Jewish Community Manifesto for West Yorkshire
For over 100 years, the Leeds Jewish Representative Council has been responsible for representing, protecting, uniting, defending and serving the Leeds, Bradford and wider West Yorkshire Jewish community. Rooted within Jewish values, we work across the community regardless of religious, cultural or political affiliations or beliefs, ensuring that the Jewish population of West Yorkshire have a say over the great city in which they lead their lives.

The West Yorkshire Mayoral elections on Thursday 6th May 2021 will mark the beginning of a new era in local politics. For the first time ever, West Yorkshire will have an elected Mayor with wide-ranging and far-reaching powers. Whoever is elected will have the ability to bring a new agenda to West Yorkshire that will shape the city for many years to come.

Working with the relevant communal agencies we have identified the concerns of West Yorkshire’s Jewish community. Moreover, we have created this manifesto to inform both incumbent and prospective politicians of the issues faced by our community. Our clear and concise pledges seek to demonstrate the actions that would benefit our community.

The Jewish community is not immune to the pressures faced by wider society. Locally, the burden on housing, social care and community cohesion creates challenges that make the relationships between the community and elected politicians crucial. This manifesto will ensure that our elected officials and public servants are understanding and responsive to those challenges.

Our success as a community is tied to that of our neighbours. I am therefore extremely proud of the strong links that have been established with all of the other faith communities across the city. The community led by the Representative Council are determined to deliver a tolerant, cohesive and inclusive West Yorkshire that all communities can enjoy.

The issues raised within this manifesto will require partnership with politicians and community leaders for years to come. We hope this manifesto can serve as a foundation of the work to be done during the election and beyond.

Leeds Jewish Representative Council
WEST YORKSHIRE JEWISH COMMUNITY
Jewish people have been living in West Yorkshire since at least the middle of the eighteenth century. Like communities throughout the UK, the migrant population in Leeds increased throughout the nineteenth century as Jews fled pogroms in Eastern Europe. The Board of Guardians (now the Leeds Jewish Welfare Board) was formed in 1878 primarily as a means to assist those that needed financial help to avoid the workhouse.

However, the First World War caused existing tensions to be exacerbated. Over 3,000 men from the Jewish Community fought in the war. The war dragged on for far longer than anyone had anticipated and the desire for a scapegoat might have been the catalyst that finally brought tensions to a head during 1917, with the outbreak of serious anti-Jewish riots in Leeds. After weeks of isolated incidents, on June 3rd a mob of approximately 1,500 people surged into the Leylands, smashing and looting shops and carrying out physical attacks on Jews. It took police several hours to disperse the rioters that night and violence erupted again the following day, with some 3,000 rioters storming the area, destroying property and stoning both Jews and later, the police.
As a result of the unrest the Leeds Jewish Representative Council was established that same year. Its purpose was to promote and protect the interests of the Leeds Jewish community, as well as create a bridge between Jewish and non-Jewish communities; values that are still fundamental to the organisation today.

With the rise of fascism in Germany and Italy, anti-Jewish sentiment spread, and the British Union of Fascists (BUF) was founded by Oswald Mosely in 1932. At its height, the BUF claimed 50,000 members and with Mosely’s aristocratic background and press support from the likes of news baron, Lord Rothermere, prospects looked bleak.

BUF marches took place around the country and Leeds was no exception. A 1936 march was successfully re-routed by authorities to avoid predominantly Jewish areas but allowed to take place. The march was to culminate with an address by Mosely at Holbeck Moor but the black shirts were massively outnumbered by a combination of Jewish and Communist protesters and violent clashes took place, with the Fascists firmly rooted.

In London, the Jewish People’s Council against Fascism and Antisemitism (JPC), preparing for what was to become the most famous British anti-Fascist rally, the Battle of Cable Street in London, proclaimed in relation to Holbeck Moor: ‘What has been done in Leeds, must be done in East London!’.

After the war social care reform across the country was mirrored by a new set up of volunteer and professional staff at the Board of Guardians. New services were offered including communal sedars at Passover and prisoner rights. Hospital visits were organised and outings and holidays during the summer were introduced.

A general welfare committee was set up in 1949 to run existing services but look more proactively at introducing new services such as meals, visits to the lonely and sick, weekly socials and the distribution of clothing. This was followed by the appointment of a full-time welfare officer. Friday meal provision and an annual Chanukah party were also introduced.

In 1953 the formation of The Leeds Jewish Housing Association, a sister organisation to the Welfare Board designed to meet the housing needs in the community. Also, in the 1950’s the board started a home help scheme and it invited representatives of all Leeds Jewish social care provision organisations to be represented on its executive. This included The Leeds Jewish Blind Society, Home for Aged, Ladies Aid Society, Leeds Jewish Institute, United Hebrew Congregation, Social Welfare Committee and Jewish Convalescent Home.

According to the 2011 census, there are Jewish residents in every constituency in West Yorkshire with the most populous being Leeds North East, Elmet & Rothwell and Leeds North West. Organisations within the Jewish community cover the length and breadth of the community and act on the basis of never turning someone away, this is applicable not just to Jewish people, but anyone needing their services.

During the coronavirus pandemic, Jewish organisations in Leeds have come together with congregations and organisations across the whole of Yorkshire to deliver online religious services, online activities for young people and online festival observance.

The community is well known for its dedication to volunteering, leading interfaith dialogue through the Muslim Jewish women’s network Nisa Nashim, their dedication to education through the foundation of the Leeds Jewish Free School and Brodetsky Primary and their involvement in civic duty. In Bradford, the synagogue is the only synagogue in the country & arguably the world to have Muslim members of the executive board due to the diminishing number of Jewish people in central Bradford.

Miki Vyse
Jewish Leadership Council – Yorkshire Manager
EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE
Lifelong Jewish learning is a unifying concept across all streams of Judaism and Jewish communities. It manifests itself in Leeds’ Jewish schools, multiple youth movements and religious institutions. Education, skills and employment are consistently amongst the community's key concerns. It is therefore no surprise that Jewish primary and secondary schools continue to feature at the top of domestic league tables. In Leeds we are blessed to have the Brodetsky Primary School and Leeds Jewish Free School catering as the Jewish schools in the region.

The overwhelming majority of Jewish children attend a Jewish school giving them the opportunity to enjoy a Jewish education rooted in British values and the national curriculum, something that may be difficult in areas where there are low proportions of Jewish youth, like West Yorkshire, before the foundation of the Leeds Jewish Free School, it was not uncommon that the Jewish Youth of the region would travel to Manchester to attend Jewish school there. The community firmly believes that teaching secular and religious studies alongside one another creates balanced well-rounded students. The state supported schools pride themselves on being models of best practice, promoting links between schools of all faiths and none, ensuring children understand and appreciate individuals with backgrounds that differ to their own.  

However, the demand on Jewish school places continues to outstrip supply and a clear commitment to funding Jewish-based education is needed from local authorities and central government to ensure that the growing population of Jews has the opportunity to attend a Jewish school.

Similarly, the Jewish community’s provision for young people is highly developed reaching at least 20,000 young people annually. This also includes over 12 denominational and cross-communal youth groups. This equips young Jews with the skills necessary to be active and contributing members of society. The Zone is the provision in Leeds that, though based from the same campus as two of the Jewish Schools, serves across the community, covering all Jewish denominations and offering extra-curricular activities and youth provision for anyone that enters.

1. Jews in the United Kingdom in 2013 JPR
COMMUNITY SAFETY, COHESION AND ANTISEMITISM
West Yorkshire is a vibrant and multicultural region, in which all components of the Jewish community rightly play an integral and confident part. The Jewish community is well established across the city of Leeds, though every local authority has smaller communities and by and large is integrated into the wider fabric of society.

The Jewish community is committed to promoting good relations between different groups across West Yorkshire by proactively preventing tensions, combating racism and violence and promoting tolerance and understanding.

The community welcomes the Government’s adoption of the International Holocaust and Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. It is expected that this modern and wide-ranging definition of contemporary antisemitism be implemented across the country in all relevant government departments and civil society.

Despite the confidence of the community shown through a multitude of religious and cultural gatherings, the community has longstanding legitimate concerns regarding its security and levels of antisemitism. The Community Security Trust (CST) monitoring of antisemitism has recorded a long-term rise of incidents since 2000 which includes specific increases associated with antisemitic responses to “trigger” incidents that usually revolve around war in the Middle East. However, despite no major conflict affecting Israel, the Community Security Trust reported a 36% increase in antisemitic incidents in 2016.3

This increase is keenly felt in Leeds due to the concentrations of Jews and communal buildings. It is exacerbated by the emotional impact of extreme anti-Israel activity such as boycott, divestment and sanction campaigns that negatively affect communal life including on university campuses across the city and local region. Across Yorkshire there has been a consistent rise of antisemitic incidents year on year, in CST’s more recent antisemitic incidents report (2020) there was a rise across Yorkshire despite the region spending more than 9 months in government mandated Lockdowns. This left West Yorkshire sitting as the region with the 4th most reported antisemitic incidents in the country.

The significant threat to the Jewish community comes from terrorism. All residents of West Yorkshire could fall victim to terrorism but as the attacks in Toulouse (March 2012), Burgas (July 2012), Brussels (May 2014), Paris (January 2015), Copenhagen (February 2015), Pittsburgh (2018) and Halle (2019) there is a specific terrorist threat to Jewish communities worldwide.

Since 2010, the government has supported the Jewish community by providing funding for security at grant maintained Jewish schools. In 2015, this was extended to all Jewish schools and an additional provision was made for the cost of security guarding many communal buildings.4

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3. CST Annual Report 2016
4. CST Annual Report 2015
In light of the increased security threat level to the Jewish community, ensure that combating antisemitism and hate crime in West Yorkshire remains a priority. There should be a continued focus on terrorism prevention, community resilience, and the work of the CST, including the provision of services to support victims of antisemitic hate crime.

**Pledge 4**

To engage with Jewish communal bodies and stakeholders in projects that deliver inter-community and interfaith relations to encourage tolerance, co-existence and cooperation.

**Pledge 5**

To work with the local community and communal organisations helping schools to counter antisemitism with programmes such a Stand Up.

**Pledge 6**
HOUSING AND PLANNING POLICY
The pressure on housing in West Yorkshire continues to be a significant issue for the region's population.

Many young Jews, have been priced out of owning their own home in the community in which they grew up. Geographically, the vast majority of the Jewish community resides in a small section of West Yorkshire. As a result the availability of housing is low which in turn drives up prices. Young people are therefore being forced to reside a considerable distance away from their local synagogues and their families.

This problem is exacerbated for Orthodox Jews who cannot travel on the Sabbath and other Jewish festivals, as their families and communities are not within walking distance. In addition, if they live outside of the symbolic boundary provided by the eruv (which is in the construction stages) they are not able to carry belongings or push children in public places leaving them effectively housebound.

Larger families continue to struggle to find accommodation that can adequately house all of their children. In addition, recent changes to welfare provision have created to a challenging financial environment. Furthermore, it often proves difficult for larger families to obtain planning permission in order to extend their homes. As a result, families are sometimes forced to look for suitable accommodation outside of their community.

The Jewish community is proud to champion affordable housing through established organisations like the Leeds Jewish Housing Association. It is a strongly held belief that affordable housing strengthens communities, regenerates areas and benefits the local economy for all inhabitants. It is also hoped that when new land becomes available, affordable housing organisations will be given priority to purchase and develop the land for the benefit of all local communities.

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5. An Eruv is a symbolic boundary consisting of wires running along steel poles. The simulated boundary extends the domain of a household into public areas permitting activities such as carrying belongings or pushing a pram that would normally be forbidden on the Sabbath.
6. Jewish families and Jewish households, JPR
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE
Leed’s Jewish community is considered one of the most vibrant and well-established faith groups monitored in the city, but over 40% of the community is over 50, significantly higher than the city’s average. In addition, the community has twice the number of people over 60 compared to the general UK population. West Yorkshire Jewry has always taken great pride in looking after its elderly members but current demographic trends create certain challenges.7

The majority of Yorkshires Jewish older people entering long-term care prefer to access services from Jewish providers such as Donisthorpe Hall and the Leeds Jewish Welfare Board. Through extensive fundraising and mergers with other communal health and social care organisations, The Leeds Jewish Welfare Board and their domiciliary care provider, Moorcare, have managed to create a one-stop shop where all elements of care including mental health services are made available in tune with religious and cultural sensitivities.

At present there is one Jewish Care Home, Donisthorpe Hall in North Leeds, covering the entirety of West Yorkshire. It is sometimes the case that other local authorities are reluctant to contribute to the care of a resident when he or she chooses to leave local authority social care in search of a culturally sensitive provider.

Despite the impressive re-invigoration of Donisthorpe Hall and the drive to rationalise resources to cut expenditure, services continue to be under-funded by the local authority, this is the same case with the Leeds Jewish Welfare Board Services. The community itself continues to fundraise but a combination of ever-increasing costs and dwindling state support has caused severe funding gaps for social care providers both inside and outside the Jewish community.

This is a cross-communal issue and representatives of the Jewish community would welcome a discussion on “fair fees” with all other care homes as to how the £6 billion gap between social care funding and demand can be reduced. The sector is committed to continuing to build constructive relationships with statutory partners regarding future initiatives.8

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7. Jews in the United Kingdom in 2013, JPR  
8. Adult social care funding 2014 state of the nation report LGA
CULTURE, HERITAGE AND SOCIAL ACTION
Jewish culture in West Yorkshire continues to thrive and makes a significant contribution to the lives of those both inside and outside of the community.

The community supports the desire for public events and festivals to deliver engagement between people with different faiths. One of the most iconic annual images of Leeds Town Hall is the public Menorah lighting in Millenium Square surrounded by the Christmas markets.

Jews also have a long history of playing an integral part in supporting both religious and cultural aspects of the Jewish faith through volunteering. This commitment to volunteering presents a great opportunity to adopt a larger focus on the idea of a shared volunteer community made up of different faiths. This promotes understanding of other faiths and creates an environment in which faith-based organisations enrich communal culture. The Jewish community in West Yorkshire and beyond is proud to be seen every year creating large inter-faith events, including Mitzvah Day, Food Festival and Nisa Nashim’s women events.

To ensure faith-based bodies and events that celebrate Jewish culture and history in West Yorkshire, such as the public Menorah lightings are fully supported.

To endorse, encourage and support Jewish charities engaged in promoting inter-community, interfaith relationships and social action within the region and where appropriate, their funding and other support by local government and other agencies within the region.

To ensure that the Jewish community and its history has a place within a Culture Strategy for West Yorkshire.
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