

Leeds 2030: Shaping our Best City Ambition

Date: 20 October 2021

Report of: Director of Resources

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 and council ambitions

- This report asks Executive Board to agree in principle to replace the Best Council Plan with a more externally facing and partnership focused City Ambition from February 2022.
- The City Ambition will demonstrate the interlinked nature of the key priorities shared by the council and its partners, will enable work to be better aligned across partnerships with resources used to their maximum in Leeds, and will include clear commitments on key priorities alongside outcome-focused measures through the Social Progress Index. Crucially, the Ambition will help to position the city effectively to attract additional investment to meet broader shared ambitions, including infrastructure priorities and working at a spatial level.
- The City Ambition provides an opportunity to further embed and build upon the way in which the council and partners in the city work together, embracing the successful Team Leeds approach – being focused on the three pillars of health and wellbeing, inclusive growth and climate change. The Ambition will be targeted at the cross-section where the three pillars come together and will be underpinned by a continued commitment to strength-based approaches, working across sectors with the citizen at the centre of activity.
- Significant research and analysis has already been undertaken to provide a high-quality evidence base which can effectively underpin the Ambition – primarily through the recent Joint Strategic Assessment and Covid-19 lessons learned exercises. This will be supplemented by continued engagement with community committees and drawing learning from the range of engagement exercises underway in the city, including but not exclusively on Future Talent, Leeds Local Plan and Leeds 2023.

Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to:

- a) Endorse in principle the replacement of the Best Council Plan with a City Ambition.
- b) Note that General Purposes Committee will receive a report to recommend it endorses the necessary amendments to the Budget and Policy Framework, and to refer this to Full Council for approval.
- c) Agree to receive a report with initial proposals and a draft City Ambition in December 2021.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 The Best Council Plan (BCP) is a key council strategic document. Over recent years, it has increasingly reflected the ambition and need to work on a cross-city basis alongside public, private and third sector partners, and to navigate the council's changing relationship with the people of Leeds in response to budget challenges and new ways of working. Further embracing this direction of travel through the move to a City Ambition is a natural next step.
- 2 A City Ambition offers the opportunity to build on positive learning and stronger relationships which have developed as the city responded to Covid-19. At both a citywide level through excellent multi-agency partnership working, and in communities where people have supported their neighbours and taken care of those experiencing higher risk, the city has come together in a way rarely seen before. The challenge and opportunity moving forwards will be to maintain these organisational and individual behaviours for the long term and agreeing this as part of a shared ambition can help to achieve that.
- 3 There are also a range of practical benefits of shifting to a City Ambition – including to better position Leeds to attract additional external investment, to more effectively set out city priorities at a 'place' level recognising the strengths and needs of different communities, to refresh the council's key priorities considering recent events such as EU exit and West Yorkshire devolution, and to simplify and more clearly articulate what the council overall is seeking to achieve in a way that is more accessible to citizens and partners.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 4 It will be important to ensure adoption of a City Ambition adds value to the work the council and partners are doing in the city – helping to bring agendas together, maximise the impact of limited resources through effective alignment between partners, and build momentum behind shared priorities. It is not intended to be a detailed delivery plan which duplicates what is in place elsewhere, nor simply an additional level of visions and priorities which are not anchored in work on the ground. Instead, the Ambition will provide a clear direction of travel, a high-level strategic intent, shared by the council and its key partners and around which people and organisations can come together with everyone playing their part in achieving the city's ambitions.
- 5 There are several key areas this proposal can deliver a positive impact.
 - a) **Advancing the Three Pillars approach** – to better articulate the complex and inter-related nature of these three key agendas and how they affect the lives of people in Leeds. Increasingly agencies and organisations in the city are recognising the need to tackle wider determinants in achieving their core ambitions, whether that be the impact of education on health, or of housing on crime. The City Ambition can help to communicate this approach and support everyone to understand the part they can play in the city overall, alongside their more specific individual and organisational aims.
 - b) **Priority setting at a 'place' level** – recognising that across Leeds there are hugely diverse communities with complex identities, strengths and needs. Focusing on the city means understanding this and reflecting it in the Ambition. Continuing and further developing efforts to embrace the locality working approach will be a key enabler in this respect, connecting services to geographical as well as population-based communities.
 - c) **Embedding strength-based and asset-based approaches across all priorities** – recognising the hugely important role that individuals and communities already play in the

success and resilience of the city and considering how we can continue to empower people to maintain independence and support one another, while making the best use of the assets we have across partners in driving forward shared ambitions. Leeds benefits from examples of national best practice in this space, and the City Ambition provides an opportunity to take that learning and set out how the principles behind it can apply across the range of what the council and partners do. Naturally these efforts will be central to the future relationship between the council, other anchor organisations, voluntary and community organisations in the city, and the public.

- d) **Building on the Anchors partnership** – further embedding the importance of anchor organisations – both city wide and community-based – coming together to harness their collective strength in pursuit of shared city ambitions. Within this there continue to be opportunities to make the ‘Leeds Pound’ work harder for the city, both in terms of keeping money in the local economy and investing in local people through skills development, employment opportunities etc.
 - e) **Establishing clear commitments to the city** – taking account of the levers and resources already within the city’s control, the City Ambition should set out clearly what the council and partners are committed to delivering, irrespective of external factors, in line with key agendas. Alongside this, it should also include more aspirational ambitions and the specific asks of Government and others which would be required to deliver on them. This approach will create a strong foundation to bid for additional funding and investment, demonstrating the wider vision funded projects would be part of and the impact they could have.
 - f) **Positioning the city to attract investment** – linked to e) above, a shared statement of the city’s ambitions which is clear about the ability to act now and also about what more is required to go further will put the city in a strong position to take advantage of funding streams as they become available. It will be important to consider this in a regional as well as national context, given the progress now made on West Yorkshire devolution.
 - g) **Simplifying the message** – the City Ambition offers the chance to communicate the headline vision and ambitions for Leeds more clearly to citizens, wider partners, potential investors, Government, and others. Through development of the Ambition, more innovative ways to achieve this will be considered including the potential of mission-based approaches. Adopting a shorter, sharper Ambition will better equip elected members, colleagues and partners to advocate for the city over the coming years.
 - h) **Improving measures of impact** – through the adoption of the Social Progress Index (SPI) as the key measurement tool underpinning the City Ambition. The SPI will help us to understand the difference the council and partners are making over the long term through a more deliberate examination of key strategic indicators – considering the basic needs of the Leeds population, the foundations of wellbeing, and opportunity for everyone. A Leeds version of the index is currently in development, working with the Social Progress Imperative, which will include metrics relevant to the city and our shared ambitions.
- 6 The City Ambition provides an opportunity to respond to the key findings and policy implications identified in the Leeds Joint Strategic Assessment 2021 (JSA). The JSA has been developed in partnership with the support of a stakeholder ‘sounding board’ with cross-council colleagues and partners from the CCG, Third Sector and Universities helping to shape the analysis. In light of strong stakeholder input through the sounding board we have developed a life-course approach to the JSA’s structure, which uses the lens of life-course stages to frame the analysis. Within this we have also ensured coverage of the three pillars of the city ambition – with health and wellbeing at the core of the JSA’s focus.
- 7 The full draft summary report is attached as Appendix 1, but the headline findings are summarised briefly below:

A changing city

- a) A range of complex and inter-related demographic trends continue to shape our population, with a growing number of older people, the profile of young people becoming more diverse and focused in communities most likely to experience poverty, population growth focused in inner-city areas and continued uncertainty on post-exiting the EU patterns of immigration.

Starting well

- b) Covid-19 has had a profound impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people, with the disruption to their education perhaps most obvious. This impact is set against longer-term challenges regarding educational attainment, particularly of more disadvantaged children, the incidence of child poverty and wider concerns regarding the mental health of children and young people.

Living well

- c) Tackling poverty and inequality is central to our approach to health and wellbeing, with the ambition to improve the health of the poorest fastest. The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities, driven by a combination of underlying health conditions, limited scope to follow healthy living opportunities, and exposure to the virus. Poverty is the common factor in all these drivers.
- d) The pandemic is likely to have also intensified inequalities highlighting weaknesses in our community resilience and rising experiences of loneliness, but it has also shown the best of Leeds communities with people supporting one another and increased collaboration between institutions and stakeholders. How do we hold on to this stronger sense of neighbourliness to overcome underlying challenges and add further support for our established strengths-based approaches?
- e) Climate change remains the single greatest challenge to global health and Leeds is not immune from its impacts. Achieving net zero carbon ambitions will be incredibly challenging and efforts should focus on four fundamental issues for health: minimising air pollution, improving energy efficiency to reduce fuel poverty, promoting healthy and sustainable diets, and prioritising active travel and public transport.

Working well

- f) Covid-19 has had obvious impacts on the city's economy and labour market with the rapid expansion of home working and acute impacts on hospitality, retail, and local consumer services. The consequences were felt most by young people, women and low earners. However, the city has strong foundations from which to recover, experiencing economic growth and expansion over the last two decades with a diverse economy, though longer-term concerns regarding low productivity and the nature of recent job growth remain.

Ageing well

- g) Our older population is growing and becoming more diverse, as the wider demographic trends are increasingly reflected in our older generation. Although perhaps too early to be definitive, the socio-economic profile of our older population may also be changing, with house-ownership less dominant, and people working longer over a more varied career pattern. Older people from diverse ethnicities, cultures and communities of interest who have a particular identity or experience can also face specific challenges as their established networks and support diminish over time.
- 8 As the proposal progresses and the City Ambition is developed, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be carried out to ensure due regard is given to equality across all protected characteristics. As with the BCP previously, this will be a joint EIA covering both the City Ambition and the 2022/23 budget proposals.

- 9 When moving to the City Ambition, it will be important to ensure some of the 'Best Council' elements of the current Best Council Plan are not lost, although they will no longer naturally sit within the Ambition. Therefore, further consideration will be given to what should be put in place internally to capture key issues around finance, people etc. for the council with an update on this being included in the December Executive Board report noted in the recommendations.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 10 As mentioned at the beginning of this report, in developing the City Ambition insights will be drawn from a range of consultation and engagement exercises currently ongoing and recently concluded. This will be supplemented by formal consultation on the Ambition being undertaken alongside the 2022/23 budget in December 2021 and January 2022.
- 11 To date nine of the ten community committees have held discussions about the development of the Ambition, with the tenth to follow later this year. Targeted community outreach is also taking place having already had a presence at the Age Proud Festival in early September and a stall at the International Day of Disabled People marketplace planned for early December.
- 12 A range of additional engagement is also being planned to include:
- a) Follow up discussions with the Inclusive Growth Delivery Partnership and Anchor Institutions Executives.
 - b) Further discussion with the Health and Wellbeing Board and engagement with the Leeds Climate Commission.
 - c) Leeds Youth Council.
 - d) Equality Hubs.
 - e) Parish and Town Councils.
 - f) Third Sector organisations – both larger / city wide and smaller grassroots organisations – in partnership with Voluntary Action Leeds.
 - g) Additional voluntary and community sector engagement based in localities and supported by community committees.
- 13 To supplement this activity insights and content will be drawn from the strategic plans of key partners in the city, fully recognising the importance of the City Ambition being owned by a broader group. The Ambition offers a strengthened opportunity to influence these partner plans and strategies, taking the shared position it will establish as a basis in future years.

What are the resource implications?

- 14 The City Ambition will set out the council's strategic intent and headline priorities. Resource allocation in support of these, along with the more detailed activity outlined in supporting plans and strategies, will be aligned through the medium-term financial strategy and annual budget.
- 15 Developing the City Ambition and any actions associated with it will continue to be informed by the council's overall funding envelope, staffing and wider resource availability. However, a key rationale for this proposal involves making the best use of overall resources in the city, working with partners to combine efforts and maximise impact on the ground.

What are the legal implications?

- 16 In accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 the council determined that the Best Council Plan was of such significance that it should be included in the Budget and Policy Framework (B&PF) and be subject to adoption by Full Council. Although the City Ambition will supersede the BCP on adoption, its scope extends beyond it and

it is therefore necessary to amend the B&PF to identify the City Ambition as a Plan within it. Proposals to amend the B&PF are a matter for Full Council following consideration by General Purposes Committee. Subject to these approvals, the Ambition will be prepared in accordance with the B&PF Procedure Rules, which includes referral of the draft City Ambition to Scrutiny.

17 In light of the above, this report is subject to Call In, however subsequent decisions on this matter will be taken in accordance with the B&PF Procedure Rules.

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

18 The adoption of a City Ambition in place of the BCP will require a review of risks aligned to relevant strategies. This will be undertaken as proposals are developed and reported on in line with usual risk reporting processes.

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

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

19 The City Ambition will support all three of the key pillars, developing the way they are embedded into the council's and city's strategic ambitions.

20 Recognising the inter-related nature of these three agendas is increasingly important in making the progress the council and partners wish to see, so strengthening these connections with the citizen at the centre is a primary driver of this proposal.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

21 The primary alternative option would be to maintain the Best Council Plan in closer to its current form, embarking on a further iterative update and refresh. This option is not proposed for the reasons outlined paragraphs 1-4.

How will success be measured?

22 Detailed delivery plans and key performance indicators are in place for the range of supporting plans and strategies that will continue to sit beneath the City Ambition and accountability for monitoring and managing these falls within existing governance arrangements which are often already rooted in partnership. Executive Board, scrutiny boards and Corporate Governance and Audit Committee also receive regular updates on the council's performance against the agreed KPIs.

23 To strengthen how the council can measure progress in the city, alongside traditional economic measures and qualitative insights from communities and lived experience, the council will adopt the Social Progress Index (SPI). Designed by the Social Progress Imperative, a global non-profit organisation based in Washington DC, the SPI first launched in 2014 and is now used across the world, including by the United Nations, as a comprehensive measure of real quality of life to complement rather than replace traditional economic measures.

24 The SPI is built on three themes: Basic Human Needs; Foundations of Wellbeing; and Opportunity. Work is ongoing to populate the indicators with data for the city working alongside partners.

What is the timetable for implementation?

- 25 Engagement on the emerging City Ambition is well underway and will continue, culminating in the 2021 State of the City event in December. Alongside this input from Scrutiny will be sought in line with the recommendations of this report.
- 26 The City Ambition will be received by Executive Board and Full Council in February 2022 for consideration and approval.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Leeds Joint Strategic Assessment 2021 – Draft Summary Report

Background papers

None.