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## Third Sector Leeds/Leeds City Council Event Report;

### *Sharing the Wealth; the third sector's role in building a fairer Leeds economy*

Thursday 23 July 2019

Leeds Town Hall

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## 1. Introduction and background

Third sector organisations across Leeds play a key role in enabling people in our poorest communities to face challenges head on and make the best of their circumstances. However, the world is changing quickly and if we want to challenge inequality we all need to work together to build a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy that delivers better for everyone.

This event, hosted by Third Sector Leeds and Leeds City Council and attended by in excess of fifty delegates, showcased current thinking about how to share the wealth, and sought to generate ideas for how the third sector could play a greater role in building a fairer economy in Leeds. Most importantly, the event started a conversation in the third sector which, had until now, been muted and has prompted a debate in the economic development department about ways in which indicators of wellbeing could be embedded into growth models.

### Presentations –

#### **Why inequality matters; the Leeds Picture**

Simon Foy, Head of Policy and Intelligence, Leeds City Council introduced some of the key challenges Leeds faces and why more even development is critical;

- Leeds' geography includes more affluent suburban areas than many other core cities (where they would be in different Authorities). This gives Leeds benefits but can also mask massive challenges in the inner areas
- Leeds is great at generating jobs; but many of them are low skilled and insecure and in the future these jobs may be threatened by automation
- Leeds has a rapidly growing population of young people which is positive for ensuring there are new people entering the workforce. However, this population growth is clustered in the most deprived neighbourhoods in the city. This creates challenges in matching young people to opportunities.
- Housing choices in Leeds inner areas are limited and some neighbourhoods are stuck in a cycle of poor housing and limited renewal. Traditionally, people would move into these areas and many would move on when they became more settled. There is some evidence that this movement has reduced or stopped with people who face major life challenges increasingly moving within these neighbourhood.

## A vision for reshaping the economy with the third sector as a key player

Rachel Laurence, Director of Programmes and Practice at the New Economics Foundation outlined current thinking about reshaping economies

- Leeds has been at the forefront of designing ‘inclusive growth strategies’; strategies for economic growth that seek to use the benefits of economic success to redistribute opportunities into poorer communities.
- Some recent thinking suggests that the kind of growth our city aims at (e.g. high productivity digital) could lock out more deprived communities and/or that it’ll take a long time for the benefit to reach these communities.
- Action to promote more ‘grass roots’ local economies such as thriving local market places (that don’t show high productivity gains) could make a bigger impact on deprived communities as more of the money they generate and move around stays local. This approach to economic development is often called community wealth building.
- However, cities like Leeds have to balance their approach because they cannot get inward investment from governments or private business without showing that they’re aiming to create and support high productivity industries.

## Sharing the wealth in Leeds, the Inclusive Growth Strategy

Eve Roodhouse, Chief Office Economic Development, Leeds City Council introduced key features of Leeds’ Inclusive Growth Strategy:

- The strategy includes 12 key areas of work (Big Ideas) organised into themes around “People”, “Place” and “Productivity”
- Through it’s “Community Anchor” work, Leeds is seeking to make sure its largest employers (like the NHS) invest more in local development and spend more locally (e.g. the NHS is targeting recruitment on the most deprived neighbourhoods in Leeds).
- Leeds digital inclusion work is seeking to raise the ICT literacy of the population
- There are big infrastructure projects like HS2 and the Southbank city centre extension underway (but communities need to be involved in choices about the development that happens around them)
- Partnership investments are seeking to raise productivity

## Third Sector Case Studies

- Digital Creativity Foundation
  - One project is getting children and their families used to using digital tools to map local pollution building digital schools and helping with climate action
- Seagulls
  - Seagulls reuse and recycle the cities’ paint. As a social enterprise they are committed to giving local people opportunity and have delivered £1 million of benefits (without counting the paint that hasn’t gone to landfill. They are always looking for the next project that can change things for the better
- Chapel FM
  - Chapel FM are the only arts organisation in East Leeds. Their work, enables young people (and adults) to see pathways into arts careers and that you can be a broadcaster without leaving your home behind

- GIPSIL
  - Shared the story of an ex service user who now works for them. They make a real local commitment to development by giving themselves the target of 10% of their staff team having been volunteers or service users.

## 2. Group discussions and key findings

- There is great potential in community growing initiatives and co-ops, as they bring together health and wellbeing, cheap food and economic growth. Successful Leeds examples exist but they need support to co-ordinate and to scale up.
- The third sector has a great track record in refurbishing and retrofitting homes. Leeds has real challenges here so there is massive potential for the third sector to be part of the solution – if policy makers and third sector organisations can work together as schemes come to fruition
- Digital Leeds is doing great work; the next step is to build more than basic skills in communities
- Third sector organisations don't know how they or communities can influence development (e.g. the South Bank) or the extent to which these developments will include 'social infrastructure' (e.g. faith spaces or accessible green space that feels welcoming to communities)
- Knowledge in the third sector (outside of specialist agencies) around apprenticeships is patchy; third sector organisations want to be able to recruit apprentices and sign post people towards apprenticeships.
- There is appetite and experience in the third sector in community and green transport; to scale this there needs to be a co-ordinated approach to building the right infrastructure (e.g. cycle lanes) and engaging with the third sector organisations that can raise confidence and provide cheap solutions.
- There is massive potential in social enterprise and community enterprise to build the economy from the ground up; however in order to achieve growth there needs to be more dedicated support (over and above 'standard' business advice) that recognises the particular challenges and cultures of these sectors.
- Communities are disengaged from the conversation about the kind of economy they want. In the case of major infrastructure projects like HS2 neighbourhoods will be radically changed and communities need a say how this is done. The third sector is well placed to help with bringing communities into the conversation

## 3. Recommendations

- TSL to advocate for an explicit third sector seat at the table to ensure that the voice of the sector continues to shape the implementation of the Inclusive Growth Strategy.
- TSL to work with Council colleagues to understand plans for delivering the city's green infrastructure in order to ensure that the third sector is able to play an active role in delivery.
- TSL to work with the Council and Local Economic Partnership (LEP) to understand and promote how business start up support can be directed towards and tailored to the social enterprise and community asset transfer sectors

- TSL and the Council should work together to ensure that the benefits that accrue from work with Community Anchors Institutions<sup>1</sup> and increasing engagement with private sector partners are directed to communities through third sector organisations
- TSL to work with partners to consider the best way of starting a conversation with communities about what the future economy should look like at a neighbourhood level.

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<sup>1</sup> Community Anchor Institutions are large city wide organisations (e.g. the NHS or the Universities) for whom a small change in the way they spend can have a big impact on poorer neighbourhoods. This can be confusing as when some people in the third sector talk about *Community Anchors* they mean locally based third sector organisations (e.g. a community centre) that provide a range of services that empower local people.