

Report of City Solicitor

Report to Council

Date: 16 September 2020

Subject: Scrutiny at Leeds City Council – Annual Report 2019 to 2020

Are specific electoral wards affected?	☐ Yes ☒ No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	
Has consultation been carried out?	☒ Yes ☐ No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	☐ Yes ☒ No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	☐ Yes ☒ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	☐ Yes ☒ No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:	
Appendix number:	

Summary

1. Main issues

- Article 6 of the Council's Constitution requires that the Council's Scrutiny Officer reports to Council annually about how the authority has carried out its overview and scrutiny functions. The 2019/2020 Annual Report is appended.
- The 2019/20 report also sets out the role of scrutiny in supporting Leeds City Council's initial Covid-19 pandemic response and recovery period.

2. Best Council Plan Implications

- The Annual Report illustrates those areas of work undertaken by Scrutiny which directly contribute to the delivery of the Council's Best Council Plan; as detailed within the schedule included within this report.

3. Resource Implications

- This report has no specific resource implications.

Recommendations

- a) Council is asked to receive and note the Annual Report 2019/20.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Council the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/20. It also provides opportunity to further update members on the role of scrutiny during the initial period of response to, and subsequent recovery from, the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Background information

- 2.1 Article 6 of the Council's Constitution requires that the Council's Scrutiny Officer reports to Council annually about how the authority has carried out its overview and scrutiny functions.

3. Main issues

- 3.1 The attached Annual Report for 2019/20 highlights the work originated by Scrutiny during the last Municipal Year and also reflects on the monitoring of past scrutiny activity to ensure agreed recommendations stay on track.
- 3.2 The 2019/20 Annual Report is being considered later in the municipal year than comparable reports in previous years given the unprecedented circumstances of recent months. With public meetings halted during the initial period of response to the Covid-19 pandemic it was not possible for the Scrutiny Annual Report to be considered by full Council in the typical cyclical manner.
- 3.3 Given that context for the timing of this report to Council, the 2019/20 report also outlines the role of scrutiny during the initial pandemic response period and on-going activity during the first three months of the new municipal year.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 The Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/20 was produced by the Head of Democratic Services (designated as the proper officer for Scrutiny) in consultation with Scrutiny Chairs and the Executive Board Member for Resources.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 All terms of reference for work undertaken by the five Scrutiny Boards require inquiries 'to review how and to what effect consideration has been given to the impact of a service or policy on all equality areas, as set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme'.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 The annual report illustrates those areas of work undertaken by Scrutiny which directly contribute to the delivery of the Council's Best Council Plan.

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.2 As this is a factual report providing an overview of the work of the Council's scrutiny function for 2019/20 there are no specific climate emergency implications. However this year, it should be noted that there has been increased participation from Scrutiny Board members in paper-free agenda distribution.
- 4.3.3 Climate change has been a significant consideration with regards to the majority of items within the Boards' work programmes. The Chair of the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee has also engaged with a number of Boards in relation to specific items of work programming.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 4.4.1 This report has no specific resource or procurement implications.

4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 4.5.1 This report has no specific legal implications.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 There are no risk management implications relevant to this report.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 Article 6 of the Council's Constitution requires that the Council's Scrutiny Officer reports to Council annually about how the authority has carried out its overview and scrutiny functions. The Annual Report for 2019/20 is therefore appended for information.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 Council is asked to receive and note the Annual Report 2019/20.

7. Background documents¹

- 7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.



Leeds
CITY COUNCIL

scrutiny

Annual Report 2019 - 2020



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Introduction

This Annual Report provides a general summary of the work undertaken by the scrutiny function in Leeds during the 2019/20 Municipal Year as well as setting out the key highlights and achievements of the council's individual Scrutiny Boards.

In 2018 the Leeds Scrutiny function was reconfigured, reducing the number of Boards to five. Since then, the council's 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 124 work items were considered.

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. A refresh of the [Best Council Plan](#) for 2019/20 to 2020/21 was approved by Council in February 2019.

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 for 2019/20.

This Annual Report also reflects the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic emergency, which led to the cancellation of May local elections and the Annual Council Meeting, with executive and scrutiny arrangements 'rolling on' into the 2020/21 Municipal Year. As Scrutiny Chairs remained actively engaged in the review and clearance of key decisions necessarily taken under the Council's Urgency provisions during this time, this report also presents a brief overview of the key areas addressed by each Scrutiny Board during June and July 2020 linked to the Council's initial response to this unprecedented pandemic.

A self-assessment review of the Council's Scrutiny function was also undertaken this year in line with the Council's wider culture of benchmarking linked to its Medium Term Financial Strategy and also the Best Council ambition to become a more efficient and enterprising organisation. Leeds has remained 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. The timeliness of the self-assessment review also followed the publication of the Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local and Combined Authorities by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government in May 2019 and therefore provided assurance that the Leeds scrutiny function is compliant with the government guidance as well as demonstrating value for money when compared with other comparable authorities.



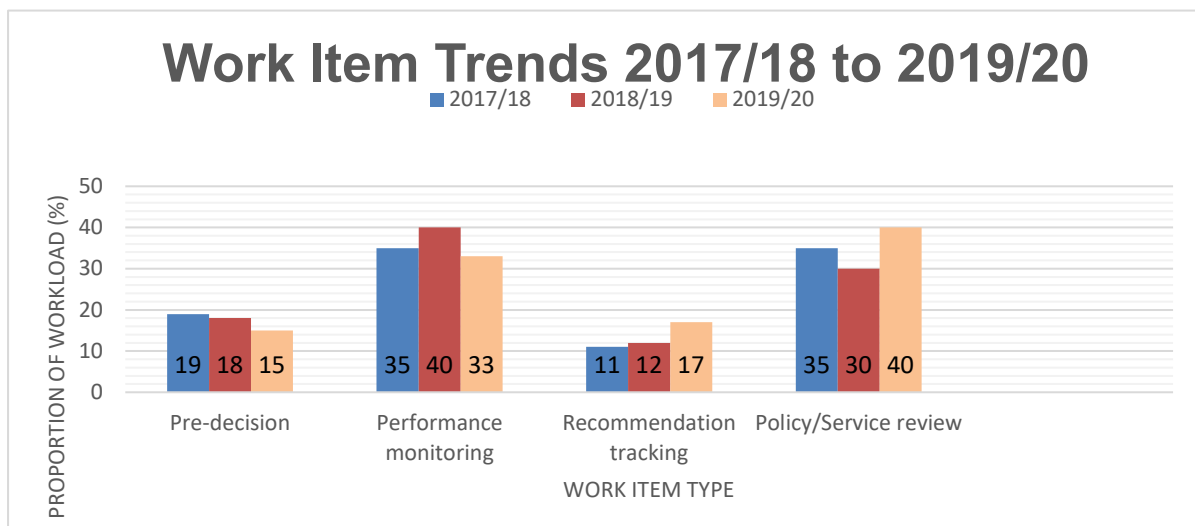
Summary of work 2019/20

This section summarises the type of work undertaken by the Scrutiny Boards¹ during the 2019/20 municipal year (June 2019 – May 2020), as well as looking at trends over the last 3 years.

On 16 March 2020, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, Leeds City Council took the necessary step to cancel a number of planned meetings of various Committees, Boards and Panels. This included all Scrutiny Board meetings and any joint scrutiny arrangements where the Council acts as the lead authority. However, Scrutiny Chairs remained actively engaged in the review and clearance of key decisions necessarily taken under the Council's Urgency provisions during this time. This included 8 decisions during the period of 20th March 2020 to 29th May 2020 on issues such as the emergency procurement of Personal Protective Equipment for staff; implementing the Government's Covid-19 Business Support Grant Funding and its Business Rates Retail Discount scheme in helping to support businesses affected by Covid-19; and securing additional beds to enable people to be discharged from hospital in a safe and timely way during the current COVID-19 crisis. Chairs and Scrutiny Board Members also received fortnightly briefings from Directors and Executive Members on the Covid-19 response.



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

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 there has already been additional early engagement about the way in which Scrutiny can maximise the value of its contribution to the development of the Council's budget proposals during what is an unprecedented period of challenge for the organisation. Initial consultation on early budget proposals will now begin in the autumn with Boards providing a collated summary of their feedback for consideration by Executive Board in December.

Scrutiny Boards have also taken a collective approach to increasing their scrutiny of business risk, including business continuity plans, which played such an important part of the organisation's initial response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Boards have also proactively sought to influence the development of proposals for West Yorkshire devolution, which look set to become a reality in the coming year. Scrutiny Boards publicly engaged with the formal consultation on the proposals, advocating that devolved arrangements be underpinned by a robust scrutiny function to ensure transparency and democratic accountability.

The Scrutiny Boards have continued to work collaboratively on a number of other cross-cutting issues – this maximises resource and avoids duplication of work. Some further examples of this approach are listed below.

- Exploring the Council's approach to the disposal of green spaces, with particular emphasis on the context of the declared Climate Emergency - Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources); Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) and Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth).
- Considering the Council's approach to car parking policy and management – Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) and Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth).
- Continued joint working with North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council on changes proposed to in-patient mental health services for adults and older people in Harrogate, likely to affect the population around Wetherby.
- Working collaboratively with the Children and Families Directorate and the Leeds Youth Council to directly engage with young people as part of an Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-Rolling.

Regional Scrutiny

The Council continued to take a lead role to support and deliver regional joint health scrutiny arrangements – improving collaboration between and across local authority health scrutiny functions across West Yorkshire and Harrogate.

The [West Yorkshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#) maintains oversight arrangements for the developing West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership across a range of programme areas and other matters, including:

- Specialised Stroke Care
- Mental Health
- Urgent and Emergency Care
- Development of proposed changes to vascular care
- Access to Dentistry
- Acute Care Collaboration (Hospitals working together)
- Workforce Challenges

Moving forward, the Authority will continue to participate in the function of the Joint Committee while also assisting to ensure it remains fit for purpose; reflects the geography of the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership and forms an important and integral part of the governance arrangements for the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership.

Highlights and Achievements



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. Mental Health Services	➤ Focusing on a number of areas including the development of Leeds' Mental Health Strategy; mental health services for adults and older people in Wetherby (in conjunction with North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council) and mobilisation arrangements for enhanced Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services.	➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives ➤ Live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible
2. Leeds Health and Care System	➤ Maintaining oversight of progress against the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Leeds Plan, including the development of Local Care Partnerships across the City, the Board highlighted the need for a comprehensive strategy to encourage the recruitment and retention of staff; and considered the proposed prevention work programme, receiving assurance on the inclusion of oral health. In addition the Board noted that in order to address consideration of health infrastructure for new housing developments, health partners were now receiving housing applications in early stages of development and were able to provide input to address population changes.	➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives ➤ Live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible
3. NHS proposed service changes and consultations	➤ Maintained oversight of proposed local NHS service changes, including some specific proposals around: • Maternity and Neonatal Services • Urgent Treatment Centres • Urgent Dental Treatment • Community Dental Services	➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives ➤ Live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible
4. Bereavement arrangements	➤ Building on the work of the previous Board and the review of bereavement arrangements at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT), the Board considered and welcomed developments to the service following a review of practices and discussed the advice and support available for bereaved families and clarity around the development of new operational plans.	➤ 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.

Highlights and Achievements



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. Is Leeds a Child Friendly City? – Scrutiny Inquiry	➤ In asking the question 'Is Leeds a child friendly city?' the Board undertook an in-depth inquiry last year which took stock of the overall progress made since the launch of the Child Friendly Leeds initiative in 2012. The Board agreed its final report in July 2019 and subsequently began tracking progress towards implementing the 13 recommendations stemming from this Inquiry.	➤ Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life. ➤ Enjoy greater access to green spaces, leisure and the arts. ➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives
2. Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-Rolling - Scrutiny Inquiry	➤ The Board commenced an inquiry into exclusions, elective home education and off-rolling. In light of the Council's commitment towards addressing such matters as one of the eight priority areas within its new 3As Strategy, the Board set out to assist in the effective delivery of this Strategy, as well as exploring whether Leeds as a city will be in a position to respond effectively to future reforms and expectations stemming from associated national reviews by Timpson and the School Commissioner. During its inquiry, the Board welcomed the input of the Leeds Youth Council from a meeting held 15th February 2020. While the Board had to pause its Inquiry as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it had already anticipated the need to conclude this work in the new municipal year.	➤ 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.
3. School Organisation Proposals and Objections Procedure	➤ Following the dissolution of the School Organisation Advisory Board, the Board considered the beneficial role of early scrutiny involvement when decisions regarding prescribed alterations to community and voluntarily controlled schools were being made by the Authority. Support for scrutiny during the informal consultation period informed the approach adopted in July 2019 for the Executive Member to discuss with the Chair of Scrutiny any objections received to identify situations that would benefit from greater scrutiny ahead of a final decision being made.	➤ Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life. ➤ Making better use of resources and ensuring Leeds is an efficient Council.
4. Post 16 Education including the Meadows Park Partnership	➤ The Board undertook scrutiny to better understand the circumstances and rationale associated with the decision to cease the Post 16 Meadows Park Partnership arrangement within the broader context of reviewing the city's Post 16 education offer, which would include a focus on vulnerable learners and young people with SEND. Recognising the importance of ensuring Leeds has the best possible provision with a range of pathways for Post-16 learners and particularly vulnerable learners; the Board agreed to feed into the Council's strategic review of Post-16 education.	➤ 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



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)
1. Leeds Draft Waste Strategy	➤ Following the Board's earlier Inquiry into refuse and waste management arrangements in the city, the Board participated in the development of an improved local waste management strategy.	➤ Live in good quality, affordable homes within clean and well cared for places.
2. Standards in Private Rented Sector Housing	➤ The Board discussed general interventions by the Council in the Private Rented Sector (PRS); specifically the progress made by Housing Leeds on implementing selective licensing in Beeston and Harehills and related issues including targeted interventions in Holbeck; the 'Leeds' Letting Scheme' and resources associated with Legal notices. Later in the year the Board focussed on measures to alleviate fuel poverty and promote affordable warmth, the energy efficiency activity undertaken with council housing stock, and the Council's approach in supporting carbon reduction in the private rented sector.	➤ Live in good quality, affordable homes within clean and well cared for places. ➤ Be safe, feel safe ➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives. ➤ Live in good quality, affordable homes within clean and well cared for places.
3. Revised Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Service Strategy	➤ Following consultation in autumn 2018, the Board received the refreshed Leeds Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy in July 2019. The Board emphasised the role of Member involvement to support the Strategy in terms of Community MARACs and triage of referrals, and noted the inclusion of graffiti & vandalism within the Strategy.	➤ Ensuring Leeds is a safe city with resilient communities. ➤ Be safe, feel safe
4. Reducing Poverty and Improving Financial inclusion, including specific focus on the Impact of Universal Credit	➤ The Board retained focus on the impact of the introduction of full service Universal Credit in Leeds; with the referral of the long term strategic partnership with Leeds Credit Union (LCU) from Executive Board providing the opportunity to review the sustainability of LCU; measures to improve access by individuals and organisations and the complexity of the deferred share scheme. The Board also heard that issues remain outstanding with the UC and discussed a number of matters including out of Hours queries provision, pre-existing debt and food poverty. A future working group will provide further focus on the issues claimants are experiencing with UC.	➤ Ensuring Leeds is a safe city with resilient communities. ➤ Be safe, feel safe ➤ Enjoy happy, healthy, active lives

Highlights and Achievements



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. Inclusive Growth Strategy & Sustainable Development	➤ The Board maintained a focus on the implementation of its Inclusive Growth Strategy and Sustainable Development Inquiries via reviews of departmental responses to the recommendations contained in those Inquiry reports. The Board welcomed the Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in advancing the concept of sustainable development. It also discussed recommendation in the Centre for Local Economic Studies (CLES) report – Progressing Procurement Processes and Practices in Leeds and the contributions made by anchor organisations towards Inclusive Growth. The Board received a further update on activity undertaken to support disabled people including those with learning disabilities into employment.	➤ Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life ➤ Strengthening 'Smart City' infrastructure and increasing digital inclusion.
2. Road Safety, Leeds Transport Strategy and Advancing Bus Service Provision	➤ The Board continued its focus on transport and road safety issues. This included examining the challenges arising from the number of people Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) on Leeds roads; how the Leeds Public Transport Investment Programme supports the Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy priorities; and progress on recommendations made in its inquiry 'Advancing Bus Service Provision'. Topics included the Transforming Cites funding, notice of construction/highways works, train station refurbishment, West Yorkshire Bus Alliance Commitments and developing a Sustainable Bus Network.	➤ Move around a well-planned city easily ➤ Enjoy greater access to green spaces, leisure and the arts
3. Digital Inclusion	➤ The Board continued to monitor progress against recommendations arising from the Inquiry 'Powering up the Leeds Economy through Digital Inclusion' relating to the improvement of broadband infrastructures, and digital literacy through education, learning and the provision of equipment. The Board was pleased that Scrutiny focus had given Digital Inclusion greater prominence in the Councils corporate priorities, including the Inclusive Growth Strategy, and sought reassurance this work is sustained.	➤ Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life.
4. Housing Mix	➤ The monitoring of recommendations that ensure the timely delivery of the right property type and tenure within criteria of affordability as defined in the Core Strategy, alongside a focus on Neighbourhood Plans and the Climate Emergency. The Board will continue its work in this area during 2020/21.	➤ Live in good quality, affordable homes in clean and well cared for places. ➤ Be safe and feel safe

Highlights and Achievements



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. The reduction of energy consumption in Council buildings – Scrutiny Inquiry	➤ The Board undertook an inquiry to review how the Council is reducing energy consumption levels within its own corporate buildings in order to minimise both cost and carbon impact. The timeliness of this inquiry provided an opportunity for Scrutiny to consider the principles and proposals linked to Phase 2 of the Council's 'Changing the Workplace' Programme as it rolled out across localities. The Board also considered the potential implications and challenges associated with the Programme in terms of trying to minimise energy costs and carbon impact, with a particular focus around the promotion of flexible and mobile ways of working and aiming to reduce car usage and facilitate clean transport choices.	➤ Making better use of resources and ensuring Leeds is an efficient Council. ➤ Move around a well-planned city easily
2. Promoting Sustainable Travel for Staff	• Having reviewed how the Council could reduce energy consumption levels within its own corporate buildings, the Board turned its attention to how the Council was working towards promoting sustainable travel for staff. In February 2020, the Board considered and welcomed a range of proposed measures around adopting new approaches to using transport smartly and linking this to better journey planning and use of technology. Measures also included potential changes to terms and conditions; offering new incentives to travel appropriately; and changes in working practices and culture.	➤ Making better use of resources and ensuring Leeds is an efficient Council. ➤ Move around a well-planned city easily
3. Devolution	➤ In accordance with its remit, the Council's Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board maintained a watching brief of the Devolution agenda and in late February 2020, received an update from the Council's Leader and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority on developments prior to the West Yorkshire "minded-to" Devolution Deal being announced by government as part of the Budget on 11 March 2020. This focus continued into municipal year 2020/21 with the Board responding to the regional devolution consultation and playing a lead role in the West Yorkshire Region in advocating for a robust scrutiny function to underpin the devolved authority.	➤ Making better use of resources and ensuring Leeds is an efficient Council. ➤ Live in good quality, affordable homes in clean and well cared for places
4. Leeds City Council's preparations for the UK's exit from the European Union	➤ In view of the UK's exit from the European Union, the Board received updates on Leeds City Council's preparations, focussing on: • Infrastructure and Supplies; including future supply chains and the labour market and issues identified in the agriculture, food and chemical sectors; • Business and economic impact and partnership working; • Resettlement work and community tensions; • Organisational impact; and • Transition period and clarity of the UK's future relationship with the EU.	➤ Making better use of resources and ensuring Leeds is an efficient Council. ➤ Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life ➤ Be safe, feel safe

Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 emergency in Spring 2020 saw the cancellation of May local elections and the Annual Council Meeting, with executive and scrutiny arrangements 'rolling on' into the 2020/21 Municipal Year. Since April 2020, the Council's Executive Board has received regular update reports from the Chief Executive surrounding the Council's Covid-19 Response and Recovery Plan. As public meetings of Scrutiny Boards began to recommence in June, albeit remotely, each Board also focused its attention on the ongoing progress made by the council working with partners and communities in response to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. Set out below is a summary of the relevant key areas addressed by each Board during June and July 2020.

The ongoing pandemic response and the city's initial recovery plan remain the primary focus for the Council as decisions taken during this period will have a substantial, long-term impact on communities, partnership arrangements and public services in Leeds. Moving forward, the Scrutiny Boards will also continue to determine how best to use their collective remit and resources to add maximum value to the organisation during this unprecedented period of change and challenge, with a view to supporting a robust and resilient recovery.



Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles

Having engaged with a wide range of representatives from the Council, third sector and local NHS bodies, the Board welcomed their collaborative approach in supporting the broad range of patients and stakeholders across the health and care system during such an unprecedented period. Particular areas of discussion included support services for shielded groups; mental health services; the impact on care homes; associated health inequalities; managing local outbreaks and planning for future peaks in infection rates. The Board also noted the learning points, practices and positive impacts of new ways of working arising from health and care organisations' responses to Covid-19.



Children and Families

Due to the fast paced nature of developments linked to the pandemic, the lead Executive Board Members and the Director of Children and Families led on briefing the Board on the latest position surrounding Schools; Children's Homes; Children's Social Care; and Early Years/Childcare Provision. Particular areas of discussion included the work in schools for vulnerable children and key worker's children; the phased wider reopening of schools, including plans for September; the continuing support to children with care plans; and risk assessments for children with social care and mental health needs. The Board praised the efforts of everyone during this very difficult period.



Environment, Housing and Communities

Given the context of the Council's necessary prioritisation of the emergency response to Covid-19, the Board discussed the impact of the pandemic on the city's waste services, cemeteries and crematoria, non-emergency housing repairs and the return to use of void properties. Members were updated on support provided to rough sleepers and victims of domestic violence, and explored how services adapted to safely support vulnerable citizens during the initial stages of the pandemic. Members came together with voluntary partners to provide initial reflections on the lessons learned from the voluntary response to Covid-19 and discussed how those conclusions might influence long-term resilience in the sector.



Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth

The Board identified the economic impact of Covid-19 on the city as a priority and welcomed updates from the Director of City Development on the support provided to businesses and third sector organisations throughout the initial phase of the pandemic. The speed at which grants to businesses were administered on behalf of Government was acknowledged as a particular achievement and Board Members extended their thanks to all those involved. The Board discussed the action taken to enable social distancing in city and district centres, along with the progress of major infrastructure schemes, support for active travel, increasing levels of universal credit claims and support for people looking to move into employment.



Strategy & Resources

Covid-19 has had a major impact on the Council's budget in terms of reduced income and increased expenditure. Scrutiny Board Strategy and Resources has recognised this and focussed on the unprecedented challenge the Council now faces in terms of its financial resources both now and over the longer term. The Board has received updates from the Director of Resources and Housing and the Chief Officer Financial Services on how the Council plans to manage this challenge and throughout 2020/21 this is expected to be a key issue for the Board to focus on. The Board has also recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic does not only have an impact on the Council's budget it will also affect the workforce and the buildings they use. Key issues considered include; home working and how that impacts staff well-being and morale, the Council's office accommodation, the Council's wider asset base and Council Tax and Business Rates collection.

