

**Legal and Democratic Services**

Governance Services

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Date: 24th July 2024

To: All Members of Council

Dear Councillor

**COUNCIL MEETING – 10<sup>th</sup> JULY 2024**

At the above meeting, the thirty minutes of Question Time expired with questions 10 to 61 unanswered. Council Procedure Rule 11.6 requires that each Member of Council is sent responses to such questions.

**Q10** Councillor I Wilson – Does the Executive Member have a message for all of those people who have been involved in the smooth running of both the Local and General Elections?

**A** Executive Member for Resources

The General Election was called just 20 days after the local and WY Mayor elections. Our elections team and all the other teams across the council that support them had to move fast to make sure everything was ready for July 4.

For the General Election the team appointed:-

1,307 polling station staff

534 postal vote opening staff

496 count staff

They booked 331 polling stations and sent out 150,604 postal votes

The entire Electoral Services Team have worked every single day since 22 May when the General Election was called, no time off. This has meant 60/70-hour weeks. Several of the team had to cancel holidays they had booked and paid for. The cost of the cancelled holidays was recovered for them.

Between 22 May when it was called, and the register to vote and postal vote deadlines on 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> June, the team processed over 30,000 applications to register to vote and over 12,000 applications to vote by post. They also responded to 9,628 emails.

On polling day the team worked from 5.30am right through to the end of the count which was around 6am the following day. It's been a long hard slog for the team, but they have been absolutely incredible, and I am so proud of every one of them.

Other teams across the council worked alongside the elections team to help deliver the General Election. The staff at John Charles Centre for Sport helped ensure the count venue was ready, Parking Services assisted with the traffic management plan and Climate, Energy & Green Spaces helped trim back foliage to ensure road signs could be read easily. IDS ensured all the systems needed to coordinate the count worked without any trouble, Customer Services dealt with thousands of general enquiries from the public, Building Services upgraded the power system at the count venue, the council's Communication Team coordinated the huge media delegation that descended on the count venue that night, and the Web Team were there to ensure all our results were published promptly on the internet.

Let's not forget the 2,337 additional staff that worked in polling stations, opening postal votes, or at the count itself. They all worked long hours with amazing attention to detail.

This truly was a #TeamLeeds achievement. Well done to all of you and thank you for all your hard work. Now you can all get some well-deserved rest!

**Q11** Councillor B Flynn – Can the Executive Member for Economy, Transport & Sustainable Development advise me how much of the previous Government funding to the Council for the repair of potholes has actually been spent?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

Thank you for the question. I can confirm that since 2010/11 the council has spent all additional funding made available from Government for highways maintenance, and in the case of this current year on schedule to likewise spend it all. In addition, Council has also spent a further £157,000,000 of its own capital allocation into highways maintenance since 2010, with another £29,000,000 allocated in the next 3 years.

**Q12** Councillor C Campbell – Could the Executive Member inform Council when the damaged wall at Manor Garth Park in Otley will be repaired?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy Environment and Green Space

Damage to the wall in Manor Garth Park in Otley is occurring as a consequence of tree roots damage from protected privately owned trees that are in very close proximity to the wall. The wall is being monitored for any further deterioration including any association risk to park users. Whilst the damage caused is unfortunate, repairing it is neither necessary nor essential. Otley and Yeadon ward presently has £162k in available s106 greenspace funding and it could be feasible to undertake walling work as part of a broader access improvement scheme in the park should members wish to do so.

Conversations remain ongoing with the developer of this site regarding existing developments and the suitability of work completed by the developer within public space along the river front. In addition, future developments and associated community infrastructure investment



are also under consideration. As part of that process, discussions remain ongoing regarding the developers longer term intention regarding the wall.

**Q13** Councillor A Scopes – Please can the Executive Member give an update on the Child Friendly Leeds Awards 2024?

**A** Executive Member for Children and Families

The fabulous Child Friendly Leeds Awards took place on 4 July, and I'm delighted to share the highlights.

The awards recognise the people, places and organisations that help make Leeds a child-friendly city. They're planned and delivered by a dynamic group of 10 to 17-year-olds who form the planning committee. This year, the group known as The Midnight Snack Club, were supported by a team at Leeds Heritage Theatres and planned every detail from the theme of movies, to the script, performances and decorations. These young people worked together to create an unforgettable experience.

An audience of around 350 people saw performances from talented young people in Leeds, including singer Mary Collins, indie rock band The Casuals, musician Josh Stanchev and dance act DAZL Explosion, made up of children aged seven to 10.

Among the winners announced throughout the night was 14 year old Leigh-Taylor Arundale, in the 'Child or Young Person of the Year' category, for her incredible work supporting a range of causes.

From arranging fundraising events for the Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal to raising funds for dementia and Alzheimer's charities, Leigh-Taylor's commitment is truly inspiring. She has also raffled teddy bears for defibrillator equipment, raised money in the aftermath of the Moroccan earthquake, supported a friend through Marie Curie and mobilised efforts to collect clothing for Ukraine, by contacting headteachers at local schools.

Other winners across the 7 categories were:

- CATCH Leeds, who scooped Youth Group of the Year;
- West Leeds SILC and Rob Lakewood, who were recognised for the difference they make for children and young people;
- Tutti Frutti Productions, for their inspirational creativity through arts and culture;
- SNAPS charity, who through their support for children for additional needs and their families, have made an exceptional contribution to the 12 Child Friendly Wishes;
- and Getaway Girls, who were awarded Best Place for Children and Young People.

Finally, Leeds Rhinos and the Leeds Rhinos Foundation received the prestigious award for 'Overall Contribution to Making Leeds a Child Friendly City'. Their generosity in providing hundreds of free tickets to children from a range of backgrounds, and their community work to engage children in sport, truly embody the spirit of Child Friendly Leeds.

None of this would be possible without our incredible sponsors and the city's Child Friendly Leeds ambassadors. Thank you to AQL, First Direct Arena, Hamara, Leeds Bid, The Grammar School at Leeds, Trinity Leeds, University of Leeds, and the White Rose Shopping Centre. Their commitment to making Leeds child-friendly is unwavering.



I'd like to congratulate all winners, those shortlisted and nominees, and everyone who contributes to making Leeds a place where children thrive. Thank you for championing Leeds' child friendly future.

**Q14** Councillor B Gettings – Does the council know how many people are sleeping rough in the city centre and are they on a register and what support are they receiving?

**A** Executive Member for Housing

The Street Support Partnership do have a clear understanding on the numbers of rough sleepers found each month in the City Centre. We have a commissioned team (CGL street outreach) who do a daily early morning sweep as well as a monthly headcount covering the whole of Leeds.

The people found often have multiple complex needs and so a support plan is agreed and arranged in conjunction with those individuals around their unmet needs. This can be a combination of needs which range from accommodation to physical health, mental health, criminal justice or substance misuse. The people we are working with are often the ones who fall through the systems and services, making it harder for them to address problems via the usual pathways which is why the outreach model is so important.

Not every person who is found rough sleeping is homeless and so support is offered to those with accommodation around understanding the difficulties someone may be experiencing which leads them to sleep rough.

The partnership and commissioned services, use a case management system licenced by LCC to record all interactions, risks and support plans with anyone found to be rough sleeping or use and access support services available such as the St Annes Resource Centre or our off street accommodation provision. LHO also have multiple systems which they record personal information around assessments, tenancies and legal duties.

Leeds are constantly striving to improve the work we do with those who rough sleep and we are hoping to soon become a MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) City. MEAM partnership supports local areas across the country to transform services and systems and to directly improve the lives of people facing multiple disadvantage. We will then use our shared knowledge and practical experience from this work to influence policy at the national and local level.

**Q15** Councillor K Brooks – Please can the Executive Member provide an update on the building of affordable housing in Leeds?

**A** Executive Member for Housing

Over the last 5 years we have delivered more affordable homes than any other Core City, with 2,859 new affordable homes delivered. The last two years have seen over 650 new affordable homes delivered per annum, a 13 year delivery high. I am particularly pleased to report that direct council delivery accounted for over 40% of these additional homes in 2023/24, up from an average of 25%, and we have now provided over 670 council homes in the last 4 years. Each of these homes in turn enables us to provide a follow-on let and mean that more families and others in priority housing need can move into a more suitable home. We opened the Gascoigne House extra care housing facility in Middleton last October as part of a transformational scheme to provide 176 homes in Middleton. The scheme has already



won or been shortlisted for a number of awards and we are looking forward to our next extra care scheme starting on site this year in Armley.

Despite all the challenges of recent years, our projections for affordable housing delivery working with our valued (Registered Housing) partners continues to show an upward trajectory over the next two years, where delivery is anticipated to reach c900 homes per annum and completing the delivery of our current total pipeline of 1,200 new council homes in the next few years.

We know that the affordable housing sector will face significant challenges in delivery post 2026, with funding streams via Homes England and WYCA's Brownfield Land Programme coming to an end. We are working closely with the new government to ensure that longer term funding certainty [and RtB reform] can be realised to keep us on the upward delivery trajectory for affordable housing and meeting the needs of our residents.

**Q16** Councillor M Robinson – Would the Executive Member agree with me that when parents find themselves with a poor school bus travel provider it damages trust in all providers, negatively impacts student learning and hits those with the worst travel options hardest? What recourse can be set up to challenge this? And would they agree that a new voluntary agreement with parents in our area should be produced that ensures a better level of service?

**A** Executive Member for Children and Families

We do not agree that a negative experience with one bus provider reasonably damages trust in all providers, and WYCA work hard to support and facilitate bus transport in the city, and across the region. Travel options in more rural areas can be challenging, particularly if parents are choosing to travel to schools outside of the Leeds area.

**Q17** Councillor C Hart-Brooke – As we approach the first anniversary of the launch of Beryl Bikes in Leeds can the executive member update on how usage and uptake is versus initial projections and how the next 12 months will see this scheme develop?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

For the Leeds City Bikes scheme, operated by Beryl, ridership is measured in trips/active vehicle/day where active vehicles are bikes available to hire by users. The scheme was projected to average 2 trips/ active vehicle/day across the year with each month's forecast adjusted for seasonality. In December and January, ridership was expected to be 1.2 and would peak in July at 2.8.

When the scheme launched in mid September 2023 the initial demand for the scheme was very high with ridership figures of just under 3. However vandalism and resulting reduced bike availability, along with the exceptionally wet weather during the winter meant ridership was reduced significantly through Autumn and winter reaching its lowest number of 0.33 in January 2024.

Throughout the spring, ridership has improved and Beryl have revised the seasonality to account for the potential for high demand in the summer and lower than expected demand in the winter. Since expansion of the scheme at the start of April, we have seen an upturn in demand and the following ridership figures:

April: Actual 1.25, projected 2.4



May: Actual 2.12, projected 2.6

June: Actual 2.06, projected 2.6

At the current time, the number of active vehicles is lower than expected due to another increase in vandalism and anti-social behaviour directed towards the bikes. This means that although uptake of available bikes is good, there are fewer bikes than expected available on-street. Discussions are ongoing with partners including WYCA and West Yorkshire Police around specific enforcement resources and Beryl are working with partners to find more resource to support the operations team based in Leeds.

The final tranche of docking stations and bikes, match funded by Beryl in the contract, were due to be deployed into the scheme at the end of June. Due to the issues stated above the final expansion of the scheme has been put on hold until a manageable and predictable service level can be achieved. The plans for this expansion would see the service area extend further into Roundhay, Moortown and Weetwood wards. There would also be stations added into the current service area to support popular locations. We still anticipate this expansion to take place within the next 12 months.

**Q18** Councillor A McCluskey – Please can the Executive Member for Equality, Health & Wellbeing give an update on services supporting people with drug and alcohol issues in the city?

**A** Executive Member for Equality, Health and Wellbeing

As a compassionate city, Leeds City Council has an absolute commitment to support our residents who are experiencing harm from drug and alcohol use.

Our Public Health team commission an integrated service that supports adults and young people affected by drug and/or alcohol issues called Forward Leeds. The service provides:

- Recovery co-ordination - support from prescribed medicines if necessary and access to different activities to support recovery
- Harm reduction
- Community detox
- Specialist support - e.g. families, young people, pregnancy, co-occurring mental health and alcohol / drug use
- Sustained recovery - recovery support and relapse prevention
- Training for professionals

There are usually around 3,500 people being supported at any one time, with on average 300 people moving into and leaving the service each month. To put this into context, Leeds has the third largest treatment population in England, only behind Birmingham and Lancashire.

For some years, Forward Leeds has consistently been one of the highest performing drug and alcohol services in England. It is also one of only a few drug and alcohol treatment services in the country that is rated outstanding by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Following the publication of the national drug strategy: From Harm to Hope, Leeds City Council were allocated substantial grant funding, from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) to increase and enhance drug and alcohol prevention, treatment and recovery service provision for Leeds. This has now been invested and I'm pleased to say that in June OHID visited Leeds as an area of good practice in supporting opiate and crack users into treatment – Leeds is an exemplar and the learning will be shared with other Local Authorities.



There is a new national threat of synthetic opioids which are much stronger than heroin and fentanyl and which pose a risk to overdose. Leeds is well-placed to respond to these threats, we have a drug alert system in place and people who use opioids - as well as our partners in Police and Probation - carry lifesaving Naloxone.

I'd like to thank Officers in Public Health, Adults and Health Commissioning, and Forward Leeds for the excellent service they provide to our residents.

**Q19** Councillor T Smith – Given that the use of large “ride on” mowing machines in older sections of a cemetery often causes damage to headstones, puts the operator at risk, and leaves larger headstone or vaults in danger of collapsing; what contracts exist between Cemeteries (as client) and Ground Maintenance (as contractor) in terms of the number of cuts per year, the specification for that grass cutting and the machinery used?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The maintenance of all grass areas within cemeteries is undertaken by the council's own staff working within the Climate Energy and Green Spaces (CEGS) service and teams operate within a geographical area of the city delivering maintenance of cemeteries, parks and other green and open spaces. Beyond specialist works such as construction or drainage, there are no contracted arrangements in place with third party providers for maintenance activity. In common with all operations of our staff, cemetery mowing is undertaken in a safe and controlled way using appropriate equipment that is provided and maintained by the CEGS workshop. The council recently approved a significant investment in new plant and equipment over a 3-year period to support the operations of the CEGS teams and the first equipment purchased under this investment is already operating in the city including a number of electrically powered mowers specifically purchased to assist with operations within our cemeteries.

**Q20** Councillor L Buckley – Would the Executive Member for Economy, Transport & Sustainable Development please confirm to Council what actions he will be taking to reverse the unsightly and dangerous ‘relaxed mowing’ of highway verges, now that vegetation can be seen growing on/through the Ring Road surface?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

The areas of relaxed mowing introduced across the city are now maturing well with an attractive, healthy diversity of species appearing, providing food and habitat for insects and small mammals helping to support biodiversity across the city in response to the declared climate emergency. In addition to the support for wildlife, these areas help tackle pollution, reduce urban heat extremes, slow down rainfall flows entering drainage systems and lock away atmospheric carbon below ground. These changes to mowing approaches only involve soft margins with no changes introduced to the engineered highway road surface. Where sight lines are required for safety at highway junctions these remain on our mowing list. We are always looking at opportunities to introduce further relaxation to mowing activities as we consider the changes made to grass maintenance across the city provide long term environmental and ecological benefits and there are no plans to revert to close mowing for any of the relaxed areas in the foreseeable future.

**Q21** Councillor C Hart-Brooke – 2024 has seen significant disruption in waste collections in Leeds, apparently due in part to staffing levels. This manifested mostly as missed brown bin collections in many parts of the city. Can the executive member update on what the root



cause(s) were of this unavailability of capacity and what learnings and steps have been taken to minimise the chance of such failures in future?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The refuse service has experienced difficulties in completing all collections on a number of occasions in the last couple of months. Unfortunately, due to difficulties mainly in getting driver cover, the ability to revisit missed streets has been severely affected, meaning we have been unable to recover all bins within the two-day timescale we aim for, and a small proportion we have not been able to recover at all.

On those days that we are unable to send all 75 crews/wagons out to fully complete the collection rounds due, we prioritise black and green bin collections. If we need to stand a brown bin route will we choose the route with the least amount of garden waste due to be emptied that day based on previous tonnage records.

Since the brown bin collection restarted for 2024 in April, the service has successfully collected 99% of the routes, with 1% having to present their brown bin at the next scheduled collection.

Communications have been sent to ward members on missed collections and we are very sorry to the relatively small number of customers who have had to wait until the next collection.

With regards the root causes, there have been a number of coinciding factors that have contributed. These have resulted in a combination or more staff being off work than usual, and difficulty in proving sufficient cover on some days, particularly for LGV drivers.

In line with many other operational services that work on a shift based pattern, cover for staff absence is provided through a combination of a permanent staffing pool, agency and voluntary overtime. We have found it more difficult recently to source LGV drivers from Agencies. Recent recruitment has resulted in more drivers and loaders for the cover pool, which in turn will reduce the reliance on voluntary overtime and reduce the risk of future difficulties and disruption to service.

**Q22** Councillor T Smith – There has been a lot of unacceptable damage to headstones, including Commonwealth War Graves, from grass cutting in Pudsey Cemetery which is likely replicated across the city. What action is being taken to prevent this damage happening in the future and who is liable for the cost of repairing the damage that has already been caused?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The maintenance of all grass areas within cemeteries is undertaken by the council's own staff working within the Climate Energy and Green Spaces (CEGS) service and teams operate within a geographical area of the city delivering maintenance of cemeteries, parks and other green and open spaces. In common with all operations of our staff, cemetery mowing is undertaken in a safe and controlled way using appropriate equipment with training activity specifically including procedures to operate equipment around sensitive stonework and planting without causing damage. Headstones, memorials, and grave surfaces remain the responsibility of grave owners and this includes maintenance and repair costs. When damage is directly attributable to our operations, the council would instruct suitable repairs using approved contractors or meet the reasonable costs of repairing the damage.





**Q23** Councillor B Flynn – Can the Executive Member for Children and Families guarantee that children with SEN, and in particular those with sensory disabilities, will not be required to take public transport to school under the new proposals for over 16 SEN transport?

**A** Executive Member for Children and Families

We have an Independent Travel Training team who identify and support young people with SEND to learn how to safely use public transport where appropriate. This work is irrespective of the current consultation on proposals for post-16 SEND transport.

**Q24** Councillor C Hart-Brooke – Officers in our semi rural ward asked Cllrs over a year ago to help assist in funding ebikes for officers so they could cover our large ward more feasibly. Funding was found but hit a brick wall when WYP procurement refused to allow due to “lack of agreed specification” for police ebikes. Over 12 months of chasing and frustration by officers and Cllrs has failed to progress this. Would the executive member responsible for police engagement agree that it’s unacceptable that WYP can’t agree a specification for something so simple and would they be willing to raise this with the Mayor’s office on behalf of hard working police officers and Cllrs?

**A** Executive Member for Communities, Customer Services and Community Safety

Whilst the offer of financial support from a number of councillors across the city to support the provision of E-bikes has been gratefully received by officers in Leeds District Police, unfortunately, West Yorkshire Police have advised they are unable to accept funding for E-bikes at the present time.

This is because they are still working to arrange a suitable financial agreement / framework which would include both the purchase of a legally compliant E-bike model (that meets their specifications) as well as ongoing maintenance commitments.

WYP have acknowledged that this has been the situation for some months now, but due to an ongoing review, their central Procurement department is having to prioritise other Force critical contracts.

Additionally, when senior officers canvassed the six Leeds Neighbourhood Policing Teams only two of them had a commitment from members interested in part-funding E-bikes. With demand/interest being limited locally and Force-wide, the purchase is not yet deemed a priority for WYP procurement.

Chief Inspector Tierney in Leeds police is the point of contact and she will continue to work with both the neighbourhood policing teams and local elected members with a view to progressing this matter in due course.

**Q25** Councillor W Dixon – Does council agree that the Leeds homes fencing policy needs reviewing to ensure the safety of our children and vulnerable adults?

**A** Executive Member for Housing

The Housing Leeds fencing policy was reviewed earlier this year to ensure that that Housing Leeds continues to meet it’s legal and regulatory obligations in respect of repairs,



maintenance and replacement of fences while also ensuring the council does not incur unnecessary costs for works that it's not responsible for.

The policy ensures that all requests for fencing works are treated in a fair and consistent manner and includes consideration for any children living in the home. In addition, a panel has been formed to consider any extenuating circumstances outside the parameters of the policy. The panel meets bi-monthly and considers evidence such as resident vulnerabilities in order to inform its decision making.

**Q26** Councillor B Anderson– Is the Leader of Council happy that the quality of service/help and support to some Councillors is far worse than the standard 10 day turnaround expected?

**A** Executive Member for Resources

I'm not aware of the specifics to which Cllr Anderson alludes. However if any councillor has an unreasonable delay in receiving answers to casework matters or other queries that they might have, then those concerns should be addressed to the relevant Director, Chief Officer or Executive Member.

**Q27** Councillor C Hart-Brooke – On 19<sup>th</sup> January the council issued a press release saying it anticipated the sale of the trophy U1 numberplate to help bridge the urgent £58.4 million budget gap and that “experts estimating it could fetch a substantial figure in a private sale”. Now a further six months have passed can the executive member update on how this urgent contribution to our budget gap is progressing?

**A** Executive Member for Resources

The potential sale of the U1 registration plate remains a consideration for the council but no decision to sell has been made. Should a decision be subsequently made to sell the asset this will be progressed in accordance with the Council's decision-making framework.

**Q28** Councillor W Dixon – Does council expect our new Government to invest more into our roads in the coming months?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

As yet we do not know, but we will continue to liaise with DfT and any new monies secured will be published in the normal way.

**Q29** Councillor B Anderson – What excuse does the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space give for Recovery Collections being ignored in some Wards in order to give preference to other wards, and what actions will he introduce to ensure that all Wards are treated equally in the future?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The recovery of bins that were missed on the scheduled day of delivery follows processes that have been in place for a number of years, and are always dependant on the amount of resources available on a given day to do the extra work required.

For smaller scales misses, of up to a handful of streets, the work is usually undertaken by the same crew the next day before they begin that day's scheduled collections. This is often referred to as “slippage” work.



Where that is not possible, or the scale of the missed collections is more than a few streets, the work is added to a recovery list and is allocated by the Duty Manager Team to a recovery/back up crew to do. That of course relies on there being enough resources (staff and wagons) spare to create a recovery crew for that day. How that work list is prioritised may depend on a number of factors, such as:

- creating a list of the same waste type (for example all black bin misses collected together).
- creating an efficient recovery day's work to maximise the amount done; for example avoiding sending a crew to do a few streets on one side of the city and then travelling several miles to the other side of the city for a few more.
- prioritising black bin waste over green bin waste over brown bin waste.
- consideration as to the relative impact of leaving the waste uncollected on the local environment – for example if it is a consecutive miss and overflowing or side waste is likely.

The staff make these decisions in professional and fair manner and with the above sensible considerations. All wards are treated equally in how the above factors are considered and it is the customers that we focus on, not the ward in which they live.

**Q30** Councillor R Downes – Given that the Council has decided that it is not in the public interest to prosecute the Leeds Bradford Airport (LBA) for nighttime flying infringements, could the Executive Member please comment on GALBA's recent claims that LBA is instructing a third party to operate rules that LBA knows have no legal basis?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

The City Council understands, that LBA successfully applied to the Department for Transport for an agency called Airport Co-ordination Limited (ACL), to independently manage flight schedules on behalf of the airport. It would however be inappropriate for the City Council to comment publicly on claims being made by a third party, in relation to LBA and ACL.

**Q31** Councillor W Dixon – Would council agree that we need more investment to build laybys on our council estates to ensure traffic flow and reduce emissions in the process?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Greenspace

The question presumably relates to lay-bys to predominantly provide car parking, rather than for buses or other activity. An alternative to lay-bys is verge hardening which has been undertaken in some locations by the council.

Any lay-bys or verge-hardening to provide parking have been undertaken on a discretionary basis by Housing, but due to the significant amount of on-street parking, resources can only be directed at specific locations on a discretionary basis, as funding allows. There is no budget available for these works from Highways, which is focussed primarily on maintenance and road safety.

Whilst parked cars on residential or estate roads can cause delays and obstruction, they can also help reduce speeds and make the routes less attractive for through-traffic, keeping flows down. Road safety is a primary concern especially with the adoption of Vision Zero and any shift in the council's approach to this would need careful consideration for the impact on road safety.



With regard to emissions, the Council routinely assesses air quality across the district and the main focus is on areas where the air quality is close to or exceeds quality thresholds at the point where people are exposed to the pollution. Because of the relatively low traffic flow and delay in most estates (compared with the main road network) air quality is much less likely to be a key factor in decisions around the highway layout and investment priorities.

If there are delays within residential estates which are substantial and regularly delay buses, then a case could be made to invest in lay-bys at specific locations. Each situation would need to be assessed on its own merit.

**Q32** Councillor B Anderson – Will the Executive Member responsible for Street Cleansing explain why the service are refusing to take further actions in regard to landowners who are refusing to cut back overgrown paths, when those landowners are not responding to requests?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

Where vegetation from private land overhangs a highway or any other road or footpath to which the public has access so as to endanger or obstruct the passage of vehicles or pedestrians, or obstructs or interferes with the view of drivers of vehicles, the Council's Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team (CNT) will and does use powers set in legislation (Highways Act 1980) to serve notice on the land owner to lop/cut the vegetation to remove the cause of the danger, obstruction or interference.

The legislation sets out clear requirements in terms of fair notice and timescales that must be allowed and the council should always be proportionate and pass the public interest test in its actions/enforcement.

Appropriate arboriculture consideration must also be given during bird-nesting season, for example with reference to the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Where appropriate, Parks and Countryside take the lead in issues relating to how trees on private land affecting the highway are best resolved.

Ultimately if the vegetation is overgrown and meets the criteria in the legislation (so not just height or aesthetic issue), CNT can and does undertake work in default and seek to recover costs from the landowner where notices are not complied with.

**Q33** Councillor W Dixon – Does council agree it's time to extend the restrictions on where HMO's are built to support our neighbourhood to remain family friendly?

**A** Executive Member for Housing

Unfortunately, the legislation available to Housing does not enable the Council to restrict or manage the number or proliferation of HMO's. It only allows us to manage the quality of the accommodation, such as the level of amenities, the living space and safety of the occupants who resident within it. The remit of the housing function is to ensure those living in a HMO have a safe well managed property with the required level of amenities and living space.



**Q34** Councillor B Flynn – Can the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Active Lifestyles and Culture advise me what the average increase in charges for residents in the last 2 council years for social care clients was resulting from:

- i. the removal of the MAC cap and what the highest individual increase was; and
- ii. the same information for clients who have more than one care worker?

**A** Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Active Lifestyles and Culture

**Methodology:** We have used the figures from the original executive board report cohort to establish the benchmark for the two financial years. For the 2023/24 we have used a snapshot of the Billing information from the month of January 2024. We have also added a third category for those who were impacted by both policy changes, these are not individuals are not included in the figures for the two individual policy changes. As detailed below we have also applied notional increases that would have occurred to the MAC cap had the policy change not been implemented. As you will note the total number of people affected in 2022/23 was 248 and the total number of people that are still affected in 2023/24 has significantly reduced to 48 as a number of residents have moved into residential care, passed away, funded by NHS or now receive financial assistance from Leeds City Council.

	2022/23			2023/24		
	More than one care worker	Removal of MAC cap	Both	More than one care worker	Removal of MAC cap	Both
Highest	£213.15	£1,631.07	£738.90	£312.90	£1,130.36	£726.95
Lowest	£8.59	£2.49	£18.70	£11.18	£63.70	£78.80
Average	£84.21	£628.55	£160.24	£152.18	£578.69	£256.94
Total Residents Affected	103	53	92	27	8	13

**More than one carer:** In 2022 there were 103 residents affected by the policy change, only 27 of these still received multiple care workers in January 2024. 7 of these also reduced their package meaning they have not paid more in the second financial year. In 2023/24 also removed a subsidised hourly rate for home care regardless of the number of workers, which explains why the impact is higher in the second financial year.

**Removal of MAC cap:** In 2022 there were 53 residents affected by the policy change, only 8 of these were still Full Cost payers in January 2024. Figures in the table above are based on the council notionally increasing the MAC cap by the agreed percentage increases usually agreed at Executive Board (pre policy change). MAC cap in 2021/22 was £482.00, increasing by 3% to £496.50 (in 2022/23). Further increasing by 10.1% to £547.00 (in 2023/24).

**Affected by both policy changes:** In 2022 there were 92 residents affected by the policy change, only 13 of these were still financially affected by the policy changes in January 2024. Figures in the table above are based on the council notionally increasing the MAC cap by the agreed percentage increases usually agreed at Executive Board (pre policy change). MAC cap in 2021/22 was £482.00, increasing by 3% to £496.50 (in 2022/23). Further increasing by 10.1% to £547.00 (in 2023/24).



**Q35** Councillor W Dixon – Could the council do more to tackle prostitution and nudity on the streets of Beeston & Holbeck?

**A** Executive Member for Communities, Customer Service and Community Safety

Leeds City Council recognises sex work exists on a complex spectrum influenced by various societal and personal factors and as such, our strategy will continue to be set through a lens of reducing 'high risk and/or high harm' in places where it is prevalent. This includes working collaboratively to concurrently:

- Reduce the vulnerability and improve the safety, health, and wellbeing of street sex workers
- Target 'harm-doers' involved in criminal activity, including coercion, exploitation, trafficking and kerb crawling
- Reduce sex work-related anti-social behaviour adversely affecting local residents
- Use intelligence-led deployment of the partnership's resources to reduce the impact on local residents

The council uniquely joint funds a highly visible specialist dedicated police team. If anybody is causing harm, alarm, or distress, and/or committing a criminal offence, we strongly encourage local residents to report this to the Police.

We will continue to keep things under review and work closely with West Yorkshire Police, using a range of criminal, civil and regulatory powers to take the appropriate action.

**Q36** Councillor B Anderson – Who does the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space hold responsible for the unacceptable missed bins in the city and in particular Adel & Wharfedale Ward?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

Leeds has the second largest council refuse operation in the UK. Our hardworking staff empty about 5,000 tonnes of household waste from half a million black, green and brown bins every week; making sure less than half a percent goes to landfill.

The service has experienced difficulties in completing all collections on a number of occasions in the last couple of months. Unfortunately, due to difficulties mainly in getting driver cover, the ability to revisit missed streets has been severely affected, meaning we have been unable to recover all bins within the two-day timescale we aim for, and a small proportion we have not been able to recover at all.

On those days we are unable to send all 75 crews/wagons out to fully complete the collection rounds due, we prioritise black and green bin collections. On the rare occasions we need to stand a brown bin route(s) will we choose the route(s) with the least amount of garden waste due to be emptied that day based on previous tonnage records.

Communications have been sent to ward members on missed collections and we are very sorry to the relatively small number of customers who have had to wait until the next collection.



In line with many other operational services that work on a shift based pattern, cover for staff absence is provided through a combination of a permanent staffing pool, agency and voluntary overtime. We have found it more difficult recently to source LGV drivers from Agencies. Recent recruitment has resulted in more drivers and loaders for the cover pool, which in turn will reduce the reliance on voluntary overtime and reduce the risk of future difficulties and disruption to service.

**Q37** Councillor W Dixon – Would the council's administration agree that it's time to knockdown and rebuild some of our council flats.

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

In October 2023 the Council's Executive Board approved the phased demolition of 11 blocks of high rise flats across the city. This decision was based on the recommendations of options appraisals carried out on these blocks owing to the significant investment required to ensure the long term viability of the flats. This decision was in addition to the previous approval to demolish two blocks at the Highways, with the demolition now reaching it's conclusion.

These decisions underline our commitment to ensuring all our residents live in good quality, healthy and affordable homes and for them to be safe and feel safe, as well as delivering an approach that represents best value. It allows us to target our investment in areas where the longer term viability of the homes is more secure, as demonstrated by the almost £90m of energy efficiency investment in high rise flats since 2020.

**Q38** Councillor B Anderson – When will the Executive Member responsible for Highways be advising Council of their plans to recover the service after their predecessor admitted the service was not achieving the standards we all aim for?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

The Highways and Transportation Service is a busy, complex £200m (capital and revenue) per annum Service undertaking a wide range of work across multiple teams, ranging from heavy civil engineering projects, flood risk management, maintaining street lights, carrying out winter maintenance, strategy setting, bidding for funding for schemes to teaching road safety at schools. As such, its circa 450 staff, comprising 300 office and 150 operational staff have thousands of interactions with Cllrs, partners and residents each year.

Performing the duty of the Highway authority cross 3000km network, it works closely with multiple contractor and consultant organisations across a large number of procurement frameworks and interacts with key partners such as WYCA, Network Rail, National Highways, many different utility companies and a multitude of developers, ranging in size from the very local to national, all of which adds complexity to the work being undertaken.

Given this level of interaction and the high level of demand for service, there will be occasions when service levels do drop below our high standards, despite best efforts. Staff vacancies, urgent issues, weather and unexpected circumstances will play a part in this. Particular issues in Traffic Engineering for example earlier in the year, culminated in the unusual step of a letter being sent to all Cllrs.

The Service has a continuous improvement ethos and will always seek to learn lessons and employ new ways of working, where appropriate.

Having said the above, the Service has a successful track record in delivering across its revenue and capital budgets and delivering its programme of capital works; it continues to



take the lead on initiatives across West Yorkshire e.g. Vision Zero and the Service does receive many compliments for its work and has received regional and national recognition via the many awards won in recent years and entertained visitors from various governmental departments and other authorities from across the country who have visited Leeds to learn more about the projects delivered.

In context of the busy and complex operating environment set out above, if there are any specific concerns, please raise them with me and I will endeavour to assist.

**Q39** Councillor E Pogson-Golden – Does the Council agree that parking around schools should be monitored by traffic wardens once a month to keep the children and parents safe to walk, bike or scooter to school?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

There are about 330 schools in Leeds and we do not have the resources to cover each one each month. We are aware of the issues regarding illegal parking around schools and we maintain a rota of problem areas with coverage of 5 sites each morning and afternoon. We believe a risk based approach is the best way to allocate the resources we have available.

**Q40** Councillor B Flynn– Can the Executive Member for Adult Social Care, Active Lifestyles and Culture advise what improvements in years in mortality rates in deprived areas of Leeds have been achieved over the last 10 years?

**A** Executive Member for Equality, Health and Wellbeing

Life expectancy at birth rates for people in Leeds living in the most deprived areas of Leeds has declined very slightly for males and females in the last 10 years, though the change is not statistically significant.

For males living in the Leeds neighbourhoods within the most deprived 10% nationally (ie IMD1), life expectancy at birth fell from 73.7 to 73.0 years (not a statistically significant change).

For females living in the Leeds neighbourhoods within the most deprived 10% nationally (ie IMD1), life expectancy at birth fell from 78.5 to 77.6 years (not a statistically significant change).

It is not possible to directly compare the Leeds rates with the overall England rate (for IMD1), however it is consistent with overall national trends in life expectancy rates which after sustained improvements for many years plateaued from approximately 2010 and in 2020 had begun to fall in some areas, particularly for those most deprived.

**Q41** Councillor W Dixon – Would the Administration please ensure that the Consultation around the Broomfield SILC rebuild reaches out to residents in the surrounding streets in writing rather than just online consultations?

**A** Executive Member for Children and Families

Surrounding addresses will receive written correspondence relating to this consultation.





**Q42** Councillor B Anderson– Will the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space apologise to the residents of Adel & Wharfedale Ward for the poor refuse collection service that some of the streets have had to accept for too long?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

Leeds has the second largest council refuse operation in the UK. Our hardworking staff empty about 5,000 tonnes of household waste from half a million black, green and brown bins every week; making sure less than half a percent goes to landfill. The addition of glass in the green bin from 1<sup>st</sup> August will add to the large list of items/materials that Leeds residents can recycle at home through their green bin.

We have also successfully introduced fortnightly recycling collections in the Holt Dales since March. A significant operation in response to requests from the community and ward members.

However, I recognise that the service has experienced difficulties in completing all collections on a number of occasions in the last couple of months. Unfortunately, due to temporary difficulties mainly in getting driver cover, the ability to revisit missed streets has been severely affected, meaning, unusually, we have been unable to recover all bins within the two-day timescale we aim for, and a small proportion we have not been able to recover at all.

On those days we are unable to send all 75 crews/wagons out to fully complete the collection rounds due across Leeds, we prioritise black and green bin collections. On the rare occasions we need to stand a brown bin route(s) will we choose the route(s) with the least amount of garden waste due to be emptied that day based on previous tonnage records.

Communications have been sent to ward members on missed collections and I am very sorry to the relatively small number of customers who have had to wait until the next collection, including those in the Adel & Wharfedale ward, and I thank them for their patience.

**Q43** Councillor W Dixon– Does the Administration believe the brown bin service is a vital service for many and the collections should be treated as such?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy Environment and Green Space

Leeds City Council continues to invest significantly in the city's kerbside garden waste collection service. Leeds operates by far the largest garden waste collection service of any single council in the UK. Despite the budget challenges, the service in Leeds remains free, with the majority of councils currently charging extra for this discretionary service. Currently 220,000 (60%) households in Leeds receive this service.

The service was created to help households, that have a sufficiently sized garden to justify a fortnightly collection, to reduce the amount of garden waste being put in their black bins. It was never designed as a service that would deal with all garden waste produced by every garden irrespective of size. It is there to support/complement other ways of dealing with garden waste, such as home composting, taking excess waste to local Household Waste and Recycling Centres or reducing the amount of garden wates produced in the first place (e.g. leaving grass cuttings on the lawn).

In recent weeks we have had some issues getting all 75 collection routes fully staffed and out every day. On the very rare occasions that happens we prioritise the collection of the black



and green bins that all households have. Across Leeds since the garden waste service resumed for 2024, we have collected 99% of all brown bins, with 1% having to wait until their next collection day.

**Q44** Councillor B Anderson – Does the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space accept that the quality of communication with Councillors whose wards are the victims of poor service and regular misses is exceptionally bad, and what excuse would he give for some Councillors being ignored by the service when raising such concerns?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

Leeds has the second largest council refuse operation in the UK. Our hardworking staff empty about 5,000 tonnes of household waste from half a million black, green and brown bins every week; making sure less than half a percent goes to landfill.

The service has experienced difficulties in completing all collections on a number of occasions in the last couple of months. Unfortunately, due to difficulties mainly in getting driver cover, the ability to revisit missed streets has been severely affected, meaning we have been unable to recover all bins within the two-day timescale we aim for, and a small proportion we have not been able to recover at all.

Communications have been sent to ward members on missed collections and we are very sorry to the relatively small number of customers who have had to wait until the next collection.

Every day, including Saturdays, the refuse service provides the 99 Elected Members in Leeds with information/updates on any missed collections in their ward through the End of Day email report; with improvements made to the information provided over the last few years in response to Member feedback and Scrutiny Board recommendations.

Due to how the service operates in Leeds to deliver a 6-day a week service over 3 shift patterns, it's not so easy to have dedicated, named local supervisor contacts for Members who will always be available. So, the refuse service also operates a small team of staff whose role includes case managing the dedicated email inbox for Elected Members in Leeds. On top of this, Cllr Anderson has a quarterly meeting with the senior manager of the black and green bin collection routes, and has recently met on site and dealt directly with the manager of the city's brown bin collections.

Cllr Anderson is also in regular contact with the senior manager who is overseeing the roll out of alternate week collections in the Holt Dale area. As well as delivering fortnightly green bin collections for the first time in this area, this project also responds to issues raised by local Members about the previous recycling collections made through communal bins.

In addition, within the capacity available, the Chief Officer has also intervened in issues that are taking longer than Councillor Anderson feels reasonable.

**Q45** Councillor W Dixon – Would the Executive Member(s) responsible for Housing and Highways offer the resources needed to clear the neglected access paths behind people's homes on the Manor Farms estate, LS10?



**A** Executive Member for Housing

Housing Leeds and Highways have worked collaboratively to find a solution to the neglected access paths on the Manor Farms estate, a volume of garden waste has been tipped on the site, plans are in place to remove this and clear the site, Housing and Highways will joint fund this project.

**Q46** Councillor B Flynn – Can the Executive Member for Resources advise me how many compensation applications/claims against the Council by the public have been made to the council's legal services department over each of the last 3 years?

**A** Executive Member for Resources

Legal Services have received instructions relating to 3711 compensation applications/claims in the last three years broken down as follows: 21/22 1289; 22/23 1402 and 23/24 1070.

**Q47** Councillor B Anderson – Does the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space still consider that the garden waste (Brown Bin) service is at an acceptable level of collection for all residents who receive this service?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

Leeds has by far the largest kerbside garden waste collection service in the UK with about 220,000 households able to present a brown bin for collection every fortnight. Leeds is in the minority of councils who do not charge extra for this discretionary service.

The refuse service has experienced difficulties in completing all collections on a number of occasions in the last couple of months. Unfortunately, due to difficulties mainly in getting driver cover, the ability to revisit missed streets has been severely affected, meaning we have been unable to recover all bins within the two-day timescale we aim for, and a small proportion we have not been able to recover at all.

On those days we are unable to send all 75 crews/wagons out to fully complete the collection rounds due, we prioritise black and green bin collections. On the rare occasions we need to stand a brown bin route(s) will we choose the route(s) with the least amount of garden waste due to be emptied that day based on previous tonnage records.

Since the garden waste service restarted on 1<sup>st</sup> April, we have successfully sent out 97.5% of crews scheduled each day. Of the 2.5% that we missed, half of those were recovered, leaving just over 1% of scheduled collections uncollected and having to wait until the next collection.

Communications have been sent to ward members on missed collections and we are very sorry to the relatively small number of customers who have had to wait until the next collection.

**Q48** Councillor B Anderson – Does the Executive Member for Housing accept that in some parts of the city the quality of Housing Management is not at the high standards it was a few months ago?

**A** Executive Member for Housing



Housing Leeds continue to deliver a consistent quality service to their tenants in relation to Housing management.

This is validated by the latest Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

Since April 2022 the Council has been carrying out quarterly surveys of our tenants, asking a number of set questions designed to determine how satisfied tenants are with their landlord. The 2022/23 results show a number of notable improvements from the position at March 2022:

- Overall satisfaction with services has increased by 6%
- 'Landlord makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood' has increased by 16%
- 'Being kept informed about things that matter' has increased by 14%
- 'Landlord provides a home that is safe' has increased by 13%
- 'Landlord treats me fairly and with respect' has increased by 12%
- 'Landlord listens to views and acts upon them' has increased by 11%
- 'Landlord's approach to handling ASB' has increased by 11%

**Q49** Councillor B Flynn – Can the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space advise me how far behind schedule the council's tree maintenance timetable is at present?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

At present there are 423 jobs within the forestry system that are outside of agreed parameters for completion. Of those, 30% are already committed for delivery with an anticipated completion in the next 6 weeks. The remaining jobs are low and emerging risk work which will be monitored by officers and progressed as promptly as possible.

**Q50** Councillor B Anderson – Does the Executive Member responsible for Planning and Highways feel there is a disconnect between the Highways Service who are dealing with Planning Applications, and the parts of Highways who have to deal with everyday issues and problems, and who are working hard to be helpful to residents, particularly in Adel & Wharfedale Ward?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

A consistent approach to assessing Planning Applications and addressing everyday issues and problems is applied by teams within Highways and Transportation reflective of National Guidance and local strategies and policies. There is a close working relationship between Development Services and the wider teams such as Traffic and ultimately both teams work hard to identify solutions that provide betterment for residents whilst delivering on planning and transport policy within the planning application constraints and guidance colleagues have to work to. If there are any specific concerns on this matter, please make me aware so it can be considered further.

**Q51** Councillor B Anderson – Can the Executive Member responsible for Planning Enforcement explain how he thinks this section is fit for purpose and delivering for the majority of residents in this city, when Councillors are receiving so many complaints about the lack of enforcement action?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development



Planning Enforcement is a high profile and contentious area of statutory activity, dealing with conflict and competing interests on a daily basis. The service works to the Leeds Local Enforcement Plan which sets out the priorities in working to in seeking to resolve breaches of planning control. The most effective and quickest way of concluding cases is often through negotiation rather than formal action with the inherent appeal process which can extend the period of resolution considerably. The Enforcement Plan sets out that formal action is a last resort.

Notwithstanding this negotiation-first approach, the service will not shy away from undertaking formal action where felt necessary; this is demonstrated by the fact that Leeds undertakes significantly more formal action than any other core city – for example in 2023, Leeds served 52 Enforcement Notice (ENS) and 46 Planning Contravention Notices (PCNs), compared to 21 ENs and 23 PCNs served by Manchester, 8 EN and 4 PCNs in Liverpool, and 6 ENs and 10 PCNs in Newcastle. Even Birmingham City Council, with a much larger population than Leeds, served fewer with 42 ENs and 12 PCNs.

Supplementary information

There is often a perception that enforcement is ineffective and slow; and disagreement where a decision has been taken not to pursue formal action. However, with the confines of the legislation and planning system, the Service is evidently operating to a high level.

The service remains in demand with approximately 1,300 new requests for investigation being raised each year, although this year is on course to see about 1,500 requests. In recognition of the increase workload and the statutory duty to investigate all complaints, alongside the continuous process efficiency measures undertaken, additional resource has recently been allocated to the service.

Comparative Formal Enforcement Action; Year to December 2023

Planning authority	Enforcement notices issued	Stop notices served	Temporary stop notices served	Planning contravention notices served	Breach of condition notice
Birmingham	43	0	0	12	1
Bristol	10	0	0	0	0
<b>Leeds</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>5</b>
Liverpool	8	0	0	4	13
Manchester	21	0	1	23	2
Newcastle upon Tyne	6	0	0	10	0
Nottingham	10	0	0	3	0
Sheffield	35	0	0	8	7

**Q52** Councillor B Flynn – Can the Executive Member for Economy, Transport & Sustainable Development advise me how far behind the council's road maintenance programme is at present?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

The backlog of Highway Maintenance for Leeds currently stands at approximately £288M.



This backlog has continued to increase over recent years from both inflation and overall cuts to local government funding.

There has been a significant increase in overall material, plant, labour and maintenance costs with the previous rise in inflation from 2020 to April 2023 was 21%. (Source Bank of England CPI inflation data).

Despite the rate of inflation reducing recently, costs continue to rise but simply rising at a slower rate.

Whilst our local level of investment in highway maintenance has increased it has not kept pace with both the rate of decline of the network condition, and industry cost increases.

The Highways Maintenance backlog for England and Wales, estimated in the annual ALARM survey on the state of Britain's roads undertaken by the Asphalt Industry Alliance in 2024, is £16.3bn. As stated, the backlog in Leeds being estimated in 2024 at £288m.

**Q53** Councillor B Anderson – Why does the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space think that so many missed bins are not listed on the End of Day Report; and it is only because of Local Ward Members who care for their residents that this is brought to the attention of Management?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The End of Day report pulls together information from that day's 75 scheduled refuse collection routes across Leeds that have been tasked with emptying over 83,000 bins, using a mixture of data from the in-cab units and any manual records required that day.

The report helps the service plan for the recoveries required and the data is linked to the council's website so that a member of the public reporting a missed bin is provided with a message to say we are aware and why the miss occurred.

To help ward councillors, the report is sent each day, usually early evening, to the ward councillors where a miss has been recorded.

Improvements to the reliability and information provided have been made over recent years, something reported to and acknowledged by Scrutiny Board.

The importance of recording correctly all missed collections has been a focus of staff development in the service and reinforced through the appraisal process. Significant investment has been made by the council in updated in-cab units.

However the service recognises that there remain a relatively small number of occasions when misses are either not all being recorded or not transferred correctly from manual records at the end of the day. When this happens, the input of local ward members and the public too in highlighting the issue is welcomed and appreciated.

Further support and training is being provided to operational and back office staff to make the further improvements that are required in recording all missed collections and so that they appear on the report.

**Q54** Councillor B Anderson – Does the Executive Member for Economy, Transport & Sustainable Development accept that their policy for clearing the backlog of potholes and



carrying out quality repairs is at best a concern, but in some areas could be described as worse than just concerning?

**A** Executive Member for Economy, Transport and Sustainable Development

The Highways Maintenance backlog for England and Wales, estimated in the annual ALARM survey on the state of Britain's roads undertaken by the Asphalt Industry Alliance in 2024, is £16.3bn. The backlog in Leeds is estimated in 2024 at £288m.

Potholes are an ever-present issue and tackling them is a high priority for all. Recent years and particularly last year, have seen an increase in the number of potholes reported and this is likely because of the second wettest year since records began.

Potholes can quickly form, increase in size, and can often be found in clusters occurring in a similar time frame. It is acknowledged that the weather and particularly the freeze/thaw effect and wet or standing water pushed by the action of traffic into cracks in the surface, can significantly accelerate the deterioration of roads and the subsequent pothole formation.

A review is currently ongoing looking at how both planned and reactive maintenance might be adjusted to take account of the increasing adverse effects of the climate on our road network and the prevalence of potholes. The details and recommendation from this review will be presented to the Executive Board later this calendar year, with an initial report going to Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth) later this month.

**Q55** Councillor M Robinson – On Sunday 23rd June 2024, a peaceful Leeds leads against antisemitism march took place and was attended by the Council Leader, Leader of the Opposition and many Councillors. During the peaceful march an Israeli flag was defaced and danced on by counter protesters, some of whom covered their faces as the Police watched on. Does this sort of protest worry the Leader of Council? Would he condemn it? And what action will be taken with West Yorkshire Police who watched on?

**A** Leader of Council

I was pleased to join the Leeds Leads Against Antisemitism march in June, alongside members of the community and colleagues in the chamber today. I think it is imperative that we all stand against any and all forms of discrimination wherever it might exist, including Antisemitism.

And of course, any activity or action, such as the defacing of flags or indeed other symbols of national identity that are purposely intended to cause harm or distress to communities does cause me concern and I do indeed condemn such actions.

The incident raised has been reviewed by the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) for West Yorkshire Police on behalf of the strategic group that is responsible for co-ordinating the investigative response to incidents within West Yorkshire relating to the conflict between Israel and Gaza.

The SIO has outlined that flag defacement as part of a political protest has been found not to be a criminal offence **on its own**.



However, West Yorkshire Police have commenced a criminal enquiry against a person believed to be involved in the behaviour described - but as part of their overall actions as opposed to solely those regarding the flag itself. This investigation is ongoing and the Crown Prosecution Service is being consulted.

**Q56** Councillor B Anderson – Does the Executive Member responsible for grass cutting accept that their service is causing concern to residents, who do not understand their “relaxed mowing policy”?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The areas of relaxed mowing introduced across the city are now maturing well with an attractive, healthy diversity of species appearing, providing food and habitat for insects and small mammals helping to support biodiversity across the city in response to the declared climate emergency. In addition to the support for wildlife, these areas help tackle pollution, reduce urban heat extremes, slow down rainfall flows entering drainage systems and lock away atmospheric carbon below ground. To inform residents of the benefits of the approach we have placed information on the council’s website as well as posting information on social media. To help raise awareness further we have also placed out on sites involved numerous attractive signs that inform the travelling public of the ‘relaxed mowing’ initiative in place. We are always looking at opportunities to introduce further relaxation to mowing activities as we consider the changes made to grass maintenance across the city provide long term environmental and ecological benefits and we would welcome suggestions from residents for other areas to add to the approach.

**Q57** Councillor B Anderson – Will the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space explain to Council which Community Committee areas have had a reduction in the street cleansing service since the 2024 Council Budget?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

The 2024/25 Council budget included a reduction of £600k within the Environmental Services’ budget in relation to Cleaner Neighbourhoods Team (CNT) and City Centre Cleansing teams.

The bulk of this saving will be achieved through the voluntary leavers scheme, with a number of staff leaving at the end of June and a small amount in August.

The operational structure of the CNT is being reviewed, as is the scope of the work and responsibilities that fall to it. In the meantime the service continues to deliver across all community committee areas on its core, daily functions of emptying litter bins, responding to flytipping, undertaking programmed sweeps, collecting booked household bulky items, supporting community led action such as Litter Free Leeds and responding to requests from the public and ward members within the capacity available.

**Q58** Councillor M Robinson – Does the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space think it is appropriate for residents with an assisted bin collection service to be told to “take it to the tip” as part of the messaging on forms when reporting a missed bin collection?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space





When a customer who is in receipt of an assisted bin collection for their household reports a missed collection online through the council's website, they are asked the question "Do you need us to come back out again before your next bin day?". If the customer replies "Yes", then the response provided is as per the screen-grab example below:

**Q59** Councillor B Anderson – Will the Executive Member responsible for grass cutting apologise to the residents in Adel & Wharfedale Ward for the exceptionally poor verge cutting service they have had?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

High rainfall throughout the winter of 2023 continued into the current mowing season and has impacted mowing activities in all parts of the Leeds and across the wider region. To provide context the UK Met office have provisionally recorded rainfall levels at 129% of the 1991-2020 average. There is normally an expectation that sloped areas cannot be cut during wet conditions however, the amount of water present in the ground this year has meant some level plots were also too soft to mow. To maintain operator safety and avoid the risk of machinery sinking and causing damage to grass surfaces some grass plots were intentionally left until conditions became more favourable. Cooler than normal spring temperatures had initially suppressed grass growth rates, but as temperatures have now risen consistently, grass growth rates have increased and combined with the wet ground to pose significant mowing challenges. Inevitably when cut, long grass surfaces produce large volumes of mown arisings that adds to the appearance of a lower quality finish however this is unavoidable in the circumstances. In response to these issues our verge mowing contractor has been working overtime on weekdays and Saturdays at no additional cost to the city to address the issues seen.

**Q60** Councillor M Robinson – Can the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space tell Council how much money is expected to be raised annually by the administration's decision to charge for car parking in Leeds' parks, what it will



be spent on, and whether he will give consideration to involving local councillors and parish councils in deciding which elements within a park are improved?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

It is estimated that circa £700,000 will be raised annually and the money will primarily be used to invest in much needed car park improvements. Ward members will be consulted on the designs as they are developed.

**Q61** Councillor M Robinson – Can the Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space outline what alternatives to app payments will be put in place to ensure older park users are not deterred from continuing to use Leeds' parks?

**A** Executive Member for Climate, Energy, Environment and Green Space

There will be machines available in all car parks to allow for card payment as well as the option to purchase monthly or annual season tickets using cash at a number of council venues.

Yours sincerely

**Kevin Tomkinson**  
**Deputy Head of Democratic Services**

