

Best City Ambition - Update

Date: 25th January 2023

Report of: Chief Officer Strategy and Improvement

Report to: Scrutiny Board – Children and Families

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

This report provides the Scrutiny Board with an update on work to implement the Best City Ambition since its adoption by Full Council in February 2022.

2022/23 is a transitional year with the adoption of the Best City Ambition, where we will review our strategic framework, partnership arrangements, and performance monitoring. This work is continuing and key developments to date are detailed in this report, along with information about next steps.

The Best City Ambition will be reviewed in full in 2023, to take account of the outcome of the recent LGA peer review, as well as the refreshed Health and Wellbeing and Inclusive Growth strategies which are due to be published in spring/summer 2023.

Recommendations

- a) Board members are asked to note the content of the report and consider any further scrutiny actions that may arise.

What is this report about?

- 1 The Best City Ambition was adopted by Full Council in February 2022. It sets out the outcomes we want to see for the city, recognising these cannot be achieved by the council alone and that everyone has a part to play – the council, city partners across sectors, citizens, communities and Government too.
- 2 The rationale for transitioning from the previous Best Council Plan to the Best City Ambition was described in detail and agreed by Executive Board in October 2021 – report [available here](#). In summary, it provides an opportunity to further highlight the interlinked nature of the key priorities shared by the council and its partners, to enable work to be better aligned across partnerships with resources used to their maximum, and to include clear commitments on key priorities alongside outcome focused measures and the Social Progress Index. The Ambition can also help to position Leeds effectively to attract additional investment, clearly communicating our priorities and inviting others to join us in striving towards them. Work to continue strengthening this element of the Ambition remains ongoing, particularly considering what it means for the city spatially, with the next refresh likely to pick up more detail on this matter.
- 3 Significant research and analysis was undertaken to provide a high-quality evidence based which underpins the Ambition – primarily through the 2021 Joint Strategic Assessment and Covid-19 lessons learned exercises. This was supplemented by continued engagement with community committees and drawing learning from the range of other consultations and engagements being undertaken in the city.
- 4 Since its adoption, a series of workstreams aimed at implementing and embedding the Ambition have been in progress. We are continuing to treat 2022/23 as a transitional year as this work moves forward. This next section of this report provides a brief overview of the progress to date, covering:
 - a) Refreshing our strategic framework
 - b) Mapping and reviewing city governance and partnership arrangements
 - c) Re-establishing our breakthrough approach to drive rapid and targeted progress
 - d) Transitioning to a revised set of performance measures / indicators
 - e) Making the Ambition meaningful at a community level
 - f) Using the Ambition to shape our narrative and communications

What impact will this proposal have?

Refreshing our strategic framework

- 5 With the Ambition in place there is an opportunity to review and better align the range of supporting strategies in place. Where possible, it may also be valuable to try to reduce the overall number of strategies in place which currently run to a very high number, some of which have only a very limited profile. We undertook a mapping exercise and review of the council's strategic framework. The aim of the review was twofold:
 - i. To ensure clearer communications about strategic direction and improve connections between policy areas in line with the Ambition.
 - ii. To reduce the amount of staff time and resources needed to produce, refresh and monitor such a high number of strategies and plans.
- 6 Individual discussions were held with Executive portfolio holders about all the strategies that fall within their remit. Following those discussions, and further engagement with Directors and CLT,

agreement has been reached on a revised strategic framework to support the Best City Ambition. Moving forward elected members have agreed to focus efforts on our cross-cutting three pillar strategies, and a small number of essential thematic priorities:

1 Vision	3 Overarching Pillars	7 Thematic Strategies	Flexible Priorities
Best City Ambition	Health and Wellbeing Strategy Inclusive Growth Strategy Zero Carbon Strategy (TBC)	Better Lives Strategy Children and Young People's Plan Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy Culture Strategy Future Talent Plan Housing Strategy Safer, Stronger Communities Plan	Food Strategy (2022/23) Local Area Plans (2023)

- 7 This framework relates to city outcome-focused strategies and therefore does not include internal priorities such as the People Strategy or Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- 8 Flexible priorities are included to recognise the high priority, but one-time or time-limited nature of some policy issues. These items are unlikely to become a long-term fixture in the framework in the same way as other core issues. The framework also does not list the range of narrowly focused statutory strategies the council is required to produce, and which will clearly need to continue.
- 9 The outcome of this review has three main implications which will shape next steps but be done in a pragmatic way over time. We will:
 - i. Seek to bring these strategies together on the council website, more clearly setting out how our activity overall is in support of our Best City Ambition.
 - ii. Work with colleagues across the organisation to try to coalesce around this framework and avoid, where possible, the creation of new strategies. As an alternative, elected members have agreed we should be seeking to create outcome-focused action plans aligned to the above.
 - iii. Make best use of the council's limited graphic design capacity by focusing on support for the strategies above, with a stripped back and mainly self-service offer using templates etc. available for other documents.

City governance and partnerships

- 10 Following on from the strategy review, we have mapped partnership boards and forums to better understand the route for delivering on the Best City Ambition. As expected, this is a complex picture and further consideration is needed about whether revisions could be made to support better co-ordination of partnership working and improve accountability.
- 11 This issue has also been reflected in the outcomes and recommendations of the council's recent LGA peer review – as reported to Executive Board in December – so will be the focus of further work in the new year.
- 12 Continuing to focus on embedding, communicating and securing broader ownership of the Ambition remains a priority, and ensuring these governance and partnership arrangements are working effectively is a key part of this.

Breakthrough priorities

- 13 The Best City Ambition launched five initial breakthrough priorities:
 - a) Better homes for health and wellbeing

- b) Promoting mental health in the community
 - c) Inclusive green jobs
 - d) Learning outcomes for social mobility
 - e) Responding to the cost-of-living crisis
- 14 The overall intention of the approach is to build on existing partnership working to invigorate cross-city, cross-sector collaborative working, with a focus on a small number of time-limited priorities. The priorities all represent challenges that cannot be addressed by any single organisation alone.
- 15 Each priority is progressing, allowing for capacity and other demands. Attached at Appendix 1 is a brief update on each.

Assessing our progress

- 16 The shift from Best Council Plan to Best City Ambition has provided an opportunity to refresh our approach to how we assess progress against our goals. We have decoupled the Best City reporting from the organisational KPIs allowing for a more tailored approach and schedule to suit the information being monitored – and we have refreshed both sets of KPIs in consultation with Cabinet, CLT and Scrutiny Chairs.
- 17 The Best City KPIs are structured around the three pillars, with a lead indicator and a basket of five supporting indicators for each one. Most of these indicators look towards the long term, in line with the goals set out in the Ambition. The internal facing organisational KPIs are largely operationally focused in support of our ambition to be an efficient, enterprising, healthy, and inclusive organisation. These KPIs mainly relate to performance within service areas such as HR, Finance, Procurement, and IDS.
- 18 2022/23 remains a transitional year so the move to this new reporting framework is currently in progress. There is a performance update alongside this report on the meeting agenda and Board Members may see some changes in the format and indicators being included. As agreed with Scrutiny Chairs we are working to include more time series analysis allowing Scrutiny to see longer term trends – this is already in place for some indicators, with work continuing on the rest. This work will be complete by the time of the next performance report to Scrutiny in June 2023.
- 19 The Leeds Social Progress Index will underpin these KPI indicators as an important part of our overall understanding of progress towards the Best City Ambition. The SPI provides a broader and more detailed set of indicators against which we can judge our success over the longer term and examine a ward-level picture in more detail. In future, annual performance reports are likely to reflect on both the KPIs and the SPI, although the detailed work on what that looks like remains to be completed. A dedicated session for scrutiny board members on the Social Progress Index was held on 14 December 2022.

Making the Ambition meaningful at a community level

1. Using the Best City Ambition to influence priority setting and resource allocation at a local level remain of the utmost importance and is something which has consistently been the focus of discussion with elected members. Work undertaken through the Strategic Review is an important contributor to the next steps, considering in more detail how a Team Leeds approach can foster a community-led approach at a locality level.
2. Alongside this there is also an opportunity to use the Ambition to tell the Leeds story as part of making the case for investment, using it in a different way to communicate with inward investors, developers etc.
3. In taking both of the issues above forward, there are a number of key areas of work ongoing:

- a. Next steps in the Strategic Review, to incorporate the expansion of asset-based and strength-based approaches across the range of council and partner activity in communities (i.e. starting from the place of what people can do; and being led by citizens in our approach to the services we provide). From an inclusive growth perspective, for example, this might include identifying positive assets and activities already existing in communities that can be enhanced to contribute to inclusive, sustainable development. Strength-based approaches can also enhance our support for marginalised people to secure good employment and career progression. This direction will deliver on the principles set out in the Ambition to work with communities and foster a community-led approach. This will in part be picked up through the peer review action plan mentioned earlier, but also reflected in the refreshed Inclusive Growth Strategy due later in 2023 etc.
- b. Early scoping and development of a series of local area plans, aligned to the city's most 'deprived' wards (according to Indices of Multiple Deprivation definition) and the community committee geography. These will, amongst other things, enable elected members and local partners to identify local priorities in line with the Ambition and detail some local performance measures to track progress, drawing on the Leeds Social Progress Index.
- c. Exploring development of a spatial reflection of the Best City Ambition, to 'fill in the blanks' between places and help make the case for investment. This could make a significant contribution to developing a stronger narrative about the challenges and opportunities in Leeds, with its unique city geography in the North. Conversations on this are at an early stage but we are exploring opportunities to work with colleagues at the city's universities to develop a proposal.

Using the Ambition to shape our narrative

20 The Best City Ambition captures the spirit of our mission to tackle poverty and inequality, taking a Team Leeds approach, clearly setting it at the apex of our three pillars of health and wellbeing, inclusive growth and zero carbon. We are using the Ambition to strengthen and amplify the story we tell about the city, threading this through all our communications and engagement activity.

21 Aspects of this approach include:

- a) Production of an animation to explain the Best City Ambition and the Team Leeds approach in a more accessible way.
- b) Exploring opportunities to develop a better web presence for city vision and strategy.
- c) Alongside the partnership review work outlined above, looking at way to strengthen partner communications and opportunities for people to come together around Ambition themes.
- d) Another push in the new year to further communicate, embed, and build wider ownership of the Best City Ambition.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

22 The Best City Ambition is where the three pillars, and the relationships between them, are set out most clearly. They are at the core of the document. All the implementation work outlined in this report is focused on embedding the pillars into the council's and city's strategic approach, and ensuring they guide resources and interventions to improve outcomes for citizens.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 23 This is not a decision-making report and so consultation and engagement on its contents is not required. As is covered above, the Best City Ambition was subject to public consultation prior to its adoption, and its development was subject to very wide consultation and engagement in its co-production.
- 24 Future updates of the Best City Ambition will also be subject to public consultation, with the first refresh planned to take place in 2023.

What are the resource implications?

- 25 There are no resource implications arising directly from this report. The Best City Ambition will be used to guide use of council resources, and any subsequent implications will be picked up as part of the regular budget planning, monitoring and reporting cycle.

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

- 26 There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report.

What are the legal implications?

- 27 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report. Any that arise as a result of decisions taken in line with the Best City Ambition will be picked up through the council's regular governance routes.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 28 Not applicable.

How will success be measured?

- 29 Not applicable.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

- 30 Not applicable.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Breakthrough priorities update.

Background papers

- None.

Better homes for health and wellbeing

Original Drivers: Housing quality, tenure, security, and the local environment are key factors in breaking the link between poverty and inequality and poor health and wellbeing outcomes.

Update: The breakthrough group, chaired by Cllr Fiona Venner, has been established with key partners and organisations to represent our health, care and housing sectors covering the Leeds and West Yorkshire area. The group have met twice and will be meeting monthly in the New Year.

The identified priorities have been developed and agreed through engagement with people and partners, and in some cases build upon and bring together existing work alongside new projects.

Priorities include:

- **Transfer of care/hospital discharge for Leeds residents:** improving the discharge processes, integration work and the flow of people between health, care and housing to avoid unnecessary delays where people have complex, multiple health, care and housing needs. This covers homeless services and those who do have housing but might need support/care packages/adaptations/respite/rehab etc. A Transfer of Care (TOC) Hub has now been established, dedicated to improving the flow of patients ready for discharge and improving health outcomes and experience through this process. The council has committed funding for two new Hospital Caseworker roles to work with the TOC.
- **Weatherproofing and fuel poverty initiative:** using the Disabled Facilities Grant to enhance resources available to support disabled people, older people, and others who may be vulnerable to improve the quality of heating, insulation, or undertake repairs needed. Initiative commenced in April ahs so far 15 homes have been improved with 2 more ongoing.
- **Rise High project with health and care for multi-storey flats:** Work to improve health and wellbeing outcomes, particularly focusing on mental health support. Has been successful in the Clyde's LS12 and resources and scope for expanding work currently being explored.
- **Selective licensing in the private rented sector:** Working in partnership with residents, landlords, communities and partners to improve the quality and management of PRS accommodation, with a focus on reducing health inequalities. Two designated area – Beeston and Harehills – run until January 2025.

Promoting mental health in the community

Original Drivers: Responding to the mental health impact of Covid 19 and the cost-of-living crisis.

Update: The Mental Health breakthrough project takes a local approach to addressing poor mental health in areas of greatest need – within a context of the intensification of mental health inequalities, driven by both the impact of Covid and the cost-of-living crisis.

The breakthrough project is working with and engaging a range of partners to create positive conditions for good mental health. A multi-agency steering group has been formed - with links to the Marmot City work and other breakthrough projects.

It focuses on boosting the protective factors which we know help people. It is doing this by delivering training and support in community settings or 'the places people trust'

The first pilot project is now underway and is being delivered by Humans Being. In consultation with third sector partners and Public Health, the pilot is working with vulnerable women who may be at risk of depression or anxiety - including women in food or fuel poverty, women who have been bereaved during the pandemic, survivors of domestic abuse and young women.

Volunteers (any gender) who have regular contact with vulnerable women, including food bank and community centre volunteers and community members who have an informal leadership or caring role within their community are being trained in wellbeing conversation skills for women.

These volunteers will empower 250 vulnerable women to take control of their wellbeing, put in protective factors and begin to recover from the collective trauma of the pandemic. Ten community groups will be further supported to embed the learning into their organisation through an ongoing process of training and consultancy.

Next Steps: An interim evaluation in January 2023 will inform the next phase of the work. This is likely to involve an element of participatory research – working with and training local people/previous course participants to evaluate how well the project is working and how to develop it going forward.

Inclusive green jobs

Original Drivers: Pre-Covid Leeds labour market too reliant on low skilled / low pay employment; some businesses / sectors vulnerable to decarbonisation; significant economic / employment opportunities linked to green economy and related sectors / activities; increasingly active Anchor Network. There is a significant risk that a current lack of skilled labour will act as a brake on decarbonisation and therefore progress towards net zero.

Update: Initial discussions have focused on the potential to work with Anchor Institutions to utilise the sum of their collective forward capital investment more effectively for the benefit of the city economy, by sharing / publishing investment plans and priorities to provide opportunities to maximise the positive investment of the Leeds £, including:

- *More certainty to education and training providers* - who could develop targeted courses linked to a programme local employment opportunities
- *Working with the construction sector* on local employment/training initiatives, but also wider supply chain opportunities in the city economy
- *Realise synergies between the investment programmes* (and individual investments) of participating Anchors and how they might benefit the wider community

Learning outcomes for social mobility

Original Drivers: Deep-rooted challenges around health, social mobility; stubborn/long-term gap in attainment between poorest (FSM children) and rest – especially at primary age and pre-school; growing and increasingly diverse young population in our most deprived communities

Update: A range of positive discussions have refined the focus of the approach, initially specifically on pre/early-school age children. The implementation of the revised 3 A's strategy has focussed a city-wide push on reading as a key lever in addressing some of the deep-rooted challenges.

Responding to the cost-of-living crisis

Original Drivers: The worsening cost of living crisis which comes on top of already existing stubborn inequalities in Leeds; increasing draws on a limited amount of welfare support available; and the partnership-based outcomes of the strategic review of work in neighbourhoods and communities.

Update: It is imperative that there is a coordinated and collaborative approach to understanding and addressing the cost-of-living crisis both in the immediate term and over the next 18-24 months.

In the short-term, it has been agreed that colleagues involved in the breakthrough priority, from the Council, partners and the 3rd Sector, will come together to form a City Operational Group who will

co-ordinate and integrate activity to help mitigate as far as possible, the immediate cost of living issues arising. This group, which met, through a range of 1:1's over the Summer and for the first time collectively, on 28th September, will meet fortnightly and will report into a City Strategic Group which has been established, and has a membership comprising of Cross Sector CEO level representation, relevant Chief Officers and the Director of Communities, Housing and Environment. The first meeting of this group will take place at the end of October and will meet again in February 2023.

Further to this, the City Operational Group will identify appropriate workstreams for development, with short-term Task and Finish Groups established to take the workstreams forward and report back into the Operational Group. An example of a Task and Finish Group is the already established Warm Spaces Group who are working to put in place a searchable digital map of all Warm Space provision in the city.

Initial discussions have taken place between members of the City Operational Group (both over the summer and in the initial meetings) and some common areas of immediate focus/work to take forward have clearly emerged including,

- An Integrated Communications and Campaign approach, including a single web-presence.
- Greater integration across partners to ensure consistency on Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)
- A training package for front line workers on the IAG available in the city
- A support 'Toolkit' for front line workers to help them support and signpost appropriately
- A collective focus on the provision of Warm Spaces across the city
- An ask around additional volunteers to support the city's work
- A focus on the provision of funding to support the following:
 - To increase organisational resilience and ensure a sustainable approach across the city
 - The provision of direct support to individuals and families - fuel, food and practical support.
 - The availability of Debt Advice within the city
- A City Dashboard of demand and response