

Best City Ambition Update

Date: 16 October 2023

Report of: Director of Strategy and Resources

Report to: Strategy & Resources Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

In 2022, Full Council adopted the Best City Ambition as a replacement for the previous Best Council Plan, marking a shift in how the council sets out its overall strategic vision and intent from one focused on the organisation itself to one focused more on outcomes in the city.

Building on the work that has taken place since its adoption, including development of new strategies for two of the three pillars, feedback from last year's LGA Peer Challenge, and continued progress embedding the Ambition, Executive Board has endorsed the first update of the Best City Ambition. The update will not bring major change but is instead focused on refining the Ambition and evolving the ideas it contains to be certain the council, alongside its partners, is striving for continuous improvement even in an increasingly challenging financial context.

This report outlines the scope of the Best City Ambition update to enable Scrutiny to have early influence over the process and content. More detailed proposals will come back to the Board early in 2024 as normal, before Full Council is asked to make a final decision to adopt and updated version.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- a) Note the scope of the update of the Best City Ambition set out in this report.

What is this report about?

- 1 This report outlines the proposed update of the Best City Ambition that was adopted by Full Council in February 2022.
- 2 The update is an opportunity to further embed the Ambition across the city so that everyone can help tackle inequality and poverty and be a part of Team Leeds. In particular, the Ambition helps with those areas where the three pillars of health and wellbeing, inclusive growth, and zero carbon intersect.
- 3 The Best City Ambition update will expand upon the existing version, remaining consistent with the principles that drove the change from the Best Council Plan to a Best City Ambition i.e., about the city and all the partners rather than just the council. It will respond to the updated picture of the city provided by Census 2021 and be informed by the early findings of the next Leeds Joint Strategic Assessment which will be produced in parallel and is due to be published shortly after the updated Ambition in spring/summer 2024. The update will aim to broaden and deepen the impact of the Team Leeds approach, more clearly articulating the value of partnership working to generate a shared ownership and commitment to the city's shared priorities, for example by influencing what this means for the design and delivery of services, how we communicate and engage residents, and how partner organisations including the council can better align their efforts to maximise the use of the resources we have in the city in the face of ever-increasing pressures people are facing in their daily lives. The Ambition also presents us with the opportunity to tell the positive story of what is being achieved in the city despite the challenges and showcase the huge opportunities the city can provide when we get the relationship right between key policy areas – articulated here through our three pillars.
- 4 The Ambition will continue to provide a high-level summary of the strategic intent for Leeds, with the detail sitting in supporting strategies and delivery plans. The Ambition sets out our direction of travel, our ways of working together as a city so that communities and organisations feel ownership and can align their efforts and work in a Team Leeds way to make a difference to the outcomes.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 5 The Best City Ambition update will reflect on the successes to date and apply this knowledge to advance its overall impact moving forward. The Ambition helps everyone understand the direction of travel for the city, to enable organisations, communities, and individuals to make their best contribution and best use of our collective resources, as well as potentially increase the likelihood of investment opportunities.
- 6 The overarching aim set out in the Best City Ambition is to improve the lives of everyone who calls Leeds home or works in the city. Through this update a suitable approach to measuring progress, which matches the long-term nature of the Ambition, will be further developed and embedded – the direction of which is set out later in this report.. The key areas of focus for the update are as follows:
 - a) **Strengthening Team Leeds** – We know from feedback to date, including from the LGA Peer Challenge in late-2022, that city partners have embraced the powerful idea of Team Leeds. The principles of this partnership-first approach are well set out in the Ambition but will be revisited through the update to reflect on any areas for further improvement. There is now the opportunity to take this further and more effectively embed the approach by demonstrating what it looks like in action - including by sharing good examples and case studies. Further developing the Team Leeds concept can help continue to drive actions which will overcome barriers, bring people together, and deliver impact not least through efforts to continuously improve how we work in neighbourhoods and communities and embrace the idea of community power (including strengths-based and asset-based working).

- b) **Refreshing the Three Pillars** - It is important that this update reflects the revised supporting strategies, including Health & Wellbeing, Inclusive Growth, and the Net Zero action plan, as well as wider initiatives including the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and Child Friendly Leeds Wishes, regeneration and place-based priorities, and partner-led initiatives like the new Third Sector Strategy. Updated Ambition statements and accompanying priorities will be developed for each pillar, drawing on the sources above, and tested through engagement. Currently it is intended to maintain the clear structure of our strategic intent with each pillar being summarised in an Ambition statement underpinned by five priorities for Team Leeds, all shaped by and in direct response to the evidence base we continue to develop alongside partners.
- c) **Sharing best practice through Spotighting** - To support efforts to share successful examples of Team Leeds in action, re-energising the previous approach to developing Spotlights – i.e. short, sharp case studies which champion the impact of work ongoing in the city and share best practice. While further consideration is needed, early thinking is to link from the Ambition to an online space where the best examples of Team Leeds partnership working will be captured and promoted. Providing diverse case studies of how partnership working occurs in different contexts can motivate and support people to think in a more collaborative way, and offers another route to highlight the importance of targeting the intersection between the three pillars where the biggest positive difference can be made to the lives of local people.
- d) **Measuring success** - To support a culture of research and evidence driven approaches to decision making and strategic planning, this update will aim to enhance, and better communicate a progress framework for measuring success. Recognising that the current version of the Ambition does not provide detailed KPIs, it is our intention to develop a framework of success metrics that capture the size and diversity of the visions outlined within the Best City Ambition. Whilst the exact tools informing the reporting cycle are yet to be finalised, paragraphs 18 and 19 provide a more detailed insight into current proposals, including:
 - a) Leeds Joint Strategic Assessment (JSA)
 - b) Leeds Social Progress Index (SPI)
 - c) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in Strategies and Plans

This framework will enable a deeper analysis of the city's progress, empowering partners to align their success metrics with the Ambition and improve the allocation of resources to maximise impact. Further consideration is also being given to incorporating wider city research priorities into the Best City Ambition, potentially through development of a light-touch city research strategy/framework shared with partners, as well as building on bilateral work the council has been pursuing with the city's universities.

- e) **Clearer strategic planning for the city** – With the Best City Ambition now better understood than when it was first adopted, this update can be used to set out the strategic planning framework in place for the city more clearly. In short, the Ambition provides an overall vision – our strategic intent – around which partners can convene, and we can tell the city's story. Much of the detail and delivery plans is embedded in supporting strategies and the various organisational plans of key stakeholders. Connections through to the community are crucial too, with new local area partnership plans being developed for priority wards and the community anchors network continuing to establish itself across the third sector and beyond. The Ambition update will seek to set out this framework in a clear and understandable way, supporting partners and citizens - and where relevant other stakeholders including Government - to see how we are working together in pursuit of shared goals.

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

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 7 The update will reflect the latest versions of the key supporting strategies through refreshing the series of priority statements. The new Inclusive Growth strategy was launched in mid-September and the Health and Wellbeing strategy will be launched in the autumn. The intention is to use the Ambition to create stronger shared ownership over these priorities, thus building on the Team Leeds approach.
- 8 Zero Carbon remains a more emerging pillar which is less established over the long term than the two noted above, with its scope continuing to adapt and widen due to the fast-moving agenda it covers. The update provides an opportunity to further strengthen the Zero Carbon pillar, and this is likely to be a major focus through consultation and engagement. At this stage, widening the focus of the Ambition to better reflect the importance of enhancing biodiversity alongside reducing carbon emissions is a clear and important priority.
- 9 The intersection between the three pillars will be emphasised further in this update, encouraging organisations and communities to consider the wider impact of their efforts.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 10 During the development of the Best City Ambition update, insights will be drawn from a range of key stakeholders through the engagement that will take place. Where possible, following the approach which was successfully used to develop the Ambition in 2021/22, discussions will take place at existing boards and forums to maximise reach, help embed within wider context, and reduce the additional organisational capacity needed to undertake the work.
- 11 In addition to discussion with Scrutiny, a range of consultation and engagement is being undertaken to capture insights across the public, private and third sector. This includes attending all ten community committees, the Leeds Youth Council, Inclusive Anchors Network, Health and Wellbeing Board, Staff Network Chairs, Leeds Community Anchors, and a range of other partnership forums such as the Third Sector Leadership Group. This will be supported by a range of engagement across the council itself, and the potential to host a roundtable discussion(s) to hear from key partners not reached by through the channels outlined above.
- 12 To supplement this activity insights and content will be drawn from the strategic plans of key partners in the city, fully recognising the importance of the Best City Ambition being owned by a broader group. The Ambition offers a strengthened opportunity to influence these partner plans and strategies, taking the shared position it will establish as a basis in future years. We will also continue to draw on feedback received through other engagement the council undertakes and the regular discussions that take place in city forums, as well as the helpful reflections on the early successes and further growth opportunities for the Ambition from the LGA Peer Challenge.

What are the resource implications?

- 13 There will be no additional or specific resource implications from this report, all engagement and consultation will be carried out within current staff resource and budget. It is anticipated that the Best City Ambition will influence organisational plans in the city and potentially the use of resources to deliver priorities according to need and in line with shared priorities.

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

14 There are very minimal risks that will arise from updating the Best City Ambition. Most notably, is minor potential for communication challenges, where the update of the Best City Ambition has not been fully communicated across the city. The impact of this could be a lack of awareness surrounding the change in priorities. That said, as this ambition is set out to be a high-level overview, it is reasonable to believe that each of the supporting strategies will have been effectively communicated with relevant partners, thus mitigating risk.

What are the legal implications?

15 In accordance with the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 the council has determined that the Best City Ambition is of such significance that it should be included in the Budget and Policy Framework (B&PF) and be subject to adoption by Full Council. In November 2021, Full Council resolved to approve the necessary constitutional amendments to facilitate this.

16 The Best City Ambition update will therefore be prepared in accordance with the B&PF procedure rules, including referral of the initial proposals to Scrutiny, with those considerations scheduled to be made in January 2024. In light of these reasons, this report is not eligible for Call In in line with Executive and Decision Making Procedure Rule 5.1.2.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

17 The alternative to this update of the Ambition would be to continue with the current edition. However, this would constrain the potential impact of the Ambition and due to reasons highlighted in paragraphs 5-6, this is not the preferred option.

How will success be measured?

18 There are lots of existing routes through which progress towards the Best City Ambition is regularly monitored and reported. These include a range of annual reports, updates on health and wellbeing, inclusive growth and climate change, Equality Improvement Priorities, strategy updates and monitoring such as the regular Thriving child poverty strategy reports to Executive Board, and over the last two years has also included regular updates on work to respond to the cost-of-living crisis. This list is not exhaustive and while there is a huge amount of activity undertaken, currently this is not suitably reflected in the Best City Ambition itself.

19 Therefore, one of the key objectives for this update of the Ambition is to set out more clearly the progress framework which will underpin it. While further details and specific reporting cycles are still to be determined, early proposals are for the progress framework to consist of three main parts (alongside clarifying what is described above):

- a) **Leeds Joint Strategic Assessment (JSA)** – statutory city analysis undertaken every three years and covering the widest set of health determinants. The JSA provides an opportunity to look in details and areas of progress and challenge covering themes including the economy, health and wellbeing, environment and climate change, housing, transport and mobility, early start and education, and more.
- b) **Leeds Social Progress Index (SPI)** – adopted earlier this year the Leeds SPI, developed alongside the global non-profit Social Progress Imperative, was created to help the city measure progress on Inclusive Growth and a broad view of factors affecting this. The SPI can help us to understand progress at a local ward level across its three domains: basic human needs, foundations of wellbeing, and opportunity.

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

20 These arrangements will be refined further and tested through consultation and engagement, before being presented as part of the initial proposals to Executive Board and then Scrutiny later this year.

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

21 Engagement on the update will happen through the rest of Summer and into the Autumn, with the intention being to bring initial proposals forward to Executive Board in November 2023. Following public consultation and further consideration of those proposals by Scrutiny, as required by the council's Budget and Policy Framework procedure rules, the final update proposals will be received by Executive Board and Full Council in February 2024 for consideration and approval.

22 The Director of Strategy and Resources will have overall responsibility for implementation of the Best City Ambition update.

Appendices

None.

Background papers

None.