

**Report of Director Communities and Environment**

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

**Date: 12 November 2020**

**Subject: Locality working in our most disadvantaged communities: tackling poverty and inequality and Covid-19 recovery**

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input 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**

- Scrutiny Board have been instrumental in supporting Executive Board to make decisions on the shape of the council's work to tackle poverty and inequality and strengthen the city's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities. Executive Board first approved the new approach for Locality Working in November 2017; a subsequent report was submitted to Executive Board in February 2019, which provided an update on its emerging work in priority neighbourhoods.
- The Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Committee have influenced and helped shape the design of the locality working approach. The Director for Communities and Environment has submitted two Scrutiny Board reports, the most recent in January 2020.
- In March 2020, the UK government took the decision to lockdown the country as the key response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. This has had a disproportionate impact in our most disadvantaged communities. The Neighbourhood Improvement Board and the locality working approach have a critical role to play in making demonstrable improvements in our most disadvantaged communities.

- An update report was scheduled for submission to Executive Board in March 2020, but this was rescheduled to October 2020, due to the outbreak of the pandemic and national lockdown.
- The work articulated in this report was progressed with the full knowledge, active involvement and leadership of local ward members and there is an intention to share the learning and the emerging good practice more widely with other wards for their benefit.
- This report provides a locality working update to Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities), specifically, this report will:
  - a) Detail the emerging impact of Covid-19 in our most disadvantaged communities
  - b) Provide a Covid-19: Locality working update 2020
  - c) Outline the Neighbourhood Improvement Board's role in supporting the impact of Covid-19 in our most disadvantaged communities.
  - d) Scrutiny Board's support in the successful delivery of locality working

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

- This report explains how the council's overarching ambition to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities as set out in the Best Council Plan is enacted at a local level, working in partnership in the city's most disadvantaged wards and neighbourhoods based on a range of insight and intelligence and ongoing engagement with communities, elected members and partners.
- The newly updated Best Council Plan 2020-2025 reflects the current Covid-19 context, while maintaining the three pillar priorities of inclusive growth; health and wellbeing; and climate change, under the overarching priority of tackling poverty and inequalities. Covid-19 continues to have a hugely significant impact on all areas of the Best Council Plan, with the economy, employment, education, community resilience and health and wellbeing all detrimentally affected by the pandemic, which will undoubtedly limit progress towards our ambitions. Our city ambitions, particularly our overarching priority of tackling poverty and inequalities, will be key to guiding the recovery period, particularly as we begin to understand better the long-term health, social and economic impacts of the pandemic.

## 3. Resource Implications

- No current resource implications other than for existing resources that have been re-purposed to provide for greater focus on place-based integrated services and the alignment of new additional resources through funding bids/grants to local neighbourhood and ward level programmes to meet the ambitions of locality working and the need to strengthen our communities. Consideration is being given to future resource requirements through aligning planned investment.

## Recommendations

Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board are asked to consider the content of the report and agree the following recommendations. That this Scrutiny Board –

- a) Note the positive comments of Executive Board following submission of a report to the October 2020 meeting.
- b) Request that the Chief Officer for Communities work with the Chair of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board to push forward engagement on locality working with other scrutiny boards, in tandem with the wider ambition to take forward locality working through organisational development and design work in the council.
- c) Request that the Directors of Communities and Environment, Housing and Resources, and City Development consider the implications of the progress to date for further improving the connectivity of the city's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods to economic opportunities and aligning capital investment

### 1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board have already influenced and shaped the design of the locality working approach during its highly effective working group meeting of October 2017. This contribution informed the Executive Board report update presented in November 2017, and was acknowledged by Executive Board in its decision-making.
- 1.2 Executive Board approved the model for Locality Working at the November 2017 meeting. Following this approval, a new place-based approach was developed, which aims to tackle poverty, reduce inequality and address vulnerability in some of the poorest neighbourhoods in Leeds. A subsequent report was submitted to Executive Board in February 2019, which provided an update on its emerging work in priority neighbourhoods.
- 1.3 A twelve-month progress report was submitted to the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020. The report was well received by Scrutiny Board, the examples of success the report highlighted, and which were expanded upon in the meeting, were cited as a credit to the officers involved and clearly reflective of our ambitions as an organisation as set out in the Best Council Plan and its supporting strategies including the Health and Well-Being Strategy.
- 1.4 In March 2020, the UK government took the decision to lockdown the country as the key response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. This has had a disproportionate impact of Covid-19 in our most disadvantaged communities. The Neighbourhood Improvement Board and the locality working approach have a critical role to play in making demonstrable improvements in our most disadvantaged communities.
- 1.5 An update report was scheduled for submission to Executive Board in March 2020, but this was rescheduled to October 2020, due to the outbreak of the pandemic and national lockdown.

- 1.6 This report provides a locality working update to Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities), specifically on:
- a) the emerging impact of Covid-19 in our most disadvantaged communities
  - b) Covid-19: Locality working update 2020
  - c) Neighbourhood Improvement Board - supporting the impact of Covid-19 in our most disadvantaged communities.
  - d) Scrutiny Board's support in the successful delivery of locality working

## **2. Background information**

- 2.1 The Locality Working model aims to respond to the national Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data, which in 2015 identified sixteen neighbourhoods in Leeds that were categorised as being in the most disadvantaged 1% of neighbourhoods nationally. As part of this approach, six priority neighbourhoods were identified to accelerate the council's approach to tackling poverty and inequality in the city. These six neighbourhoods are New Wortley; Beeston Hill; Cliftons and Nowells, Recreations; Lincoln Green and Boggart Hill.
- 2.2 The approach was predicated on the council's ambition to be a compassionate city with a strong economy that is inclusive of the communities in the city and a view that a smaller neighbourhood focus creates the opportunity to develop a more detailed process for understanding and responding to communities affected by poverty. It also creates a locus for testing and aligning the approaches of council services and partner agencies, including, the alignment of investment and resources.
- 2.3 The approach seeks to challenge current approaches and focus the capability and capacity of the whole council and its partners, working with elected members and local residents, on improving outcomes in the city's most challenging neighbourhoods. This approach is built on:
- Enhancing the centrality of community committees to locality working led through elected members;
  - Prioritising our collective endeavour and resources;
  - Using our own staff resource, capacity and capability more effectively;
  - Developing improved working relationships with our partners locally;
  - Ensuring we work closely with communities so that we do things with and not to people;
  - Enabling cultural change in the council and across our local partnerships, so that we can learn and apply improvements across the whole city;
  - The development of six Core Teams and a range of target ward partnerships.
- 2.4 The Council has driven the implementation of the locality working approach applying a strategic framework, which places the most disadvantaged communities in Leeds at its centre. The Locality Working Strategic Framework is predicated on a number of principles and different, more integrated ways of working:
- Developing a shared sense of the assets of individuals and communities with a strong focus on building self-reliance and resilient communities;
  - A placed based more integrated working approach;
  - Early intervention and prevention to prevent reactive public service cost;
  - Getting to the root causes, sharing knowledge and avoiding duplication to develop effective local and/or citywide solutions;
  - New ways of working and driving system change.

- 2.5 This approach is split into the three key strands, working through: Community Committees; target wards and priority neighbourhoods. Working in this way has created a locus for council departments/services and partners, to target their existing investment and resources and align new resources - for example, through external funds, bids and grants - to best effect.
- 2.6 Six 'Core Teams' have been established in the priority neighbourhoods; alongside a number of partnership arrangements for improving the city's target inner city wards. Core Teams comprise of officers from within the council, elected members, NHS, Police, DWP and the Third Sector.
- 2.7 A number of reporting mechanisms have been developed to support this new way of working including, the appropriate Community Committees, the Neighbourhood Improvement Board and the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board.
- 2.8 To strengthen the council's commitment to being a compassionate city and reducing poverty and inequality, an Equality Improvement Priority has been established, which aims to 'improve equality outcomes across the six priority neighbourhoods'. See Corporate Considerations for further detail.
- 2.9 In March 2020, the UK government took the decision to lockdown the country as the key response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The aim was to prevent infection transmission in the general population by restricting activities that could be undertaken beyond the home. The key advice was to stay at home, leaving only for essential supplies, (food and medicine), and for essential work. This necessitated the closure of business and wider activities, and potential loss of income to communities. The pandemic emergency initiated a crisis that quickly brought to the fore a large number of needs across the communities in Leeds.

### **3 Main issues**

#### **Emerging impact of Covid-19 in our most disadvantaged communities**

- 3.1 The impact of Covid-19 has been high in the poorer areas of the city where the ability to withstand shocks is restricted. Work has been taking place in Leeds to understand and get a picture of the disproportionate or differential impact on inequality that is happening due to Covid-19. This work is supported by Voluntary Action Leeds, Forum Central and a range of partners who provide specialist support to the city's diverse communities. This includes gathering evidence of the impact on Communities of Interest, some of which is evidence based and some, which is anecdotal. It also shows that there is overlap across many Communities of Interest. This mirrors work that is being undertaken by Public Health on wider health inequalities of Covid-19.
- 3.2 The emerging evidence highlights that the Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated social and economic inequalities and we need to further understand what these impacts are on communities in Leeds. What it tells us so far mirrors national evidence and the local narrative that Covid-19 does have a disproportionate and differential impact based on where you live, your gender, your ethnicity and your job.

3.3 The following emerging issues are identified as being pertinent to all Communities of Interest and the general public and these include:-

- Navigating information and guidance: challenges around accessing accurate, appropriate and accessible information in a rapidly changing scene, littered with mis/dis-information and complex communications.
- Access to essential provisions and services: challenges in gaining/maintaining access to food, essential personal and household items; and accessing support necessary to protect health, care and wellbeing.
- Social isolation and boredom: challenges around the loss of social bonds, relationships and contact; the loss of physical and intellectual stimulation.
- Mental Health – low-level anxiety to crisis: challenges around management of pre-existing mental health issues and the emergence of new concerns.
- Abuse, domestic violence and safeguarding issues: challenges around imposed segregation of perpetrators and victims, accessing support whilst experiencing violence and abuse.
- Concerns about restrictions being lifted: challenges around managing change uncertainty and the concerns and anxieties, which this brings.
- Digital Exclusion: communities and individuals having limited/no access to equipment and/or data thus exacerbated barriers to accessing information, support and social connection.

#### **Covid-19: Locality working update 2020**

3.4 The pandemic emergency initiated a crisis that quickly brought to the fore a large number of needs across the communities in Leeds. The following paragraphs provide some examples of how locality-working partners have responded during the crisis.

3.5 VAL in partnership with Leeds City Council launched a new volunteering programme - Community Care Volunteers. The response was excellent and at its peak, the programme attracted sign ups from nearly 8,000 people across Leeds. Of these 8000 people, 5,400 went on to fully complete all parts of their induction, meaning they were ready to be deployed.

3.6 In order to ensure that volunteers could be deployed to support people locally, VAL worked in partnership with LCC Communities Team to set up a new network of volunteer 'hubs' across the city. Discussions were facilitated by Leeds City Council and Voluntary Action Leeds with a range of third sector organisations who were interested in being a ward level hub and leading the response to meeting needs at the local level. Twenty-seven third sector organisations confirmed their intent to participate in the programmes and the volunteer response commenced.

3.7 Whilst the Leeds City Council Community Hubs closed following the onset of the pandemic, Customer Access and Welfare worked hard to maintain their support to local communities, through their key role in this programme of work. The Covid-19 Helpline was established alongside the existing Local Welfare Support Service. Both helplines recorded food referrals and systems were put in place to ensure food and support was provided and accessible to those most in need and impacted by Covid-19. In addition to food parcels, the service offered other support with shopping, prescriptions, fuel, hygiene products, baby products, dog walking, and welfare/befriending telephone calls.

- 3.8 Following the launch of a central LCC Covid-19 telephone helpline in late March, accompanied by a citywide distribution of leaflets to 330,000 households to promote it, the Hubs took on the responsibility of responding to referrals for support from people living locally to them.

**Vignette 1: New Wortley Community Care Hub**

*New Wortley worked through lockdown delivering essential services to the community as the local hub for Armley. Through this work, they reached a wider audience and engaged with new people. This has emphasised an ambition to have a greater reach into the local community and highlighted a previous low level of engagement with the BAME community to provision within the community centre. The centre were awarded £63,000 from the National Lottery to deliver a 6 month Covid-19 response project to meet the changing needs of local people during the pandemic. The project continues the existing Building Blocks provision, but also funds a mental health support worker and a dedicated development worker targeting the BAME community, who will develop a range of support and learning opportunities appropriate and relevant to need.*

**Vignette 2: Community Care Volunteer Hub: Beeson & Holbeck - Slung Low**

*A theatre company, Slung Low, with the help of volunteers, became very busy picking up shopping and prescriptions, delivering food parcels and hot meals, dog walking and carrying out welfare calls. They also put together the beautiful LS11 Art Gallery where local people submitted artwork, which Slung Low used to line the streets. This was a far cry from their usual role producing large community theatre performances, showcasing the work of artists in the Holbeck and running their Cultural Community College. The Slung Low team feel that they don't want to go back to exactly what they were doing before; they've discovered new areas of the local community, which they previously had little contact with, new partnerships have formed with organisations they'd never been in touch with and amazing individuals have stepped up to help. Slung Low have now returned to doing some of their day-to-day work albeit in a Covid secure environment such as outdoor performances to families and are even a drive thru show. The way that Slung Low have completely changed their service delivery and adapted to Covid-19 is huge and has made a massive impact to the local community.*

**Vignette 3: Community Care Hub: Burmantofts and Richmond Hill**

*Ten local VCS organisations have come together under the leadership of Leeds Mencap to coordinate the local volunteer and welfare response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This partnership have worked together very effectively over the past eight months providing essential support to people in the ward that have been adversely affected by the pandemic. The work of the partnership is evolving as the impacts of the pandemic change, the economic and psychological impacts remain a significant challenge. Leeds Mencap have been successful in securing Lottery Funding, which they will use over the next six months, enabling them to continue their leadership and coordination role for the partnership. The main focus of this project will be moving people away from emergency support and connecting people with the relevant support they need as they recover from the Lockdown phase of the pandemic. The partnership are enthusiastic about continuing to work together to tackle the immediate impacts of Covid-19, but also the wider issues of poverty and inequality in the ward – a positive legacy to come out of adversity.*

- 3.9 A further need was identified for culturally appropriate food packages to meet the diverse needs of communities in Leeds. To address this need a central Cultural Food Hub has been established.

#### **Vignette 4: Cultural Food Hub**

*In responding to the Covid-19 crisis, the council identified that there were residents in Leeds who needed help and support with emergency food, which better met their cultural needs. Hamara were initially identified in May 2020 to act as the Cultural Food Hub, in addition to being a community care hub, providing culturally appropriate emergency food parcels for the city. In July 2020, Infinity / Give a Gift became the Cultural Food Hub for the East of the city, in recognition of the growing delivery footprint and the high density of the population in that area. The Cultural Food Hubs have aided residents who are less willing to contact the council helpline to access to food, through direct referral to the cultural food hubs, or through frontline services supporting communities with emergency food provision. The cultural food hubs have acted as catalysts in forging strengthened relationships with other third sector organisations and enabled greater community connections with residents from diverse communities and ethnicities.*

- 3.10 It is also clear that strong, effective partnerships have been developed, through the development of the Community Care Hubs. These partnerships are flourishing and in many cases are being developed to support wider locality needs, as described in the following vignette.

#### **Vignette 5: School Uniform Recycling**

*Fall into Place, Seacroft Community on Top and LS14 Trust organised a pop up school uniform shop at Kentmere Community Centre ready for schools returning. A vast amount of clean, good quality uniform was donated and then offered to families for free. This was hugely successful with hundreds of items chosen by families, alleviating the financial pressure of purchasing new school uniform and the first steps towards regular school uniform recycling within Seacroft.*

- 3.11 In recognition of the need to have an immediate and agile response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Executive Member for Communities and Director of Communities and Environment in March 2020 approved the use of 2020/21 Wellbeing funds (£10K per ward) to support Covid-19 related activities at the discretion of local ward members. This was underpinned by a fit-for-purpose decision-making process; with members deciding on spend for each ward. As of the 10th September 2020, 142 grants had been awarded by local ward members, totalling just over £203k (61% of total budget available). Grants awarded cover a wide range of local support needs and activities including support for food banks, befriending calls, activity packs, specialist support for equality communities and virtual education and other activities. The following vignettes provide some examples of how wellbeing funds have enabled continued support through the pandemic.

#### **Vignette 6: Mafwa Theatre**

*Mafwa Theatre is a community theatre organisation working at One Community Centre with women from refugee, asylum seeker and settled communities. They use movement, voice and drama to increase confidence, improve English language and build resilient communities. They have been running weekly women's workshops since February 2018 in partnership with Leeds Refugee Forum. They responded to Covid-19 by ending face-to-face delivery on the 13<sup>th</sup> March and transforming their 'Cooking with Parveen' project focusing on food and femininity into a postal project. Each week they sent out a creative pack with activities, letter writing task, recipe, bus ticket, food voucher, responses from other members and a SAE. They sent out 274 packs to 51 women. A whatsapp group and weekly phone calls enabled them to keep in touch with the group and keep a sense of community alive. **Wellbeing funds** were granted by the **Inner East Community Committee** to purchase smart phones and data to enable them to begin to run online zoom sessions as well as provide digital support and training to their group. 19 women benefited from this digital access support.*

**Vignette 7: Ciaran Bingham Foundation Trust**

*Pre-Covid-19, service users used the centre to get out on a Sunday, to get a low cost meal, see friends, play bingo and volunteer for the trust. On average, they were getting about 23 service users per Sunday. Ciaran Bingham Foundation Trust are now cooking for 65+ per Sunday. The Charity's method of service delivery has changed since lockdown to "take away" meals. **Inner South Community Committee** have provided **wellbeing funds** to subsidise the increase in provision of Sunday takeaway meals.*

- 3.12 In total over the first 24<sup>1</sup> weeks of the Leeds Emergency Food Response there were 25,971 referrals for services such as food parcels, shopping, prescriptions and fuel. The referrals recorded by the council helplines resulted in an estimated 64,000 food bags (equivalent of 34,000 food parcels) being distributed from the food warehouse over the course of 24 weeks.
- 3.13 As lockdown and shielding measures began to ease in August so too did demand for emergency food. This led to a gradual handover of direct deliveries to the Community Care Hubs and wind down of the food warehouse and the Covid-19 helpline. Calls to the helpline are now diverted to the Local Welfare Support Scheme where referrals are being recorded and passed to Community Care Hubs to maintain provisions where necessary. This process has been in place since early September and demand is being monitored.
- 3.14 Leeds City Council Community Hubs reopened in July, with Covid-secure measures in place. Libraries are reopening on a phased basis and a number of Job Shops are reopening in October for pre-booked appointments.
- 3.15 Local Ward members have led our approach to support local relief efforts and this has proved invaluable in ensuring that our response to those who needed support was fit for purpose and tailored to local needs. As part of this, Members have led on different approaches to maintain local connections in their local communities, as highlighted in the following vignette.

**Vignette 8: Virtual Residents Meetings**

*A range of approaches have been adopted, from virtual meetings that enable residents to raise issues during the meeting to more 'Question Time' events, all of which enabling the opportunity to listen and respond to local residents concerns and questions.*

- 3.16 Partners are also exploring different ways of engaging with local residents, striving to stay connected and listen to local needs.

**Vignette 9: Lincoln Green Online Community Engagement (Engagement HQ)**

*Housing Leeds are working alongside the Communities Team and East Street Arts with a view to including a number of consultations within the launch of 'Your Voice Leeds' – an online community engagement platform. The web based platform allows residents to give feedback, share ideas, take part in discussions and surveys/polls etc. Housing aim to go live and invite residents to take part in the consultation projects later in October. The platform will provide a new channel to engage with a broader range of residents as possible.*

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<sup>1</sup> This information represents data collected by the council and does not capture all the work being delivered by partners and third sector organisations. The first 24 weeks represents the time the food warehouse was in operation from week commencing 23 March to week ending 6 September.

- 3.17 During Covid-19, the Council has gone above and beyond to ensure that its citizens are safe at this time. The following vignette provides an example of work to support our migrant communities, further details and examples can be found in the Executive Board report: Annual update on the strategic approach to migration in Leeds, October 2020.

**Vignette 10: POMOC (Help)**

*The team, in partnership with other services, led and delivered the POMOC service through a virtual weekly drop in to targeted eastern European communities. Referrals were received from local, statutory services and churches, to provide support to service users mainly from priority neighbourhoods, around welfare, housing, EU Settlement Scheme and further signposting. Since May 2020 this service has received approximately 50 referrals and a further two drop-ins were set up to meet demand. This will continue until face-to-face contact is resumed.*

- 3.18 A further example of this being the development of an innovative partnership with a multi-faceted approach to respond to the issue of street drinking on a busy Harehills thoroughfare, bordering Burmantofts and Richmond Hill. Traditionally, the approach to street drinking has been to deploy disruption and enforcement approaches, going forward partners are working on a much more restorative person centred approach.

**Vignette 11: Street Drinking**

*A multi-agency partnership has been launched, comprising of Elected Members from both Burmantofts and Richmond Hill and Gipton and Harehills Ward and representatives from Leeds City Council, Public Health and the Police. The partnership's objective is to tackle the issue of problem drinking in the heart of one of Leeds' busiest neighbourhoods. Whilst both disruption and enforcement will form part of the approach, there will be an outreach offer to provide pathways to support for the cohort of individuals who regularly gather to consume alcohol. In addition to this, there will be a push to engage with local businesses, particularly off-licences, to become more responsible retailers.*

- 3.19 Local Care Partnerships (LCPs) have been working hard to support local communities throughout the pandemic, focusing not only on the physical health and wellbeing of patients, but also social and economic support. A number of LCPs have set up a 'Developing You' programme, which is a free 10 week course to help people cope better with day-to-day activities and give them the opportunity to learn about themselves and the next steps that are right for them. Along with sessions on looking for and finding a job there are sessions with local employment and health support providers and access to volunteering opportunities and job opportunities. A further example of LCP support is highlighted through the following vignette.

**Vignette 12: HATCH bid LCP – West Yorkshire & Harrogate: Health Inequalities Grant Fund**

*HATCH Local Care Partnership (LCP) have secured funding to work directly with families to ensure the inequalities gap experienced by low income families is not widened for those asked to shield for a prolonged period of time. An asset based approach is being adopted, which builds on the strengths of families rather than a gift model that 'rescues' people who are shielding. A plan will be made with the family, identifying gaps, issues and concerns that are surfacing. All aspects of health and wellbeing will be considered and the resources of all partners in HATCH will be available.*

- 3.20 During lockdown youth providers moved quickly to embrace new ways of working moving away from face to face group work, utilising digital platforms and keeping in touch by telephone so they could continue to engage with young people.

**Vignette 13: Youth providers**

*Youth providers have been using digital platforms to engage with young people, examples include chat rooms, online CPR sessions, support with schoolwork and Bike 100 mile challenge and couch to 5k challenge. Youth Service have been working alongside the Neighbourhood Policing Teams providing detached youth work to engage with young people and reinforce the Covid-19 guidelines. Funding has been secured to put together activity and information packs, inclusive of activity booklets, young person friendly Covid-19 information and advice materials on coping with stress. Cardboard boxes filled with resources to promote play, physical activity and art/design have also been delivered to the doorsteps of the most vulnerable families.*

**Vignette 14: Healthy Holidays**

*Throughout the summer holidays there has been an impressive collection of Healthy Holidays programmes, which have taken place despite the significant challenges Covid-19 has presented. They have been delivered by the third sector, Leeds City Council and local schools. The provision has varied across the city and has included socially distanced activities predominantly outside, activities delivered to children and young people to do at home, online activities and the provision of food.*

- 3.21 Public Health have been working with a wide range of partners to develop and implement the Leeds Outbreak Control Plan for the city. The following vignette provides an example of localised implementation.

**Vignette 15: 'Pop up' Covid-19 test centre in Harehills**

*In response to a clustering of cases in LS8, Public Health, Communities, Housing and Adult Social Care, along with third sector volunteers, worked extremely hard to set up and run the 'pop up' Covid-19 test centre at the Bilal Centre in Harehills. This partnership door knocked on local streets and engaged local people, raising awareness of key messages and the local testing offer. Volunteers from Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL) were able to support the door knocking with community languages (Czech, Urdu and Punjabi). The 'pop up' centre was well attended by local residents and the testing positivity rate was high (suggesting effective engagement). Positive and strong communication through Bilal centre's Facebook and WhatsApp platforms have helped us raise awareness of the testing site with over 300 members. Local ward members have played a key role in shaping our approach and promoting and engaging with local residents through posting repeatedly on the Inner East Community Committee Facebook page, and local radio – Breeze and Fever FM. The success of the centre was a testament to partnership working across the Council and the wider system. Following a recent visit by a Number10/Cabinet Office Covid taskforce, Leeds was commended for displaying 'huge evidence of collaborative approach across partners and engagement with communities.'*

**Big Asks**

- 3.22 Priority neighbourhood core teams continue to work hard to progress key programmes of work, where possible. The following vignettes provide examples of recent programmes of work.

### 3.23 Cliftons and Nowells:

**Vignette 16: Nowell Mount Youth Hub and Nowell Mount Park**

**Nowell Mount Youth Hub:** Over £200,000, capital funding has been sourced to build an extension to Nowell Mount Children's Centre. Despite losing 8 weeks during lockdown, works have continued and the building has now been formally completed. The extension will enable the creation of a youth and community centre. The Communities Team are working with CATCH, BARCA, Youth Service, Active Leeds and Nowells Community Group to explore next steps in terms of youth activities. Applications are currently being developed for the next round of West Yorkshire's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) funding for 2020/21 to fund some key anchor youth/ community based organisations for the next 6 months to support the Covid recovery phase in the Nowells.

**Nowell Mount Park:** Over £60,000, funding has been secured through CIL, Inner East Housing Advisory Panel and Ministry for Communities Housing and Local Government to enhance Nowell Mount Park. Installation of recreational play equipment ceased when lockdown commenced, this has now resumed and is nearing completion. The new equipment includes gym equipment and various play elements.

### 3.24 Lincoln Green:

**Vignette 17: Lincoln Green investment plan**

Following a discussion at the inaugural Neighbourhood Improvement Board, a cross service approach to regenerating Lincoln Green is underway. The purpose of this project is to guide the development of the Lincoln Green Investment Plan. The Investment Plan will set out the actions required to deliver physical regeneration within the Lincoln Green area over the next 10+ years, identify the investment appetite and avenues for securing the required investment. The project will seek to provide regeneration solutions to address market failure, promote good growth and community/social wellbeing in line with the city's core strategies for inclusive growth, health and wellbeing and climate emergency. The project will explore the dilemmas faced by Lincoln Green, with the risks and opportunities of taking several courses of action clearly articulated in the options appraisal and subsequent Investment Plan. The investment plan is being driven by a project team with officers from the council's Regeneration Team, Asset Management Team, Communities Team, Public Health Partnerships Team, Housing Leeds and Highways.

### 3.25 Recreations:

**Vignette 18: Streets for People**

Following a briefing at the core team, where partners raised the need for improvements. Highways supported the development of local proposals and were successful in acquiring £1 million from the Department of Transport and West Yorkshire Combined Authority to transform streets in the Recreations area of Holbeck, creating additional greenspace and a safer environment, as part of the Streets for People initiative. Following initial consultation, officers engaged in the project had their duties reassigned as part of the Covid-19 response however, traffic engineering are looking to start the reengagement of this project soon and hope to bring forward a design developed from the community consultation, within the next 6-8 weeks.

### 3.26 Boggart Hill:

#### **Vignette 19: Kingsdale Court**

*The Neighbourhood Improvement Board in April 2019, agreed to consider a long-term comprehensive solution to the challenge of Kingsdale Court, utilising the full powers of the Council and partners to tackle this site in the short, medium and long term. As part of landmark action taken by the Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team (LASBT) and West Yorkshire Police at Leeds Magistrates Court in February 2020, a three-month closure order was subsequently granted for each flat located in Farnley House (the worst block) with a further extension to this order being kept in place until August 2020. An additional closure order was granted for Gilstead House, and extended until November 2020. In securing these orders, this is the first time wholesale action has been taken against private sector leaseholders and administrators in one block. In addition, the Development Department are currently considering a longer term strategy for the Kingsdale Court site.*

#### **Boggart Hill, Rein Park**

*Rein Park now has a performance circle and new trees installed as the first phase of £200k of improvements. Work continued over the summer to engage the community in proposed works through playful activities delivered in the mini play boxes that went out to local families. Xplorer a family friendly, fun navigation challenge session was also held in the park encouraging families to get active and explore their surroundings.*

### 3.27 New Wortley

#### **Vignette 20: Regeneration and connectivity**

*Following discussions around regeneration and connectivity opportunities at the January 2020 NIB meeting, partners are coming together to explore opportunities around the British Gas site, the Armley Gyratory and connectivity to the city centre. New Wortley Community Centre's Chief Executive has also been invited to the October Anchor Institution meeting, to present opportunities for collaboration with the group.*

### 3.28 Beeston Hill:

#### **Vignette 21: Bin yard improvements**

*A central capital injection of £125,000, which was boosted by financial allocation from local Elected Members through their capital budget, was approved to deliver ward improvements to bin yards. Following extensive consultation with elected members in response to local challenges around waste management, flytipping and public health concerns it was agreed that bin yards in Beeston Hill should be targeted for improvement. During lockdown the bin yards have been removed and traditional wheelie bins replaced by 1,100 litre euro bins housed in bespoke metal frames. This work has significantly improved the local infrastructure and service outcomes. Groundworks were commissioned to deliver the project and alongside the building work there has been conversations with residents regarding the transition of bins and what they should do with their waste.*

#### Learning from pandemic: locality working

3.29 Under these very difficult circumstances it is evident that there has been a real desire to be more companionate and demonstrate humanity in our way of working. Locality working responses have taken a person centred approach, creating opportunities for human contact physically, where possible or digitally. Partners have worked hard to make every contact count, to support those most in need and get them the support that they need. Creating a sense of hope that their situation can be improved and sustained over time.

3.30 The role of the community and the call to action for volunteers at the outset of the pandemic, is a great example of how communities came together to support each other at a time of greatest need. The significance of which helped to support those

shielding, social isolating and those in financial hardship, to maintain a life-line through the local authority, third sector and volunteers to sustain their basic needs. This support continues as we head into the winter months.

- 3.31 The last eight months have seen partners work in an unprecedented fast paced environment, with very difficult problems and challenges to overcome. Partners have had to come together rapidly to bend and flex our systems to respond to local and citywide needs. This has had a powerful impact on achieving the seemingly unachievable at times, and demonstrates that we can get our systems working better for us.
- 3.32 Undoubtedly, the way that locality working has evolved and the connections it has made between the delivery of integrated services in neighbourhoods and the engagement of the communities of Leeds has underpinned a significant part of the COVID-19 response in the city with positive and effective collaboration across council directorates and with partner organisations at neighbourhood level. It is timely now to consider what we have learnt from the experience of the last six months, hardwire the best of it into the council's working practices and ensure that it drives organisational design activities in the months to come. The delegation of budgets to communities will be reviewed as part of this as clarity emerges from the budget position response.

### **Neighbourhood Improvement Board Neighbourhood Improvement Board (NIB) - supporting the impact of Covid-19 in our most disadvantaged communities**

#### Neighbourhood improvement Board (NIB)

- 3.33 The city wide Neighbourhood Improvement Board provides strategic oversight of locality working in our priority neighbourhoods, and consists of senior representation from within the Local Authority, NHS, Police and Third Sector.
- 3.34 It is chaired by the Executive Member for Communities, who has been resolute in the board's ambition to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities in our most disadvantaged communities. The Chair of the Neighbourhood Improvement Board has supported the locality working approach from inception, observing and championing the impact demonstrated throughout this report from integrated multi-disciplinary locality working approaches.
- 3.35 An update report was recently submitted to the October Executive Board meeting. The report received positive feedback and Executive Board approved a number recommendations, in particular the engagement of other scrutiny boards in locality working and the consideration of the implications of the work to date for organisational development and design work in the council.

#### **Performance management framework for locality working**

- 3.36 We have been working to adopt a consistent approach to establishing baselines and tracking trends within the priority areas. Profiles have been developed for each priority neighbourhood to track changes over time.
- 3.37 However, Covid-19 continues to have a hugely significant impact on all areas of the Best Council Plan, with the economy, employment, education, community resilience and health and wellbeing all detrimentally affected by the pandemic, which will

undoubtedly limit progress towards our ambitions and the outcomes in our most disadvantaged communities. Therefore, the performance management framework will form a focus of work going forward and profiles will be reviewed to take account of the emerging impact in our priority neighbourhoods.

### Role of Community Committees

- 3.38 Discussions have begun with the 10 Community Committee Chairs, and more recently Community Safety Champions, where they have expressed their ambition for the champion roles to be more defined and structured. This would involve establishing a clear thread between themed activities taking place within the community committee area, through to structures that are more corporate. Discussions so far have included; developing a champion's role profile, strengthening their links to responsible Executive Members and key partners - for example, West Yorkshire Police, more direct involvement in strategic service reviews, and more cross committee work to tackle thematic issues and share good practice.
- 3.39 Furthermore, in order to build on the good work that has taken place locally through the leadership of local elected Members throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, discussions have begun on the development of a new Civic Engagement Champion role. The Civic Engagement Champion would support the work of the local third sector and encourage the creation of more local volunteering opportunities. A small elected member working group has met to make recommendation to the 10 Community Committee Chairs, who have recently agreed to pilot the new Civic Engagement Champion role in Inner South, Inner West, Inner North East and Outer East. The pilot will operate for 6 months, with feedback being provided back to the chairs before the start of the new municipal year. If approved the role will then be rolled out to the other committees and formally included in the Council's constitution.

### Neighbourhood Improvement Board's response to Covid-19

- 3.40 Since the outbreak of the pandemic and lockdown, there has been a significant focus on combatting the impact of the Covid-19 crisis. The Neighbourhood Improvement Board reconvened in July 2020, with renewed vigour to address poverty and inequalities in our most disadvantaged communities, exacerbated further by the disproportionate impact of Covid-19.
- 3.41 At the July Neighbourhood Improvement Board meeting, NIB Board Members requested the development of a 'Covid-19 Crisis Recovery Plan: Locality Working', to build on the need to work differently due to the impact of Covid-19 and to ensure a continued focus on poverty and inequality in our most disadvantaged communities.
- 3.42 A Covid-19 Crisis Recovery Plan: Locality Working is in development and features six strategic strands:
- Strand 1:** Discovery: understanding the impact of Covid-19
  - Strand 2:** Locality working in priority neighbourhoods and target wards
  - Strand 3:** Locality Working: managing local outbreaks
  - Strand 4:** Role of the Third Sector
  - Strand 5:** Communication and engagement
  - Strand 6:** Strengthening the system and structures of locality working arrangements

- 3.43 The recovery plan will form a strong focus of the Neighbourhood Improvement Board going forward.

### **Scrutiny Board's support in the successful delivery of locality working**

- 3.44 Improving outcomes in priority neighbourhoods requires a process of significant change and a 'can-do' approach from council services and departments. The Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board is well placed to provide leadership on this agenda, working alongside other scrutiny boards to co-scrutinise the engagement and contribution of all departments and services to the locality working approach. Scrutiny Board's support in the engagement of the other scrutiny boards has been invaluable to the successful delivery of locality working.
- 3.45 The Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board have requested that all Scrutiny Chairs consider their role in relation to how they can add value to the work of the Neighbourhood Improvement Board. This was reinforced at the Executive Board meeting in October 2020, at which a number of recommendations were approved, including the engagement of other scrutiny boards in locality working and consideration of the implications of the work to date for organisational development and design work in the council. There is the opportunity for this Scrutiny Board to inform the piece of work around organisational development and design.

## **4 Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 Locality working places the active involvement of citizens, which includes locally elected Councillors, as a vital ingredient that underpins this approach. All six-priority neighbourhoods have placed significant emphasis on community engagement and working with local communities to harness a local voice, develop local solutions through social action.

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

- 4.2.1 An equality impact assessment was undertaken on the proposals to develop an approach to Locality Working in November 2017 (Appendix 1). Equality and Diversity is an integral part of the work on tackling poverty and inequality and strengthening the city's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities. It is timely to refresh this equality impact assessment, to take account of current circumstances. It is planned for this to be undertaken over the next six months.
- 4.2.2 A new Communities equality improvement priority has been established which aims to 'Improve equality outcomes across the six priority neighbourhoods'. Published alongside the rest of the council's equality improvement priorities for 2018 – 2022, progress is included within the annual update. This priority helps to include equality considerations within all aspects of work in the priority neighbourhoods.
- 4.2.3 Equality of access to services and communication has been identified as an initial priority across all six-priority neighbourhoods. Several of the communities are very diverse, with higher than average numbers of new communities with language barriers and low levels of ability to read and understand written English across all communities, whilst in other areas there is evidence of a higher degree of settled communities facing more entrenched poverty.

- 4.2.4 There are several examples of improving access to services, empowering communities to be confident enough to do more for themselves and addressing some of the presenting symptoms of poverty. Whilst targeted interventions across the six priority neighbourhoods have largely tackled poverty, a number of equality characteristics have been supported. The City Listening Project, for example, has ensured that women living within priority neighbourhoods as well as target wards have been supported to voice their views on issues facing women and it will inform the work of the Government Equality Office and it will be used within Leeds to inform decision-making.
- 4.2.5 We will continue to give due regard to equality to individual proposals through undertaking equality and diversity impact assessments when individual proposals for interventions are developed across the priority neighbourhoods.

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

- 4.3.1 The newly updated Best Council Plan 2020-2025 reflects the current Covid-19 context, while maintaining the three pillar priorities of inclusive growth; health and wellbeing; and climate change, under the overarching priority of tackling poverty and inequalities. Covid-19 continues to have a hugely significant impact on all areas of the Best Council Plan, with the economy, employment, education, community resilience and health and wellbeing all detrimentally affected by the pandemic, which will undoubtedly limit progress towards our ambitions.
- 4.3.2 Locality working in our most disadvantaged communities, tackling poverty and inequalities, will be key to guiding the recovery period, particularly as we begin to better understand the long-term health, social and economic impacts of the pandemic.

#### Climate Emergency

- 4.3.3 Swings in climate and more extreme weather will create inequality, as financial disparity creates pressures between those able to invest in measures to maintain comfort, diet and activity that may be denied to those least able to afford it. A range of initiatives within the priority neighbourhood approach supports the climate emergency agenda. These include planting additional trees, helping to improve air quality; also work to improve housing conditions, delivering greater energy efficiency and thereby reducing fuel poverty. Further exploration of the issues and potential solutions in respect of our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods is planned following the state of the city meeting on the climate emergency held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2020.

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

- 4.4.1 The work articulated in this report currently makes best use of existing resources already working in neighbourhoods and seeks to do things differently by making best use of the leadership role and knowledge of locally elected representatives, working with residents to shape their neighbourhoods and inform service re-design to tackle poverty and reduce inequality. It also seeks to help communities to be more resilient, strengthen cohesion and prevent issues and challenges escalating in priority neighbourhoods.

4.4.2 To make continued progress, an investment-oriented approach is needed whereby available resources, for example, capital investment schemes are better targeted to these priority areas through a more joined up working across services.

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

4.5.1 The city's existing neighbourhood improvement architecture has been re-shaped and a citywide neighbourhood improvement board led by the Executive Member for Communities holds the responsibility for these developments and oversight for the programmes of work that they will require. Local ward members are instrumental in both the local arrangements and the citywide Board.

4.5.2 There are no exempt items so there are no access to information issues.

4.5.3 There are no legal implications for the work articulated in this report.

4.5.4 This report is eligible for call-in.

#### **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.1 The Council has determined a risk to community cohesion and it has established this risk on its corporate risk register. It has also been discussing a need to change radically the way we work in localities and has implemented a new approach to locality working in November 2017. Pressures in some of our most challenged and disadvantaged neighbourhoods are now greater than ever due to a range of factors. The communities of Leeds have changed rapidly over the past decade, this is more apparent in the city's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. A failure to fully engage and be inclusive to all the communities of Leeds may result in increased tensions leading to a sense of alienation and isolation.

4.6.2 These fractures may increase the city's risk of becoming more susceptible to the influences of those who want to divide our communities, making them more polarised and vulnerable to extremism and other harmful influences. The locality working approach seeks to engage with all communities, with a strong focus of the work on strengthening communities and building self-reliance and more resilient communities.

4.6.3 This approach also seeks to mitigate against deterioration in our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and a worsening of these neighbourhoods nationally in future IMD analyses. Moreover, we will not deliver against our key aim of tackling poverty and inequality and delivering on our ambition to be a compassionate city.

4.6.4 It would be simplistic to assume that priority neighbourhoods could be supported by redirecting resources from communities and neighbourhoods, which are largely self-sustaining and thriving. The reality is that resources in many front-line operations have already been deployed on a needs led basis with limited capacity from simply shifting where staff work to another area. The agility of organisations to respond in the context of broader economic changes could challenge the pace of improvement.

4.6.5 Furthermore, failure to fully engage and get the full buy in of a wide range of partners and council services to support the delivery locality working approach will hamper the council's efforts to deliver significant and sustainable change in our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. It is therefore imperative, that we maintain and build on the whole Council approach, maintain momentum, working with local communities to drive change and much needed improvements.

## **5. Conclusions**

- 5.1 The locality working approach supports the council's ambition to improve the city's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods through the Best Council Plan priorities and it is integral to Inclusive Growth, Health and Wellbeing and the Climate Change Emergency, focusing its efforts on interventions to tackle poverty in our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and helping to develop thriving, more resilient communities.
- 5.2 This report demonstrates the positive impact that locality working is having, how it is making best use of the physical and human assets we have in our local areas and how we are harnessing the community spirit within our localities. It is rooted in the democratic accountability of local ward members to their wards, community committees, strong community leadership and early intervention.
- 5.3 Bringing people together, from councillors, individual residents, businesses, community and faith groups, community leaders and public sector bodies, to create a focus around our most disadvantaged communities to target investment and resources. Our expected outcomes in the medium to long term is to see an increase in active citizenship and more community ownership of issues, challenges and solutions. Building community resilience is key to driving this change requiring investment and continual buy-in of all those involved and impacted.
- 5.4 Working closely with the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board is helping to continually shape locality working and this scrutiny board's support in working with other Council scrutiny boards will help to deliver the council's ambition for a system-wide approach with organisational development at its centre.
- 5.5 Six months on from the start of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in the UK, Leeds has navigated unprecedented challenges, which have evolved over the course of the pandemic. Covid-19 has had a significant negative impact on poverty and inequality in our most disadvantaged communities. In responding to these changing circumstances, our priority has not changed, and our focus remains in the most disadvantaged communities. Locality working partners have responded quickly and flexibly, adapting at pace to meet changing demands. The benefits of locality working, through more multi-disciplinary integrated ways of working have been illustrated throughout this report. This is a unique point in time, where we are seeing significant changes and the need to utilise our skills and expertise to reconfigure ourselves to operate as effectively and efficiently as possible has never been more important given the economic pressures facing public, private and third sector services. There is the opportunity to shape a refreshed locality-working framework that encompasses whole system change, with a move away from specialism silos to more integrated locality working multi-disciplinary approaches.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board are asked to consider the content of the report and agree the following recommendations. That this Scrutiny Board –
- 6.2 Note the positive comments of Executive Board following submission of a report to the October 2020 meeting.

- 6.3 Request that the Chief Officer for Communities work with the Chair of the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board to push forward engagement on locality working with other scrutiny boards, in tandem with the wider ambition to take forward locality working through organisational development and design work in the council.
- 6.4 Request that the Directors of Communities and Environment, Housing and Resources, and City Development consider the implications of the progress to date for further improving the connectivity of the city's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods to economic opportunities and aligning capital investment programmes.

## **7. Background documents<sup>2</sup>**

- 7.1 None

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<sup>2</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.