

## Report Title: Stronger Leeds

A strategy for social cohesion 2025-2030

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Report of: Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Report to: EHC Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### Brief summary

The strategy is the result of extensive community engagement and research, highlighting the challenges and opportunities in promoting social cohesion in a diverse and growing city. Over the years, Leeds has welcomed people from different backgrounds, faiths, and nationalities, making it one of the most multicultural cities in the UK. However, despite this strong foundation, recent years have presented new challenges that have tested community relations and cohesion.

The Stronger Leeds Strategy 2025-2030 outlines the city's commitment to promoting stronger, safer, and more connected communities across Leeds thereby improving social cohesion in the city. The strategy addresses the challenges posed by recent events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, economic pressures, and social unrest, and sets out clear priorities to build stronger, more cohesive communities. It emphasises the importance of participation, relationships, belonging, and equalities in achieving these goals.

### Recommendations

- a) To note and support the work of the Stronger Leeds Strategy 2025-2030.
- b) Monitor and evaluate the progress of the strategy through the Safer Leeds Executive.

### What is this report about?

- 1 This report presents the Stronger Leeds strategy 2025-2030, which aims to strengthen social cohesion across the city by addressing key issues that impact on people's sense of belonging. The strategy has been developed following a consultation exercise that sought to better understand the challenges to social cohesion, as well as the work needed to develop stronger and more resilient communities. The strategy outlines a comprehensive approach to promoting

positive relationships, encouraging active participation, and ensuring that all residents feel they belong in Leeds.

- 2 The Stronger Leeds strategy sets out a vision for a city where everyone feels they belong, where communities are safe, and where people from different backgrounds can build positive relationships with other people and communities.
- 3 Social cohesion is fundamental to building a city where people feel connected, safe, and included. The strategy is essential because:
  - **A cohesive city is a resilient city** – Stronger community ties reduce social tensions and increase resilience in times of crisis.
  - **Social cohesion benefits health and wellbeing** – Isolation and division contribute to poor mental and physical health, whereas connected communities foster better overall wellbeing.
  - **A socially cohesive city is an economically stronger city** – When people feel included and valued, they are more likely to contribute to society, boosting economic growth and social capital.

### What impact will this proposal have?

- 4 The strategy will have a significant impact on improving social cohesion in Leeds by:
  - Enhancing community safety;
  - Creating safe spaces for dialogue;
  - Promoting good relations between diverse communities; and
  - Developing a sense of belonging for all residents.

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

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 5 **Health and Wellbeing:** By promoting social connections and reducing isolation, the strategy will improve the physical and mental health of residents.
- 6 **Inclusive Growth:** Promoting active participation and equal opportunities will contribute to economic growth and social equity.
- 7 **Zero Carbon:** While the strategy primarily focuses on social aspects, promoting local engagement and community activities can indirectly support environmental sustainability.

### What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 8 The strategy was developed through extensive consultation with over a thousand residents, including surveys, focus groups, and engagement with community partners. Key themes from the Big Leeds Chat exercise and other related strategies have also been considered.

### **What are the resource implications?**

9 The implementation of the strategy will require collaboration with various stakeholders, including public, private, and the third sector. Resources will be identified where available and allocated to support community safety initiatives, education programmes, and engagement activities.

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

10 Key risks include potential resistance to change and challenges in coordinating efforts across diverse communities. These risks will be managed through continuous engagement, transparent communication, and a multi-agency approach to addressing issues.

### **What are the legal implications?**

11 The strategy aligns with legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation such as the Prevent Duty and Hate Crime. It also supports the council's commitment to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion.

## **Options, timescales and measuring success**

### **What other options were considered?**

12 Alternative approaches to addressing social cohesion were considered, such as tackling the issues identified through the Leeds Community Safety Strategy, but it was recognised that further work over and beyond this was required and the proposed strategy was deemed the most comprehensive and effective.

### **How will success be measured?**

13 Success will be measured through regular monitoring and evaluation by the Safer Leeds Executive, using a measurement tool that tracks progress against the strategy's objectives as well as regular monitoring of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's 'Your Views' survey.

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

14 The strategy will be implemented over the next five years, with the Safer Stronger Communities team leading the efforts in collaboration with partners, including the public, private and third sector.

### **Appendices**

- Stronger Leeds Strategy 2025-28

### **Background papers**

- None