

Equality Impact Assessment

Leeds Best City Ambition and 2022/23 Council Budget

Scope

The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to give 'due regard' to equality. The council is committed to ending unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advancing equal opportunities and fostering good relations. In order to achieve this we need to ensure that equality and diversity are given proper consideration when we develop policies and make decisions. The council has an agreed process in place to do this through the use of equality impact assessments.

This paper outlines the equality analysis and strategic equality assessment of the proposed Leeds Best City Ambition and Budget and Council Tax for 2022/23 (both as detailed in the accompanying reports to the Executive Board meeting on 9th February 2022 recommending proposals to Full Council at its meeting on 23rd February 2022). The lead person for this equality impact assessment was Neil Evans, Director of Resources. Members of the assessment team were:

- Coral Main - Head of Business Planning & Risk
- Lelir Yeung - Head of Community Relations and Cohesion
- Naomi Eastwood – Head of Finance, Strategic
- Amy Porter – Policy Development Officer
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- Graham Sephton - Head of HR
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Overview

The Best Council Plan 2020 to 2025 (available [here](#)) is the council's current strategic plan which sets out its ambitions, outcomes and priorities for the city of Leeds and for the local authority. The City ambitions as set out in the Best Council Plan are that the council, working in partnership, will continue to tackle poverty and inequalities through a combination of strengthening the economy and doing this in a way that is compassionate and caring. The authority's internal 'Best Council' focus is on becoming a more efficient, enterprising and healthy organisation.

In October 2021, the Executive Board considered the report, '*Leeds 2030: Shaping Our Best City Ambition*' (available [here](#)) which sought agreement in principle to replace the Best Council Plan to better reflect the importance of harnessing partnership working – our Team Leeds approach – in achieving the city's shared goals. Initial proposals were subsequently considered and endorsed at the Board's meeting in December 2021 (available [here](#)). Final proposals are included elsewhere on today's agenda through the report, '*Leeds Best City Ambition*' which seeks the Board's endorsement to refer them to Council for consideration and adoption at its February meeting. This updated Ambition offers the opportunity to better bring together in one place the key priorities we have for the city, articulated as our three pillars of health and wellbeing, inclusive growth and zero carbon. The Best City Ambition remains our overall vision for the future of Leeds, with our longstanding mission to tackle poverty and inequality at its heart.

It is important the Best City Ambition remains rooted in activity on the ground and supports delivery of real progress in this city. For the council's part, that means alignment is required behind the ambition and goals outlined in the draft proposals,

and the financial and wider resources invested to deliver. As such, these strategic ambitions can only be delivered through a sound understanding of the organisation's longer-term financial sustainability which enables decisions to be made that balance the resource implications of the council's policies against financial constraints. This is the primary purpose of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy which then provides the framework for the determination of the council's annual revenue budget for which the proposals for 2022/23 are contained in the *2022/23 Revenue Budget and Council Tax* report and in the *'Capital Programme Update 2022-2026'* being considered by the Executive Board in February 2022 for recommendation later in the month to Full Council.

The Budget 2021/22 was developed in the context of the approach agreed by the Executive Board at its meeting on 15th December 2021 through the *'Proposed Budget for 2022/23 and Provisional Budgets for 2023/24 and 2024/25'* report available [here](#). In accordance with the council's budget and policy framework and as agreed by Executive Board in December, these proposals were subsequently submitted to all Scrutiny Boards for review and consideration, and have also been used as the basis for wider public consultation.

The Budget proposals are set within the wider strategic context of the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 to 2026/27 (available [here](#)) which was approved by the Executive Board on 22nd September 2021, the Government's Spending Review 2021 (announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 27th October 2021) which covers the three-year period of this current Parliament 2022/23 to 2024/25, and the Provisional Local Government Settlement - the annual determination of funding at a national level to local government - published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 16th December 2021 (available [here](#)), a one-year settlement for 2022/23.

The financial climate for local government continues to present significant risks to the council's priorities and ambitions. The council continues to make every effort possible to protect frontline service delivery, and whilst we have been able to balance the budget each year since 2010, have continued to deliver a broad range of services despite declining income, and have avoided large scale compulsory redundancies, it is clear that the position continues to be difficult to manage. Resource implications will impact on all communities but those who have been identified at being at the greatest potential risk of negative impact include:

- Disabled people – including all impairment groups;
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities;
- People from new and emerging communities;
- Women;
- Older and younger people; and
- Low socio-economic groups (within this group, there is over-representation by disabled people and BAME communities).

Best City Ambition

The proposals contained in the *'Leeds Best City Ambition'* report take forward Executive Board's resolution to develop a Best City Ambition rooted in partnership between the council, partner organisations and local communities. The Ambition aims to build upon the strengths that have come to the fore throughout Leeds's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, capturing the spirit of genuine partnership between organisations to deliver for local people, and the vital contribution that everyone living

or working here can make to our shared efforts to improve the lives of people who live in all parts of the city.

The Best City Ambition offers the opportunity to bring together in one place the key priorities we have for the city – articulated here as our three pillars of health and wellbeing, inclusive growth and zero carbon. Each of these pillars is underpinned by a range of important work to make Leeds the best it can be, the best place to live, work and visit, the best city in the UK, and crucially to deliver meaningful improvements in people's quality of life so everyone in Leeds can thrive. In bringing the pillars together, the Ambition highlights how progress against each is equally dependent on the other two, with many of our greatest challenges and opportunities sitting at the intersection between the three.

The Best City Ambition will provide a platform to review the council's wider strategic framework and the city's partnership infrastructure, maximising opportunities to align activity, reduce duplication and strengthen our shared focus on a set of cross-cutting key priorities in a way that helps to ensure progress is being made. Importantly, the Ambition also outlines the limits of Leeds's ability to directly affect change, noting that while there is much in the city's control, some of the most aspirational aspects of our city ambition will require us to influence greater support, resources and new approaches from Government and other stakeholders.

Adopting the Best City Ambition will provide the council and city with a refreshed strategic intent shared amongst partners. It brings up to date and refines some long-standing ambitions, brings into sharper focus the current priorities gathered through consultation and engagement, and better connects priorities which are co-dependent to achieving the outcomes we want to see. The Ambition will provide a platform and context for more detailed plans, projects and programmes to be developed. It will also underpin influencing activity and bids for funding by offering a coherent narrative about the city's overall aims and direction.

The Ambition offers a bold statement of what Leeds stands for: it paints a picture of where we want Leeds to be in the future and highlights what people who live here have told us is important to them. Many of the things it includes are challenging to achieve and will take time, sustained effort and resources – but it is grounded in what is possible with some of the meaningful first steps outlined in the second half of the document. These parts will be kept up to date with annual 'light-touch' reviews to update on progress of current work and add any new or further work underway. A fuller review of the Ambition will be undertaken on a three-yearly rolling programme using the [Joint Strategic Assessment](#) as context – the next of which is due in 2024.

Best City Ambition consultation and engagement

Between September and early December 2021, extensive engagement with internal and external stakeholders was carried out to inform the development of the initial Best City Ambition proposals considered at December's Executive Board meeting. This included a range of targeted engagement to ensure the people with a protected characteristic or from a minority background had the opportunity to influence the proposals, and those conversations will continue on an ongoing basis as the Ambition is adopted and implemented. A full list of those people, groups, organisations, fora and committees engaged up to that point is included within the December Executive Board report at Appendix 2 (available [here](#)).

Following agreement by December's Executive Board, public consultation on the draft Best City Ambition took place during the four weeks between 16th December 2021 and 13th January 2022. The consultation was delivered through a series of short online

surveys which broke the Ambition down into thematic sections. Overall, 285 survey responses were completed by 197 people with additional full written submissions received via email from a small number of partner organisations.

The results of the public consultation are included in full at Appendix 2 to the February 2022 *'Leeds Best City Ambition'* report with the results of the consultation with Scrutiny Boards at Appendix 4.

Budget

The council has so far responded successfully to the funding challenges since 2010 by reducing a number of areas of revenue expenditure - most significantly on employees and through better procurement and demand management - and by increasing income as outlined in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Also, through targeting revenue resources into preventative services, the council has ensured that the implications of demand and demographic pressures, which have resulted in significant cost pressures in other local authorities, have been contained within Leeds. The council's capital programme has also been reviewed and prioritised in light of the ongoing financial challenge, but continues to deliver capital investment to support the delivery of our strategic objectives and to support the realisation of revenue savings.

The council is committed to responding to the challenges of inequality in Leeds within the pressures of the financial context in which we are now operating and ongoing uncertainty with regard to the Government's future spending plans.

After taking into account the impact of the anticipated changes in funding and cost pressures and the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on the council's financial position it is forecast that we will need to generate revenue savings, efficiencies and additional income to the order of £20.7 million in 2022/23 to balance to the anticipated level of resources available. The council remains committed to protecting frontline services as far as possible, especially those that provide support to the most vulnerable, and is planning to meet the challenge of the estimated budget gap for 2022/23 through a combination of efficiencies, changes to service and increased income. Details of proposals can be found in the directorate reports appended to the February 2022 Executive Board and Full Council *'2022/23 Revenue Budget and Council Tax'* report and in the *'Capital Programme Update 2022-2026'* report.

Impact of budget proposals on employees

Last year, the council's revenue budget for 2021/22 required the authority to deliver budget reduction measures of £87.5m, on top of the significant savings already achieved since 2010. Accordingly, in February 2021, following Council approval of the 2021/22 Budget, the council served notice under Section 188 (S188) of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 (TULR(C)A) to collectively consult with our recognised Trade Unions to avoid, reduce and mitigate the potential risk and consequences of compulsory redundancies.

However, the financial challenge continues: as set out in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 to 2026/27 considered at September 2021's Executive Board meeting, a budget gap of £146.5m was estimated for that five-year period, of which £65.4m related to 2022/23. Throughout the 2021/22 financial year, the council has held ongoing discussions with Trade Unions regarding this financial position and our response, including highlighting the 'service review' savings proposals that, subject to consultation where appropriate, will be taken forward during 2022/23 and beyond (as considered by the Executive Board at its meetings in September and December

2021). In previous years this has been constructive and has collectively worked to avoid, reduce and mitigate the need for compulsory redundancies in the authority.

The council has operated a voluntary retirement and severance scheme since 2010/11 which has already contributed significantly to the reduction in the workforce of around 2,831 FTEs (or 3,699 headcount) to December 2021. The Budget proposals for 2022/23 provide for an estimated reduction of 19 FTEs, offset by growth of 211 FTEs, a net increase of 192 FTEs (178 FTEs in the General Fund and 14 FTEs in the Housing Revenue Account) by 31st March 2023. However, with the council's budget for 2022/23 requiring the authority to deliver budget reduction measures of £20.7m and within the context of the estimated revised budget gap of £85.5m for 2023/24 to 2026/27, further budget savings proposals will be required to bridge this gap. This could result in a reduction in the number of budgeted FTE posts, and it is therefore the council's intention to issue an updated S188 notice following Full Council approval of the 2022/23 Budget in line with our statutory duties to consult with recognised Trade Unions for ways to avoid, reduce and mitigate compulsory redundancies. Any service reviews that arise as part of the further budget savings proposals that could impact upon council staffing will undergo consultation on a service level with the appropriate Trade Union representatives.

In response to the significant change that the council has undergone and will continue to go through, additional support is in place to support individuals and managers through any change and challenges they experience, as well as looking to support people with the opportunities that the changes may present to progress their career and personal development.

Budget consultation and engagement

The 2022/23 Budget proposals were developed through consultation with a range of stakeholders, notably with the Executive Board, all Scrutiny Boards, the council's Corporate Leadership Team and other senior officers. They also draw on insights from the priorities set out in existing council and partnership plans and strategies which have themselves been subject to extensive consultation and engagement.

Following agreement by December's Executive Board, public consultation on the council's Proposed Budget for 2022/23 took place during the four weeks between 15th December 2021 and 13th January 2022. In a change to previous years, the consultation survey was hosted on an online engagement platform. This included links to other relevant consultations (including the Best City Ambition), a detailed timeline, and an opportunity for participants to share and comment on each other's ideas for how the council can improve and deliver services more efficiently.

The survey explored a range of themes relevant to the proposed budget including: principles of how we should be funded, proposed changes to Council Tax, and how we plan to spend the revenue budget. Further questions included satisfaction with how the council runs things overall, and ideas for opportunities for the council to do things in more modern and efficient ways.

The consultation was circulated primarily through Leeds City Council social media channels and online community groups, and a news item on the council's website. The 1,421 members of the Citizens' Panel received an email with a link to the survey. Staff and elected members were invited to take part through emails and a news item on the council's intranet (InSite). Invitations were also emailed to partner organisations, requesting that they share through their networks. Targeted social media was successful in increasing engagement of younger people aged under 30.

In total, 1,332 participants visited the engagement platform. From here, 623 clicked through to the survey, of whom 468 went on to complete it. Within the engagement platform 15 participants shared a total of 28 ideas for how the council can improve and do things in more modern and efficient ways. Although at 468, the survey response is lower than previous years (2,495 in 2021,22 and 1,537 in 2020/21), this statistically represents the population well to a confidence interval of +/-4.5% (with 95% confidence). Survey participants were from a range of different demographic groups, which broadly represents the population of Leeds residents as compared with the 2011 Census.

The public consultation results are included in full at Appendix 2 to the February 2022 '2022/23 Revenue Budget and Council Tax' report with the results of the consultation with Scrutiny Boards at Appendix 3.

Fact finding – what we already know

Demographics: A Changing Population

The population of Leeds was estimated to be 799,000 people in 2020 (ONS mid-year estimate) - an increase of 0.8% (6,000 people) in the year since the previous 2019 mid-year estimate. The population has increased by about 48,000 compared to the 2011 Census.

Based on the ONS 2020 MYE, there are estimated to be:

- 51% (407,119) female and 49% (391,667) male
- 154,400 children and young people aged 0 to 15 years
- 520,600 people of working age (16 to 64 years)
- 123,800 older people aged 65 and over
- One in ten people (10%) in the 20 to 24 age band, reflecting the large student population

Looking at the nine years between 2011 and 2020:¹

- It is estimated that the Leeds population increased by 6.4% (48,100 people).
- The working age population had a smaller percentage increase (3.6%) than both the population of children and young people (12.0%) and the population aged 65 and over (11.6%).
- The population of older people aged 65 and above increased by 13,600 people. Although the 65 and above age group still has more women than men, there has been a bigger increase in the number of men, with 7,400 more men aged 65 and over resident in Leeds in 2020 than in 2011 (compared to 6,200 more women).
- There was an increase in the number of primary school age children in Leeds, with an additional 10,400 (11.7%) children in the 0 to 10 age group.

Looking at the projected population 2020 to 2030:²

- Over the 10 years 2020 to 2030, the peak of those primary age pupil increases will continue to feed into secondary school, with an increase in the number of teenagers in Leeds. There are projected to be 6,300 more young people aged between 11 and 17 by 2030 (10.3%).

¹ ONS mid-year population estimates 2011-2020

² ONS projections - 2017 release, 2020 revisions

- The increase in the older population is projected to be even bigger with almost 17,000 more people aged 65 and over resident in Leeds in 2020 than in 2030.
- The Leeds population overall is predicted to continue to grow, reaching almost 820,000 by 2030; a 24,000 (3.0%) increase from 2020. The working age population will have a smaller percentage increase (1.8%) than those aged 65 and over (13.6%). The population of 0 to 15-year olds is predicted to fall by 1.5%.

The makeup of the city is outlined below:

- Leeds continues to become more ethnically diverse. The national 2011 Census showed that 18.9% of Leeds population was from a BAME background.
- According to the January 2021 Leeds School Census:
 - The proportion of the school population from BAME backgrounds more than doubled since 2005, increasing from 17.4% in 2005 to 36% in 2021.
 - The greatest ethnic diversity is in younger age groups, with 36.7% BAME pupils in primary schools and 34.4% BAME pupils in secondary schools.
 - In 2021, 20.2% of Leeds school pupils spoke English as an additional language, with the top five main languages being Urdu, Polish, Arabic, Romanian and Panjabi (this excludes the category 'Other than English', which is the second most selected category).
- According to the national 2011 Census, the population aged 65 and older is less ethnically diverse than younger age groups, but the proportion from BAME backgrounds will increase as people who settled in Leeds as young adults grow older.
- The religious profile of the city is changing. In the 10 years between the 2001 Census and 2011 Census, the proportion of people who said they are Christian decreased from 68.9% to 55.9%. The proportion with no religion increased from 16.8% to 28.2%. Compared to England and Wales, Leeds had higher than average proportions of people stating their religion as Jewish (0.9% compared to 0.5%), as Muslim (5.4% compared to 4.8%) and as Sikh (1.2% compared to 0.8%). The Muslim community had the youngest age profile.
- There is no direct count of disability for the whole population, but the Census 2011 collected information about 'long-term health problems or disability'. In Leeds 83.3% of people said that their day-to-day activities are not limited by long-term health problems or disability, 7.9% said they are limited a lot and 8.9% said that they are limited a little.
- The 2011 Census collected information on civil partnerships for the first time, reflecting the Civil Partnership Act 2004, which came into effect in the UK in December 2005. In Leeds, 41.5% of adults were married, which is lower than the England and Wales rate of 46.6%; 0.2% of adults were in a registered same-sex civil partnership, which is the same as the England and Wales rate; 40.8% of adults were single (never married or never registered in a same-sex civil partnership), which is much higher than the England and Wales rate of 34.6%; 17.5% of adults were separated, divorced or widowed, which is slightly lower than the England and Wales rate of 18.6%.

Poverty and Inequality

The key message in the council's strategic plan, the Best Council Plan, is that for Leeds to be the Best Council in the Best City, we need to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities. Whilst, subject to final approval by Full Council in February 2022, the

Best Council Plan will be replaced with a Best City Ambition, this strategic ambition will continue, aligned to three pillars of health and wellbeing, inclusive growth and zero carbon.

The council's approach to equality improvement recognises that people with a number of protected characteristics are disproportionately represented by poverty and financial exclusion.

Picture of Leeds

A significant number of people in Leeds were already being impacted by low income and poverty before COVID-19 took effect in March 2020.

Local authorities are often ranked on the proportion of neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10% nationally. Based on the most recent Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019, Leeds has 114 neighbourhoods (24% of its 482) in the most deprived 10% nationally. Leeds is ranked at 33 out of 317 local authorities in England (1 is most deprived) on this measure.

There are two measures which identify local authority districts with large numbers of people experiencing deprivation: the income scale - which ranks local authorities on the number of people experiencing income deprivation -; and the employment scale - which ranks local authorities on the number of people experiencing employment deprivation. Based on the IMD 2019, Leeds had the fourth highest number on the income scale (with Birmingham ranked first, Manchester second and Liverpool third) and the third highest number on the employment scale (with Birmingham ranked first and Liverpool second) out of the 317 English local authorities.

Although the IMD is based on neighbourhoods and is designed to identify pockets of deprivation, the government also publish summary measures for larger areas like local authorities. There is no single 'best' local authority measure, and the ranking of Leeds varies depending on the measure used.

Long-Term Challenges

Long-term challenges for the city in relation to poverty include:

- In 2019/20, 22% of the Leeds population (equating to 174,000 people) were classed as living in relative poverty after housing costs are deducted from income³.
- 24% of children, (36, 496) were estimated to be living in relative low-income families before housing costs in 2019/20⁴.
- It is estimated that 18.2% of all Leeds working residents earned less than the Real Living Wage in 2020, affecting 61,593 FTE residents. It is also estimated that 12,417 workers are on zero-hour contracts⁵.
- Between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021, 153,335 food parcels in Leeds were given out informally via Community Care Hubs, Emergency Food Provisions which equates to an 860% increase since 2019/20.

³ Relative Poverty measures individuals who have household incomes 60% below the median average. Source: DWP households below average income 2019/20, published March 2021

⁴ Children in Low Income Households Local Area Statistics 2021 (Source: HMRC & DWP Combined data published for the first time in 2020, replacing DWP's Children in out-of-work benefit households and HMRC's Personal Tax Credits: Children in low income families. This local measure provides a picture of children in low income families for both Relative and Absolute measures, but only Before Housing Costs (BHC)

⁵ More information on Wages, Household Income and Employment in Leeds can be found in the [Leeds Poverty Factbook](#)

- In 2019, 16.8% of Leeds' households (57,429 households) were estimated to be in fuel poverty⁶.

Impact of COVID-19

Even before COVID-19 the scale of the challenge was significant: the combined impact of austerity with sustained public sector funding cuts, welfare reform and an increase in low paid and insecure employment all contributed to increasing and deepening levels of poverty across the UK - and Leeds was no exception. Prior to the pandemic, local research highlighted that in 2018 households in Leeds were less resilient and worse prepared for an external financial shock or crisis than in 2004, with significantly lower propensity to save and a higher likelihood of being in debt.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 proved to be such a crisis, increasing pressures on low income households and the most vulnerable in our society, as well as pushing many additional households to experience financial uncertainty and hardship for the first time.

The last year has seen further impact on low income households, with both local and national evidence describing how many are left trapped between a reduction in income due to job losses, furlough ending and the removal of the £20 uplift in the Universal Credit (UC) weekly standard allowance, compounded by rising costs from energy prices, household bills and supply issues. In a new report '*Dragged Down by Debt*⁷', Joseph Rowntree Foundation has found 3.8 million low-income households across the UK are in arrears and 4.4 million have had to take on new or increased borrowing through the pandemic. Many of these households weren't in arrears before the pandemic, and have faced income loss and increases in their expenses.

Despite the combined impact of national COVID-19 response and recovery measures, including government funding allocated to local authorities, and the strong, well-established supportive infrastructure in place in Leeds, the actions undertaken have not been enough to prevent increasing numbers of households falling into poverty and hardship.

- In February 2020, pre-pandemic, 33,715 people citywide were claiming UC⁸, but by October 2020, this had more than doubled to 70,127 claims. Although rising further during 2021 to a peak in March of 74,515, the number of claimants has since fallen back to 70,892 in October 2021, still more than double the pre-pandemic figure. (Stat-Xplore – People on UC)
- According to the January 2021 school census, 29,350 children from Reception to Year 11 claimed free school meals (FSM) in Leeds. This was an increase of 1,462 since October 2020 (5.2%) and an overall increase of 4,843 since January 2020, giving an annual increase of children claiming FSM of 19.8%.

At a national level, research has shown how protected characteristics (particularly disabled households, BAME and disadvantaged communities) have been disproportionately impacted both by COVID-19 directly and the associated negative economic impacts of the pandemic.

⁶ Source: Department for Energy & Climate Change, 2019 results published in June 2021. Details are available online [here](#)

⁷ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, '*Dragged down by Debt*', October 2021. Available at: [Dragged down by debt: Millions of low-income households pulled under by arrears while living costs rise | JRF](#)

⁸ Leeds moved to the full-service digital platform of Universal Credit (UC) in October 2018. Full service means that all new claims to the 6 key legacy benefits (Job Seekers Allowance, Employment support Allowance, Income Support, Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit), will now be made to UC instead.

- The Money and Mental Health Policy Institute (MaMHPI) 2021 report '*The State We're In*⁹ found that, 'more than one in four people with mental health problems owe more than they did a year ago and those with the least manageable debts were most likely to have increased what they owe.'
- The same report also found that '44% of UK adults with mental health problems who fell behind on bills last year either considered or attempted to take their own life, amounting to 2.5m people nationally'.
- A survey conducted in January 2021 by The Disability Benefits Consortium¹⁰ highlighted, 'during the pandemic, 67% of respondents stated at some point, they had to go without essential items and 44% were unable to meet financial commitments such as rent and household bills'.
- 62% of severely food insecure people are claiming benefits, according to research published in October 2021 by the Welfare at a Social Distance Project¹¹.
- The Resolution Foundation reported in October 2021 that, 'three quarters of households on UC will still be worse off as a result of the removal of the £20 uplift, despite the reduction in the taper rate and increase to work allowances.'¹²

Citizens Advice Leeds (CAL) and Chapeltown Citizens Advice have reported that in most cases, data has returned to 2019 levels, following the period of disruption in 2020:

- UC enquiries rose to 26% of total enquiries (15,711 enquiries), compared to 19% in 2019 and 24% in 2020, reflecting numbers of people becoming unemployed or losing income throughout the pandemic.
- Other Welfare Benefits enquiries increased again to 24% in 2021 as forbearance measures ended (compared to 17% in 2020 and 23% in 2019). Of all benefit enquiries, the largest issue in all three years continued to be initial claims for UC.
- Employment enquiries increased from 6% in 2019 to 10% in 2020, largely due to furlough, redundancy, and job insecurity. This reduced to 5% in 2021 as employment became more stable.
- Overall there has been a fall in debt advice enquiries at 9% of all enquiries in 2021 compared to 12% in 2020 (and 14% in 2019). However it is important to recognise that the overall fall does not necessarily reflect a fall in demand – due to a variety of reasons, advisers are spending more time on individual cases, reducing the number of clients they are able to help. In addition, in 2021 Citizens Advice developed a national debt line and local callers are being diverted to this service rather than to CAL.
- Fuel debts and Council Tax arrears continue to be the largest debt enquiry areas, the former rising from 6% of debt enquiries in 2019 to 12% in 2021.
- Across the two organisations, the number of BAME clients has returned to pre-pandemic levels (35%), having fallen slightly in 2020 to 33% in 2020. But

⁹ Bond N and D'Arcy C., '*The state we're in: money and mental health in a time of crisis*'. Money and Mental Health Policy Institute, November 2021. Available at: [The-State-Were-In-Report-Nov21.pdf \(moneyandmentalhealth.org\)](#)

¹⁰ Disability Benefits Consortium, '*Pandemic Poverty*', February 2021. Available at: [MS Society External template \(wordpress.com\)](#)

¹¹ The Welfare at a (Social) Distance Project. Available at: [Project Report #6 \(October 2021\): Hunger and the welfare state: Food insecurity among benefit claimants during COVID-19](#)

¹² The Resolution Foundation, '*The Boris Budget*', October 2021. Available at: <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/app/uploads/2021/10/The-Boris-Budget.pdf>

households with dependent children, working age clients and those with a long-term health condition or disability have all increased in 2021, compared with 2019 prior to the pandemic.

Third sector

The council recognises and values the critical and significant role that the third sector plays in the life of the city and the importance of a diverse sector as articulated in the Leeds Third Sector Ambition Statement. The council has a long tradition of working in collaboration with the third sector in order to deliver the best possible outcomes for the people of Leeds.

The council demonstrates its commitment to the sector in many ways:

Partnership and engagement relationships

The council invests financial and staff resource in the development and maintenance of partnership and engagement relationships with the sector, including city-wide strategic bodies and a network of locality, service, thematic, community and equality-focused third sector forums. This facilitates strategic engagement with the sector, dialogue between the sector, council and a range of partnerships and forums and enables the council to have better reach into communities through the third sector, resulting in more effective co-production and collaboration on key city and locality agendas. For example, the council provides executive support and plays a leading role in the Third Sector Partnership. This is a key part of the city infrastructure through which the third sector, council, NHS, universities and other public sector partners work together to ensure that collectively the conditions are created for a thriving third sector, so organisations can deliver better outcomes for the people of Leeds.

Investment in third sector infrastructure support

The council invests in third sector-based infrastructure which provides a range of support to frontline third sector organisations, including: financial management, fundraising, training, legal, constitutional issues and governance, organisational development, volunteer management and brokerage. This investment has a particularly important role in ensuring that there is support for small and emerging groups and those groups from minority and marginalised communities and priority neighbourhoods.

Investment in the wider sector

The council makes a significant financial investment in the sector each year. An Annual Analysis of the council's investment in the Third Sector is produced and presented to the Third Sector Partnership. This allows council colleagues and partners to track trends, scrutinise and build an overview of where investment is made.

In 2019/20, provisional analysis shows the council's overall investment in the third sector to have been £130.5m with 1,264 individual third sector organisations. Members Improvement in the Community and Environmental (MICE) allocation totalling £153,000 was invested in third sector-led, community-based initiatives. Analysis for 2020/21 is currently in progress to be taken to Third Sector Partnership in Spring 2022. The council, along with third sector partners, continues to review the analysis of the council's financial relationship with the sector in order to understand whether the approach is supporting our shared ambitions for the sector and the city.

Dialogue with the third sector around budget pressures, future direction of travel and investment in the sector

There is ongoing dialogue with the third sector regarding the budget challenges and future plans, for example:

- In February 2022, the council's Deputy Chief Officer Financial Services will provide Leeds Third Sector Partnership with an overview of the council's financial position and the challenges that will need to be addressed. Further discussion is planned on the analysis of council and CCG third sector spending alongside analysis from the National Lottery Community Fund and Leeds Community Foundation.
- Council directorates have well-established ongoing arrangements and dialogue with their third sector partners and other interested third sector stakeholders which shapes and informs their approach to the budget challenges and their priorities. The Compact for Leeds (available [here](#)) sets out well-understood expectations for regular detailed discussions with organisations that will be impacted by any budget reductions or changes.
- Third sector partners across West Yorkshire and Harrogate have carried out three Resilience of the Third Sector surveys during COVID-19. The surveys sought to capture the impact of COVID-19 emergency arrangements on the third sector looking at: sector viability in the light of changing income and expenditure; pressures on communities and changes in volunteering; and the third sector's ability to adapt to changing circumstances and positive experiences. As a result, recommendations have been made to help reduce the worst impacts of the crisis on the third sector and capture the key positives of new working practices and changed relationships.
- The Resilience of the Third Sector Bronze Group set up during COVID-19 in recognition of the critical support a thriving third sector provides to the people of Leeds has now been stood down. However, the Bronze Group remains part of the Leeds COVID-19 Multi-Agency Command and Control Arrangements should it need to be reinstated. The workstreams initiated on resources, communities, volunteering, environment and generous leadership continue to report into the Third Sector Partnership.
- The close working between Voluntary Action Leeds (VAL) and other community and voluntary organisations to respond to needs in our communities during COVID-19 has led to an established network of Community Care Hubs covering each ward of the city. Several of these hubs are now exploring community anchor and alternative models to create and sustain strong local partnerships. This ward hub structure is available for the wider sector, commissioners and other stakeholders to link in with and has provided ongoing support throughout the winter period.
- The Communities of Interest network of community-based organisations was established in partnership between Forum Central, VAL, Healthwatch and the council's Communities Team following COVID-19 to ensure information and support connects with the most marginalised and vulnerable communities in Leeds. The network brings together representatives from third sector organisations supporting diverse communities from across Leeds to discuss and identify priority needs/issues and opportunities. An independent qualitative evaluation explored the role of the network, the related benefits, and learning from the perspective of the members and wider system stakeholders. A number of successes were reported including the network's diverse

involvement, the capability to gain and share knowledge and information, the making of new connections and partnerships, and the opportunities to challenge and influence system change. Recommendations for future organisation and delivery suggest a review and refinement of action plans to support communities into the COVID social recovery phase and the methods of addressing health inequalities for the most marginalised groups.

Ongoing commitments and developments

The council continues to drive and support a range of initiatives to ensure that Leeds has a thriving third sector and strong civil society that can deliver for all of the people of Leeds. For example:

- The Third Sector Partnership and Third Sector Resilience work continue to build on the following policy commitments (all available to download [here](#)):
 - Compact for Leeds
 - Third Sector Ambition Statement
 - Characteristics of a Thriving Community
 - Leeds Pledge to Strengthen Civil Society
 - Leeds Commissioning Code of Practice
 - Leeds Code of Practice for Working Together
 - Social Value Charter
- The council is a member of the Keep it Local Network and has adopted the Keep it Local principles to support and encourage a determined focus on the 'local' through: investing in, and building on, local community assets; utilising local investment and resources for maximum local benefit; maximising external investment into the city; promoting collaboration and co-production across sectors for maximum local impact; and through the delivery of locally-focused and delivered, sustainable, people-centred services, saving money and minimising demand on public sector funding. Further work is planned for 2022 to engage with the network and share good practice.
- The council facilitates the cross-sector Funding Leeds Partnership, which has been leading on ambitions to maximise external investment into Leeds through the third sector by making funding information and support accessible. This includes the Funding Leeds platform: a comprehensive database of funding opportunities with information about local support that is available online and free to access.
- The People's Commissioning arrangements in the council provide a vehicle to ensure that investment, including in the third sector, is coherent and coordinated.

Council colleagues and third sector partners will continue to broker further discussions as necessary on budget, global, national, local and other emerging challenges that impact on Leeds, in order to drive new ways of working and contribute to the delivery of the city ambitions; specifically to ensure that there is a diverse and thriving sector that continues to involve, engage and meet the needs of all communities.

The council's workforce profile

In recent years in response to the financial challenges, the council has significantly reduced its workforce. Working closely with the trade unions and with the take-up of

our voluntary leaver scheme we have managed to reduce staffing with relatively few compulsory redundancies. Reducing agency staff costs, overtime, sickness and introducing working from different locations has also brought costs down significantly. Reskilling and redeploying people whose roles are at risk helps continue to create a more flexible and responsive workforce and to minimise redundancies.

In-work poverty and low pay remain issues of national concern. In Leeds, work continues to tackle this, reflecting the commitments in the Low Pay Charter adopted by Council in April 2015.

- From 1st April 2021 the council's minimum hour rate increased to £9.50 which mirrored the Living Wage Foundation's recommended minimum rate of pay.
- We remain committed to further increases in the future, as Living Wage Foundation recommendations are made.

These changes will continue to have a positive impact on in-work poverty, particularly for women, those under 25 and part-time workers. The council remains committed to annually reviewing pay in the overall context of the budget strategy. Increases are considered in terms of affordability, impact on pay structures and national pay settlements.

As at December 2021 there were 14,141 people employed in the council (excluding schools and casual staff), equating to 12,126 FTEs. The workforce profile of all employees is shown below.

Leeds City Council workforce profile – December 2021		
Profile area	Headcount	% of overall headcount
Gender		
Male (including Trans)	5,554	39%
Female (including Trans)	8,587	61%
Total	14,141	100%
Age / years		
16 – 25	921	7%
26 – 40	4,105	29%
41 – 54	5,288	37%
55 – 64	3,434	24%
Over 65	393	3%
Total	14,141	100%
Ethnicity		
Non BAME	10,763	76%
BAME	2,053	15%
Prefer not to say	30	0%
Not declared	1,295	9%
Total	14,141	100%
Disability		
Disabled	842	6%

Leeds City Council workforce profile – December 2021		
Profile area	Headcount	% of overall headcount
Not disabled	11,771	83%
Prefer not to say	119	1%
Not declared	1,409	10%
Total	14,141	100%
Carer		
Carer	1,267	9%
Not a carer	7,870	56%
Prefer not to say	110	1%
Not declared	4,894	35%
Total	14,141	100% (rounded)
Sexual orientation		
Heterosexual	8,667	61%
Lesbian	127	1%
Gay Man	163	1%
Bisexual	137	1%
Other	62	0%
Prefer not to say	168	1%
Not declared	4,817	34%
Total	14,141	100% (rounded)
Religion or belief		
Religion stated	9,818	69%
Prefer not to say	138	1%
Not declared	4,185	30%
Total	14,141	100%
Additional gender details		
Same as assigned at birth	3,496	25%
Not same as assigned at birth	42	0%
Not declared	10,603	75%
Total	14,141	100%

Equality Impacts and Improvement Work

Introduction

As described above, we know that some of our communities have poorer outcomes than others and this affects them individually as well as the city as a whole. We are committed to making equality a reality for all the citizens of Leeds. We want Leeds to be a city where people are able to recognise, value and embrace diversity and difference. We will support people from different backgrounds and ages to feel

comfortable living together. We will work with organisations across Leeds to promote a clear and consistent message that prejudicial views or behaviour that could result in hate incidents or crimes are not tolerated or condoned. We will work with communities to ensure people are treated with dignity and respect and the causes of unfairness are understood and addressed.

We value the contributions that all citizens in Leeds make to our city and we want everyone to recognise and appreciate these. We will ensure that we show kindness, and empathise with the difficult situations people find themselves in. We will do what we can to work with them to help them alleviate these. We want to live in an equal society which recognises different people’s different needs, situations and goals and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be. We will consider all the protected characteristics covered in the Equality Act 2010, and we will also widen our considerations to others who are disadvantaged in other ways, for example, by poverty.

Equality Improvement Priorities

The council’s Equality Improvement Priorities were developed to ensure that the authority meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and to complement its strategic ‘Best City’ ambition to tackle poverty and reduce inequalities.

Equality analysis continues to be used to set the council Equality Improvement Priorities and has also been used to inform, and is an integral part of, the council’s strategic priorities and Budget proposals. The Equality Improvement Priorities recognise that there are currently different outcomes and experiences for different groups and communities, highlighting the challenges the city has to address in order to tackle inequalities and help people out of poverty.

Tackling poverty and reducing inequalities has been the council’s strategic ambition for a number of years and thus work was already in progress by the council and its partners prior to COVID-19. Improving equality outcomes and tackling inequality are inextricably linked and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought this to the fore: work that has been taking place since the start of the pandemic in 2020 demonstrates that there is a disproportionate or differential impact on inequality due to COVID-19 on the city’s Communities of Interest and the protected characteristics as required under the Equality Act 2010. This work highlights that action needs to be taken to address these social, structural and economic inequalities to ensure that they do not worsen.

As a result, in July 2021 the council agreed a new approach to the council’s Equality Improvement Priorities for 2021 to 2025, developed to take into account the disproportionate and differential impact of COVID-19 on inequality. Three cross-council Equality Improvement Priorities were agreed with a further eight Priorities aligned with the eight Best City priorities as set out in the council’s strategic plan at the time, the Best Council Plan 2020 to 2025, helping to hardwire the council’s approach to improving equality and tackling inequality into its strategic framework.

Equality Improvement Priorities 2021 to 2025	
Cross-council	Best City aligned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget • Procurement • Employment and Organisational Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age-Friendly Leeds • Health and Wellbeing • Sustainable Infrastructure • Inclusive Growth • Housing • Safe, Strong Communities

Equality Improvement Priorities 2021 to 2025	
Cross-council	Best City aligned
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child-Friendly City • Culture

The new Strategic Equality Improvement Priorities 2021 to 2025 will ensure the council continues to meet its legal duties but, more importantly, will improve equality outcomes and help tackle the barriers to poverty and disadvantage for the citizens of Leeds. The priorities do not include all our work across all the protected characteristics, but highlights those areas where there are significant differences in outcomes for people due to those characteristics. We believe that by addressing these areas we will make Leeds a better city for everyone. We welcome all communities in Leeds and value the contributions that our citizens make to our city.

Summary and Next Steps

The proposed Best City Ambition and Budget 2022/23 recognise the challenges that the city and the council are facing: rising cost of living and other financial pressures, increased demands on public services and deep-rooted inequalities, many of which have worsened as a result of COVID-19. Maintaining a clear, strategic vision centred firmly on tackling poverty and inequalities with a Budget and wider financial strategy that supports this will help tackle these challenges.

Our strategic ambitions and Budget are aimed at tackling inequalities through a range of activity and interventions. This requires an understanding of the potential negative impacts on communities and protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 and action identified to mitigate against these. The Budget will impact on all communities and, as previously stated, those groups identified at being at the greatest potential risk of negative impact include:

- Disabled people – including all impairment groups;
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities;
- People from new and emerging communities;
- Women;
- Older and younger people; and
- Low socio-economic groups (within this group, there is over-representation by disabled people and BAME communities).

Other considerations consider a range of factors including:

- Stakeholder status - for example, whether one is a service user, employee or elected member; and
- Potential barriers - for example, the built environment, location, stereotypes and assumptions, timing etc.

The Equality Act 2010 requires the council to have ‘due regard’ to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. The law requires that the duty to pay due regard be demonstrated in the decision-making process. Assessing the potential equality impact of proposed changes to policies, procedures and practices is one of the key ways in which public authorities can show due regard.

The council is fully committed to ensuring that equality and diversity are given proper consideration when we develop policies and make decisions. In order to achieve this the council has an agreed process in place and has particularly promoted the

importance of the process when taking forward key policy or budgetary changes. Equality impact assessments also ensure that we make well informed decisions based on robust evidence. Equality impact screenings were carried out on all 'service review' revenue savings proposals previously approved by the Executive Board for implementation / consultation at its September and December 2022 meetings, contributing to this proposed Budget. Full equality impact assessments will continue to be carried out as appropriate on specific proposals in relation to implementing the Budget during 2022/23 and beyond through the council's decision-making processes.

This is a high-level strategic analysis and equality impact assessment of the proposed Leeds Best City Ambition and Budget and Council Tax for 2022/23. It has not identified any specific gaps in the equality and diversity information used to carry it out.