

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS SUPPLEMENTING THE MINUTES OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL MEETING ON WEDNESDAY, 11TH JANUARY 2006

THE LORD MAYOR (Councillor W. Hyde): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, Members of Council.

Very sadly, I start the Council Meeting today with news of the death of one or two people. First, the death of Lord Merlyn Rees on Thursday, 5th January. Lord Merlyn Rees was a former MP for Leeds who served as Home Secretary and Northern Ireland Secretary and, as we will all know, he was also a Freeman of our City.

Also I report the death on 30th December 2005 of Christine Congreve, the wife of Councillor David Congreve, and also the death of Peter Langham, a former Mace-Bearer for Morley.

I think it appropriate that the Council observes a minute's silence in memory of these people, and I invite you please to stand with me. Thank you.

On a much happier note, I have to report the nomination of Councillor Mohammed Iqbal as the Lord Mayor Elect for 2006/7. Congratulations, Councillor Iqbal. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: He is celebrating Eid, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, thank you.

Members will have noted a change of senior officers supporting me today. This is because our Chief Executive Paul Rogerson is on sick leave following an operation. I understand he is well on the way to a full recovery, and best wishes have been sent on behalf of the Members of Council. A change of seats then for our Chief Democratic Services Officer, Nicole Jackson, who is now sitting on my right, and the presence with us this afternoon of Stuart Turnock on my left as our Legal Adviser. So, in case you thought that we had different faces, you are right, we do, in different places. Nonetheless, I am sure we shall get through the meeting as expeditiously as we normally do and look (Laughter) I will rephrase that - even more expeditiously than we usually do, and look forward to support of Council in achieving that.

ITEM 1 - MINUTES OF MEETING ON 1ST NOVEMBER 2005

COUNCILLOR M. HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, can I move that the minutes be received?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I second and I note with some pleasure that you have been able to park outside for free, I hope.

COUNCILLOR M. LYONS: Why don't you walk, though?

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for your concern, Councillor Gruen.

(The minutes were agreed)

ITEM 2 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: To announce that the list of written declarations submitted by Members is on display in the ante-room, on deposit in public galleries and has been circulated to each Member's place in the chamber. Are there any other additional declarations or corrections to those notified on the list?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Yes, my Lord Mayor, an additional one, personal interest as a member of the Police Authority in, I think it is White Paper 1, is it? White Paper 1.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Lord Mayor, can I apologise for the lateness of my ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Yes, I apologise as well.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: I am normally a member of School Organisation Committee but, in view of the Beckett Park School call-in which I took part in, I shall not of course be taking part in School Organisation Committee, but I am a member. Thank you.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: My Lord Mayor, could I declare a personal interest in Agenda Item 5(a) as a member of Wetherby Town Council.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: My Lord Mayor, same item, I am a member of Otley Town Council.

THE LORD MAYOR: Are there any other alterations? Oh yes, sorry, a couple over here.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Lord Mayor, Item 8, Director of South Leeds Primary Care Trust.

COUNCILLOR KIRKLAND: (Inaudible)

THE LORD MAYOR: Sorry, I didn't quite catch that. Which item was it? Sorry.

COUNCILLOR KIRKLAND: A member of Otley Town Council, Lord Mayor.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: I am a member for Campaign for Dark Skies, which I think affects the White Paper on PFI street lighting.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: 5(a), Lord Mayor, as a member of Morley Town Council, as

are the rest of my colleagues, to be honest.

THE LORD MAYOR: You are declaring an interest on behalf of everybody, are you?

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Well, points of interest.

THE LORD MAYOR: Yes, the record will so indicate. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR FOX: Reference the reference back, member of the School Organisation Committee, personal and prejudicial.

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: I am the same, Lord Mayor.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: The same here.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Nash.

COUNCILLOR C. NASH: I am a member of the School Organisation Committee.

THE LORD MAYOR: I think that probably concludes the notification of declarations. Can I invite Members by a show of hands to confirm that they have read the list and agreed to its contents in so far as they relate to their own interests and as modified and amended by those indications just given. Those in favour? Anybody against? That is agreed. Thank you very much.

Before we move on, just to remind everybody to ensure that mobile telephones are switched off, in order to avoid disruption of the Council's business.

ITEM 3 - COMMUNICATIONS

THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES (Ms. N. Jackson): There are no communications to report.

ITEM 4 - DEPUTATIONS

THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES: There are two deputations. The first is Garforth Community College from the Mayor for the Day, and the second is the representatives of the Governing Body of Great Preston Primary School regarding the financing of a one-site primary school.

COUNCILLOR M. HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, can I move that both deputations be received?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

(The first deputation was admitted to the chamber)

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon. In accordance with the Procedure Rules of the Council, you have a period of not more than 5 minutes in which to address the Council. Would you please start by giving the names of the deputation and the spokesperson.

EDWARD ADDISON: My name is Edward Addison. This is Philip Woodcock, Seranoush Mikailian, James Bebbington and Eleanor Watling, and we are all Year 8 students at Garforth Community College.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Go ahead.

EDWARD ADDISON: When we were asked about ideas for improving Leeds, we felt that a major problem was with transport. Pollution, congestion and traffic jams have increased over the years because there are more and more cars and car users.

People have become unfit and unhealthy because they travel everywhere in cars and get little exercise. We think this is in particular a big problem for children, who get driven everywhere they go, including to school.

Congestion is always bad at schools in the morning and afternoon, with many safety issues, such as cars parking on the pavements forcing pedestrians onto the road, children having difficulty crossing the road safely and incidents of road rage. I myself experienced all of these while at my primary school and on one occasion the police had to be called by the headteacher after we walked on the "wrong side of the pavement" where the car driver felt entitled to park, and sparked off a road rage incident.

Therefore, we think it is very important to try to encourage people to get out of their cars and to get around in other ways. So what can be done about this? We believe there are ways, some more ambitious than others, that could go some way towards solving these problems.

Our main change would be to put cycle lanes everywhere possible, so that people can get out of their cars and onto their bikes. Cycle lanes would make cycling far safer, so parents of children would be a lot happier letting their children cycle, as they would be less likely to get injured on the roads. Children would feel a lot more independent and wouldn't be reliant on their parents taxiing them around everywhere. I'm sure many of you know what I mean!

We would also like to see cycling proficiency courses provided throughout schools in Leeds to help promote safe cycling.

Improved bike lock-up areas could be provided in schools and more of them in public places - anything to help further promote cycling as a safe and fun alternative to travelling by car.

We would also like to promote walking as an alternative to car travel. Both walking and cycling would reduce the amount of overweight children and adults and would help increase fitness and therefore general health. This is obviously better for the individual, but would also reduce the burden on the health service.

As for banning the car, which is the bit we know you are all worried about (Laughter and applause), this would be something to think about only for certain areas of Leeds, including the city centre, and perhaps only at certain times of the day, a bit like York.

A better bus service could be provided in these areas because there would be no cars. There would have to be secure and cheap car parking facilities outside the no-car zone for people to be able to leave their cars behind.

So let's have another look at how these changes could help the City and the people of Leeds. Fewer cars on the road would obviously help the congestion problems of traffic jams and ridiculously long journey times. The air quality in Leeds would improve because there would be less cars pumping out exhaust fumes. This would be better for those with asthma and breathing problems, and Leeds would be doing its bit to help reduce pollution globally.

Hopefully, drivers who start to use their cars less would be less stressed and could find themselves saving money. The people of Leeds could also find themselves getting fitter, and for children we know this is very important. And these children could also find themselves enjoying new independence, transporting themselves around at the same time as keeping fit.

For those of you that perhaps doubt whether some of these changes are feasible, my family have had to manage without a car for over 4 years now. We cycle everywhere we can and have grown to love our cycling. For longer journeys we use public transport, mainly trains, as we find this is a better service than the buses. Of course, there are times when a car would be more convenient but, on the whole, cars are not as essential as people like to think.

The problems Leeds faces with too much traffic has been well publicised and, with the recent rejection of the proposed Supertram system for the City, it has become even more important that we try to find solutions to the problems. Lots of ideas will have to be looked at and discussed, and we hope that some of our suggestions might be of interest to you here at Leeds City Council.

Thank you all for listening, and good afternoon. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR M. HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, best speech of the day, I think, that one. Downhill from now on! Yes, I would be delighted to move that that matter be referred to the Leader of Council for consideration.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Yes, I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to thank you on behalf of the Council for your presentation today, and to confirm that your comments have been noted and will be referred to the Leader of Council for further consideration. Thank you for coming. (Applause)

(The first deputation left and the second was admitted)

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon. In accordance with the Procedure Rules of the Council, you have a period of not more than five minutes in which to address the Council. Would you please start by giving the names of the deputation and the spokesperson. Thank you.

MR. BEAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am Tim Bean, the headteacher of Great Preston Church of England Primary School, and I would like to put forward the case for our school being brought onto one site from the existing situation of operating from two separate buildings. I am spokesperson on behalf of the Governing Body and am supported by Rev. Jean Sykes, my Chair of Governors, and Kath Oswald, my Vice-Chair.

The case is in two parts: broken promises from Education Leeds, and a current situation which is intolerable.

First of all, broken promises. Historically, we have concerns about the uneven educational provision offered in our area and our ability to compete fairly with neighbouring schools which are operating out of new school buildings with nursery provision.

It was our choice to be initially placed on the Primary Review Programme because, and I quote from the report to the Executive Board in 2001, "Review will clearly identify the investment strategy for improving school buildings through close linkage between proposals and opportunities for funding as outlined in the Asset Management Policy."

We were identified as having the oldest buildings in the Allerton Bywater Planning Area. The Infant building dates from 1897 and the Junior school from 1934.

The initial proposals in 2002 stated that the existing junior school would be

remodelled and enlarged to create a new primary school within one year of amalgamation, and would be funded from the Primary Review Programme.

Our difficulty was agreeing the status of the new school - Church of England or Community - and we were asked by Education Leeds to resolve this at school level, which we did.

The Executive Board sanctioned the amalgamation in September 2004, but we were told that we were no longer in the Primary Review Programme and had lost the funding for any new building work.

In January 2005 the School Organisation Committee stated that the amalgamation onto a single site be given the highest priority, and I quote the reasons for the Primary Review are, "To improve the quality of school buildings and the physical environment in which children learn". This promise has not been fulfilled. A video, produced by our School Council, which I believe was shown before today's meeting, is evidence of that.

The current situation: The school opened as a new primary school in September 2005 with the support of staff, governors, parents, pupils, and a willingness to see the school flourish.

We were being asked to operate on split sites a quarter of a mile apart, for an indefinite period - a problem which is compounded by being separated by a main road.

We are in buildings which are old, below standard, lacking suitability, for example, we have five portakabins, no small group areas, a lack of clerical and work space, and consistent roof leaks.

All classrooms are below regulation size. Some have no hot water. Some lack insulation and are too hot in summer, too cold in winter. Children walk outside to the toilets and to access the hall.

The school cannot begin to meet the Government 10 year Child Care Strategy.

We have difficulty organising meetings for staff, providing training, promoting whole school policies and operating joint policies. We meet, for example, in the village hall fortnightly in order to get the whole school together.

There is undue stress and strain placed on the workforce from headteacher to cleaning staff, a position which is not sustainable.

Parents are concerned that promises made by Education Leeds have been broken, and there is an uncertainty about our future. I have a petition which is signed

by 63% of the parents, showing their concern.

Education Leeds might well have received praise for their programme of reducing surplus places and making financial economies, but in our case this has amounted to running two existing buildings with half the senior management staff.

I come back to the reasons for the Primary Review, "To improve the quality of education in schools and maintain improvements." This is an almost impossible task.

We would therefore ask the Council to show a commitment to our school by providing the necessary capital funding to bring the school onto one site as a matter of urgency. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR M. HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, I move the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I thank the deputation and, as you have just heard, your comments will be referred to the Executive Board for their consideration. Thank you for coming this afternoon.

MR. BEAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Thank you, Members.

(The deputation left the chamber)

ITEM 5 - REPORTS

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I move Item 5 in the terms of the notice, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR M. HAMILTON: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

ITEM 5(b)

COUNCILLOR M. HAMILTON: I move in the terms of the notice, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

ITEM 5(c)

COUNCILLOR M. HAMILTON: I move in the terms of the notice, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Again I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

ITEM 6 - QUESTIONS

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, will the Executive Member for Corporate Services please tell me how many agency staff are currently employed by the authority?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Yes, Lord Mayor. As of last night, the information I was given is that we have a central corporate contract with one agency and we have 325 staff from them but, in addition to that, Social Services have separate arrangements to employ care and social workers, and they indicated last night that they have approximately 150 additional temporary staff taken from those agencies specifically for those areas of Social Services. That makes a total of 475.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you. No supplementary.

COUNCILLOR MONAGHAN: Lord Mayor, following the recent success of the Kaiser Chiefs and the positive international attention this has brought the City, can the Executive Board Member for Leisure tell us what the Council is doing to support music talent in Leeds.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, I am delighted to say that the City has a proud tradition of supporting music talents in Leeds, both classical and modern popular music. The Kaiser Chiefs have been phenomenally successful in the last year or so, and I am reliably informed by my more in tune Members, dare I say, that they have been nominated, I understand, for a Brit Award as well.

I think it is interesting that the Millennium Square has finally - finally - found a use, and the Embrace concert that was held there last year I thought was an excellent use of the space available.

It is interesting, isn't it, you hear chuntering from the benches opposite and yet if the Millennium Commission had ever found out that the quarter of a million pound stage that was procured as part of that space had never ever been used in totality until this administration came into office and the Embrace concert, I don't think they would be very pleased. (Applause)

And before I forget, Lord Mayor, we have also, I am delighted to say, attracted the biggest single male recording star in the world at present, namely one Mr. Robbie

Williams, to Roundhay Park. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Monaghan, any supplementary? No? Thank you.

COUNCILLOR MILLARD: Lord Mayor, would the Executive Board Member for City Services please advise what steps he is taking to encourage suitable recycling facilities to be located throughout the City, especially on public and large open spaces such as supermarket car parks?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Lord Mayor, the Council operates around 350 Bring Bank recycling centres across the City, and these are designed to complement the Council's Household Waste sites. They are a critical part of the network in terms of providing local and convenient reuse and recycling facilities for residents who do not wish to travel to the household waste SORT sites. The recycling centres can vary in size and provide reuse and recycling of a wide range of materials.

We are anxious to maintain this network of facilities because it is a convenient way for the public to reuse and recycle. By their very nature, they tend to be located close to where people visit during their everyday lives. However, because they can cause a nuisance - glass is somewhat noisy when it is deposited into the banks and car engines running late at night is not conducive to a peaceful neighbourhood - we do have to be careful where they are located.

Car parks are a good location, not only because they are convenient for the public but they also provide good access for the large collection vehicles which are required. Car parks also tend to be far away from dwellings and therefore don't generally cause a noise problem.

Because supermarkets, to which you refer, are such a cornerstone of our modern lives, their car parks are particularly good locations for recycling centres. The public can deposit their reuse and recycling material before doing their weekly shop and it is very convenient for them, and environmentally they will consume less fuel than if they made a separate trip to the household waste SORT site.

Supermarkets also benefit because they can show society that they are helping to recycle some of the packaging they generate. The Council benefits because we reduce the amount of waste which ends up in landfill.

I can tell you that all the major supermarket chains in Leeds participate in the provision of Bring Banks on their car parks which are provided, operated and managed by Leeds City Council. Asda is alone in operating and managing their own recycling centres in their car parks. We look forward to the continued co-operation of all the supermarkets in this convenient and critical service to the public who are, after all, the supermarkets' customers.

COUNCILLOR MILLARD: Lord Mayor, I thank the Executive Board Member for that comprehensive answer. As he may well be aware, due to recent articles in the press, a Yorkshire-based supermarket chain that has recently expanded its store in Wetherby has refused to include recycling facilities on its car park, despite requests from Ward Members, and also Officers of Council. As a result, will the Executive Member for City Services please assure this Council that he will enter into discussions with the Exec Board Member for Development, Councillor Andrew Carter, to consider that all future planning applications are conditioned with the requirement to include recycling facilities?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: I could be brief and say "Yes", but I will say that, yes, we have already started some talks with Development, or I have already approached Development Department, because you are right, under PPG6 we are able to insist on facilities being provided. We will continue those discussions.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, can the Executive Board Member for Education please confirm if consideration is being given to introducing a programme to eliminate the use of temporary buildings in secondary schools in the Leeds area?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Lord Mayor, the simple answer is "Yes". When we took over the administration, we actually took on a huge legacy of temporary buildings. The numbers at the moment are standard 230 temporary buildings, some of which are in fact nursery provision and privately owned in that figure, and I cannot actually untangle at the moment what that is, but I can report that we have taken out 20 in the first 18 months of this administration, and we will continue to do more.

I have just asked Education Leeds to produce a paper, a position paper, which will show clearly the current need of the school estate for repairs and removal of temporary buildings, so that we can get some capital cost idea, in light of the fact that the next round of Building Schools for the Future won't occur until about 2025.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: My Lord Mayor, by way of a supplementary, could I ask that Councillor Harker will give serious consideration to making sure that Bruntcliffe High School, who have an excellent academic record, is one of those schools that will be high on his list of considerations when it comes to this particular process?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I may have misheard - I think you said Morley but you meant Bruntcliffe.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Bruntcliffe.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Thank you. I can assure you of that, and in fact Bruntcliffe was mentioned in my last briefing with Education Leeds by me.

COUNCILLOR HARRISON: Will the Exec Board Member for Social Care please confirm

that he has no plans to close any Council-run day centres for older people, or for any of those with learning difficulties?

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Lord Mayor, before I answer the question, I would like to take the opportunity to report to Council that there was a fire last night at Cottingley Court Mental Health Hostel, which apparently started accidentally. Two residents in our care were taken to hospital and are being treated for smoke inhalation. It was necessary to vacate the hostel, and we have been able to keep the residents together in Hemingway House for older people, which is in Hunslet. Staff from the hostel have gone with the residents and we hope to have them back in a couple of days.

I believe local Members have all been told. Angela, have you been told? I think Adam and Councillor Congreve have been told as well, so that is the latest situation. It is not as bad as it could be, but fires in Mental Health Hostels are serious.

To answer the question, I could have stood up and said a simple, "No" in that we have no plans to withdraw any Council-run day services or close any Council day centres for either older people or for those with learning difficulties. That would be literally true and I could sit down. I think, however, that the subject deserves a better answer than that, and Council might find it useful to understand our approach, which I must admit is not profoundly different from that which has existed for many years.

We are trying, as no doubt all parties would, to improve day centres every year. Day services must get better. The latest step in the process, the Exec Board paper on a commissioning strategy for day services, which was agreed on December 14th. This authorised officers to review day services and that review is currently in progress. I won't anticipate or predict the outcome of the review, but if any Member wishes to participate, please do so. Please contribute; everybody is very welcome.

I would like to stress, however, that when you go and talk to older people, listen to older people in day centres, their primary concern is always that they stay with their existing friends. They don't often tell me about the decorations on the wall and the state of the paintwork, but they do value the regular, comfortable contact with both service-users and staff. Just to illustrate that, last weekend you would see some letters in the paper singing the praises of the staff at the Doreen Hamilton Centre who had done a first-class job over Christmas. There are many unsung heroes working in day centres providing valuable social contact to the people who go there. It is the friendships that are important.

Some of our day centres are poor. Almost every one needs serious amounts of money spending it. We are looking into that and we will do whatever we can. Councillors on all sides will be able to tell me which buildings need attention, and no doubt before we finished every centre in the City would be on the list. So I could easily and glibly comment that we don't plan to close any centre. That would be true,

but if the services to older people can be improved, and if the older people agree - and if the older people agree - then we should improve them and we will ask Councillors on all sides to help us.

The subject of centres for people with learning difficulties. I wish I could take all Members present to see the building that is used at Moorend in Hunslet. It is amazing. Has anybody been? I know that many Councillors - yes - many people have seen it and others have seen the work Development Unit - I met Adam Ogilvie there some months ago - that we have for people with learning difficulties in Roundhay Road. They are a complete disgrace to a City as confident and prosperous as this one. If you have not seen them, you must go. They were out of date 40 years ago. I wouldn't work in any of them, and none of us would work in any of them, and we should not ask people with learning difficulties to work in conditions that we wouldn't tolerate.

The next step in this process is to report to the Exec Board and, after the review is complete, there will be a further report. As I said, anybody, any party that wishes to contribute, come and talk to me or to Rosemary and we will listen.

I'm sorry to have gone on a bit, Lord Mayor, but I have tried to answer the most important question we have had in Social Services in Council for many months, and I hope nobody here would like to unsettle people who are dependent on us.

I don't think this answer - I have got to the serious bit. I don't think this answer can be misinterpreted and given a spin that is not there, but my colleagues tell me that I am irredeemably naïve on this subject!

COUNCILLOR HARRISON: By way of supplementary, I would like to thank Councillor Harrand and the Officers on behalf of our side, to thank them for informing us about the fire last night. Can Councillor Harrand inform Members of Council how consultation of users is going at the Roundhay Road site, especially the Clifford Brooke Day Centre?

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: I don't know the details, Andrea. We will find out and tell you. There are a very small number of people using Clifford Road. There are plans in fact to move them next door to the old, what was it called, Frankland Childrens Centre.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: Lord Mayor, hearing is very difficult. I don't know why, but you have got to strain to hear Councillor Harrand. There is a problem.

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Is this better? I'll start again. I don't know the details of how consultation is going at Clifford Road, except they are tiny numbers there, and there was a suggestion some months ago to move them to the Childrens Centre which may be vacated next door. Still having trouble? Can you hear me, Brian? We will let

you have the details as soon as we can, Andrea, but we appreciate the importance of it.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: He was good, Andrea. He was very good. (Interruptions)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Before calling Councillor Hollingsworth, can I remind Members that it does help if you can avoid putting papers between your mouth and the microphone. Very often that causes problems with the PA system.

COUNCILLOR HOLLINGSWORTH: Would the Executive Board Member for Development please inform Council when the construction of the East Leeds link road will commence?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, first of all, in answer to Councillor Hollingsworth, it gives me the opportunity to point one or two things out about the East Leeds link road. Some people could be forgiven for thinking that the Government, in its grand munificence was financing this £32 million project. It is far from the truth. In fact, even now with the extra £5.3 million that we have got, their contribution is £14.8 million to a £32 million project. The rest of the money is coming from the City of Leeds and the private developers whose land abuts the route of this particular road. Nevertheless, it was good news that finally the Government agreed, albeit at the eleventh hour, to fund the additional costs which had been caused by their delays.

This scheme was agreed in 2000. It was then held up and well and truly bogged down. Indeed, one of the first jobs I had to do after June of 2004 when the administration took over was to go with Officers to the Department for Transport to try and persuade them to unblock the deadlock, which we successfully did, only to find there was a further blockage which was the fact that the Department for Transport would not fund the increased costs caused by their delays. So finally it was quite a good Christmas present, Councillor Hollingsworth, I think, particularly for the City but also for the Ward Members through whose area it runs.

In direct answer to the question, I can tell you that we will be bringing a paper to the February Executive Board meeting. We shall continue to talk with our partners in Yorkshire Forward and the Highways Agency, but we hope that we will be inviting tenders in April of this year and that construction will start in November of this year and be complete in November 2008.

Let nobody under-estimate the importance of this link road. It will facilitate the development of the Lower Aire Valley, create thousands of jobs in an area of Leeds where there are still high levels of unemployment, certainly in relative terms and also in actual terms. Not only that, it will help the regeneration of the EASEL Project. Can I point out to Members of this Council that both EASEL and the regeneration of the Lower Aire Valley are massive regeneration areas which this Council and its partners in the private and public sector are driving forward, in the case of EASEL with

no Government assistance, and in the case of the Lower Aire Valley with very limited Government assistance, and this City should be very proud of those two regeneration areas. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Does the Executive Member with responsibility for "Narrowing the Gap" agree with me that reducing fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency for the 14.3% of vulnerable households in the City is one of his principal objectives and, bearing in mind the problems with the Warm Front Grant Scheme, would he care to advise me of the initiatives he is planning throughout the City?

COUNCILLOR BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, yes, reducing fuel poverty is one of my principal objectives, and the range of initiatives is quite extensive. The key actions include more than doubling the size of the Fuel Savers Team, who are tasked with bringing in Government and energy-providers' funding into the City and administering and monitoring energy improvements to homes across the City, mailing 58,000 households so far this year, 10,530 of which have been provided with Home Energy reports identifying the improvements that could be carried out in the dwellings and identifying grant support availability.

Health Through Warmth initiatives. This target supports the fuel poor households, having medical needs. Referrals are received through front line staff in Social Services, the voluntary sector and Health staff. To date, 479 staff have been directly trained, 1205 staff cascaded trained to provide referrals. To date the scheme has received 322 referrals with 171 dwellings receiving the benefit of support. 170,000 low energy light bulbs have been distributed across Leeds in total to the Warm Front eligible households with a view to highlighting the Warm Front Grant. Planned revisions of the City's Affordable Warmth strategy with a view to including the call for more partner organisations in supporting Affordable Warmth provision or grant referral identification.

Leeds Primary Care Trust and North-West District Partnership are drafting support in Affordable Warmth strategies in their own right to complement the forthcoming City's new strategy. Fuel Savers and Warm Front Grant target is to bring 3,000 private sector homes to improvement in 2005/6 through media releases and direct mail targeting of 1356 homes. 931 homes have been improved. This is over and above the owners who may apply in their own right.

Further, the private sector mailing will commence in February of 82,500 homes. This includes 22,500 going to the private sector occupants in the four fuel poverty worst first wards, that is Gipton and Harehills, Hyde Park and Woodhouse, Middleton Park and City & Hunslet.

Just moving on to our own housing stock, with regard to our own Council housing stock, there are still large numbers without cavity wall insulation. For instance - I am not getting at Leeds West Homes on this one - for instance in the west

of the city a third of the Council properties with cavities still require insulation. I welcome the comments of Leeds West Homes that they are likely to complete during 2006/7 all these homes, but this is something that should be a priority across all the ALMOs. It saves energy costs for the tenants and it doesn't cost the ALMOs or Leeds City Council a penny. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Would it be possible to compliment the Councillor opposite on the level of his delivery, which made it so inspiring a 45 minutes?

THE LORD MAYOR: Duly noted, Councillor Atha. Thank you for that.

COUNCILLOR C. NASH: Lord Mayor, would the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing advise me what funding mechanisms he feels the ALMOs and the private rented sector in particular could gain access to in order to address fuel poverty and energy efficiency in the City?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Lord Mayor, I hope Bernard can hear me. I know it must have been difficult last time because I don't know what his hearing aid is up to but it might be going on the blink. Is it any better, Bernard? Can you hear now?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Not now.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Okay. To answer the question, ALMOs, as you have been hearing actually in the previous answer, they currently can receive 100% grant from fuel company funding, and that is a grant which obviously we encourage and hope that it goes forward because it helps a great deal. In addition to that, there is pump-priming, which I feel I wonder if somebody wrote that on purpose, for boiler fitment in 2005/2006, and that will be in the region of £1.3 million.

Fuel Savers are to be negotiated - new grants are to be negotiated for ALMOs in respect of Fuel Savers, and that is proposed improvements in 2006/7 and '7/8. Now, the main part you asked for is private rented accommodation, because obviously the ALMOs are pushing forward through their own Boards. There are four basic ways in which you can help private rented sector: Warm Front Grants, free Home Energy reports for Fuel Savers, and Fuel Savers' facilitated fuel company grants - that is a wonderful thing to say - for loft and cavity wall insulation.

Now, how do tenants and landlords get this? Well, we are trying to advertise, along with other people. In Leeds the Energy Saving Trust has taken on TV advertising and media releases. The Council itself has in the past put advice and informed people through the Council Tax bill. They have in 2005 released 14 articles, two press releases, and undertook two radio interviews to promote across all housing tenancies that support and assistance is available, and how to contact us, and we have delivered over 1,000 posters to GPs and libraries and community centres.

Now, all these things are to help, but the main thing is I have got here a

freephone number - a (inaudible) number - I will read it out and I hope somebody will pick it up, 0800512012. That is a freephone number which I would hope people in Leeds who want help as far as energy is concerned, energy saving is concerned, would use and ring and we shall be able to bring in all the things I have spoken to them about. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, can the Executive Board Member responsible for Housing confirm the level of negative subsidy that each Leeds Council tenant has to pay for the year 2005-2006?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Lord Mayor, I could be facetious and say "Nothing" because they don't pay it, it is paid by the Council, but I know that is not the question. If I can give you the facts that you are really chasing: In the last year, in 2005/2006, £29.9 million was paid to Government as far as the subsidy is concerned. This year the figure will be £33.3 million, which will be an increase of £3.4 million.

As far as individual properties are concerned, which is the question you asked, the average per property last year was £529. £529 of our taxpayers' money was taken back in negative subsidy. Next year it is expected to be £597. I would say, my Lord Mayor, and I think people have got to realise this, at this present time the increase in negative subsidy paid to Her Majesty's Government is working out at something like 11.4% in cash terms and 12.9% per property for next year. That is going to affect how much and what we can do as far as Housing next year. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: By way of supplementary, my Lord Mayor, does the Executive Board Member agree with me that it is about time that this outdated practice is resigned to the dustbin, and that we actually spend this money on improving the quality of Council housing in the Leeds City Council area?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, it is a very obviously complicated subject is Housing finance itself, and it would be simple to say, "Yes", but the one reason I would say "Yes" to this for is I think our money should be in this City for us to decide how that money is spent for our tenants. What is happening at the moment is this negative subsidy goes away. There are places in London - in London - which actually receive positive subsidies. There are none of the main bodies do such as Leeds, Bradford -- sorry, Manchester, Birmingham. None of those do. So the answer to your question is "Yes". It was brought in, and I have no doubt they are going to run over there and tell me it was brought in by a Conservative Government, but let me just remind them of something. The current Government has been in office for at least 8 years, and if they had wished to change it they could have changed it. They obviously don't want to change it. I think they should change it. We have a new leader who is going forward, and I am certain that leader would also agree with what I am saying. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: Lord Mayor, will the Executive Board Member for Leisure please tell Council how Elected Members are being involved in the consultation exercise for the proposals for a new concert venue?

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, I, too could be facetious, as Councillor Carter has mentioned, and say that there are no proposals for a new concert venue in Leeds. However, I think what Councillor Harington wishes to ask about is the proposed new arena development in the City. A concert hall and an arena are two very different things.

As Councillor Harington is well aware, a substantial number of Elected Members have already taken part in the consultation to date, along with varying stakeholders across the City. Elected Members who have already taken part in the consultation from part of individual focus groups with the PMP consultants who were retained are Councillors Harris, Carter, Wakefield, Minkin, Mulherrin, Harington, Atha, Procter, Hussain, Kirkland, Rhodes-Clayton, Robinson, McArdle and Councillor Wadsworth and Wilkinson. All of those Councillors took part in the Phase 1 consultation that took place, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: By way of supplementary, I suppose I could have said the word "gig" to make it clearer to Councillor Procter ---

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I would have understood you then!

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: -- but the word "concert" can I think apply to various kinds of musical entertainment. You are quite right to say that those various Councillors, including myself, were involved in Phase 1, but obviously my question is whether there are to be any further opportunities for Councillors to be able to respond to the proposals that we have on the table at the moment.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Well, indeed, Lord Mayor. This just shows how this administration goes to the nth degree to consult all Members of Council. I have to say when we were sitting over there I am not sure, my memory may be failing, colleagues, but I don't seem to remember we were consulted on very much at all, actually. We seemed to be kept in the dark by the Executive Members as much as possible.

Councillor Harington will know that Members of the Labour Group were briefed by Officers at a meeting in December '05, and also Councillor Harington will no doubt remember that all Elected Members of Council received a reminder letter that the first phase of consultation was drawing to a close and, if they had not already made their views known, they were urged to do so.

This is a process that does need some impetus behind it. I am delighted to say

that the talking is about to come to an end and, as quite rightly identified by the Leader of Council in the evening paper yesterday, the action is about to begin in terms of driving this whole proposal forward.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much. That bring us to the end of the time allowed for questions, and so the remaining three questions will be answered in writing to Councillors Hamilton, Lowe and Gruen in due course.

ITEM 7 - RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXECUTIVE BOARD

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, in moving the recommendations of the Executive Board, I am sure all Members of the Council will join with me in thanking our colleagues who have served on the Licensing Committee dealing with the applications for extended licensing hours over the past few months. I would like to give thanks and pay tribute to those Members who have put in an inordinate amount of time in a very constricted timescale to deal efficiently with a piece of legislation that we all know is fatally flawed, so I would like to record the thanks of the administration to Members of all parties who have put so much effort into this work. Thank you very much, my Lord Mayor. I move the minutes.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I second and reserve the right to speak, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR SELBY: Lord Mayor, two issues. First of all, byelaws, and secondly, trolleys.

First of all, so far as byelaws are concerned, save for a short period of time last year when Leisure Scrutiny looked at them, there has been very little involvement by Members, and it is a pity that the appropriate Executive Member didn't go to the nth degree and organise a seminar so that all Members' views could have been considered before this went to the Executive Board. I am sure if he had such concerns that Members have could have been looked at and any explanations given and, where appropriate, any changes to take place.

Can I first of all say that I welcome the proposed Byelaw 7, protection of wildlife, which means that no foxhunting can take place in any of our parks. I am sure that is a great blow to the Countryside Alliance.

But there are a number of issue that do require clarification. Let's take, for example, Byelaw 43 in respect of kites. They are not to be flown dangerously, so what advice is to be --- First of all, what is dangerous flying of a kite, and what advice is to be given so that people know not to fly kites dangerously?

We have Byelaw 11, prohibiting discharge of missiles, so presumably there will be no weapons of mass destruction on Otley Chevin - no doubt a byelaw to be enforced via the Ranger, if he is still about, or perhaps the Student Prince.

And who is going to prevent unauthorised games of cricket at Roundhay Park? Is it going to be the Police? Is it going to be Leisure Services staff, or will it be Councillor Procter?

I am not aware of any prosecutions that have taken place for breach of byelaws. I was speaking to one of the Officers in the Parks Department who has been with the Council for over 30 years - he is not aware of any either. So realistically is anybody going to be prosecuted? Are we wasting our time on this? I appreciate we are not in the budget debate, but will there be adequate --- In response, will Councillor Carter tell us whether there will be adequate funding to enforce these byelaws. Will the interest on the loan to Yorkshire Cricket Club be used to pay for the prosecution of those families playing unauthorised cricket on the grassed area in front of Templenewsam House? How many additional staff are going to be employed in each area to police the parks?

I mean, these are important changes. We are proposing to increase the maximum fine from £50 to £500. In Daily Mail-speak, or in pre-Cameron Conservative Central Office, that would be called a stealth tax. These byelaws go out in our name and we should have the opportunity to have them explained and their interpretation.

So far as trolleys are concerned, can I say how delighted I am that something is being done, because for years Officers of the Council when pressed took a very softly, softly attitude, hoped the problem would go away, write to the offending supermarket chain, and hope that that would mollify any Councillor that would have the temerity to raise the issue.

We all know it took an act of God, the very heavy rain in August 2004, to show this was wrong, and we all remember that in parts of East Leeds so many dumped trolleys were found in the becks that contributed to the flooding. None of the major multiple supermarkets are doing enough to tackle the problem. They object to the Council adopting these proposals but their lack of any realistic alternative highlights what is in my view their lackadaisical attitude to the problem. Hopefully, once they are forced to pick up the tab for collecting their own property they will invest in measures that will stop people taking away their trolleys but, of course, more needs to be done to make those who think they can just take away trolleys and dump them realise the problems they are causing to the community and the cost to taxpayers to clear the mess up.

I pointed out last year that we could have taken action under the 1990 Act, and I did ask Councillor Carter to have a friendly word with the Director of Legal Services to get Officers to see that those powers are used, but what I would like to know - perhaps he can assist me here - is why is it that we have to wait for him to come back as acting Leader to see some action? Why have we had to wait for nearly a year?

The 2005 Act referred to in the report, introduced by a Labour Government, gives the Council greater powers. I hope we are going to use them. I am sure that all Members will monitor the situation in their own areas. I expect Officers to take action, not to kowtow to the bleatings of the multiples when they get the bill to clear up the mess. I trust that I am not going to have to raise this matter in Council again, and I would like an assurance both by the Leader and also by the Executive Member that adequate resources will be included in the budget to enforce this proposal. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, I would like to really comment briefly on the byelaws as well. Now, none of us want any unauthorised erections in our public spaces, and none of us want our life-saving equipment to be interfered with. That is clearly covered in some of this, but I would perhaps ask for consideration to be given about the consumption of alcohol because, with the best will in the world, I have less worries about the interference with life-saving equipment in most of my parks and open spaces than I do about the consumption of alcohol.

I accept as a principle we can go along the DPPO route. That tends to be involved, laborious, and if we can cover it with byelaws than certainly that might be an opportunity that we wish to consider. It is not included in these particular byelaws. I accept a lot of the byelaws we have actually got here will do some good in our open spaces, but I think not dealing with the alcohol consumption problem is a trick that we have missed.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to speak in support of the second report on proposed new powers, which is on page 114. Blockages of becks caused at least in part by supermarket trolleys which have been thrown aside have led to flooding in houses in parts of Leeds. The earlier powers only allowed Councils to impound trolleys and charge owners who wanted them back, and it is likely that no-one wanted trolleys which had been submerged in sewage.

These new powers are worth adopting, as they will place a charge on all those owners who allow trolleys to be taken off their premises and give the Council a better chance of recovering its costs. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR C. NASH: Lord Mayor, I would just like to raise on the issue of byelaws the matter of the disappearing Wortley tenter grounds. We have a very proud history in Wortley of being involved in the cloth trade and we had a number of tenter grounds, eight, that were allocated as pleasure grounds in 1930 and which were listed in the 1961 byelaws on page 110, but for some reason mysteriously disappeared from the new list of byelaws, and I did raise this with the Legal Department some time ago, and again with Leisure, and I don't seem to have had a very satisfactory explanation yet as to why our tenter grounds have disappeared from the list, so if I could have a proper answer, I would be very grateful. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I am sure Mr. Turnock has made a note of that.

COUNCILLOR HOLLINGSWORTH: Lord Mayor, I refer to Recommendation section 3(b) about dumped shopping trolleys. Without wanting to repeat what some of the previous colleagues have said, they are a plague on our area. After the flooding in East Leeds we found that the Wyke Beck, you know, was full of trolleys, partly blocking up the beck and partly causing or exacerbating the problems with the flooding.

I think this new Act we are introducing as a Council will force the supermarkets, hopefully force the supermarkets, to take more control over what they do, introduce schemes, use coins in the trolleys so people can't run off with them. I think some of them are putting things in where it jams up the wheels if they go off the premises, and force the supermarkets to take some responsibility, and I hope the charges that Council introduced for them will cover the cost so we have no extra cost on collecting these trolleys. The supermarkets are very, very huge organisations with multi-billion pound turnovers and profits and they can well afford a very small amount of money that this will cost them, and it should not be falling on the taxpayers of Leeds. Thank you very much.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, in answer, first of all to Councillor Leadley and Councillor Hollingsworth, just thank you for the positive comments about supermarket trolleys and the problems that we have had with those.

I say to Councillor Selby, you know, doing something about the problems of supermarket trolleys is something that has been going on a long time. It is this administration that is actually taking action to deal with the problem.

The issues that Councillor Nash raised I do not think were addressed in this particular report, but I will request that the Director of Legal Services looks at those issues and comes back to you, and I am sure we can try to incorporate something in future reports.

As regards Councillor Selby's ramble through the byelaws, far be it from me, my Lord Mayor, to want to contradict a solicitor, who I am told has worked for so many legal practices around the City that he probably knows at first-hand, personally, how many prosecutions there might or might not have been under a whole raft of these byelaws. Therefore, suffice it to say, the Director of Legal Services I am sure will look at the points you have raised and will answer them in the tone they deserve. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

(The Recommendations of the Executive Board were approved)

ITEM 8 - RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY BOARD
(HEALTH & WELLBEING)

COUNCILLOR LANCASTER: Lord Mayor, I request that Council approves the report of the Scrutiny Board (Health & Wellbeing) following its inquiry into the fire safety standards of the Leeds Mental Health Teaching NHS Trust PFI buildings.

The scope of the inquiry was to consider the fire safety standards of these three centres against prevailing regulations and the extent to which these standards meet the needs of a vulnerable client group using these centres. It was quite clear that there was difference of opinion and that did exist about the fire safety standards of the Trust's three large PFI buildings which are the Beckling Centre, Newsome Centre, and The Mount, and we therefore concluded that further scrutiny into this matter was required.

In recognising the needs for any fire safety concerns to be addressed urgently, we agreed to establish the small working group to carry out the majority of the work which enabled the Scrutiny Board to conclude its findings as quickly as possible. In consulting relevant statutory bodies, the NHS representatives and other interested parties during an inquiry, we tried to meet as many members of staff working in the centres as possible to help understand the operational context of the fire safety standards, and a summary of the evidence considered is set out in the report and, as Members who will have read it will have seen, I think there was over 20 witnesses that we met with and over 130 reports.

I know there are Members who wish to make comments, so I will reserve the rest of my comments to the summing up. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR BENTLEY: I would like to second, Lord Mayor, and I would also like to congratulate the members of the working party who worked really hard and had a mountain of documents and interviews to read through. Thank you very much.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, can I first start by thanking Councillor Lancaster and her colleagues on the Scrutiny Board for going very thoroughly into this particular matter. I think the work they have done is excellent. I think they begin to put together some clarity to what has been a very, very cloudy area, and I think that is good news for those people who are suffering from mental health problems and are actually using these centres, and for people across Leeds City Council area.

Councillors will remember that we raised this particular matter because we had significant concerns about the way this process had been conducted. Certainly one of the issues that the Scrutiny Board focused in on was the fact that there seemed to be some drive towards a lowering of fire safety standards in these particular buildings.

If we go back to the whole PFI process and look initially at what we were looking at at that particular point, when these were first commissioned there was clearly a decision that suggested that these particular buildings should be regarded as

patient hotels and not hospitals, and that is fundamentally one of the questions that the Scrutiny Board asked, and I think the answer was not entirely clear from the Mental Health Trust at that particular point.

There is no doubt whatsoever that there are opportunities for the Mental Health Trust to go for higher standards at that particular stage. There is no doubt whatsoever that, if they did go for those higher standards, that would have increased the costs and, at that particular point, potentially meant lower profits, but it was clear even at that stage that the Mental Health Trust had a lot of information, an awful lot of documents that would have helped them and supported them to come to a decent design for what are the most vulnerable group of people we have got within our communities.

Now, we have here design guides: Accommodation for Adults with Acute Mental Illnesses, Options for the '90s, which suggests the way the particular buildings should be constructed. Again, this has been ignored. We have different rules and different regulations that apply to hospitals, and there was a conscious decision to drive towards patient hotels which meant lower standards, and well done to the Scrutiny Board for basically exposing the fact that the Mental Health Trust were not entirely clear in their particular process and that this whole matter is unclear in many, many ways.

Now, one of the other issues that we have a significant concern with is that, when this information came out, people were involved in whistle-blowing. People who took a chance with their livelihoods, who were brave enough and strong enough to make these representations so that this matter could come out into the public domain were those who were victimized, who were chased and had a lot of pressure applied to them. People will know who we are talking about at this particular stage. People will know that a disciplinary process has been conducted against these particular individuals, and that is entirely regrettable, and one of the things I think we recognise as a Council is the fact that these courageous individuals should be thanked for their contributions and not penalised in any shape, way or form, and that is something else that we ought to recognise.

I would hope that when we do make these representations to the Secretary of State for Health that she will listen very carefully to what we have said, because ultimately what we are talking about is making sure that those who do suffer from a mental illness, they go through this process in the future, are as safe as it is possible for us to make them. I think that is critically important. I think that has been missed.

Now, whether that has been missed by default, whether it has been missed because there is a drive for higher profits, whether it has been missed because there is not a genuine concern as much as there should be about this particular vulnerable group, I don't know, but I would leave colleagues with some comments from the Fire Safety Officer who talked about these specific buildings and gave evidence. He says, "The buildings are not as safe as they should be, and certainly not as safe as they could

be", and that is something that we all need to reflect upon, and I hope the Secretary of State for Health will also reflect upon in the future.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Lord Mayor, there is no doubt that this particular episode has left a really pungent smell around, and a nasty taste in the mouth as far as I am concerned. It has been bogged down in misinterpretation, deviation and obfuscation.

What is paramount here is that these hospitals, and these are hospitals, are made safe, irrespective of cost, not only for the employees but also for the vulnerable patients. If it was up to me, they would be gutted.

Second, and this is to replicate what Councillor Finnigan has said, is my concern for the safety and future employment of these two interested parties, or should I say members of the public who are the heroes or villains of the piece, depending on which side of the fence you sit on. In my mind there is no doubt they are heroes. I, too, have personal experience of whistle-blowing, and it is a nasty, nasty thing. Being sent to Coventry for three years is hell, I can assure you but, you know, we wore the gauntlet and that is a fact of life.

I have some experience of major contracts from within the NHS, and I can tell you that this really needed a first-class clerk of works on the job, and I would have liked to see my old and trusted friend Fred Clarke who worked at the General Infirmary Leeds on this job because this particular case wouldn't have got to that stage, the job would have stopped.

There are lots of references. I am not going to go through the references, but the reference to the patient hotels plus, I think it should have been perhaps patient hotel minus. There is evidence from Paul Roberts who says the criterion in 4.49, criterion for a patient "That these facilities will not meet the criteria for a patient hotel", yet he never saw these premises. Miss (?)Cochrane, the Strategic Planning and Modernisation Officer, gave her own personal view that they should be classified as hospitals. This is a real stunner, this, Accent Project Solutions moved office and shredded documentation. How convenient. I would like to think the Inland Revenue would take a very dim view if I destroyed my accounts from within the last 7 years.

I think in terms of the 15 minute meeting from 14th February 2000 to formally review and agree the process of awarding the contracts was obviously a very short meeting, and I am interested to see that no Director had any pecuniary interest in the project. The Board again noted the full business case from 30th September, circulated 30th September, previously received by the Board of the potential risk and health benefits of the project. I do not believe, and so do many other people, not just the two interested members of the public, that this hospital is safe. It seems unlikely that the Strategic Health Authority would be keen to support a public inquiry, particular Miss Walter, who is now the Director of Corporate Affairs in the West Yorkshire Strategic Health Authority. As I say, it is a pungent smell, it is a nasty taste, and I

think we should make this safe.

I, too, would like to thank Councillor Lancaster and the Scrutiny Board for a very complex and very difficult case, and I can only hope that this case does go for public inquiry, because there is more to this than meets the eye. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR LANCASTER: Lord Mayor, I would just like to say that we note the comments of Councillor Finnigan and Councillor McArdle, and the Scrutiny Board is very proud of this report and, as everyone would agree, it is a very comprehensive report and, you know, a lot of time was spent on it, which it was very important to do.

Just to point out as well, the main point was that there will be some other reports to come to Scrutiny Board as requested. The response from the Secretary of State, you know, that will come to the Scrutiny Board for consideration, and obviously Members will get that information, and also the findings of the design review by Accent and the Trust, we have asked for that to be brought back, and also an update report on the matter of the false alarms within the Trust because, as reported, they are on the high side.

As I said, I think it was the other day that we sent the report to the Secretary of State and a letter and asked for a formal response, which we are hoping to get a report back in February, and a formal response to the Board's recommendations is also required from those whom the recommendations are addressed, and the Board will be considering the formal responses, as I said, in February.

Just to say that we feel that we have done what we were asked to do. It does bring up a lot of unanswered questions, which I think is national really. We are all increasingly using these private finance companies or the monies, whether it is the LIFT programme or regardless of where the funding is coming from. It seems like they are at liberty to get a little bit of advice from here and from there, and when you mix it up it doesn't always necessarily come out with -- like the guidance from the fire code, it was giving people a license to take out the bits, and that is resulting in the problems that we have had.

I would like to publicly thank the two co-optees, Eddie Mack and Joy Fisher from Scrutiny Board, and also Councillor James Lewis and Councillor Gerald Wilkinson, as well as Gerry Gillen, the Legal Adviser, and especially to Angela Brogden, our Scrutiny Support Officer, who managed to pull all this together. I mean, obviously you can see there was lots of discussions, lots of questioning, and all the findings in our interviews of the witnesses was then sent to those witnesses so that they could agree our interpretation of what they said, which I thought was very important so that was very time-consuming.

So on that note, I present this to Council and ask for them to approve this

report. Thank you.

(Recommendations of the Scrutiny Board (Health & Wellbeing) were approved)

ITEM 9 - RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE
AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I move in the terms of the notice, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I second, my Lord Mayor, and reserve the right to speak.

(Recommendations of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee were approved)

ITEM 10 - RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
NORTH EAST INNER AREA COMMITTEE

COUNCILLOR LANCASTER: Request that the recommendations of the North East Inner Area Committee, as detailed in the report of the Director of Legal and Democratic be approved, and I know we have some comments from some Councillors, so I will leave my comments until my summing up. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I second, my Lord Mayor, and reserve the right to speak.

COUNCILLOR DOWSON: Lord Mayor, I would like to comment on the Executive Board's Recommendation 10, the North East Area Committee, and the Cumulative Impact Policy for Chapel Allerton. A lot has been said at the moment about rights and responsibilities. When bars and restaurants started to open in vacant properties in Chapel Allerton, they had every right to do so, and they now make a significant contribution to the vibrant, cosmopolitan feel of the area, but they also have a responsibility to ensure that the way they conduct business adds to the amenity of this lovely area of our City and, on the whole, on an individual basis, they have actually done this.

Many of you may have visited the area yourselves and, indeed, Councillor Lobley has often told me stories of his many adventures drinking, dining and, I understand, bopping in the excellent bars and restaurants in Chapel Allerton, luckily for us not always at the same time!

However, when the sheer weight of numbers of these premises, the accumulation of this type of premises in the area, begins to impact adversely on the quality of life of local residents they have every right to ask what can be done, to ask for action to protect their community from the loutish behaviour, the litter, the noise, and you all know what I am talking about because many of you have similar areas in your own wards.

When we were asked to help, it was then the responsibility of my ward Councillors, Councillor Hamilton, Councillor Rafique and myself to raise these problems at Council level, and this we did. It then became the responsibility of the Licensing Department to conduct a fair and thorough investigation, and I would just like to take this opportunity to thank the Licensing Department for the hard work and, in particular, and I know this is not done very often, Michael (?)Frangali, who often attended residents' meetings in the evening, facing sometimes quite forceful and robust comments and questions.

I also want to thank the local residents and the Residents Association for their help, support and input, ensuring the report contained the true feelings of the majority of residents in the area.

It then became the responsibility of the Council to respond to this, and this they have done, and I thank them for that. I do, however, personally find it quite hard to reconcile in my mind some of the schizophrenic actions of the Council at the moment.

On one hand, they have been quite positive in responding to our call for the Cumulative Impact Policy and for the alcohol ban in Wetherby but, on the other hand, they attempt to reduce funding for St. Anne's Centre for the help and treatment of sufferers of alcoholism, which was only saved, with less money than they really need, by a hard fight. Also the scramble to make money by allowing the advertising of alcohol and alcopops on large, illuminated signs at possibly 2,000 sites across the City - images our young people will see on their way to school either walking or on the bus every day. I think we need a consistent stance on alcohol, a consistent message, don't you?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You should tell Mr. Blair, dear!

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Lord Mayor, I think Councillor Dowson and Councillor Carter has already alluded to the barmy legislation that has come through, and this is indicative of that. I think anyone who has read this report on Agenda Item 10 could not fail to support the Cumulative Impact Policy for Chapel Allerton. In summary, the report says the premises are in general well-mannered but a creeping increase in alcohol-fuelled crime and disorder is having a deleterious effect on the streets of Chapel Allerton; crimes such as unprovoked punches in the stomach, punches in the face, headbutts - these all lead to there being no doubt in my mind that drink is the sole cause of this problem. What is more, I am sure this does not apply to anyone in this particular chamber, but there is no shame in being drunk any more ---

COUNCILLOR M. LYONS: Particularly if you are a Liberal!

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Oh, right. The irony is that in 2001 I note from the report that permission was granted for the Old Police Station on Harrogate Road to be granted a licence. I think the letter copied in the report dated 26th April indicates that Andrew Briggs, the Inspector for the Neighbourhood Police Team, some might even say the beleaguered police team, opines that the saturation point has been reached. It is an

interesting fact that round about 70%/75% of both the public and the trade agree with that. I think when children are being exposed to foul and abusive language and behaviour, this is quite unacceptable, and I for one really do give a XXXX about this, and, you know, Councillor Finnigan, in front of me, the Chair of the Area Committee, doesn't drink but I do, but we both have the same opinion of this barmy legislation regarding the 24-hour drinking.

In one year the crime statistics - again these are from the report - anti-social behaviour is up 200%, assaults up 600%, criminal damage up 800% - all drink-related, I am absolutely certain.

I think it is a tribute to all the interested parties, the Ward Members, etc., the Police in Chapel Allerton, and the Licensing Committee - that is the third mention they have got this afternoon - I think well done and I fully support this.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Before calling Councillor Monaghan, can I remind Council to extend the usual courtesy of listening quietly and seriously to the maiden speech which he is about to make.

COUNCILLOR MONAGHAN: Lord Mayor, having attended two very long Council meetings, you will be glad to know that I keep my first speech very, very short.

Since the Headingley Ward Councillors pressed for the introduction of a Cumulative Impact Policy in Headingley, we have not had a single new pub, club or takeaway opened. Despite the best efforts of the Government to force through extended trading hours, we have, using the Cumulative Impact Policy, been able to prevent any increase in trading hours in Headingley.

There is no doubt that the Cumulative Impact Policy has prevented anti-social behaviour from getting any worse in Headingley, and I hope the scheme meets with similar success in Chapel Allerton. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, in my first term in jail - I have done two terms in jail now - I distinctly recall Councillor Dowson taking the administration to task over the non-implementation of the Cumulative Impact Area in Chapel Allerton. That was, I think from recollection, just about my first -- if not first, second meeting when I was then Leader of Council. I said then, with reference to what were very new powers which we had introduced on an experimental basis in the city centre and Headingley, that once we were sure that they worked, and if there were other areas in the City where a similar request was made, we would look at it, and if the evidence was there we would implement it, and indeed that is what we have done, and that should be not indicative, it should be absolutely illustrative of the administration's determination to do all it can to deal with the problems of anti-social behaviour. And I could rehearse a whole raft of other measures that we have taken, but I won't - there will be other opportunities for that.

However, I must take issue with what Councillor Dowson said regarding St. Anne's Shelter, and I will start by saying this. That piece of paper is yellow; it is not purple, it is not black; it is yellow. That is a fact, and it is a fact that we have not, as an administration, taken money away from St. Anne's Shelter, and for you or anybody else in the Opposition to keep peddling that piece of misinformation is - I am not going to use that word - is not just mischievous of you, it is wholly wrong of you to keep telling the public that that is what we have done, because we have not.

The crisis at St. Anne's was brought about because it was the PCT that withdrew funding, not us, and there has been a whole series of other voluntary very, very worthy, important voluntary organisations in this City that have been plunged into crisis because other third parties have withdrawn funding, and we as an authority have done everything we can in a tight financial situation to assist, to give extra money, to give advice, to try and help those organisations get out of their predicament.

But for you or for anybody else to say that we have a schizophrenic attitude towards alcohol control when we have consistently, all of us here, decried the new licensing laws, when we have said consistently that can only add to the problems, and for you to try and illustrate it with what is a complete piece of misinformation that we took money away from St. Anne's is entirely wrong of you, and you ought to be ashamed, frankly. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: I was just going to say the same as Mark, Lord Mayor. It wasn't us that took the money from St. Anne's, it was the PCTs. Write and ask them. Go see them and ask them. They are grateful for what we have done. They are not at all critical of Leeds City Council. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR LANCASTER: Thank you, colleagues, for clearing up that matter, but I think the emphasis is on that we are not precluding anyone putting in an application for new cafés, bars or whatever, but the onus is on them actually how they are going to contribute to the life of Chapel Allerton and not make any more problems for us.

Obviously, it was a very intensive process and consultation and the evidence showed an area at saturation point, as no doubt that is why it happened in the city centre and in Headingley, and I expect there will be other areas in a similar situation, but obviously the strong support for a policy was from the local people in Chapel Allerton and helped us drive this forward.

The Licensing Committee can decide whether the new licence will add to the problems or not, and there is a lot more consultation around this, so the Area Committee does welcome this addendum to the Council to introduce the policy for Chapel Allerton.

We also endorse the Officers' view that a full review of the licensing policy and

the Cumulative Impact area should now take place at the end of 2006, to allow time for this policy change to be implemented and to tie in with revised guidance from the Government. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

(Recommendations of the North East Inner Area Committee were approved)

ITEM 11 - MINUTES

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I move the minutes in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 2.2.

COUNCILLOR M. HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, I second and reserve the right to speak.

(a) Executive Board
(i) Central & corporate

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, firstly I would like to congratulate the Officers, which seems to be a common theme today, on ensuring that the Council becomes a pilot in what is now called Area Agreements. Now, I know that will mean not a lot to a great deal of Members round here, but I hope to kind of point to one of the challenges that we have in this.

Firstly, I think it builds on some of the partnership work we have done over the many years, and I think that has probably been influential in the Government using Leeds, and secondly I think it is a tribute to the work that we have done over many years in building the partnership up. Is that better? It must be something with this microphone.

COUNCILLOR E. NASH: I don't think it is on.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Well, I think we have struggled all day.

But can I just say that the themes that are in the Area Agreements, i.e. the Children and Young People, the Health and Old People, and the Community Safety as well as the Economy and Enterprise are the ones that I think are appropriate.

Now, it is really to Councillor Harris, this, because all those issues touch upon all of us in this chamber every day and are very important and a new way of working in partnerships which we should be involved and engaged in. He will know, Councillor Harris, that I think there was a degree of disappointment at the Executive Board when a 6-page report didn't once mention the role of Elected Members in this new arrangement of partners. It was a small half a sentence.

I then took the time to read a 44-page cover, and again even less mention of Elected Members - another disappointment in the new arrangements that are supposed to come about, and I was absolutely amazed that a civil servant was

criticising the authority for not involving Members in Area Agreements, so I think to Councillor Harris it is this very simple question, and that is, could he reassure all Elected Members that we will be involved? Could he just explain how and when, given that by March 2006 we have to submit the Agreement, because it is one that I think we should feel very strong about. If everybody else is being involved and engaged and empowered in delivering the new agenda, cutting down bureaucracy, I would hope that Councillor Harris could now say to us today, if not some indication of when, how we can try to get the Elected Members central to that document and central to that strategy. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Lord Mayor, I rise to speak on Minute 164, page 211, which records the Council's progress towards the 100% electronic service delivery by 31st December 2005.

Lord Mayor, I have been reading the report, despite the fact that it was not actually available promptly by electronic means as promised to the Executive Board. Still, it is better late than never. More worrying is the content. The report claims that the Council places customer needs at the heart of all our plans to transform our services, and it is achieving 99.49% of interactions e-enabled by the target date - 99.4%.

Lord Mayor, this claim is ludicrous. Careful reading of the report shows that the bulk of electronic transactions are with banks and corporate bodies, and those were all counting towards the total. Interaction with the public comes a poor second.

Where are we failing? Lord Mayor, page 8 of the report, R5, this is about public access to reports and agendas. The Council gives itself full marks, 100% compliance, despite the fact that we do not achieve the minimum standards prescribed in the Local Government Act to keep records for at least 4 years - I think it is 6 years for financial matters. You try looking for a 4-year old record on the Council website and you will be disappointed.

G3, public consultation. We are full of good intentions, Lord Mayor, but we are not actually doing it. We are doing a public consultation in Kirkstall right now, and I asked about electronic filling in, and it is not available.

Page 9, and this is the most serious one, Lord Mayor, R8, on line receipt and processing of planning applications. We only give ourselves an amber - well-deserved. Lord Mayor, in 1996 - 1996 - I wrote to Phil Cook, who was then Director of Planning, and I said as follows, Lord Mayor: "I have been reading the February AMA News and noticed an article on page 207 about Wandsworth Council's internet page of planning applications. You can try it for yourself on the Wandsworth website", and so on and so forth, and I got an acknowledgement from Phil Cook saying that they were looking at it. That was 10 years ago, Lord Mayor, that this was raised with the Planning Department. Not very quick in Planning, but 5 years ago we

had a further exchange of e-mails and again correspondence with Ian Andrews about the need to emulate the performance at Wandsworth. Wandsworth by this stage was a beacon council in this area. I hesitate to say it is a Tory authority, but anyway, it's not a Tory authority here.

Anyway, Lord Mayor, we are now in 2006, so it is 10 years, Lord Mayor, since the lead authorities were implementing this. 10 years, and we still have not managed it. If you look at our website, the Planning information is absolutely pathetic, and the information the public need to participate in the process, that is the planning history and all the relevant officer reports, not available. Nothing. We are pathetic at Planning. Pathetic, Lord Mayor. To award ourselves 100% for this field is just ridiculous because it is one area where the public are engaged and where the public do need accurate, up-to-date information. We cannot supply it.

On the same page, G5, public access to the Council's GIS system, geographic information system, we can't do it. Where the public are concerned, we under-perform.

Page 14, this may seem a bit technical but it is not technical, the outcome. G19, adoption of ISO 15489, methodology for EDRM in order to meet the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act. We cannot keep track of our Council documents, so we can't release information to the public as required by the law.

To sum up, Lord Mayor, and I notice the red light is on, Leeds City Council is very good at electronic government except where it involves Freedom of Information, Town & Country Planning, customer complaints. Lord Mayor, we have to do very, very much better than this. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Lord Mayor, I wish to speak to page 211, Minute 165, which is the new financial agreement settlement with the Government.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Just remember you are on our side, Brian!

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: I am well remembering. I hope Council will remember that I led a Scrutiny Board that each year, John, criticised this Council for putting forward just such a letter to the Government, and were even more flabbergasted when just such a letter received (inaudible) from the Government and we got the necessary few bob that came with it. That, unfortunately, seems to be the problem that we face in local government, that if you do the little things the Government want as they use their smoke and mirrors, you get a few bob here and a few bob there, whilst they are taking the quids off you behind your back, like the 500 quid subsidies and things like that.

I find it odd, Lord Mayor, that our settlement doesn't reach the average of the core cities, and yet at the same time we have got a pay increase next year of 2.95. We have only got a 2.5 increase. Landfill Tax has risen by £3 a tonne, meaning that

we will pay an extra £821,000 next year. You know, that is pretty close to a million in ordinary people's money. That is a lot to have to find extra without getting the extra from Government, and without the lessening in the demands for our resources.

Councillor Wakefield has referred to Local Area Agreements. They may well be a good idea, but wouldn't it be wonderful if, as we discovered in Overview this week, there are tremendous barriers to those agreements actually being reached because the barriers in the legislation, where primary legislation is needed to be enhanced to enable us to do the partnering with those particular people who have funding, who can work with us, who can share data, and so on, and make us all more efficient, but those are the barriers that cost us as an authority a lot more money.

City Region is a similar one. I asked at my briefing this morning, "How involved are we in the City Region context with Local Area Agreements?" "Well, Councillor, you had better not bring that up at your Board in a fortnight's time because those are very difficult areas, there are all these barriers", and those are the barriers that constantly I am faced with as a Councillor. I am sure the members of the Executive can come out with great longer lists of the barriers facing the Executive, the barriers that cost us and this authority money, and yet we do not get the freedoms, we do not get the rewards that the Government are taking from this City and are taking from our residents, and yet isn't it funny, whenever they want a bogus war they can always find the cash for that, Lord Mayor. Thank you, Council.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Lord Mayor, I am speaking to Minute 178 on page 215. First of all, I would like to congratulate all the staff employed by Leeds City Council for their invaluable help in delivering a 4 star CPA rating. (Cries of "Hear, hear") This is the highest rating possible, and only one other core city has achieved this. It is testament to the strength of the new administration that this has been achieved, and the full report clearly notes this Council is having a positive impact on the most deprived neighbourhoods, including those from minority ethnic communities. The impact is in line with and proof of this administration's aims of "Narrowing the Gap".

Also included in the progress report is that the Council is achieving good outcomes for children, especially in early years, where we are helping to reduce the exclusion and child poverty. It also shows that we as an administration are overcoming the burden of complex funding arrangements that this Government challenges us with.

It is interesting to note that councils are matching these CPA results with delivering over £1.9 billion worth of efficiency savings for the public purse. These efficiencies in many cases out-perform those of Whitehall departments.

I would also like to applaud the decision by the Executive Board to reward all members of staff with an extra day's holiday next year in recognition of this excellent achievement. However ---

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Apart from the teachers.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: They are not directly employed by Leeds City Council as such. (Interruptions) It is through Education Leeds. Anyway, to close, as good as this award is, I must paradoxically question the fact that these inspections do get in the way of delivering service for local people, as Councillors are spending significant amounts of money and time filling out the Government's score sheets, another example of red tape and bureaucracy getting in the way of functionality. Instead, councils should be left to get on with the job that they do, and that they do well. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, let me first of all deal with what Councillor Downes was saying because, you know, there were the usual jeers of derision from over there when reference was made to our recent 4-star award. There might have been, might just have been, grounds for hoots of derision when we were awarded "Excellent" status under CPA because, in fairness, that was very soon after this administration took over, albeit it is worth referring to the fact that inspectors who looked on the first time round and weren't too sure we ought to be "Excellent" and we appealed it, made reference when they came back again to certain areas where they felt the new administration had actually tipped the balance. But, alright, that was a good year ago, but the 4-star rating is an award for not just this Council for the way in which this administration has been directing the Council, and it is a judgment on what we have done and you can sneer and hoot as much as you like, but those are the facts. We are a 4-star Council and it is under this administration that we have achieved it, not under your administration.

Councillor Cleasby and the settlement. Well, he pointed to many things, but I would just like to reiterate a couple of points made at Exec Board. Of course, we have got a new and very complicated way of being given our settlement from central Government once more and, as I said at Exec Board, one could be forgiven for thinking that, because everybody was actually beginning to understand the old FSS system, the Government changed it because we were getting on top of the game, and they have introduced a new wholly Byzantine formula for us to use.

But there are two particular areas that deserve reference in addition to what again is a not very helpful settlement. The first is a comment made by the Minister, Phil (?) Woollas when I went down to London to hear what he had to say about the settlement in which he made the bizarre claim that the Council would not have to stand the additional cost of implementing the new licensing laws and there would be no net cost - sorry, not to the Council but to this City, and when questioned on that what he said was, "Well, the new licensing laws will mean a reduction in anti-social behaviour and therefore there will be reduction in the cost of policing the big cities, and that is where no additional net cost will affect the City."

Well, I have heard some double-talk in my time, particularly from Councillor Dowson's comments earlier. If you are talking about somebody who has got schizophrenia, look down to London, don't look over here, because that is a schizophrenic explanation on costs and licensing. But, worse still, and we have appealed against this, is the statistics that central Government have used to decide what money we should get, and in fact they are using two separate sets of statistics. They are using a tax-based statistic to calculate what money we receive locally and they are using brand smack up-to-date statistics to calculate that, but then when looking at the number of households we have, they are looking back to a figure which is now 3 years out of date, claiming therefore that we have tens of thousands fewer people in the City than we actually do have, and by doing that they have managed to introduce some brilliant creative accountancy to say, on the one hand, we are getting loads of money from our tax base but, on the other hand, we don't have as many people in the City as in fact we do, and that is definitely double-standards and schizophrenia.

Councillor Wakefield, Local Area Agreements. Well, of course, there has been Member involvement through the Exec Board, through Scrutiny, but I take the point you make, and afterwards we will sit down and we will look at that point. It is appropriate that Members should be involved as much as possible. It is not a deliberate act on our part to exclude Opposition Members, or indeed large numbers of administration non-front bench Members who have not been involved. So I take the point and we will address that.

And now I come to John Illingworth and implementing electronic government. Now, I tell you, John Illingworth reminds me of a punch-drunk boxer who doesn't know when to lie down and who keeps standing up. He keeps standing up and staggering out of his corner to take another bloody great big thumping. Are you stark raving mad to say that you raised the matter in 1996 and nothing was done about it? Who was running the Council in 1996? (Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: And 1997 and 1998.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: '98, '99, 2000? Out of the last 10 years, your party, the Labour Party, were in control for eight and a half, and during those eight and a half years you did absolutely diddly-squat about it. We have been in control one and a half years and we are pushing the agenda forward at a pace. Don't start pointing the finger at us and saying the whole thing is pathetic. We are actually implementing it. You know full well, because you have had an extensive written response to the issues you raised at Scrutiny, you know full well, particularly on Planning, that the first part of the new electronic computer system for Planning is being implemented in the first quarter. It is an extremely complicated system to give the public complete access to all records. You know that it is to be phased in in the course of the next 12 months.

We are the second largest authority in the country. We receive the greatest

number of planning applications of any authority in the country. There is no off-the-shelf system we can just use to deliver electronic government in this way. It is something that needs to be carefully implemented because you will be the first to stand up and scream and yell if we do something that then collapses at the first time of asking, but for heaven's sake don't start -- well, it is saying that the record of the Council is pathetic. You know, it is your Council as well, isn't it? It is the Council that you had a hand in running for all those years (Interruptions). Well, on a percentage basis, if I am just being generous, that makes you lot 85% pathetic and us lot 15% pathetic. Well, even with my rudimentary knowledge of maths, that means you lot are guilty. (Applause)

(ii) Development

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, commenting on page 200, Minute 131, that is the Town and District Regeneration Scheme. Really, just to thank the Executive Board for helping us, down certainly in Morley at Morley Bottoms Scheme, to actually get to that particular point. We do have a feeling of optimism that Morley Bottoms can be turned around after many, many years of neglect, and we are also grateful for the additional financial support that we have been granted for Scatcherd Park, and we would recommend that, if anybody gets an opportunity, if they are passing through Morley, to spend 5 minutes going through Scatcherd Park to see the significant improvements that we have actually seen there. We do appreciate that. We don't whinge all the time in Morley and we are grateful for the support. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: Lord Mayor, page 212, minute 168, the Showcase Bus Project. This is, for people who don't know anything about it, it is a bendy-bus with an extra metre on the end, which is supposed to look more like a tram than a bus, and you might have seen the recent Metro puff that came out which had it on the front page. It runs on rubber wheels rather than on a track.

Some months ago the Pudsey Elected Members received a whole wadge of information about this, detailing every single bus stop where this bus would stop, the length of carriageway required for the vehicle to pull in and all the rest of it. At that time I sent an e-mail to various Officers of the Council and Metro saying, "Can I just raise the issue of the Waterloo Bus Terminus?" Waterloo bus terminus, again for those who don't know it, is in a relatively deprived part of the Pudsey Ward. It is an area where we, as Elected Members, have been putting a lot of effort into making changes to the area, where we have just got a new school, where there are some large sites which are up for redevelopment, where we also demolished an estate that was very unpopular. My e-mail was saying, "We need to make sure we get this bus terminus right because, you know, this is a prestige thing that we need to get into the area. We need to make it look good", and historically, going back years, there have always been problems with buses parked on the main road there, Highways coming along and plonking in a reservation in the middle of the road without realising the buses stop there, and all sorts of problems which have really been going on for far too

long. So I said, "This is a perfect opportunity to get it right".

A couple of weeks after that I got an invite to come and watch a test of the new vehicle turning round at the terminus, so I went along with Mick Coulson, and actually they didn't have one of the new vehicles, they had a standard bendy-bus which you will know from the No. 1 route, the Holt Park bus, and it was one of those kind of quite diverting mornings when you sit and watch something that just can't do the thing it is supposed to do, because the driver is an expert at using the bendy-bus but he just couldn't get the thing to turn round easily without it bottoming as it came out of the terminus. Every inch of his turn-round he had to watch his mirrors, in so far as you can watch your mirrors on a bendy-bus because you do lose visibility at certain points, and you just realised it was totally impractical the way it was.

What became clear as that site meeting went on was that they hadn't actually thought about this terminus. They thought about every single bus stop between Whinmoor and Pudsey, but they hadn't thought about the bus terminus and how it turns round.

Now, I have passed on this information to Andrew, and I think the comments that have been made in Exec Board have been helpful. It is just really to kind of renew that plea that we get this right. It is important, not just as a turn-round for a bus. It is more than that. It is providing a better facility, road safety terms, the look of the area, giving the area something, and we should be, if we are talking about a prestige project, you don't want the thing just parked anyhow on a main road; you want to make it look good. So let's make sure we do get this right.

There are problems, I have to say, and I am a bit concerned that Officers have come back to me and said, "Oh yes, we can easily engineer a solution". I think you can easily engineer half a solution that kind of works, that would enable the buses to just about turn round, and that's not what we need. We want it to be done properly. We want the vehicles off the road. We want it so that the drivers aren't struggling to get round there. We want it to work.

Now, the other problem with this whole route is that the bus company can withdraw at any time, and I think again the comments that have been made are very helpful. We need to make sure that we don't have what happened in I think it was York. Was it York or Bradford? But certainly all the work was done and the buses were then sent to York, weren't they? All the work was done prior to a scheme coming in. It didn't happen because First Bus decided to move the vehicles across somewhere else.

We have got the time. It is not going to happen for another year, as I understand it, because they won't get the vehicles. So we have got that breather. Let's make sure we get this right. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR TAYLOR: Lord Mayor, I would like to speak on Minute 135 on page 202 in connection with local safety and safer routes to schools. As you probably know, Lord Mayor, Harehills is one of, if not the most densely populated areas in the whole of our City and as such it does need particular and special attention.

Can I therefore welcome the approval that has been given to establish a 20-mile an hour safety zone, and I do that. I believe it is the largest 20-mile per hour safety zone now within the City. I do it on behalf of the staff and the pupils at Bankside and Hovingham Primary Schools. I know that they very much welcome this measure, and also on behalf of many of the elderly people who attend the local Mosque, people in our community, because it is such a tight community, they regularly walk to and from the Mosque. This new approved scheme is very much welcome within the community and will improve the safety of local residents, and I look forward in times to come, Andrew, perhaps sooner rather than later, that it might be extended to the Hovingham School area as well, but thank you for all the work that has gone into it. Much appreciated.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I will begin, if I may, by commenting on the remarks passed by Councillor Taylor. Thank you for the complimentary comments, but I have to say there is a lot more to be done. The administration made it clear 18 months ago this would be a priority, and what we have done is to, in a very thorough way, I think, look at home zones around schools rather than perhaps what was oversimplistic, just looking at 20-mile per hour zones directly in front of schools where they were not on major routes, and what I think we have been able to achieve is significant, but there is a great deal further to go. Actually, what I would want to do is to urge all Members to help us in moving this policy forward, because I think there are opportunities that can assist us in getting more and more schools included in home zones when we look at the Planning system, and there is an opportunity for Planning gain to be applied to a number of applications where schools are very adjacent, and I would ask Members always to look at that when things come before them in their own wards. I am sure we would all agree that safer routes and safer areas around schools is an objective we should strive for around all our schools.

Now to comment on the No. 4 bus route and Councillor Lewis's comments. I entirely agree with him, I have to say, and I am grateful for the comments that he made prior to the Executive Board meeting. In point of fact, some comments had already been given to me by Councillor Blackburn, because it would appear it is not only the terminus adjacent to the Waterloo estate but a number of other areas that we need to look at as well.

Now, when the report was brought to me for clearance prior to that meeting of the Executive Board, Officers made it very clear that they would recommend me to withdraw the paper if we hadn't had an undertaking in writing from First Bus to ensure that we were not put in the position that has been alluded to, where we commit to some quite substantial funding only to find that the bus itself is then withdrawn and

taken elsewhere. That is not a situation that is tolerable and not a situation that we are going to accept. However, we have had almost what we want in that respect. However, I think there is a way to go yet, and what I can say to Councillor Lewis is that on Monday of this week, I think it was, we were contacted by First Bus for a meeting with them and our Officers to discuss the whole of the route, and I have said that you should be invited to that. This is not a party political issue; it is a commonsense issue, purely and simply, about making sure this bus route works in an exemplary fashion, because it will have or can have a regenerative effect and it can be very successful, but unless we dot the i's and cross the t's we are not going to get what we want, and we cannot waste Council money in an investment like this unless we know it is going to work.

Finally, the issue of the Town and District Regeneration Project. Thank you, Councillor Finnigan, for your comments. I have to say that the project is not moving fast enough for my liking. Certain parts of it are moving well. I turn to look at various Officers sitting on the back. They know that this whole programme is a priority, spread over three years. We are in year 1. Some areas of it are moving forward, others need to move forward more quickly, and I shall be expecting to see progress to be able to report to this Council very quickly.

I know that Members now, I hope thankfully on all sides, realise the importance of these regeneration packages in their areas, and we expect to see the programme rolled out and moved forward expeditiously. (Applause)

(iii) City Services

COUNCILLOR LOWE: I am speaking on page 213, minute 172. I am really pleased to see that we have got a Draft Integrated Waste Management Strategy for Leeds, but I do want to just point out a couple of things about it. One is that the proposed consultation, I hope that it is going to include all the different proposals that have been mooted at Scrutiny Board and which the people of Leeds are going to have to suffer, i.e. black bin collection being reduced to fortnightly, side waste not being collected. I hope that that is going to be really transparent as part of the consultation mechanism so that citizens of Leeds understand what they are being consulted on and what the ramifications of adopting this policy are going to be, and that is really important in terms of ownership of the strategy and then delivery of it.

The other issue that I hope we can also take on board is the consultation with regard to a sustainable energy park, which I think is a separate issue, and I hope that there will be a separate consultation arrangement for this, because the issue of the locality of the energy park is going to be crucial, and I think it is right that whichever area is mooted for possible sites are properly consulted with and Ward Members similarly properly consulted with.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Thank you, Councillor Lowe, and, yes, I absolutely agree with

you. The Waste Strategy that needs to be delivered will affect Leeds for the next 25 years so it is absolutely critical that we get it right, and part of that process, as you so rightly say, is about consultation, and in the next 5 months we will be conducting a widespread consultation with all stake-holders, with all interested parties, and at that point we will be bringing the whole proposal back to the Executive Board, so, yes, we will be consulting very widely.

(iv) Neighbourhoods and Housing

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Lord Mayor, I am speaking on Minute 174 on page 213 of the book about the EASEL Project, and my Inner East colleagues, Councillors Taylor, Akhtar, Pryke and Hollingsworth are, I think, like me, pleased at the progress of this project, which we welcome. We are all hoping that the long negotiations in the autumn of last year between our Officers and Bellway will bear fruit when the main Bellway board hopefully signs this deal in the next few days.

I am speaking here as a Ward Member, not as a lead Member, and for me the crucial part of the discussions are still to come when we begin to talk about the joint venture company or Stage 2 of the project. It is crucial that Stage 2 involves the major areas within South East Leeds Homes Area as well as the Leeds East Homes Area, but it is also vital that Stage 2 does at least some work in the huge areas of terraced housing in the Inner East Area where about 20,000 people live.

The terraces along Harehills Lane and along Roundhay Road, in Richmond Hill, in Cross Green and in East End Park have sadly been neglected for years. I am not aware of any major scheme to tackle these terraces in the 24 years of Labour control in Leeds. The money went to the Council estates. The EASEL Scheme is bigger than any previous housing project in Leeds. It is very ambitious. It is seeking to regenerate huge areas of our City over a 20-year period.

Now, in the terraces that I am particularly concerned about we need to find ways of encouraging young families to stay: home zones, blocking streets to discourage cars, planting trees, improving the street furniture with seats and other street signage must all be on the agenda for us. If, as well as this, we improve the infrastructure as this project aims to do by building schools, leisure centres and shops, people will surely continue to want to live in these areas, and I hope that EASEL will quickly prove that these large areas of terraced housing can be successfully regenerated for the 21st century. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: My Lord Mayor, I refer to page 195, Item 116, the Housing Strategy. As is common by now, members of the administration very quickly claim credit for whatever has happened before and they have inherited and things that have then come onto their watch, no more so than J. L. Carter, who told us all about the successful negotiations he has personally conducted on the Yorkshire Transformation PFI Scheme in Swarcliffe, and what a wonderful achievement he has made in just

less than 6 months of his tenure.

I think Councillor Carter is aware that we have consistently berated some of the advice that has been given up to then. I have to confess and admit that when the new Chief Regeneration Officer was appointed that significantly improved, but when it came across as part of the scheme of implementation to the Chief Housing Officer, we thought, well, responsibility will be taken; this scheme is going to be monitored and managed and delivered on behalf of the Council with real professionalism and with real gusto.

Now, my Ward colleagues and I have, over the last 4-6 weeks, seen Councillor J. L. Carter and told him that that is far from the truth, that what actually is happening on this scheme in the days from July onwards is a disgrace, that the scheme for housing improvements which was supposed to last in some cases for 8 weeks from July onwards had not been completed by Christmas, that the houses that my colleagues and I have visited are in a state of total disrepair and inhabitation for months on end. We said to him, "We think we want to draw that to your attention."

I want to ask him today what he has done with the information we provided to him, whether he has talked to any of the Officers responsible for monitoring the very extensive, costly and complex PFI scheme. Has he ensured that any action has been taken? Has he ensured that the specification of the contract has been applied and used? Why has no City Council Officer come out to what have been very difficult consultations with the local residents?

As I say, taking credit is easy. Following up and following through properly and diligently and thoroughly, which is what we have been doing locally in the ward, is of course much more difficult, and undoubtedly when it has all been put right by us locally after months and months of work, we will see J. L. Carter come along and say, "I have done this, folks, and I will take the credit." Well, I will be very interested to see how he has discharged his responsibility, because his Officers have insisted that they do the monitoring of the contract. When South East Homes offered to do the monitoring of the contract, we were told, "No, this is a City Council function and we have got such excellent, excellent resources and people who will do it for us." Well, so far not so good.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Lord Mayor, may I just take the last speaker first? He talked about approaching me and going through all the problems that have been taking place on this particular, Swarcliffe. Let me tell you that approach was passing him in a corridor in the doorway. That was it. Did he e-mail me? No. Did he write to my office? No. But his ward colleague did. His ward colleague did some many weeks ago, that is Councillor Armitage, who was genuinely trying to sort something out.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: And have you?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Just a minute, Peter, don't start interrupting. Who was genuinely trying to sort something out as far as this project is concerned. Now, I am not taking that from Peter Gruen. Let's just start with, Peter Gruen for four and a half years tried to land a Swarcliffe deal. Peter Gruen failed totally, utterly and miserably because he was --- Well, I was going to say something wrong there, but he couldn't achieve it. We did achieve it, and we are pleased we achieved it. That doesn't mean to say it is right. If there are problems there, and we are asking Officers to go in there and monitor it and see this monitoring is put right, but let me tell you this: the one question I have asked is, if it is not right, can we make them put it right under the contract? And the answer to that is, "Yes", and they will be made to put it right and it will happen that way.

The other point I would say to Peter Gruen, as a Chief Whip, can I just tell Council he has not given any notice whatsoever of his comments today. No notice whatsoever. That is fine if he wants to operate that way. If he wants to operate that way, that is how he can operate. I am amazed that a Chief Whip, who likes to see the business of Council run in a proper way - that is why we have that. We don't need it. No Councillor has got to give any notice. No Councillor has got to do anything. We could throw it all away, but it is done to run this Council in a proper way. He is a little bit peeved about something at the moment is Peter, and I won't go into it at the present time. (Interruptions) Well, I am not going to. I am not going to.

Let me go on another part now. Let me just go somewhere else, actually, and just come back to Richard. Richard is looking to the future. It is a difficult situation. We have said very little about that particular contract, because we are not there yet. In fact, I am pleased today to see the Officer who has worked most and hardest on this is sitting at the back of the room. It is the first time he has been to a Council Meeting, Liam Murphy, and I think there are a lot of Officers but the Officer leading this is sitting at the back of the room here and, quite honestly, I pay tribute to him for the work he has done.

Richard, you are right. In this City we have something like 20,000 back-to-back houses - 20,000. I don't know the answer to it, I have got to be honest, but at some stage we are going to have to have an answer to it. We cannot expect them to last forever. If somebody thinks they are going to last forever, then they are living in the Land of Nod. Part of this will be used hopefully to actually cure some of it. It will not cure the lot. It is a very, very difficult situation and it is not one that will be cured overnight. Leeds suffers badly from the number.

But the project itself is an exciting project. I would like the contract signing before we get onto what we are going to do with it and what we are not going to do to it, because that is when we know we have sealed it, unlike Peter Gruen who talked for four and a half years about Swarcliffe and never got it signed. I will get it signed first. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

(v) Learning

THE LORD MAYOR: We have an amendment in the name of Councillor Atha, which I am going to take separately from the rest of the Learning part of the agenda, and we have an alteration in what is down on the paper as a second amendment. We will come to that after Councillor Atha has moved his amendment and it has been seconded. There will be an opportunity for people who wanted to speak on that amendment to do so before we move on to the other items which we are going to be discussing.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: My Lord Mayor, can I move the motion in the terms of the notice with one amendment, which requires the agreement of my seconder and the Council. By some mistake I was away abroad yesterday and I only got back and saw this this afternoon. The minute should be 149 on page 207. It is exactly the same issue, Beckett Park School, but with the leave of Council I would like to propose the amendment, which is not to take a definitive stage but to ask the Executive Board to look again at a very important issue - important for lots of children, important for lots of parents.

I was Chairman of Education many, many years ago. I think I have had more experience of closing schools than any dozen people could here, because it was a time when we were getting rid of middle schools - a very, very awful, frightful period - and I know just how hard it is to close schools, and how often sentiment can over-rule good sense.

What I would say to you is this, that I am absolutely convinced that the right thing for us to do is to keep Beckett Park School open. If I didn't think it was the right thing I could do what many politicians and ourselves may have done in the past, appear to be supportive, but not really made the effort. But if it is important, if it is right, you have to fight for what is right, and so for those who don't know Beckett Park, let me tell you very briefly about it.

It is a very well preserved school in terms of building. It has got extensive play space, which would be the envy of almost any other primary school. It has got really splendid sporting facilities, beautiful playing fields, well-maintained, toilets for the use, and these are used heavily by young people in the community in a whole host of teams, run by a club called Crusaders, which some of you may know.

It is an ideal school on an ideal site. Councillor Carter was talking quite recently, only moments ago, about taking children safely to and from school. The children go to that school with almost complete safety, because it is such a confined area with, at the most, one road to cross, and that can be crossed by pelican crossing, and so it is a school which really is quite significant in terms of its position.

Its position, however, is bedeviled by one fact. For some reason it is being treated as Far Headingley, this school in Kirkstall, for the purpose of this review, but I

won't discuss that further, except to just point it out as an anomaly.

The truth of the matter is that the nearest three schools are faith schools, St. Chad's, which is heavily over-subscribed - 33 more pupils we are told than could properly be fitted into the classrooms. That is St. Chad's. The next two are two further down the valley, Kirkstall St. Stephen's and Kirkstall Sacred Heart, and that is the Roman Catholic, and there is St. Matthias as well. So those are the faith schools.

The non-faith school is Beckett Park Primary, and that is the one that is going to be closed. Now, that may make arithmetical sense if you want to reduce the numbers of spare places, but we are not dealing in numbers, we are dealing in the education of children and the convenience and the goodwill of parents, and so there is now, at this moment, a shortage of non-faith places in our schools in that area.

The proposal is really to move lots of these children down to a school lower down the valley and, because that school has not accommodation for them, to consider the use, and that is in the report, of temporary accommodation. Only a short time ago Councillor Harker, who normally refers to them as "our children", or "my children" - I think he is even more possessive than I am - that our children would go into temporary accommodation.

We all know that the best way to close a school is to let it be known it is going to close, and that is what happened here. Only five years ago the school was healthy in terms of number. Then at the turn of the century 2000 proposals came up for review of that and that was signposted as one that was likely to close. Numbers fell immediately.

In the year 2003 there was a second proposal that went through the formalities and was only beaten off at the last minute, and again numbers fell, and then lo and behold, after getting a promise then that there would be a five year period when the school wouldn't close, we were given that promise, 18 months later comes along another proposal to close, and this is the one that is being pursued now as statutory notices have been served.

The effect of that, when the beginning of 2005 began there were 18 people who had their name down for their children in the school. By the time it came to September for the intake 12 of those had dropped out, because the parents did not wish to have their children going to a school when they were so young and having to move after only possibly a year. And so the school has been closed, in effect, unless we fight back, by this proposal to close that has been a sort of death by three cuts, one in 2000, one in 2003 and now one in 2005.

And what about the school itself? I have told you the facilities are excellent. What about the education? It has had an excellent Ofsted, very good Ofsted indeed. It is the site of an autistic group of people, young children, who have been incorporated into the school's running in a way that is quite unique and quite splendid.

The parents of these autistic children are desperately keen to keep the autistic unit open on Beckett Park but, no, they are going to be dispersed, not to a nearer place because we know the one at Iveson is full and cannot take them.

So we have a very successful school in ideal circumstances, giving an extremely good education and with a very, very fine record, and this despite that 28% of the children are BME children, 43% are eligible for free school meals, which is an indicator of deprivation, 31% have special needs. Now, if you put those together, those statistics, with what I have been telling you, you must see what a fine job the school is doing, and if you say what about attendance? Well, it has a 0.02 attendance record, and so if you look at this by any standard it is a first-class school. So what will be lost?

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Non-attendance.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Non-attendance, sorry. By God, that would be --- I would not be arguing now, yes. Thanks very much for correcting me. I appreciate always being told when I am wrong, which is, of course, so infrequent it comes as a pleasant surprise.

What would be lost then basically, Lord Mayor, and ladies and gentlemen, is this: an excellent school in an area of deprivation, in the top 20%-30% of deprivation, an excellent community facility for sport and the arts, a community centre, only one in the estate, the closure of a parent and toddlers' group that would go, the loss of a projected children's centre which had already been identified as going onto that site, the closure of LEA and WEA courses in an area of high deprivation, no widening of the gap or closing the gap there. It is quite clear it was going. It has been taken away has this facility. The loss of excellent playing fields or, if retained, they could only be retained at cost to Leisure Services, which I think I would happily support.

We were told there would be savings, and the Executive Board were told of the savings. The savings in the original report were £120,000. That is the report received by Executive Board. Later on it went up to 150. Then it went up to 152. Now it is down to 140.

We had the advantage this morning of discussing with people from Education Leeds - very helpful, sensible, decent folk - who explained these figures. The truth of the matter is there will not be a saving. What there will be is a saving, not nearly as big as they are suggesting as 140, because we already picked out those elements that wouldn't apply to them this morning and they agreed, so it is less than 140. What we do know is there will be no saving for the Council. It will be a saving for Education Leeds but not for the Council, and guess who owns Education Leeds? Leeds.

So there will be no saving for Leeds, and why won't there? There will be a period, if it closes, when the school is empty and we will have to have security,

security overnight 52 weeks in the year, 7 days a week. The cost will be £26,000 to £30,000 in a year - only a small figure, but it knocks a hole in the 140 we are talking about. There is a school library on the site, a school library service. If the site is going to be cleared for sale, which is proposed in the report, then that will have to be cleared. The cost of moving that would be infinitely greater than the saving made on keeping the -- than the £140,000.

I could go through item after item, but in 10 minutes I can't do it full justice, to show that that saving would not be right, and I would say to you, Andrew, and I know we bluster at each other, and we can appear very pompous and dismissive at times, but I think equally we have the same regard for facts and truth. If you believe that I am not stating the sums accurately, I ask you to have a proper look at this or get somebody, an outsider, to do it and see will there be a saving for the Council?

If we retain the playing fields, for instance, and we couldn't let them go, they are too splendid. If the playing fields are going to be used, we have got to have the toilets kept open. And if the toilets are kept open, there has got to be someone to open them, and to clean them. Those costs have not been factored in, and yet if I had been on the Executive Board and seen a plain statement of £140,000 saving, I tell you what I would have said, I would have said, "That is a saving which is big enough to make me consider very carefully the rights and wrongs of it."

Now, am I a lonely voice crying in the wilderness? Well, no, I'm not. The position quite simply is this ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Atha, you have just run out of time, I am afraid.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: With respect ---

THE LORD MAYOR: I am going by the coloured buttons. You could no doubt pass it to Councillor Minkin to be included in part of the seconding.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I would ask leave of Council just to extend my period for 2 minutes.

THE LORD MAYOR: No, I am sorry, Councillor Atha. We have got to work to the rules.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I will accept your ruling. I was watching the clock very carefully, I thought.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Lord Mayor, to continue what my colleague was about to say, which was that this was discussed twice at the meeting of the Inner North West Area Committee. We had a good discussion. To be honest, I missed the second one because I got the times of the meeting muddled up, but nevertheless I got obviously reports back on it and the minutes of that Area Committee I read, and I was obviously

pleased that our LibDem colleagues on that Inner North West Area Committee agreed that the case for closure for Beckett Park was very weak, and I do want to go through some of those points, and confirm what Councillor Atha has proposed in moving this reference back.

Firstly, there is the geography of the area. I can't pass that round. It is too small for you to see, but just to let you know that, apart from what Councillor Atha has said, Beckett Park Primary School is a school in the middle of an oval of other schools which are at the edge of the area. If you close Beckett Park you have a huge hole in the middle of that area, with children having a long way to travel. Now, I know that parents take all kinds of decisions these days about different schools and different journeys that they take their children to. Nevertheless, this is a remarkable hole in a big area with many, many children.

To confirm the numbers, and the closest schools to Beckett Park, Hawksworth Wood Primary, which is just about full, is the most awkward distance and journey away from the Beckett Park School and area. It is, in fact, in a straight line 1.2 miles, by road 1.8, and on the path 1.6 miles. It is also the only approach is down Butcher Hill, over a very, very narrow railway line, where there is not even a pavement just by the railway line to get over, and then they go down, cross again a very dangerous Butcher Hill, go up into the Hawksworth Wood estate which, of course, serves that whole community and is, as I say, just about full from serving that own community.

The next closest school is St. Chad's, which is a Church of England aided school. That has 33 more on roll than there are places. The next state school is Weetwood Primary. That has two more children on roll than there are places for. You go right down the other end and you get to Beecroft School, and again Beecroft is just about full, except that in Year 5 it has two classes of 17. It is a one-form entry but actually there are 34 children in that year group. They have managed to juggle their resources to make two classes of 17. They are actually over-subscribed and over the numbers expected of a one-form entry school. Kirkstall St. Stephen's is the closest but, again, another Church of England aided school.

I would want to draw the attention of Council, as I did at Scrutiny, to what I think is unequal consideration with Fir Tree Primary, which they were both on the same agenda at the November meeting of the Exec Board. The Fir Tree proposal for closure was deferred because there were insufficient community places and because local schools were refusing to help. That is exactly the same position in so far as there were insufficient community places as for Kirkstall St. Stephen's. I got an e-mail reply from one of the Officers saying, "If Beckett Park Primary School were to close or amalgamate in September '06 there would be a slight" - I would quarrel with that word "slight" - "shortfall in the number of places available at community schools of about 40."

There is no difference between the position of the children at Beckett Park,

where the closest schools are St. Chad's, which, as I have said, is already full by I don't know how much, and St. Stephen's, both Church aided schools. The nearest primary state schools - I have just described Hawksworth Wood to you, and Beecroft is --- Well, I will finish by saying that it is not good enough to say that you can close Beckett Park because Beecroft School is willing to do its best to co-operate by juggling its numbers, whereas Alwoodley schools are not willing to co-operate and help the children in their area, but they are certainly not expecting Portakabins, but how else can 60 children be accommodated at Beecroft?

I would just conclude by saying there are many more points that the case for closure is very weak and narrowly focused. The case for retention long-term - don't want just a year - this school is needed by that community and that whole area, because I include Far Headingley and Weetwood in this question of children needing places at these schools, and please support this reference back.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Now, we come to what was described on the order paper as the second amendment. I understand from Councillor Harker that he wishes to withdraw the second amendment; is that correct, Councillor Harker?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I beg leave of Council to withdraw it, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Unfortunately, we have a slight difficulty because the Procedural Rules require the consent of the seconder before I can put to Council the withdrawal of an amendment.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I am happy to help out there.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harris is seconding. Thank you very much. It wasn't identified in the papers as to who the seconder was, so the mover and the seconder have agreed to withdraw the second amendment. Can I put it to Council that that is approved? (Agreed)

Now, just so that we are clear, because one or two people have indicated that they want to speak, we are going to take the comments on the amendment before we do the summing up and the vote on the amendment, so I will start with Councillor Harker, who is now going to comment on the amendment, and we then have Councillor Leadley and Councillor Illingworth, so far, and probably a few more as well. If you want to speak on the amendment - not on the minutes but on the amendment - can you send a note up, please, to one of us up here. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, forgive me for asking this, if I may, but in view of the fact that the amendment has now been withdrawn, wouldn't it be more appropriate to hear other people's comments on the amendment as it stands before asking Richard Harker?

THE LORD MAYOR: We can do that, if that is what you wish, but I would emphasise ---

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: You just called Richard Harker to speak now.

THE LORD MAYOR: I hear what you say, Councillor Harris, but Councillor Harker will have an opportunity to sum up at the end of the minutes anyway.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Okay. I apologise.

THE LORD MAYOR: Not on the amendment. If he is going to speak on the amendment, it will have to be before we have put that to the vote, so I think perhaps it might be appropriate if Councillor Harker wishes to speak after the other comments, then he can do that. Yes?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Just a quick point of order. I thought I was moving a motion and, as the mover of a motion, I thought I had the right to wind up. (Interruptions) This is an amendment but you can't amend a minute. You can't amend a minute unless it is inaccurate. I am in fact proposing an additional, so that amounts to a motion to amend the minute.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am advised, Councillor Atha, that we take a vote on the amendment, but that there are no further contributions other than the people who have not spoken on the amendment.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: If that is the ruling I will accept it, but I think it is a motion and not --

THE LORD MAYOR: Okay. Well, in that case we will go straight on to Councillor Leadley, I think, who is the next name on the list.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: I hope I can make an unconfused contribution, because you will see my contribution originally was supposed to come slightly further down the order paper, actually on a slightly different tack, but I will try and amend what I was going to say to try and make it fit in with what has been said already.

Really, it is to say that some Members may know that this particular matter was called in by Overview & Scrutiny, and that I seconded the call-in motion which had been proposed by Councillor Minkin. Although the eventual outcome wasn't what the opponents of the closure would have wanted, the call-in was useful in that it was the first under the new rules whereby only the nine Members of Overview & Scrutiny can sign a requisition, and at least two have to sign from at least two political groups.

During the run-up to that special Overview & Scrutiny meeting, there were a number of excuses raised for not allowing the call-in. It was claimed that the process might be delayed so much that the deadlines would be missed and the school might have to be kept on for another year in a kind of life after death, and if that had been

the case it shouldn't have been placed as being open to call-in in the first place. And then Councillor Minkin was told that she shouldn't have signed because the school was in her ward so she had a prejudicial interest, and I was told that as a Morley Member without any interest in Kirkstall I shouldn't have signed either! (Laughter) There were a certain number of pressures behind the scenes, and these difficulties were overcome, and I think it is likely that the process would run more smoothly if it were invoked again.

Having said that, we did spend 3 hours discussing this matter at the meeting, when I had done quite a lot of reading before the meeting, and the matter was very thoroughly discussed at the meeting. I know it is always difficult to make these decisions to close schools, but in the context that we always seem to have of steadily reducing numbers of children in the City, and really it does come down to the point where school closures are inevitable, and they are always difficult for those that have to accept them and they are always difficult for those who have to implement them, but I think really that is the context in which we have got to look at this problem. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Lord Mayor, I rise to speak because (inaudible) but, Lord Mayor, there is an issue about public health and children's health here. The school has excellent playing fields, excellent sports facilities, and on the Health Scrutiny Board we are presently conducting an inquiry into child obesity, and one of the recommendations I am sure that the Board is going to make when it finally submits its report is more emphasis on exercise, physical activity in children.

It is absurd to be closing the school that has the best playing fields in the area and the best facilities for young people that are heavily used, and the only sensible conclusion in these circumstances is that we are going to close the school but keep the playing fields open, in which case virtually all the costs on the site continue and we make no saving at all - an absurd policy to embark upon, particularly when the children from the school will have to be accommodated in Portakabins at the receiving school because there is not space for them. And this has been brought forward at a time when we were told as a community there would be a 5-year moratorium on further closure proposals to allow the school to recover, to allow the children who had gone elsewhere to come back to it, and suddenly, 18 months into that moratorium, yet another closure proposal comes out. So three times people have opposed the closure of this school in the last 5 years. It is not surprising there is a flight of kids elsewhere, kids crammed into the neighbouring schools, where they won't fit, because of the lead that the authority has given to them.

So, Lord Mayor, I do hope the Executive Board will accept this reference back, will reconsider what they are doing, because it is simply a question of commonsense, Lord Mayor. If we are not going to make any savings, if we are going to inconvenience the children who attend the school, and if we are going to prejudice the health and recreation among young people, it is not the thing to do, Lord Mayor.

Thank you very much.

COUNCILLOR MULHERRIN: Lord Mayor, as my colleagues have already stated, this is the third time in recent years that the threat of closure has been looming over Becketts Park Primary School. That uncertainty has in no way helped the school or engendered the confidence of parents to send their children to the school.

Members of the Inner North West Area Committee are well placed to appreciate the circumstances and the reasons why the number of families and children in this part of Leeds have reduced in recent years. The pressure on family housing in the area is well-known across Inner North West Leeds, but if we are to have any hope of turning the tide and drawing families back into the area we must ensure that there are places at the schools for children to go to.

The plea to keep open Becketts Park Primary School was supported unanimously by the North West Inner Area Committee on two separate occasions. That support was across all parties and there are many Members in here on the Liberal Democrat benches as well as Labour benches who supported it. The Liberal Democrat Party as a whole then supports the plea also in two recent publications which have been distributed in the area, and to vote against that now would surely be to undermine the democratic process and the things that you stood up for locally and at the Area Committee. It is time to stand up now and be counted. You will be applauded for it.

Councillor Morton has already lent his support to the campaign of the school and the Kirkstall Councillors to save Beckett Park Primary through the local press. I would urge all Members in this chamber to back the call of the Kirkstall Ward Members and for the Executive Board to reconsider this decision, not only to secure education provision on the site for the children and families who already use it but also to retain and attract back the children and families that this area needs to secure its future sustainability and regeneration.

COUNCILLOR M. HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, I think it has been very useful to have this debate today, and I am actually quite grateful that we have this motion to debate.

It is absolutely right that the Area Committee took the view that has been described unanimously on two occasions that we were not convinced by the evidence presented to actually go ahead with the closure of this school. I think that in a sense is the standing position of the Area Committee, and that will go forward to SOC, but I think what you have to remember in this is, in a sense, what Area Committee was saying is, "We want Executive Board to reconsider this." It was considered at one meeting and then, largely as a result of the views of the Area Committee, the decision was deferred, further work was done, further information was looked at, and the matter was considered again before being brought to the following Executive Committee, Executive Board, and so I think in a sense what this motion is trying to do

has already in a sense been done, it has already been looked at twice by Executive Board.

It has been said in the debate that this matter has been looked at on three occasions over the last few years, and on each occasion that it is looked at that, in a sense, makes the decision to close the school -- it is no easier but it actually puts the threat on the school and means that parents are unconvinced about sending their children to the school because they think perhaps it is going to close in the future. So each time we start the thing and don't actually finish it, I think in the end that is actually a cause of the problems of that school. So it is my view, whilst the Area Committee took that position, and I think we continue to hold the views that we hold, that we are unconvinced by the case that has been made, but I think what we now need to do is to take it forward to SOC so the matter can be dealt with once and for all, and I really think there needs to be some clarity on this and some finality on this.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: So you are not (inaudible)?

COUNCILLOR M. HAMILTON: No, I am saying it should go forward to SOC, Bernard.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: So you are not.

COUNCILLOR M. HAMILTON: No. So that is my view. I think it is a difficult one. I think it has probably been a marginal decision for Richard, I am sure he will say a bit more about that, but I do think we now need to come to a decision on this, and I think the best way to do that --- Delaying it by another month isn't actually going to solve the problem, so I think we need to take it forward to SOC. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR C. NASH: I would just like to respond to something Councillor Mulherrin said about democratic process, pointing out this has actually been through the democratic process. It has been to Overview & Scrutiny, who did look at this in great detail, and at the start of that scrutiny two members of the people who were looking at it, an independent member from the Education section and Councillor Leadley, were extremely unsure, and the rest of us were certainly also undecided, but we made the unanimous decision to release the decision, refer it to SOC, and we agreed that there were certain things that it would have been nice if the Council could have taken into account when deciding this.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: Lord Mayor, I think it is highly unacceptable when a Member of Council is speaking and we can't hear a word in this chamber. It is not the first time it has happened today and I just can't follow Councillor Nash's comments.

THE LORD MAYOR: We will try and increase the volume. Okay, we will see what we can do to improve the volume.

COUNCILLOR C. NASH: I was just pointing out that it was a unanimous decision of the

OSC group that looked at it, and we did agree that there were some things that would have been nice if Council could have taken into account in making a decision, but that they are very circumscribed by the requirements on considering school closures which doesn't allow certain of the social elements to be taken into account, and we did refer that back to the Youth and Children's Scrutiny Board to look at as part of the work they are doing. At the moment those aren't able to be taken into account, it appears, so I do think it is very important that we recognise that some of the things that Councillor Atha said about the fact that the saving to Education Leeds may not fully reflect the overall saving to the Council may be correct but at present there don't seem to be procedures allowed by the Government to take them into account, and that certainly it may be that what they are after is actually after some changes in the national guidance and the national regulations rather than after changes in decision by this Council.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for that. Just so that I can be absolutely clear, we have now got everybody who wants to contribute on the amendment, have we?

COUNCILLOR MORTON: Lord Mayor, you have set out more eloquently than I can, Bernard, what you might call the paradox of consultation when it comes to these matters. You have a school that doesn't have enough children in it. You then have a "consultation exercise" - inverted commas - about closure, which means that parents vote with their feet, which reinforces the original decision. Where do you then go from there?

If you accept the inevitable, which it probably is in this case, things are a lot quicker, the school knows what is happening, but you effectively give unelected officials in Education Leeds the right to shut things. So you are absolutely right to fight. The case you have made in my mind is quite clear. I am not even sure on a "balance of probabilities" argument that we should be shutting the school. Certainly if you ask for "beyond reasonable doubt" we shouldn't probably be shutting the school.

The question you need to ask yourself at this stage is what is the best battle site now to continue your opposition, which I think you will have a lot of support for in the area, and surely at this stage it has to go to SOC. It has been to Executive Board in effect twice. On the first occasion they have responded to a request for a delay, which I am very grateful for them doing. On the second occasion people have asked them not to take the decision and they have.

Having done that, it has then been to Scrutiny that has looked at it and they have come to the conclusion it should be released. Now, fortunately the system builds in School Organisation Committee and that is the new battleground, it seems to me, and you have put together a very -- well, not a very strong case, I would argue a compelling case, but at what point do we move on? Does sending it back and sending it back again and playing another round of ping-pong help? I suspect that it doesn't.

There are three real arguments that have convinced me. I mean, there are arguments against closing any school, and we have just been through this with Headingley Primary, which has shut with almost not a whimper of opposition, because in that case the situation was so far gone what would you be achieving other than to go through the motions? Even two or three weeks before a bye-election campaign, local Ward Members including myself felt that there just isn't any point in setting up some false hope that this thing isn't going to shut.

So I think it may seem odd to you but, having taken a decision not to fight one in my own ward, that some of us, and you have made allusions, and indeed everybody in Hyde Park and Woodhouse, Headingley, Weetwood Wards at Area Committee did support you twice, so I think we were right to do so. If we won't fight for one in our own ward, why go the extra mile for one in yours? And the reason for that is the facts point to that.

We have not really gone into the detail about why shutting the four primary schools in the Inner North West that have been put forward for closure recently have all explicitly said in the reports that it is looking at the penetration of student housing. If you shut schools, more families leave the area, therefore you are exacerbating the problem. We are talking about "Closing the Gap" and regenerating these areas and there is a stream of Council policy that goes against that. I accept that. The quality of the site doesn't need reiterating. If we close this, we won't get another school - or it is very unlikely that we will get another school - site of that quality.

Finally, as I think John has said, there is a sense that it is not quite cricket to have one, two and three attempts in five years to shut it. If you are going to turn a school around, you need to have some period of doing that. The arguments are there but, in a sense, we have lost this stage of the argument. What do we gain by playing ping-pong with it? Now, so far we have not played party politics with this at Inner North West. I accept it may come to that and, at the end of the day, parties exist to have those kind of debates, but I hope you would accept the good faith of those of us that have supported you so far. As Councillor Hamilton has indicated, that support at an Area Committee level will go forward to SOC and, to the extent that my voice will make any difference, I will help with that process, but at this stage is there really a case to play ping-pong? And I think not. I think we need to go to the next stage, to marshal the arguments and to do the best that we can really.

The final point - well, it has to be - we are not authors, you know, of our own fate here. It would be lovely if we could decide what shuts and what doesn't. We are implementing a national agenda that looks only at surplus places, and nobody would be happier than me, and nobody would be happier than I think most people on this side of the chamber, if we could alter that, but at the end of the day if we don't take difficult decisions, like some in my own ward, the Government have made it very clear that it will take it for us. So on that note, that is my position, and it has been referred to and I thought I ought to clarify it. You are absolutely right, but I don't quite agree

that this is the best way to push it forward. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, I appreciate David's honesty, or at least sincerity, on trying to maintain I think a degree of integrity into this debate, because it is difficult. In actual fact, it was David that alerted me, and I am being quite truthful about this, about the complexities of the debate and I went back to read it. But let's make absolutely no mistake at all, this is a Council decision. Education Leeds don't make the decision. Education make recommendations, and that is why it is better that we debate it both at Executive Board, where Members are represented, and Council here, so I think it is actually creating fog and misleading people to pretend it is some other body elsewhere, and I am amazed Elected Members wanted to see it debated and discussed elsewhere. I prefer this chamber. I prefer Elected Members exchanging views, like we are trying to do, in a positive and constructive way.

Now, I want to kind of allude to the origins of this debate. Yes, it has been backwards and forwards. It went back to Executive Board, and actually it was Councillor Carter who said, "I am not happy with this. Elected Members and the Area Committee have not been included in this paper." I think that is where we were, and I look for an indication. I think that is where we were on the Executive Board.

So Exec back what I thought was going to be, what is a very difficult debate, back with Area Committee. It boomeranged back fairly quickly and a little paragraph was put in saying, "Area Committee are against it unanimously", and I couldn't help feeling that somehow this wasn't a sincere attempt to work through the complexities of this debate. I just felt deep down that somebody was trying to push this through in a timescale. Now, correct me if I am wrong, Richard: is there a paper on next week's Executive Board dealing with this?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Dealing with this?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Becketts Park?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: No.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: There isn't, okay. I am wrong.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You are wrong.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I just said that. Okay, I am wrong. Because it doesn't alter the substance of the points I am going to make. What David said that in his original presentation this is not an easy debate, and what I want and what Members wanted was parity with Fir Tree.

Now, I accept there is not exact analogies and parities to draw on and say, "That is exactly the same", but there are some powerful ones. Firstly, I think the point

that both Councillor Atha and Councillor Minkin made about there being no nearby community school. That was the same point as Fir Tree and, in fact, I was in support of Councillor Harrand in saying that this was ridiculous to ask people to walk not as far as you believed, 1.6 or 1.8 miles, but long enough to make it uncomfortable, and I supported Members in the north of Leeds - no political gain - because I think there was a very powerful point, and I think Members were right to say to us, "Let's have a similar longer look at this" and let's see if we can't avoid putting Portakabins in, or forcing people to go to Hawksworth Wood which, as I know because my daughter went to the very same school at Becketts Park, is too far to make a comfortable walk and indeed journey by even public transport.

So I think there was a debate, not on numbers, I think it was Councillor Carter that said it two meetings back, you can't talk about education in pure numbers, and it is absolutely true. I am convinced that had they not had the Sword of Damocles over 3 or 4 years, I think the numbers would be higher. But let's talk and say this is a marginal case, you know, difficult case. You could go one way and say that is right or could go another. Personally, I want to be optimistic and go with local Members but it is a very tight, marginal argument.

I think a powerful point is this, that what you are doing here is taking away a first-class school. I know it to be a first-class school in a first-class location, and if you are interested in a balanced community, as you rightly say, a lot of people look at the area, they look at the school, and then they buy their house. That is the process of people buying and investing in a community. Take this away and you are taking away the heart of the community and the lack of real choice and hope for local people to stay in a local community instead of bussing a very long way, so I support local Members, including your original argument, David, but I accept, you know, that you have changed it, but I do think we have to think optimistically about the future for those children. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, it seems to me that we are damned if we do and we are damned if we don't, and on the one hand we have got people saying that the process is so long and drawn out it is death by a thousand whatevers, and it goes on for so long that the pupils just drain away. We know that very well from the Rodley saga, and others as well, and Councillor Wakefield is right, at the Executive Board meeting three cycles ago, whatever it was, when this was deferred I made the point, as has been made in the past by both Councillor Harris and myself, we will always - always - look again at the issue of school closures. Nobody, no politician, ever wants to close a school; it doesn't make any sense, but nevertheless the authority is faced with having to take very difficult decisions, and we have to face up to those decisions.

To remind Councillor Wakefield and his Labour colleagues, one of the reasons why Education Leeds is in existence is because there was scathing condemnation by a Government Inspector of the inability of the then Labour administration to take the

decisions that the Department for Education thought should have been taken. Well, don't shake your head, Councillor Selby; that is exactly what was said.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Not relevant to this debate.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Of course it is. Of course it is because, Councillor Wakefield, as you well know, we are watched every foot of the way. Well, we will be until we are allowed to be in charge of our own Education affairs again, which thankfully, because of Education Leeds' success, is not long away but we are, as I say, damned if we do and we are damned if we don't.

I listened very carefully to what Councillor Atha said. When Councillor Atha is sensible, which is not very often, he is worth listening to, but he was very sensible today and I listened to virtually all that he said, but I particularly listened to the comments of Councillors Hamilton and Morton, because I think they are right; you have reached the stage where the forum has to be the SOC. It is the forum you used all the time, and I have to say, Keith, a little disingenuous, some of your comments. I am glad you admitted you were wrong because they were a little disingenuous, because I don't recall many instances when we looked again at any proposal your administration made for a recommendation of closure to go to SOC. I recall very few of those ever being looked at again, whereas we have looked, and will continue to look, again and again to make sure ---

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Rodley.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Well, that was actually us, as I recall. You refused an actual recommendation, but let's not get into cross-talk.

This is a very serious issue. We take proposals of this sort very seriously and, indeed, if SOC disagree, and I have to say I welcome the independence, at least I hope it is independence, of SOC, and they take a view across the piece and can come to a conclusion which we will then obviously have to take on board, but I conclude by saying that Councillor Hamilton's comments and Councillor Morton's comments are quite correct. We have reached a stage where this has to move forward, and the place it moves forward to is the SOC.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, briefly, I just want to comment on the point Keith Wakefield made, although he said it wasn't a perfect analogy, but the analogy he has used between the situation and the discussion we had over Fir Tree Primary School and what we have got now.

The first thing is, and I have to say it is the first time in all the discussions that I have heard advanced, the argument that Bernard Atha has advanced, that the three nearest schools are faith schools. I don't recall that discussion at Executive Board, and so I see where Keith is coming from with drawing the analogy. However, the

analogy falls down in this respect, that at Fir Tree the only schools near it that had surplus places are those that are faith schools. The whole point is with Fir Tree that every other adjacent school, non-faith school, has no surplus places. There are no surplus places in the non-faith sector, in the non-denominational sector, within striking distance of Fir Tree. Therefore, if Fir Tree closes, and none of the other adjacent primary schools are prepared to take those children from Fir Tree, then that is the problem. So if Fir Tree were to close, then the only schools that were prepared to take those children are the faith schools.

Now, that is where the analogy falls down because in this situation, whilst I admit it is the first time I have heard that semi-analogy about the faith schools adjacent in this case, there are non-faith schools, non-denominational schools, prepared to take those children in the event of SOC deciding that it must close, and that is an essential difference. That option was not and is not available with the schools adjacent to Fir Tree, so it is not a comparison worth making in this instance, and therefore ought not to form part of our decision-making process in this debate.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Lord Mayor, decisions like this are going to come again and again and again, and they are going to get harder and harder and harder, because we do not have bad primary schools in this City, we have good primary schools, but we are charged by Government to bring under control the surplus place problem in this City, which currently stands at 8,000 places and will grow again this year by at least another 800, and will go on growing for some years to come.

That affects the amount of money Government gives to the authority to run our schools. That is a bare fact. I certainly do not enjoy the idea that it is my portfolio that has to bring forward a school for closure, with a recommendation for closure. I don't take that role lightly, and I hope nobody thinks that I do, despite the fact I did get irritated slightly because I thought I was being personally attacked in Scrutiny by the Kirkstall Members as being called unreasonable and acting unlawfully, but Bernard pointed out that they were technical terms (Laughter) but I don't believe that I have behaved at any point here unreasonably. I take very seriously --- I put officers through all sorts of hoops behind the scenes when they come forward during the period of review. All the letters that come to me are investigated. Every point that is raised in letters that come to my desk, Officers are asked to come back and explain how they would answer such a point raised, and all the points virtually that Bernard has raised today I have taken up with Officers.

Sadly, judicially perhaps I had to come to the decision to recommend to Executive Board that this proposal should proceed to SOC. When I was going to do that in November I then received, rather late in the review period, a very detailed letter from the North West Inner Area Committee and so I asked if we could withdraw the paper in November so that I could go back and with Officers again look at my decision - my decision to ask Exec Board to send this recommendation to SOC.

Officers came and spent time with me. We went backwards and forwards through the paper submitted by the Area Committee, and I want to make a point because it was more or less suggested, I felt, and I will withdraw it if I am wrong, at the Scrutiny Board that because nine Liberal Democrats were opposed to the closure I shouldn't have gone ahead with my decision. I would be failing in my duty to this Council and to this City if I allowed party politics to sway any decision I make as an Exec Board member. That is one of the reasons why we had Education taken out of our hands some years ago.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Absolutely.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I want to turn to Scrutiny now. There was a call-in to Scrutiny Board, and Scrutiny Board is the mechanism by which this Council as a whole can hold the Executive to account by calling in our decisions. There was a 3-hour investigation, during which time Bernard and his team put their case thoroughly that we hadn't taken into account the social aspects of the school, that we had behaved unreasonably, and that we had behaved unlawfully, and I would point out that one of the people who signed the call-in actually voted, when the vote was taken, the unanimous vote was taken, that we had not behaved outside our remit, and I do take exception to the suggestion that I and the Executive Board didn't read the papers, that we didn't consider this.

I would like this now to move to the next stage. I would like to bring closure for the parents and the children of this school. It is right that we have a final decision made by review, and I would encourage the Area Committee, Martin, and I would encourage the Ward Councillors to go to SOC and to put their case as well as they put it ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harker, you have had your time, I am afraid. I have to move forward. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Can I move under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 22.1 that the Procedure Rule 3.1 be suspended to allow all of the comments on the minutes to be considered?

THE LORD MAYOR: Is that seconded?

COUNCILLOR E. NASH: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I think the rules require that we take a vote on that matter without further debate. Those in favour?

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Recorded vote.

THE LORD MAYOR: Are you quite sure, Councillor Hanley, that we want a recorded vote

on whether in fact we proceed or not? (Interruptions) We have not got to the recorded vote on the amendment yet. Alright. At the moment we are just simply voting on whether we are going to proceed further or not.

(The motion was defeated)

THE LORD MAYOR: Now we come to the vote on the amendment.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Recorded vote, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: And we have a recorded vote proposed and seconded. If you will wait for the appropriate length of time for people to get back to their seats, I will call on the Chief Democratic and Legal Services Officer to talk us through the procedure for recorded votes.

THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES: My moment of glory!

Can all Members please ensure that they are in their allocated seats. All Members should refer to their desk unit and press the button marked "P". The voting lights on your unit should now flash. Those Members in favour of the amendment in the name of Councillor Atha should press the "+" button. Those Members against the amendment in the name of Councillor Atha should press the "-" button, and any Member wishing to abstain and have their abstention recorded should press the "0" button.

THE LORD MAYOR: The result of the vote is, with 86 Members voting, 34 voted for, 51 against and there was 1 abstention. The amendment is therefore lost.

We go on to the main item on the Minutes. I call on Councillor Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: I have no idea what I am supposed to be speaking on on this one, to be honest.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: That has never stopped you before!

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: No, it doesn't matter.

My Lord Mayor, I am speaking on 196, 119, Review of the City Council's Schools Admissions Policy. Very, very briefly on this particular one, and I know this relates to where we are going with the Schools Admissions Policy at this particular point, but as people will know we have significant concerns about how the Admissions Policy works, certainly in our secondary schools, and what we would say is that a review of the Admissions Policy which will make sure that Morley kids get an opportunity to attend a Morley High School is something that we would support. It is

probably not happening in this particular year, but we know that it is going through the process of consideration for the 2007 academic year.

We were somewhat concerned to receive what appears to be an amendment to the proposals that came out of the School Admissions Forum that looked at perhaps watering down the Schools Admission Policy that may be implemented in 2007, if that is the view of this particular school. We do feel that that particular amendment that is presently being circulated at this particular stage won't resolve the Morley problem, the Morley difficulty that we have got at this particular point.

We would therefore say from a Morley Members' point of view that this will be an issue that we will be revisiting time and time again until we are of a view that we can guarantee that all of our children can attend a Morley High School and that that is a guarantee that can be delivered year after year after year. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much for that. I regret, apologies to Councillors Gruen and Harker, we cannot continue with the other two items that are outstanding on this part of the Minutes because we have run out of time, but I am sure that it was right to have the full debate that we had on the amendment, and that is the result, I fear. So we have now got to go to the end of the item and invite Councillor Andrew Carter to exercise right of final reply.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I feel I should point out that probably one of the most enlightening comments so far this afternoon was - and I think I caught the wording right from Councillor Taggart when he turned to you a few moments ago when his colleagues were all over the place and said, "Don't take any notice, Lord Mayor; they don't know what they are doing." Well, I think that was roughly it, Neil. I paraphrase. But I think most of us long since came to that conclusion about the Opposition, for want of a better description.

Could I also point out to the Leader of the Opposition that had Councillor Illingworth not waffled on aimlessly for almost his full duration of time to start with, and then Councillor Gruen stood up and spoke without any notice for an equally long period of time, that it may well have been possible to get through some of the actually quite interesting things that were still to come.

My Lord Mayor, let me comment first of all on the only passing mention that there was early on on these minutes about the Local Government Finance Settlement and the awarding of 4 stars to the local authority. Let's deal with the 4 stars first of all. We won't argue about which politicians, if any, were responsible for the delivery of a 4-star recommendation award from the Audit Commission. What we do know is that a lot of the employees, the vast majority of the employees of the local authority who deliver services at the sharp end, by and large on time, within budget, and to the electors' satisfaction deserve praise from us all for getting that 4-star recognition and, whether you lot like it or not, I have to say it is, I think, something that we should all

actually be celebrating, and that does not mean - and that does not mean - that we should be complacent or think that what we yet deliver is good enough, because it isn't, and we are going to go on improving it.

Everything that has been discussed today seems to me to be predicated upon us having sufficient finance to be able to deliver it, and yet from the Opposition - because it was the administration who actually raised the issue - from the Opposition there has been no mention of the provisional financial settlement. And let me say that that provisional settlement awarded this City less than the average for England. How can a core city - how can a core city - with all the problems that a major city has possibly, under any system, be awarded less than the national average for England? That cost us £3 million.

Then, because they have this system of floors and ceilings, even though we didn't get the average for England, we have to contribute another 3 million quid to local authorities who are even worse off than us. So that was £6 million gone, and it is still only the provisional settlement and, as Councillor Harris has rightly pointed out, these weasel words from the Minister about what the Government might or might not fund are as clear as mud.

So the fact is that this City yet again has been sold short on the provisional finance settlement, and that, as I said, is what predicates all the discussions, or the majority of them, we have been having today - the ability to have the money there in the first place to spend on essential services, and that is why the budget discussions that we are having at the moment are so difficult, but I am sure colleagues will agree with me that we will deliver improved front-line services, and we will deliver them at a price that people can afford.

EASEL and the Aire Valley have been mentioned. Actually, if you go through the minutes of the Executive Board on this minute book, I challenge anyone to find a set of more important issues for the future of this City than exists on those pages. Everything from flooding, from the regeneration of our towns and village centres, to the regeneration of the Aire Valley, the Lower Aire Valley, Brian, wherever you are. The Lower Aire Valley, one of the largest brown field development regeneration areas in England. EASEL, which we are driving forward with little or no -- well, no, actually, no Government support, and yet too much of what was mentioned early on from the Opposition didn't touch on any of those major issues at all.

Instead, we had Councillor Gruen on Swarcliffe. All I will do is reiterate what Councillor J. L. Carter said. For four and a half years, he and his colleagues failed to deliver the Swarcliffe PFI, and let me tell you, as if you didn't already know, when we took over the Swarcliffe PFI Scheme was dead in the water - dead in the water. Everybody was about to give it up as a bad job, and this administration, and Councillor J. L. Carter in particular, put a great deal of effort into making sure that it wasn't dead in the water. (Applause)

My Lord Mayor, the late, and I have to say lamented, Tony Banks, Lord Stratford, in describing a politician of another party, said, "He is the living proof that a pig's bladder on a stick can be elected". Many people here may think he was referring to Peter Gruen.

Let me move very briefly to the Education issue, and I think Councillor Harker needs really no defence from me because he defended the very difficult position in which any Chair or any Executive Board Member for Education finds himself in, but these decisions that Education Leeds, that our own Education Officers and that Councillor Harker and his lead Members are having to bring to the Executive Board are not easy for anybody.

You should know, Keith, of all people, that these decisions are difficult and they have to be taken, and I think we have illustrated over and over again, as I said a few minutes ago, that we are always prepared to look again. It is not a sign of weakness to say, "Hang on, let's just make sure we have got this right", but there does come a time when decisions have to be taken, because actually to put things off any longer has a very, very detrimental effect.

Which actually brings me on to the comments made by Councillor Harington in the question relating to the Arena. Let me just say this. I think there are times when this Council does not assert itself as it ought. I have been in local government for very many years, and I have watched Governments of various persuasions chip away at what local government does. I am all in favour of partnerships and consultation - they are essential to our future - but we in this chamber are the Elected Members. We are the people, a third of whom stand every year to face the judgment of the electorate, and it is up to us to take decisions, and that is why, Councillor Harington, the sooner the issues of the Arena, the concert hall, the exhibition facilities, whatever, come into the political arena, come to the Executive Board, so that this Council in a proper sense can be consulted as an elected body and we can move things forward as we wish to do.

I have made no bones about my views. If we want to go up a league we have to have the facilities that some other cities have been able to get through Government grant, and that we have to get through private investment, but there does come a time when you have to take these big issues by the scruff of the neck, as I have said, bring them into the political arena and let us, as the elected representatives of the people of Leeds, move the agenda forward.

My Lord Mayor, there is a load more I could talk about on this agenda, but what it illustrates very clearly is that this City, under this administration, is moving forward and providing better services for every area of the City of Leeds. (Applause)

(The Minutes were received)

THE LORD MAYOR: At this stage we will break for tea. Could I invite the members of the public who are in the galleries to join us for a cup of tea in the Banquet Hall.

(Short adjournment)

THE LORD MAYOR: Sit! (Laughter)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: No-one would dare do any other now, my Lord Mayor!

ITEM 12 - WHITE PAPER MOTION -
MERGER OF WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE FORCE

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: Lord Mayor, I hope this debate can be fairly brief. That is not to say it is an unimportant issue; I think it is deeply important to the people of Leeds and West Yorkshire, and I do understand that words have been said to see that there can be some kind of unanimity on this issue.

You would think that perhaps every new Home Secretary sits down in their office and the first thing that happens is one of the civil servants comes in and plonks down some dusted-off plan for the merger and amalgamation of Police Forces, because it seems to be an idea that has been around forever, and in some cases I am sure that, with some Forces, there is probably some sense in it.

However, our concerns have to be about the West Yorkshire situation and how it affects people in Leeds, and on those grounds I don't think there can be any real argument. The West Yorkshire Force has done very well over the past few years. It has really improved its performance incredibly. A few years ago we wouldn't have been sitting round here being uncritical about it, but it has really come on in leaps and bounds in terms of detection, in terms of clear-up rates, and the performance over the past couple of years has been incredible, although it is now statistically hitting a hard spot where, having achieved those kind of major improvements, further improvements do become harder to manage, so we have got a good performing force. We have seen more police, we have seen more PCSOs, more police staff. We have seen a real expansion in terms of policing numbers, people who are actually working on law and order in West Yorkshire. So we are actually in a better situation than we have been for a long while.

Amalgamating the West Yorkshire Force with any other I think puts that at risk. The problem is, what do you amalgamate it with? And really there isn't much choice about what you amalgamate it with, and the first option to think about is North Yorkshire. That is the one that has been bandied about the most. Just start to think about it. We have West Yorkshire which, although we don't often call it a county any more, some of us call it a sub-region, politically it has an identity, it works fairly well together, something that has been there for 30 years, but it works as a political

identity; the five local authorities work well; the unitary authorities - it does work.

Look at North Yorkshire: extra unitary authorities, two tier authorities, area I think about four times that of West Yorkshire, about a third of the population. You start to see some of the differences between what you have got there. You would be talking about combining a rural force, a force which deals with rural issues, with an urban force which deals with the issues that we know in Leeds and the other parts of West Yorkshire. It just doesn't fit.

Then you start thinking about the finance of it, because in North Yorkshire the percept per person on a Band D is I think £175. £107 for us in West Yorkshire - a huge difference. Amount of support given from local government per head - huge difference between North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. What is the immediate impact of that on how much people pay in the area and what service they get? And then you go a little further and think, well, how would that impact on a good performing force like West Yorkshire when North Yorkshire clearly doesn't perform that well? You will have an equalising out. I don't think there is any chance of anything else happening. You will have a period of --- Whereas, kind of long term, you might be able to bring everything up to the same level, it takes years to achieve that. In the meantime you have a differing performance because you are concentrating on the things you should not be concentrating on; you are concentrating on amalgamation, you are concentrating on structures.

So, for those reasons in particular, I don't think there is an argument about it. The clear argument is that West Yorkshire is a large Force; I think it is fourth largest in the country. It justifies its own existence. We know how it is run. We have good governance arrangements, which I think you struggle with if you have a combined force. We have three representatives on the Police Authority, perhaps we would like more but we know that we have at least got three. What would we have in the combined force? Where would politicians locally be able to have an input into that?

So, as I say, I hope we are not going to really fall out about this issue. In the interests of the people of Leeds, in the interests of the people of West Yorkshire, I don't think there is any conclusion we can come to as Elected Members other than that amalgamation is not good news in terms of doing what we want the police to do, which is fighting crime and ensuring the community safety of the areas we represent. I move, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I second and reserve the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. We have an amendment in the name of Councillor Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: My Lord Mayor, in moving this amendment I just raise a few points, basically. We thought it was important, from our point of view, to deal with the

real villains of this particular piece, and we didn't want to absolve the Government from its responsibility for going down this particular path, and we thought it was important that we at least gave them a mention in whatever we were trying to do, and to a degree I can understand where Richard is coming from. We don't fundamentally have a problem with this particular resolution, other than we are concerned that it does not seek to put the blame where it firmly lies in this particular case.

But amalgamation clearly is not a direction that certainly we are particularly comfortable about. The whole thrust of policing recently, in our view, has been about bringing it down to a neighbourhood level, making sure that neighbourhoods get involved in setting the priorities for their own police service in their communities, and that is what we think is important.

Now, we have all had concerns in previous years where central Government have set a set of priorities that we don't agree with locally, and most of our communities don't agree with. We remember the infamous mobile phone theft issue, which was about street robbery. The Government's priorities were often very different from ours and, to a degree, the whole thrust of what we are trying to achieve, I think, as Councillors is returning decision-making and power down to that community level, to that neighbourhood level.

Now, there is no doubt the West Yorkshire Police, certainly in our area, are totally committed to that, and there is no doubt at all that the Neighbourhood Police Team that serves our community, and I dare say serves your community in the same way, is again committed to getting local communities involved in that particular decision-making process, and that is easy, and that is great, and that is the way it should be. The Police Service should reflect the problems of the communities they are serving.

Now, the problems that we have in Morley I suspect are different from the problems that you have got in other areas within the City, and therefore that local relationship that you have got with your community starts to return that confidence in the police service that has been lacking for many years. Certainly one of the things that we have identified in our communities is that people are beginning to have confidence again in the police service, and the reason for that is that they can see that they are involved in setting the priorities for that police service, that there is that direct and local neighbourhood relationship, and that is particularly important.

Now, it seems to me that we are going to start losing that, and we are going to start losing the things that we have achieved with this new approach if we amalgamate to bigger and bigger. At the point the Government comes up with proposals you have always got to have a concern because they think big is beautiful; they want to see about amalgamating so we are in a big particular block, and that seems to me the wrong direction that we need to be going into. I mean, we see this in other things. We see this in regional assemblies which nobody particularly wants,

nobody thinks is a particularly good idea. It is an amalgamation and you have always got to worry that it is a question of taking some sort of the democratic opportunity to influence things away from local authorities and presenting further up a particular structure, and that removes the decision-making process in our view from neighbourhoods and communities further and further up the structure, and that makes that decision-making more remote.

So what we would say in conclusion is it is a bad idea. West Yorkshire Police Service is operating well at this particular point. We have all seen the achievements of the police service and the work that they have put into it, and the fact that they are committed to working in partnership with us, and I think we would start to lose that. We are drawing in with North Yorkshire, we are in a situation where their priorities are inevitably going to be different from ours. It is fairly difficult to see how a police service can react to the needs of its neighbourhood if it is diluted by the fact that it is dealing with areas with all sorts of different problems and issues.

So we do think it is a bad idea. We do think we ought to put some of the blame for this, or all of the blame for this, to be honest, on central Government. We have got to be suspicious of the reasons that they want to amalgamate in the first place. We do want to make sure that this stays West Yorkshire-wide and they continue on with their good work of operating on a neighbourhood basis. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ELLIOTT: My Lord Mayor, I would like to second the amendment and reserve the right to speak. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor J. L. Carter to move a second amendment.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Lord Mayor, thank you. Before I start may I ask leave of Council's permission to amend my amendment? Well, if you don't want to do it, I am happy!

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Yes, yes, make our day, Bernard.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Before I start, so I am hoping the time isn't running. Where I said, "This Council considers the Home Secretary to be cavalier" can I remove the words "be cavalier" and put "ill-advised". I will ask leave of Council.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: We don't want to bring Oliver Cromwell into this.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Well, it is Peter that does all these things. I am only following his lead.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we just get that clear, first of all? Does the seconder agree with Councillor Carter's suggested word amendment? Councillor Brett, is that alright

with you?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Yes.

(The alteration was agreed)

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor, and the reason for that, my Lord Mayor, is that I think it is important that we as a Council speak with one voice on this particular issue. I put five points in there not simply just to be saying it is my amendment to the actual White Paper, simply to try and highlight some of the problems that we are experiencing if this merger takes place, and also - sorry, am I covering my mike because I sometimes can't be heard, can I? Is that better? Now, I can't see what I have written!

Being serious for a moment, it is giving some idea of what this merger is talking about, and I think it is important that we do consider that. I am not going to go on too much about the governance and accountability because I know Richard wants to speak on that, and some of the financial arrangements, but I would say one or two things, and I think I have got to confirm what has been said already. A police force which may stretch from the Humber across to the Pennines, from North Yorkshire probably as far up as Fylingdales, etc., down to just south of Sheffield, it is a huge, huge area. It has a population of 5 million people. Somebody has just told me, one of my more intelligent people on my right-hand side here, is that Scotland's population is 5 million. It is crazy. That is what we are talking about. It is like a police force, one police authority, for Scotland.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Don't tell Charles Clarke that.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I am not talking about Charles at the moment. But seriously, it is far too large and anybody who knows anything about Yorkshire must have to admit. I am not going to go on too much about that.

Now, as far as the Home Secretary is concerned and whether he is "ill-advised" or whether in my words "cavalier", just let me tell you what he did. In September he asked us to reorganise as police authorities, and it is a voluntary reorganisation - that is what he is asking for. He now has to go to Parliament if he wants to move that without the support of the Police Authorities. He put that forward in September, and he asked for a reply by December. Now, I know Ted and Peter think I am a bit cavalier on the ALMOs but, my God, I have never done that to you - put it forward in September and told you are going to find the answer by December. It is absolute nonsense to expect anybody to do that, especially bearing in mind the things that have actually got to be decided.

The first thing is the governance which you uncovered. The governance of neighbourhood community in this, we don't know how it is going to work. Nobody

knows how that would work. The financing of it, Richard has already raised this, but just to highlight it, a 15%-20% increase in our precept. 15%-20% increase in precept.

At the moment the Government are saying to the police authorities, "We will cap you if you spend more than 5%", and yet they are putting a proposal here which we know could cost us between 15% and 20%. Surely none of us can accept that, or at least say we need to know the answer to that before we go any further.

We are talking about West Yorkshire Police Force record. They have a better record than the surrounding police forces at the moment. They have a better record, and that record is something which, quite honestly, I am convinced if you suddenly have Chief Constables, Assistant Chief Constables, Deputy Chief Constables, Chief Superintendents all vying for different work and different jobs, we all know what is going to happen. The eye is going to be taken off the ball and we are going to go down. We are not going to have the same standard, the standard will go down.

Now, that is not an argument that you never change anything, because you have got to accept that, but you must have a really sound reason to change if you are going to accept that, that crime in Leeds could actually and would -- may actually increase. Now, you have got to accept that if that is going to happen, you have got to have grounds.

Now, there is talk about obviously what happened in London, and we are all well aware of that, and our police forces are ranging from terrorism, you might say, to anti-social behaviour, but a large enough force can cope with it. West Yorkshire at the moment can cope with the full range, but it has got to be acknowledged that some of the smaller forces that are surrounding us cannot cope with the full range. But that does not mean to say that you have to automatically change the whole of the way West Yorkshire is run. There are things that you can work with them. There is nothing to stop West Yorkshire using some of their services or providing services to other authorities. They will do it now. When the G8 Summit was held in Scotland, lots of police officers from West Yorkshire went up. More than our fair share, because we had training - I know this sounds a bit funny but we had training - with football matches, some of our police, so they were able to do the job easier and better up there that they wanted. So it is not that you cannot work with other Police Authorities, you can and on major crime, you can work on those. Federations of Police Forces, they have not been looked at, or Police Associations. They have not been looked at.

I think the merger could, as I say, lead to more crime, but the other thing which I am asking in my resolution, if I can find the thing again, is that we have in West Yorkshire 24 MPs, 24, 1 Conservative, 22 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrat. That is a large number of MPs, certainly 22 in the Government. In Yorkshire and Humberside we have another 34, again there's 24 Labour MPs in there, which would go to something like 46 Labour MPs. They have the Government's majority. They have the Government's majority. If we can get their support, along with our other

colleagues, Conservative and Liberal MPs, Mr. Clarke wouldn't be able to do this. He would not get it through the House of Commons, which he needs to do.

So, having covered it altogether, I am hoping that we get a unanimous agreement to my amendment. The Prime Minister himself is talking about respect at the present time. Now, I am going to go on about that, not now because I don't believe that this is the time to go on it, but I will go on and refer to some of the things in there. But in that respect he is referring to local policing. He knows that local policing is vital if it is going to work. We in this Council do. We have increased our PCSOs. We know it is vital. So can I just ask all Members of Council to support my amendment, and we will go forward together. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Lord Mayor, in seconding the amendment in Councillor J. L. Carter's name, I am going to concentrate on the mechanics of what I believe the Government's agenda means. As many of you will know, the report from Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary about the unfitness of 43 Police Forces and Authorities throughout the country pre-dates 7/7, and it basically said - this is what the Home Secretary was told - that protective services, which means things like counter-terrorism units, can only be managed if you have the police organised in big enough units. West Yorkshire is a big enough unit, but some of the areas surrounding us are not.

Now, I believe the best way to prepare and maintain for what the police call these protective services would be to do it at a separate organisation at regional level, and I don't believe that it needs to involve the police service directly at all. But if I accept, for the purposes of this debate, that mergers need to be considered, there are three things that must be right before any Police Authority member can vote for them.

The first is sound governance arrangements. Any new Yorkshire regional merged Police Authority would need to have, in my view, at least one Councillor representative from each of the Councils that would be collecting the precept with their Council Tax. That to me is absolutely fundamental.

At present, as has been already referred to, West Yorkshire has 9 Councillors on the West Yorkshire Police Authority covering five Councils. Now, I am told the maximum number of Councillors that the current law allows for any Police Authority is 12. In the Yorkshire and the Humber Region there are 15 major Council Tax-raising Councils. The Home Secretary, one assumes, would be aware of that. I believe he has already been told by the West Yorkshire Police Authority in the consultation stage at the end of October that this was unacceptable, that you have got to change the law and change the number of Councillors, or you are going to have what I believe the total nonsense of saying to a small Council somewhere, "You must collect a Council Tax with a police precept with no representation". Total nonsense.

If you begin to consider, with these mechanics, the fact that Leeds would expect, as a big authority, to have perhaps the number of representatives reflecting

that, and there is perhaps the difficult issue of political balance, you can see that this is not something that can easily be brushed aside.

Second, and in my personal view more important, because it affects the way the public perceive the police is accountability at a local level. Now, as many of us know only too well, Wakefield is a very, very distant place and it is sometimes hard, under present arrangements, for local communities to feel that they have any influence or accountability on their local police divisions. I believe it is the case that in many areas of West Yorkshire people don't, at the current time, feel that the current arrangements give them the feeling that it is their police. It is very difficult for the Police Authority with 2 million people in the region and a relatively small amount of resources. There must be a review of local accountability arrangements now that neighbourhood policing is being rolled out, and in my view there needs to be more accountability at each division level.

There has already been referred to the third and most important thing for us is the financial arrangements, and we have already had speakers who have said, "Well, it would mean this and it would mean that". The thing I want to stress is that if the precept goes up 20% we could perhaps begin to consider selling that to the electorate of Leeds if there was an improved service, but that is for a stand-still service at best, and I don't believe actually, because any merger would mean that there would be some disruption, that there wouldn't actually be a worse service for a short period.

Now, at the end of October there was a period where the authority passed its views back to the Home Office and we then waited for new thinking from the Government. We waited for Hazel Blears to come to us in December and say, "Yes, we have listened to your problems. These are the potential solutions." I am afraid to say it only produced one piece of typical thinking which was, "If you agree to merge, we will give you more money." Bullying, bullying, bullying. We are not having it. I urge you to support the amendment in Councillor J. L. Carter's name. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR BLACKBURN: My Lord Mayor, I am going to be brief. I mean, I think Councillor Finnigan summed it up wonderfully. Big is not beautiful, and if we all talk to our electorate, if we are honest and we talk to our electorate, what do they complain about the police? They are too distant, they are too far away. Well, West Yorkshire Police have got some faults but it is better than a county-wide force that will be so distant and so unaccountable it will be unbelievable.

What we have got is a lot better and the old saying, isn't it, "If it isn't broken, don't try and mend it." Well, let's leave it alone. This is totally and utterly crazy. It is going to cost us more. We are going to get worse service. Let's leave it as it is. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield, having reserved his right to speak, now exercises that right.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: No, Lord Mayor, after that speech, I think I will sit down and allow Richard to sum up.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: Lord Mayor, I think all over we have covered the points that really matter, I think, the governance issue, the accountability, the impact on the service, they are all there. I am also concerned that, if you do go into a period of the uncertainty of amalgamation, it is a bit like the ALMO debate, isn't it, you do go through all those problems, particularly in a big organisation. West Yorkshire Police are a big organisation. Quite how all those decisions that are currently pending, and Les and Richard know what I am talking about, about headquarters and all these things, suddenly just go on hold.

So apart from the kind of basics of just kind of reorganising, I think there would be just a period where decisions would be taken for the wrong reasons, you would put a headquarters here because that fitted politically, rather than fitting because of something that you are actually trying to achieve.

I think, having had more dealings with the police over the past year or so than I have had ever in my life, I have a lot of respect for the current professionalism within the force, the effectiveness of a lot of the officers, which I have to say a few years back I would never have dreamed of saying anything like that. There is too much at risk here, and the main thing that is at risk is the service to the people of this City. You know, the precept is important but I think the main thing has to be the service, and for those Members who were around when Leeds took over the outer boroughs, you will all have gone through that experience of services going down and then coming back up afterwards, but that period is not something that you can go through with law and order. You cannot afford to see a drop in the standard of policing in the City. It is too important a service.

So I think in a different way I won't quite say, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it", because I think there are reasons why Charles Clarke has concerns about the protective services, and I would agree that there are other ways of doing it, other than creating super forces, and I do think there are some forces that probably would do well to amalgamate, but for West Yorkshire, I think the key is let's leave things as they are. We have a big force, a big effective force, that is doing a good job for the people of this City. Let's let the force get on with doing that job and not get kind of deflected into amalgamation and what is a huge job on its own. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

(Councillor Finnigan's amendment was lost)

(Councillor J. L. Carter's amendment was carried unanimously)

(The substantive motion was carried)

COUNCILLOR HARKER: My Lord Mayor, I am making a fool of myself over and over

again today, and I do apologise. I need to point out the vote we took before tea-break, I pressed the wrong button, and I wonder if my vote could be re-recorded as opposition rather than abstain.

THE LORD MAYOR: Hang on, we are just checking the record. Are we to assume that you intended to vote "No" instead of abstaining? Good. Perhaps, whilst we are on the subject, we can check the position of Councillor Jennings where there was also --- No, he was okay. It is alright, we got Councillor Jennings mixed up with Councillor Harker. It was indeed Councillor Harker who was down as an abstention and is now a "No". That is wonderful. Thank you.

ITEM 13 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - ADVERTISING ON LAMP POSTS

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Lord Mayor, the last White Paper of the night. I am confident that it is the three-party administration's view that Members of Council and the people of Leeds must be given every chance to consider and comment on the placing of advertising hoardings on our lamp posts. Indeed, I remember Councillor Procter's assurance earlier - exactly, Councillor Gruen, going to the nth degree, and after all, these signs on the lamp posts are 6 ft. 8 ins. high, 4 ft. 2 ins. wide and 1 ft. 8 ins. thick, and ---

COUNCILLOR MCKENNA: It is bigger than Richard!

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: -- 19 are already up for the pilot, and another 56 have just been applied for out of the 1,896 total that could be the end result. I recall the Exec Board minute of 11th March 2005 that did resolve that the contents of the report be used as part of information briefings to Area Committees in relation to the street lighting PFI, and indeed those briefings did go out to Area Committees.

I just look at a couple of the minutes that went through into the October/November/December cycle, for example, East Inner on 7th December considered the report and asked a whole range of questions, such as asked if there were to be a consultation process with each Area Committee wedge on a phased basis, and that a further report be submitted to a future meeting of this Area Committee on the type of lighting proposed for the East Inner Area.

And then if I go to the next one, East Outer, this was on 2nd November, discussed again many issues arising from the report including consultation arrangements with Elected Members in respect of the street lighting advertising proposals. Or South Inner on 27th October, again many, many points raised and again they were expecting answers and information relating to issues raised by Members to be submitted to the Area Committee for information. And West Inner on 20th October again noted the need for full prior consultation with Ward Members on new street lighting proposals. And finally West Outer, on 28th October, asked about the prospect of Ward Councillor briefings being scheduled by City Services

Department, and particularly with regard to the third party income pilot scheme. I have to say I am not quite sure what is the third party income pilot scheme, so I obviously do hope that we will all get those Ward Member briefings very soon. By the way, the only committee that I couldn't find on this list is South Outer, so I don't know whether, you know, you need to make sure that it gets onto your agenda.

But the minutes, I would think that I have just taken a flavour of the minutes, do demonstrate that there is cross party agreement on the importance of this issue and the need for vigorous public debate, and indeed Steve Smith, quoted in the YEP on 21st October, said about the trial, "We will be carrying out consultations with members of the public, local businesses and Ward Members. The results will be submitted to the Exec Board for approval in 2006", he said. Good. Well, I am very pleased that he said it because intent is very often an important beginning.

However, it was acknowledged that the first batch of planning applications were not well handled, for example, I think many of us got this e-mail from Peter Barnett on 17th November, "The initial batch of applications raised some criticism from Elected Members regarding lack of prior consultation", and so they undertook that, "Officers in this Department will advise relevant Area Committees that they anticipate applications in their areas and will ask Street Broadcast to write to relevant Members with details of their proposals".

But unfortunately that didn't really work out in practice because then we had a follow-up e-mail from Peter Barnett on 22nd December saying, "You should have received a letter about a month ago from Keith Fulham, Development Director of Street Broadcast", which indeed those Members did. This explained what the trial is about and the process by which they would select and seek approval for the trial site. Unfortunately, I now understand that the letter did not include details about the locations of the proposed lighting columns. The applications for advertisement consent have now been submitted and you will find a copy of a schedule listing the locations of the lighting columns attached to this e-mail", of which there are 56, as I said. At least that is how many I counted going down the list. "This letter was sent to you as a result of a request by Officers of this Department following concern expressed by members of the Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Board about there having been insufficient prior consultation on the applications on the first batch of sites. Officers in this Department also agreed" about Area committees, etc. "These applications have an 8-week target decision date of 2nd February. Due to the break in the meeting cycle, there are no meetings of Area Committees scheduled during this period. I am therefore writing to offer you as a Ward Member for one or more of the areas affected the opportunity to have a briefing session or other means of obtaining further information and/or commenting on the proposals."

I cannot accept that this target date of 2nd February can have been kept to in that way when all the Area Committees have demonstrated during the autumn cycle that they are very concerned about the future of these applications. There are issues

that they want to understand and to go through, and then suddenly to have 56 applications with late notice about them coming forward, without them being not possible to go back to the Area Committees within that cycle.

We must have a system which is clear and public and understood and agreed to by us all. It should not take long - I would have thought an hour or two for a reasonably competent Officer should be able to come up with some kind of system, or I would like to suggest, actually, that Councillor Anderson's Scrutiny Board looks at it. Their record of doing a competent job is very clear.

And shouldn't we have an advertising design guide, I ask yet again. Even the applicants, and I quote from the letter, have been given criteria in line with draft guidance. Can't we see some of that guidance and understand some of the judgments that are being made?

I must also say I have checked the LCC website and it does say under "Advertising on street lighting columns", "When not in use to promote specific events it is intended to sell the opportunity to local businesses." I am not sure where this comes from. Are these proposals on our website for lamp posts besides the PFI ones so that there will be more than 1,986 if this continues? And why do we have to have such big ones? Is it not possible in this pilot to consider having smaller ones as part of the pilot? It would seem to me there are good grounds for having different sizes of those street lighting adverts to look at and consider.

Street Broadcast, by the way, are the company involved with this initiative. Unfortunately, they are the only company which deals with them. They have the monopoly. I would have to say I do think that we have to be very wary when there is such a monopoly and ask and wonder why do the other major advertising companies like JC (?)Deco or (?)Maiden, why are they not getting involved in this market? I believe that there are questions about the robustness of this market that we need to be wary of.

I would hope that we can now look and ask the Development Department obviously to do the initial work looking at the impact of advertising overall in this City. It is hugely important for the quality of the environment in this City, which I think we all do care about, certainly high up on the agenda for a Council Plan.

We came in on the A62 yesterday from Mrs. Congreve's funeral and I have to say that road must be one of the worst approaches to come into our City that we have. For example, apart from all the mess of advertising that there is all the way down that road, there is now a new huge massive pole appeared outside a business premises there and you wonder how did that get there? What kind of permission did that get?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, is that light broken? Somebody had gone to

sleep and forgotten to push the button.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: So I shall conclude by asking that we have a strategic, wide-ranging look at advertising in our City so that the place of these proposed lamp post signs can be seen in that context, but in the meantime let's have a clear system and an open and public, demonstrably public, system that involves our area committees for those at least.

COUNCILLOR J. HARPER: My Lord Mayor, I would like to second this White Paper in the name of Councillor Minkin. You know, I am really quite surprised that we are here discussing this, because I would have thought that we have had enough problems with signs in our streets, particularly if you think about all the problems with the "To Let" signs in Headingley and Kirkstall, and which are now actually spilling into Armley as well, and the fly-posting that we have that mysteriously appears on our lamp posts and roundabouts, and now we are going to add more of the same.

The only difference is, of course, that these are quite monstrous. They are lit, and I believe they are a potential hazard and a distraction to motorists, and also, of course, they are being erected without any public consultation, which I find deplorable.

So where are these signs to be located? The amendment says, "This Council acknowledges that the time-frame of the pilot allows ample opportunity for a thorough evaluation of the proposals" - I would challenge "thorough evaluation". So what does it mean? That there will be some signs in every ward? There will be a few signs in every ward? How are they going to deal with this thorough evaluation? Shall we have a look?

According to the information sent out by the Officer which Councillor Minkin has clearly referred to, only 10 Wards have been selected to take part in this thorough evaluation. I became very suspicious when I saw which wards were not taking part, you know, wards like Adel, Alwoodley, Wetherby, and I was quite sceptic about that, and I wonder if it had anything to do with a certain date in May.

I was also disappointed to see that, Councillor Harris, you have none in your ward, none in Moortown. But now I have told you about it, I am sure you are going to make sure you are going to get 15 in your ward so you can be one better than Armley. You can have 20 if you wish, of course you can.

Now, the thing is Armley, along with City & Hunslet, have the dubious honour of having the most lamp posts adorned with these monstrosities in the City, that is they have 14 in each ward, and before you leave, Andrew, I was just going to say that I know that you consistently tell Officers to think West and, Andrew, you have done better than Mark because you have got four in your ward ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I know.

COUNCILLOR J. HARPER: I know you know.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: And I know you know he knows.

COUNCILLOR J. HARPER: Of course we do. We all know now ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: That is the ward that had the good sense to throw her out, by the way.

COUNCILLOR J. HARPER: -- and I have even told you all again, so in the West of the City, which I know we are all interested in, Andrew, you have, as I have said, four in Calverley and Farsley, one in Pudsey, none in Farnley & Wortley - you are missing out, Greens - and none in Bramley & Stanningley. Well, that is how it appears on paper, that there is none in Bramley & Stanningley, but if you look at it more closely in actual fact they are all along the Stanningley Road corridor and, of course, although the ward at one side of the road is in Armley, the other side of the road is in Bramley, and there is one significant one, it is actually placed opposite (?) Agard and Hanley, and I wondered if Councillor Hanley had been consulted about it, you know. There we go.

I did notice that the four in Calverley and Farsley were mostly opposite pubs. Were you aware of that, Andrew, as well? Mostly opposite pubs on the Stanningley Road, and I became a bit suspicious about that. I wondered why they are opposite pubs, and then it became clear, and I am being serious now. These adverts would be alcohol-related and, what is worse, they would be for advertising alcopops, a drink which is aimed at young people, particularly girls, and I find that --- In fact, that has made me really angry.

When John Battle opened the Armley Moor Health Centre on Monday, he praised the work done to improve the health of the people of Armley. He clearly did not know that this Council was planning to promote alcohol consumption on its doorstep.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, Standing Order 34, a point of information, is that the same John Battle who voted three times for the extension of licensing hours? (Applause).

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Carter, I am not sure that that intervention is valid.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I do apologise, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Yes, I thought you might. If you want to speak, then I think you need to indicate.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Indeed I do, Lord Mayor. Put my name down?

THE LORD MAYOR: I thought you might.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I am waiting for Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR J. HARPER: I am sorry, Lord Mayor, I would ask that I should be heard ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Sorry about that, Councillor Harper. We will allow extra time for that intervention.

COUNCILLOR J. HARPER: Thank you. I do not believe that the people of Armley would want the Council to profit by these advertisements which may well be detrimental to the health and wellbeing of our young people. It is a very important issue, Council, and I have to remind you, and some of you will know this, that the life expectancy of a child born in Armley is 15 years less than one born in Calverley.

I attended two community meetings last night and at both of them I outlined this scheme and I gave them the facts as I have given them to you and they tell me, in the way people do in Armley, that they wanted me to come and tell you that we don't want them in our wards. We are not willing to subsidise the people of Adel, Moortown and Wetherby at the expense of the health and safety of our young people, and that was their message not mine.

THE LORD MAYOR: I think, Councillor Harper, you really have had more than the time now.

COUNCILLOR J. HARPER: I have got one sentence, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Will you very quickly wind up, please.

COUNCILLOR J. HARPER: Surely, Council, if this is such a great idea, why aren't you out there selling it to everybody? Why aren't you consulting with the public? I urge you to support this White Paper. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR SMITH: My Lord Mayor, I would like to start off by saying to Council I am somewhat perplexed - somewhat perplexed - because I have a genuine respect for Councillor Liz Minkin, and I think that is shared by most people round the Council.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Not so much round this side, though.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Well, perhaps not on your side, Bernard, but on this side. And I would like to go back to 12th May 2004 Executive Board, present Councillor Wakefield in the chair, Councillors Blake, Bradley, Carter, Harper, Lewis, Minkin, Murray and Ogilvie. Item 279. What were they talking about? Is that what you ask? I don't

think it was, actually. Item 279, Street Lighting PFI Outline Business Case. Do you remember that, Liz? I think we need to know. I am sure you will come back to it. But it was resolved that the submission of the outline business case move forward. Councillor Minkin, did she abstain? It doesn't say so in the record. Did she vote against it? No, she didn't. I think people need to know why.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: We will come to that.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Thank you. But ever since then, the proposal has been scrutinised and it has been called in, largely I have to say as a result of Councillor Minkin's efforts. So why have you changed your mind? But nevertheless Executive Board have again considered the matter in detail and have again approved the proposal and in particular the pilot, and that is what it is, a pilot. Why are we having a pilot? To test out and determine issues relating to some of the things that you spoke about: planning applications, highways approvals, appropriate locations and streets, marketing and the advertising - all best done, in my view, in real time to test out the practicalities of it.

Now, again I will go back to something. Councillor Minkin in her opening remarks said people must be given every chance to comment. Well, it has been reported, as she so rightly acknowledges, several times at Area Committee. The Yorkshire Evening Post ran a full-page story in October 2005 and, as ever, asked for feedback. I don't think there was a great deal. 23rd December, again front page story on the Yorkshire Evening Post. In the winter edition of "About Leeds", there was a half-page story about the pilot to every house in Leeds.

Elected Members of course are interfacing with the planning process as well as being able to feed in any feedback that they get from their constituents. So if you want to talk about feedback during the course of the pilot we will be getting feedback from Officers in Planning and Highways, the advertising company who are running the pilot, the preferred bidder for the PFI, the project board and, of course, we want to hear from the public. We want to hear from the public, so what are we doing? well, arrangements are being made for on-street interviews with members of the public in the streets where the pilot advertising is being run, and a letterbox questionnaire is being conducted in areas around the streets where the pilot advertising is being run.

At the end of the pilot, the street lighting project board will report back to the Executive Board, once they have considered all the feedback, and I am sure you will have a lot of feedback for them, but please feed it in, and when they have got that feedback they will determine a recommendation to the Executive Board, so it will come back to the Executive Board once we have all the feedback.

What benefits might it bring? Well, it might bring us a modern, vibrant city. We might throw away some of those billboards, some of that, you know, paste, and have a modern way of advertising. It will support business in the City and it has the

potential to keep Council Tax low for City Council Taxpayers.

Now, I believe we should be taking all reasonable steps to keep Council Tax down. This proposal has every chance of doing that, not just for one year but over the life of the PFI. Every penny generated from such a scheme, were it to be recommended and approved, will ease the bill for Council Taxpayers. The scheme has the potential to earn up to £1 million every year. It is a 25 year project. That is £25 million over the life of the PFI.

This is a good proposal. The pilot needs to continue to run so that problems are ironed out and a real evaluation of the issues surrounding the proposal is conducted. I hope that people who respond to our feedback see that on the street the benefits of this proposal match the very real financial benefits for all Council Taxpayers for a very long time. I would urge Members to support the amendment. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: My Lord Mayor, as a Leeds taxpayer I find it irritating that we have to be in the position of talking about a £95 million street lighting scheme at all, but here we are. 25 years ago the Labour Group in this City must have made a conscious decision that it would set about a campaign to systematically run down the City's assets, such as the lamp posts and the roads, so that here we are in 2006 with the result of this. After all, lamp posts are a bit dull in comparison to exciting social engineering projects, or ill thought through City centre initiatives that the new administration is now working to sort out. Lamp posts have a lifetime of around 30 years if they are to remain safe, and anyone travelling through suburbs in Leeds such as Roundhay will have seen semi-decayed concrete columns with metal caps put on there in a desperate attempt to put off until tomorrow what should have been sorted out today.

So now we have to borrow money via the Government and to ask our ever-suffering Council Taxpayers to foot the bill, because if we don't do this they will be falling down around our ears. This was eventually agreed by the Labour administration in this City in May 2004. Advertising on lamp posts comes about because the Labour Government's Department for Transport asked us to look at income generation opportunities from the PFI scheme, and in all fairness this will raise an estimated £1 million a year, which is £1 million that Council Taxpayers would otherwise have to find.

Advertising on lamp posts in appropriate areas of this City is absolutely the right thing to do, and the £1 million income is equivalent of 0.5% of the average Leeds Council Taxpayer's bill each and every year for the next 25 years, according to the projections.

Furthermore, if we don't sign off the contract with the preferred bidder by the end of March the Labour Government will increase the interest rate on the loan

meaning that a further contribution would be required from the Leeds taxpayers of £5.5 million. So introducing any delays in agreeing of the PFI contract is not an option, and if the Labour Group believe that it is an option then I look forward to seeing this listed in the Labour Group's alternate budget proposals in future months.

The new administration is committed to consultation about advertising on lamp posts through the pilot. I am not sure how we can realistically gauge opinion and assess issues without having a pilot for people to see and pass opinions on. To me this seems completely logical, and so on a final note - it is something which I have been pondering for quite some time now - how many Labour Executive Board Members does it take to change a lamp post? The answer, I believe, is two: one to propose it at the Executive Board and one to ring the press and blame it on the Tories. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR C. NASH: Councillor Harper suggested that there had not been any public consultation, adequate public consultation over this.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Can you lift the volume, Claire? It is worth listening to.

COUNCILLOR C. NASH: As a Ward Member, I received perfectly adequate advance notice. I had e-mails, I was given information and there was a planning application which I did comment on. I was able to look at it in detail and make comments, and I don't quite understand whether I was an odd case and I am the only one who was able to do this, but certainly I did have that opportunity. That might account for the fact that there are none in Farnley & Wortley in the current pilot, because certainly they were proposed and I did make objections to them in detail.

I think it is a bit rich, as Councillor Lobley has already said, to be criticised for this when it was a Labour Party decision to go out to PFI and that if the Government had funded us to replace these street lights without a PFI we wouldn't be in the situation, and it did take decades of Labour neglect to lead us to where we are now with street lighting. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Lord Mayor, I have to say I am one of those people that is puzzled by this debate, I have to be honest with you, because I can't think of anything particularly bad about the scheme that has been put forward, which is why I am very surprised at the vehemence with which Councillor Minkin has objected to it.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: It is because she is a passionate woman.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: We are going to get an extra £1 million into our coffers each year due to a little bit of creative thinking, as far as I am concerned, and that is £1 million that we are going to reinvest into our streets, £1 million that we don't have to find from our taxpayers, and as far as I am concerned, that is a pretty good idea to even think about it.

Once they are actually in there, the new street lighting that we are going to get from the PFI is going to be of a better quality and, as we all know, safer streets come from brighter streets and, ironically enough, the advertising that might go with these lampposts will also make the streets look a little bit more busy because, you know, they are a little bit more vibrant, it makes you feel as if things are going on in that area, and if you have busy streets it is a virtuous circle and you have safer streets again. This adds into their regenerative impact.

One of the Councillors that was going to speak today isn't here today, unfortunately, at short notice. That was Councillor Akhtar. He is very much in favour of advertising on street lights, and that is because he can appreciate the regenerative quality that comes from it, not only because of the safety aspect but if you have got brighter streets you can also increase your night-time economy, and there are parts of our City that, after it goes dark, a lot of people don't want to venture out and that actually holds back businesses from starting up that want to offer leisure opportunities, and in the Harehills area, for instance, there is such a huge opportunity for that to be brought on board in the same way that it has been done in Bradford.

Also, once these lighting standards are up and you actually see the advertisements that are on them, the majority of them that you are going to see in many cases are going to be local businesses. It is the local businesses that are offering local products to local people and will end up producing local employment, so I cannot really see anything to object to in that either.

It might also consolidate neighbourhood identities because, as I said, there are some areas in the City that actually want to develop, and they want to be able to do that under their own auspices, and to be able to create this night-time economy, for instance, as I say, it might help in Harehills. There are also some parts of the City that might want to market themselves in a certain way, and remember that we are going to have half a million pounds worth of spare capacity in terms of advertising that the Council can use and they can put out those messages that those communities have chosen in order to market their own neighbourhoods, so there is another opportunity for you.

What is more important though, as well, in terms of not understanding why you are objecting so much to this is that we have got safeguards. We have already heard from Councillor Nash that all of these are subject to the planning regime - the planning regime which is one of the most restrictive regimes that you can have in terms of making sure that decisions that are made are done properly, and all of these will be subject to planning applications, all of these would be able to be commented upon by yourselves and by your constituents.

There has also been a lot of thinking gone into it in terms of different formats and different kinds of advertising depending on different areas in which the advertising

is actually taking place. More importantly, there is also a draft advertising guide, and I have seen the things in the paper that came from Councillor Wakefield, which basically said, "Ooh look, they are only interested in advertising booze and us Labour Party people we are all, you know ---"

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You be careful. I am coming to you. (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: "We are all Puritans." I am very well aware of the term, "People in glass houses shouldn't throw stones", so I am not going to imbibe any kind of inference on any Member of Council or any particular party in terms of who is worse in terms of that aspect. What I will say, that having our probity of advertising called into question by a party that was associated with Bernie Ecclestone and used that association to actually resist further restrictions on advertising tobacco, I think is a little bit rich. But that is one of the examples where the pilots are being shown up to be actually working, so I am glad that Councillor Wakefield actually did bring that to the attention of the Evening Post, because it shows that where we might have a weakness in the system we are able to firm it up, and it is due to these pilots that when this actually goes out across the City it will actually be a very successful project.

It will bring in money to the Council. It shows creative thinking. It shows innovation, and I think that is really why the Labour Party opposite is objecting to this so much, because, as we have mentioned earlier, a 4-star rating Council, that comes from creative thinking, it comes from innovation, and when your ideas run out and you get voted out, it is very difficult to get your head round these innovative ideas, and that is the only reason I can think why all of a sudden Liz Minkin who, when I first joined the Council ---

THE LORD MAYOR: I am sorry, Councillor Golton, I am afraid you won't be able to get your head round it.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: -- has turned into Liz the Luddite.

THE LORD MAYOR: Your time is up, thank you very much. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Lord Mayor, as one of the bastions of the most restrictive planning regime, I feel I need to raise a couple of points in regard to this particular matter. Can I say, Lord Mayor, that I have to say when I first heard about advertising on street signs I was amazed. No, I was shocked and horrified.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: Lord Mayor, I cannot hear, but it is okay.

THE LORD MAYOR: We are having trouble with the speakers on that side. We have made a note to get them overhauled. Can we ask Members on those benches to shout at us, please.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Certainly, Lord Mayor. I am more than happy to shout at any time you like. Who is that old man who keeps shouting over there?

THE LORD MAYOR: I don't know, Councillor Campbell, but he is using up your time. I should ignore him if I were you.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I was slightly surprised when I was re-elected to Council some 18 months ago (Interruptions and laughter) Not half as surprised as the Otley Labour Party! -- that the Council were actually coming forward with the suggestion that we do this particular thing.

COUNCILLOR COULSON: If Councillor Campbell gets much further away from the microphone we might as well go home because I can't hear him for one bit.

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, we have noted that. You are still shouting, Councillor Campbell, are you? Thank you very much. (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I think we can do without that. I really do think we can do without that.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: My Lord Mayor, I do feel I have to stand up now. I did say earlier that I couldn't hear. As far as I know, apart from old men with partners I do have selective hearing, but my hearing is good and I couldn't hear. There are two Members on this side, and one of them has just been insulted, who has hearing impairment and I don't think that is on. Councillor Harris, I think you should apologise. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Look, can we make some headway? I have already said that we recognise that there is clearly a problem, there is clearly a problem with the microphones on that side of the chamber, and we are going to have some attention given to them immediately after this Council Meeting. In the meantime, if anybody has a means of increasing the volume from that side of the chamber, then I hope that they will apply it, because it is true, and I am one of those people who have a hearing impairment as well, it is very difficult to hear from that side of the chamber. Yes, that is a good idea, let's use the hand-held mikes.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Okay, thank you, Lord Mayor. I hope everybody can hear now. I am practising my Robbie Williams impression!

I have to say, Lord Mayor, I was somewhat surprised 18 months ago when I was elected to Council that we actually were thinking about advertising on street signs, and in fact one of the first things I did as a Councillor was ask about the PFI contract and ask why included within that there were advertising on street light provisions, and I was told, as has been ably explained to us, that the Executive Board had made a decision about it and it actually wasn't up to me to question that, because initially I thought to myself, "Well, actually I am not sure that is a good idea".

Now, I have to say I have mellowed slightly on that particular point. One of the reasons I have done that is that over the summer I went on holiday to a couple of European cities, all of whom seemed to have this facility and, quite frankly, as far as I am concerned, it seemed actually to enhance some of the streets within that particular neighbourhood. (Interruptions) Actually they did have trams, too, yes, and a very good road in from the airport as well. That is another thing they had.

But I am prepared, as Chair of Plans Panel, to look at what the results of this particular pilot is. Now, I suppose I really ought to stand up and actually defend Liz - I know she probably doesn't need it, but I think she does - because I actually do feel that Liz is passionate about planning. I have always felt that, and I think that there is not a Member in this particular room who wouldn't agree with that. But, as has already been said, there is a process, there is a planning process, for these things, and Liz I am sure when they come to Plans Panel will be vociferous in her comments with regard to these particular matters, and I am sure that other Ward Members will be, too, and the Panel will take that into account before they make a decision.

Now, that is a process we have got in place at the moment. Now, as Councillor Smith has already mentioned, there will also be a process whereby we can discuss the results of the pilot, and at the moment we are discussing the results of a pilot when we have not got them, and I think really it would be beholden on us to delay this discussion, and it is a discussion I think we should have about where we want advertising in the City to go. We should delay that decision until the evidence is here for us to make a sensible decision on.

Now, my view is that we should actually reject the White Paper, not because I don't believe that it raises a valid point, because I think it does, but what I do believe is I think it is premature to make that decision now.

Now, one of the great problems I think, Lord Mayor, is that we have slipped off the planning issues, which I am quite happy to debate with anybody, on to various other semi-emotive issues which are really nothing to do with the principle of advertising. You know, what are we actually advertising on the columns? Alcopops.

Well, as somebody who is well past the age when he can get an alcopop down him, it doesn't really affect me; it is a waste of advertising. I suppose if you were advertising cask ale it might make an impression to me when I was driving along. But, really, my Lord Mayor, either we have a discussion about planning and the impact of these adverts in planning terms, or we have a discussion about what goes on adverts, and really if we are having a discussion about what goes on adverts, we really need to talk to the advertising industry not have this discussion here.

So my suggestion is that we actually do not support the White Paper but await the results of the pilot, which will give us information to make a proper decision.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Lord Mayor, I am going to try and attempt to protect myself, just in case Councillor Minkin, when she sums up - remember she went through a whole list of things she picked out of the books - in case she is trying to trip me up afterwards, perhaps I could get in first, Liz.

On page 458 of the book, Lord Mayor, it is pretty clear from the Inner North West minutes, of which Councillor Minkin attended, that everything she is asking for is in place. The trial period will be through to spring 2006, will allow time for consideration of public reaction and Members' views as well as that of the business community and the likely impact in terms of the proposed Supplementary Planning Guidance. The estimated potential income to the City Council is there just written up, not flagged up and not pressed in any way. But, more importantly, the minutes that were agreed, resolved at (b) "That the Committee receive a further report back to the next meeting picking up all the issues raised during the discussion". All perfectly normal.

When you go to page 461, which are in fact, the next minutes, Councillor Minkin still in attendance, nobody asked to see where the paper is. Now, I think ---

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: I wasn't there at that point. Read the minutes more carefully. I came in after that. As I said, I was late for that meeting.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Well, you still didn't ask for it, Councillor Minkin.

(Interruptions) Councillor Campbell came up, Lord Mayor, with the cogent point here. There is a trial in place. We cannot make decisions until the trial is over, so let's see what comes out of the trial. Then we all make our bids, if it is going to go forward, to get it to go right. But to do the bogus things you are doing, Liz, I do hope you will use your summing up to tell us what is it you are really objecting to. You try to hide from the fact that you made the original decision when you were on the Exec Board. You are trying to hide the fact that you are there at your Area Committee being involved in all the discussions, pretending you don't know anything about it, you are not involved in any way. Well, come on, tell us what is it, in your summing up, Liz, that you are objecting to. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, I have to say, Councillor Campbell, that was an absolutely amazing statement to make as an elected representative of any party, to say that planning has no morals and no values, and indeed all you want to know is whether it is a right planning issue, which is what he did say, is absolutely astounding.

I am staggered by that kind of lack of responsibility, because I think this is an important debate, and I think Liz has raised some very important issues about ethical standards which we all operate in. You know, everybody has said she is passionate about planning, but there is something about the integrity of planning as well, and what you are actually promoting, which I think is the point that she is trying to get at.

If I can go back to 2004, this administration introduced the principle of

advertising to get the lamp posts up and running, but what we always said, and why Liz was very strict on this, was that we had to have a long consultation, be absolutely sure that we weren't advertising things that we thought were unhelpful to the promotion of some ideals, and that we needed a careful engagement of local Members, and I think that was a perfectly legitimate objection and concern that one of our Elected Members had, so there is no mystery, and I am sure she will fill out the detail, because I think Members are entitled.

You know, Councillor Jennings even raised them himself in 2004. He said ---

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: He didn't speak, did he?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: He did, yes. He put in his newsletter, "Councillor Jennings is determined to protect the leafy streets of West Park and Far Headingley from unsightly street furniture such as street benches, bollards and signs" and, you know, good for him, unless he thinks, you know, other parts shouldn't have the same degree of commitment and concern about their streets, or is there something about West Leeds that was different. So he raised a legitimate point and, indeed, there is a further legitimate point raised from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, and that is, which we ought to debate, when you are on a road like we have seen them on, it is a distraction to motorists and road safety, being illuminated, and, as Councillor Carter will know, there is very strict advice now about advertising on motorways and trunk roads so that you don't distract. That is a legitimate concern as well in planning.

But I want to go on to what I regard as one of the concerns I have, and that is the advertising of alcopops. Now, we have heard a lot about licensing laws, and I am sure we will debate that further. Is there yet, though, evidence that licensing laws have led to binge-drinking extra alcohol? Well, as yet it is far too early to make that judgment, and I am sure when the evidence is out we will discuss and debate that, but what we do know - what we do know - is that advertising of alcopops, the evidence is there. It is reported recently in The Times is that it can increase consumption by young teenagers of up to 3% a month. The evidence is there, and therefore we can discuss and debate about licensing laws. We can wait for the evidence, but, by the way, let me tell you, you know that Stuart was on a little bit of thin ice when he was going through his pub advertising. Guess who has asked for extended hours for licensing? Five out of the six Liberal clubs in this City. (Interruptions) Gets better. Just in case Charles, so you can stab him in the back, a decent and ordinary person like that got stabbed in the back by a person who likes a pint. But it gets even better. Guess how many Conservative clubs have done it? Ten out of thirteen have asked for extended license laws. Here is Councillor Carter telling everybody how bad the licensing laws and all his clubs are asking for extended hours. Not a word from him.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Did he oppose them?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I haven't heard or seen anything that said he opposed it at

all.

So what I would say is this, that we do have, if we are serious about advertising, then we need an ethical framework. We do need to know what we are promoting. We do have values. We do have principles, and I am saying not just this. I think all of us should. Should we advertise McDonald's beefburgers outside schools? That is a real debate, and therefore I think it is a quite legitimate debate and concern that Councillor Minkin has brought forward to this White Paper, and I hope we debate it in a serious and constructive way. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, I wasn't going to speak until Councillor Harper made reference to Moortown. I just want to start, though, if I may, because I really want to concentrate on what Councillor Harper and now what Councillor Wakefield has said. I suspect that Liz is getting as het up over this as -- well, is as sort of blinkered about this, if I could say in a very nice way, as I remember you being over the Love Parade when you appeared to be the only person I came across who was adamant that nothing happened on Soldier's Field except lots of dancing and having a jolly time, and nothing else appeared to have happened there.

Now, I am sure that what you said earlier was all very well meaning but I think you are completely off the mark, however. I really want to concentrate on this sort of very tenuous connection that is being made between the question of six signs that had alcopops on them and, well, Keith, it was a reasoned argument. Janet Harper's was the sort of feigned moral outrage about it. Now, you may have a legitimate point, but the point there is that it will be picked up as part of the pilot and part of the consultation. To suggest that because of six advertising hoardings out of 56 in the pilot that we should now abandon and suspend the whole thing is, frankly, absurd. But, worse than that, I have to say it is this moral outrage from Councillor Harper about the effect that that somehow is having on Armley. I am very sorry indeed that the life expectancy of people in Armley is so appallingly worse than, let's say, where I live. I have to tell you I wouldn't want to exchange my position with theirs. I make no bones about it, but what I do want is for them to have a much better life expectancy and a much better standard of living, which is what "Closing the Gap" is all about, and for you to make this tenuous connection between six advertising hoardings and somehow a cataclysmic effect on Armley is frankly absurd. You would be far better addressing ---

COUNCILLOR HARPER: You (inaudible) any in your ward, then, Councillor Harris.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Then I will deal with that before I finish what I was saying. Randall, Randall, bring it on, bring it into Moortown if you can find the appropriate place. Let's have them in Moortown, okay? I have got no problem whatsoever, so that is the end of that argument, which was equally absurd.

However, let's deal with this tenuous connection between six alcopop hoardings and life expectancy in Armley. I suggest that you address yourself to your Government that won't introduce a smoking ban, for instance. There may be differences of opinion in the administration, but it is a well-known fact on our side we would support an outright smoking ban. That has a far worse effect on the people of Armley than six advertising hoardings, and I suggest you speak to your Government about its refusal to fund Supertram, because the problems of congestion - this was a point Jim McKenna made in debate many times - the effect of congestion and exhaust on the main arterial roads in the City is far worse for the health of the people of Armley than anything else. Address yourself to those things first, before you come forward with this absurd moral outrage stuff. Let's stick to the real issues, not nonsense.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I think the cat really came out of the bag when Councillor Wakefield spoke, as I thought it might. I mean, this White Paper from the Opposition seems to me to be just opportunistic and disingenuous in the extreme.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: Look at me when you say that, Andrew.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Opportunistic and ingenuous in the extreme. My Lord Mayor, what don't you understand about that, Councillor McKenna?

My Lord Mayor, this is, as has been repeated over and over again, and I am sure that Councillor Coulson can hear me, I am very pleased to say. It has been repeated over and over again, this is a pilot scheme. It was underlined by Councillor Smith and I will say it again. In May 2004 the administration, led by Councillor Wakefield, on an Executive Board which included Councillor Minkin - now she may not have known what she was voting for, and I won't go into that - but nevertheless you know a lot of people are getting a bit sick and tired of your lapses of memory. Indeed, it is probably accounting for the fact that so many people outside just wonder what sort of an opposition you are.

You pressed ahead, and Councillor Lobley hit the nail on the head when he said you had left the lamp posts of this City in a disgraceful state of neglect, leading to the need to replace so many of them so quickly through the only vehicle available to us, PFI. Now, you decided that we should look at advertising, and we have gone ahead with that proposal, trying to minimize the cost to the Council Taxpayers, and when the pilot scheme is over, and let me tell you, I make no bones about it, there may well be sites that I find unacceptable, and if there are I shall say so, but there will be sites I don't find unacceptable and I will be quite happy for those to go ahead, but I have confidence that the Planning Committee Members and the Planning Officers, who I have to say take a pretty rigorous line on advertising, are going to make sure that it is their views that prevail.

What I find wholly unacceptable is that Councillor Harper decides to introduce the subject of one of our Members of Parliament. Now, let me tell you about the six Labour Members of Parliament. They all voted - and this is what this debate is really about; it is how they can get off the hook for the licensing laws, anything to deflect attention from the new licensing laws. The six Labour Members of Parliament voted each three times in favour of a Bill that the police, medical experts, judges, residents, councils, all said needed rethinking. When they were given the opportunity to rethink, actually bringing the legislation in, in November of last year, they didn't take that opportunity either.

I will let you into another secret, and I am not going to name names, not at the moment because I am saving it for another day, but when we started getting objections into the City from residents about extended licensing hours, one Member of Parliament rang up our Licensing Department and asked how he went about objecting. He had voted three times for the legislation and didn't know what the legislation said about how Members of Parliament, let alone members of the public, went about objecting.

It is disingenuous in the extreme for anybody on that side to start talking about promotion of the consumption of alcohol. Tell me, Keith, and I will give way, if an advertisement for alcopops encourages people to drink them, how does extended licensing hours not do exactly the same, because I really don't quite understand that, and neither does anybody else.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You said you would give way, and if you look at The Times article that I waved at Councillor Harris, it will tell you that promotion - and I am happy to copy it to you - promotion of alcopops does increase the excitement, indeed the attraction for young people and has increased the alcopops.

Now, what you have not really understood, or you deliberately have not, because although you are against - in his latest leaflet - "No more Punch & Judy politics", he said. Well, we have heard it all afternoon, but if you had really wanted a serious debate, what there was is that the evidence or the philosophical evidence-based argument was that if you were more reasonable, like you were in Scotland, do you remember when they increased their license hours, you would have less drinking, in fact more civilised behaviour. (Interruptions)

Hang on, I have been asked to give an explanation, so be quiet, go for a drink. And in Scotland there was evidence that instead of them closing, I think it was 7 o'clock, if I remember right, I am old enough, sadly, to remember that, they extended the hours and the behaviour and the consumption moderated, and a lot of European countries think like that as well.

THE LORD MAYOR: Before you resume, Councillor Carter, can I just tell you I have made a note that Councillor Wakefield took a minute on that point of personal

explanation, which I am now adding to your time, so you continue for one more minute.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, you are a statesman, unlike the Leader of the Opposition. My Lord Mayor, of course he didn't address the issue. You merely indicated what had happened in Scotland. You indicated what The Times newspaper had said. What you have not addressed is the fact that everybody, your own Government included, are saying they do not know what the effects of these new licensing laws in England are going to be. That is the whole point.

Now, you can wriggle all you want. The fact is --- Well, you may believe everything you read in the papers. You probably believe in the Tooth Fairy as well! My Lord Mayor, the point is this debate is not about advertising, it is about how to get Labour off the hook for this appalling mess that they have made of the new licensing laws. Not that they didn't need reformation. Not that they didn't need reformation, but to do what they have done in the way they have done it has brought them nothing but unpopularity, and now they are seeking to hide away underneath some sort of subterfuge to get themselves off the hook, and it won't wash. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Lord Mayor, obviously the issue of the content is important. I am not quite sure that --- I mean, you are very clever, Andrew, at making it, you know, connecting it with the Licensing Act, but I want to bring us back to what my White Paper said. If you read it, it is about making sure that we and the public get the full opportunity to consider the impact of these proposals, and if it had not been for that e-mail, which I read out to you just a little bit of, of 22nd December which I didn't actually read because of the Christmas break until 29th December and did immediately respond to it, I wouldn't have put this White Paper down. But the fact is that there is not time, as was assured, for Area Committees to be able to look at these pilot proposals that are coming in their areas. That is the point.

Now, I was surprised at Stuart sounding so keen because I am not so sure that to have them down the Otley Road going through Weetwood would actually be what your residents would immediately support, unless you go out and ask them, and you sounded as though you had made up your mind, or maybe moving to Rothwell you are sure that Rothwell will like them.

I mean, I think the point is that we haven't made up our mind and it is about having that public debate. Now, that brings me back to the very beginning and that Exec Board of May 2004. Now, I explained this in full, as Councillor Anderson probably remembers, to the Scrutiny of City Services, and I am willing to circulate all those e-mails and everything that I circulated at that time again to all Members of Council, but I welcome the opportunity to say that, yes, it was very late in the day that Cabinet colleagues were told about these proposals for adverts to be on the business case, and you look at that Exec Board paper and unfortunately there is not a mention anywhere that it is to be funded by proposals for advertising. Now, that was what got

me.

I had understood from many meetings I had with Officers in between the Cabinet meeting on 7th May and actually having the Exec Board meeting on the 12th that, yes, Officers would explain to that Exec Board meeting what the connection was.

They did not, and I am sorry I regret myself very much that I did not and was not quick enough to be able to say, "What has happened to this clarification about the adverting proposals?" So this was 12th May. I followed it up with more cases. I read the outline business case very carefully. I made comments to Randall, but you will be aware that very shortly after 18th May there were elections, and I did in fact put it on one of the lists to Andrew, as you will remember, as one of the things that was going on to have to look at.

So my concern has been that there is that continuing and wider public understanding and debate that did not start off well, and I certainly acknowledge my part in it. But from now on I want that debate to be open, above board, and no preconceptions or making your mind up before the event.

Let me just be clear. At the moment, if these 56 are agreed, the 19 -- just the 75. If you are going to have 1,896 in the end, which is what will fill the gap to pay for this PFI, it is a lot, so please all of you don't think that because you have not got one of these 56 in your wards now it is not going to affect you. It is. You need to keep on top of this debate and what these issues are about.

Now, you mentioned, Steve Smith, that you might have the opportunity to throw away some of the billboards from these, and indeed the letter from the business from Street Broadcast says, "Lamp post advertising offers the opportunity for a controlled approach to advertising on the highway which will limit displays to professional smart and high-quality format in commercial locations." I would like to know why, and that is why in moving this debate I actually said let's have a strategic look at advertising in this City, because how are you going to remove those billboards? Many of them are on private land, not within our control to move. How are you going to - and nobody has asked this question yet - how are you going to prevent private owners putting similar kinds of illuminated adverts on poles on their land? How will you be able to resist them if you have already agreed ones that are in Council-ownership on Council land? I think there are real questions that we need to look at.

It is the balance of benefit that needs to be thought through, and I am not sure that that is what your amendment says. It just hints at just tipping over the balance and having made your mind up this pilot is going to work, because it says it welcomes the long term financial benefits. I am not sure that we are quite at the stage where we can welcome that when we are so early on in the pilot.

So finally, please, everybody, let's have a public and reasoned debate about these. Yes, I am sure many of them I hope will come to Plans Panel because I have to say, being delegated to Officers, and I come back again, there is no advertising

design guide. We only have what is a very old advice in the UDP and we need to have a more robust system in place.

Finally, to demonstrate that that system is not robust and needs to be looked at, three of those applications which are said to be in Morley North are actually in Beeston & Holbeck. I don't know if Beeston & Holbeck Members know that yet, but that just highlights why we need to have a system that is clear and open, and it is not there yet. (Applause)

(Councillor Smith's amendment was carried)

(The substantive motion was carried)

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I thank everybody for their attendance, and declare the meeting closed.

(Council rose at 7.43 p.m.)