

Future trends and opportunities in our city and local centres

Date: 22nd September 2021

Report of: Director of City Development

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- Covid-19 has changed the way we think about place and how we use our spaces, as well as how we travel, work and shop. Before the pandemic we knew that the way we worked and shopped was already changing, but the crisis has altered these further and work and leisure patterns now appear to be accelerating previous trends. Quite how the pandemic will change our city over the longer-term remains uncertain and this is posing fundamental questions for us and for other cities like Leeds.
- The Leeds Economic Recovery Framework, published in October 2020, outlines our approach to recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic as being centred around the need to Respond, Reset and Renew and Build Resilience, all within our overall ambition to create a strong economy set within a compassionate city. This approach provided a catalyst for us to undertake several pieces of work to consider what the future of our city and local centres may be. This report outlines this work, the findings from it (including what the impact of the pandemic has been so far) and what the next steps are as we bring together all the findings and what actions can be taken to ensure a positive and inclusive future for our centres.
- Work has involved Leeds input to the Core and Key Cities' report on 'The Future of Urban Centres'; a project with ARUP as our partner on how our centres can adapt to the long-term transformational changes and challenges over the next 10 years, culminating in the 'Future of Leeds City Centre and Local Centres' report; an online survey for members of the public and businesses to enable them to tell us what they think about the centres they use; collaborating with Ahead Partnership to ascertain the views of young people in relation to our centres; and liaison with Common Purpose about the findings of their Leeds150 Legacy Programme. Additional work includes consultation and engagement with stakeholders and partners across the city, as well as Elected Members and senior Council officers.
- We have brought all of this work together to see what it is showing us and to consider what we can do as a result. The work confirms that in many cases we are doing the right things, but we need to ensure we remain committed to them, whilst we also need to take the opportunities that are presented through new sources of funding to address the trends we are seeing. One aim of the work presented in this report is to provide assistance in assessing the identification of impactful and deliverable schemes that are capable of winning investment through the bidding processes of Government funding, including the Levelling Up Fund, Community Renewal Fund, Towns Fund and any announcements which may come in

the Government's Budget later this year in relation to the Shared Prosperity Fund. This is alongside influencing the new City Plan that is currently under development and what we can do as a Council already without any additional funding.

- More and more, the idea of place matters. The future of our centres is paramount to how we recover from the Covid-19 crisis economically and socially in a truly inclusive way. This is directly linked to our ambition to deliver Inclusive Growth across the city, whilst striving to be the best city for Health and Wellbeing and tackling the Climate Emergency. Centres play a major role in delivering quality of life and integrating Covid-19 economic recovery with both Health and Wellbeing and Climate Action within them will ensure our economy and our places are supported as much as possible. Furthermore, the work outlined in this report will be used alongside that which is being undertaken to produce a new version of the Joint Strategic Assessment (JSA) for Leeds, which will set out the current data on health and inequality. Together, and with other work such as that being completed by Planning colleagues looking at the health of local centres, the work will be used to assist us in prioritising and identifying the centres which require the most support across the city given limited resources.
- While this paper informs Executive Board of the findings of all of this work, it is mainly focused on proposed actions and interventions. These are set out in the context of what we can do with our available resources and strong partnerships and our dependence on winning investment through successful Government funding bids for additional resources.

Recommendations

- a) Executive Board is requested to note the work that has been undertaken looking at the future of Leeds' city and local centres.
- b) Executive Board is asked to approve the recommendations for next steps outlined in this report, and as listed below, to agree that they are the right areas of focus to take forward at this stage with the resources we have available and the potential for additional resources through successful Government funding bids and for them to be delegated to the Director of City Development.
 - a. We will continue to identify and deliver transformational projects across the city, linked to external funding streams.
 - b. We will explore how we can facilitate flexible workspaces and co-working spaces in areas outside of the city centre.
 - c. We will work to capitalise on the role of Culture for the future of our centres, including the opportunities presented through Leeds2023.
 - d. We will continue to support our local centres as we recognise their importance in providing services, employment and social opportunities to local people.
 - e. We will continue to support businesses across the whole city and we will continue to support people who are seeking employment.
 - f. We will continue to encourage collaboration and experimentation to connect activity across centres of innovation, now and in the future.
 - g. We will explore how we can create a long-term, sustainable way of collecting local data and intelligence for each of our centres.
 - h. We will continue to drive this work and these recommendations for next steps forward, both externally across the city and internally within the Council.
- c) Executive Board is asked to note that this work will inform the development of and be reflected within the new City Plan for Leeds which is currently underway. Executive Board will be kept informed of work to develop the City Plan as this progresses.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 This report is to inform Executive Board members of the progress that has been made regarding work looking into the future of Leeds' city and local centres and what the intended next steps are in relation to proposals for actions and interventions to ensure a positive and inclusive future for our centres.
- 2 Leeds has a diverse economy which, combined with farsighted civic and business leadership, has enabled the city to respond to economic shocks and changes in the past and can provide the basis for the future resilience and success of our local centres and city centre. The Leeds Economic Recovery Framework, published in October 2020, outlines our approach to recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic as being centred around the need to Respond, Reset and Renew and Build Resilience, all within our overall ambition to create a strong economy set within a compassionate city. This approach provided a catalyst for us to undertake a number of pieces of work to consider what the future of our city and local centres may be.
- 3 Covid-19 has changed the way we think about place and how we use our spaces, as well as how we travel, work and shop. Before the coronavirus pandemic we knew that the way we worked and shopped was already changing, but the crisis has altered these further and work and leisure patterns now appear to be accelerating previous trends, such as working from home. The pandemic is accelerating trends in our centres and posing huge questions for cities like Leeds. Some sectors have seen five years of change occurring in less than six months, with Covid-19 accelerating structural trends around digital transformation, remote working and the shift from 'bricks to clicks' in Retail. Many businesses are now considering how best to capitalise on these trends to support flexible working and redefine their office space. Major city centre retail locations are also being impacted by a reduction in office workers and shoppers; indeed, throughout the peak of the pandemic, in Leeds city centre we have consistently seen footfall reduced by 66% or more. There have been some positive opportunities for our local centres, however, by enabling some to capture more spend locally; although they too will be challenged by the huge changes in the Retail sector.
- 4 Although we can see the broad impacts on employment, travel behaviours and our local economy, we still need to better understand how Covid-19 is impacting different places across Leeds. We embarked on this work to help determine how much of this change is structural and what is transitional. What we did know, and still do, however, is that cities evolve and change and that Leeds needs to adapt so it can continue to thrive moving forwards.
- 5 Our overall aim through all the work outlined in this report is to understand how Leeds' city centre and local centres can adapt to the long-term transformational changes and challenges, now and in the future. We want the work to inform a future direction of travel for our centres that supports the city's ambitions and policies around economic competitiveness, skills, Inclusive Growth, Culture, Health and Wellbeing and the Climate Emergency. Brought together, we believe all the different strands of our work will be able to provide some very important insight into what the future may look like for our centres and what needs to be done to support them to be as successful and inclusive as possible. The work will also inform the development of and be reflected within the new City Plan for Leeds which is currently underway.
- 6 We are proposing to work more closely with local communities and we need to establish what would work for a particular centre on a specific-basis when it comes to making our centres more in line with what local people want and need, rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach. Our engagement with Council colleagues, Elected Members and local communities will enable us to do this.

- 7 We expect that this work can help inform what and where we prioritise our existing available time and resources and assist with bids for discretionary funding programmes that may become available, including the Levelling Up, Shared Prosperity and Community Renewal Funds.

Overview of work undertaken

Workstream	Description	Timeline	Findings
Core and Key Cities' report	Leeds as a case study of the Core and Key Cities report, 'The Future of Urban Centres: An agenda for post-pandemic Inclusive City Renewal' report, May 2021 (research undertaken by Metro Dynamics).	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large urban centres have been most affected by the Covid-19 crisis and will be the slowest to recover. • The Covid-19 crisis has disproportionately affected more deprived neighbourhoods. • City centres can be focal points for innovation and complex economic activity. • Increasing employment in exporting businesses will help close the productivity gap. • High streets must adapt to suit new purposes. • There are enormous opportunities for cities in the transition to Net Zero.
City Conversation	Online survey held between 12 th February 2021 and 26 th March 2021 (therefore during a period of national lockdown) for the public and businesses, to enable them to tell us what they think about the centres they use. (Copy of survey available at Appendix 1.)	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People will visit local centres more over the next 12 months. • People visit local centres for Retail, Hospitality, and meeting friends – this is likely to stay the same in the next three years (returning to pre-Covid-19 levels). • People will visit the city centre less than they did before. However, what we have seen is footfall steadily increasing (at mid-September 2021) to c. 20% below 2019 levels. Weekend footfall has been particularly strong over the summer of 2021, with some weekends showing increased footfall compared to 2019. • In the next three years people stated that they intended to visit the city centre less for work and more for Culture, Theatre and Hospitality. They intend to visit broadly the same for Leisure, Retail, and meeting friends. • People are expecting to work more from home part of the time. • More people are spending online, and some will continue to do so. • More people are spending in their local centres and the vast majority say they will continue to do so. • If people used a car before, they say they will continue to do so. • Walking has increased and this could continue into the next 12 months, although to a lesser extent than during the pandemic.
Long-term transformational changes for our centres	Work alongside our partner ARUP looking at how our city and local centres can adapt to long-term transformational changes over the next 10 years. (Copy of 'Future of	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing work patterns pose a risk to the economic growth and business activity created from knowledge-intensive industries working in close proximity that we have seen in recent

	Leeds City Centre and Local Centres' report available at Appendix 2.)		<p>years in the city centre; however there are opportunities to maximise benefits of remote work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of centres will need to be about more than Retail consumption. • There is significant opportunity for Culture and Leisure as part of future role of centres. • Successful centres are important to enabling Leeds to respond to climate change challenges. • The Council has an important role in urban management, leadership and enabling.
Working with Ahead Partnership and Common Purpose	Seeking the views of young people in relation to our centres. (Copy of challenge pack available at Appendix 3.)	October 2021 completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing (Ahead Partnership). • Importance of sustainability and green issues; digital; and education (Common Purpose).
Consultation and engagement	With LCC officers (including an officer working group), Elected Members, Inclusive Growth Ambassadors, the Leeds Inclusive Growth Extended Delivery Partnership, and other key stakeholders across the city. Will continue as work progresses.	Ongoing throughout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People are interested and engaged in this work– need to capitalise on this and continue to work closely with key partners, stakeholders, and important local communities as we take forward this work.

Overall findings

8 The work that has been undertaken, as outlined in the table above, is telling us a number of things in relation to how people are working, spending and travelling, as well as what the role of our city and local centres could or should be in the future to make them more inclusive and sustainable. As a summary, the work has shown us:

8.1 **Ways of working are changing** – There is a move towards more blended models of working (involving a mix of working from the office and at home), more working from home in general and a consequent change to offices and places of work. This may impact on the city centre, which has seen fewer workers and therefore less worker spend, but also on local centres too, some of which have been experiencing greater spend as people are choosing to spend more locally/closer to where they live whilst working from home - although we are aware of the fact that different local centres have had different impacts depending on the spending power of the local population that they rely on. 'The Future of Urban Centres: An agenda for post-pandemic Inclusive City Renewal' [report](#) also highlights the potential implications of more permanent working from home, including the 'hollowing out' of urban cities as those workers able to work remotely now work from home, although the long-term position at this stage remains unknown. Furthermore, whilst some existing businesses may reduce their office space, in Leeds we have also seen major investments into the city, with new businesses choosing to locate in Leeds. This includes the UK Infrastructure Bank, which launched in June 2021 and has its headquarters in Leeds, and Utterberry, a British tech firm specialising in innovative AI technology which has chosen Leeds to build a new manufacturing and innovation hub on Sovereign Street from the autumn of this year. This gives us real reason for optimism moving forwards.

8.2 **Ways of spending are changing** – We know that it was already the case that people have been spending more online in recent years and less in physical shops – the shift from 'brick to click'. However, the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend due to the shift in economic activity across geographic space as a result of more homeworking, which has affected different neighbourhoods in different ways; office-dense city centres have experienced declines in output and employment, although residential areas and local

centres are now seeing an increase in productive activities as people spend more there due to working from home. People are planning to continue to do this as they work from home more often than pre-Covid-19, potentially meaning the city centre may be more negatively impacted – although it should be noted that high-end Retail in particular has been doing well in recent months in Leeds and footfall has been increasing steadily since most Covid-19 restrictions were lifted on 19th July 2021. This being said, we have seen footfall steadily increasing (at mid-September 2021) to around 20% below 2019 levels. Weekend footfall has been particularly strong over the summer of 2021, with some weekends showing increased footfall compared to 2019. Furthermore, city centre retailers are generally reporting that transaction levels are higher than normal, meaning that the lower footfall is partly compensated for by higher ‘basket spend’, alongside a number of restaurants recording a higher summer turnover this year than in 2019. However, we know that the role of our city centre in the future is likely to be less about Retail and consumption, meaning that the city centre needs to adapt to suit new purposes alongside Retail, and that we need to re-think what the city centre offers to visitors and residents alike. There has, for example, been much success in recovery as a result of collaborative working to ensure a coordinated approach to the animation of the city centre, such as via partnership working between the Council and Leeds BID to provide a summer of free activities for families, including the Jurassic Trail, climbing walls, new table tennis tables, pop-up sports and the waterfront festival. As we move towards the key trading time of Christmas in particular, it is important that this collaborative working continues, with the Council working with partner agencies such as Leeds BID, Otley BID, West Yorkshire Police and others to ensure the city and local centres remain attractive, safe and welcoming destinations to visit.

- 8.3 Ways of travelling are potentially changing too for some modes of transport, although not in all – There is the potential to capitalise on some of the positives coming out of changed travel behaviour, for example more people are walking and intend to continue doing so. However, car usage will remain and if people used a car before the pandemic, they say they will continue to do so. It is important that we continue working with travel industry partners to ensure people feel more confident and able to use buses across the city, which is already being undertaken through the work on the draft Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy.
- 8.4 People think they will visit the city centre less and when they do visit it will be for different reasons – People have said that they envisage that they will visit the city centre less for work and more for Culture, Theatre and Hospitality, and that they will visit at broadly the same level for Leisure, Retail and meeting friends. We need to ensure that we capitalise on this, particularly in relation to our cultural offer and our current cultural assets. Leeds is the only city outside London to boast both a resident opera and ballet company (these being Opera North and Northern Ballet respectively), alongside four major theatres, a world-class arena, museums and venues, which will all prove vitally important as we know Culture has a huge role to play in both our economic and social recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 8.5 People think they will visit local centres the same or slightly more – People have said that they envisage that they will visit local centres for social reasons, Retail, Hospitality and Health-related uses. We therefore need to explore what the offer is in local places, considering the idea of the 15-minute neighbourhood (whereby residents can walk or cycle to access most of the local services they need within 15 minutes), which is outlined in the ‘Future of Leeds City Centre and Local Centres’ report (at Appendix 2) in particular.
- 8.6 High street renewal is vital – Our work has shown that there is a great need to enable our high streets, local centres and city centre to be adapted to suit new purposes – it is clear that our centres are for more than just Retail now. Innovation and complex economic activity both have a role, as well as there being opportunities for reaching Net Zero and addressing the Climate Emergency, ensuring a green recovery for our centres, which have a pivotal role in reaching our green ambitions. Culture has a huge role to play too and we

should ensure to capitalise on Culture and on creative industries to bring people together, shape place identity and support communities.

- 8.7 *The Inclusive Renewal idea should be utilised* – This is highlighted in ‘The Future of Urban Centres: An agenda for post-pandemic Inclusive City Renewal’ report in particular, emphasising that there are trends that could help cities transition towards an Inclusive Renewal to ensure local places prosper post-Covid-19 (for example consolidating a Retail offer that is more about experience; doubling-down on cultural and creative strengths; and pivoting towards future sources of inclusive growth driven by innovation). The report states that Inclusive Renewal would drive recovery and levelling up, stressing that widening deprivation must be reversed to level up.
- 8.8 *Sustainability and green issues are of utmost importance* – Throughout all of this work, the importance of sustainability, green issues and our ambition to tackle the Climate Emergency is highlighted. There are enormous opportunities for our city in the transition to Net Zero, for example in relation to the creation of green jobs, but also successful local centres are hugely important to enabling Leeds to respond to climate change challenges, for example through encouraging active travel and by bringing nature and new green spaces to centres.
- 8.9 *The Council’s role is likewise vital* – We know that the Council has a very important role in urban management, leadership and enabling, including leading, convening, and creating partnerships and mobilising people that can make a difference. We need to make sure we continue to work hard to continue to fulfil this role the best we can.
- 8.10 *There is a real opportunity to work with communities* – The culmination of this work has shown us that there are many opportunities that we can take advantage of to ensure that the future of our city and local centres is positive. This clearly should involve working with local communities on what actions are already being taken and what more could be done within local areas, with the potential to make new coalitions for positive change.
- 8.11 *Young and older people’s needs should have more consideration in our centres*. The work that ARUP have undertaken has highlighted that we could include older and younger people in identifying opportunities to improve centres. For children and young people, more and better spaces and opportunities for teenagers for older people alike are required, for example by providing spaces to bring people together we can put centres at the heart of tackling loneliness. We have begun a collaboration with Ahead Partnership to allow us to gain insight into what young people think about their centres. Through this work, we launched a challenge for young people in July 2021 which will run until mid-September 2021 and which is due to report in October 2021. We want to ensure that the voices and views of young people count and that their ideas are heard, and their passion and enthusiasm captured, as we recognise that our city centre and local centres need to focus more on them.
- 8.12 *Communications* – This work has shown just how interested and engaged the people of Leeds are in what happens within our city and local centres and that many want to continue to be involved. We need to ensure that we capitalise on this and continue to work alongside communities and partners collaboratively as we look to implement any actions going forwards.

Actions and interventions

- 9 The findings from the work presented in this report demonstrate that the implementation of our key strategies (which support the Council’s three pillars of Inclusive Growth, Health and Wellbeing and addressing the Climate Emergency) is leading us in the right direction and that we will be able to build on the actions currently being taken to keep delivering on our

three pillar priorities. As well as influencing the new City Plan that is currently under development and what we can do as a Council already without any additional funding, one aim of the work presented in this report is to provide assistance in assessing the identification of impactful and deliverable schemes that are capable of winning investment through the bidding processes of Government funding. This includes the Levelling Up Fund, Community Renewal Fund, Towns Fund and any announcements which may come in the Government's Budget later this year in relation to the Shared Prosperity Fund. Therefore, rather than completely altering our approach, we should be looking at adapting and accelerating some actions and making sure we have projects ready to go when external funding opportunities arise.

- 10 The recent [report](#) from the Institute of Health Equity (IHE) 'Build Back Fairer in Greater Manchester: Health Equity and Dignified Lives' (published in June 2021) highlights how communities, place and local environments are key social determinants of health and wellbeing. We know that high streets and local centres make a distinct contribution to wellbeing and give a sense of pride of place, but we also know that every neighbourhood is different and has its own challenges and opportunities. The IHE report states the importance of working with local communities to better include their needs when reviving local high streets for example, as well as the importance of putting health equity and sustainability at the centre of planning for local areas. This aligns with the direction in Leeds provided through our three pillars of Inclusive Growth, Health and Wellbeing and addressing the Climate Emergency. This being said, we know that there remains inequity between places within Leeds and to close the divide between places and make our city and local centres as inclusive as possible, there is much more that can and should be done. Work is underway to produce a new version of the Joint Strategic Assessment (JSA) for Leeds, which will set out the current data on health and inequality. A near final draft of this will be taken to the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Board in September 2021. The work on the next JSA for Leeds, alongside work being undertaken by Planning colleagues looking at the health of local centres (referenced in paragraph 13.g) and also the work and findings outlined in this report, will be used to assist us in prioritising and identifying the centres which require the most support across the city given limited resources.
- 11 We also know that sustainability and green issues are paramount to the success of our city and local centres and that it presents a huge opportunity for our city. Because of this, we need to make sure we understand the opportunity (and challenges that will be associated with it) more comprehensively. This is why, later this year, we are beginning work looking at the opportunities, challenges and risks for Leeds associated with tackling the Climate Emergency through an economic lens.

Recommendations for next steps

- 12 Covid-19 may not have changed many trends affecting centres, but it has accelerated them rapidly. These trends, and in particular the rise of remote work and the accelerated shift to online retail, pose real challenges to the traditional economic role of the city centre and local centres. However, there are also opportunities to reimagine centres as more collaborative, social, playful, liveable, inclusive, creative and sustainable places. Intervention, partnership, investment and leadership will be needed to help our centres, and their businesses and workers, to adapt. Leeds city centre has to date been a huge source of economic growth not just for Leeds and West Yorkshire, but of national significance. Local centres support many businesses and jobs. The health of our local centres and city centres matters to people.
- 13 Following the completion of the work outlined in this report, we are proposing the following recommendations for next steps in relation to future opportunities for our city and local centres.

- a) We will continue to identify and deliver transformational projects across the city, linked to external funding streams, including the Levelling Up Fund, Community Renewal Fund, Towns Fund and any announcements which may come in the Government's Budget later this year in relation to the Shared Prosperity Fund. We recognise the importance of cross-sector collaboration in creating a sustained programme of public and private investment to deliver transformation in our centres in response to our policy ambitions. This work will need to include a refreshed emphasis on inclusive growth of the city centre, to focus on possibilities for positive, new relationships with inner city neighbourhoods and their communities which have previously been disconnected, to realise wider social and economic benefits. Collaborative place-shaping will be essential to open up future opportunities for positive change and the Council has a key role to play in enabling, problem-solving and using its statutory powers and influence. Such spatial transformation can be complex in planning and delivery, but the Council remains committed to driving this forward and to embedding the success of major projects, developments and place-management activities in order to create and sustain inclusive centres across the city. We will also review projects that are already in the pipeline to ensure there is balance that responds to the needs to keep our centres as vibrant and responsive to opportunities and challenges as possible. Examples of this work include the detailed development of the Morley Town Investment Plan, with a focus on the town centre; the final phases of work to complete the Kirkgate Townscape Heritage Initiative and the initiation of the New Briggate Heritage Action Zone supporting independent retail in the city centre; developing conversations to help shape positive change in the Mabgate area to effectively link Lincoln Green with the city centre and support cultural sector activities; and the continued development of the South Bank, underpinned by green infrastructure, public transport and active travel connectivity improvements. The Council has also made a continued commitment to the implementation of its Local Centres Programme (LCP), where despite the difficult decisions required to reduce the funding available to address wider budget challenges, local centres, town centres and high streets in all parts of the district have been or will be able to draw on financial support for improved public realm, highways, buildings and environmental conditions to deliver benefits for high street businesses and visitors. Over £2.7m of direct LCP investment will be made by the programme completion, leveraging a further estimated £2.5m of other public and private investment. We will also continue to build more climate resilience into our city via transformational projects, ensuring we capitalise on the opportunities available in the transition to Net Zero and the creation of new and improved green spaces (such as the scheme delivered on Cookridge Street and the planned Aire Park in the South Bank area of the city) and by bringing nature into centres and encouraging active travel even more. We are also currently reviewing the Local Plan and will be considering consultation responses and drafting policies with a view to consult on these in Spring 2022, ahead of the Plan being adopted in 2023. Additionally, we will also be refreshing the Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy in 2022.
- b) We will explore how we can facilitate co-working in areas outside of the city centre. The city centre in particular has seen a lot of co-working space developed over recent years, which has proved very successful. We need to expand this across the city as the trend for more flexible working has expanded, particularly as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, as part of the Rates Relief review we are already undertaking we will look at how we could potentially use rates relief to support such co-working space, along with other sources.

- c) We will work to capitalise on the role of Culture for the future of our centres, including the opportunities presented through Leeds2023 and its legacy. We want to support and grow the importance of Culture across our local centres and in our city centre, supporting grass roots cultural activities, securing investment in continued improvements to landmark cultural facilities and destinations and protecting and identifying space for creative and cultural activities in local centres and the city centres alike. Leeds2023 provides a fantastic opportunity within our communities to embed long-term aspirations around cultural and creative assets and activities. Furthermore, the Leeds2023 economic impact study undertaken by Leeds Culture Trust in January 2021 indicates that indicative impacts of Leeds2023 include 1,310 new jobs in the visitor economy, rising to 1,620 by 2030; 10% growth in the Leeds visitor economy in 2023 and 4% growth thereafter; £114m extra direct and indirect revenue to the Leeds visitor economy; 1,000 freelance opportunities; 2,000 trained volunteers; 150 internships/work placements for students and young people; 100 apprenticeships/accredited training opportunities; 50 entry-level opportunities for young people via education programmes and partnerships; and 6 to 1 return on investment for Leeds (as well as 8 to 1 investment for West Yorkshire and a £49m annual boost to the regional visitor economy too). We have also extended our arts@leeds programme for a fifth year, supporting 44 Leeds-based cultural, voluntary and community organisations to deliver cultural engagement opportunities for residents across the city, therefore continuing the enablement of organisations to reach and engage citizens in their homes and local communities (a report on this was taken to Executive Board in June 2021 and can be found [here](#)). The arts@leeds programme also delivers a significant economic return to the city - for example in 2019/20 for every £1 the Council invested arts@leeds clients matched this by £30 and over £29m was generated by arts@leeds funded organisations through ticket sales and earned income.
- d) We will continue to support our local centres as we recognise their importance in providing services, employment and social opportunities to local people. Each local centre has particular circumstances and issues relating to its vitality and viability and a unique socio-economic and locational context, as well as there being significant differences between centres in how they have been able to respond to the challenges presented both before and since the Covid-19 pandemic. We will continue to work with stakeholders and prioritise actions to target support to centres that are most in need. This could include bolstering Town Boards and partnerships within local centres.
- e) We will continue to support businesses across the whole city and we will continue to support people who are seeking employment. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic we have supported businesses both in response to the crisis and in enabling them to recover – for example via the administration of business support grants to the total of £14,438,002 since November 2020 (as at 3rd September 2021) and via our business support programmes, including Ad:Venture and Digital Enterprise, as well as through our visitor economy campaigns and the Leeds MicroBusiness Support Service, which was launched in the summer for a second time by the Council and Insight with Passion following the success of last year’s programme. We will ensure we keep providing support to all businesses, not just for them to survive but for them to adapt to current and future trends, and for them to take up opportunities arising from changes in our behaviour and working patterns – not only through financial support, but also by measures taken to link initiatives and businesses, opening new markets and opportunities. The Employment and Skills team have a

number of programmes aimed at supporting people into well-paid, secure jobs and we are working with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to ensure skills programmes are in place to meet the needs of employers, particularly in key growth sectors. We are also now refreshing the Leeds Talent and Skills Plan, with the aim of establishing a new plan early in 2022. This Future Talent work will respond to how the labour market is changing and how we can respond to those long-term trends. The first round of consultation on this opened on 7th September 2021 and will close on 28th September 2021.

- f) We will continue to encourage collaboration and experimentation to connect activity across centres of innovation, now and in the future. We recognise the importance of innovation to the whole city and we are undertaking a full review of the Innovation District and surrounding area, working in partnership with Anchor Institutions such as Leeds Teaching Hospital Trust, the University of Leeds and Leeds Beckett University. The review will conclude in the autumn of this year and we will use insights from it to re-set the ambition for Leeds. We know that innovation and entrepreneurship is not and should not be confined to the city centre and there could be a role and an opportunity in local centres or other parts of the city, such as White Rose, to provide collaboration space to enable this more broadly. This is why we want to better connect the ambition to innovation hubs across the city and within local centres, which we will examine and review once again as we refresh the Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy in 2022.
- g) We will explore how we can create a long-term, sustainable way of collecting local data and intelligence for each of our centres. This will include continuing the work we are undertaking to adopt the Social Progress Index, which will measure Inclusive Growth alongside traditional economic measures by measuring success through lived experience. It will also involve the work Planning colleagues are doing to develop a web-based data collection and analysis tool for centres, including a mapping element with boundaries of each centre and a dashboard element to provide an overview of local centre health. We will look at how to further embed such spatial approaches to data and intelligence gathering across the Council.
- h) We will continue to drive this work and these recommendations for next steps forward both externally across the city via city stakeholders and partnerships, such as the Inclusive Growth Extended Delivery Partnership (IGEDP), and internally within the Council, via the centres officer working group and ongoing dialogue with Elected Members through Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth). We will also ensure that when we refresh the Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy next year, we will set a clear vision for the city and local centres, building on priorities around strengthening the roles of the city and local centres which are in the current strategy.

Constraints

- 14 The workstreams outlined in this report have proven invaluable by providing many positive and in-depth suggestions about what could be done to improve our centres. We are aware of the constraints placed upon ourselves both financially and in terms of wider resources, such as staff time, and therefore we know that we are dependent on winning investment through successful Government funding bids for additional resources. Because of this, we will set initial priorities for the coming months and establish and agree what we can take forward as first steps to enabling the recommendations for next steps to be progressed.

- 15 As previously mentioned, the findings from the work presented in this report demonstrate that our key strategies are leading us in the right direction to address the opportunities and challenges we are facing. Therefore, rather than completely altering our approach, we should be looking at adjusting existing actions and accelerating others when external funding becomes available.
- 16 Although the work looking at the future of our city and local centres commenced prior to the announcement of the Levelling Up Fund and Community Renewal Fund by central government, there should be a link to both programmes. The work undertaken, and the ongoing commitment of the centres officer working group will help to crystallise how the findings from the work may help the bidding processes for either or both of the funding streams mentioned above. The aim is for this work to provide assistance in assessing the identification of impactful and deliverable schemes that are capable of winning investment through the Levelling Up and Community Renewal Funds and how to use existing resources more smartly. Put together with other information from other sources, such as the Joint Strategic Assessment, which aims to provide a shared understanding of key health and wellbeing needs and inequalities within the city, the findings of our centres work can assist in providing a narrative for our city and local centres as we work to pull together the ambitions, opportunities and challenges of our places.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards Affected: All

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 17 The Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education has been briefed on our centres work. All Elected Members were made aware of our public survey via the fortnightly Economic Briefing of 19th February 2021 and Community Committees were involved in the publicising of the public survey to members of the public in particular. Furthermore, this [report](#) was taken to Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment, and Inclusive Growth) on 22nd July 2021 to give Elected Members the opportunity to scrutinise and debate the work that is being undertaken. The views of Scrutiny Board members have been fed into the work that is ongoing and which will continue over the coming months. As potential opportunities, challenges, actions, and interventions are identified moving forward, ward members will be consulted appropriately.
- 18 As part of the Communications and Engagement Plan that will be established, we will consider how we feedback the findings of our work to the city, including at a future Inclusive Growth Delivery Paternship events and by establishing the most appropriate way of illustrating findings and potential actions and interventions to Community Committees. We will consider too the option of holding a second public survey/city conversation, potentially in the spring of 2022, a year after the first survey was undertaken.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 19 The future of our city and local centres work has been discussed and presented at both the Inclusive Growth Core Delivery Partnership (IGDCP), made up of Elected Members, Inclusive Growth Ambassadors and Council officers, including the Chief Executive, and the Inclusive Growth Extended Delivery Partnership (IGEDP), which involves representatives from across all sectors within the city and which sees c.120-170 attendees at each tri-annual event. At the IGEDP on 24th November 2020, a panel discussion was held whereby the Partnership heard from a range of panellists and their views on our centres. The panellists included John Ebo (Head of City Centre Management at the Council, at the time); Mark Hollander (Executive Director of Leeds2023); David Maddison (Chair of the Retail Top 12 Group in Leeds and Centre Director at Trinity Leeds); and Camilla Siggaard Anderson

(Design Lead at ARUP). Attendees were also able to provide their views and thoughts and invited to complete the public survey that was launched in February 2021.

- 20 As outlined in this report, the Council also launched a public survey in February to March 2021. Over 1,300 responses were received, and sample analysis has been undertaken of the results, giving us key headline information to use when we bring the totality of our work together over the coming months.
- 21 Key stakeholder engagement was an important part of the work the Council undertook with ARUP. This included facilitating a dedicated workshop with partners from across the city to assess and evaluate key trends driving change in our centres and their associated opportunities and challenges for centres. The stakeholders involved in the workshop included (not exhaustively) representatives from the Leeds Business Improvement District; the West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce; cultural institutions such as Leeds Playhouse and Opera North; Voluntary Action Leeds; Nexus Leeds; West Yorkshire Combined Authority; and Morley Town Deal Board. A session was also held with senior officers from the Council to gather key perspectives and insights.
- 22 Our collaboration with Ahead Partnership and engagement with young people, and consideration of the findings of the Leeds150 Legacy Programme undertaken by Common Purpose, also highlights our commitment to ensuring we engage with a wide range of individuals as possible.
- 23 A report was also taken to Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment, and Inclusive Growth) on 22nd July 2021 to provide an update on policy research in relation to our work on the future of our city and local centres. A copy of the report which was taken to Scrutiny Board and the notes of the meeting are available [online](#). It was agreed that this work will be taken back to Scrutiny Board later this financial year, to update Board members on the progress that has been made.
- 24 We intend to work closely with ward members going forwards, for example, as outlined above, we will establish the most appropriate way to illustrate findings and potential actions and interventions of this work to Community Committees. We will also establish a Communications and Engagement Plan and will consider undertaking a second city conversation/public survey.
- 25 There is an opportunity to work with communities to create a new vision for centres and build broad-based coalitions for positive change. We have been working closely with colleagues within the Council's Communications team and will continue to do so, with the aim of establishing a Communications and Engagement Plan to assist us in driving this work forward. Part of this work will confirm our commitment to ongoing engagement with Elected Members, partners, stakeholders, and local communities throughout our overall centres work this year and into next, as required. For example, this will include returning to Scrutiny Board and illustrating our findings to Community Committees in the future.
- 26 We are also considering the best mechanisms to feed back to everyone who submitted their views to the public survey and we are committed to feeding back the findings of our work at a future IGEDP event, including how we will take forward any realistic actions and interventions identified. We will also consider the option of holding a second public survey/city conversation, potentially in the spring of 2022, a year after the first survey was undertaken. If a further survey is undertaken, we will ensure that we consider all methods of engagement. We are aware that the survey that took place in February/March 2021 was only completed online due to the lockdown restrictions which were in place at the time, which meant we could not run any consultation events in local centres, meaning some people who may have wished to have contributed were unable to do so.

27 We will also consider how best to capture feedback in relation to areas which are outside of the listed local centres from the Leeds Local Plan.

What are the resource implications?

28 Resources to deliver activity are constrained. Any implementation above and beyond our current funding will need to either be delivered through external funding bids or through prioritisation within individual service plans, if resources allow.

What are the legal implications?

29 There are no significant legal issues relating to the recommendations in this report.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

30 The report has no specific risk management implications.

31 There is always a risk to the Leeds economy through both policies and external pressures. The Council recognises that growing the economy has positive benefits to the city and that our work looking at the future of our city and local centres is a crucial component of delivering our Inclusive Growth Strategy ambitions.

Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

32 The Council's three pillars provide a framework for our centres work. More and more, the idea of place matters. Both our city and local centres have a major role in supporting the Leeds economy and the success of centres has a major impact on how people feel about their places and also upon the confidence of those looking to invest in the city. Because of this, the future of our centres is paramount to how we recover from the Covid-19 crisis economically and socially in a truly inclusive way. This is directly linked to our ambition to deliver Inclusive Growth across the city, whilst striving to be the best city for Health and Wellbeing and tackle the Climate Emergency. Centres play a major role in delivering quality of life and integrating Covid-19 economic recovery within our centres with both Health and Wellbeing and climate action will ensure our economy and our places are supported as much as possible (for example, by adopting a health-led approach to interventions within local centres or the city centre, such as to support physical activity and wellbeing, and by introducing climate adaptation measures, such as more green space and more energy efficient buildings).

Options, timescales and measuring success

a) What other options were considered?

33 Our work looking at our centres has to date indicated a lot of possible interventions and actions which could be taken in relation to both the city centre and our local centres. We have used the findings from this work, together with discussions with stakeholders, to present actions in this report which we feel are appropriate, deliverable and impactful.

b) How will success be measured?

34 A part of ensuring we build resilience into our economy is how we measure the actions that are being taken. More than ever we need to understand how our interventions are addressing inequality and we need more real-time information about the economy to inform our interventions. This will also assist us to be more agile in our response and able to

pivot/change as evidence of impact and opportunity emerges. We will continue to work with our partners, such as Open Innovations (formerly ODI Leeds), to try and obtain and use new and different types of data.

- 35 As mentioned earlier in this report, we will be implementing the Social Progress Index in Leeds to measure Inclusive Growth alongside traditional measures.

c) What is the timetable for implementation?

- 36 As this is a large report spanning multiple areas of work, there is not one clear timetable for implementation. We will take time over the next year to make sure that areas for implementation are included in forward work plans and reported through appropriate Scrutiny Boards and the Executive Board too.

Appendices

- 37 Appendix 1: A copy of our public survey/city conversation and list of our local centres, taken from the Leeds Core Strategy.
- 38 Appendix 2: The ARUP report, 'Future of Leeds City Centre and Local Centres'.
- 39 Appendix 3: The Ahead Partnership challenge pack sent out to young people.
- 40 Appendix 4: Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening.

Background papers

- 41 None.