



Leeds
CITY COUNCIL

scrutiny

Annual Report 2020 - 2021



leeds.gov.uk/scrutiny



[@ScrutinyLeeds](https://twitter.com/ScrutinyLeeds)

Contents

	PAGE
Introduction	1
Summary of Work 2020/2021	2-4
Highlights and Achievements	5-9



Introduction

This Annual Report provides a general summary of the work undertaken by the scrutiny function in Leeds during the 2020/2021 Municipal Year as well as setting out the key highlights and achievements of the council's individual Scrutiny Boards.

The council's five Scrutiny Boards have continued to target their resources on priority areas aimed at driving forward the council's ambitions and making a real difference to the people of Leeds. Across the five Boards 98 work items were considered. 61 of the Council's 99 Members sit on Scrutiny Boards, supported by 9 co-optees.

The Best Council Plan is the council's strategic plan, setting out the authority's ambitions and priorities for both the city (working in partnership) and the organisation. An updated [Best Council Plan 2020-2025](#) was launched in September 2020, placing emphasis on the role of the Council's priorities in establishing a 'new normal' for life in Leeds after COVID-19.

As well as having a key role in influencing the content of the Best Council Plan, Scrutiny plays a fundamental part in promoting efficient and effective partnership working between the Council and stakeholders to meet the Best Council Plan outcomes. This Annual Report therefore illustrates how the work of Scrutiny has particularly contributed towards achieving the key outcomes set out within the Council's Best Council Plan.

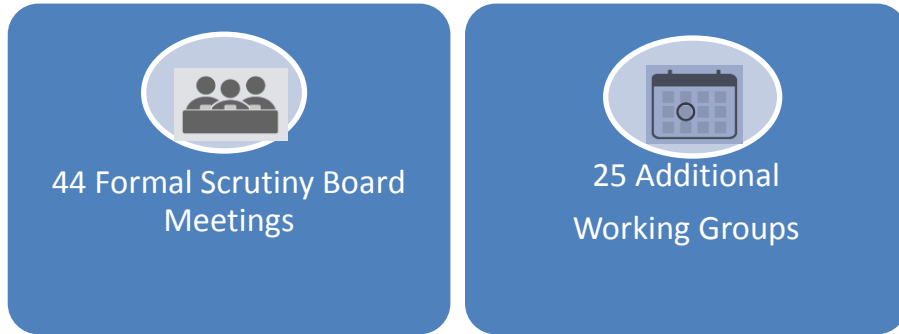
This Annual Report also reflects on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic emergency, which led to the cancellation of meetings March to June 2020, the cancellation of the May 2020 local elections and the Annual Council Meeting, with executive and scrutiny arrangements 'rolling on' into the 2020/2021 Municipal Year. In February 2021, as the leadership arrangements for Leeds Council changed, two new Scrutiny Board Chairs were appointed.

Leeds remains committed to providing dedicated officer support to the scrutiny function and while the Council's 'Vision for Scrutiny' agreement acknowledges that resources to support the Scrutiny function are, like all other Council functions, under considerable pressure, there has been continued effort to maximise available resources and prioritise areas of work that will add value towards the delivery of the Best Council Plan and other strategic policy drivers.

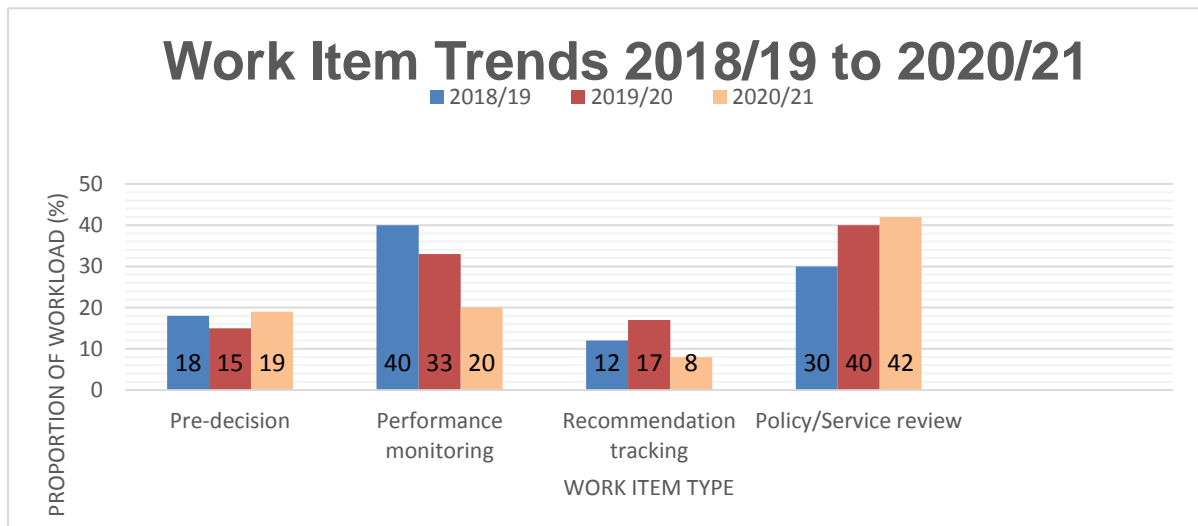


Summary of work 2020/2021

This section summarises the type of work undertaken by the Scrutiny Boards¹ during the 2020/21 municipal year (June 2020 to May 2021), as well as looking at trends over the last 3 years.



PROVIDING SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE FOR THE FOLLOWING OUTPUTS



¹ This does not include the work of the Tenant Scrutiny Board as the responsibility for this function does not fall within Democratic Services.

Collaborative working across the Scrutiny Boards

BUDGET

All Scrutiny Boards are consulted annually on the Council's initial budget proposals and any proposed changes to the Best Council Plan prior to formal approval. Observations and recommendations are reported back to the Council's Executive Board as one composite report.

This year, Scrutiny undertook valuable early engagement on the Councils Budget proposals, reviewing three sets of budget savings proposals for 2021/22 throughout September, October and November 2020 and providing a composite Scrutiny Statement summarising feedback from this first phase of consultation. The December Executive Board considered additional potential savings and a further Phase 2 consultation was conducted with the Scrutiny Boards during January 2021 with feedback on the proposals provided to the February 2021 Executive Board meeting.

All Scrutiny Boards welcomed the opportunity to engage in the budget setting process earlier in the municipal year and are keen that such consultation continues in future and is not limited to the unprecedented circumstances of 2020/21. Moving forward, Scrutiny Members will maintain a degree of oversight of the budget delivery process, alongside the Executive Board, as well as continuing to monitor and review any consequential service outcomes and impacts on citizens within the remits of each individual board during the coming municipal year.

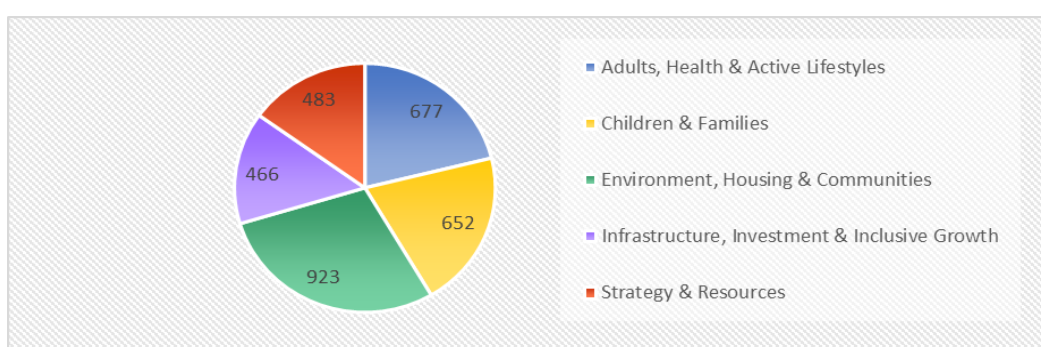
RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

All Scrutiny Board meetings were held as remote meetings under the Regulations that ceased on 6th May 2021. In those initial months the scrutiny function faced three challenges –

- the stability of the meeting platform and reliance on home wi-fi connectivity;
- striking a balance between enabling members to scrutinise the impact of the pandemic on Leeds' citizens and Council services while also minimising reporting pressures on those working to provide the vital frontline pandemic response; and
- the sustainability of the staffing levels required to support remote meetings as the organisation returned to 'business as usual.'

The 2020-21 Municipal Year has, as well as highlighting the resilience and flexibility of the scrutiny function, delivered some unexpected benefits –

- webcasting remotely held meetings has improved public accessibility and engagement; we recorded 3201 views of webcast Board meetings
- we have been told that remote meetings have made attendance by colleagues and partners from external organisations, the Third and Voluntary Sectors easier; and affording the Scrutiny Members the opportunity of meeting a wider range of participants - ensuring the right people with the right knowledge are available to share their experience at the right time.



Throughout the year, Scrutiny Boards continued to focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, with a view to supporting a robust and resilient recovery, highlights included:

 <p>Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling health inequalities exacerbated during the pandemic. • The impact on existing winter pressures across the health and care system. • Support provided to care homes. • The importance of the Mental Health Service.
 <p>Children and Families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressing exam anxiety and delivering a quality remote learning offer. • The impact on child and adolescent mental health. • Recovery planning of local schools, including staff and pupil welfare needs. • Support measures to protect the most vulnerable children.
 <p>Environment, Housing and Communities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Voluntary and Third Sector response, including the infrastructure required to successfully support and enable locally led initiatives • The increased demand across all Community Care Hubs • The impact on the Local Welfare Support Scheme (LWSS) • The work and role of Neighbourhood Networks.
 <p>Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport/Traffic and air quality • Delivery of business support and the administration of business grants • Re-energising city and district centres to support economic recovery • Employment & Skills.
 <p>Strategy and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Continuity during the Covid-19 pandemic • How the Council has developed new ways of working and the approach to home and agile working moving forwards • Remodelling the estate to ensure it supports agile working and meets service delivery requirements • Collection rates for both Council Tax and Business rates.

Regional Health Scrutiny

The West Yorkshire and Harrogate Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (JHOSC) maintains oversight arrangements for the developing West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership across a range of programme areas and other matters. The support resource for the JHOSC moved to the remit of our colleagues at Calderdale Council with the Chair of Leeds Scrutiny Board Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles continuing as Chair until February 2021. The JHOSC will appoint a new Chair from its membership at its first meeting of 2021/22. The new arrangements have cemented support for the delivery of regional joint health scrutiny arrangements – improving collaboration between and across local authority health scrutiny functions across West Yorkshire and Harrogate. This year the programme areas and other matters considered by the JHOSC included:

- Coronavirus pandemic response, recovery and Vaccination Programme
- Assessment and Treatment Units (ATU's)
- Update on the Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Commission Review
- Overview of proposed changes to vascular care through the North and West Yorkshire Joint Health Scrutiny Committee
- Improving Population Health Inequalities
- Nightingale Hospital, Harrogate

The JHOSC also held two successful workshops with our Health and Care Partnership colleagues – in September the Kings Fund facilitated a peer review workshop on the JHOSC/HCP collaborative approach and in March the JHOSC and HCP discussed the Department of Health and Social Care's legislative proposals for a Health and Care Bill – “Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all”. Moving forward, the Authority will continue to participate in the function of the Joint Committee as the JHOSC and HCP continue to work alongside each other as the proposals for a new Integrated Care System for West Yorkshire develop.

Highlights and Achievements



Chair –
Councillor H Hayden
(until Feb 2021)
Councillor A Marshall-
Katung (from February
2021)

Focusing on services for adults and public health services to monitor progress towards improving health, lifestyles and quality of care across the city; and providing oversight of service integration and partnership working within and between health bodies. The Board also oversees the sport and active lifestyle related functions and activity across the city.

Topic Area	Added Value/Impact	Associated BCP Outcome(s)
1. Adult Mental Health Services	➤ Engaging with health partners, the Board focused on the current impacts of Covid-19 on mental health services across city, as well as considering future implications linked to the delivery of the existing Leeds Mental Health Strategy 2020-2025 .	➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives ➤ Live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible
2. Active Leeds Service	➤ Reviewing the work of the Active Leeds Service, including an update on Get Set Leeds and Physical Activity Ambition work; and specifically focusing on work throughout the pandemic in terms of promoting physical activity such as development of the Healthy at Home Website and an app to deliver livestreaming classes, keeping customers engaged and staff development; as well as looking ahead to opportunities to use Physical Activity to aid recovery post COVID-19.	➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives ➤ Live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible ➤ Making better use of resources and ensuring Leeds is an efficient Council.
3. Hearing and Balance Centre	➤ Responding to matters of interest is at the heart of scrutiny, and this year the Board received an update on proposals to temporarily relocate the hearing and Balance Centre to Seacroft Hospital whilst works to create a Hospital for the Future on the LGI site will impact on delivery of the service from the existing Brotherton Wing hub. The Board heard the patient engagement undertaken had informed the relocation proposal and noted the temporary Unit will open in April 2021, with the Service retaining the Wharfedale Hospital spoke and other outreach services. The Board welcomed the undertaking that, should this position need to change then further engagement work with the Scrutiny Board and with patients would be undertaken by the Trust; and additionally that consideration would be given to explore provision of an outreach clinic in the South of the city.	➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives ➤ Live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible Working as a system to ensure people get the right care, from the right people in the right place
4. Women's Health in Leeds	➤ The March Board was timetabled to consider women's health – the Board recognising recent events that had highlighted the need for greater focus on women's safety and wellbeing. A range of health partners contributed to the session and discussed health outcomes for women in the city and how their experiences have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for black and minority ethnic groups. The Board considered specific issues including addressing health inequality through targeted intervention; Domestic Violence; endometriosis and considered the opportunity for Leeds City Council to join other organisations and City Councils to sign up to the Inequalities in Health Alliance.	➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives ➤ Live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible ➤ Working as a system to ensure people get the right care, from the right people in the right place ➤ Reducing health inequalities and improving the health of the poorest the fastest

Highlights and Achievements



Children and Families

Chair –
Councillor A Lamb

Focusing on services affecting the lives of children and families across the city to monitor progress towards becoming a child friendly city, putting children first and developing active citizens.

Topic Area	Added Value/Impact	Associated BCP Outcome(s)
1. Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-Rolling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Board had agreed to pause its inquiry whilst focusing its attention on how the Council and its partners support all children and their families during the pandemic. However, the research findings of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) on school exclusions had been shared with the Board, which included Leeds City Council and local schools as key partners. The Board also held an evidence session on alternative education provision and gave a commitment to resume its ongoing inquiry work in 2021/22. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life. ➤ Be safe and feel safe. ➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives.
2. Future in Mind – Leeds Strategy Refresh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In November 2020, the Board considered a new 5-year “Future In Mind” strategic plan created to continue the city’s journey to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in the city. This provided an opportunity for the Board to build on work undertaken in 2019; to review the draft priorities proposed for the refreshed strategy and confirm the Board’s endorsement of the 7 priority areas identified as part of the “Future In Mind” Strategy refresh. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Be safe and feel safe. ➤ Making better use of resources and ensuring Leeds is an efficient Council. ➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives.
3. Child Poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The pandemic brought child poverty starkly into focus and the Board considered an update to “Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds” which was first launched in 2019. In recognising that experience of poverty has a significant correlation to poorer outcomes across a wide range of life indicators; the Board supported the partnership approach and strategic framework set out in the Strategy which seeks to ensure that poverty presents no barriers for children and young people, and mitigates the impact of poverty whilst working as a city to improve the structures around people who experience, or are at risk of, poverty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life. ➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives. ➤ Making better use of resources and ensuring Leeds is an efficient Council.
4. Addressing the immediate and long- term impacts of Covid-19 on children and young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Board actively monitored and helped to inform some of the immediate responses needed during the pandemic and gave particular attention to the impact that lost learning and the uncertainty of future pupil assessments had on pupils and teachers. In January the Board discussed the national guidance on pupil assessments and relayed its concerns in writing to the Secretary of State for Education and Ofqual, which were echoed as part of a response to the DfE/Ofqual public consultation on how GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded. In March 2021, the Board then began to explore the long-term impacts of Covid-19 and sought the views of a range of experts and young people, with the intention of reporting on its findings in the new municipal year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life. ➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives. ➤ Making better use of resources and ensuring Leeds is an efficient Council.

Highlights and Achievements



Chair –
Councillor B Anderson

Focusing on services and issues affecting the lives of citizens living and working in the council's neighbourhoods to monitor progress as a citizen focused city, prioritising environmental sustainability.

Topic Area	Added Value/Impact	Associated BCP Outcome(s)
<p>1. Supporting long term resilience in the Third Sector.</p>	<p>➤ In July 2020 the Board heard powerful evidence relating to the voluntary sector response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Members explored how the lessons learned from that experience could inform the way in which the Council works with the third sector to ensure sector resilience in the longer term. The Board returned to the issue in November 2020, focusing particular attention on the work of the Community Care Voluntary Hubs in local neighbourhoods.</p>	<p>➤ Keeping people safe from harm & protecting the most vulnerable. ➤ Helping people out of financial hardship. ➤ Being responsive to local needs, building thriving, resilient communities. ➤ Promoting community respect and resilience.</p>
<p>2. River Cleanliness</p>	<p>➤ In response to community concerns about river cleanliness, the Board brought partners together to explore the health and environmental impacts of river pollution. Particular consideration was given to the practice of discharging raw sewage into local rivers and the Board made a number of recommendations relating to the challenges of complex landownership, environmental standards and changing expectations in relation to the approach to local environments.</p>	<p>➤ Improving air quality, reducing pollution and noise; and ➤ Improving the resilience of the city's infrastructure and the natural environment, reducing flooding and other risks from future climate change</p>
<p>3. Reducing poverty, improving financial inclusion and supporting safe communities.</p>	<p>➤ Examining sustainable, collaborative interventions designed to address issues of financial exclusion and poverty continues to be a long-term priority for the Board. Members were particularly concerned this year to explore the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable citizens and to understand how the universal credit system responded to the increasing numbers of people in need of financial support. The Board has also been consulted about improving ways of working within Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Team to improve customer experience.</p>	<p>➤ Helping people out of financial hardship ➤ Keeping people safe from harm, protecting the most vulnerable ➤ Targeting interventions to tackle poverty in priority neighbourhoods</p>
<p>4. Carbon Reduction and Fuel Poverty</p>	<p>➤ Since the Council's declaration of a climate emergency in 2019 there has been increased focus by the Board on the climate implications of a range of activities, services and strategies. The Board has engaged with Climate Emergency Advisory Committee and has explored in detail work to improve energy efficiency and carbon reduction in both Council Housing stock and the Private Rented Sector. Similarly, the Board has maintained its ongoing challenge in relation to tackling fuel poverty in the city.</p>	<p>➤ Improving energy performance in homes, reducing fuel poverty</p>

Highlights and Achievements



**Chair –
Councillor P Truswell**

Focusing on development and infrastructure functions and services to monitor progress in relation to transport and planning, regeneration and housing growth. The Board also oversees economic growth functions and services to monitor progress towards being a strong and compassionate city, promoting opportunities for access to learning, skills and employment for all.

Topic Area	Added Value/Impact	Associated BCP Outcome(s)
1. Digital Inclusion and Smart City infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Board has had a long standing focus on Digital Inclusion, regularly supporting and reinforcing the importance of the Smart Cities and 100% Digital programmes and making these a Council priority. Members examined evidence of how innovative interventions had successfully supported those at risk of digital exclusion, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Board concluded that the pandemic challenges had confirmed the vital importance of the coordinating, connecting and enabling role of the 100% Digital Leeds team and recommended that this be sustained and strengthened. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strengthening digital and data ‘Smart City’ infrastructure and increasing digital inclusion
2. Inclusive Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Inclusive Growth is a ‘golden thread’ running through the Board’s work programme. The Board has explored how the Council’s commitment to delivering Inclusive Growth can aid the city’s recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and how this can be measured. Opportunities to deliver good quality employment in new sectors was an area of particular interest. The potential economic impact of devolution and the West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Plan were also examined. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Supporting the city’s economic recovery from COVID-19 and building longer-term economic resilience. ➤ Supporting growth and investment, helping everyone benefit from the economy
3. Advancing Bus Provision and improving connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The importance of transport infrastructure to Inclusive Growth and the wider city region’s Strategic Economic Plan has been an ongoing area of investigation. Members engaged with the developing Connecting Leeds Transport Strategy, explored the progress with the Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme and brought partners together to explore proposals for the transformation of the city’s bus networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Improving transport connections, safety, reliability and affordability
4. Sustainable Development & Housing Mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Members explored the progress and challenges associated with delivering ‘local sustainability’ and regeneration, including consideration of the role of Section 106 agreements, the Community Infrastructure Levy, and the potential impact of the Government’s proposed changes to the planning system. Progress towards previous recommendations relating to Housing Mix was assessed. The Board also investigated the cumulative impact on communities of delivering multiple small developments without sufficient green space. This led to several recommendations being made to Development Plans Panel ahead of DPP members considering the emerging Local Plan Update. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Housing of the right quality, type, tenure and affordability in the right places

Highlights and Achievements



Strategy and Resources

**Chair –
Councillor M Harland
(until Feb 2021)
Councillor A Scopes
(from Feb 2021)**

Focusing on the council's central strategic and regulatory functions, including financial services, human resources, digital and information services, elections, registrars, licensing, local land charges and council tax processing. The Board also oversees cultural related activities to deliver the city's cultural ambitions.

Topic Area	Added Value/Impact	Associated BCP Outcome(s)
1. Agile Working and Estate Realisation Inquiry – Scrutiny Inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Board undertook an inquiry to review how the Council is adapting to and developing new ways of working in light of the pandemic whilst also maintaining and improving council services. The Board focussed on staff well-being, staff consultation, staff development, the financial implications of changes to the way the Council operates, technology and the provision of new equipment to staff and the likely impact on the Council's estate as it looks to rationalise the estate to meet the ongoing financial challenge and make best use of council owned office accommodation both now and in the future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Making better use of resources and ensuring Leeds is an efficient Council.
2. Welcome to Yorkshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In accordance with its remit, the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board undertook a review of the funding arrangements for WtY; including an overview of the future plans for WtY given its new structure, leadership and in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. This highlights the potential for remote meetings to enhance the scope of scrutiny as James Mason CEO of Welcome to Yorkshire was able to attend, lead the discussion and answer questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Making better use of resources and ensuring Leeds is an efficient Council.
3. Improving the experience and outcomes of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues at Leeds City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Board reviewed the Council's response to the call to action by the BAME staff network, seeking to ensure that BAME colleagues are supported and are treated equally when they work for the Council. This work naturally included focus on the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on BAME colleagues and communities and the Black Lives Matter movement that developed in 2020 and will continue to be a focus for the Board during the new Municipal Year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Making better use of resources and ensuring Leeds is an efficient Council. ➤ Be safe, feel safe
4. Budget Savings Proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Throughout the year the Board has taken a keen interest in both the current year (2020/21) financial position and the budget setting process for 2021/22. There has been a focus on the impact of the pandemic on key income streams to the Council and through budget working groups a more detailed and much earlier focus on the budget setting process included detailed questions on the 'business as usual' approach and service review proposals contained in the budget setting process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Making better use of resources and ensuring Leeds is an efficient Council.

