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**Chris Hollins, Independent Chair,
Third Sector Leeds**

Reflections from July 2021

As spring has slipped into summer and the worst impacts of Covid seem to be reducing I've noticed that many of the meetings I attend are beginning to look to the future; to borrow the terms of Leeds' economic recovery strategy , we are moving into 'Recover, Reset and Renew'.

With a new Council leadership, major change underway in the health service, and with Tracy Brabin becoming the first West Yorkshire Mayor (and first female Metro Mayor) it feels like there is a real opportunity to think again about the way we decide on the direction our city takes and how the third sector can play a more central role in delivering for communities.

Over the last couple of months, at Third Sector Leeds we've tried to respond to the changing mood in the air; we've been working hard to engage with our local politicians, to renew ourselves for the future and to shape some key debates where we feel the third sector could be more involved.

In this round up we talk about:

[Engaging with the Leader of the Council, the Executive Member for Communities and the Council's Chief Executive](#)

Reflections from the Third Sector Leeds meeting with the Leader of the Council, James Lewis and with Tom Riordan at a recent meeting.

[Learning Lessons from Covid-19 in Leeds](#)

Over the last couple of months the Council have been reviewing the effectiveness of the emergency response arrangements during Covid, and TSL has provided some feedback into this review on behalf of the Third Sector in Leeds.

[#LeedsActsTogether \(Climate Emergency\)](#)

We are supporting #LeedsActs Together campaign by highlighting how the third sector is at the centre of connecting people to action to sustain our earth, water and climate.

[Hearing the Voice of Local Organisations in the City Plan](#)

Third Sector Leeds is working with our colleagues at the Council to ensure that the voice of the third sector is reflected in the new plan and we really want to hear the voice of our local members.

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[Engaging with the Leader of the Council, the Executive Member for Communities and the Council's Chief Executive](#)

In our last Round Up, we shared our 'Statement of Principles' for how we feel the third sector could be involved earlier in conversations about investment in Leeds' future. Third Sector Leeds' Leadership Group were fortunate to have the chance to explore some of these thoughts with the Leader of the Council, James Lewis and with Tom Riordan at a meeting towards the end of May.

In particular, we took forward a conversation about the need to have new ways to quickly bring together the third and public sectors when new opportunities for funding become available. We also focused on the need to build social value

into public sector expenditure and the way that the third sector offers distinctive social value because it is community run and reinvests any surpluses into communities. Finally, we touched on the need for a strong third sector voice at West Yorkshire level and TSL's view that this voice should be expressed through the West Yorkshires third sector Assemblies.

Following this meeting, Third Sector Leeds and Forum Central worked together to invite a wider group of third sector leaders to an in person 'breakfast meeting' with Cllr Mary Harland (the new Executive Member for Communities) and Tom Riordan.

The third sector attendees asked some great questions like how the Council can re-engage with Faith Communities and what the Council can do to ensure that third sector organisations that work with the most marginalised communities can continue to innovate.

We do feel that (along with others) we are being successful in raising awareness about where our relationships could be stronger; we were at an Inclusive Growth event the other date where Tom Riordan acknowledged one of the key points that we've been making for a while; that relationships between the third sector and the health system have developed significantly but that we may be less far down that road when it comes to thinking about the role of the third sector in building an inclusive economy.

How can you help:

We're always keen to hear from third sector organisations about the key challenges you face and the solutions you'd like to see.

Your feedback really helps us to focus conversations with our public sector partners on what matters to our members. For an informal conversation about your priorities please contact Richard.warrington@val.org.uk

Learning lessons from Covid-19 in Leeds

Over the last couple of months the Council have been reviewing the effectiveness of the emergency response arrangements during Covid. The report, [Learning Lessons from Covid-19 in Leeds](#) shows that our city's 'Bronze, Silver and Gold' structures worked well and contributed to achieving the "most positive outcomes possible under the circumstances".

As part of the review TSL spoke to third sector leaders that had been involved in the emergency response structures and prepared [this response](#) reflecting on the experience of the third sector.

Both the 'learning lessons report' and TSL's response show that partners that were involved in the emergency response structures felt that new relationships had formed and that people worked together in new ways irrespective of what organisation they came from. In some cases there seemed to be overlap between different 'Bronze and Silver' groups and it wasn't always clear who was responsible for what – but given the speed at which new systems were set up and the need for lots of people to receive key messages this was understandable.

TSL's main feedback for how things could be improved in the next emergency is that third sector infrastructure and our public sector partners need to have a stronger plan (building on innovations like the community care hubs and communities of interest network) for how to communicate key messages to third sector people that are delivering on the ground but not part of the formal emergency response structures.

#LeedsActsTogether (Climate Emergency)

If you listened to Radio 5Live between 12 and 16 July, you may have heard '*Leeds: City on a mission*'; a series of items on how the people of Leeds are stepping up to make a difference around the climate emergency.

The 5Live coverage is expected to last for the whole of the coming year (focusing on different aspects of sustainability each month) and Leeds Climate Commission is seeking to widen the impact of the coverage by running a campaign #LeedsActsTogether.

At Third Sector Leeds we are supporting #LeedsActsTogether campaign by highlighting how the third sector is at the centre of connecting people to action to sustain our earth, water and climate. Along with the forum [Leeds Academic Collaboration in the Third Sector](#) we intend to publish a series of blogs and articles that show the difference that we make.

You can read [the Leeds ACTS! blog](#) about how they've brought sustainable food growers *Incredible Edible* together with academics looking at the impact they have made.

[Read the Leeds ACTS! Blog](#)

How can you help:

We'd encourage as many TSL members as possible to join the #Leeds Acts Together campaign. You can sign up to get updates from the campaign [here](#).

If you want to tell your story about how your organisation makes a difference around sustainability we'd love to hear it, write it up and publish it to accompany the 5 Live coverage.

To share your experience contact Richard.warrington@val.org.uk

Hearing the Voice of Local Organisations in the City Plan

The Council's 'Best Council Plan' sets out the main things Leeds needs to achieve to make a difference for our Communities. For several years it has focused on 3 key strategies – Health and Wellbeing (making our city healthier),

Inclusive Growth (making the economy work better for communities) and the Climate Emergency

As we come out of Covid there's a recognition that our city needs to deliver lasting change so the Council wants to work with partners to transition to a new City Plan, reflecting a wider range of views and recognising the contribution everyone is making to life in Leeds.

Third Sector Leeds is working with our colleagues at the Council to ensure that the voice of the third sector is reflected in the new plan and we really want to hear the voice of our local members.

Three short local events in October 2021 – for any third sector organisation working in Leeds but particularly for our smaller and neighbourhood based organisations) will be a great opportunity to hear about the key challenges and opportunities for our city and a chance to give your view from the ground about the things that big things that we need to work together to achieve.

How can you help:

Please save the dates for these events - more information and booking details will follow.

Monday 4 October | 1.30pm - 3.00pm | West North West
Tuesday 5 October | 1.30pm - 3.00pm | East North East
Tuesday 12 October | 10.00am - 12pm | South East

Want to share good news from your community?
Doing Good Leeds is a great place to share your successes and promote the work of the third sector in building strong and resilient communities in Leeds.

[Click here](#) to register and take the first step in sharing your news, events and training.

