

Leeds

# Best City Ambition

## Tackling Poverty and Inequality

Health and Wellbeing • Inclusive Growth • Zero Carbon

# Introduction

The Best City Ambition is our overall vision for the future of Leeds.

At its heart is **our mission to tackle poverty and inequality** and improve quality of life for everyone who calls Leeds home.

We will achieve our mission by focusing on improving outcomes across the **Three Pillars** of the Best City Ambition

1. Health and Wellbeing
2. Inclusive Growth
3. Zero Carbon

The Three Pillars capture the things that will make the biggest difference to improving people's lives in Leeds – and many of the big challenges we face and the best opportunities we have relate to all three.

The Best City Ambition aims to help partner organisations and local communities in every part of Leeds to understand and support the valuable contribution everyone can offer – no matter how big or small – to making Leeds the Best City in the UK.

## Our Team Leeds Approach

Everyone in Leeds coming together to play their part is how we will achieve our ambitions. We want to build **Team Leeds** – made up of the people who live or work here, and those who champion the city nationally and internationally.

Team Leeds is about supporting one another to **make Leeds the best it can be**. It is about sharing ideas and learning, working in genuine partnership, being ambitious about our collective social and environmental impact, and organisations sharing their resources and assets as we work towards common goals.

We will continue to adopt the following ways of working to drive a Team Leeds approach:

- Make **co-production and co-design** central to how we work, **listening to the voices of citizens** including children and young people, building community wealth and **promoting mutual respect** to strengthen our democracy and civil society.
- Ensure we have **vibrant and sustainable community-based social infrastructure**, shifting power to citizens and local communities, and committing to **tackle deep-rooted and systemic inequalities** including the fight for racial justice.
- Be **ambitious and optimistic about the future for Leeds**, looking towards the long term as we respond to changes in our population and the impact of globalisation in a digital world
- Promote Leeds as a place where **businesses and public institutions recognise their responsibility** to adopt progressive employment and procurement practices, and where private sector leadership and investment is harnessed to tackle big social challenges.
- Strengthen our **asset-based approaches** and **invest in prevention**, recognising what people can do rather than what they cannot and **build community capacity** to further **empower citizens** to find their own solutions.
- Be led by the evidence, **being clear about how the actions we prioritise contribute to our goals**, always thinking about our impact over the long term; and strengthening a **partnership approach to data collection, sharing and analysis**, using data to provide valuable and practical insights in guiding interventions.
- Recognise the circumstances people face at the **different stages of their lives** need to shape our interventions, and the factors which make the **biggest difference to health lie outside of healthcare**; therefore putting these social and economic factors at the centre of our responses is crucial – as highlighted by our intention to **become a Marmot City**.
- Be **innovative, creative** and foster a **learning culture**, working with communities, businesses, partners and educators to try new approaches and ideas, and learn from the best examples globally, in pursuit of our shared goals.
- Learning from the success of the Inclusive Anchors Network – which brings together the largest organisations in Leeds to think about their collective impact – work with the third sector to further develop the network of **Community Anchors** so vital in pursuing our ambition in local communities and develop plans to attract **increased investment into social entrepreneurship** to meet specific city challenges.

# The 3 Pillars of our Best City Ambition

## One: Health and Wellbeing

**In 2030 Leeds will be a healthy and caring city for everyone: where those who are most likely to experience poverty improve their mental and physical health the fastest, people are living healthy lives for longer, and are supported to thrive from early years to later life.**

To realise this ambition, Team Leeds will focus on:

- Investing to ensure better and more equal access to essential services in health and learning, developed with and accessible for every community across Leeds.
- Ensuring children in all areas of the city have the best start in life and enjoy a healthy, happy and friendly childhood.
- Delivering a safe and welcoming city for people of all ages and from all communities in which residents feel more secure and have good friends.
- Enabling every community in the city to have safe connected spaces, streets and paths to access a local park or green space, providing somewhere to be active and to play, helping to improve mental and physical health across all ages.
- Working with housing providers, landlords, tenants and communities to improve poor quality housing, so everyone can have a home which supports good health, wellbeing and educational outcomes.

## Two: Inclusive Growth

**In 2030 Leeds will have an economy that works for everyone, where we work to tackle poverty and ensure that the benefits of economic growth are distributed fairly across the city, creating opportunities for all.**

To realise this ambition, Team Leeds will focus on:

- Ensuring young people and those changing career in later life have the skills and job opportunities which enable them to realise their potential and thrive.
- Our businesses and social enterprises being innovative, creative, ambitious and connected to the local community they are in, with access to the skills they need to boost productivity and succeed.
- Understanding that place matters, and positive identity, culture, heritage and pride in our communities are vital assets in a sustainable future for the city and its local centres.
- Growing cross-city research capacity and making Leeds a test bed for innovation and new technologies, including in healthcare and the delivery of a just transition to net zero.

- Leeds being an outward looking global city with our people and businesses operating on the world stage, mindful of our impact on the planet and addressing the biggest societal challenges of our time, and where we welcome inward investors that share our values.

## **Three: Zero Carbon**

**In 2030 Leeds will have made rapid progress towards carbon neutrality, reducing our impact on the planet and doing so in a fair way which improves standards of living in all the city's communities.**

To realise this ambition, Team Leeds will focus on:

- Delivering a low-carbon and affordable transport network which encourages people to be physically active and reduces reliance on the private car, helping people get around the city easily and safely.
- Promoting a fair and sustainable food system in which more produce is grown locally, and everyone can enjoy a healthy diet.
- Addressing the challenges of housing quality and affordability, tackling fuel poverty and creating vibrant places where residents have close access to services and amenities.
- Joining with local communities, landowners and partners to protect nature and enhance habitats for wildlife.
- Investing in our public spaces, green and blue infrastructure to enable faster transition to a green economy while improving quality of life for residents.

## Team Leeds Breakthrough Priorities

In Leeds, we have successfully adopted a partnership-based approach to tackling some big challenges. These efforts have focused on issues that could not be addressed by any single organisation alone, often under the banner of 'breakthrough' projects or priorities. A good example of this approach is the creation of a single, co-ordinated approach to domestic violence cases in Leeds – where more than 15 agencies now work closely together on a daily basis to share information, plan and co-ordinate actions to protect victims and those at risk.

The Best City Ambition provides an opportunity to reinvigorate this way of working to respond to some of the biggest challenges Leeds faces today. This approach can help to strengthen partnership working and focus on measurable progress to improve outcomes, drawing on the collective skills, knowledge and innovation of people, organisations and communities from all parts of Leeds.

To ensure we can invest the time and resources needed to make a meaningful difference, the number of Breakthrough Priorities will be limited and bring together teams drawn from across organisations and communities.

The first set of priorities will focus on:

- **Green Jobs** – working with business and educators, focusing on pathways through education and training to employment in low carbon jobs.
- **Learning Outcomes** – working with early years providers, schools, colleges, universities and employers to improve outcomes and close the attainment gap particularly for disadvantaged children and young people, learning from what has worked in the city and elsewhere.
- **Mental Health** – working with communities and health partners to help people in Leeds stay in good mental health and prevent the need for support from acute NHS mental health services – especially thinking about the longer-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- **Healthy Housing** – working with the NHS, third sector, developers, private-sector landlords, housing associations and tenants to focus on the vital role housing plays in the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, and how our approach to housing in Leeds can help to reduce pressure on social care.

Diverse groups of people drawn from all sectors and all parts of Leeds will come together to work on these priorities, with Community Committees and Local Care Partnerships, alongside community representatives, providing a connection to their places within the city.

# The Big Challenges facing Leeds

Like every large city in the UK, Leeds is always responding to a range of complex challenges and the Best City Ambition sets out how we will do that.

Here we summarise what some of those big challenges are, informed by conversations with citizens and partners as well as from recent research and analysis through the [Leeds Joint Strategic Assessment](#).

The challenges are a key starting point for the development of the Best City Ambition. We have developed a **Life-Course** approach to the challenges, meaning we consider the biggest issues at each stage of a person's life from early years to older age, whilst also ensuring we cover the Three Pillars of the ambition.

## Starting Well

- **Close educational attainment gaps** between most and least advantaged young people, against the legacy of Covid-19 disruption and the population profile of children and young people becoming more diverse and focused in communities most likely to experience poverty.
- **Ensure coherent post-16 education and skills provision** for the 'bulge' cohorts now beginning to go through secondary school.

## Living Well – Health and Wellbeing

- **Break the link between poverty and inequality, and poor health and wellbeing outcomes**, exacerbated by the pandemic - from prevention and enabling of more healthy and active living, to tackling wider determinants such as employment, education, housing and the environment, and improving access to health and care.
- **Respond to the mental health crisis** which deepened during the pandemic, particularly affecting young adults and women; shielding older adults; adults with pre-existing mental health conditions, and Black, Asian and ethnic minority adults.

## Living Well – Thriving Communities

- **Ensure the sustainability, self-reliance, and resilience of our communities** through meaningful community engagement and embracing the critical importance of community assets and good personal connections in helping people and communities to build resilience and respond to the challenges they face.
- **Address challenges of housing quality and affordability** against the trends of rising housing costs and the concentration of older poor quality housing in low income communities, combined with the significant expansion of the private rented sector in inner city areas.

## Living Well – Climate Change

- **Make significant progress towards our ambitious net zero carbon target** focusing on: improving energy efficiency, promoting healthy and sustainable diets, and prioritising active travel with walking and cycling as an easy and first choice.

- **Ensure a public transport system that is safe, active, accessible, clean and energy-efficient** to help people get around the city.

### **Working Well – Inclusive Growth**

- **Equip people and businesses with skills and life-long learning** which enable them to realise their potential and renew their skills-needs as the world of work continues to change and our workforce ages.
- **Ensure economic growth and opportunity is widely distributed** across all communities and areas of the city, against a backdrop of accelerated changes in working practices and potential changes to the economic geography of the city post-pandemic.

### **Ageing Well**

- **Designing accessible neighbourhoods with quality services nearby** to enable our aging population to thrive while it is becoming more diverse, with a changing socio-economic profile, house-ownership less dominant, people working longer over a more varied career pattern, and with carers themselves become older.
- **Close the stark gaps in healthy life expectancy** and premature mortality between different areas of the city against the backdrop of a more diverse ageing population, recognising the role a healthy and active lifestyle can play in keeping people well for longer.

# Achieving our Ambition: Strategies, Partners and Evidence

The Best City Ambition aims to help partner organisations and local communities in every part of Leeds to understand the contribution they can make to achieving our shared goals – working together as Team Leeds.

To support everyone's efforts, keep and ensure that together we can deliver real progress for people in Leeds, we now need to:

- Refresh key strategies and plans on an ongoing basis so they fully reflect and progress the Best City Ambition.
- Draw on the reviews of Locality Working and Neighbourhoods and Communities, to work with Community Committees, Local Care Partnerships and other key stakeholders to ensure the Ambition is meaningful at a local level and rooted in Leeds communities, guiding prioritisation and interventions.
- Continue to develop a broader, more consistent evidence-base to both inform interventions and monitor their impact.

Leeds already benefits from **strong networks and partnerships**, some which have a city-wide remit while others are more focused on specific geographical communities or groups of people. These partnerships will have a key part to play, so together we will ensure their role in supporting the Best City Ambition is clear, and that different partnership groups are connecting as needed.

The **breadth and diversity of our city partnerships is a big strength** – one that enables more people from a wider range of backgrounds to contribute. Continuing to find ways to work with citizens from different backgrounds in new and innovative ways is crucial to our ambition, especially ensuring the **voices of people with lived experience** of our big challenges are heard.

We will review **existing city strategies** in response to the Best City Ambition guided by the Three Pillars and aim, over time, to reduce the overall number of strategies so we can better join up our actions and focus effort on what will make the biggest difference to people's lives.

An important part of this will involve updating how we **measure the outcomes** of the work Team Leeds does, as we **strengthen our understanding of Leeds** and the way our communities are changing. Our new tool, the Leeds Social Progress Index, will provide new capability to track the impact of our interventions and highlight the social and environmental wellbeing of our citizens and communities.

The data and analysis underpinning these assessments of progress will be made public on the Leeds Observatory (<https://observatory.leeds.gov.uk/>) whenever possible so is available to anyone who can benefit from its use.

## Propositions to Government

This Best City Ambition sets out our overall vision for the future of Leeds and how we will need to come together as Team Leeds to achieve our ambitions. Clearly, we will need to work with partners beyond the city, including our neighbouring local authorities, private sector investors and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. It will also be **vital to engage with Government in working towards these goals**. The Best City Ambition and the supporting Three Pillars of health and wellbeing, inclusive growth and zero carbon provide a framework with which existing and future discussions with Government can be framed, developed and refined, clearly articulating our vision and enabling us to make a strong case for the city and its potential.

Within the overarching vision which the Ambition sets out there will be opportunities to pursue more specific aims, both responding reactively to opportunities to bring new resources or investment into Leeds and seeking to influence national policy to support our shared goals. To strengthen Leeds' position further in doing this, the Ambition will provide a framework to now **work with partners across all sectors to develop a series of Leeds-based propositions to Government**. These should capture the biggest opportunities here and now, being clear about how what we propose supports national social and economic progress, as well as advancing our own ambitions for Leeds.

Leeds

# **Best City Ambition**

**Focus 2022/23**

# One: Health and Wellbeing

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## Background to our Ambition

Leeds has strong foundations to deliver excellent health and wellbeing, with a track record of health innovation, well-established system leadership, and assets like parks and green spaces which provide people with the opportunity to lead healthy lives. However, systemic social, economic and environmental inequalities mean that health outcomes vary significantly across Leeds, with people in the most disadvantaged parts of the city worst affected and inequalities being worsened further by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic highlighted more strongly than ever before the impact wider issues like housing, education and digital connectivity can have on health and wellbeing. Addressing these is key to improving the health of those most likely to experience poverty the fastest, and is why Leeds plans to become a Marmot City – that is, a city accelerating its work to tackle these social determinants of health, working to the principles established in the 2010 Marmot Review: [Fair Society, Healthy Lives](#).

The collective response to the pandemic in Leeds showcased the vibrant network of community-based social infrastructure we have – the people, groups and organisations who kept people fed, connected and well throughout the pandemic. Relationships across this network have strengthened through considerable learning that took place during the pandemic, providing a great platform to build on. Continuing to strengthen our social infrastructure, ensuring that it is funded, supported and sustainable, will be essential to tackle the deep-rooted systemic inequalities that shape peoples' ability to lead healthy lives.

## Current Focus

- Strong partnership working continues to be well-established between health and care partners and we have established **strong system leadership** to drive the ambitions of our Health and

Wellbeing Strategy, with a shared understanding that health and wellbeing is inextricable from broader social, economic and environmental factors.

- Working as a Team Leeds partnership to **make the best use of the collective physical, social and digital infrastructure** we have in Leeds across our public, private and third sectors.
- We will continue to take a **life-course approach** to health and wellbeing, recognising both specific factors affecting people's health and wellbeing at different times during their lives and the cumulative impacts of policy interventions of a whole lifetime, with well-established partnerships supporting a population that is growing at both ends of the age spectrum - Child Friendly, Age-Friendly and Dementia-Friendly Leeds.
- We will continue to highlight the importance of **safeguarding children and at-risk adults** in everything we do. The experiences of the pandemic and lockdowns highlighted how not only those working in public services, but anyone who has an established relationship with potentially vulnerable people can play an important role in being vigilant about their health, wellbeing and safety. We know relevant professionals cannot be everywhere, all the time, seeing behind every closed door – so in Leeds we will maintain that **safeguarding is everyone's business** and work to make sure people across the city are confident and knowledgeable enough to raise any concern they may have.
- Continuing to shape and develop **an integrated regional health and care system** rooted in broad partnership which is responsive to ongoing change and reform in health and social care while innovating in how health and care services are commissioned and delivered.
- We are putting **elected members, communities and the third sector** at the heart of health and care conversations, including citywide conversations through the Big Leeds Chat and People's Voice Growth to amplify community voices.
- Health and Wellbeing starts with people who can thrive within safe and strong communities. We are embedding an **asset-based approach** to build resilient communities which have access to the resources they need to make the changes they want to see to improve people's health and wellbeing:
  - Establishing a network of local community infrastructure including Priority Neighbourhoods, Neighbourhood, Community Connector third sector organisations, Community Builder local champions, and 33 ward-based community hubs established during the pandemic to coordinate emergency support to residents.
- We continue to drive a **strengths-based approach to social care**, focusing on giving people the opportunity to live in a way that gives them quality of life, drawing upon the support of their communities and the strengths and abilities of the individual, to live well and more independently.
  - We have placed **tackling health inequalities** at the centre of everything we do, including delivering a vaccine health inequalities plan for our most hesitant communities to ensure that nobody is left behind.
- Prioritising a **preventative approach** wherever possible to allow people to lead fulfilling lives which are healthy, active and playful, learning from the experiences of people most at risk of experiencing poorer outcomes. As a result we:
  - Reversed a trend of rising obesity in reception-age children between 2009 and 2017, one of only a few European cities to do so, with the reduction greater in deprived areas – although Covid-19 has subsequently impacted.

- Through strong partnership working, we are able to prevent 90% of potential homelessness, far above national averages.

### Future Focus:

- In responding to governance changes to the **regional Integrated Care System**, tackling health inequalities will remain at the centre of our approach. We will strengthen our resolve to **address the entrenched societal challenges affecting wider health and wellbeing**, including poor quality housing and lower educational attainment for children and young people from low-income families. A warm, safe, suitable home, space for study, and a strong start in life are crucial to long term mental and physical wellbeing and reducing the necessity of acute healthcare interventions later in life.
- To this end we will more closely align with the **Marmot approach**, already complementary to how we work in Leeds, with a view to becoming a Marmot City, allowing us to draw on national expertise from the Institute of Health Equity to strengthen our approach to tackling health inequalities. Joining the network of Marmot Cities in the UK will present new research opportunities, strengthen our ability to attract funding, and galvanise partners behind our mission to reduce health inequalities. The Marmot approach is drawn from the principles in the 2010 *Marmot Review: Fair Society, Healthy Lives*, and the 2020 *Build Back Fairer: Covid-19 Marmot Review* both led by Sir Michael Marmot.
- We will continue our work to promote Leeds as an **Age Friendly City**, including our focus on improving outcomes for **disability-free life expectancy**, alongside wider efforts to close the gap we see across Leeds on life expectancy and premature mortality across the city more generally.
- Putting the struggle for **racial justice** at the centre of our work, recognising the disproportionate negative health outcomes faced by Black, Asian and minority ethnic people due to systemic inequalities; and tackling racism and discrimination within healthcare.
- Re-state our commitment to the equal rights of disabled people and to the social model of disability – developed by disabled people themselves and which holds that people are disabled by the way society is organised and by barriers which can be changed or eliminated – as a way to **eradicate systemic barriers facing disabled people** in Leeds, and challenge outdated attitudes which do not represent the contribution disabled people continue to make to the economy, culture and community life of the city.
- Working as a team with all stakeholders playing their part, re-double our efforts to **tackle crime, community safety, gender-based violence and drug-related issues** in those communities worst affected – responding to calls from children and young people about the profoundly negative impact these challenges can have on their lives.
- Drawing upon evidence established through the Leeds Joint Strategic Assessment to anticipate and **address the future health needs** of the city, for example a significant growth of the population of young people concentrated in low-income parts of the city, and an ageing population.
- Working with partners regionally and nationally to **raise the profile of social care** to promote parity of esteem with the health service. Recruiting and retaining a well-paid, well-supported social care workforce who are recognised and valued for the enormous contribution they make.
- Responding to **calls from children and young people** in Leeds to treat **mental health** as their top priority in recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. Working together with Mind Mate to improve

mental health and emotional health for our younger populations with evidence they have been some of the worst affected.

## Two: Inclusive Growth

**In 2030 Leeds will have an economy that works for everyone, where we work to tackle poverty and ensure that the benefits of economic growth are distributed fairly across the city, creating opportunities for all.**

To realise this ambition, Team Leeds will focus on:

- Ensuring young people and those changing career in later life have the skills and job opportunities which enable them to realise their potential and thrive.
- Our businesses and social enterprises being innovative, creative, ambitious and connected to the local community they are in, with access to the skills they need to boost productivity and succeed.
- Understanding that place matters, and positive identity, culture, heritage and pride in our communities are vital assets in a sustainable future for the city and its local centres.
- Growing cross-city research capacity and making Leeds a test bed for innovation and new technologies, including in healthcare and the delivery of a just transition to net zero.
- Leeds being an outward looking global city with our people and businesses operating on the world stage, mindful of our impact on the planet and addressing the biggest societal challenges of our time, and where we welcome inward investors that share our values.

### Background to our Ambition

Covid-19 has had obvious impacts on our economy, both exacerbating long-standing inequalities within our communities, and the immediate constraints on the ability of businesses to operate 'normally'. It has changed the way we think about place and how we use our spaces, as well as how we travel, work and shop. The repercussions were felt in the first instance by young people, low earners and women in the labour market, linked in part to longer-term concerns regarding low productivity and recent job growth being too often concentrated in low skilled, low-paid employment.

However, Leeds has strong foundations from which to recover and will continue be the main driver of economic growth for the city-region. The city has a diverse, knowledge-based economy, linked to our universities and teaching hospitals, which are major centres of innovation. We have a dynamic business sector with strengths in digital and medical technologies, telecoms and creative industries, all sectors likely to be increasingly important in our future economy.

### Current Focus

- Our current priority remains a sustainable and inclusive economic recovery, centred around the need to:
  - **Respond.** continuing to take immediate actions to support businesses and the economy as we have done working together as a city since lockdown in March 2020.

- **Reset and Renew** – focussing on the challenges and opportunities that we face in recovery and that we have a clear focus and direction on the projects and partnerships that will address them.
  - **Build Resilience:** underpinning our long-term Best City Ambition - tackling poverty and inequality, with the key drivers of Health and Wellbeing, Inclusive Growth and Zero Carbon.
- We will continue our commitment to **100% Digital**, reflecting the vital importance of access to our increasingly digital world. As one of the largest ambitious programmes in the UK, this work is vital in increasing the resilience of our third sector and ensuring digital inclusion for organisations and individuals across all parts of Leeds. Our vision for Leeds as a digital city encompasses our data infrastructure – including improving access to high speed internet; our partnership approach to data collection; sharing and analysis; and digital inclusion, supporting and empowering citizens through digital skills and connectivity.
  - We will continue to work as a cross-city partnership to support families to give **children and young people the best start in life**. Looking to improve learning and inclusion by refreshing our work on the 3As of attendance, attainment and achievement, with insights from the pandemic and active engagement with the learning community crucial in helping children to make the best start at each stage of their learning. We will continue to invest in child literacy and to broaden awareness of the tools and facilities available to support this, including through Leeds Libraries.
  - Continue to strengthen the **Inclusive Anchors Network** – a group of the the largest public institutions and businesses in Leeds who have a long-term stake in the success of the city – encouraging increasing numbers of organisations to be good Corporate Citizens and recognise their responsibility to adopt progressive employment and procurement practices and play their part in responding to the climate emergency. We will also work with the third sector to further develop the network of **community anchors** so vital in pursuing our ambition in our local communities.
  - We will continue to work in partnership with businesses across Leeds and potential inward investors to **attract and create more and better jobs**, especially in sectors where the city is already a national and international leader, and in growing or emerging industries. Accelerating productivity growth will be important in helping to **improve standards of living**.
  - We will continue to work with West Yorkshire Combined Authority and transport operators to **strengthen Leeds’ transport network**, focusing on **reducing carbon emissions** and ensuring more equal access to safe and affordable services so people in all communities can get around easily.
  - We continue to work as a partnership to welcome, embed and widen the benefits of inward investment, with investors that share our ambition and enhance the city, including major public sector investments such as the **UK Infrastructure Bank**, the northern hubs of the **Bank of England**, the Department for Work and Pensions’ and the Department for Transport. We will also continue to work with existing and new SMEs and social enterprises to deepen their roots in the city and enhance their relationship with local communities.

## Future Focus

- More and more, the idea of **place matters** as we try to more equally share the benefits of Leeds’ economic success and enable everyone to feel proud of the community they live in.

We will work in partnership to identify and deliver transformational projects across the whole of Leeds, drawing in external funding streams, including:

- Invest in community infrastructure and good quality local services so everyone can be proud of where they live.
  - Recognising the important cultural and historical factors which affect how parts of Leeds have developed and how the people who live there feel.
  - Facilitating flexible co-working spaces in areas outside of the city centre.
  - Capitalising on the role of **culture**, including sport, arts, media and heritage, for the future of city and local centres through Leeds 2023.
  - Considering the future role and use of local high streets in a post-pandemic landscape.
  - Strengthening a mutually beneficial relationship between the city centre and local communities.
- We will put **skills and opportunity** at the heart of our approach through a **Future Talent Plan** to help drive our economic recovery, address unemployment and underemployment, help people to be more resilient in work, and support people and businesses of all sizes to thrive – including by **supporting young people to access the labour market** and older workers to access the skills and retraining they might throughout their career. Led by West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA), we will **support employers to retain older workers in fulfilling roles for longer**.
  - We will work in partnership with our Child Friendly Leeds ambassadors to help **raise aspirations and work readiness of young people**, provide supported internships for young people with additional needs and offer work experience or employment opportunities to young people who are care leavers or are not currently in education, employment or training. More broadly, we will keep the voices of children and young people at the heart of our work as a child-friendly city, valuing youth allyship and empowerment as part of overcoming inter-generational inequalities.
  - We will put **innovation and creativity** at the heart of our approaches, co-designing with the private, public and community sectors, stimulating new conversations with partners on how to strengthen our innovation ecosystem, ensuring inclusivity and social impact, and increasingly demonstrating that Leeds is a place with a strong innovative spirit that plays a significant role internationally.
  - We will work to take advantage of the many opportunities in emerging green industries and **make Leeds a focal point for new green jobs**, looking at the support we can provide to businesses which will need to change due to the climate emergency. Our approach will understand that low-income families should not face additional disadvantage as a result of climate change, and we must deliver a **just transition to an environmentally sustainable and inclusive economy**.

## Three: Zero Carbon

**In 2030 Leeds will have made rapid progress towards carbon neutrality, reducing our impact on the planet and doing so in a fair way which improves standards of living in all the city's communities.**

To realise this ambition, Team Leeds will focus on:

- Delivering a low-carbon and affordable transport network which encourages people to be physically active and reduces reliance on the private car, helping people get around the city easily and safely.
- Promoting a fair and sustainable food system in which more produce is grown locally, and everyone can enjoy a healthy diet.
- Addressing the challenges of housing quality and affordability, tackling fuel poverty and creating vibrant places where residents have close access to services and amenities.
- Joining with local communities, landowners and partners to protect nature and enhance habitats for wildlife.
- Investing in our public spaces, green and blue infrastructure to enable faster transition to a green economy while improving quality of life for residents.

### Background to our Ambition

Leeds declared a climate emergency in March 2019 and agreed to work towards making the city carbon neutral by 2030. Understanding that we are part of the global effort, urgent transformative action is required for Leeds to make its contribution to preventing the worst impact of climate change. We need everyone to play their part, with local and national government, business, communities and individuals all able to make a difference through their actions. Without determination in Leeds and beyond to respond now, the future will bring catastrophic consequences for humans and the natural world, with increasing disruption to many aspects of life including the food system, spread of disease, and extreme weather events like floods and heatwaves.

The drive towards a low carbon, sustainable and nature-friendly future offers huge possibilities for a city like Leeds, placing ourselves ahead of the curve for new market opportunities and acting as a test bed for innovation and new green technologies. We can make it easier and more affordable for people to connect with each other and move around the city, reclaiming public spaces for leisure and play. Better access to nature and green space, cleaner air, locally grown fresh produce and well-paid jobs in emerging green industries can improve wellbeing and make environmentally conscious lifestyles easier to follow.

### Current Focus

Much of the transformative change required to see a Zero Carbon Leeds will take time, but we want to halve the city's (1990) emissions by 2025 and good progress is already being made.

- We will continue our work to **reduce emissions from buildings and vehicles**, with anchor institutions leading the way, making commitments and supporting others to join us. We will work as an Anchor Network to explore opportunities to further strengthen or accelerate our collective commitments. The council is investing £100m and £25m in its housing stock and public buildings respectively, retrofitting insulation, heat pumps, solar panels and LED lighting. Leeds now has the largest local government electric vehicle fleet in the UK, Yorkshire

Ambulance Service has an ambitious plan to achieve a zero-carbon fleet by 2050, and West Yorkshire Combined Authority is working with bus providers to scale-up availability of all-electric buses. £7m investment is also helping local businesses to switch to lower emission vehicles.

- Opportunities to **invest in infrastructure which reduces energy demand and costs** will continue to be explored, with the 19km district heating network constructed since 2017 already delivering low carbon heat to hundreds of properties in low-income communities and several key civic and cultural buildings, and further network expansions planned. Switching to LED street lighting across Leeds will halve its energy requirement.
- Across Leeds we are working to **protect and enhance the natural environment**, with businesses and institutions ‘greening’ their campuses, investment in major flood alleviation schemes protecting over 3,500 residential and commercial properties, and a collective effort aiming to increase the city’s tree canopy cover from 17% to 33% - with potential to give Leeds more trees per person than any city in Europe. Planning policy is being reviewed to support these efforts and ensure the importance of green and blue infrastructure is recognised.
- We will **make it easier for people to live low-carbon lifestyles in Leeds**, championing community-led green initiatives, supporting people to grow food locally and further investing in low carbon travel options – building on the city’s highly successful park and ride schemes and harnessing the power of the now over 172km of dedicated cycle network Leeds can benefit from.
- Leeds has suffered several flooding events in the last decade and with the effects climate change likely to grow, effective flood risk management is increasingly important for communities to ensure they are resilient and adaptable to the current and future impacts of climate change. We will continue to work with partners, including Government, to **invest in sustainable flood risk management** through effective water management, climate change adaptation, land management, habitat protection and creation. Delivery of affordable and high quality flood alleviation measures will be pursued wherever possible.
- We will continue to **listen, learn from and act on the feedback from Leeds residents** – including children and young people who have been at the forefront of the efforts to confront the climate emergency so far, and who will be the most affected by climate change in the future. We will promote ideas about how families can take action in their homes, schools and communities to reduce carbon and live more sustainable lifestyles.

## Future focus

- We will go further to **transform the way people move around Leeds**, prioritising walking, cycling and other sustainable forms of travel – with a target to increase bus usage by 130%, cycling by 400% and walking by 33%. We will make Leeds a city where you do not need to use a car and deliver a 30% reduction in car usage as a result. These changes will enable public spaces to be less vehicle dominated and to reclaim streets for people.
- Alongside community partners we will continue to **invest in the energy efficiency of council and social housing stock**, with the council alone accounting for 18% of the city’s homes overall. We will invest £120m to improve our multi-storey buildings and build upon successful work in Cross Green and Holbeck to improve the most challenging pre-1919 back-to-back homes. We will also work with partners, including Government, to explore ways to support low-income homeowners to improve energy efficiency in owner-occupied homes.

- The decarbonisation of heat is crucial to achieving zero carbon housing stock, so **Leeds will remain at the forefront of the drive towards hydrogen** as a replacement for natural gas, working alongside local government and academic partners. The emerging hydrogen economy should be rooted in our region with opportunity for new high skilled jobs in Leeds and game-changing advances in low carbon transport and industry.
- We will **champion local farming and food production**, including through exploring vertical farming in urban settings, promoting growing at home or in communities, and working with anchor partners to source more food served by organisations in the city from producers based in Yorkshire and the surrounding counties. The council for its part will halve the carbon footprint of meals served in schools, cafes and meal deliveries, will no longer accept food contracts for air-freighted imports and will work with partners to support them to do the same.
- **Habitat preservation** and **nature recovery** will be at the heart of our approach to land management, and we will bring landowners in the city together to promote biodiversity and create new and connected spaces for wildlife in response to the nature emergency we see alongside the climate emergency. This means we will plant more wildflower meadows, use relaxed mowing wherever possible, increase tree planting, and support community-led green initiatives as much as possible.
- We will continue to work with the Leeds Climate Commission and the **Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission**, who have developed a climate action plan to reach net zero by 2038, with significant progress being achieved by 2030. The plan clearly sets out the journey our region needs to go on, and we will work as Team Leeds with partners elsewhere in Yorkshire to develop the actions we can take to meet the targets laid out.