transport Improvement Programme (LPTIP) where a number of key streets will bring forward enhancements to the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. As a result of this Executive Board gave approval to provide a new public space at Cookridge Street. Improvements to the Corn Exchange Gateway will also include cycling and pedestrian infrastructure improvements as well as new additions to the city's public realm to the frontage of the Corn Exchange (one of the city's greatest heritage assets) and will provide new public realm at Meadow Lane linked to the north of the river by Sovereign Square footbridge to be delivered next year. There are proposals being developed in relation to City Square, the city's premier area of public realm, which seek to provide a world class 'front door' to the heart of the city centre.

3.2.3 It is important to note that the Our Spaces Strategy as it currently stands covers areas of the city centre that were imminently undergoing development associated with a number of independent and interrelated programmes, such as LPTIP, South Bank, Leeds Integrated Station Masterplan, HS2, City Park, Quarry Hill redevelopment etc. The intention is that the Our Spaces work will continue to include areas and interventions in the city centre but expand out to communities and town and district centres beyond the city centre. This approach will assist in bringing better and more integrated placemaking to the city as a whole, and support the development and delivery of green infrastructure as a priority for Leeds.

### **3.3 Our Spaces – The Outcomes**

3.3.1 The Our Spaces Strategy will support (in partnership with developer led projects, Highways, regeneration and other city centre public realm proposals) and deliver:-

- 12 new public realm schemes (including the likes of Meadow Lane, City (Aire) Park, Soyo, Cookridge Street, New Briggate, Monkbridge, CEG Southbank and Lisbon Street)
- 6 public realm improvement proposals (including City Square, Belgrave Square, Quarry Hill – Playhouse Gardens and the Corn Exchange)
- 1 new pedestrian footbridge at Sovereign Square
- 18 streets and roadways with increased pedestrian space, cycleways and tree planting proposals;
- Opportunities for new street cafes and kiosks

3.3.2 Linked to these direct benefits is the opportunity to transform the city centre highway network through Connecting Leeds. The Connecting Leeds programme will

see over £500m invested in highway and transportation infrastructure within the next 5 years. The programme will help build three new rail stations, 6 sustainable transport corridors and four new or extended Park and Ride sites with over 2500 spaces. Furthermore the investment will help transform the city centre creating world class environments in which to walk, cycle, work, shop and explore. The ultimate objective of the investment is to transform travel habits, reducing car usage and double the number of trips made each day by bus, cycle, rail and on foot within ten years.

- 3.3.3 The assessment above is a snapshot of what of what is being brought forward at this point in time. The Our Spaces Strategy to date through the public engagement, has raised the profile of importance of public realm in the city and there will be many other developments that come forward under the framework of the Our Spaces Strategy as a direct and indirect consequence of this. On that basis the projects and proposals above are just the start of changes to come.

## **4. Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 In addition to the engagement on the Our Spaces strategy detailed in this report, Connecting Leeds have undertaken extensive consultation on their proposed improvements to city centre gateways. Proposals for the Headrow and Corn Exchange Gateways include Our Spaces public realm schemes with recent consultation on the Corn Exchange gateway (2264 contributions received from over 500 people) resulting in specific support for:

- Limiting access to the city centre by private car, including for environmental reasons; and
- Improved public realm and greenery

- 4.1.2 Consultation and engagement will be undertaken for individual Our Spaces schemes as they are developed.

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

- 4.2.1 An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening form has been completed at appendix 2.

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

- 4.3.1 The Our Spaces strategy will support the ambitions and a number of the priorities set out in the Inclusive Growth strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Best Council Plan as reflected earlier in this report. The strategy supports the Best Council Plan 2019/20 priorities on:

- reducing health inequalities and supporting active lifestyles
- improving the city's transport and digital infrastructure and tackling climate change risks
- making Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in
- making Leeds the best city to grow old in

- improving the quality of lives and growing the economy through cultural and creative activities

### Climate Emergency

- 4.3.2 Full Council declared a climate emergency in March 2019, with the stated ambition of working towards a net zero carbon city by 2030. The council has accepted that very urgent action is required to make our contribution to containing global temperature rises within 1.5C. Beyond this limit, there is a strong scientific consensus that there will be catastrophic consequences for both humanity and the natural world.
- 4.3.3 An urgent priority for the city is reducing carbon emissions to restrict global warming and green infrastructure (through the Our Spaces programme) can play a key role in contributing to this agenda. Based on locking up carbon to mitigate UK greenhouse gas emissions, the Committee on Climate Change has advised national Government that there is an urgent need to increase national canopy cover from the current 13% to 17-19%. Leeds, therefore has to significantly increase its tree canopy cover and this is not just woodland creation. Urban trees are hugely important, in addition to locking up carbon they also mitigate air pollution and along with other planting, cool urban heat island temperatures, contribute to flood risk management and improve biodiversity.
- 4.3.4 A Climate Emergency Update to Executive Board in January 2020 highlighted that addressing the issues of landscape and biodiversity presents the opportunity to offset some of the remaining carbon in production but also to enhance wildlife and improve the public experience. A combination of developing woodland on our own holdings, together with work with other land owners is set to bring forward millions of trees in the next thirty years. The report highlighted our programme to develop green spaces in the city centre as it becomes a major residential centre, shifting its emphasis towards encouraging biodiversity.
- 4.3.5 More trees and planting in our spaces will attract new animal and plant species, delivering biodiversity net gains at a time when many species are at risk, and also supporting the creation of green corridors across the city.
- 4.3.6 The council has a commitment through the West Yorkshire Transport Plan to a series of initiatives which are designed to cut carbon emissions by a quarter over the next decade. It is the council's aim to be city where you don't need to use a car. The measures include:
- Doubling bus patronage
  - A 75% increase in rail
  - A 10% increase in walking
  - A 300% increase in cycling
  - A 15% decrease in car usage
- 4.3.7 To support and encourage the use of public and active transport, the Our Spaces strategy aims to support and deliver the creation of high quality public realm that makes journeys across the city centre safe and enjoyable for pedestrians and cyclists. Where possible, Our Spaces schemes will clearly integrate 'Active Transit' opportunities, including walking and cycling, into the design of principal streets and afford them greater priority within the street use. Schemes will also offer greater

pedestrian and cyclist priority, with pedestrian crossings within the city forming an integrated part of the public realm environment.

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

- 4.4.1 There are currently no specific resource implications arising from this report. The development of the strategy, however is likely to result in the requirement for future additional resources/funding requirements from the Council that are both revenue and capital in nature. As and when these requirements are identified they will be need to be assessed in the context of the Council's financial position and the prioritisation of competing capital and revenue resources.
- 4.4.2 Approvals relating to individual schemes will be sought from Executive Board or the relevant delegated decision making powers as schemes are brought forward. Where it is intended that schemes will be funded from the capital programme and are not currently funded at this time, for example City Square, this will be considered in future years' budget rounds.

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

- 4.5.1 This report is eligible for call-in. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

#### **4.6 Risk management**

- 4.6.1 There are no specific risks or issues arising from this report.
- 4.6.2 The delivery of the Our Spaces strategy will assist in mitigating corporate risk relating to air quality and will support the delivery of the city's Clean Air Zone.

### **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 The Our Spaces strategy has been developed as the Council's strategic document to bring together and set out the ambition for the development of public realm within the City Centre to be world class, vibrant and inclusive. It has been developed at a time of unique opportunity with 'once in a generation' growth transforming our city centre.
- 5.2 It is widely recognised that public spaces, and particularly green and blue infrastructure, deliver significant benefits for people, the environment and the economy.
- 5.3 Public engagement on the draft strategy has confirmed support for more public space and greenery and the importance of having an ambition, vision and principles for the design of our streets and spaces. Valuable feedback has been provided through the engagement which has been incorporated into an updated version of the strategy.
- 5.4 Adoption of the strategy will set a benchmark for those designing and delivering public realm to put 'people first' and to respond to the challenges that our city faces regarding the climate emergency and species extinction, health and wellbeing and inclusive growth.

- 5.5 Progress has been made on delivering the ambition within the strategy through new and enhanced public spaces in the city centre including Queens Square, Playhouse Gardens and Woodhouse Gardens (Claypit Lane). Moving forward, there are exciting proposals to transform some of our landmark spaces such as the area surrounding the Corn Exchange and City Square. In addition, there will be a greater focus on repurposing our existing spaces, on reconnecting the city centre rim to the city centre through both events and infrastructure and expanding the Our Spaces ethos out beyond the city centre to communities and town and district centres.

## **6. Recommendations**

- a) Note the outcome of the public engagement undertaken on the draft Our Spaces Strategy and the changes made to the strategy to reflect the feedback.
- b) To approve the final version of the Our Spaces Strategy, which is appended to this report, and endorse the publication of Leeds: Our Spaces Strategy (city centre version).
- c) Note the Our Spaces projects delivered over the last year since the launch of the public engagement and those in the pipeline for delivery at a future point in time.
- d) Note that the Director of City Development is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the Our Spaces strategy and related Leeds City Council projects. It is anticipated that proposals for public realm at the Corn Exchange, Meadow Lane and City Square will be presented to Executive Board in 2020/21.

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

- 7.1 None.

## **8. Appendices**

- 8.1 Draft Our Spaces Strategy
- 8.2 Equality impact assessment

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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.