

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 28TH FEBRUARY 2006

THE LORD MAYOR (Councillor W. S. Hyde): Good afternoon, Members of Council. Please be seated.

Before we start the meeting this afternoon, Members of Council, I think it appropriate that I just say a few words about former Councillor Marlene Lyons, who sadly passed away recently and, as most of us will know who attended the funeral service at St. Theresa's, was a very well-respected and much-loved member of the local community. It hadn't occurred to me that she was in fact a Member of Council for some 9 years and represented the former Richmond Hill Ward of the City. During her term of office, Marlene served as Chair of the Community Involvement Team representing Richmond Hill and Rothwell, and also on the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority where, for a while, she was a spokesperson for transport issues in Leeds. She also chaired the Council's Social Services Committee. I think it might be appropriate if we were all just to stand for a minute in memory of former Councillor Marlene Lyons. (Council stood in silence) Thank you.

Just the usual housekeeping issues. Ensure that mobile telephones are switched off, and you will see that we again have Stuart Turnock with us as well as Nicole Jackson, so I don't know whether that means it is the second team on duty, but I think probably more a reflection of the fact that it worked very well last time. It is not that our Chief Executive is still indisposed; it is, I think, that he has other duties which he may well need to attend to during the course of the afternoon and, as you will all know, the three of us are stuck here. Unlike you, we cannot get up and wander about, so if you have got to do other things then you have got to be able to be free to do it.

ITEM 1 - MINUTES OF MEETING ON 11TH JANUARY 2006

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, I move that the minutes be received subject to the correction detailed on the order paper.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The minutes were agreed)

ITEM 2 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Just the usual reminder about the declarations of interest. I trust that everybody who has a declaration to make has done so by signing the notice in the ante-chamber. I don't know why I trust that. I don't, really, because I know very well it is not the case, but Councillor Carter ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, on the budget motion, Governor of Farsley Spring Bank School and Farsley West Royd School.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I then invite any further individual declarations or corrections to those notified on the list.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Apologies, Lord Mayor, I should have signed it - Adel Primary School.

COUNCILLOR MRS. A. CARTER: I am a School Governor of Farsley Parkside.

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, okay. Anybody else? Yes, dozens of folk. Can we write them all down, please, somebody. I know there are regulations about these things. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to correct them afterwards but I think perhaps it would be useful. We have a list of additional names here. If, in fact, you are on that list then you don't need to again declare it, but if you have not put your name down anywhere then perhaps you do need to make sure that you are shown if you do have a declaration.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: It is just a correction, Lord Mayor on the interest on the final page. It is son-in-law rather than son.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Lord Mayor, Governor of Wetherby High School, Governor of St. Mary's Church of England Primary School in Boston Spa.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Lord Mayor, Governor of East Garforth Primary School.

COUNCILLOR R. FELDMAN: ALMO member of North East Leeds Homes.

COUNCILLOR C. NASH: Governor of Farnley Park High School and Five Lanes Primary School.

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, Whingate Primary and Lower Wortley Primary.

COUNCILLOR SCHOFIELD: Whitkirk Primary, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: Lord Mayor, I declare a personal interest on East Leeds Family Centre.

THE LORD MAYOR: What was the declaration, Councillor Procter?

COUNCILLOR MRS. PROCTER: Bardsey Primary School.

COUNCILLOR TOWNSLEY: Lord Mayor, a member of Grand Theatre Board, Playhouse Board and Governor of Horsforth High School.

COUNCILLOR HOLLINGSWORTH: Member of the West Yorkshire Fire Authority, as somebody else has declared. I don't know if I need to, but I thought I had better.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Lord Mayor, Acting Chairman of Roundhay Care.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Right, have we got everybody? Nearly.

COUNCILLOR TAYLOR: Director of the Grand Theatre Board, Lord Mayor, sorry.

THE LORD MAYOR: Yes, thank you very much. Perhaps I ought to be down for that as well.

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: Can I also declare an interest on the PTAs, my Lord Mayor?

THE LORD MAYOR: Right. Can I take it then that we have all the declarations duly recorded? Thank you very much for that. Can I now invite Members to show that they confirm that they have read the list, or the list as amended, and agreed to its contents in so far as they relate to their own interests? Those in favour? Any against? That is agreed, thank you very much.

ITEM 3 - COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Communications, Nicole? No? No communications.

ITEM 4 - DEPUTATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: We have a note that there is in fact one deputation from the Chapeltown Community Centre Action Group regarding closure, demolition and lack of replacement for the Centre.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, can I move that the deputation be received?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Yes, I second.

(The motion was carried)

(The deputation entered the chamber)

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon. Welcome to the Council Meeting. Please make your speech to Council, which must not be longer than the five minutes maximum which is allowed. Will you please start by introducing yourself and your colleagues. Thank you.

MR. GOLDRING: My name is Andy Goldring, Cath Muller, Naseem and Justin. We are a delegation from the Chapeltown Community Centre Action Group. Our group was formed immediately after the closure of the Chapeltown Community Centre in January 2001.

Over the last 5 years our group has represented the users of the former centre and worked with many other local groups and individuals. We have broad support from residents, schools and police as well as from community, voluntary, ethnic and religious groups in the area and, of course, our local Councillors and MP. We are made up entirely of people that live or work in Chapeltown.

The old community centre was much loved and well used, and its loss leaves a big gap in the community, which has yet to be filled. Our aim is to develop a new community centre that will be designed, managed, owned and built by the people of Chapeltown for the people of Chapeltown.

We are here to make public our deep dissatisfaction with the way that our community has been treated by Council officials and to ask that the matter is fully and transparently investigated, particularly with regard to decisions on the allocation of land for the LIFT project and community centre.

The centre was closed in January 2001 in an atmosphere of confusion and mixed messages. The Council set up a Feasibility Study Steering Group in 2000, apparently with £17,500 allocated for the study. However, it then delayed the decision on the group's funding application and closed the centre before the group had a chance to carry out any work.

Public meetings were held and people were led to believe by Council officials that a replacement centre would be created. However, we have since been told that the Council never promised to rebuild the centre. This directly contravenes statements made at public meetings and in letters.

Quickly after the closure of the centre, the Council's focus changed to the development of a new Joint Service Centre or LIFT project, which we were told would meet the needs of local people.

Feasibility studies and public consultations were promised. We asked for involvement, inclusion and participation. "Absolutely", said Andy Taylor, then Director of Community Planning and Regeneration. He told us there would be a Planning for Real event as part of the consultation on the project. That was the last we heard of any consultation.

We were told by an officer that our group would be involved at an early stage and throughout the planning process for the Joint Service Centre, and that we would be contacted about that involvement. When we were finally invited to a

users meeting, the matter of community space was "irrelevant". We were told that the community would be consulted on the plans. It now appears that this will not be happening either. So where is the opportunity for the people of Chapeltown - surely the LIFT project's most important stakeholder - to influence the development and make the case for community facilities?

Chapeltown has the third poorest neighbourhood in the country. Local people want to be involved in its improvement, but involving people here takes more work, care and energy. This extra effort has not been made in this case. Indeed, very little effort at all has been made in this case.

Our group has been misled, given partial answers and ignored repeatedly by Council officials since the closure of the centre.

Instead of being seen as a source of information and expertise on how to improve Chapeltown, our group has been treated like the opposition. We feel that we have been perceived as an inconvenience that is getting in the way of the experts and their plans.

It now seems highly likely that the removal of the community Centre was part of an overall plan to introduce the new Joint Services Centre. If this was the case, then it would have been more honest for that to have been stated at the beginning.

Andy Taylor, who is now on the board of the LIFT Company, last month told one of our members that he couldn't imagine there being room for another centre on the site - despite the fact that we were told by a lead partner in the LIFT project that the users' needs have only been collated in the last month and that plans have not yet been drawn up.

In the next few months the LIFT Company will seek planning permission, and any opportunity to claim land for a new community centre may be lost forever.

We request that an appropriate committee make a full investigation into this matter and, in particular, answer the following questions:

Which department has responsibility for the sites of the former community centre, the Hayfield pub, and the green-space between them?

Has a decision been made about how land will be allocated? In particular, has the land for the LIFT company been allocated, and does that allocation in effect mean that land is no longer available for a new community centre?

If decisions have been made, who made them and when?

Will Leeds City Council review these decisions and allocate land for a new

community centre? This should be seen as separate from who would fund and manage the community centre.

Chapeltown needs and wants a new community centre. We have a strong team supported by local architects, a robust business plan, and multiple funding streams identified, but without land for the new centre we cannot move forward.

We urge all Councillors and the Executive Board to give consideration to the needs of our community. Thank you all very much. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, can I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board, where I think the matter will be given full consideration. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Yes, Lord Mayor, I second that.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for attending. Sorry, I have got to take a vote, first of all, before I thank you.

(The motion was carried)

THE LORD MAYOR: So now can I thank you for attending and for what you have told us. You will be kept informed of the consideration which will be given to your comments so that you will be up to date on what action the Council is going to take in the future. So thank you. Good afternoon.

MR. GOLDRING: Thank you.

(The deputation left the chamber)

ITEM 5 - BUDGET MOTION

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, in proposing the budget for the coming financial year, may I begin in the customary manner of thanking the battalions of departmental officers who have worked on our proposals, but in particular, as ever, I must pay a special thanks to Mr. Gaye and his immediate team in Finance who I know have been burning the midnight oil on many occasions during this current round.

But I have to tell Council that the process we have gone through this year has not been the usual one as we have understood has been the process in the past. Our budget considerations started the day after we set last year's budget, and we have gone through an exhaustive process of review where absolutely no stone has been left unturned in our determination to ensure that we deliver a

constantly improving Council at a price that stands scrutiny.

But above all else, Lord Mayor, before I turn to the body of our budget, I want to pay a special thanks to every single one of our 33,000 employees, so often missed when budget motions are put. Our budget is, frankly, worthless without their determination and willingness to deliver it for us, and they have and will continue to deliver for us second to none, and that is why they have made Leeds, under this administration, both "Excellent" last year and 4-star rated this year - the only major city in the country to be so.

There is much to say in this budget, especially since we must formally deal with not only the Revenue budget but also Capital, Housing, Treasury Management, and whilst I formally move all items on the order paper 5 (i) (ii) (iii) (iv) and (v), I will leave specific comments on the Capital budget to Andrew Carter, if he so wishes, whilst I focus specifically on the Revenue Account.

I would like to begin by reminding Council what it was that this administration found when the keys were turned over to us in June 2004. My starting point is simply the view of the way in which Leeds Labour had gone about budgeting compared to our approach, and just looking at the figures shows the stark contrast. The number of budget heads receiving new cash is on a far wider scale than ever before, and this year the number is even greater. That alone tells us that the Labour approach was less than rigorous and really one of, "Well, we have a few million to spend so let's allocate it in simple blocks to a few old chestnuts", but not only does it scream, "Line of least resistance", to the practised eye it clearly says they did not understand the process at all. And ours has been to say, "Challenge all and consider everything" to ensure that the cash we have available has the greatest impact for the greatest number of our residents, against the greatest geographical spread of this City.

Not only have we considered every line and sub-line in each department, but the money we put into our corporate priorities makes Labour's look feeble. Excluding Social Services - and don't worry, I will return to that later - in our two budgets new growth money is 40% greater than in Labour's last two years. So, let's be clear, not 10%, 20% or 30% greater, but 40% greater, and although we inherited the '04/05 budget, let me remind Council again, we still plumped a massive extra £14 million into Social Services. £14 million was more than the total new priority spend over two years that Labour had planned in their budgets, and yet they have the temerity still to accuse us of cuts.

If I put this another way, including the £14 million for Social Services, it means that we have now doubled the amount of money for new spend in departments and the people of Leeds I hope will listen to that very carefully. Not a 25% increase or 50% or 75%. We are doubling what Labour spent in their last two years, and this underlines absolutely that we came into office promising to deliver and we have delivered. We are delivering more front line services paid for

out of back room savings.

To do it we had to initiate, and this still continues, a rigorous budget approach. In its own right that is a good practice, but it is far more important that we need to get hold of what was rapidly running out of control. This was nowhere better evidenced than the twofold test of what was happening to Council Tax increases and what was happening to our level of reserves.

Over the last 8 years of the Labour administration Council Tax increased by an average of 5.8% with the lowest, one may say "best" year of 4.5%, and the highest at a staggering triple-inflation-busting 9.9%, but was the money at least used to hold our reserves steady? Far from it. By the time the people of Leeds waved bye-bye to Labour, reserves had fallen by almost 10% but allowing for the inflationary effect in real terms they had fallen by nearly 30% to a level totally unacceptable for prudent management and certainly unacceptable to the District Auditor. The simplest of all tell-tale signs - nobody saves money when the budgets are badly managed.

We have reversed that trend, increasing our reserves last year and again this year so that by the end of '07/08 we will have raised them by 50% on what we inherited, making sure that we have a proper buffer against, heaven forbid, any disaster that should befall us. But if Labour's Council Tax increases were at that level, was the money well-spent? What was happening in our service departments? Were they in good health? Well, no, as we all know, they weren't.

As has been said so many times, Social Services was £14 million under-funded in Labour's last budget and was heading to a £20 million overspend when we took over. The roads had a cumulative £50 million repairs backlog. Commuters were not benefiting from the availability of PCSOs available to us, and consequently people felt increasingly vulnerable. Narrowing the Gap initiatives were stagnating, and the public were finding it almost impossible to get a simple answer to queries because our customer service system was so complex.

Lord Mayor, that is what we found when we took over, and that is what we have comprehensively set about dealing with, and will continue to do so in this coming year but, as ever, we have been set an increasingly difficult task by the double-dealing Labour Government.

Andrew Carter, in trailing his views ready for today has made it absolutely clear that the settlement for England's second largest authority of 2.5% below that of the country-wide 3.4% average is nothing short of bizarre, if not indeed criminal.

With all the complexities, challenges and demands that Leeds throws up, how is it that anybody in Whitehall thinks we need a percentage settlement lower than, say, Dorset? I have got nothing against Dorset but they got 6.4% when we got 2.4%. That is patently absurd.

Add to this the perverse system of floors, where we actually have money

taken away from us to subsidise other authorities, and you have produced a formula that has denuded our coffers of nearly £5 million, in other words, the equivalent of 2% on Council Tax. Our Council Tax is being used to help other authorities around the country, so when the people of Leeds ask why has Council Tax risen above inflation, the first but not only explanation is that a Labour Government has taken the money from us that otherwise alone would have left us with a simple inflationary increase.

Nevertheless, at 4.5% our proposed Council Tax increase is equal to the best thing Labour could come up with in 10 years but, taken as an average over the last 2 years, this is the lowest 24 month rise since Council Tax was dreamt up.

At 4.375% it is almost 25% lower than Labour's average. Put another way, if we continued with Labour's average increase of 5.8% a year, then the Band D Council Tax bill would have been £26 higher this year, so we have saved our Council Taxpayers that money.

I said earlier that our starting point had to be a total review of how we spend our money. That is commonsense and, frankly, it has paid dividends. It has allowed us to reduce and hold down unnecessary increases whilst simultaneously giving us the wherewithal to spend heavily on service delivery, and before we are accused of cuts again, just let's be clear what that means.

To begin with, it is a Labour Whitehall requirement for us to make the so-called (?)Gershon savings of 2.5% annually. Brian Walker and Keith Wakefield had already got this message and had made a start. However, as one would expect, theirs was half-hearted, ours rigorous. In their last 3 years Labour made efficiencies, not cuts, of some £22 million. In our first two budgets we have pretty well equalled that. Put another way, we are 33% more successful at driving efficiencies from the back room to the front line - essential if central Government is continually demanding greater delivery with inadequate funding.

Let me give you a flavour for some of those efficiencies, some small, some large. Us, for instance, the Elected Members, once and for all the subsidy for the Members' Lounge has been done away with. Originally over £100,000 a year, we reduced it 12 months ago and in this budget the remaining £60,000 will go. Members' Allowances, always the first thing to be inflation-proofed round here - well, not this year. Our allowances will be frozen. Neither the basic nor special responsibility payment will get any inflationary rise, saving us £55,000, and Member Support will be reduced by £48,000. The public have a right to expect us to look to ourselves first and not to use their money to feather-bed our lives or activities.

In City Services, we have been able to reduce the insurance pay-out provision by a huge £300,000. How? Easy - by reducing a Highways maintenance backlog which similarly reduced the number of claims made against us for damages. Simple, efficient housekeeping. And in Corporate Services over

£100,000 has been saved by better use of IT. And in Social Services £250,000 has been saved in the back room by introducing cutting edge digital pen technology. Development - Andrew Carter's own territory - has saved £100,000 by reviewing their subscriptions, publications, marketing and graphics. Simple areas of efficiency. I could go on forever, but it amounts to just over £11 million not taken from service delivery. The public expect us to point the money outwards not inwards, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Now, Lord Mayor, I turn to what our spending plans are for the coming year. I have already said that we are spending more on new corporate priorities than Labour ever dreamt of. In addition to everything we did last year, this year those priorities will add up to well over £23 million. We promised and we have delivered on time and on budget a service-transforming state of the art contact centre. Nothing makes the public angrier than being unable to talk to somebody about what they see as service failure or the need for service delivery, so we are putting another £680,000 into Westgate so that the public quickly and efficiently get both answers and service. This, together with the new One-Stop-Shop building programme will make us one of the most accessible local authorities in Britain, and if we are to grow and prosper Leeds must continue to set its sights high as a competitive city. Its destiny lies mainly with the private sector and we continue to work to this common goal, but we too must do our part to encourage this agenda and to that end we have allocated some £691,000 which will be used to help the private sector deliver the economic growth needed to Barrow the Gap and benefit the whole of the City.

In particular, we have agreed a ground-breaking partnership with the Leeds Chamber of Commerce where we will provide £100,000 to support two posts with the sole remit to help our local Leeds businesses take advantage of the export market available to us through the City's world-wide associations. And just as going up a league is a major objective, so too is Narrowing the Gap. During last year, under the guidance of David Blackburn, we announced a series of initiatives for the various job guarantee schemes that we had inherited from Labour. Amongst those new schemes is the much heralded Academy at Contact Leeds where 36 people annually will be given the chance of fulfilling a career that previously would never have been available to them. Now we propose to do even more, allocating a further £100,000 to our Construction Skills Academy, guaranteeing another 25 posts in that sector. Taken with what we have done in the previous 2 years, this now means that such schemes have increased under this administration by over 110%.

Equally, we depend so heavily on our partnerships across the City with voluntary organisations, without whom it would be impossible to protect, help or Narrow the Gap for so many, even though we are bound to make 2.5% Gershon savings across the board we are not going to pass those reductions on so that in the grants to the voluntary organisations instead, every organisation receiving grant aid from us will get a 2% increase this year, and if anybody wants proof

positive of our commitment to social justice, helping people to help themselves, Narrowing the Gap, this is it.

In our environment, in its broadest sense, it is crucial to how people see themselves and feel about themselves in this City. By "environment", I mean physical, visual, aesthetically as well as community safety. We have therefore decided to inject a huge £4,089,000 into a series of schemes to make all our areas places to be proud of. Although the use of PCSOs was not new when we came to power, we inherited a lack-lustre use of this very valuable means of creating better safety in our communities. In addition to what the Police were prepared to provide, this administration guaranteed 50/50 funding to ensure every ward had at least two PCSOs. Of course, we have to use other tools in combination as it were to improve community feel good but nobody can doubt the huge impact these uniformed officers have had. So we have decided that next year we will increase this again by a further 50%, giving every ward at least 3 PCSOs.

We are particularly pleased to be able to provide another £1.3 million to create two more SORT areas, two more black bin areas, a kerbside garden waste collection service and, for the first time, targeted street cleansing on arterial routes through into and around the City. Added to this there is more money for allotments, an extra late and early grass cut, and for the first time a Climate Change Officer. Climate change indeed is a growing concern for all of us. Whether or not we are witnessing a permanent shift to milder winters is not for me to say, especially in view of the current sustained cold snap, but what is absolutely clear is that the flooding we have been experiencing is not a once in 100 years event, as we first thought. We cannot and we will not abandon those parts of the City susceptible to flooding, even though the principal responsibility for this is not ours, and to that end next year we will spend an additional £1.1 million on water asset management to help address better flood protection.

Lord Mayor, everything I have so far outlined emphatically says that this administration's commitment is to create a fairer, safer, greener, more prosperous city, but I cannot finish without spending some time on Social Services. In our first 2 years we spent no less than £13 million extra caring for our most vulnerable residents, compared to what was bequeathed to us by the outgoing Labour administration. £30 million extra, but even so they cynically and cruelly keep crying "Cuts".

I have said many times how an extra £30 million is a cut really defies logic, but I suppose one is drawn to the obvious conclusion, this shows just exactly how arithmetically challenged Labour are! No wonder things were getting in a mess, and that mess would be utterly out of control now if not for the absolute commitment that we, and in particular Peter Harrand, has made to Social Services.

A combination of demographic changes, demands from Whitehall that we deliver more - quite right that they should demand it but always without the

commensurate level of funding - has resulted in a nation-wide funding crisis for Social Services. This year Labour in London has given us a mere 2.5% increase in the Social Services budget. In real terms, a paltry £2.5 million. Without any question whatsoever, if we were to fund Social Services at the Labour Government suggested level, then we would have to instigate huge cuts, but we have not and we will not. Rather, we have decided to boost Social Services by a massive 8% increase, that is £17 million extra next year for Social Services, £14.5 million more than Westminster gave us to spend on Social Services. To put it another way, this is nearly three times as much as the total grant increase Labour Government has given this Council for non-school expenditure right across the board.

And what does that sort of money spent on social Services do? Well, for instance, it is an extra £2.5 million for domiciliary care, an extra £1 million for fostering, £1.9 million for older people, to keep them at home and not be hospitalised. So don't ever dare suggest that we don't care. We do care. (Applause) We care and, unlike you, we put our money where our mouth is and we deliver. It is Labour who would have us make cuts, not us, so let the people of Leeds understand exactly what this means. What we are injecting into Social Services equates to the entire 4.5% Council Tax increase plus another 2.5% on top of that. It means effectively that every other department, all of which, as I have explained, have new spending areas and are putting more real cash into service delivery, all of those other departments have come in cost-neutral or made real savings, and we are asking the people of Leeds to understand and support this absolute necessity to defend Social Services against the savagery and cruelty of new Labour, and I am sure they will.

Lord Mayor, we said we would be prudent and we have been. We promised to deliver better services and we have. We promised to protect and do our utmost for those most vulnerable and needy and we have, and we said we would be an administration for the entire City of Leeds, not just for selected areas, and we have been, and this budget, Lord Mayor, does even more. I commend it to Council but, more importantly, we offer it to all the people of Leeds. This is their budget and one on which we are happy to be judged. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

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

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, can I first of all echo Councillor Harris's congratulations to the staff of Leeds City Council, and we all know that they are extremely professional and rightly rewarded 4-stars. I would particularly like to thank the Finance Department and Alan Gaye who, without his help and support, we would not be able to put this amendment forward, and for those colleagues who are not aware that our amendment has to be scrutinised and passed by a SITFA qualified accountant before it can come to Council, and I am very grateful for that guidance and support he has offered to the Labour Group in preparing our

amendment. He has indeed as always been extremely professional - and if that doesn't get you the sack, Alan, nothing will! But, on a serious note, we are extremely grateful for your help.

You know, last year, Lord Mayor, we labelled the three Leaders as the George, Zippy and Bungle Show, if you remember. I was kind of amazed how many people actually knew which character played which role, which shows you what a sad lot we are in terms of looking at children's programmes, but on reflection, having looked at this year's performance and Councillor Harris's performance, I am beginning to think that was a huge compliment because, in terms of the messages and in terms of the teamwork, they are just like three bald men fighting for the last comb. They have been an absolute shambles, and the messages that we have got today are far from the experiences that I will recount later.

But, you know, I remember when they were all friends, you know, Mark and Andy and Mini-Me Davey who, you know, always nods when Andrew speaks. I remember them all when they were really mates until one day when that great grass-cutting fiasco took place and made Leeds look in parts like the wild jungle of Borneo and, on a serious note, it stopped a lot of our elderly people enjoying their space and recreation, and then suddenly you couldn't see them. Councillor Procter suddenly, the successor to Andrew Carter, suddenly started getting dressed up in his dinner suit and wearing a dicky-bow and posing as the Culture Czar in the paper - far too busy to talk about grass-cutting, Councillor Procter - let's talk about everything else but. And, of course, not for the first time, Councillor Steve Smith took the rap. Now, I was going to say it couldn't happen to a nicer fellow, but I understand today probably people have a different view about Councillor Smith, and he is still here. Despite taking the rap, he is still there.

But then, suddenly through the year the Executive Board went into paralysis. If you take issues like Education - let me give you an example. One minute they were closing Fir Tree, then they weren't, then they were, then they weren't, and the same thing happened to Aireview and Rodley - then they were, then they weren't, and then were still not sure, and do you know we are still not clear about those decisions even now today and, of course, Councillor Harris and Councillor Blackburn went into a real tizzy last year and they are still doing it now. You know, shouting, "What cuts? Where are the cuts? What cuts? We don't know any cuts." Well, actually on the grass-cutting you got it absolutely right, Mark, there were no cuts.

And what about Councillor Andrew Carter, the real leader of the Council? Well, here he is. We have got a soft lens. I don't know whether you recognise him, Amanda, in that, but it is the new Cameron look. You know, it is the open-neck shirt, the smiling face, the caring, compassionate Conservative.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Better than the flat hat and the scarf, Keith.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: There it is, but guess what - there wasn't one mention of the coalition with the LibDems. This is meant for the people of Leeds. No mention. So I thought that is curious, let's have a look at some of the LibDem stuff. Barry, you will be pleased to know that they say that the Tories can't win in North-West Leeds. But guess what else they say? LibDem-led City Council provided an extra £234,000 to increase the number of Graffiti Enforcement Teams across the City. It says in here, "LibDem-led Council" everywhere. Guess what? Absolutely no mention of each other. No mention of the other party there. It is weird. (Interruptions) It is strange. If this is the perfect marriage or ménage-a-trois, why is it they don't tell people? Why is it they don't tell the people of Leeds that they are together as a partnership?

But let me tell you, by Christmas it got even worse. They sent out a Christmas card. I didn't get one of these. I don't know whether anybody else did. But, David, in case you didn't get one, you are not even mentioned. You are not even mentioned. David, where is this trio? And, you know, isn't it time, if it is such a great success about working together, that they actually told the people of Leeds, instead of trying to hide the embarrassing relative in the cupboard because we have got visitors around, isn't it time that they did? But let's not be fooled. You may have given that budget speech but we actually know who is running this Council, and it is the Tories and it is the Carters all the time pulling the strings, all the time.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Look at the body language.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You know it. You know it. Now let me quote you. (Interruption) I will come to you in a minute.

Can you remember nearly 2 years ago Councillor Carter said this, "If you look closely the three parties" - oh, you were alright then, David, you were in - "have similar local policies. We all agreed that our differences can be ironed out to make way for improvements which we can work together." Do you remember that? Well, we all know what that is now. It is broken promises. It is cuts and it is privatisation, and this budget is another reflection on that.

I have got to say this, Mark, if the LibDems claim to be Closing the Gap, then let them stand up today and defend the increases in Leisure charges, Cemetery and Nursery charges. Let them explain the cuts to the day centres, home helps, support for women fleeing domestic violence and cuts in Social Services and training places. If the LibDems have any influence, it is time you stood up and said which ones they are.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Come on, Keith, deliver your budget amendment.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Do you know, we remember --- Ah, you don't like it,

do you? They actually don't like being reminded. As they used to say, "They don't like it up 'em" but I am beginning to wonder about that.

Let's have a look at the promises that Councillor Harris made 2 years ago. Mark Harris said they would break out of the Civic Hall committee room structure. Do you remember that one? They would introduce a public question-time at Council meetings, introduce a golden number for Council services and, of course, the infamous holding of meetings on a rotation basis throughout the City. Do you remember that one? You know, in Kippax they were queuing up for tickets. Guess what? Guess what has happened since then? Nothing. And there was also a promise to address the democratic deficit plaguing this administration. I defy any Member in this chamber to say they have greater control over issues and decisions now than they ever had.

Let me remind you again of what Councillor Carter demanded at the Council meeting on 16th July 2003 when he spoke and told us there was a democratic deficit in the Council. Along with us, he argued that the delegated decision process was out of control and that officers were running amok spending money and making decisions all over the place. Very eloquent and very convincing. What has happened since then? Precisely nothing. In fact, as Leader of this Council, along with Councillor Harris, he has overseen this year alone decisions made by officers without any Member involvement of up to £105 million, and £15 million of that is in his own Executive Board portfolio, and it has got to stop. We need to restore power to Members, not constantly marginalise them, which is happening more and more under this administration.

By the way, do you remember your speeches, along with Councillor Harris, Councillor Golton, about local income tax? That one has disappeared as well with Charles Kennedy.

Even when this lot own up to massive price increases, they blame other people. Do you know, Members, this is absolutely true, in case you missed it, they even tried to explain the massive hike in five-a-side football and cricket on a lack of the Government's energy policy. You know, if you are going to use Marketing Leeds, I would get them to make a website for this Council called www.dontblameus.com because that basically sums their attitude up to this Council.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I think that is on your website, isn't it?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Now we come to Councillor Harris's reference to the Government settlement for Leeds. Yes, Mark, every local authority has had to have a tight budget and, yes, we would like more, but let me remind you that the grant from the Government has increased from 1.8% under the last 3 years of a Tory Government to 4% under a Labour Government since 1997. Now, if these figures feel abstract, let me remind everyone of the real investment in this City by a

Labour Government. The spending in every school has risen by over £1,000 per pupil since Labour came to power. There are 179 extra police constables for our streets. The housing repair budget has gone up an extra £359 million through the ALMOs. We have 230 more teachers and over 15,000 children have taken up one of the free part-time nursery places available in this city. Furthermore, £27 million from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, a Government-funded initiative, is helping to tackle the gap between the rich and poor in this City.

In terms of future investment, the Labour Government is funding 23 new children's centres with 43 up and running in the City by 2010 and, don't forget, in a massive investment programme every secondary school in Leeds will either be rebuilt or refurbished. Yes, the budget is tight but let's not forget the investment this Labour Government has put into this City, which is unprecedented since Victorian times, and it is far more than the Tories ever did. There is no doubt that, despite the difficulties and challenges, I would rather stand side by side by a Labour Government facing them than with a Tory Government still threatening cuts and privatisation and a Liberal Democratic party still trying to be the Tory Party Mark II.

And, yes, local government does need reform, and we would like to see the Lyons Review - not Mick's - give local authorities far more power and a bigger proportion of the income from business rates, and we will make these views known to Government Ministers.

Now I want to turn to our budget amendment. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Red light, Lord Mayor. (Laughter)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I am sure you know a lot about red lights, Brian. (Interruptions)

Labour's amendment is all about getting this Council's priorities right. In order to fund things that really matter to local people, we would make a number of decisions that cut the waste, squander and inefficiencies that plague this administration. Firstly, we would radically reduce the amount spent on so-called corporate communications and marketing. Now, given you are not giving this part of the budget, Andrew, let me remind you of something you said in the Yorkshire Evening Post on 14th March 2002, "Just like Labour nationally, Labour locally is obsessed with media manipulation and spin. It is all completely out of control. I suspect our PR spending could be cut by up to two-thirds and the money diverted to front line services." Right. Councillor Harris on his website, 2004, "Likewise the money we spend on press and publicity and on international relations is way over the top. We have a Press Unit, full-time post backed up by an admin section along with the communications section." Guess how many we had? Seven. Guess how many they have got now? Twenty-nine, and still have plans to advertise more. In fact, it might interest Members to know under this Tory and

LibDem administration this press officer is bigger than the Coca-cola press office which is thirteen. It is massive.

Now, I want to make it absolutely clear about this. We would also put a block on any further money going to Marketing Leeds. Make no mistake, I will repeat it twice, we support the principle of marketing our great city nationally and internationally. We support that. We funded it, and I think the idea came from our administration, but as far as we can see this lot have done nothing to enhance the image of Leeds since its inception except, of course, we hatched a slogan, "Made in Hong Kong" and spend £70,000 on a lavish drinks party in the Victorian quarter hosted by Councillor Mark Harris himself. We need to radically review this role before contributing any more of taxpayers' hard-earned money.

We would also scrap the civic newspaper, something of course that Andrew

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You invented it. You invented it. Come on, you are a joke. (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It is good to have all-party support, and I look forward to your support on that, and Andrew promised to do something, but what we would do is actually now spend it more by giving it to the Area Committees for them to do their own engagements and consultation. (Interruptions)

We would also address your failure to tackle the spiralling sicknesses in Social Services Department which under our administration was 12 days per employee year and under your administration is now 14 days for each employee, and we would also deliver considerable savings by working with our excellent staff in the Procurement Team. Council officers estimate that a saving of 1% on the procurement of goods and services would bring in savings of at least £2.5 million, and we would also reduce the amount of taxpayers' money spent on the cost of offices in the city centre and trim the seemingly ever-growing cost of consultants. This exercise would realise in the region of £400,000.

Now turning to how we would spend or re-prioritize the Council's spending. Our amendment is making sure that the Council demonstrates to the people of Leeds that we will not waste or squander their money on the vanity of politicians but actually concentrate on offering value for money, protecting services for the elderly and providing safer and cleaner streets.

Firstly, let me deal with the environment and street scene. Our workers do a wonderful job trying to keep our City clean and tidy, but they are at breaking point. They are under enormous pressure. Clearly, more resources are needed and we would allocate almost an additional half a million pounds which would enable us to tackle the parts of our City both in the inner and outer areas which clearly need more resources, and Councillor Alison Lowe will deal with this later.

Another of our priorities is to tackle the yobbish behaviour that blights our neighbourhood. We don't subscribe to Les Carter's view reported in the Economist and The Times recently - it is a bit left wing for you, Les - but let me just quote you, "Short of bringing back the stocks, there is not much more we can do." Bring back the stocks? How PC is that? Does that fit into the new caring compassionate Toryism that David Cameron is promoting? But we believe there is actually far more you can do, and that simple quote sums up the complacency of this administration.

Let me tell you, since the Tories and Liberals took power, the number of ASBOs issued by the Council has reduced to 147 in 2004 to 49 in the last year. This contrasts with places like Manchester, where 433 were issued during the same period, that is 10 times the amount in Leeds, and even Nottingham managed to issue 111, and we also believe that the administration is failing to use the power that this Government has given them.

Now, many of these powers were opposed by the LibDems when they were going through Parliament, and perhaps that is why there is a reluctance to push ahead here in Leeds. Who knows? Maybe it could be that Councillor Harris has influence over Councillor Les Carter. I don't know.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: He has a lot of influence.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: What we do know is that these powers work. Where action is taken, crime and vandalism falls and people begin to feel safer in their homes. I welcome the plans by the Government to provide local authorities with even more powers, and I hope that the people of Leeds will not be let down by this administration.

So, Lord Mayor, we would plough an extra £800,000 of capital into community safety, and we will use this money to massively increase the alley-gating issues. There is proof and evidence that it works, and it is very simple. If you have seen or had explained to you how burglary takes place, they often like to go through the side window and the back window and then escape through the alleyways by it, and where alley-gating has been used in London burglary has been reduced by over 90%. Labour's budget would mean that 800 additional communities would benefit under our budget and hundreds of families would feel safer in their homes.

We would also reverse the cuts made in the city centre wardens, which were pushed through by this administration and is, we believe, leading to an increased amount of disorder in the city centre, particularly during the day-time at weekends. Needless to say, we would also re-introduce the proof of age scheme which again this administration also cut and there appears a desperate need to do so. (Interruptions) Research shows that actually binge-drinking is a massive

problem. One third of 15-16 year-olds claim to drink on a regular basis and over two-thirds of the same age group, 15-16, actually claim to have purchased alcohol illegally. We believe that £160,000 is a small price to pay to protect our communities and young people from the damage that alcohol and tobacco can cause. Every local authority in West Yorkshire has signed up to this. Every one is trying to sign up or find the money to do it except this one.

But dealing with anti-social behaviour is not just about coercive measures. The action plan needs to have two elements: (1) We do need the coercive element but, secondly and this very importantly, we need to invest in some of the causes. Poverty and social exclusion can be the breeding grounds for crime. They are not the only causes because crime happens all over the City but, as most of us know, anti-social behaviour is more common in poorer areas, and I welcome the initiatives from the Government such as Sure Start, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the New Deal for Communities, all of which are bringing much needed support to the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in our City, but there is more than a Council should be doing and could be doing.

One of them is to look to put more front line resources into our youth services. We would restructure the Council's Youth Service and devolve it to Area Committees, so that local people had a real say how their money is being spent in providing positive activities for young people. Indeed, there needs to be a radical view of Youth Service funded activities, and that is something we will bring into Council at a later date.

Moving now to Social Services. First, let me be absolutely clear, we repeat our commitment of last year to restore axed care services for older people. As we said last year, and we are continuing to say this year, these cuts are a disgrace, yet all year all we have had from Councillor Harris and some of his cronies is, "Cuts, what cuts?" and what we have had today is spin upon spin upon spin and trying to confuse and to use smoke and mirrors, and it is not working in any parts of our community. We know the cuts are taking place, and I will give you some examples, and these are not real --- These are real --- (Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: They never are real.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: No, they are not a Freudian slip, they are actually part of an independent survey done by people who work in that field, so they are not done by us, they are done by an independent organisation who have actually provided them, and some of them were last night.

Let me talk to you, Richard, and if you pay attention. One example is of a woman in her seventies who is partially sighted and registered blind. She had been receiving around 5 hours of help with cleaning every week which, as you can imagine, due to her disability, she found particularly difficult. After a review, the service was withdrawn. She was sign-posted to the voluntary sector.

We have another case, again involving an old lady who is blind. She is 94 and walks with a Zimmer-frame. She has arthritis in her hands and because her care has been withdrawn this lady does not get a hot drink from lunch-time until the next morning.

Finally, my Lord Mayor, we have an 85-year old who lives alone, suffers from breathlessness, has a serious heart problem, suffers from falls and has had treatment recently for an ulcerous leg. She appears confused, forgetful and possibly suffers from dementia, and after 10 years has had her fortnightly help with cleaning withdrawn. How disabled and ill do you have to be before you get support off this administration?

And these are not isolated examples. The simple fact is that in this year alone 456 older people have either had their services cut or reduced as a result of this Tory/Lib led initiative. This is a fact, and no amount of burying your head in the sand by the LibDem Leader will make it go away and, what is more, a further 5,500 people will have their services reviewed this year if this budget goes ahead.

Members of Council, don't fall for the claims that people are being sign-posted to other services. Just don't believe it. Last year we were told that the voluntary sector would be given more money to cope with those people whose services had been cut. If you remember, £300,000 was allocated in the budget to support the excellent voluntary schemes across the City, so let me tell you, when I asked officers how much of this had been spent, they came back with some figures that are very revealing and disturbing. Just over £100,000 - that is all - has been spent this year in providing grants to the schemes, but the figures also reveal that over £60,000 has been spent on management, consultancy and administration to do this. This is an absolute disgrace. 60% of the money that has gone to the old people has actually been used to fund consultants and bureaucrats. Our budgets would restore these services and make sure that our older people got the support they deserve.

Now, Lord Mayor, it is not just home care services that are being cut. What Councillor Harris hasn't told us in all his spiel in his speech today are the problems he is having making the sums add up in Social Services. Members will remember the furore after the last election - it was touched upon today - about the reasons for the overspend in Social Services budget and the following political accusations which are still being made today against this Labour administration, or our Labour administration.

Well, Lord Mayor, I have a further document and a financial statement from Council officers in Social Services - this is the bit that he has not told us - that projects over a £14 million overspend in Social Services for this 2006/7 budget year. If this is not a cash crisis, I don't know what is. Perhaps we should demand an inquiry into political mismanagement like they did and, Peter, are you ready to

walk the plank, like you were asking some of our Members ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You mean like you did, Keith?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: So how are they going to balance the books next year, because Mark has not told us. Officers in Social Services, however, have been very helpful. Officers in Social Services have been very helpful, and I will repeat that for Les. They are reviewing the use of day centres, and this is called re-aligning services. They are also looking at adult training centres. Do you remember that, John, in Wetherby, the adult training centres? Well, that is what they are looking at now, and we all know what re-aligning means. It means cuts in Social Services and closures and, despite the promises to keep day centres open, they are now looking at closures.

This goes with other promises. They promised to scrap Fairer Charges, the Council Newspaper, the Press Office, cut consultants, clamp down on staff sick leave, keep day centres open - all promises that have been broken to the people of Leeds. Not only would Labour's budget reverse these cuts, what is more we would stop the payments to consultants to privatise our leisure centres. Instead, we would invest it to give something back to our older people. We would abolish all admission charges for people over 60 into our leisure centres, so they can enjoy some leisure, some healthy living style in their spare time. That is the least we could do and it would cost £380,000, that is all. In other words, we would give money to older people rather than the consultants, the fat cat consultants and bureaucrats.

Let me remind you, Members of Council, what Councillor Harris has said in the past over the Fairer Charging details. It is long, but I urge you to listen. It is very long-winded but there is something there for all of us. Lord Mayor, and this is what he said, "Lord Mayor, for each of us there comes a time, an issue, when conscience must overcome every deep-held allegiance to one's party, especially - especially - if that party tells you to do something that you know is wrong because in the end to do something you know is right by your conscience must in the long run be right for your own party, or you are completely in the wrong party in the first place." Do you remember that one? It is very long-winded. I told you it was long-winded but I think you get the gist.

I say to Members opposite that this is a matter of conscience. If you, the Greens, Independents and anybody here have a conscience I urge you to support our amendment. If you want to stop a budget that hits services for the old lady who cannot do her shopping, hits the family who have to save up to take the kids to the swimming baths, hits the elderly couple who look forward to their lunch at a day centre, hits the person with learning difficulties who attends an adult training centre, hits those fleeing a violent partner, and hits the young person trying to find a job, then vote with your conscience.

Labour's budget would help to make sure that Leeds stays a success but also would protect vital services. Our amendment offers compassion, fairness and social justice for all the people. At the same time it does so with a commitment that it would not waste a penny of the Council's hard-earned taxpayers' money. We would stop extravagance and waste and concentrate on people's priorities and, whilst doing this, we would deliver a Council Tax that is below that of this administration at 4.25%. Yes, our Council Tax increase would be 4.25%.

Lord Mayor, this Labour Group has not forgotten those people who need our help. It has not forgotten the role of public services in our City, and I can't wait for us, as we get near May, to give the people of Leeds an opportunity to start to get rid of this administration and bring back a Labour party that actually cares for the people of Leeds. I move, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: I second, Lord Mayor, reserving the right to speak.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, I understand that in the budget debate I can speak for as long as I like, so you are all in for one hell of a treat - I am sure of it.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Well done. I'm just getting comfortable. It has got to be better than the last effort, anyway.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: I will sit down now, while I am ahead, I think.

We are in a situation where this year we have not proposed a budget, and I think that needs some explaining anyway. We think there is a certain amount of self-indulgence of a group of five of us sitting down and proposing a budget. We do think it is a waste of officers' time, who have a very difficult job to do at this particular point. We felt it was more honourable not to waste their time trying to introduce a budget which, other than five votes, and I am not so sure of some of those, that we would actually get at this particular point!

We are going to try something slightly different, slightly unusual, and I am not going to have a go at either budget at this particular time. Let's try something different, something new. Now, we could have more Punch & Judy, we could have more accusation and counter-accusation. I could have some synthetic rage at this particular point, but I would like us to perhaps explore a little bit more some of the other issues that surround the situation and the difficulty that we get ourselves in.

Now, I believe that this is a competent budget. I am not delighted with it, nobody will be singing in the streets, but it is a competent budget which is made under very difficult circumstances. Now, we did try and get some information from the officers about the budget and the situation that we find ourselves in, because I

think it is important for us to perhaps explore who the real culprit is here and to explore perhaps philosophically the relationship between central Government and local government. I will have you all asleep in five or ten minutes on this one - I guarantee it! (Laughter)

But I think it is worth exploring and perhaps looking into things. Now, we did ask our Finance people to go back and look to see what the situation was if we had a total standstill budget. You know, taking into account the reality we find ourselves in, where exactly would we stand? They have given me the figures here. Pay awards at 2.95%, perhaps, that would cost us, pensions increases that we are obliged to pay - no choice in that particular matter - 0.7%, £1.8 million. Price inflation running at 13.6, and we look at those and we look at the additional fuel costs, £468,000, and somewhere in there, if we were just to stand still would be a 5.8% increase in Council Tax.

I think that is something that is worth reflecting upon because we are in a situation here where, you know, we can all do the knock-around and blame each other but we have to really examine why, at a point where to stand still we need 5.8%, we get such - and I think everyone would agree - a shabby settlement from central Government, and I think we need to perhaps explore that a little bit more.

Now, like all of us, we have had a look through the financial papers that accompany this particular budget. You know that there is this 2.5% increase in formula grant that Leeds is getting, 2.9% increase in formula grant between 2006/7 and 2007/8. The figures are all there, and I note the whole floors approach which basically, as far as I can actually see, says, "We will give you a floor settlement but for those that we are" - and I have used this phrase before - "shafting below you, we will make sure that we take some money off you and give it to them", so it is like it is poorly financed from central Government local authorities, you know, subsidising those who are even poorer off, and that seems chronically unfair. £2.4 million in 2006/7 and £1.2 million in 2007/8, so to a degree there was £2.4 million that the Government are recycling from us to other places, and that is a significant concern that I think we need to perhaps reflect upon.

Again we are, both administrations, the Labour administration, this administration must claim some of the credit for this, an excellent authority, as it is assessed in the CPA 4-stars, and you would have thought that the Government would reward good behaviour but, looking again at some of the figures that we have got, 2-star Birmingham gets a 4.7% increase over 2 years as against our 2.9. 1-star Bristol gets a 4.9% increase. You go through to Nottingham, who get a 5.2% increase and they are on 2-stars. Manchester, who are behind us on 3-stars, even they do better than we do, and you have to explain ---

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: It is called poverty.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Well, it may be called poverty but it may be called ---

I mean, most of these are Labour authorities. It may be called shafting those that aren't in Labour control, but we need to (Applause) We need to explore a little more closely.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Birmingham is in Tory ---

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Birmingham, as far as my research actually points out at this point, is in alliance but certainly if you want to be absolutely clear about it, Manchester is Labour-controlled, Nottingham is Labour-controlled, Nottingham is on a 2-star, but we will leave that aside. That really fundamentally isn't the issue at this particular point because we need to explore the relationship between central Government and local government, and why are we in this situation that we actually find ourselves.

One of the other issues that we have is that we are given new powers, which is fabulous. We all like new powers. We all believe in local democracy. We all want to make sure that the local authorities do more, but along with this we don't get the money to support these new powers.

Now, there are three examples that I have picked out, I am sure there are many others. The Respect agenda. Okay, all in favour of that. We would like to have more respect in our particular communities. It seems to me very little if any cash coming to support that, but you can guarantee the obligations and the work will have to be done at local authority level. No doubt whatsoever about that.

We get new environmental powers, clean up the streets, do all of these sort of things. Fabulous idea. We all want that. We want more powers to be able to enforce, have cleaner and greener environments but again the money does not come out and follow that, and that is another concern. And you know you have heard this before but, there you go, I couldn't get away without talking about the licensing legislation, could I? So we need a little bit of investigation with our colleagues in Finance to say, "Okay, what has the Licensing Act cost us at this particular point?" And the figures are here. We have visited this before but we might as well deal with it. Cost to the authority, £439,860.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Cost-neutral.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Well, I couldn't go without bringing my good friend Mr. Colin Challen in at this particular point, who assures me in this letter that he wrote to me on 9th September 2004 that he had assurances from the gentleman who was pushing the licensing legislation through that it would be cost-neutral, that we would be in a situation where it couldn't cost us anything. Now, I am not an accountant but I am sure that cost-neutral doesn't mean it is going to cost you half a million quid. I am absolutely clear about that, so again we have got new powers and we are in a situation where none of the money actually follows, and I think we need to explore why we are in this situation, why - and we all agree, whether you

are over there or over there - we all agree local authorities, we all agree bringing democracy down to a local level, we all agree that the local authorities are at the cutting edge of improving the quality of life for the individuals. I think what we need to reflect, really, is why we get such a poor deal from central Government.

It is not necessarily party political. I believe previous Conservative central Government, the Labour central Government at this particular point go down the same particular path, and what we need to explore, if we are going to have a sensible and reasoned discussion about that, is why that is the case. Why, if central Government is as committed as David Miliband - or David Miliband, as some of us would put it - if David Miliband says he is absolutely sure that he wants neighbourhoods to actually operate, why that finance is not there to actually support that.

To a degree - and this is somewhat controversial - I think it is because most central Governments don't particularly like councils, don't particularly trust Councillors, whether it is Labour, whether it is Tory, whatever. You know, bring me a weak government that is in control centrally and I suspect that they will have the same doubts.

One of the things that we really need to discuss and get our heads straight about is not, you know, accusation and counter-accusation, it is looking at what we can do to put across to central Government the fact that we are ultimately all committed to running our communities and our neighbourhoods as effectively as possible, and we are pretty good at that. All of us in our own ways are pretty good at that, and we have to go back and explore with central Government that if they want us to take on board these new obligations, these new responsibilities, if they are genuinely keen on local democracy, then they need to be financing it. Quite frankly, the agreement and the deal that we have got this year and next year does not help us in any shape, way or form.

Now, the bottom line is, what can we do about that, how can we progress this? Now, I am not a big believer in putting my faith in Colin Challen, but I do think (Interruptions) I have to be honest about it. A man that can't tell the difference between no pounds and half a million pounds, you have got to have some suspicions about, but taking that aside, we have to go back and say to these people who do allegedly reflect our views down at Westminster that we do need a fairer deal for all of us, regardless of where we actually sit on this particular matter, because year after year after year, with the best will in the world, all of us have very little room to manoeuvre when it comes to budget time. I accept there were some proposals put up, I accept that there would be some counter-proposals put up, but by and large there isn't the room to manoeuvre, and if we genuinely believe in local democracy, then central Government ought to be financing us to be able to deliver what ultimately we all believe in. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, I have got to say there is a lot what

Councillor Finnigan just said that I am totally in agreement with, and I think a lot on this side would say that, and it is nice to see somebody on the Opposition benches coming up with a sensible idea, unlike the Labour benches.

Lord Mayor, today this joint administration puts before you its second budget, a budget that will result in a 4.5% Council Tax increase, which is the equal second lowest increase since Council Tax came in following the lowest one last year. You know, Councillor Wakefield might have learned about low Council Tax this year, but it certainly didn't happen in the previous years when Labour were in power.

This shows over the last 2 years this administration's commitment to setting a Council Tax which delivers the necessary services of this authority while making sure the Council Taxpayer has to pay the lowest amount possible.

We again this year will increase Social Services' expenditure to record levels, paid by real money, not spin, and not on a wing and a prayer like the Labour Party do, but actual real cash. You know, £17 million we are putting extra into Social Services, and since we came to power we have spent £30 million more than that lot over there would have done.

We will be putting additional funding to improve StreetScene, including provision of two additional SORT rounds, and for the implementation of kerbside garden collection pilot. Additionally, we would put £386,000 into addressing water management across the City, something we need to do with the climate change problems that we are having.

An additional £280,000 must be spent on improving the appearance of our arterial roads.

Following the motion passed by Council to sign up to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change, additional funds have been put into the budget for the appointment of a Climate Change Officer so we can deliver on that.

Lord Mayor, there has been much made over the time of this administration about so-called cuts. I have got to say these are acts of fiction and are wishful thinking by the party opposite, and are a sign of what they would have done if they had been in power, but luckily the people of Leeds have been spared that indignity.

By the way, actually, and I have got to admit to something - I have got to admit to something which I didn't do last year. I am not going to start my theatricals here, but actually there are two cuts in this budget. There are two cuts. Two extra grass cuts!

This budget is realistic, prudent and will deliver high-quality services to the people of Leeds. It is not about spin. It is not about sleight of hand but is a budget

of commonsense. I ask you to support it. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR LOWE: Lord Mayor, in 2005/6 I predicted that the huge savings that were in the budget would not be achieved and in fact at our Scrutiny Board last month we were told that the budget, the Gershon savings predicted were actually half a million pounds worse than budget, so I was right. What a surprise. What a surprise. And I have looked at the budget this time for 2006/7 and again I think that there are some areas there that are just not achievable.

I do think there are some things there that are achievable, but whether or not you should go ahead with them is a different issue. For instance, the £294,000 worth of savings which you are due to undertake at the household waste sites I think are a mistake.

Yes, certainly you can cut the staff and the security, and you can replace those with CCTV, but is that the best use of resources, bearing in mind the huge increase in landfill charges, the increase in fly-tipping that you are likely to get, and then the confrontation between the few staff that are remaining and the white-van drivers now that you are telling them they can only use the sites twice a week. I think there is going to be some difficulty there for staff and security. I don't think that you can compromise that, really, and so I would look again at the £294,000. There may be some savings possible but I think that the 294 is a step too far and our staff will suffer as a consequence, and I think that our targets in relation to landfill and recycling, I don't think we will achieve those if we put these cuts in.

Another of the savings that you are predicting to make is £513,000 which you are hoping to do by not increasing fuel costs by the recommended uplift. Again, I think this is a very risky way forward. Councillor Blackburn has just said that the budget is not a wing and a prayer. Well, I think this is on a wing and prayer. We know what the huge costs of fuel and energy have been these last 12 months. They are predicted to be even higher in the next 12 months. I know that you have cut the costs of heating in the Civic Hall, because there is none, and perhaps you are hoping that by having none for the next 12 months will make you these enormous savings, but I would ask you again for a department that depends so much on vehicles for running the services, you are going to need to put every penny that you possibly can to cover the recommended uplift, so if you don't put it in I think it is a risk and you are not going to be able to achieve it, and I know that I am going to be here next year saying that I was right again.

Similarly, there is £53,000 in here for a review in security in civic buildings. Now, £53,000 is a drop in the ocean compared to the budget we have got, but in terms of specific buildings that the security is threatened with, I think that it is quite a lot of money. We are talking about Morley Town Hall here. We are talking about Pudsey Town Hall. We are not talking about the Civic Hall here, but this is going to be cuts in security. We have got increases in terrorist threats. If you are happy with that, okay, but I don't think your constituents will be, and I certainly

wouldn't be. I would think about that one again.

Without consultation, this seems to be something that is happening quite a lot in City Services recently, there is going to be £202,000 savings for introducing car park charges at the weekend and evenings. This was discussed at length at Scrutiny Board and we decided that it was a really bad move. We thought that we had won that battle. Obviously we hadn't, but again by stealth and without proper consultation with the citizens of Leeds these charges have been introduced. I think that that is a real mistake.

I have been reading the Evening Post for the last couple of days and I have seen that Councillor Steve Smith has been lauding and applauding the addition of £280,000 for cleaning of arterial routes. Well, of course that is good news, isn't it, but what about the rest of the City, because we know the rest of the city is absolutely filthy. So I would like to see some more money put into the budget for the cleaning of the rest of the City, because it is a real problem for us as Councillors.

I would like to finish off just by saying that we have talked a lot about cuts today and that there aren't any cuts, but obviously we have just discovered that there are plenty of cuts in the Civic Hall if you are a Councillor. There is going to be the removal of the Members' Club subsidy. There is going to be the removal of Members' telephones, we have been told, in the Members' Lounge. What else is going to be cut? Hopefully we will cut him as Lead Member. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRISON: My Lord Mayor, I would like to make a small contribution to today's debate, in particular concentrating on Social Services' portfolio, but before I start I was glad to hear from Councillor Blackburn that there would be an increase in grass-cutting. I wonder if in this year's budget Swillington could be included in this, because last year Swillington didn't manage to get any cuts at all.

Before I begin with my main contribution, can I thank officers from Social Services Department for their help and assistance with briefings prior to today's debate. As most Members know, Social Services' budget is complex and officers have certainly made my life easier with their helpful explanations.

Firstly, Lord Mayor, I would like to deal with the line of eligibility issue. Councillor Wakefield has already mentioned this in his speech and I do really want to reinforce what he has said. The simple fact is that people are having services withdrawn or reduced because of decisions that have been taken from those running the Council to change the eligibility criteria for those who receive support.

As Councillor Wakefield mentioned, nearly 5,000 people have had their services cut already and 5,000 will have their services reviewed this year. Now, if we can assume this is in similar proportion with the services cut, that means 1,500

people will lose services this year.

Lord Mayor, despite assurances from Members opposite these cuts are happening. Unlike many Members opposite, I sit on a regular basis with representatives from the voluntary sector who have been left to pick up the pieces.

In last year's budget £300,000 was put into the budget for voluntary sector for social enterprise schemes. So far only £103,000 has been granted, but many of the cuts have already happened.

Councillor Wakefield has already given examples, but let me give you another. I have a case of a 79-year old lady with serious blood and heart disorder.

She has recently been hospitalised after a fall and not surprisingly expected some help with cleaning when discharged. Instead, she was given a list of cleaning service providers in her area. This simply is not enough.

Lord Mayor, these cuts are starting to bite. Yes, there is money being put into the Social Services budget and I have to say that people are having their support removed, and the only way it will get back is if Members support Labour's budget to restore the eligibility criteria to where it used to be.

Now let me deal with day centres. Members will be aware of our concerns over the forced closures last year of some day centres over the weekends. Our concern is even greater this year. Officers from Social Services are not hiding the fact they are looking at day centre usage. What does this mean? My worry is that low usage will be used as an excuse for closing day centres.

I have asked officers for a list of day centres with the lowest usage. A number give me concern. According to the figures, places like the day centres in Hyde Park, Fairfield in Farsley, Springfield in Cottingley, Richmond Hill, have the lowest usage rate. Having said that, they are in the range of 60% occupancy, which seems good enough to me.

What I would like from Councillor Harrand is a reassurance that these day centres will open the same hours as they are now in this next year. In a similar vein, I can also seek reassurances about the future of Breece in Scarborough. One minute we have a review and its budget disappears from the balance sheet. The money is now there. What is happening with The Breece?

Lord Mayor, older people need reassurances that they will get the support they deserve. Under this administration they are not receiving it. In fact, services are being reduced and the threat of closure hangs over day centres. Older people deserve better and only Labour's budget will give that to them. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I want to focus on the serious lack of sound governance being exhibited by the coalition who are running the City Council. I believe this underpins the excessively high increase in the Council Tax.

(Laughter) Alarm bells are already ringing in every household of the City, and some of the wiser heads in the Tories are seen privately shaking their heads and muttering unrepeatable sentiments in the family audience.

The coalition has replaced the key principles of sound governance with a new mantra of arrogance, a lack of public and individual accountability and a part-time leadership on full-time pay - a reward system which Unison can only dream about negotiating. No part-time pay, pro rata pay for our Leaders. Cuts everywhere else.

Since taking control of the Council in June 2004, the coalition has embarked on one misadventure after another and shown scant regard for what is best for those that purport to represent the people of Leeds. Something that has become all too prevalent during the coalition's period in office is the marginalisation of elected Members, especially in their capacity as advocates for their wards. Too many decisions are being taken without ward Members being consulted.

One of the first signs of this occurred very soon after the coalition assumed power. As my colleagues have said, it was decided from on high that day centres across the City would begin to close at weekends. This cut was the first in a number of services cut by the administration. Ward Members were not consulted on these proposals and were rightly up in arms when it came to light, not from within the Council but from individuals concerned.

During the debate that followed in Council we were told this was an operational decision and it could be done on a trial basis. Well, that was either one of the longest trial periods in history or perhaps it was never a trial and the plan all along was to close these day centres at weekends. Whatever, in the end a key decision had to be dragged out of the hapless leadership, and of course by that I mean political leadership, of Social Services by the authority's Monitoring Officer.

Another example of Elected Members being kept out of the loop occurred more recently. We received a missive informing us of the new arrangements in the Children's Services Department following the appointment of Rosemary Archer as the new Director of Children's Services. Again, Members were not consulted during any part of the development of this plan. We just received an e-mail from the Deputy Chief Executive informing us of what was to happen. More about that in a later debate.

The point I make here is that governance and accountability have plummeted to hitherto unknown depths within this Council. As my colleague Councillor Wakefield has already stated in his speech, huge numbers of decisions are now being made without any reference to Elected Members. The amount of money spent during the last year by officers who have now had power delegated to them is astronomical.

I am sure, irrespective of political persuasion, we would all agree that currently too many decisions are being taken by delegated powers. We have repeatedly spoken on this subject before in this chamber. Members should not be removed from the process of decision-making. It is true there is no need to involve Councillors in the majority of small and straightforward decisions, but we must be able to have our say on key and major decisions where huge sums of money are involved.

In November 2004 Councillor Carter said, "The delegation of a whole raft of functions which I have spoken on this Council over and over again I believe has been over-delegated to officers and I hope we will do something about that." 18 months later, where are we? These noble sentiments mean that in the last year over 1500 decisions costing over £100 million have been made through delegated decisions. That does not look to me like you are attempting to do anything about that at all.

Planning is another area where decisions are made by officers without seeking the view of elected Members. The scrutiny of applications is lost.

Accommodation review. Over £16 million in accommodation are spent on staff in the next financial year. Of this over £10.5 million spent on office space in the city centre. We can make substantial savings in that area.

There is a veil of secrecy throughout this administration. Whether it is the Roundhay Golf Club saga, where we still do not know what has been spent, or not

THE LORD MAYOR: Can you finish up now, Councillor Gruen, please. You have run out of time.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: One more sentence, Lord Mayor. (Interruptions)
One more sentence. On this side of the chamber (Interruptions) One more sentence, Lord Mayor. On this side of the chamber we are very concerned --- (Interruptions) I am sure you will apply the same to everybody else.

THE LORD MAYOR: I always do, Councillor Gruen. You know that.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I think, like most other Members of the Council - probably 98 of us, including me - we find it very difficult to take lectures on corporate governance from Councillor Gruen. I think perhaps I don't intend to dwell long on Councillor Gruen's contribution, other than to say he had better get used to being in opposition.

If he threw his mind back to when this new structure of local government was imposed upon us by his Government, he would realise that at that time a lot of

the protocols and strategies and delegations were agreed by his party here, and all I would accept from what he said as being sad is that indeed there are far too many delegations. Indeed, it is my view, and remains my view, that Elected Members are not as involved in the running of the authority as they were before this system of local government was brought in - this system that was forced upon us by your Government and accepted by your party in this Council Chamber.

What I can say from my own portfolio of Development is that in the Strategic Review of Planning Services we are reviewing officer delegations, and if you had talked to some of your colleagues you would probably have realised that.

Now, if I may turn to Councillor Wakefield. When I was young, my Lord Mayor, I went to see a film and it was a Disney cartoon, and I remember this song.
COUNCILLOR MRS. A. CARTER: You are not going to sing!

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: "I think I done seen about everything when I see an elephant fly." Now, I don't want to point out to you which Disney cartoon that was from.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: It was "Dumbo".

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: It was "Dumbo", says Councillor Cleasby. It was "Dumbo".

COUNCILLOR ATHA: The resemblance is remarkable.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Right, yes. Well, we have heard from Councillor Wakefield a quite amazing turn-round in the Councillor Wakefield we have grown to know and love, and I use that word extremely loosely, over the past 10 or 12 years.

Now, actually I want to extract and lengthen the period of time that Councillor Harris used on the subject of Council Tax, because when Council Tax was introduced in 1993, if you take the 11 years to the last year you lot were in office, you increased the Leeds element of Council Tax to the people of this City by 66%.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: How much?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: 6.6% average every year for the whole of the 11 years, and now you come along in your second year of your long stint in opposition to tell us you are going to move a Council Tax increase of 4.25%. Interestingly, and rather typical of Labour, don't you think, last year when there were no local elections in May, they proposed a resolution increasing the Council Tax that we were proposing by 0.5%. This year, when there is a local election, they are proposing that they would lower Council Tax by 0.25%, cynical as ever, and the

message is very clear, that this administration will continue to ask the people of Leeds only for what it needs to run the budget, but we will ask for what we need and we will not jeopardise front line services in making sure that we set the correct Council Tax.

I had a look very carefully at Councillor Wakefield's amendment and he displays a lot of the traits of old Labour. It is strange, isn't it, when they go into opposition they very soon revert back to type, you know, spending money before they raise it.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I never changed, Andrew.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Oh, he never changed. He wouldn't have said that a few years ago, would he? Anyway, never mind. He is proposing to save £2.67 million in efficiency savings on procurement, and he says - and he chose his words very carefully - he said that our excellent Procurement Department, if I remember the term correctly, have said that a 1% saving could raise that. Well, they have indeed said that. They have not said it can be delivered, by the way. They said, you know, 1% is that amount of money. Well, indeed it is.

Now, what I have to point out to everybody is that most of the contracts that the Council has have been in place for some considerable time. A series of them come up for review every so often and, of course, we try to get a better deal every time. We are under a lot of pressure with energy costs at the moment, like every man, woman and child in the City. We are one of the biggest users of energy, you know, and you can see us managing to get a saving out of that, can't you? So he extrapolates £2.67 million and he spends it. He hasn't got it, but he spends it.

He then goes on to look at Sundry Debtors, and he never went through the detail of where his money was coming from. He brushed over it very, very quickly, but he looked at Sundry Income. Now, Sundry Income, most of it is the very difficult debts to collect, the stuff that is hard, and he has reduced our provision for bad debts by £300,000 to make his sums add up. He hasn't got it. He has just made a paper calculation and reduced it by £300,000.

But he has done something else as well. He has tried to make a virtue out of not going ahead with our proposals for a Sports Trust and has used the one-off saving of the set-up costs to fund ongoing revenue expenditure. My Lord Mayor, this is typical. This is typical of the George Mudie mathematics of 20 years ago. (Laughter) You know, talk about --- Some of you people won't remember Viv Nicholson. She won the pools, "Live Now, Pay Later", they called her. She spent everything. This fellow is just the same. He is spending Council Taxpayers' money that he hasn't raised on services he is going to provide straight away.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: And everybody else will have to live later.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I have to say, I have for a while wondered about how seriously, Councillor Wakefield, you were taking this job, but you are really, really pushing the boundaries out as to whether anybody thinks you are a serious politician any more, because what you have done is you have spent over £3.5 million that you haven't got and that you have no ---

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: SITFA have passed it.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Hang on, and that you have no guarantee you can get. Now, this wonderful Government of ours, for the year 2007/8 is saying to us, "We would expect Council Tax increases of a similar amount, under 5%." What this fellow has done is to build a structural fault into the budget process of another 2%. Isn't it strange? 4.5% and 2% makes 6.5%, the same average they delivered for those 11 years.

If you want Labour, ladies and gentlemen, back in power next year they will give you what they gave you for 11 years running, an average Council Tax increase of 6.6%, and let me tell you this, that we take very seriously the issue of Council Tax and the effect it has on people on fixed incomes, usually elderly - the very same people you keep mentioning in Social Services, but people who maybe don't qualify for benefits, and every time they get an extra 0.5% on their Council Tax it costs them money out of a fixed income. That is why we try and we will continue to try to keep Council Taxes to the lowest possible level, and let me tell you this: If we are fortunate enough to be in this Chamber as an administration for the next 11 years, our average Council Tax increase will be a hell of a sight less than yours, and what your budget proposal today, Councillor Wakefield, is about is purely this, he is saying, "I am drowning, I am drowning. Will somebody rescue me? I will promise you anything you want", just like you did before the 2004 election. It is not good enough. It won't wash. It ain't true and it doesn't work.

My Lord Mayor, let's move on to anti-social behaviour. We regard our attempts to make sure that across the whole City we are fair, we understand that in every ward in the City there are problems of lawlessness and anti-social behaviour.

We inherited spending on community safety measures in 2004/5 of £2.8 million. This current year we increased it to £3.5 million, 25% over Labour's last budget, and in this year it will go up to £4.2 million, 18% over our first budget, which means we will be spending 50% more than Labour spent on community safety.

(Applause)

ASBOs, and I think if you haven't already picked it up for yourselves - I am sure you probably have - the local election campaign has just begin. It is going to be based, as far as they are concerned, on lies - lies about cuts that don't exist, lies about things that have not happened. Well, let's be ready for them and give them it back full measure.

Let's talk about Councillor Wakefield's false claims on the number of ASBOs

that we have issued. This administration's record on Anti-Social Behaviour Orders compares very favourably with Labour administration. In less than 2 years we have issued 271 ASBOs compared with 153 issued by Labour in the 5 year period up to June 2004. Fact.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: We didn't have them for 5 years.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: (Interruptions and applause) This is an increase of over 60% in the number of ASBOs.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: It is a lie.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: It is a lie. This is a lie.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: It didn't happen. It didn't happen. We didn't have ASBOs (Interruptions).

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Hang on. (Interruptions) Are you telling me (Interruptions) Well, Councillor Gruen is talking about lies. I will leave him with that one. Let's move on.

We issued 271 ASBOs compared with 153 issued by Labour. Fact. No? You finally agree.

We are going to continue fighting in every ward in this City against anti-social behaviour. I am delighted we have included in this budget a third PCSO for every ward in this City. Remember this, that the Labour Group have opposed the deployment of PCSOs in every ward in the city. Councillor Lewis has opposed it. His colleagues have opposed it, and they will take PCSOs away from Garforth, from Pudsey, from Calverley and Farsley, from Horsforth, from all the outer areas of the City and probably some of the inner areas as well. Heaven knows what they will do with them.

Social Services, my Lord Mayor. In our first year as an administration we increased spending on Social Services by £16 million. In this our second year we are increasing it again by £17 million. Way, way, way above the Council Tax increases, way, way, way above inflation. Nobody - nobody - can say we have cut Social Services. We inherited a deficit of £17 million. We know they don't like to admit it. We know every one of them said they knew nothing about it. That is how competent they were, but £17 million deficit was there and somebody must have known about it. We dealt with that and we increased spending on Social Services, and we shall continue to increase spending on Social Services, and if most of us have our way it will continue to be way above inflation and a way above the levels of Council Tax increases, because we know that people who need our support and deserve our support should get our support.

My Lord Mayor, in the 2 years - less than 2 years - that this administration has been in power we inherited a backlog of over £50 million in Highway repairs. We have the biggest budget to repair roads and pavements of any local authority in the country.

We are investing in our parks and our countryside areas at a level that is getting us national recognition even from their Government as an exemplar that we are prepared to invest in our public open spaces. We have reinstated the Private Streetworks Programme that they scrapped, and we have added a fourth year to it.

We are opening a record number of children's centres and - and - we are spending in those children's centres above Government guidelines, with a commitment to teaching facilities in those children's centres above Government guidelines.

We promised that we would rectify the mismatch of funding between junior and secondary schools because we know that we have to attain better levels of education at secondary level, and we have done it. We said we would clamp down on anti-social behaviour, and we have done it. Every front line service in this Council has received more funding, and is continuing to receive more funding, than was given by that lot, and every pledge that we set out in our pooled manifestos when this administration took office is being fulfilled. That is a record to be proud of, and we have done it with the two lowest consecutive Council Tax increases since the Council Tax was introduced. It is a record to be proud of, and we must not allow ourselves to be sidelined, side-tracked or lied about, and I don't use the word advisedly, I use it deliberately - lied about by politicians who are desperate to save their own skins at the next local election, because that is what the whole tenor of Councillor Wakefield's amendment was about. It was made worse, as usual, by Councillor Gruen's intervention, but it highlighted the point I made. We must be proud of our record. We are proud of our record. We have delivered a whole series of service improvements.

I want to finish up on this note, and it refers to two things, really, the Capital Programme and also Marketing Leeds and the vision of the City for the outside world. First of all, the Capital Programme. We introduced our market town and village town centre initiative scheme, which was not supported by them until they realised how popular it was and then they started to. I mean, no-one actually believed that if they were in power that they would carry it out. It would be one of the first things to go, and that is something else we will be telling the electorate, by the way. But there were two purposes to that: first of all, the acceptance that every part of the City is important, inner city, outer area, leafy suburb, whatever. It all goes to make the rich mix that is the City of Leeds, and an acceptance that many areas had been starved of investment for 24 years by this lot, and a belief that if you want to move Leeds forward you move it forward as one City, all proud of our individual communities and their identities but all proud of the City as the generator of the economic wealth, the generator of prosperity, the vehicle by which we deliver the investment, particularly into the poorer areas of the City.

I think that is one of the reasons that the Labour Group set up or agreed to the arm's length company that is Marketing Leeds. I mean, it wasn't us. We inherited it, and we moved ahead with it, and this year you would think, to hear Councillor Wakefield talk, that this year we had been the major funder of Marketing Leeds. In fact, the private sector put £300,000 into Marketing Leeds. I think we put in about 130 and the Regional Development Agency 110.

To make the disparaging remarks that Councillor Wakefield has made I think is really quite worrying, because it seems to me that what he is saying is that Labour no longer wants to promote the City of Leeds as the capital of the City region, the place into which people should invest, the place that needs to generate prosperity if we are to achieve anything.

It seems to me what we heard from Councillor Wakefield today was an abdication speech of any role of leadership in the City at all, that now he really has become a politician who really wants to whinge and moan and criticise, and doesn't want to look at the larger agenda at all, but I will tell you this, the people of this City will not thank him for that, because there are issues upon which, and I am not pretending that Marketing Leeds is the best thing since sliced bread, it is a work in progress and it had better be a work in successful progress or there will be a lot of very searching questions asked. But, you know, as I said, they set it up, we took it on board, and I have never heard a Leader in this Council of any party be as disparaging about things to do with this City as Councillor Wakefield has been either in this chamber or through the columns of the press over the past few weeks, and another one we will be referring to later.

It is no way to serve your City to run it down in the way he is now seeking to do, and that is why I finish on this note, that his amendment was all about self-preservation, nothing about better services, nothing about lower Council Tax - all about saving their own skins at an election they are dreading. Bring the election on. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Lord Mayor, I suppose, Andrew, you should be congratulated in making a speech like that, because I suspect you actually believe that sanctimonious twaddle you have just come out with. If that is the best you can do, and some of us had previously rated you on a personal basis. We think when the 6 months is there when you are Leader, as opposed to Mark Harris, the City actually has a better focus. We may not like you and your politics but we think you are actually better in those 6 months at leading the City on a private basis, and that is the view of many individuals in the Council, notwithstanding our political differences. But I think what you just said about Councillor Wakefield really demeans the respect that some of us have for you.

However, I am going to talk mainly about Social Services and I would like to thank, together with Andrew and Councillor Selby, all the work that has been put in

by officers in Social Services who have been assisting us in the Opposition to try and get to grips with the Social Services budget and, of course, the budget itself and any amendment put to it does have to pass the SITFA test, of course, in order to be put on the order paper but, as we all know, there are parts of the budget which are more aspirational than real. (Interruptions) No, always were, and there are aspects of Social Services, for example, Councillor Carter has talked about taking strong stern action when they came to power. You have got exactly the same pressure on the Social Services budget that the Labour administration has.

You are facing probably at the end of the next financial year a deficit of the kind of proportions that the Labour administration struggled to get to grips with - probably. We will see. I will give you one example. We were told last year you were going to be really tough, really, really tough, really hard on staff sickness. There was a plan within the Social Services budget to have an actual reduction in the amount of staff sickness, which is fine as an aspiration. Who is going to possibly disagree with that?

Of course, the real world is different because there are all kinds of pressures on people. Some aspects of work in some parts of Social Services Department can be more stressful than others, and the reality - and officers admitted to it - is despite their best laid plans the sickness level is the same as it was before, and you will find aspects - and in some parts of the department they are worse, actually, yes. But I am not criticising anyone who is running the Department at officer level; they have done their best, but I do think the politicians, and you have got at least two politicians with some kind of Social Services portfolio - I think Councillor Jennings has some responsibilities, although I personally don't know what they are - and Councillor Harrand, perhaps you can tell us in the terms of this budget what you are actually going to do to meet your aspirations in terms of staff sickness.

Councillor Harrison mentioned The Breece. The Breece provides short break holidays in Scarborough, in a property owned by the Council. There is a variety of accommodation there. We know from our own researches that it is the en-suite rooms which tend to get better booked, and we understand all of that, and even in the past a Labour administration has considered closing it. In the end we decided, because there was a great public uproar, outcry not to close it, but last year we had a debate in Council about The Breece - was it going to close, was it not going to close, and in the budget that you voted for in the administration last year, you removed the line of the subsidy for The Breece over 3 years, and some of the money instead was to be spent on alternative ways of sending people away, if I can use that term, to enjoy themselves.

Well, there is nothing in the budget at all this year for The Breece. It has just disappeared into some kind of black hole. I am therefore asking anybody who feels they can speak with some authority on behalf of the administration, and that is quite a lot of Councillors these days, and we don't care who it is, can you tell us,

within the context of today's discussion, does this budget that you are proposing mean that The Breeze is going to close or alternatively can you allay people's fears and tell people, no, this budget means The Breeze is going to remain open. You have other opportunities to speak, we would really like to know the answer on that one.

Some of us have also got concerns about adult training centres. There is a rumour going round that maybe the one at Wetherby is up for closure. I don't know whether it is or not, I am just telling you what the rumours are.

It would be really useful, bearing in mind we are in Opposition and you are in power, perhaps one of you get up and tell us, are any of the adult training centres going to close? Is Wetherby going to close or is Wetherby going to remain open? This is your opportunity to tell us.

Finally, earlier on, when Councillor Wakefield made reference to some research that had been done in the City, some of you seemed to imply he was lying or making it up. Not at all. I have got the dossier here. The organisation is Leeds Federated Housing Association, Community Link, Age Concern, Otley Action for Older People, Leeds Irish Health & Homes, Action for Gipton Elderly. I am not asking for an answer today, but is anyone from the administration either going to answer today if they can or at the next Council meeting give a specific response to the specific examples that Councillor Wakefield gave, because many of us on this side have great fears for the level of Social Services provision for many people across this great City of ours. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR DOWSON: I just want to focus for one or two minutes on one small but important part of Community Safety. I would imagine that, provided you are in good health, how safe you feel in your own home, your streets, and out and about, is one of the most important things to the residents of this city. You have put in a derisory sum of money for closing alleys and ginnels and you have put in absolutely no money at all to close rights of way. There is no CROW officer now in Leeds.

What were once quiet leafy lanes, safe areas for residents to walk down, are now magnets for anti-social behaviour, drugs, fly-tipping. They are usually dimly lit and they are full of litter. Ask the people who live near ginnels what they think. In fact, I think Councillor Harker did actually do that. There was a meeting about the Carrholm Grove ginnel recently. Councillor Hamilton, Councillor Rafique and I talk all the time with our residents at meetings about the ginnels in our area. A large number of residents turned out on Sunday afternoon to see us about their ginnel at the back of their street the Newtons. At residents' meetings all the time, the Potternewtons, the Miles Hills, St. Martins, the problems caused by the existence of these crime highways is evident. Our area is not unique. Many of you over there will have the same things at your own residents' meeting.

Councillor Carter seems pleased that he is spending Council Taxpayers' money towards wardens - a warden in every area - and that is really good but, surely, how about spending in areas where it is really needed?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: They are needed everywhere.

COUNCILLOR DOWSON: Oh, I doubt that. I am sure that most of you will have attended meetings and listened to some horrific stories about intimidation, about firebombings, as in the Carrholms, burglary as in St. Martins, muggings and assault as in the Miles Hills, anti-social behaviour everywhere, all associated with ginnels, alleys and rights of way.

The police have made their feelings clear. The residents have made their feelings clear, and look at it this way: what savings are you making by not providing sufficient money to do the job? What price is peace of mind? What price would you put on not living in fear? What price? The invisible cost, the intangibles, I mean, what price?

This is your second budget and a pattern is beginning to emerge. The axe seems to fall on vulnerable, elderly, the less articulate. You have done it time and time and time again. You seem to know the cost of everything - the cost of everything - and the value of absolutely nothing. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: My Lord Mayor, there was one film that I was reminded of. It was the one that gave me nightmares as a child - Disney film - Pinocchio - because there's a few long noses over there, and they are getting blooming longer. Either that or they have got absolutely no memory of the things they said in this Council chamber a few years back.

I look particularly at Andrew Carter. Nobody, he said, has derided the efforts of the City the way that Keith has. You know, what has happened over the past 20 years where the Labour administration actually put huge efforts into working with the rest of the City to boost the City's image. Have you all forgotten that? Well, probably you have. That wouldn't surprise me, because there is so much that you just seem to have ignored.

We are very keen on Marketing Leeds - as you say, it was set up by us - but not keen on an organisation spending £70,000 on a party. Certainly if I don't get an invite, I am not keen on the party at £70,000, but seriously --- Come on, you know I am not a champagne socialist as you well know, Mark.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Your Leader was there drinking champagne.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I was there, not drinking - I was driving.
(Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: If I had one I would stick to it. But let's talk about the kind of serious issues behind that. This organisation that is publicly funded should not be spending that kind of money on parties, so on the one hand you have got huge amounts spent on a party and then you have got these very kind of dismissive comments about Members' Support, money spent on Members' Support.

Now, I am not arguing the particulars of that, but money spent on Members' Support is not money spent on Members. It is money spent on assisting Members to achieve their job as Councillors and to help their constituents. That is what it is about, Mark. Have you missed that point over all those years? That is what it is about. So when you kind of, "Oh, yes, it is just Members' Support" - Members need support to do their jobs properly.

Figures in terms of ASBOs that were questioned were actually supplied to the Home Office by Gillian Mayfield, who Les knows well, but this kind of anti-historical point of view that we have where we get castigated for not using ASBOs when they didn't exist. Well, you know, hands up, I am deeply ashamed that we didn't use ASBOs before they came into effect. Well, that is terrible, Andrew. Terrible. Terrible.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You are going to have to withdraw that in a moment. You don't know when your own Government brought them in, that is your problem.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: Don't you worry, I do. Now, just a couple of other things. We did have Mark saying about how well they have done in terms of the Council Tax increase. What you did have was a very good year in terms of the Police and Fire Authority precepts, but what was rather interesting was the Police Authority meeting where you had Councillor Richard Brett, coalition Member, jumping up and demanding a 6.5% increase at the Police authority. Les Carter, on the other hand, sticking with the rest of the Police authority for 5%. Now, what Richard didn't realise, probably because he is kind of fairly illiterate in these terms, is that 1.5% would have made absolutely no difference to the black hole that the Police Authority is in this year. You know, but what a coalition - Lead Member. What can you say about this wonderful coalition? Do they not really talk to each other?

Just a couple of other things. One thing that has not been mentioned is Fairer Charging. Now, do you remember (Interruptions) all the hand-wringing, "Oh my God, we would do anything to reverse Fairer Charging. Every year we will revisit it. We are so conscience-stricken", and you are busy crucifying Sherree Bradley over Fairer Charging, and look what we have now. We don't even have a mention of it. If you are pouring all this money into the Social Services budget, has there been any consideration given to reversing that? Absolutely not. (Interruption) Oh yes, you must have given it half a moment's consideration.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Have you reversed it?

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: We have not been in power since then. We were not going to commit ourselves to reversing it because we thought it was right and we stick to the things that we consider right.

Just in terms of one last thing. You talked a lot about PCSOs and one thing. One promise that you made to us was a police base in every ward. Every ward was going to have a police base. Where are they, Les? Where are they? We are still waiting. Have you established one? No. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Yes. You don't know what is going on, Richard. Spend more time here. (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Was that a speech or did he just wind up?

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Lord Mayor, like almost everybody else I hadn't intended to speak but I am provoked, and I do so more in sorrow than in anger, but only just. This won't be as organised as it would like to be because I will just deal with various questions put to me. Neil, it is the same speech --- Where has he gone? The same speech every year. We have had it in 2004, 2005, now 2006.

You want to know about The Breece? The Breece will not close. I think I said that last year, I will say it next year, I am fairly sure. You are going to have to go back and delete something from your election leaflets now, I suspect; that paragraph is out, isn't it? Have you got that?

Thanks for the point about sickness. We will take that back to the staff in Social Services and tell them that these implications of malingering and staying at home when they could be at work have been broadcast in this Council. (Interruptions) Sickness? Sickness? Well, they are either sick or they are not sick. If you are suggesting they are not sick, we will tell them.

5,000 cases going to be reviewed next year. Nothing like 5,000 cases will be reviewed next year. 8,000 cases will be reviewed. We have that statutorily every year to review every case. Don't go round giving us credit for what statutorily we have to do. We have no option with that at all.

I like the bit about, "There are rumours going round." That was good, wasn't it? So anybody can start a rumour, can't they? Yes. Going round the whole of the Labour Group, yes.

Also, I don't quite understand Richard's point about Fairer Charging. He is desperately urging us to do something he doesn't agree with, as far as I understand.

Then there is this in the Evening Post last night. Did you see this? We have no support. Yes. This is in two parts, if you read it. The bit round the bottom is about a young lady called Alexandra who lives in North Leeds, and includes comments from our Councillors and MPs commenting on Alexandra's case. Unlike, I suspect, people there, I went to see Alexandra's social worker, the social worker's manager, and the young man who looks after Alexandra from the Mental Health Trust.

If anybody else has done that research you must tell me, but you felt confident to comment in the Evening Post. This article is 10% of the story on a most generous interpretation. I only know 50% of the story, but even that would stop me writing this rubbish. The young lady in the Evening Post was described as having a borderline personality disorder. How would you feel if somebody you cared about had half a page in the Evening Post for all her friends and neighbours to read about that?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Ask the people who sent the report to the press.

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Absolutely. Then there is the bit in the middle about the dodgy dossier. I began to read these examples here and I thought, "Well, that looks familiar, and that looks familiar." Then I read the bit about the man who was asking for a care home to provide halal meals and I thought, "I have seen this before."

This was a confidential document presented to a meeting set up by Social Services and attended by representatives of 16 voluntary organisations - I have got the list - on February 2nd in Room 4 in this building. I convened that meeting. I chaired that meeting with the genuine wish to work with these organisations. The purpose was to find ways to improve our own care services, interface with Social Services, and perhaps we could do it with the Health Service as well.

In preparation for that meeting on February 2nd staff at the Old People's Forum compiled a list of case studies to act as a catalyst for discussion. Just think about how you would feel if you found details of your granny's frailties displayed in the evening paper without permission, without consultation, without a shred of compassion. Would you like to see their personal details printed as a shocking dossier?

There was no mention about the purpose of this meeting for which this paper was prepared, or the positive plan that we have got since then to work out solutions to the small number of problems we identified.

I am going to cut some of these out. Members of Council, the people of Leeds this week have been treated to a ragbag of inaccuracies. Five citizens have had their personal details disclosed to public view. Countless more have

been made needlessly anxious by the outrageous claims of this article. This is a private document prepared by the voluntary sector for a meeting on February 2nd.

In a polite, charitable, voluntary way the charitable sector is furious. Ring the Older People's Forum up and ask them what they think. We have seen in print their reaction to this document emerging in the Evening Post. You have had your headline. No doubt it will all be in your leaflets, but what a cost has that been to people in Leeds to see all this confidential information? (Interruptions) A confidential document prepared for a meeting on February 2nd. Ring the charitable sector tomorrow morning and ask what they think about this. And finally ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harrand, I must ask you to finish there, otherwise I shall incur the wrath of a previous speaker.

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: If Neil Taggart was running Social Services they would put their arms round him, they would say "Neil" and he would. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harrand, if I allowed you to go on, and I would have been personally happy to have done that, but it would, I suspect, encourage a further violation from the next speaker, Councillor J. L. Carter.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, you won't get a violation by me because I am not going to be too long.

I just want to correct something, the screams that came across at Councillor Andrew Carter when he referred to 5 years of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, etc. I am not certain he is not incorrect, actually, because let me just tell you what it is. Section 1 of the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 introduced these ASBOs, and it was in 1999 that the first ones were used in the country. That is true. If that is true, then can somebody withdraw the fact that somebody shouted across to Andrew Carter that he is lying. This Council could have used them. This Council chose not to use them. That is your choice, but don't tell lies on when they could or could not be issued. They could be issued from 1999 and if you didn't issue it, you didn't issue it.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Can people refer to the verbatim when it comes out and then if an apology is necessary ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Bernard, you needn't say anything. I suggest you sit down. (Interruptions)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Atha, if you would like to speak you may do so after Councillor Carter has finished.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, just coming back to the point that was made at the back there by the lady at the back there. Let me just tell her once more, there are more police officers in Chapeltown than anywhere in, say, my ward or other wards similar to mine, because naturally more police officers are

placed in there by the Police Force itself. What we are trying to do is to give a balance across the area to give some extra policing in areas which do not have it, and that is what the two and eventually the three PCSOs will achieve.

Now, if you don't want them in Garforth, please say so. If you don't want them in Templenewsam, please say so. If you don't want them in North Ward, please say so. But you won't say that. What you will do is you will write a leaflet out and say you are putting them into certain areas. Morley has got quite a lot in Morley because Morley themselves were one of the pioneers of this and showed the way by getting extra ones by their own local Council. They have done a very good job. I am delighted at that. (Applause)

If you look at Anti-Social Behaviour Orders - it is worth repeating this because I know you are always thinking you think it is macho to actually send out Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. I don't, personally. I think it is a form of legislation that we use for a certain purpose. It is not giving you any more strength or me any more strength how many I issue. It just happens that since we took over in June 2004 271 have been issued and prior to that 153 have been issued. Those are the figures. Those are the figures given to me by the officers when I asked for it. It is meaningless because the reality is if you now look at this document which your Government are now pushing - have you all seen this? It is called, "Respect". This is what the Government ---

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: It is Galloway, isn't it? (Laughter)

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: No, this is not. This is actually Tony Blair, and I don't think he has joined with him actually. This is Tony Blair's "Respect". What is Tony Blair saying in this? I will tell you what he is saying, he is saying the Anti-Social Behaviour Orders are just one part, but he wants more things doing. He wants more Parenting Orders. He wants more Anti-Social Behaviour Care Orders, all sorts of things he wants. He is asking for something completely different, and let me just tell you this. He is actually asking for what Leeds are currently doing. Leeds are actually doing this, and for that reason Leeds has been selected - has been selected - as one of the areas to pilot his "Respect" scheme.

There you go, you see, they are always attacking us and telling us we are no use, but his Government don't accept that, so if you just get up and apologise, whoever said it, to Andrew Carter about you couldn't issue an ASBO 5 years ago, you could.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Apologise.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis, point of personal explanation.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: My understanding - the personal explanation - was that the ASBOs, when they first came in, were for various technical reasons almost

unusable and it was only about 2002 it was possible to use them in a practical sense and that was when the Labour administration started to use them.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, on a point of personal explanation. I was speaking when Councillor Gruen quite clearly said, "Lies, lies" twice. It was heard by plenty of other people. I also heard Councillor Lewis issue the word "Lies". I was reading a very clearly prepared briefing document. It was quite obvious to me the information was correct. I expect both Members to withdraw the word, "Lies" because by implication they were calling me a liar, which I am not.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Can I take advantage ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Atha, I have you down to speak next.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I think if anyone is deserving of an apology they should get it, but I think when we see the verbatim we shall decide whether or not an apology is in order. We have got plenty of precedents for this ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I didn't ask for an apology, I asked for the withdrawal of the remarks.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: -- because I remember Councillor Harris three or four times making a public apology in this Council because he had got it wrong. Now, that is pretty average for him but it was very honest of him, and I assure you that on this side if someone has behaved in a manner which is inappropriate in that respect then they will, I am sure, feel it incumbent upon them to apologise. But let's see what the verbatim says.

Now, I am coming back to Councillor Harrand.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Withdraw the comment. I don't want an apology.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Councillor Harrand is someone I think for whom, as we have in many other cases, decent respect, because we accept he is an honest person trying to do an honest job, and we are not in any way attacking an individual personally, but what Councillor Harrand did not say in his speech was that he denied the accuracy of these reports. He tried to deflect our attention to the fact that how wrong it was that people should have their private business displayed in the press.

I have just been looking at the report here which I had seen but not read particularly hard before. There are one or two names but the other names are not given and, quite frankly, if the press is ever put in the position it cannot reveal facts like this, then we are moving Councillor Harrand into the most desperate kind of society. I admire an evening paper, or a daily paper, or the Morley Observer, or

any other paper which has information which it feels is in the public interest and it should publish it. It may be inconvenient for people who are standing and defending a particular case, but it is wrong for us in this Council to give one scintilla of pressure on to any newspaper not to blow the whistle when the whistle wants blowing, and if you read - and I appeal to, I was going to say to the Liberals, they have a reputation for being more caring but I don't see any aspect of that at all. No, I don't.

I look just across both sides of this chamber, that half, and say, "You are no different, no worse, no better than any of us; we are a reasonable cross-section", but you must admit that when you read the details of these cases given, thank God via the local paper who has the courage to do it, you must feel there is something wrong.

Now, Councillor Harrand did not deny the accuracy over those reports. He was really claiming the paper should not have published them. Well, I should say we as individuals of Council, irrespective of whether it means one vote or half a vote out of the several hundred thousand that are going in the city, we should say we should not play that kind of game. Let's support any press organisation that publishes the facts and if they get them wrong let's insist that they publish an apology and a correction but, my God, we depend for our safety upon the freedom of the press and the right of them to blow the whistle, and in local affairs there are always whistles to blow, and we should not be ashamed of having these problems revealed because when they are revealed then people like Peter, I am sure, will take them up and see that they are solved. Unless they are known, that won't happen.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harrand has a point of personal explanation.

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: I am in no way able to confirm or deny the contents of those documents. They were supplied to us by the charitable, voluntary sector, completely in confidence. I don't know whether they are true or false. I have no reason to think they are anything but true, but I cannot say in detail they are accurate. They were supplied to me on a confidential basis to the meeting on February 2nd on the understanding it was for that meeting only. The fact that it has got in the Evening Post annoys me but infuriates the charitable sector. Ring them in the morning, Bernard, and see how they feel. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I have got to say that was not a personal explanation, it was a different speech, but I won't take the same advantage.

THE LORD MAYOR: Very kind of you, Councillor Atha.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Unfortunately, Lord Mayor, I never saw the film, "Dumbo" - I am obviously not old enough - but what we have been treated to this afternoon from Labour is, and I do use the word advisedly here, is an incredible

performance. It is incredible in its literal sense, completely unbelievable, and I am drawn to the conclusion that we have had a series of contributions from Rumpelstiltskin and the Woodentops. Now, you remember the Woodentops - at the end of the programme they all climbed back into the box and waved, "Bye-bye". Well, that is just about all that is worth saying about the Woodentops' contribution, except for Spotty Dog himself, Peter Gruen, who had the temerity to talk to us about accountability and about governance. I would simply say to you, "Gus John". Okay, remember Gus John, you lot, and then don't start lecturing us on cover-ups, accountability and openness.

Now, Rumpelstiltskin, aka Keith Wakefield. You remember Rumpelstiltskin was the nice little chap who sat in his room and thought that he could determine his destiny by spinning hay into gold, and that is really what Keith has been trying to do this afternoon. He has been taking figures and trying to spin them into electoral gold, and I think we should look at some of the things that he said in his budget amendment.

Let's just first of all talk about the astronomical sum of money that its spending is decided by officers, £105 million spent without accountability. That is less than 0.5% of our budget, and all I would say is this, I am surprised it is a figure as small as that. We have a highly professional, competent, highly-paid senior officer corps, and I am perfectly happy for them to determine spending at that level without having to constantly run to Elected Members to see if it is alright for them to do this or do that.

Corporate Communications and Marketing - another fantastic figure that he tried to spin into something else. There used to be seven people in Corporate Communications and now it is 29. No, it is not. It is seven. It started at seven; it still is seven. 29 is a complete piece of fiction, and we have this staggering - what is it? It is the conversion on the road to Damascus, "Scrap the Council newspaper" - the Council newspaper that you lot defended tooth and nail to the bitter end, costing £165,000 a year. Yes, we have still got it, but it only costs the people of Leeds £40,000 a year, and if I may say it is a quality piece of literature now, not the rank you used to put out.

Sickness - another amazing statistic. Sickness levels according to Keith Wakefield are up to an average of 14 days sickness a year. No, they are not. They are down to 12.4 days a year, down half a day from last year. It is a complete piece of nonsense for you to say otherwise.

The re-introduction of Proof of Age - you cannot re-introduce something that was never there in the first place. That is actually called black magic. (Applause)

And then, of course we have the continuing attack on Social Services by this trial by anecdote, and the demand that we deny or confirm what was printed in the paper last night. Well, in due course we will be able to get to grips with that, but I just remind Council of the great anecdote Rumpelstiltskin came up with last

year - the unfortunate lady in Kippax who under Labour received one hour's help a week and under our administration, as it transpires, receives 14 hours help per week and, well, if that is the sort of trial by anecdote that Rumpelstiltskin and the Woodentops come up with, bring it on, because it is fallacious in the extreme.

This document that was waved, the Social Services document, which is a cover-up of a £14 million overspend, I sent a note to the Director of Social Services in the course of the debate saying, "Please confirm to me there is no such document and no such overspend." The note came back confirming that is the case. Yes, there probably will be an overshoot on our original budget of maybe £3 million or £4 million, but I don't apologise for that because we use that extra money to further defend services.

Andrew Carter has talked about the reliability, the credibility of Labour in opposition based upon their record when they were in power. They now want to convince everybody that somehow they can create efficiencies which this profligate administration are unable to produce. Well, in our two years in office we have produced over £21 million worth of efficiencies - not cuts. In your last two years you managed just over £12 million. Why should anybody believe that suddenly you can work this miracle and produce efficiencies of a level where there is absolutely no evidence you were ever able to do it?

And then we come to the utter fantasy of the Council Tax suggestion, 4.25%. Rumpelstiltskin is a Council Tax yo-yo. Well, because I have not been here as long as Andrew I can't go back quite as far as him, but I have been going through my figures in my little folder here now, and this is what happened with Labour's Council Tax record. It went up, down, down, down, up, stayed the same, went up and came down again. I am tempted to start talking about - well, I mean, (inaudible) sort of sexual references about things going up and down but I am not going to go there, but it is utterly absurd for anybody to believe that a party that was in control for 23 years and singularly failed ever to produce a Council Tax of 4.25% can suddenly work a miracle and produce it now. There is not a shred of evidence anywhere to suggest that your budget amendment is worth the paper on which it is written.

I just want to conclude by reminding everybody what happened to Rumpelstiltskin in the end. In the end, poor little Rumpelstiltskin, because he was found out, stamped his feet and fell through the floor, and that is what is going to happen to your electoral fortunes. They are going to go through the floor. Bye-bye. (Applause)

(Councillor Wakefield's amendment was defeated)

(The motion was carried)

REPORTS - LATE ITEM

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, could I move under Council Procedure Rule 2.2(f) that Councillor Campbell be replaced by Councillor Pryke on Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Councillor Kirkland be replaced by Councillor Jennings on the Standards Committee.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Seconded.

(The motion was carried)

ITEM 6 - RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXECUTIVE BOARD

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, in moving the minutes of the Executive Board, could I draw Members' attention to Minute 217 on page 52, which is the proposed memorial for the Leeds Pals.

I am grateful to Councillor Minkin for passing me a copy of a book that was produced by the Leeds Libraries and Arts Committee, I presume in 1919/1920, which is entitled, "Leeds In the Great War 1914-1918". This book contains ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Carter, can I just stop you a moment. We are on 6 at the moment, the Recommendations of the Executive Board. From what you have said, it sounds as though you might be on the next item, where we are talking about Council Procedures under Item 7, Minutes. I am advised that we are perhaps one step ahead.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Okay. Well, I often am one step ahead, my Lord Mayor, certainly of Councillors Wakefield, Gruen and Lewis.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You are going in the wrong direction, Andrew.

THE LORD MAYOR: I take it you have moved the recommendations of the Executive Board. Councillor Harris to second.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Second, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: My Lord Mayor, first of all, I would just like to replicate much of what Councillor Finnigan has said in his enlightened and cogent view.

I just want to turn to the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan, and I am pleased to see that £33 million is going to West Yorkshire Highways Capital Maintenance, a third of which is going to Leeds. It fits in with the strategy approach which is to maintain and improve roads, pavements, rights of way conditions for all users, pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles and freight-users.

The other strategy approach, A4, to maintaining and developing public transport networks throughout our bus and rail system will come later, I am pretty

certain, but £10 million is a start from the Department of Transport. If the money was increased six-fold, the City of Leeds would get the roads that it deserves. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I would like to make brief comment on the West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan which is presented for approval today and is perhaps one of those worthy documents which go on and on so that it might be doubted whether anyone manages to read them through or makes much use of them as works of reference.

Many of the maps and diagrams in the black and white copies sent out for this meeting are beyond understanding. The originals must rely on colour. Division into four sections, each with its own numbering and rather sketchy indexing, cannot help or encourage users and the landscape format is rather awkward.

References to Supertram have been weeded out or qualified in one case, but there has not been time to weigh up its abandonment or to suggest alternative investment which surely must take place.

At 2.3 on page 15 of our Minute book there is a mention of a supplementary statement about this, so the plan may be overtaken by events even as it is adopted. On 2.2 also on page 15 of the Minute Book it is said that the provisional plan submitted last year was marked by the Department of Transport within the main lump of "Promising" plans. It seems unlikely that the final version will rise into the higher, "Very promising" range.

A lot of work has gone into the plan and it holds much valuable information. With a bit more thought it could have been much more usable and much better. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, the Local Transport Plan document is something, of course, that we agree as well with our partners in West Yorkshire. Councillor McArdle is right, at the end of the day it comes down to how much money we are going to get, and what I can tell you is whatever we get it is going to be grossly inadequate to fulfill the transport needs of this City, let alone the aspirations of our other four partner West Yorkshire authorities.

I can't see that we can rise above the "Promising" mark without making commitments to a Government that is scared of implementing its own policies nationally and tries to twist the arms of local authorities into doing the job for them, which we will not be prepared to do. However, we have to make sure that we use the LTP wisely, and I shall be looking very carefully at the projects that come forward in Leeds under the LTP to make sure that they don't add to congestion rather than reduce it. Traffic congestion of all sorts, whether it is caused by public transport or private transport, has to be avoided. Our bottom line should be we

are seeking to move all modes of transport around this City more freely and with less environmental impact, and that is what we are going to be trying to do.

(The recommendations of Executive Board were carried)

ITEM 7 - MINUTES

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I move the minutes in the terms of the notice, my Lord Mayor, and whilst doing so now once again refer you to page 52, minute 217 and to the book kindly loaned to me by Councillor Minkin which I will, I promise, return to her, and it is published by the Leeds Libraries and Arts Committee some time after the end of the Great War, so it was published by this Council and it has in it the Roll of Honour with all the names of all the people who died on active service in the Great War, a total of 9,640 people from this City.

What I wanted to mention that for now was that when we are honouring the Leeds Pals on July 1st, when we put the new memorial near the Cenotaph, we should also remember that there were thousands of other servicemen who were not actually in the Pals battalions but nevertheless were citizens of Leeds and gave their life in that war. So I am grateful to Councillor Minkin for giving me this book because it does give me the opportunity to underline the debt of gratitude we owe to all those people.

I think you would agree with me that the Pals battalions across the north of England were unique in as much as they magnified the tragedy of death in wartime because of their very nature, that the battalions were encouraged to be brothers, friends, school chums, and so when there was a death it was felt even more widely than would normally and tragically be the case. So, thank you, Councillor Minkin, for letting me see that and it does give me the opportunity to underline the debt of gratitude we owe to all those men who so many years ago now gave their lives to this City and this country.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I now invite comments on the minutes, and we start with the Central & Corporate, Councillor McArdle on page 40.

(a) Executive Board:

(i) Central & Corporate

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to speak on two minutes, page 40, Minute 188 and page 47, Minute 204. The first one is around the grass-cutting contract, and I am sure it is not a very savoury episode in this Council's history but, nevertheless, it happened, and I was not one of those Ward Members that actually went round peering behind

3 ft. tall blades of grass, because I am obviously far less handsome than all those, but what I would like to draw to everybody's attention is that, irrespective of the contract, it was a new contract and new contracts take time to bed down, and I think we should have all borne that in mind at the outset and this year will be the test. I hope it comes good. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

One more, sorry, the second minute is on page 47, 204. We have all expressed our delight at the CPA 4-star performance, and in my limited two year experience as a Ward Member I have had some great service from some excellent officers and excellent departments. However, there are still some departments and sections that are not performing adequately at all. I am not going to name any departments, or I am going to name a couple of departments. I am not going to tell you whether they are actually good performing departments or whether they are poorly performing departments, but I will mention Building Compliance, and I will also mention certain sections of Environmental Health. I will leave Members to draw their own conclusions. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: I also wish to speak on page 40, Minute 188, it is the Ground Maintenance contract. I do concur that, you know, all new contracts need bedding in, but on this occasion there were several huge cock-ups, shall we call them, that helped it along its way, and I think it is time that we asked the Lead Member for City Services to apologise to the people of Leeds because, even though the Project Management Group were in the main found guilty of many of the mistakes that culminated in the débâcle that was the grass-cutting contracts last year, Randall Brown did take full responsibility for the outcome and I do think therefore it is down to the Executive Board Member to apologise to the citizens of Leeds.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: I am speaking to the same minute on page 40, 188. After privatising the grass-cutting last year, the administration rightly took a lot of criticism over the teething problems, but this saw the unique situation where, in response to Councillor Lowe, Councillor Harris did apologise on behalf of the administration, taking it to the very top because it was an important issue.

He also promised that service would improve and by the end of the year everywhere had been cut, and I am advised that does include Swillington as well, despite what a Member said earlier.

Grass-cutting is a perennial problem, and there are many examples of problems when it was in the hands of the previous administration. In Otley and Yeadon last year, as soon as I discovered that there were many areas in my ward that were not included in the database that was handed over to the contractors, I arranged a day out with the contracts manager. Rather than complaining about it, I got down and did it and together we rebuilt the database, thus ensuring my ward was one of the first to be fully cut.

I welcome the additional two cuts this year - the only two cuts in the whole budget - and I am pleased to see that these are already under way in Otley and Yeadon. This I bore witness to last week when I was round a resident's house when a leaflet from the Labour Party dropped through his door. He read it and laughed. It was talking about grass-cutting problems. When he looked out of his window he could see the machine cutting the grass outside his house. I might add that the leaflet also contained, "LibDems in meltdown nationally and locally". Again he laughed, as they had just resoundingly won the seat in Dunfermline. Let's face it, if anyone is in meltdown, it is that lot over there. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, I will be brief. It is Minute 204, page 47, the CPA report. This was a report that went to Exec Board and outlined various improvements to address other weaknesses in the report and to improve the scores still further in the future.

I think it is fair to say that we are not an administration that is particularly led by score-cards or by marks out of 10. I think these are Government things they have imposed, and that is not what we are looking at. What we are keen on is service delivery and clearly on decent financial underpinning to ensure that service delivery is actually achieved, and I think what we have heard today in the budget debate and the budget speeches from this side of the chamber is that we are well set now in the years to come through a very responsible budget that actually puts money into the services that we need to improve and that we need to develop, that we will maintain our 4-star rating and indeed I think we will improve on it. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Before I call Councillor Selby, I just want to make a point that I am advised that this particular minute could be sensitive. I don't in any way wish to teach people to suck eggs, neither Councillor Selby nor Councillor Driver who I understand is going to speak on the same minute, but I must advise that the reference has to be on matters of policy and not individual, because it is a borderline area.

COUNCILLOR SELBY: Lord Mayor, I take what you say on board. Of course, we now note the changes arising from the appointment of the Director of Children's Services, and the appointment starts tomorrow and I am sure we all wish her every success in that appointment.

Lord Mayor, my concerns are more linked to the policy issues, and although we are talking about corporate issues they have a knock-on effect on the actions of the Executive Member in charge of Children's Services.

When Councillor Jennings attended the Children & Young Persons Scrutiny Committee in October, he was asked a number of questions. He was asked what the role of Members would be. He was asked how he saw the structure, how the structure of the Department would develop. He said he would wait until a Director

had been appointed. Well, that appointment starts tomorrow.

But there are still, notwithstanding this very helpful document, a number of unanswered questions, and I am sure that nothing would give us greater pleasure than to hear from Councillor Jennings this afternoon on his views. I would like to know, first of all, are we really ready for the change? I know that some authorities not only have a Director in place, they also have an Executive Member ready to take full responsibility for children's issues. Do we?

Between 1st March and the Annual Meeting, who does the Director report to, which Executive Member? We cannot really, in my view, wait until the Annual Meeting for such a decision to be made. If anything goes wrong, the press want to go to the Elected Member to deal with an issue, who do they go to? Will it be Councillor Jennings?

When it comes to issues about education, is Councillor Harker going to be reporting to Councillor Jennings? If not, why not? Will Councillor Harrand report to Councillor Jennings about child protection issues? If not, why not? Are they going to be job-sharing like Councillor Carter and Councillor Harris and, if so, on what basis?

And then if we look at it further, and we look at what other authorities have done, will there be a role for Area Committees in the delivery of children's services? I know they are doing that in Manchester. Has this been considered? Perhaps the Executive Member could tell us. If not, why not?

What meetings has he had with the new Director to discuss these issues? Could he tell us what the outcome of those discussions has been? If he hasn't had any meetings, why hasn't he?

But then the report goes on a bit further and refers to the Leader's intentions to amend the scheme for delegation of Executive decision-making. Well, which Leader are we talking about? Is it Councillor Harris? Is it Councillor Carter? Do we have the situation where Councillor Carter changes the system now and then at some point in the future, assuming this marriage continues, Councillor Harris being allowed to change it? Is there going to be consultation with Members about the proposed amendments and, if not, why not?

When it comes to Children's Department, have Executive Members any idea of what the management structure of the new department is going to be like? But then there is also a knock-on effect. What changes will there be to the senior management structure of the Council? What are the long-term financial implications arising from the creation of this new post? Has anybody given any thought to it? The appointment was made and was confirmed on 14th December, but of course Executive Members were aware that the appointments had been made before then.

Councillor Jennings was asked a lot of questions in October. He couldn't answer them then. Hopefully he can reply to them today. If not, why not? He has had months to reflect on the issues. Can we have some answers from Councillor Jennings? If not, what are we paying him for?

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: Chair, I want to continue on the same theme. Back in last October the Scrutiny Board, I believe it was, for Lifelong Learning received a paper in which the responsibilities of the Lead Member for Children's Services were delineated, and one of those items which I will read to you said that the Lead Member is politically accountable for local authorities' children's services on behalf of the Executive. That does not mean that he or she must personally undertake the full range of responsibilities due to that role. The local authority can make arrangements for the Lord Mayor -- sorry, the Lead Member to share - "LM" means two different things - Lead Member to share aspects of these responsibilities with other Members.

At that time and subsequently many of us have asked the question, "What is going to happen when we get to the complexity of having to manage the appeals, the issues that wrap-around children's services are going to offer us?" "Wrap-around" I think we all understand, means all the different services that will now need to be managed together in order to provide the best possible start in life for all our children.

Now, I understood that the seminars that we all attended were about these issues. The last one I attended in December, I think it was the last of the series, we, at the very end of the Members' seminar, as a group of Members across the parties, made the point that we still did not now how Members were going to be able to carry out their responsibilities, either as an individual Lead Member, the Lead Member as defined in the text, or as a group of Lead Members dealing with the number of young people who are likely to need our attention and their families in a big city the size of Leeds.

We have - I forget how many now - 140,000 young people in our schools. If only 1% of those came to our attention, that is 14,000 -- sorry, 1,400. I was just going to say 14,000 is more likely to be the kind of figure that we might have to have need to look at, because there are whole categories of people like children with special needs who we probably will need to address the needs of as individuals.

Now, I believed, and I did understand, that Councillor Jennings was dealing with these matters with the officers. It does not appear from anything that the Scrutiny Board has so far produced that any such activity has taken place. I think that is absolutely astonishing given that, as my colleague here has already said, that Councillor Jennings has been in this role for two years, and here we are as a collective number of politicians responsible for this work, we still do not know what

we will be asked to do, and that work actually begins on May 15th or whatever the date of the next Annual General Meeting is. That is a very short time away.

I think it is disgraceful that we are in this position. I think Councillor Jennings owes us a severe apology for not having done the work that was expected of him, and I think he should resign. (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Lord Mayor, I would like to speak to two minutes, Minute 188 on page 40 first and Minute 206 on page 47.

Could I just draw attention to Council something that has become apparent in my ward of Middleton Park, and actually in my journeys around the City, that I am concerned about with grass-cutting and that seems to be the disappearance of what has always been regarded by me and many others as the welcome first signs of spring. In many parts of the City, certainly in Middleton Park on the ring road, the crocuses seem to have been decimated, and I don't know if this is because there has been a change in the cutting cycle or what, but I would appreciate an explanation of that.

It is, apart from the aesthetics and the pleasure of seeing crocuses in the spring, I am sure many Members of Council also work very closely with community groups, with children, school children, in encouraging planting of bulbs, and I do hope that you will make sure that, through the contracts that you work, that you will endeavour to protect the bulbs coming up across the City.

Moving on to Minute 206 on page 47, can I just for a point of clarification say to Councillor Selby when the paper came to Executive Board I asked Councillor Carter, who was in the chair of Executive Board, which Leader the paper referred to and he clearly and categorically said, without any hesitation, that it would be him, Councillor Carter, who would be making the decisions on the future organisation of the Executive briefs under this area.

I would like to have clarification as to when we are going to be involved in that decision, and when we are going to have an opportunity to contribute. I think this is an area that all Members have an enormous interest in, and I have to say that many of us attended the seminars time after time to try and get some sense of where this was going.

I have to share the disappointment that has been expressed this far that we are in a position where tomorrow we have a Director of Children's Services taking up post and none of us have a clue as to which of the three Executive Members who are most affected by this we should refer our comments. I am not sure that this is a fair position to put the new Director of Children's Services in for a start off.

When we have had presentations to Executive Board from the Government Office on the way that Children's Services are being laid out, one of the issue that has been raised is the issue of leadership.

I think everyone in this City welcomes the fact that Rosemary has been appointed to be that Director, but call me old-fashioned, in my view leadership (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Call you all sorts of stuff!

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I can always tell when we are getting to you Andrew, when you start being rude like this, but leadership comes from the politicians. That is the way that leaderships have run. We have got absolutely no clarification of which of the Members we go to when important issues around children are coming to our attention.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Just come to me!

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Don't trivialize something so damned important.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Well, you are, Bernard.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I think it is a disgrace when you actually look at the terms of reference under which Councillor Jennings was set up. He was set up to lead this process, to make it clear, to clarify things so that we wouldn't be in this position. Tomorrow we have a Director of Children's Services taking up position in this City and we have no Executive Member with sole responsibility of working to support the important work that she has to do. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I am afraid that if Councillor Blake thought that Councillor Carter was being rude, I can assure her that by the time I have finished he will be even ruder.

I want to comment on two aspects of this: the first is the handling and the second is one of principle decisions, if I call it that. The handling is that the Deputy Chief Executive wrote to all Members on 23rd January and he simply said, "I am writing to update you on the changes we are announcing today. This communication will be sent to all staff this afternoon." It goes back to what I said earlier on about sound governance. Members are as important to be told perhaps 2 hours earlier than everybody else in the world what is to happen in the most important and far-reaching portfolio and the changes in this Council.

Councillor Wakefield, the Leader of the largest group on this Council, was treated with total disdain and in fact, I think personally, contempt. No consultation, no discussion, no briefing, nothing, nothing whatsoever, and then you expect people to behave in a responsible manner, to communicate with you in a structured and proper way and take forward proposals which are so important for children in this City and for elderly people that really you ought to do better than that.

There has been correspondence also with the Monitoring Officer about the status, the decision-making process, and who actually makes the decision. As ever, I have to compliment her on her clarity. She says in a letter to me, "Following discussions between officers and discussions with the Leaders of the administration and the relevant Executive Member" - I have no idea who that might be - "the proposals as outlined in Mr. Paige's e-mail were circulated. It should be noted under our constitution it is the Leader who makes the decision and this does not require the approval of the Executive Board or the Council. The Leader's amendment in the officer (inaudible) delegation is not a decision that is capable of being called in."

In other words, the largest group on Council cannot question the decision, can't call it in, can't comment on it, until we do so now in retrospect when all the Executive Board said was "note" what the Leader had done several weeks previously. Now, in coming to this decision, in any organisational change, I am quite certain that the Leader will have considered a number of scenarios. On this side we are not convinced that the scenario that the Leader personally chose at the end of all the advice he has been given is the one we would have chosen, but that is a matter of judgment.

What I will say very clearly to Councillor Carter, if in fact he was the Leader who took the decision, that this is a decision we intend to hold him personally and publicly accountable for. He has taken that decision and everything that follows on from here onwards in Children's Services and in adult Social Services can be laid back at his door in terms of being publicly accountable, and that is exactly what we shall do, because we have not been consulted, we have not been involved. It has not been a decision across the parties, it has been a single man's decision and therefore he is personally responsible.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harris to sum up.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Can we hear from Councillor Jennings?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: CPA. Comments on CPA first. The point has already been made, but I will say it again that at the time when the real furore arose over the issue of grass-cutting I did, on behalf of the administration and all those involved, apologise and that apology still stands and I don't demur from that at all, so if that makes Councillor Lowe feel any happier, that must be No. 5, mustn't it now? My fifth apology, so my average is going up.

However, we do now know what Councillor Blake gets paid for. She gets paid for inspecting the daffs and the crocii and for staring up at the nice blue sky and watching the billowing, puffy, lovely white clouds drift by, and she is all very happy and content, and that is in fact what she gets paid for, because she certainly doesn't have any responsibility, but nevertheless she takes the money.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Just like you when you were in opposition.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Well, of course, it is interesting but I actually had a legal requirement to vote on Exec Board. That is what I was there for, to vote, and I did, and therefore when I voted, as Andrew did, we then had corporate responsibility because our names were attached to the decision. That is what Executive Board means. That is the system we have got now which, whilst everybody is complaining about the delegated responsibilities of whoever is Leader of Council, those are the rules that you introduced, not the rules that you didn't introduce, not the rules that we introduced, not the rules that you sought to change. They are your rules. I mean, I have heard of the pot calling the kettle black, but this is absolutely staggering.

Now, Children's Services. It is interesting, of course, because at Exec Board neither Keith Wakefield nor Judith Blake made any attempt to raise the issue of the necessary political changes. It was in fact I, at the very end of the whole thing, when Andrew had already mentioned we are moving on to the next point, I said, "No, hang on a sec, Andrew." I said, "I want to say something about the issue of political accountability", and it was I that raised the point quite openly that this was an extremely vexatious, difficult issue that we now had to embark upon, that because of the changes to Children's Services it had thrown up a whole issue now of adult services. Clearly, there were going to have to be major changes there and I said, "It will inevitably result in a significant change in portfolios right across the piece, because it is no longer limited only to Children's Services, and for that reason I explained quite clearly, and neither Keith nor Judith really I say objected to this or got stuck in.

I said that we would have to deal with this in the coming three months leading up to the AGM, at which point, because Judith then did raise the question, "Who will have legal responsibility or political responsibility in the interim?" The Chief Executive quite clearly said, "Under the rules - your rules - dedicated responsibility rests with the Leader of Council." That is the legal requirement. Now, that means it gets signed off in Andrew's name. When I am leader, it gets signed off in my name. The decision is taken with consultation and discussion, political and with the officers, so don't try and somehow make out that it is Andrew who is sat there signing everything away and nobody else knows what is going on. That is distorting what the Chief Executive explained in Executive Board. It is the process that we must go through in terms of delegated responsibility, because that is the system that you created and we have adhered to.

If that is to be changed, let's have that discussion, let's have that debate, if we are going to have that debate, but don't point the finger at us because we are running according to the system that you created.

The situation now with regard to political responsibility is clear. Andrew Carter, under his delegated powers, had signed off the clear responsibilities

between Peter Harrand and Richard Harker with regard to ongoing responsibility for Children's Services. Where it is Social Services related, Peter will have the responsibility. Where it is educationally related, Richard Harker will have the responsibility. Brian Jennings' role continues the same, and let us congratulate him because to date it has been an extremely smooth, effective transition that we have (Interruptions) Oh, so you are laughing, are you, at the appointment of the new Director of Children's Services? Is that what that laugh of derision from Spotty Dog was all about? That we have smoothly moved through the appointment process to have appointed in my judgment the best possible person to deliver the biggest Children's Services change agenda of any authority in this country, and you laugh it off with derision. Well, laugh yourself out of the Council chamber. I can't be bothered talking to you any longer.

Now, Brian Jennings has overseen that change. That is what he was appointed for. Let us remember the Children's Services agenda was clearly there for you to deal with, and I don't remember your administration having somebody at portfolio Executive Board level in order to bring this process forward and to get it to the point where it needed to be. It was we that appointed that person, and it is we that have taken that process forward. Now, for the AGM in May the political changes will be evident. In advance of that there will be discussion, as there always is, and again this suggestion from Labour. I mean, this is what you cannot get your poor little Woodentop brains round. You are now in opposition. When we were in opposition, I don't remember living in Brian Walker's or Keith Wakefield's office. In fact, I can count on the fingers of two hands, probably, the number of times when those Leaders wanted to talk to me when I was Leader of the Opposition. (Interruptions) Well, you may laugh but those were the facts. That was the sort of consultation with the opposition parties that you were accustomed to.

Now, we do consult and we do talk, and in the end I am afraid the reality is that it is we that are in charge. It is we that must make the decisions, and it is we that will be accountable for it, and that is how it will remain now for a long time. (Applause)

(ii) Development

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, thank you. I just want to speak on page 40, Minute 189, and ask the portfolio-holder if he can shed some further light on this particular minute regarding the Outer Ring Road route strategy. This strategy has been going on for a long time and we have known about these three scenarios which keep re-appearing also for a long time, but I wonder if he was able to help me in actually getting some of the detail from the consultants, who seem totally remiss in actually being prepared to send in information to elected Members whose wards could be - and I stress "could be" - crucially affected, so I would appreciate any assistance he could give me in letting us know how these scenarios have been built up and why the recommendation from the consultants is for Scenario 3, which

is a full dualling.

I would also be grateful if he could share with us at this stage whether he and his administration are in favour of the consultant's recommendations, i.e. Scenario 3, and when he believes that the next substantial report will be brought forward for further debate; also if he intends to involve through Officers affected Ward Members in the further work of this particular scheme.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to refer to minute 189 of the meeting of Executive Board held on 18th January. It is on page 40 and mentions the consultants' study of the A6120 Leeds Outer Ring Road. In fact, the A6120 accounts for only the northern half of the Outer Ring Road from Dawson's Corner to Colton. Over the past 3 years there have been several lunch-time seminars about the City Council's Outer Ring Road strategy, all of which have been confined to the northern sweep.

There is a background to this which is that, until a few years ago, the northern part of the ring road was a trunk road controlled by Highways Agency. It was then handed over to the City Council to join more southerly parts which have a different history in being City Council controlled throughout. It strikes me that we should have a single strategy for the whole of the Outer Ring Road which in effect begins at Tingley roundabout, follows the A653 to White Rose, then the A6110 to Dawson's Corner, where it picks up the A6120 northern sweep to Colton, then goes back via the M1 and M62 to Tingley. Both the motorways are controlled by the Highways Agency, of course. Only a single strategy covering the whole circuit can be coherent, so that is what we should be working towards. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to speak on the same minute, page 40, 189, Outer Ring Road which, as Members will be aware I represent Horsforth, is of great interest to me and to my residents.

Lord Mayor, it seems to be many years since I received a letter from former Director of Highways, Mr. McArthur, telling me that the consultation would be starting later this year and report some time in 2001, so I think that gives you a clue, the date of the letter, which is actually May 2000. The word "procrastination" springs to mind, Lord Mayor.

This road is vital to the city. The radial routes into the city are vital to getting our residents in and out of the city for all means of activity that make our city a great one and a worthwhile one to operate.

My Lord Mayor, I do hope that the new administration will not be procrastinating in the way that the old administration obviously did when it took years and years and years to say, "We are going to have a consultation. It is going to happen", then it doesn't happen, and then it is going to happen and it

doesn't happen, and the cost gets greater, and I believe it is something in the region of quarter of a million pounds being spent on consultants. I thought it was rather cheeky of Keith Wakefield, when he said in his budget speech that he was going to stop extravagance and waste, that he was going to take £200,000 out of the budget for consultants. He had already spent £250,000 just on this ring road study, and we are not there yet. (Interruptions) No, no, it was your administration. Ask your Ward Councillor who signed the documents. Nothing to do with us at that time, it was your administration, but I hope, Councillor Carter, when you rise to speak, you will be telling Council there will not be any procrastination. That is one thing.

The other aspect of it, Lord Mayor, is that the minutes there at (c) about the airport road. At the moment, Lord Mayor, every single morning - I live in Carr Lane, Rawdon - and I ratrun through Rawdon, Horsforth, and then through Kirkstall to get to the Civic Hall. I have to do that because, when I leave my house 50 yards from the A65, I am looking at a queue of traffic. Carr Lane in Rawdon is exactly three-quarters of a mile from the A65 roundabout at the Ring Road. That's where our buses, our cars are just sitting there, totally unable to move, and we have known for years the reason why, and the reason why, Lord Mayor, is that we have got three or four lanes of traffic trying to get into one lane of traffic going down towards Rodley. I am sure you know it, you face it every day, Les, don't you?

And it is a nonsense. We have all known about it but we have had to go through this charade of consultants because we do not have the expertise in-house to do the necessary modelling that will enable us to eventually prove to Government that we need the money to improve these roads. That is one thing.

The other thing is the airport road. There are some in my ward that are doubtful about the correctness of taking green belt land to put in a road just for the airport. I would implore Councillor Carter and Council to please consider that road, if it ever were to be built, as a road that would stop the ratrunning in my ward, Guiseley and Rawdon Ward, in Otley and Yeadon Ward, and so as a consequence of that ease the lives of many and turn our ordinary streets and ordinary roads back into just that, not ratruns twice a day, not with the number of accidents that we are getting in the Brownberrie Lane/Scotland Lane area of Horsforth because people are just ratrunning all over the hillside to get out of our city.

With that, Lord Mayor, I would just say, please, Councillor Carter, no more procrastination as has been shown by others. Thank you very much, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: My Lord Mayor, I want to speak on Minute 207 on page 48 about the East Leeds Link Road which goes through my ward. I am very much in favour of this road, and I have been pressing officers ever since I was elected to try and conclude the negotiations as quickly as possible. I want to welcome the announcement that it has at last been agreed and to pass on my thanks to

Councillor Andrew Carter and to all the officers involved.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: What about the Labour Minister?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: We will come to him, don't worry.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I want to pick out just three further points. Firstly, about 40 houses on Cross Green Lane opposite Copperfields College have had to put up with hell for the last 15 years as heavy lorries go within 12 ft. of their living rooms from as early as 6 in the morning until very late at night. This new road will finally bring relief to those 40 houses.

Secondly, there are currently about 15,000 jobs based in the Lower Aire Valley, and we all hope that when this new road is built, over a 10-15 year period an extra 29,000 jobs will be created. 29,000 extra jobs would be enough to support a medium-sized town and will clearly need additions to the transport infrastructure. I hope we will fight for the resources not only to bring people into this area by bus and car but by train as well, because I think we must fight for the money to add new station halts between Leeds and Woodlesford at either Stourton or John-O'Gaunts and between Leeds and Crossgates at either East End Park or Osmondthorpe.

Finally, the approval of this scheme adds to the growing list of projects which Labour started but could not finish. After Swarcliffe PFI and EASEL we can now add the East Leeds Link Road, and in case anyone over there thinks that this is just this administration continuing your good ideas, let me tell you that this new link road was first proposed in the late 1970s. I was Head of Science at what was then Cross Green School when the headteacher came to a staff meeting to say, "They are wanting to build a motorway across our school field." That, my Lord Mayor, was in 1982. 24 years later it has taken, I believe, the energy and drive of a new administration to get it finally approved. (Applause) I calculate that in 24 years a snail could have travelled this road 10 times. I hope there will be no more delays and that this road is opened on schedule in 2008. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Lord Mayor, I am speaking to Minute 209 not 207 - there is an error in the paper - on page 49. I note that Councillor Wakefield abstained from the vote on Exec Board and has urged caution in the Yorkshire Evening Post claiming that we are rushing through the sale of Leeds/Bradford Airport. I would like to point out that the sale was first mooted by Brian Walker, the then Leader of Council, some 4 years ago and it is something that we have continued to pursue, so we are hardly rushing it through. I would add from what Councillor Brett said, if it took 24 years to build a motorway we would still be waiting for decisions to be made on this.

Anyway, only last week I received an amendment to the airport's master plan that said it had been conservative in its estimation of the passenger numbers

for future growth. These figures are set to grow at least three times.

In the Wharfedale Observer recently, Labour were accusing us of lack of consultation. Well, we have been putting out surveys asking the question about the sale of the airport. Interestingly, in my ward - which the airport is within - I have already received nearly 1,000 replies and the majority of residents in my ward are in favour of the sale.

We are the only Council that owns an airport. All the others are privately owned. This, of course, causes an issue when the airport (Interruptions) I do apologise. They do have a partner, and what I am talking about is wholly-owned. My apologies if I was misleading. Anyway, this of course causes an issue when the airport needs planning permission, since it is effectively asking itself and potentially decisions could be called into question. Far better to have the control for development separate to ownership.

Finally, substantial investment will be needed to meet Government expansion aspirations and currently this would fall heavily on the taxpayers of Leeds. The Exec Board have only approved the appointment of consultants to advise on a possible sale at this stage. Don't forget that we only own 40% of the airport with neighbouring authorities owning the rest, so consultation with them will also be required. I believe this is a sensible and mature way forward to consider all options and make a decision that is in the best interests of the people of Leeds when the full facts are known. We should listen to consultants and their recommendations before making our decision.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Lord Mayor, I want to speak to Minute 210, page 50. Whilst I can understand the reasons for the UDP Inspector to give the reasons for keeping PAS status as it was, as it is, I nevertheless welcome the proposal to instruct officers to bring back suggestions to protect green field and protected areas from development. I am optimistic that with time this can be facilitated. The mystery to me is, however, how did they get this status in the first place? Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Lord Mayor, I am speaking on Minute 219, page 53, on what is titled here the Route 4 Showcase Bus Project. This is the streetcar. Well, it is a project that has a variety of euphemistic names. It is a streetcar if you read one thing. It is FTR, which is text shorthand for "future" for other things, and it is also a Showcase Bus Project, but basically it is the Metro preferred option for a substitute for a tram, and I am very pleased that Route 4 has been chosen for this. It goes through my ward, goes from Whinmoor to Pudsey and, of course, we heard from Richard Lewis at the last meeting or the meeting before last, or whatever - Council Meetings go into a bit of a time-warp - about the difficulty of turning buses round in Pudsey. Well, I am sure it can be sorted out before all this arrives.

The object of improving bus services in Leeds is to tempt more drivers out of their cars, and we have really got to put some attention to this fairly soon before we all suffer from gridlock. Every now and then I look at the Inner Ring Road and think, "That is going to be everywhere next week or the week after or next month", and traffic is an increasing problem for us.

If the buses are made sufficiently attractive, I think drivers will be tempted to use them rather more than they do at the moment, but in addition we are going to need park and ride facilities on the edges of the city or near the ring road or whatever.

On the matter of consultation, I believe all of the Councillors in all of the wards through which the No. 4 bus runs have been told about this project. I remember when, back in the good old days of CITs, we had the ring road consultation that my colleague Councillor Cleasby was referring to, and I enquired as to why Burmantofts/Harehills CIT wasn't being consulted about the ring road, even though the ring road goes round the edge of the then Burmantofts Ward, and I was told rather patronisingly by what was then Councillor Minkin's department that not enough people in Burmantofts have cars that use the ring road. I said, "How do you know?" and they didn't; they just assumed that, so I am afraid Harehills/Burmantofts CIT just got ignored on the consultation, which was pretty sad at the time.

Now, I know the current administration and I know Metro will consult fairly widely on this bus. I welcome it very much. We are told by the YEP that the purple people-movers - that is another euphemism for it - will be an improvement, but it gets better than that because the YEP says there is a choice of conventional seating purchased to provide support for those who prefer to stand and even a lounge-style area to the rear. Now, I am sure this is a great advantage to the Members from Whinmoor who will be taking advantage of this to get from the city centre to their areas with the advantage of a lounge, so Councillor Armitage, I hope it is not a smoking lounge. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I now call on Councillor Andrew Carter to respond, after which we will take tea.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. I will take the comments in reverse order.

THE LORD MAYOR: Sorry, Councillor Blackburn wanted to speak. I am afraid I haven't got him down on the list.

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: I am speaking on Minute 221, page 56, Proposals for a Memorial. As we now know that this report refers to ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blackburn, you are on the wrong minute. We will be

taking the war memorial after tea.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I will start again in reverse order. The Route 4 Bus Route, first of all. Yes, very welcome development. Be aware it is a sort of technology and I don't pretend to be an expert in these things but it will only be used on certain routes around the city because of the nature of the vehicle. It is important that Ward Members, through whose ward this route runs, do familiarize themselves with the plans because we have already had issues certainly in parts of Pudsey about what may or may not be suitable and Metro and officers in the Development Department have taken those issues on board. We need to watch those very carefully. This is not a system or a type of bus that can run through the middle of villages or built up suburbs. It is going to be very much on the major routes. That is what it is designed for, so it is a welcome development, but we do just need to be absolutely sure it works right in every area through which it travels. It is too important to get it wrong.

The UDP. We are going to be discussing the UDP a little later on White Papers. It has been a difficult process, to say the least, an interesting hotchpotch of views from the Government Inspector. What I can say is, and I will say it again later today, we will do everything we can to preserve the environment of every area in the city and, at the same time, generate the new housing that we need. It is not going to be easy but we have a head start on a lot of other cities because we have years of planning consents in the bag already for our house-building targets.

Leeds/Bradford Airport, you are quite right, Councillor Downes, no decision has been taken. We need the agreement of a majority of shareholders. We have 40% ourselves. All that this administration has done, which is different to what the previous administration did, was we have now moved to the next phase where we get specialist financial advice, which we need before we can take any decision. The decision of the administration and of this Council will be based on this, that whatever is done guarantees the long-term future success of a major regional airport, which is what Leeds/Bradford is, that it is in the best interests of the Council Taxpayers and residents of this City, and that it properly protects the environment around Leeds/Bradford Airport.

I think many of us agree with the point you made about it being better to protect the environment when the Council is not seen as poacher and game-keeper, and most of the people who have contacted me on the environmental issues have made that point or similar.

The staff of the airport I think have to be congratulated for their commitment and enthusiasm to building up that airport to the success story it is today, but you are right, we are the only major airport in the country that is not either privately owned or have a private partnership arrangement of some sort. Even Manchester has those sort of arrangements that Leeds does not - Leeds/Bradford does not.

The aviation industry is highly competitive. That airport is crucial to the

success of Leeds City region, let alone Leeds, and we have to be very mindful of ensuring that continued success. There is no panic sale. Councillor Wakefield keeps making these silly comments in the newspapers. He knows that the discussion about what to do with the shareholding in Leeds/Bradford Airport has been going on while he was Leader and whilst Councillor Walker was Leader.

So very quickly on to the ring road. Well, Councillor Gruen first of all seems to think I have got some sort of power - whether I have or have not I don't know - on some issues. On this issue, Councillor Cleasby, you are wanting me to wave a magic wand and get on with the job. The simple fact is we have got the consultants' report finally. We have noted it, not accepted it. There needs to be more consultation. I have to tell everybody in this Council chamber, whatever they may have read in the Evening Post, there is not one penny piece in any budget anywhere to implement any of the findings of the consultants, I regret to tell you.

The regional transport pot has left in it for the whole of Yorkshire and the Humber until 2015 less than the cost of this one scheme. We are going to be having to move regrettably very slowly. A lot of it, I may as well be frank, will not happen whilst any of us are sitting in this Council chamber. It is a long term venture. We have to do some things in the short term, particularly for the A65. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Well, at this point we will break for tea, half an hour, back at 20 past 6, please, and could I invite officers and members of the public to join us for tea in the Banquet Hall. Thank you.

(Short adjournment)

(iii) City Services

THE LORD MAYOR: We will resume, ladies and gentlemen. Can I call on Councillor McArdle on City Services, page 53, Minute 220.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: You have taken me by complete surprise, my Lord Mayor, I do apologise. Just bear with me. Yes, it is Minute 220, page 53. Really, it is regarding the PFI lighting. Whether or not you agree with the PFI aspect, certainly to create safer streets this is welcome, and again I just cannot understand why it has got to such a state as it has done over the last couple of years. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Now, Councillor Blackburn, 56 on 221.

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Minute 221, page 56. I am still not sure we are in the right place for it but, anyway, we will go ahead.

As we now know, this minute refers to the South Leeds Sports Complex. This morning the South Leeds Sports Complex was visited by Lord Coe. I wonder

if the Leader of Council, Councillor Andrew Carter, in winding up would like to comment.

THE LORD MAYOR: Would Councillor Carter like to comment before Councillor Smith ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: When I wind up, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: He will talk to you later, Councillor Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Lord Mayor, I welcome Councillor McArdle's comments. Not only will it provide a safe solution but it will also provide a white light solution, an energy efficient solution, and I look forward very much to the environmental improvements that it will bring.

Members may know already, but thanks to the good negotiations of officers the project is no longer dependent on the income from advertising on street lamps.

That will no doubt come back later in the year but as it stands it doesn't need the £1 million per annum from that, so I welcome that. That is £1 million saving, in effect, for the people of Leeds so, yes, in the summer they will start going up. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

(iv) Neighbourhoods & Housing

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: My Lord Mayor, Les has been kind enough to have a word with me about the Gipton Low Cost Home Ownership Scheme but I am still mystified by some bits of this paper. The bits that mystify are 3.2 and a comment on the first page which says that around 25% of the 92 properties for sale will be able to benefit from a loan under the scheme. We then whip over to 3.2 where it is suggested that 43 properties could be available under the scheme. Just for clarification, I very much support the scheme but there does seem to be some -- I kind of wonder about the kind of mission creep about who we are trying to target to benefit from this scheme. Are we trying to get people who cannot afford to buy a home and give them a bit of support, or are we trying to benefit people who already have a fair chunk of capital on one side? I just don't think the report as it currently stands is very clear, and I think my only wish in raising this is to say, "Well, can we clarify exactly who we are trying to target with this, or have we got priorities - if certain people aren't interested we then go to another group and another group. The key principle of the scheme is fine but it just needs a bit of clarification.

The other minute I want you to raise is about the future of the ALMOs which is not to go on about whether we have two, three or six, but arises out of a couple of things, and one is a number of debates we have had in Leeds West about clearing sites. Are we going to demolish properties on this site, that site, or the other? You inevitably get to the point where people say, "Well, yes, we know these properties are awful, but if we get rid of them are we undermining our own business performance? Are we damaging our own future as an ALMO? Are we

cutting the amount of social housing that is available?

So what I am keen to plead is that we need to have, between the strategic landlord and the ALMOs, where perhaps the relationship has not been as good as it should have been and where, perhaps, you know, it is very easy to divide, manage in Government terms. They would say, "Oh, management has to be separated from strategy." In reality it does not work like that and the ALMOs are currently trying I think to think how do they cope with strategy?

There needs to be work between the ALMOs and the strategic landlord to look at the whole issue of surplus land in the Council's ownership and managed by the ALMOs to see what we can do to achieve additional affordable housing in those areas where there is huge pressure for extra properties, so I am very keen that that work takes place.

Just one other point on the future of the ALMOs. We did have a mention the other day where Richard was a wonderful feed for you about daylight robbery or negative subsidy, and some of the information you actually gave back to him was a little incorrect, because they have changed the system on daylight robbery/negative subsidy, and they changed it round to taking it out of the Housing Revenue Account. It is now called moonlight robbery, but the net effect is still the same; it still takes money out ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You are still being fleeced.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: -- of tenants' pockets.

Now, when we were in control, we lobbied very hard on daylight robbery. We also in tandem lobbied very hard on the ALMO issue, and Leeds was one of the authorities I think that can kind of hold its head up in terms of getting the ALMO solution. The moonlight robbery still continues. It is not good enough just to have a go at it in Council. As the administration, I hope that you are lobbying firmly and clearly to say that there needs to be a change in the system because, as Richard said, it is unfair to Council tenants to tax some Council tenants and we need to have a political will across the chamber to say, you know, "We want the system changing" because we have got to give a future to the ALMOs post-Decency so that they can go on into the future. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: My Lord Mayor, I am speaking to page 41, Minute 191, the future of ALMOs in Leeds. I am sure that some of my colleagues on the City Council do the same as I do when the paperwork comes out, we look at the paper with all the Council homes in over the weekend when it comes out, and we look at the number of houses that there are in our particular area and we look at who successfully bid into the process in the success column, and certainly in our area in Morley we have fewer and fewer homes turning up. Certainly, we have fewer and fewer family homes turning up.

One of the concerns that we have is, with the continuing sale of Council homes, and certainly Decency programme I think will lead to an acceleration in that particular area, it is almost inevitable that the number of ALMOs will decrease, and I have a great concern that we are going to have a large community that is always going to rely on socially rented housing and what we are going to do about providing them.

Now, I know Richard referred through to the minute of this new process that might create 43 homes or whatever. The numbers that we are able to actively support in terms of creation, whether that is for rent or whether that is joint ownership or whatever, we are in a situation where they are far-outweighed by the number of Council houses that we are losing, and somewhere down the line we are not going to have the numbers that we need to provide some reasonable social housing for those people, and I am just curious to know if Les can perhaps reassure me that somewhere down the line there is going to be some magic wand, some interesting scheme that is going to start to provide these homes that we are going to need in the future.

COUNCILLOR TAYLOR: My Lord Mayor, before I comment on the matter in front of me, I must apologise - I forgot to register an interest in Leeds East Homes as a Director, so I do apologise.

I am speaking about Minute 212 on page 50, and it refers to the Home Buy Scheme in Gipton. Previous speakers have spoken about other projects that have been put forth within the City and have referred to those projects being delayed. I am aware that this particular scheme has now been thought about for the past 8 if not 9 years, first of all starting as Low Gipton Crescent, then moving on to the Home Ownership Scheme, and now changing the name again to the Home Buy Scheme.

We welcome the move, obviously, as Councillors for Gipton and Harehills. I think we are looking forward to the day when the JCB gets there and the people of Gipton also will be there to welcome that. We have waited a long time but fortunately not as long as some of the other schemes, but if I could urge you, Les, to make sure that we move speedily so that the people of Gipton benefit from this project. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: My Lord Mayor, I will be speaking on the same Minute 212, page 50. Can I just echo the sentiments of my fellow ward Councillor Alan Taylor to welcome the Home Buy Scheme. The opportunity for a family on low income in Gipton to purchase their own homes is one that rarely arises. This scheme is a further proof that this administration is committed to Narrowing the Gap here in Leeds. I am particularly glad that this scheme is to be targeted on these residents most affected by the EASEL clearance programme.

My Lord Mayor, I also would like to express my delight that this Council is entering into talks with the preferred bidder, Bellway Homes. It seems now that the EASEL can really begin to take shape. The potential for the project is quite staggering. Gipton and Harehills has cried out for sustained regeneration for years. Now we are finally seeing the wheels being put in motion for a major initiative to combat deprivation immediately.

It is still early days, but this is an enormous step forward. Residents in neglected estates such as Gipton and Harehills will benefit from the EASEL project. However, we have ensured we consult with those people set to benefit and any fear that they might have.

Unfortunately, this attitude is not shared by my colleagues across this chamber, who continue to scaremonger local residents with leaflets such as Gipton and Harehills Rose, for your information, spreading false information, something that we have become accustomed to from the Labour Party, desperate to get back into power and some candidates are desperate to defend their seats. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Lord Mayor, just on the last speaker, I am being viciously attacked all the time in their leaflets but don't worry, my back is broad, I can stand it, and I know it smells of desperation as far as the Members across are concerned.

Right, just let's get back to the business of the Council itself. If I can go to the actual Gipton site and talk about that, Richard is quite right to raise it in the way that he has raised it, and certainly Alan did as well. If I can come on to this, it is an interesting scheme and you are quite right to point out we are changing names, but we are not changing names, we are changing the way we are doing it.

One of the problems of a lot of the schemes that have been put in by the Council or Councils over the years is that once you give away the first part --- If you try to give some low cost for somebody to go in and buy, after you have done that the first time it is gone, the game is lost. If it is done through Planning, the first person gets the planning gain, it has gone. People have tried to put covenants in to try and protect it in that way - covenants break down quite easily.

Now, what we are trying to do here is retain ownership, because that is ours, no-one can take that away if we retain ownership. Now, there was schemes with building sites in the past where you could actually borrow money for buying part of the house, a building society would buy the other part, but then they used to charge a rent on that, and when that happened you brought the two together, the repayment of the loan and the rent, it became too excessive, people couldn't afford it.

This we hope is a way forward. What we are doing effectively, we are

putting the money in, we are going to retain part of the ownership. By retaining part of the ownership, we will always be protecting that property for new people coming in the future. Obviously it will go up and we will invest that back in again when the person sells and a new house is bought. That way we protect it for people who want to buy them for the first time, so I think in that respect it is a good scheme and I would like to see more of them.

Coming back to Richard's point, the point he is making is, "Well, hang on, who is going to get these properties?" Well, obviously we have got to set some kind of priority. There were a lot of houses which are being knocked down down there and they must be first priority, the people who are losing their homes in that particular area. At first I thought, "Well, we are doing it for the larger priced houses." We are doing it for the larger priced houses because some of the people whose houses are going might be families with a family of three or four children, so they will need a bigger home, so they can't go into the smaller houses, the two-bedroomed ones. So this will cover everybody. There will be an assessment of the people who come for the property and there has got to be a criteria laid down. The criteria will actually try to work to the people who are having their homes knocked down to give them the first choice.

I hope that will give you some reassurance, Richard. I am not certain it has, because you look a bit blank.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: If you could put it in a letter, maybe.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: You want a letter? He wants a letter, my God. Barry, send him a letter. Okay. (Laughter) Yes, alright, Richard, we will put something in writing to you just to cover that.

Right, on the reorganisation of the ALMOs which is obviously going apace, but obviously we are not in a situation really to finalize these in any way, shape or form at the present time because that would be wrong until all the consultations and the actions have been taken.

At least we do know now that the £11.8 million savings that we required by 2010 - that is what we needed from the ALMOs if they are going to continue - can be achieved by either one, two or three ALMOs. They will secure that and would secure that, but the numbers are not chosen, they are still open for debate.

As far as removing houses are concerned, it is interesting the difference, actually, in ALMOs and the way ALMOs operate. If you take Graham Hyde's ALMO, they have no problem knocking property down. I have to keep jumping on him - I think he has got his own bulldozer. He is forever taking them out.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: well, George Mudie runs that, doesn't he?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Oh, does he?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Yes.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Oh, I didn't know that. No, I am not going to get into that. In (inaudible) West obviously they have been more concerned and more worried about it, and I think in those two points they have got to continue as they are at the present time. They are running the ALMOs in the way they want to do.

You did make an interesting point, though, Richard - where has he gone? Oh he is there. Richard, you made a very interesting point about surplus land, and I think the surplus land we have got to look at very carefully, because that surplus land can be used for some similar schemes to what would happen in Gipton. This would then come on to helping the type of things you are talking about, which is the lack of property which appears to be coming along.

Bear this in mind - I said this to you last time - when we sell a property it does not vanish off the face of the earth; the property is still there. We still have it, it is just that the ownership has changed. What you are saying is we won't own enough property. We are not reducing the number of properties in Morley. If we have sold a house in Morley, it is still there, it doesn't vanish, so somebody will buy and sell that house as time goes on. But I do accept what you are saying, there is a need for rented accommodation and that rented accommodation has got to be found in certain ways. We are looking at different ways of providing that.

I hope when we are doing it - obviously at the moment the EASEL scheme is an ideal scheme and West Leeds Gateway Scheme is starting, but obviously there is South Leeds and other areas who have got to also attract the same type of schemes, and all those are being worked on at the present time. So, yes, I understand what you are saying and obviously we will look at it. I think that covers everybody, actually. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

(v) Learning

COUNCILLOR MURRAY: Lord Mayor, I am looking at page 52, Minute 215, and this minute refers back to what happened at the last Council Meeting when we had a deputation from Great Preston Primary School asking for a new school sooner rather than later, so I would assume in effect that most Members are aware of the issues, understand the need for a new school, and in some sense are supportive, but I just want to add two things.

As Richard will know, I think the school itself, the infants school is probably the oldest school in the City. It wasn't built last century but the century before that. It has charm, people like it, but it has all the faults of an old building. It needs replacing very quickly: inadequate heating, leaking and all the rest of it. It is a split site, working with the primary school just down the road, Great Preston Primary School where currently it is being rebuilt. The primary school partial

rebuilding is going on. £400,000 is being spent and a lot of good work will be done with that. The builders are on site.

But if the builders are on site and if you look at it from a staff point of view, you look at it from a parent point of view, a kid's point of view, what you are on in some sense is a building site, and I suppose the question they are asking us to say is if it is a building site now why can't we get the rest of the work done sooner rather than later? If we do that, it would produce the least disruption over the shortest period of time. That is all that we are asking, do it quickly, do it next year if you can.

Funding should not in some sense be the big issue, it shouldn't be the limiting factor basically because the Council Education Leeds are going to get a big capital receipt. The infants school sits on a bit of land which will generate a lot of money. It is in a nice village. I think the average property price is somewhere in the region of £250,000-£300,000. We are going to get a nice sum of money, so the money is there, the builders are on site, the parents are saying, why can't we do it sooner rather than later? Why can't we do more? We want to do more in the next Capital Programme. Thanks, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Lord Mayor, yes, I would like to see the work done sooner than later. The problem is that there is a legal question over the land to be sold. While the building belongs to the church, the land I understand belongs to Lord Halifax Trust, and this makes selling the site to raise the capital - probably about £1 million - very complex. We also have to add to that Section 77 approval may apply to a large part of the site, but Education Leeds Estates Management are trying now to unravel all of this so that we can move towards putting the property on the market and raising the capital.

You mentioned the first phase of building. A second phase project is also being investigated at the moment which would enable the former infants school site to be closed because we have to, as you appreciate, accommodate the children in the existing school in order to sell and move on. This is being given a lot of care and attention at the moment, and I hope that sooner than later we can get to grips with it. It is a great pity in many ways that the community initially, when it was talked about the schools being merged during that consultation period, became split over whether the new school should be voluntary-aided or community and, as a result, unfortunately the primary school PFI which the schools were opening this year, that programme had left the station before a decision could be reached in Great Preston.

THE LORD MAYOR: We now have an additional item on Leisure.

Leisure

COUNCILLOR LANCASTER: Lord Mayor, I wish to speak to page 52, 217, the

Leeds Pals Regiment Memorial. I welcome the proposals in recognition of the debt that we owe The Pals, as Councillor Carter said earlier. I have to take you back, really, to my first involvement was when Joan Clayton, and I have mentioned this before, but I do feel that if she had not made a mistake about which battalion her uncle was in - at the time she believed that he was a Leeds Pals and at seventeen and a half he was killed very quickly - but apparently when I went back and told her what we had achieved for Colsterdale she went back to the family and they said, "He was in the Leeds Rifles."

Now, had I not got involved in this, I would have missed out on a really spectacular story belonging to Leeds, and the White Paper really was to find a way of maintaining the memorial for future generations, and I was always interested in the Council's connection - how they were recruited and how we waved them off at Leeds City Station. It was only this weekend when I was talking to my son I suddenly realised a good 18 years ago I actually stood on Leeds railway station and waved my son off as he joined the Royal Navy. He is still a serving officer. He is in a job that he enjoys and thankfully he is safe, and I do think that that is probably where I have got embroiled in this tale, and I find it fascinating.

So 70 years to the day last September the Lord Mayor and I went to the re-dedication ceremony. We met two members of the Parks & Countryside who came to me and said how much they felt honoured that they did the renovation and tidied it up especially for that dedication, and we took a photograph of them and sent it to them, and they said that they would feel proud and as they grew older they would be able to tell people how they had had some input into that.

We know that a lot of the veterans are getting older and I don't know if anybody wants to visit. We have got the instructions. It is very difficult to find. It is quite a lengthy journey, but a lot of the older people have always wanted something in the City which would be easy, more easily accessible for them, so I do welcome the stone and the plaque.

Finally, the further proposals for the continuing maintenance of the memorial is very welcome, and I am really pleased to hear that you will consult with relevant groups. We are still hearing of the loss of life in Iraq, and I picked up on something you said earlier as well, together with huge losses in all wars, these sacrifices must never be forgotten. We must never forget. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Lord Mayor, I respond to Councillor Lancaster and thank her for her support, also for the fact that she has raised this issue on a number of occasions in this Council chamber, and she is absolutely right, we must not forget.

I took a phone call a couple of weeks ago from a very great friend of my mother-in-law who told me that her father was in the Leeds Pals. He was on The

Somme. He was captured by the Germans, held prisoner in Belgium, escaped with two other members of the Leeds Pals, both of whom were injured. They both died. He was the only one of the three to reach Paris, and then back home to be cared for. And it is amazing the number of people who are now coming to me and saying, "Well, did you know so-and-so and so-and-so?" - people who were in the Leeds Pals. Sometimes they are mistaken, they actually were in other regiments, they were not actually that particular battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment. That is not the point. As we said earlier, thousands of servicemen from Leeds and surrounding areas served in the First World War and indeed lost their lives. I think I mentioned a little earlier, almost 10,000.

You think of the size of Leeds then, it was an awful lot of people. There were not many streets not affected by the loss of someone, so I think the fact that we are going to have this memorial at the very appropriate time, 1st of July, first day of the Battle of the Somme, and that is not to diminish the role of any of the rest of the servicemen, but it is to mark a particular day in time when 800 men went over the top from the Leeds Pals and I think 70 came back, something like that, the vast majority killed or missing in action. So I think it is right that as time goes past and now very few people, of course, have any direct memories of that, but we should not forget, you are quite right, Councillor Lancaster, I think it is important that future generations remember an age gone by and suffering and sacrifices that took place.

But also you can put it into a modern context, and I think that is very useful and hopefully will be a help to future generations not to drift into conflicts that are perhaps avoidable. Whether or not that one was, I wouldn't like to pass judgment. Historians can do that, and I am in no position to judge, but nevertheless it does come as I think a timely reminder to all generations.

So I do hope that on July 1st there will be people from all over this City there to pay their respects, and I am also absolutely committed to us working with the appropriate organisations about what can and cannot be done at Colsterdale, because I know from the comments I have had passed back to me that actually very little work needs doing there, and that is fine, but what the Council is saying is we are prepared to do what is necessary, and what is necessary must be decided by the people who are most involved, and I am sure you would all agree with that.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for that, Councillor Carter. I would just like to confirm that I do believe that we owe a debt of gratitude to Councillor Lancaster for taking up this issue and running with it. It was amazing to me to turn up miles away from anywhere on the top of a moor and find that there were more than 20 people there for a very short commemoration re-dedication service a few months back, and it really was desperate weather. So I have no doubt, following on from Councillor Carter's comment, that we will have a lot of interest in the new memorial down at the Art Gallery. I think it is important and it will be very well supported.

Can I tell you now we have another slight change in the agenda. We have an item on Access to Information. Councillor Illingworth.

Access to Information

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am concerned about a factual inaccuracy in the minute that relates to my Access to Information appeal. It is on page 57 of the Council agenda. The problem, Lord Mayor, is in the preamble in Paragraph 4 which presently reads: "It was noted that the final printed version of the questionnaire document had been released to the appellant prior to the hearing." Unfortunately this statement in the minutes is not true, Lord Mayor. The questionnaire was not released to me until 8th February, three weeks after the hearing and five days after the consultation closed. I had to pursue the missing document through an extensive e-mail correspondence.

The actual sequence of events was as follows. Lunch-time last Council day Councillor Minkin and myself attended the Leonardo Building for a briefing on public consultation in Kirkstall. We were handed about 50 pages of documents by Development Officers relating to both the public consultation on St. Annes Mills and Abbey Mills and also a separate consultation on the Planning brief for Abbey Mills, and these documents included a 4-page coloured brochure about the Council's proposals for the Kirkstall Mills and a single typewritten sheet that purported to be the questions that went with it. The brochure had been professionally printed but the questions were clearly produced on an office printer.

My Lord Mayor, to cut a long story short, the typewritten sheet did not disclose the dates for the consultation. The fact of the matter is the public consultation was over, finished, before the Appeal Panel announced their decision.

My Lord Mayor, this Council has signed a local compact promising 12-week consultation periods, but in Kirkstall we only got a fortnight. I believe the Council consultation on the Kirkstall Mills was the shortest public consultation ever held in British political history.

There is a second problem created by the Councillors' use of a market research company for this exercise. The brochures cost £10,000 but were only delivered to one house in ten in Kirkstall Ward, and this sample necessarily is going to be dominated by people living furthest from the site. Those with an intense interest, living close to the buildings, were excluded.

The Government advice is that everybody should be encouraged to take part, but this is unlikely to happen if most people don't know the consultation is taking place. The addresses of the consultees were kept secret, which means the respondents have only seen the Council's in my view inaccurate and one-sided materials and it was impossible for anybody else to put a contrary view, since they

would have had to prepare and publish their counter-arguments and get them round the whole 10,000 houses in Kirkstall in less than a week.

The survey results will have only limited significance and £10,000 has been wasted on a largely valueless and I have to say politically biased exercise. With better organisation it would have been possible to conduct a much more useful and informative consultation process.

Lord Mayor, the purpose of public consultation is to improve the decision-making process by incorporating new information and viewpoints that might not have been previously considered. How is this process advanced by seeking what amounts to an endorsement from a pre-selected group who have had an artificially limited opportunity to consider alternative points of view?

However, Lord Mayor, my main purpose today is to ensure that we keep accurate records. Whatever Members might think about political issues in Kirkstall ward, we should not allow the Council Minutes to record events that are demonstrably untrue. It simply was not the case that I was shown the authentic questionnaire before the appeal hearing. I was shown a substitute document from which vital information had been omitted about the public consultation dates. I am asking the Appeal Panel, whose property these minutes are, to amend their minutes so that they record the truth, Lord Mayor. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, Councillor Illingworth, I can assure you that what we will do is refer this back to the Panel and have consideration as to the accuracy of the minutes. I won't comment any further at this time.

THE LORD MAYOR: Moving on to the Scrutiny Boards, Councillor Atha on Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

(c) Overview & Scrutiny Committee

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Can I comment briefly on page 59, Minute 82. This is in relation to the Beckett Park closure. By great generosity of a colleague here, we had a call-in to the Overview Committee. I make this one point. If I want to get something called-in, I have got to find someone from the Overview to agree with Councillor Minkin, our representative on it. The idea of scrutiny is to be totally objective. Finding someone from the other groups is often quite impossible. I have tried it on previous occasions three times and not found another signatory for the call-in. In this case I had the good fortune to go to someone who thought, as he said, "Let him have his hour in court".

But the system is flawed and I hope, Councillor Carter, you will give some thought to this because I know in the past you have referred to the necessity for democracy to operate openly. If it is impossible for me to call in an issue because I can't find someone from the coalition group to go along with it because that would mean criticising their own, then it doesn't really work.

The main point I want to make on this is we have a very strong case for keeping the school open. It is so strong it persuaded the North-West Inner Area Committee on two separate occasions to vote for its retention. Unfortunately, when it came to Council at our last meeting my Liberal colleagues declined to support that view and referred it to SOC, where it was going to go anyway.

In the meantime, I did manage to get this called in for review and, as a result of what I thought was abominable behaviour at that review, I left dispirited. I got, however, from the residents who came along with me a formal request to refer the matter to Standards. I hate this idea of Standards because I think we should be judging our own colleagues and not someone who is distant and away, and I find that it is being used, if we are not careful, reference to Standards, as a means of blackmailing others into quiescence or silence or not asking the awkward questions.

And so at Scrutiny I was dismayed at the behaviour of the way in which it was conducted, and I would have left it at that but for this letter, formal letter, requesting me to (inaudible). At that stage I didn't realise I was contravening a rule which I was sternly rebuked for by someone who will be nameless but he is smiling like a cat on the top there. I should have reported that this matter was going to Standards. I didn't know that was part of the protocol. I have made that clear.

I have referred the Chair of that meeting to Standards. I had a reply saying on the information they were sent there did not appear to be a reason to pursue the matter further, would I wish to appeal, and I have appealed on the basis of one thing only. For the first 25 minutes of that appeal Councillor Cleasby put every obstacle in the way of progress of the meeting. He challenged the Chair over and over again. He got out of his seat three or four times to consult with officers. The Chair actually had good advice from the officers, and we have excellent service from officers, and they advised the Chair that what the function was to look at the whole issue. In fact, it was some 25 minutes before that was clarified.

However, the matter has now gone to Standards. It is in the hands of Standards. They have got the information. I am quite prepared to make that information available anywhere else, but I said to the Standards and I say this, I have no animus against Claire Nash, who I am sure is as decent and honest a person as myself. I do however think this - I think it very sincerely - and it is not words, it is not just persiflage, it is genuine, that if Scrutiny, for which I have no great respect because I think it is an inefficient way of doing what we used to do on the old Council committees, if Scrutiny is to have any effect at all, it must be done in a way that is quasi-judicial, where the parties do not take stances before the issue has been decided, where there is a totally fair hearing as though you would hear it before an impartial judge and jury.

That was not achieved there, and as I think the first call-in of its kind I did want to set a marker for Standards in the future. So I shall say no more on it except that is the background to my reference here. It is made in great sincerity. It is made with no malice towards Claire Nash; I wish it had been someone else I could have reported. It was you, however, in the chair responsible for the organisation of that committee and that I think has to be looked at, and the verbatim is in there to justify or not my allegations.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Lord Mayor, I think after that Council deserve an explanation of the truth. Lord Mayor, it is interesting, if you look at the minutes to see who was actually present at this call-in. Not a single Labour member of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee was present, so it was left to Councillor Anderson, myself, Councillor Leadley, one of the caller-inners, Councillor Nash and Mr. Brittan to make this decision.

I found it appalling that a certain Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, having organised the call-in, having made sure the papers were supplied to Members, having done everything in relation to the call-in, only stood down at the moment we met to sit for the call-in. Councillor Nash unfortunately at that moment was the one that was asked to do the chairing, as late as that, not before, not to have seen the papers, anything, apart from being an ordinary Member, but to turn up to find there was not a Labour Member present apart from the two Kirkstall Councillors, and at this point it was one of the Members chose not to be Chair, to then do the right thing and declare their interest and at that point then to then sit and try to defend the call-in position.

Councillor Atha, you said that several times I was disruptive and I referred with Officers. Yes, if you will be perfectly honest with Council, I was checking the procedure because when I was Chair of Overview and when I have chaired call-ins the procedure then, and I believe we were sitting under the same procedure, was that in fact all we were doing were checking whether the decision was properly made, so twice I looked at the book as shown to me by Peter Marrington and I accepted that I hadn't been aware that the rules have changed and if anything does need to be changed this is what needs to be changed. The rules now do appear to be such that if anybody is not happy with the decision that is made, they can have it called in. Now, I think that is a procedure for anarchy. There ought to be a situation where we can make decisions properly, call them in if we think the decision hasn't been made properly but then not go to all the other things.

There was a strange bizarre situation where we had to sit embarrassedly listening to the residents that you had invited, Bernard. That is a bizarre situation. What we sat on really was a School Organisation Committee situation, not a call-in of this Council, and unfortunately the Chair, for whatever reason, of the School Organisation who was a member of Overview couldn't be there and Councillor Driver couldn't be there, so it was left with just those Members there and, Bernard, we looked at the evidence and, yes, we took cognisance of the fact that the Liberal

Democrat Members of your Area Committee had supported you through this. We looked at all that but at the end we all agreed that the decision would stand and, most surprisingly of all, and you have to accept, Councillor Leadley was one of those who agreed he was a signatory to the call-in and at the end he said, "I see no reason why this should not proceed", and that is where we are at, Lord Mayor. Thank you very much, Council.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Very briefly indeed. Councillor Cleasby said he would tell Council the truth. Right at the end, thankfully he did refer to Councillor Driver and myself of why we were not present at Overview Scrutiny. We are both members of the School Organisation Committee and we decided to exercise obviously wanting to be at SOC when the matter was referred to there. Councillor Cleasby, Councillor Nash decided to do the opposite, and they took their place up on Overview Scrutiny and therefore will not be able to take part when this decision comes to the SOC, so there were perfectly legitimate reasons why two of us were not at Overview, and I would not wish Council to think that there is an implication that we deliberately absented ourselves because of some spurious reason.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: My Lord Mayor, there can be an awkwardness - I think there is an awkwardness - about the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee also being involved in a call-in, but obviously because I am Chair of Overview & Scrutiny I cannot then say that I forego a right that every other Elected Member has to call in an issue that in this particular instance affects my ward, and I have responsibilities as a Ward Member.

Now, there is no reason why Councillor Cleasby should know this but obviously I did consult with officers at the very earliest point and abided absolutely by their advice, and I did contact other Members of Overview & Scrutiny about who might be available to chair it on that day and I think, if I recall aright, we actually had hardly any choice about when the date could be set because of the complications of the timetable, and I was very grateful for Claire to come forward to chair it.

And there was this complication, which again we have noted, and we have asked for the Whips to look at, that the number of people who are on the School Organisation Committee as well as on Overview & Scrutiny, and obviously they cannot be on both, so that again was another reason why we were a bit short of the usual number of people you have got available to call in, and then today when we were discussing with the officers - actually Claire and I hadn't talked directly but we had a kind of three-way conversation with Peter Marrington and Ian Walton about whose name should be on the order paper, and I think Nicole Jackson's advice was asked for as well, was that because it was an issue that I had been on the other side of the table about that Bernard Atha was commenting on today, then it had to be Councillor Claire Nash's name on the order paper.

Obviously as the debate has gone on it is appropriate that I stand up and

explain all this to everybody. It was also explained by Ian Walton that actually - we learn as we go along, don't we? - the minute actually is not entirely written right.

It is not apparently, and I can't remember what he said about what should be right so it might be as well, Ian, if you could send us all an e-mail to remind us whenever this comes up again, that it should not have been expressed as having a prejudicial interest in quite those terms. Right? And if we could find a more straightforward way of managing these, because it won't just affect the Chair of Overview & Scrutiny, I am sure it would affect other Members of Overview & Scrutiny, so that when we have call-ins we don't have this awkwardness and unsureness about exactly how do you handle this.

Nevertheless I was very glad of the opportunity that there was a call-in of this issue at Overview & Scrutiny and I think it was good that you have got that. By no means was it a hearing for School Organisation committee. It was a genuine example of call-in that we have available to us under the arrangements for this Council and I am glad that it was held. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: I must admit I am fairly astonished that Councillor Atha has actually referred this to Standards Board. I can't see what purpose there is in that.

Obviously I was involved in this from a fairly early stage because Councillor Minkin had to ask me whether I was going to support her call-in or not. As far as I can see, supporting a call-in doesn't necessarily mean that you agree with the purpose of the call-in at all; it just means that you agree the matter should be called-in, whether you agree with it or not.

There was a lot of confusion. You know, the whole thing happened really within the space of about a week. There was a lot of confusion of opinion and advice both on the part of officers and the part of Councillors. You know, some of the initial advice given by officers didn't turn out to be sound, and it was really because it is the first time that that system had been tried and people had to sort of feel their way as they went along. It probably didn't go as ideally and as smoothly as everyone would have wanted, and I am sure that a lot of lessons were learned and that next time there is a similar call-in that everybody will know their parts and know their scripts and the advice of officers will be spot on from Day 1 and the Councillors will know the part that they have to play.

But, quite honestly, I can't see any purpose in referring another Member of Council to the Standards Board over a matter like this when really it is to do with a certain amount of administrative confusion with something that was new and had to be done at extremely short notice. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I have found it very interesting at this Scrutiny that Councillor Gruen and Councillor Driver chose to put an outside body before a committee of this Council, an outside body they could easily be substituted at, while they couldn't be substituted at the call-in.

If this is going to proceed as far as Standards, I look forward very much to giving evidence. Councillor Atha has referred to poor behaviour on the part of Councillor Cleasby. I had to sit there and listen to Councillor Atha bully the Chair to allow him to cross-examine myself and Education Leeds as witnesses. When he was ruled that he couldn't do that, he turned to the people he had brought with him and said in a very loud voice, "I told you we wouldn't get justice here."

COUNCILLOR ATHA: And I didn't. And I didn't. You are quite right.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I just ask Councillor Nash whether she wishes to sum up on this debate.

COUNCILLOR C. NASH: I would like to sum up simply to say that if the matter has been referred back to Standards clearly it is effectively sort of sub judice and I won't be commenting on anything that Councillor Atha said, or anybody else has said, concerning the actual meeting.

I just wanted to pick up on a point that Councillor Atha did say, which was about the problems he has been having in obtaining a seconder for a call-in from members of the administration. I am not aware that I have ever been approached by Councillor Atha to assist with a call-in. In fact, I was not approached to assist with the call-in over this particular item, so I just feel that I should put the record straight on that. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for that. I have to advise Council that we have now run out of time on that section of the agenda, and I therefore move to the top of the next page and invite Councillor Andrew Carter to exercise the right of final reply.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I think there are only a handful of additional comments I would want to make. The first one I think has to just be on the last exchanges that I have heard, which seem to me to be strange, to say the least, and it strikes me that Councillor Nash is more sinned against than sinning (Applause) and appears to have been put in an extremely difficult position, and quite frankly, Bernard, you might want to go away tonight and think about the things you said in here, and think about the actions that led up to this meeting where Councillor Nash finished up in the chair, because I didn't like the sound of the last comment that Councillor Harker attributed to you at all. It would be frivolous for me, I think, to take that to Standards Board, but I would suggest to you that you may well have been frivolous in your actions, and I think you should consider them very, very carefully.

What I have heard in here today on this particular issue does not fill me with any pleasure whatever, and I find it very disturbing, quite frankly, and I think you should go and think about it, which brings me on to Councillor Illingworth's comments, which I do intend to comment on, but only in as much as I want to put this on record.

I think that in this authority we have a very robust relationship with our senior officers, and that is quite right. They are well paid, well qualified, and well able to fight their own corner, which they should always do. However, we also have a duty of care to our employees in this Council, which includes every person who works for us right up to and including the Chief Executive.

Some of the things that Councillor Illingworth has put in print in connection with the Abbey Mills/St. Annes Mills saga, the insinuations about officers are, quite frankly - and this is a personal opinion but one I hope that you might, most of you share, because most of you have been copied into these copious e-mails - quite beyond the pale, quite beyond the pale. So I will say to him very seriously, as I have said to Councillor Atha, that tonight perhaps he should go away and think about his actions and his comments about officers of this authority which have left them in an extremely distressed state, and I hope that as an employer of people I have never left an employee of mine in such a state, and I think you should go away, Councillor Illingworth, and seriously consider your conduct.

Right, if I can move on to perhaps more germane matters. Yes, Councillor Blackburn, where are you? Councillor David Blackburn mentioned the South Leeds Sports Complex, soon to be the John Charles Sports Complex, for which Mrs. Charles is delighted. Councillor Wakefield is disappointed, so I think we have a 100% win there (Laughter) because the main person, Mrs. Charles, is delighted and I look forward to her unveiling the name plaque very shortly in the presence of the Lord Mayor, marking the great service and the huge love with which John Charles is held by the Citizens of Leeds.

For those people who keep talking about penny-pinching, can I just make this point: it is costing the Council, if it is a matter of money, which it is not in my view, a great deal more to waive getting naming rights for South Leeds Sports Complex than it would have been to put up a statue. It has got nothing whatever to do with money. It is what is the most appropriate and most people on this Council believe what we have done is the most appropriate. Most importantly, Mrs. Charles thinks it is the most appropriate, so once again, Keith, you are on your own.

Which brings me to the other point I wanted to make with reference to the South Leeds Sports Complex. I was delighted to meet today with Lord Coe, who came to visit Leeds in furtherance of our bid to try and host some aspects of the Olympic Games, be it only training things, and I was able to meet all the people from the world of sports who have been busy working so hard to push the Leeds case. They are not very happy, I have to say, about certain comments made by the Leader of the Opposition in the evening newspaper last week when he, "What are Leeds doing?" In fact, Lord Coe confirmed that Leeds, indeed Yorkshire, were at the forefront and we were up and running with our declarations of interest and our task groups to push it forward long before most of the rest of the country. So

once again I would far rather take Lord Coe's view about how this City is performing and what it is doing than I would Councillor Wakefield's.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I'll bet you would.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Absolutely. Well, and for the benefit of Councillor Wakefield, he will be able to hear Lord Coe on most television channels and in most parts of the media saying exactly what I have just said, apart from the references to Councillor Wakefield, who I guess Lord Coe has never met and probably doesn't want to.

So once again, but I made the point because when I spoke in the budget I made the point about, you know, championing the cause of the City, and everything that Councillor Wakefield said earlier on was a denigration of the City, and like the article and the useless comments about what we had not done in terms of the Olympics, denigrating the effort, he never bothered to check that in fact the task group set up in Leeds through our strategic partnership, Leeds Initiative, was one of the first - within 6 weeks of the announcement of the Olympic Games coming to London our task group was up and running. Now, he didn't bother to tell anybody that.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I checked with Manchester.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: If you checked with Manchester, well, perhaps you had better move to Manchester. They might appreciate you more there. It merely continues to underline the point I was making, you know, are you or are you not a serious politician in this City?

My Lord Mayor, finally (Interruptions) You are sitting in opposition and we are not. Finally, can I just touch on the comments made about EASEL? EASEL is a comprehensive regeneration scheme. When I met some of the people, the local residents, up there a few weeks ago what they said to me was they expressed some concerns, I have to say, which you would expect because they pointed to a series of piecemeal regeneration schemes over the years for which I blame nobody. That was, I suppose, the way it went under this Government and the last one. Certain pots of money were available for piecemeal regeneration which now, quite frankly, look almost as bad as they were before that regeneration was carried out.

What the people there were saying was, "If this is as good as it sounds, it is thorough-going regeneration of every aspect of our environment, our housing, everything, and it will be a great achievement" and that is precisely what it will be. It is one of the largest regeneration projects without Government funding - without Government funding - in the UK. It is amazing and we should wish it well and we hope that very shortly Councillor J. L. Carter will be able to announce the final agreements have been reached, but it will bring to that area of the City a

transformation about which all of us should be proud. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Now we come to the vote on the minutes. According to Council Procedure Rule 2.2 we need to indicate our approval of Item 7, the minutes.

(The Minutes were approved)

ITEM 8 - WHITE PAPER MOTION -
CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY BILL

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Lord Mayor, the issue of global warming has never been higher on the world's agenda than it is right now. The relationship between the use of carbon-based energy sources and climate change is hardly in doubt. Carbon emissions are a major problem on a global scale and the Kyoto Protocol has ensured that green issues are no longer the sole preserve of sandal-wearers and flip-floppers.

This is an issue that is being taken up at national level in Parliament, and I look forward to a third and final reading of the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Bill that is currently going through the House of Commons and has cross-party support. This Bill deals with the promotion of microgeneration and renewable heating technologies, whilst addressing the problem of carbon emissions.

Here in Leeds we are dedicated to making Leeds a cleaner, greener, safer city. Indeed, that was our manifesto before we came to power and it is an agenda I believe we are delivering. However, we are constantly striving to find new innovative ways of achieving this goal. This is why the issue of microgeneration of energy warrants being taken seriously.

Across the world, cities account for about 75% of global energy production and Leeds, as a regional centre and a modern forward thinking city, has responsibility to help redress this balance. Although we have made great strides with our environmental agenda since the administration took power, there is still room for improvement. For example, we have taken Leeds from near the bottom of the table of recycling to near the top. The public are certainly becoming more aware of the need to recycle and to protect the future of this planet and, as I have already said, this is no longer a fringe issue but one of growing importance.

Greenhouse gas emissions are set to rise by 52% by 2030, unless the world takes action now, and we need to lead by example and not bury our head in the sand saying that we can't change the world alone, so why bother? We must. We can and must make a difference.

In Leeds we have already started to address the issue of greenhouse gas production. Improvements in energy efficiency to the City's housing have meant a

reduction of 77,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide in the last year alone and, as Les Carter said back in November, if you picture the size of the Town Hall and then imagine it being filled 240 times, that is how much carbon dioxide we have prevented from being released into the atmosphere.

Both abroad and closer to home in Yorkshire other Councils have grasped the nettle and now use microgenerated energy to great effect. In nearby Kirklees, for example, they have achieved a 30% reduction in energy use over the last 15 years. These are very real savings in a world of rapidly rising energy bills. How poignant is this White Paper today when only in the last week or so energy prices have shot through the roof? In fact, I heard one company announce today that gas would be going up 24% and electricity 18%, so if prices are going through the roof perhaps better insulation is needed. Of course, we can insulate ourselves against these ever-increasing costs of energy by generating it ourselves from the earth's natural resources.

York has recently completed a detailed review of the benefits of microgenerated energy and has provided a ringing endorsement for the installation of renewable energy facilities across the city.

Just a few miles away, Bradford has introduced wind-turbines that generate enough electricity to power the interior and exterior lighting for an entire tower block. On a recent trip to Nottingham, I noticed that their parking meters are driven by solar cells.

Leeds is in danger of falling behind and we must look for ways of generating as much power as we can through sustainable energy resources. In Greenwich Sainsburys have built a supermarket that uses solar power and wind-turbines. Perhaps we should look at ways through planning to encourage this.

I would like to see Leeds move forward on this issue and become a leading city on this very important subject. Renewable energies have a diverse range of benefits including the production of heat, electricity and even fuels for transportation. Renewable energies are a smart alternative to conventional sources of energy, and they protect our environment. The social and economic benefits cannot be under-estimated either, potentially reducing the price of our energy bills in our leisure centres, care homes and ALMO properties.

You only have to look at the potential of the Civic Hall that we are in for solar and thermal panels with all the available flat roof space and hot air? I would urge all the Councillors to back this White Paper, as this is a serious issue that has been proven to work in other cities and towns across the country. Leeds has always prided itself on innovation, a city that seeks to lead the way. Now is the perfect opportunity to prove our commitment for making our city cleaner and greener for all our residents. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Lord Mayor, I declare a personal interest in this item as a Director of Leeds North-West Homes.

COUNCILLOR C. NASH: Lord Mayor, Early Day Motion No. 391 is at present on the table in the House of Commons. This Early Day Motion supports microgeneration and relates to the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Bill which is currently before Parliament. It is at its committee stage and is due to have its third reading on March 10th. It is really important that our Leeds MPs sign up to this Early Day Motion and also that they vote for the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Bill, and I hope that all Members will lobby their MPs to do those two things.

The Early Day Motion says that, "This House believes that climate change is one of the most pressing issues facing the world today and views with concern the continuing increase in emissions of carbon dioxide. It welcomes the introduction with cross-party support of the Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Bill, and notes the bills will require the Prime Minister to report annually to Parliament on greenhouse gas emissions, require the Chancellor to implement a fiscal strategy to promote energy efficient microenergy generation, and require targets to be set for microgeneration and introduce policies to help achieve those targets, including such things as the granting of permitted development status and the use of building regulations to ensure that new builds will include a minimum standard for energy generation."

It is nice to see now that we have some kind of consensus that climate change is a pressing issue. A few years ago I was being told that green issues were "fringe" and that resource and environmental issues were irrelevant to politics, but now I do see even political papers full of the environment issues such as oil, water, energy, climate change, waste and flooding. I note that the Council itself is now appointing a Climate Change Officer, and I have a strong suspicion that these sorts of issues are going to start to actually dominate politics from now on.

Why microgeneration? Microgeneration is decentralised and it actually enables people to take more responsibility for their energy consumption. It works best in well-insulated properties and is not therefore a way of avoiding the issue of insulation and energy efficiency as developing some other sources is.

Unlike nuclear power, which this Council has opposed expansion of for 20 years and will continue to oppose, it leaves only a small legacy of toxic waste. It cannot lead to Chernobyl type incidents. It won't damage thyroids, as mine was damaged and thousands of others by Chernobyl, and it won't cost millions of pounds to the NHS. It is not a technology that will lead to threats of war on Iran or Iraq. Unlike incineration of waste for energy, it produces very few dioxins, saving again on cancers and cost to the NHS.

Microgeneration is generally a safe method of heating our homes and generating heat, especially when it comes from ground source heat pumps. For the electric-only households on our estates it can actually provide cheaper heating than they have at present and as gas prices rise microgeneration will actually help us close the gap. In respect of this, I welcome the efforts of Councillor Blackburn and Councillor

J. L. Carter to promote energy efficiency and conservation in Leeds to help close that gap. But microgeneration does need subsidy and help from planning regimes, nothing like the billions that we still continue to pump into nuclear energy but still some until the idea gets going.

It is a shame that we are discussing this now when we should have been doing this 20 years ago and, in fact, 20 years ago I and Garth Frankland, the then Councillor, first raised the importance of installing microgeneration in leisure centres and houses in Leeds. At present there are only 100,000 microgenerators in the UK and these are mainly pre-2000 solar water heaters. Compare this with Japan where there are 2 million, and rising fast.

The motion asks the Council to look at what it and ALMOs can do to get this ball rolling in Leeds, and I hope all Members of Council will support the motion.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Lord Mayor, we warmly welcome this resolution from Councillor Rick Downes, seconded by Councillor Claire Nash, but we have an even better suggestion, and that is that you maximize the chances of making this happen by referring it to the best group of talented and industrious Members who have got great forethought, the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

It is at the kind behest of Councillor Barry Anderson that we are already agreeing to look into energy and water management across the Council and, indeed, there is no point in having a report going separately to Executive Board. You need to have that overview thought through by Members of Council to get those recommendations to Executive Board, and I will give you an example of our forethought. I mean, I am not sure when you composed this resolution but Overview & Scrutiny Committee met on February 6th and you see the minutes of that meeting, blah-di-blah-di-blah and - right - bullet point, "Risks to future supplies of energy and the development of alternatives such as microgeneration" and blah-di-blah, lots more, too. Alright? And indeed we agreed our terms of reference, and the terms of reference would absolutely allow us to take this forward.

One of the bullet points is, "To review the work undertaken by the City Council in relation to the risks of future supplies and the development of alternatives" and, quite right, we need to do it.

There is a report in The Guardian, this morning, I think, about the National Trust recommending that it is going to --- In fact, one of its plans is to reduce its

own greenhouse gas emissions by cutting its electricity bills by 10% by next year and using green technologies. So you are quite right, we need to keep ahead, but I would hope you would accept the recommendation that it is referred to the part of the inquiry that is already happening. There is no point in having two going ahead. They are intimately linked. Send it to Overview & Scrutiny Committee first, who will act on it, as I say, with great talent, industriousness, and we will get those recommendations to Executive Board, I am sure, in the very, very near future. Thank you.

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

COUNCILLOR SHELBROOKE: My Lord Mayor, actually a lot of the things I am saying have been spoken already around the chamber. I think it is worth just stepping out for a moment and actually recognising that Leeds can be proud of some of the things it has achieved on environmental issues. £1.9 million spent on home insulation as Councillor Carter and Councillor Downes have pointed out, 77,000 tonnes of CO2 saved. £139 million saved in energy costs in the greener housing initiative which took place in the City. The installation of £25,000 high efficiency heating systems and 6,000 houses with double-glazing. I think that is well worth Leeds being recognised for as we do try and take these efforts seriously.

Of course, in June 2005 it was announced £1.1 million would be spent on energy-saving improvements in houses in the Pudsey ward, and I could go on. But how can we go further? Now, as many of you will know, I actually am an engineer and take an interest in energy issues, and one of the key things which I have been looking at lately and investigating is the geothermal source of energy. What this involves, and Councillor Nash has touched on it, it involves basically boring a 50 metre hole into the ground and uses a small electric water pump which circulates water through the hole and comes back up. For every 1 unit of electricity you use on that pump you save 4 units of electricity on the heating which will have occurred, so effectively cutting CO2 emissions by 75% because, of course, you would be burning fossil fuels to make that electricity. Now, they are quite big projects; you need quite a few of these holes to make them efficient, but they have been used to great effect in the Welsh Assembly building, the new building there, and they can absolutely halve fuel bills, and more so.

I think it is worth the Council considering, as it moves forward, any large capital projects which are put in place, and there are thoughts and aspirations in this City for new venues to be built and new arenas, and I think if we at the planning stage give this serious consideration we could actually be producing some of the greenest buildings in England and leading our way forward. Let us not forget, the Welsh Assembly is in Wales! So, you know, we could be the leading city in England in terms of green efficiency.

A lot of people are talking about the microgeneration. Microgeneration is important and certainly is the way to move forward in the 21st century. If 100 years ago when electricity was first being really pushed out you said to someone how complex it would be - I mean we can drive into the countryside in the middle of nowhere and there is a lit sign for a roundabout, something like that. It is all coming from the main power station. It is an immensely complex network, so to say let's try and move to microgeneration, Councillor Nash is talking about it on a house by house basis. I think there is more mileage at this moment in time looking at it from new estates which are built in areas like that. It is estimated that it could be paid for three times over in this country and the money which would be invested in the new nuclear power stations if they go ahead. If 15 nuclear power stations are to be built in this country, the money which will be saved from that could more than be used to bring in microgeneration across the whole of the UK, and on top of that it is estimated could actually turn off four main power stations in the energy that would be saved. So it certainly has massive merit to move forward in that area.

So, just to close, I think it is a very encouraging debate we are having in here. I think all sides are coming roughly from the main position. We want to move forward. What we have at the moment is last century technology. We have a national grid system which was really put in place, designed and was working up to 70/80 years ago, and to simply say, "I think it is time that we built new power stations to replace the ones replacing that, we should look more forward, we should look to the 21st century and bear this in mind about microgeneration, that when things are working on a cell basis in a cell area, you have got a lot more chance of being able to not have power cuts because you are controlling things from a local issue, so there are advantages all round. I thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR EWENS: Lord Mayor, I speak totally in support of the motion proposed by Councillor Downes. As he said at the beginning, green issues are no longer the sole preserve of sandal-wearers and flip-floppers. Indeed not. They are the preserve us of all. I would like that preserve to be developed from the global to the personal, and my history which brings me to this conclusion is my father was a beach-comber, as I have been - waste not, want not. His view when I was a small child if I left a light on overnight was, "If you leave the light on all night, you can't have your holidays in the Isle of Man." It made me aware of the need to balance the needs in my life and enabled him to give me a good standard of living.

My son designed and built windmills in Botswana to pump water in villages where there was only a well. The villagers could only use renewable energy to save the labour of dipping buckets into those wells, and the pumps 20 years later are still working.

When an endowment bonus arrived at my bank account, it came at the same time as the solar energy salesman on the doorstep. This has provided me

with really hot water for over six weeks at a time in the summer and temperature rising to a lower degree even today - literally today - for more than I can use, 1,000 hours of water heating a year on average.

I am personally committed to the green agenda, cavity insulation, loft insulation, double-glazing, low energy bulbs, composting, water meter. I can't use a bicycle any more because my knees won't let me.

Back to what I said a couple of minutes ago. The need is for a personal view of the global economy which is energy conscious, that is the personal view needs to be energy conscious. Installing energy saving measures is investment not expense. It saves money. Buying less damaging products such as E5 petrol, E stands for ethanol made from cereals and sugar beet, lowers the pollution in the atmosphere and costs no more. Indeed, if it leads to better health through cleaner air it costs the country less. So energy conservation and microgenerative methods of creating energy can all save money and be the direct responsibility of the person in the street.

In our modern society, better use of money is an overwhelming motivator, so whether we want to save money or to save the planet support for the microgeneration of energy, the wind, the water, the crops and the better use of waste products can all bring personal benefit to all of us, to enable us to save money and to save the planet. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Lord Mayor, I think we are in danger of breaking out into a great degree of consensus today, judging by the vague amendment from the Labour Party and the fact that all different parties are speaking in support of this motion. We have come quite a long way. It has been said by Councillor Nash, there was a time as Councillor Ewens mentioned where, if anybody was an environmentalist you knew who they were because they had beards and wore sandals - sorry, Richard - and generally with socks as well, and they generally belonged to the Green Party or to the more left wing element of my own party. It just shows what a long way we have come in about 20 years, as Claire said, that we have an administration here that, although the Labour Party likes to portray it when it is fighting the Liberals in our seats that it is the Tory dog that is in charge and, of course, I am sure they are doing the same when it comes to things like community safety by making out that you have gone weak because you have gone in with the Liberals, or whatever, but when it comes down to it this is a fantastic example of how we are all working together, because we all appreciate (Interruption) On this side of the chamber we all appreciate good governance, and that is how we can break down some of the old barriers that we have had in ideology and come together.

It does say something that the person who has brought on a Climate Change Officer for the first time in the Council's history, considering the whole generation that has been used to the environmental agenda being debated is

actually a portfolio-holder who is a Tory who has allowed the environmental agenda within his department to be looked at by Liberal Lead Members, by Conservative Lead Members, obviously, and also by making sure that David Blackburn as an Executive Member takes full responsibility for climate change in the City.

On top of that we have an unreconstructed Conservative like J. L. Carter (Laughter) who is responsible for a Council department which now, thanks to our clear sky thinking, could be responsible for the biggest lowering of fuel poverty in this city, because he has worked together with Liberals and with Greens to put together a programme which is actually implementable, which is where we come to the Labour Party, because they are lamentable.

We have had Tony Blair get elected in '97 and I assume there were quite a few environmentalists who were really quite keen on him being elected because he talked very much about taking the environment seriously, about making sure that our CO2 emissions were reduced, and what has actually happened is the opposite, and unfortunately we have also had a microcosm of that in Leeds City Council as well where the environment is something that is all very nice and we all like to have it but putting your money where your mouth is is something that this administration has managed to do through the Climate Change Officer that we have brought on board by ensuring that the Development Department has a sustainable construction policy, so that developers are coming to us to look at developing parts of our City, actually make sure that they include some of this technology in there to make sure that people's bills are lower and also make sure that our emissions as a City are lower as well.

The Environmental City Partnership, which was set up under Labour, I have to say, but has taken off under my leadership, has actually ensured that EMAS, which is the Environmental Management System is not something that just the City Council -- is a concept that we have taken on board and that we are familiar with, but we are also ensuring that our private sector partners out there who also use this as a successful way of reducing costs of their business also by mentoring other businesses are spreading it out across the City. Now, that is practical politics, it is not ideological and it is something that this administration is committed to. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Lord Mayor, I would just like to make one or two points, serious points, actually, very serious points. The change in the attitude to the environment is now phenomenal. I mean, this is coming from me, and I know my record on the environment is second to none - for polluting it - but it has changed. The whole world has changed. The whole world has recognised something needs to be done.

Now, there will still be the flat earth and the sandals and all the rest of it who want to sit in their little huts somewhere and live on that. I don't want to live in that

kind of society, but what is interesting when you listen to Claire, when you listen to the proposer, when you listen to a few round here, and Alex, the technology things that can be done and brought forward which will help this enormously.

Man can - he might be a polluter but he is also able to find different ways, different things and different ideas to protect the environment. In housing some of it is very simple, actually, and that is insulating property, and the more we do that we will save a phenomenal amount of energy if we can get property insulated properly, regardless of all the high-tech things. You know, just simply doing that would help enormously and we are obviously pushing that very hard.

But can I just say there are a lot of people working on this, not just me. I mean there is David over here and Barry have been working very hard all year on different things as far as energy conservation is concerned and I pay tribute to them for doing that.

Two years ago I had my first grandchild and I said to people, "I don't want my grandchild when she takes her children to the seaside to go to somewhere like Doncaster to go to the seaside. I want her to be able to go to Scarborough. I want the sea to stay there and not come right into land", which it well easily do.

I have got to say one thing, though, after the Great War, as you will remember, Bernard ---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I fought in it, my boy. They don't like it up 'em.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: The slogan then, Bernard, was, you know, "Changing swords to ploughs". Well, I have not quite got to changing Mercedes to bicycles. If we are doing that I say we take Andrew's Mercedes first, but my Mercedes is not quite getting changed just yet.

But having said that, it is an important subject. I am not trying to belittle the subject. It is a very important subject. It was a great thrill actually to save the 70,000-odd tonnes or whatever it is of carbon that didn't go into the atmosphere last year because we did something in this City. What we didn't say, of course, is how many millions of tonnes did go into the atmosphere, and that is what we have got to work on to try and reduce, but I would just like to thank all the people who are working very hard, and I hope we all support your proposal. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR MORTON: It is a Command Performance, Neil. Thank you for asking. I don't know about anybody else but I never seem to manage to open my brown envelopes during the week without some piece of paper talking about Closing the Gap, and we frequently talk about Closing the Gap or indeed narrowing it now. We never really ask ourselves what that gap is, and on one level that is a fairly obvious question. There are areas of the City, indeed the country, that are poorer, that have lower levels of income and wealth and have

lower health outputs. Slightly less obvious, we sometimes talk about crime and you will find there is a very high correlation between burglary, robbery hotspots, etc., and areas of poverty.

We talk less about the fact that those areas that are the gap tend to be dirtier. Interesting stuff from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation last month about the link between poverty and having poor environment, but what we tend not to talk about ever is that the gap is not just a gap in wealth or crime or in terms of environmental quality, there is also a gap in power. I am not talking about electricity.

We have heard so far I think a lot of very green warm words, and I am pleased that people have talked about the quality of technology that is now available. This is not Star Trek we are talking about, it is the political will that is missing on microgeneration. We don't need to invent anything to make it work, but you can very easily get stuck in an environmental argument over microgeneration that we talk about energy efficiency.

Councillor Nash talked about perhaps the second reason, albeit obliquely. She mentioned Iran and Iraq. There is a real issue about energy security. We have all been reading in our broadsheets about the Russians buying up gas reserves. I am not one of those people that argue that Iraq was about oil, but to say it is nothing about oil seems to be equally ridiculous.

We are facing a 21st century where the more energy, if not all our energy that we can generate in Britain, the safer I think that we will be. But there is a third reason. This is what I really wanted to talk about, because nobody else has, which is that microgeneration allows very radical devolution of economic power. There is no reason why Parish Councils can't run microgeneration. There is no reason why a housing association couldn't run it, groups of residents, if you have got big enough properties individuals, can all generate power that can at the very least supplement or meet their own needs. That redistributes wealth. In extreme cases you can actually put into the National Grid which allows you to create income and, as we talk about increasingly global environment, and we have all had Make Poverty History about these huge capital flows and still for every pound in aid we are taking ten back in trade, and so on.

We have a similar arrangement, it seems to me, in Leeds. It bothers me that we all agree that we ought to Close the Gap because I am always suspicious of consensus in politics. You know, I think that by and large you get progress having a bit of an argument.

I support the motion. I suppose where I have got a degree of sympathy with what Councillor Minkin was talking about was that we need to get some timetables and some targets into it. It is not completely toothless. Anybody - and I have done it myself - can send motions to Council saying we believe in something

or we want more or less of this. The motion does actually mention an Executive Board report, and that is a very important thing that we can come back in 6 months time if it has not happened and say, "Where is it?" We are actually asking for specific actions.

What I hope through either process, whether it is Executive Board or Overview & Scrutiny is we can actually get some targets in for that and, in conclusion I come back to what Alec was talking about, and I thought in many ways the best contribution, that you can at an estate level or whether it is significant new buildings actually get this stuff in relatively quickly if there is the political will, and if you do that, particularly in some of the poorer areas of Leeds, and if we make those a priority, you de-centralize economic power and then you begin to address the causes of the gap, not just plugging it with a sticky tape. Thank you. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Now, before I ask Councillor Downes to sum up, can I ask Councillor Harington whether he wishes to exercise his right to speak on the amendment?

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: No, thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: My Lord Mayor, I welcome the debate. It has been very interesting to hear the consensus around the room and I thank Liz Minkin and the Labour Group for, in their amendment, not actually challenging what was put down, and that shows a level of support from them as well.

I think David picked up on it very eloquently, and one or two others have mentioned it. One of the things that has been missing in the past has been the political will to drive this forward, and it is something that I picked up when I was a Councillor and it has taken me this time to sort of work out how to get this forward and push this onto the agenda, and I think it is critical now we move forward with it and, as David said, the fact that I would like to put it to Exec Board so that we can challenge it if it has not come back within 6 months, and if I am here, and I hope I will be here in 6 months, I will certainly be challenging for that to come back to make sure we do have targets and we do have ways of moving forward with it.

Whilst you can include it in your remit on Scrutiny, Liz, I would have no problems with that, but I would like to see it coming to Exec Board for the reasons I have mentioned.

I also welcome the comments made about trying to bring it onto the Planning agenda to make sure that new builds, especially new civic buildings, whatever, they need to take on an environmental dimension to make sure that we are protecting society.

There is funding for microgeneration projects which has been made

available. There is a £30 million low carbon building fund which was launched in November 2005, and it is available over 3 years to increase the uptake of technology such as solar cells, biomass and small-scale wind turbines, and I believe Leeds should be applying for this money and to make best use of our share of this funding.

Just to close, and it picks up on what Les was saying about recently becoming a grandfather. I have three daughters and I care passionately for their future, for the future of their children and for the future of their children's children, etc., and I don't want them saying of me that our generation destroyed the planet. I would rather them look back on us with pride that we had the foresight to take steps to give them a future. So whilst I have the chance to do that, it is my intention to do everything I can do to achieve it. (Applause)

(Councillor Minkin's amendment was lost)

(The motion was unanimously agreed) (Applause)

ITEM 9 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - RE-REGULATION OF BUS SERVICES

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Lord Mayor, it would be impossible for me to begin a speech in Council on buses without welcoming the introduction by the Labour Government of free off-peak bus travel for all over-60s coming into effect this April.

Lord Mayor, I believe, as Members do on our side of the chamber, that public transport should be service-led and not profit-led. Access to transport affects health, the environment, and is fundamental to the creation and maintenance of sustainable communities. It is crucial in developing thriving economies at local, regional and national levels, and most importantly crucial to enabling people to go to work, to access training, and to their overall quality of life.

We need local people deciding on the level of service required with provision based on need. Surely, this is the basis of local democracy. Increasingly people ask themselves why they should bother to vote if they cannot influence decisions.

We can all hark back to a golden time when Leeds buses were green and West Yorkshire buses were red, when people in Leeds voted to decide whether to put a penny on tram fares, but this is not about nostalgia; it is about putting decision-making over vital services back into the hands of people in our City.

So why buses? Buses are a lifeline for the majority of people in our communities. We talk a great deal about social inclusion in this chamber. The

truth is lack of access to transport is one of the key factors that contribute to exclusion, whether it be from access to training, employment, health care or simply visiting family and loved ones. The evidence is there, telling us that our most deprived communities have the most need of an affordable, reliable public transport system.

Lord Mayor, 49% of households in my ward, Middleton Park, have no access to a private car. This is repeated across the city: Armley 44%, Beeston 50%, Chapel Allerton 45%, City & Hunslet 59% and, highest of all, Hyde Park and Woodhouse at 62%. Taken together with the fact that most journeys taken are less than 5 miles long, I believe we must focus on bus travel if we are going to seriously tackle regeneration and all that the Closing the Gap agenda entails.

I am sure that no-one here needs a history lesson on the de-regulation of buses. It was one of the worst excesses of Margaret Thatcher's free market experimentation, and it is okay to mention Margaret Thatcher now in this way because now Cuddly Cameron is starting to airbrush her out of history.

We all remember the myriad of bus companies that set up and the chaos that ensued, buses not turning up, services cancelled on the grounds of unprofitability. I am sure that all of us have got examples of the misery that cancellation of services can cause, heart-breaking stories of people not being able to afford visiting their loved ones in hospital. Women having to give up jobs because they cannot physically get there and juggle child care at the same time. People not taking up training opportunities because the bus they relied on no longer runs on the same route. I am sure all of us in this chamber have a tale to tell, whether it is the 88 in Halton with Councillor Lyons, the 85 or 87 that affects my ward, the 61, the 167 service in Swillington and, as has already been mentioned, the cancellation of the Night Link service. All this coupled with disastrous planning decisions brought in under the last Tory Government allowing out of town inaccessible shopping centres and the consequent decimation of local district centres. All this has added to the isolation and loss of service in our most vulnerable communities.

Thatcher has famously been quoted as saying that any man over the age of 26 who travels by bus has lost his way in life. I would say that we have lost our way in this country by allowing most bus services to be vulnerable to market forces. In all the PTE areas bus patronage has fallen, satisfaction in bus services especially in the North of England is low, lack of investment and flexibility is not serving the needs of our communities or the needs of businesses and the economy of Leeds in the wider region.

Despite this, there are examples of good practice and I would like to pay tribute to the work of the PTEs, and in our case Metro, in the work that has been done to try and improve the services against the odds. Metro Connect, the new free City bus centre, is proving to be very popular. Indeed, Leeds has led the

country in putting much-needed investment into the infrastructure to support buses: guided bus lanes, HOV lanes and much, much more. Partnerships delivering.

Indeed, the move to setting up Quality Partnerships and the on-going work around Quality Contracts is very important and in theory should deliver a much better service in the long run, but isn't this the problem? They are bureaucratic and will take time to implement. Not only that but they are open to challenge from the bus operators. We need action now and fundamentally we need to have regulatory powers to bring services under local democratic control.

Lord Mayor, the time is right for this debate. We must turn the disappointment of Supertram into an advantage for all our communities. Supertram would only ever have dealt with part of our transport problems. It would not have answered the needs of our communities distant from the Supertram routes. Partners in the city are ready for the widest possible debate on the transport needs of the city. It is not just about big schemes and long-distance routes and connectivity within the region, it is about the people we represent and their needs in the 21st century.

We are embarking on discussions about setting up city regions, discussions about economic progress, about the imperative of productivity and about the true cost of congestion to our businesses. What better time then to have a proper debate about giving the local authority the power to determine our bus services in this City?

Investing in the needs of our workforce is essential if we are to achieve the productivity levels being asked of us. We are also deciding the future health and well-being of our City in decisions about local area agreements and climate change. Transport is at the heart of these debates and I don't want to put a dampener on the debate that just took place beforehand with Councillor Downes but all of the reductions from the carbon emissions that he has outlined would be wiped out by the predicted growth in transport emissions if we carry on as we are.

Lord Mayor, I am quite prepared, on behalf of my Group, to accept the amendment in the name of Councillor Tom Leadley. We have a model to compare with in this country and that is London. Regulation together with extra resources has improved services, increased patronage and cut congestion. Transport for London has secured unprecedented growth in investment and buses are at the heart of their vision for delivering a world-class public transport system.

Let me finish, Lord Mayor, by saying if regulation is good enough for London, it is surely, surely, good enough for Leeds. I move, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, I am advised I have a personal and prejudicial interest in this matter which I should have declared earlier, so I have waited until Councillor Blake finished to make that declaration of interest and I am

now leaving the chamber.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: What is the interest, Mark?

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Harris. It is a business interest, I understand.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: It is. Both First Bus and Arriva are clients of mine.

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

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I am gratified to hear that the amendment has been accepted, especially someone who uses buses almost every day, so the reason I wanted to amend Councillor Blake's motion was to make it a bit less like a slogan and to give it a bit more substance and purpose, and it is interesting that in recent months there has been more interest in bus services in Leeds than for many years.

A few days before the end of Supertram, and it may not have been a coincidence, Transforming Services Scrutiny Board began an inquiry into the way in which changes to bus routes and timings have to be notified. That inquiry should have found that bus services are not really de-regulated, that is something of a 1980s myth, you know, probably put about by Mrs. Thatcher. Actually, they are regulated by rules introduced in 1986 which were, if anything, more obscure and more bureaucratic than those of the 1930 Road Traffic Act which they replaced.

The 1986 Regulations give very little worthwhile power to strategic planning authorities like Metro. They often work against the interests of the travelling public and they needlessly outlaw co-ordination of services between operators.

None of this helps us to reach the goal of integrated public transport, which is what the Government constantly exhorts us to do, even though it has failed to bring in legislation which would allow Metro, the City Council and transport operators to work in partnership to achieve co-ordination and integration. Regulation of bus services must not be a mere slogan, it must have a purpose, which would be to safeguard the substantial public investment which would have to be made if we were to move towards an efficient and integrated public transport system.

There can be no doubt that bus services in many parts of West Yorkshire are at a low ebb. Arriva, the smaller of the two operators which dominate the county, made widespread service cuts at the end of January, many of them brought about by falling passenger numbers, and it is time that tide was turned. Now that the distraction of Supertram has been taken away, we should begin to work towards improvements which are affordable and achievable.

Perhaps 95% of all public transport destinations in West Yorkshire are likely only ever to be reached by bus. Without neglecting local train services, we need public investment in bus services and supporting infrastructure which should be safeguarded by appropriate regulation. My Lord Mayor, I move the amendment.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much. Before we go any further, I understand there are a number of further declarations resulting from membership of the PTA.

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: I should have declared I am a member of West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Me as well.

THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES (Ms. N. Jackson): And Councillor Akhtar.

THE LORD MAYOR: Yes. Anyone else suddenly remembered they belong to the PTA? No, Councillor Lyons is not ---

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I have not declared because it is not necessary.

THE LORD MAYOR: Okay. Is everybody happy that they have declared their personal interest? Thank you. Well, I am not quite sure about the need to second, but since we still do have an amendment on the order paper, perhaps Councillor Finnigan will second it and we will sort out the technicalities later.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I second the amendment and reserve the right to speak.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: My Lord Mayor, very briefly. When I live in Churwell, I am 5 minutes from an arterial route to and from Leeds to Morley. It is quite a nice arrangement. I am still astounded, actually, by the people that live 6 minutes further from my house that still use an area round a local primary school, Churwell Primary School, as a park and ride system, and I think there is something seriously wrong here.

I would like to support this motion really because in my opinion what the people want is a reliable public transport system. They want an accessible public transport system. They want a far more frequent service -- public transport system. Most of all they want an accessible, and by accessible I mean an affordable, public transport system, and what comes first - the chicken or the egg?

In terms of the cost, it is far too costly for people to get into and from Leeds and the only way you are going to get people to use the buses in my opinion is

nothing to do with congestion or their cars, it is to do with cost, and until the cost of public transport is brought down, until it is open and accessible to all, we are going to have massive congestion, we are going to have constant asthma problems, we are going to have a plethora of all these issues and, as far as I am concerned, the profit-making element has to be taken away from this equation, and I support this motion. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR SHELBRooke: My Lord Mayor, I have got a few points to make. Before I start, let's just draw on the inevitable comment of Councillor Blake when blaming the whole thing at the door of Mrs. Thatcher. Now, how inevitable was that comment on the way, and she used a very interesting phrase there. She said that the modern Tory Party were trying to airbrush out Margaret Thatcher from the history. Well, I think the airbrushing was done by the Labour Party in 1995 when they airbrushed Clause 4 out of their constitution, which is probably why for 10 years almost in power you have done absolutely nothing to try and re-regulate the buses, absolutely nothing at all. In fact, you have put forward two manifestos now where you talk about partnerships with Councils - nothing about extra regulation for buses - so I think when we are drawing back on history now almost 20 years, we only have to go back 10 years to see that perhaps you have had plenty of opportunity to address those complaints which you have just put to the chamber.

Now, drawing on to the comments I want to make, my Lord Mayor, I think one of the important things we have to remember when we stand in this chamber and we are discussing this is the real impact that a reduction in service can have on people, and that is what we are talking about here. You are servicing people, servicing a community.

Now, people in this chamber will know that I have spoken vocally before about the impact of surgeries moving out of town. I have written to the papers about dentists possibly shutting down and moving out, and all of this draws to a point where people have to rely on a bus service, and it is simply not good enough, as we found in the Scrutiny inquiry which we held, for people to stand up and say, "You are not going to get a decent bus service in this town before you do anything about cars." Well, taxing people out of their cars is not going to work. You have to put into place a viable alternative which people want to use, and cutting that service, which is exactly what has happened in my ward, in one of our villages in Scholes, as we heard from the deputation from the people of Scholes back in July, is doing absolutely nothing to encourage people out of their cars.

Now, I agree entirely that we need to, in a way, and the public investment can be put in to make things better but we do need reassurances on where we go with that, and therefore we need to look seriously into Quality Partnerships.

Now, the problem with Quality Partnerships, as my colleague tells me on my side here, that we only get one chance to do it. I am sure Councillor Lewis will have comments to make on this, being in the position he holds, but the point is that

I understand we only have one chance to do it and it has to be done properly, but I think, if we are going to move anything forward in this City, we certainly have to make sure we get that right and move down that road so that we can insist that routes and frequency are part of the partnership and us to invest more into those services.

One of the other points I wanted to draw on, my Lord Mayor, is that there is legislation in there already which is not being used to full effect. Now, we heard from several residents, and as a ward Councillor I am sure many other colleagues in the chamber and other Councillors in other wards have had people say, "You know, I waited for the bus for X amount of time. It didn't turn up. It turned up early. I couldn't get on it. The bus driver was rude. Things didn't happen." There are mechanisms. There is the Transport Commissioner which these complaints can be put to, and I don't think that we promote enough the legislation which already exists to actually make the bus companies and people come to account, and if they are not delivering the service which they have entered into a contract to do, we need to reassure that the public recognise that there is a mechanism for them to move things forward. It comes back to the old thing - if we don't report it, nothing is going to happen.

But another thing to bear in mind in existing legislation is that Metro currently subsidises 20% of the mileage in this City, and that subsidy is supposed to be going to the areas which are not viable. Now, when we have the inquiry - I was going to come to this in a minute, so I don't want to dwell on this, really. I think the Chair of my Scrutiny Board may make her own comments, but it was disappointing, the attitude taken by First Bus and Metro in terms of, "Oh well, bus use is growing. It is up 3% in some areas, blah-blah-blah." Yes, on the profitable routes. We have got a 20% subsidy from Metro. It amounts to £35 million for West Yorkshire, granted. Perhaps we need to investigate just where is that going and where is it being used, because we didn't really get to the bottom of it there. There is some legislation around already. I agree that we need more things to do but I think we should try and use what we have already got in place and push forward along those roads, something we can do immediately and we can do it from today. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR CASTLE: Lord Mayor, the word "regulation" strikes terror in my heart, and haven't we heard that word a lot over the last 9 years, and for that reason I was unable to raise any enthusiasm for the Labour Party's motion.

Having said that, even though people keep telling me that I don't represent an area of high deprivation, this time last year, when the bus service between Scholes and the city centre was cut, I received a huge postbag from Scholes residents who had been adversely affected by the cuts. Some drew my attention to the fact that on top of the service cuts buses were not always turning up, so that people were left hanging around in the cold and the wet, sometimes for over an hour. Others told me that they had to leave home at an unearthly hour in order to

get to hospital appointments on time. Other people told me that they had been using public transport to get to and from work but they had switched to their car because otherwise they would have to leave home very early in the morning in order to get to work and wouldn't get home again until late.

The Harewood Ward Councillors worked with local residents and we managed to get some slight improvement to the revised bus service, but local residents still only receive an hourly service to their local shopping centres. To make matters worse, there is no bus service between the villages of Barwick and Scholes. The two villages share a Parish Council and a Vicar and there are facilities in Barwick that aren't available in Scholes. From Barwick there are buses to Garforth and Wetherby, as well as to the city centre. Nevertheless, there is no direct bus link between Barwick and Scholes.

Lord Mayor, if we are to allow people to live their lives without a great deal of discomfort and hassle, if we are to persuade people to get out of their cars, stop clogging up our streets and use the bus instead, then we have got to go down the route outlined by Councillor Shelbrooke. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR ELLIOTT: My Lord Mayor, I support the amendment and in doing so would make the following comments. At the present time the lack of regulation is resulting in our bus services not performing that which we wish them to do. Not only are our most vulnerable, the young, the elderly and the less well off members of our society being disadvantaged but there is no incentive for people to use the bus service instead of using their cars. Thus I suggest that it would be of great all-round benefit for an improved and regulated service to be introduced, and quickly. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: My Lord Mayor, Councillor Blake talked of nostalgia, which brings to me visions of red buses and clippies and the TV show, "On the buses" and those immortal words of, "I 'ate you, Butler, hee-hee" by the immortal Inspector Blake. (Laughter)

To be fair, I agree with a lot of what she was saying about the problems with the buses we face today, and I do welcome the introduction of free bus travel. We had the debate previously about the way it was funded and how it was detrimental to the City of Leeds, and I am pleased that Metro have now been able to work out a way that it is now fair to Leeds. I still remain to see what happens at the end of the year if the take-up is too high. That may well cost the people of Leeds money then. Hopefully not. We shall see.

Basically, the model I would favour, and it is supported by the LGA group, is a variation of the London model which could be described as part-re-regulation. In London, services are commissioned by the Transport for London but provided by a private and in some cases social businesses. In the rest of the country anyone is free to run a bus service to whatever timetable they choose, provided they meet

safety standards. This is a free for all and can mean in places like Manchester bus companies racing each other for customers, or one monopolistic - that is a big word - provider driving out all the competition or, as we have in this area, a duopoly of two bus companies agreeing not to compete but taking up their share of the market. This leads to further problems because they withdraw services at a moment's notice and, in one of my functions on Metro, as acting Chair of the Tendered Services Sub-group, I wrote to one of the bus companies about their intentions to cut a service and basically they said, "It is not economically viable", despite the fact that it met the criteria to run. They have the control, we don't. I think it is very important that we look for a way of gaining back control so that we can deliver the services to the people that need them.

Now, bus patronage is up in London, and I believe that is because of the system they have, whereas in the PTEs bus patronage is down, and again this comes back to lack of control locally.

It was interesting to note that on 14th February, replying to an oral question, Alistair Darling indicated that the Government would not reject the approach of this form of partial re-regulation; whilst they did not want to go back to the pre-1986 legislation they did think that they could make a quantifiable change in the way in which bus services are provided outside London.

I think the White Paper, as it was presented, was too simplistic and I think that a return to full regulation of services is not the right way forward, and that is why the amendment by the Morley Independents I think more closely represents my view and is one that I am prepared to support. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Judith, I agree with your sentiments that caused you to put the White Paper down, but unfortunately it is so simple it fails in one relationship, and that is, will Her Majesty's Government, your Government, accede to your request? No, they won't, so your White Paper has no chance of success. However, the things I like about the amendment in particular is the recognising that there are support infrastructures related to services.

Now, we have heard today there has been discussion today about I believe it is the No. 4 route that starts in Pudsey and finishes in Whinmoor. This uses special incredibly long buses that need pavements altering, bus stops lengthening and so on. That is the kind of infrastructure that we will probably finish up paying for and needs protecting, and that is why I like and am speaking on behalf of the amendment, because I think that is the right way to go.

We get the kind of re-regulation that is needed by enacting legislation. I believe the legislation is in place and just simply needs enacting. Where it is not sufficient or inadequate, then perhaps there is a need for new legislation. Apart from that, I have no problems, Tom, in supporting your amendment.

Just one other thing before I finish, Lord Mayor. I am just puzzled, Judith, you did mention several buses and bus routes. I am puzzled, because I believe you live in Otley and you represent Middleton. I would love to know how you get there by bus.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Two buses.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I go on the train as well.

COUNCILLOR BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, just picking up what Councillor Cleasby said about the TR No. 4 bus, and that highlights exactly what this debate is about. When that came to Executive Board originally, we were still not certain whether that service was going to be kept on permanently. We were asked to spend all this money on improving pavements and bus stops but there was no guarantee there.

We have got a guarantee. We have got a letter, but how good that letter is I do not know, and how can we make investment just on that strength? We need some form of control so we can maintain these routes. I mean, the same thing happens with son of Supertram, this bus option. Supertram would have been a regulated service, bus services are not. A replacement service there, if we are going to put infrastructure and investment in, it needs to be regulated, it needs some form of control, and I am not talking about going back 20 years to the halcyon days of public transport, because it weren't like that at all.

I mean, I can remember when I lived on the Swinnow estate in Richard's ward, what was it, last bus on a night was half past ten and first bus on a Sunday morning was 12 o'clock. Well, that is no good, is it? So we are not talking about that. We are in the 21st century now and we need modern ways of dealing with it, something similar to what they have got in London.

I have just got to say, as far as Judith's motion, I think they have got bare-faced cheek. You know, we have had a Labour Government for 8 years. You know, she is saying we should do this. I remember at the General Election last year there were several Labour candidates going on about regulation, but what have they done? Nothing. You know, 8 years of nothing.

Yes, we need something doing and we will be supporting the Morley Borough Independents' amendment. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR EWENS: Lord Mayor, I will try and say things that other people have not commented on, because I know we are all talking in very much the same direction. I would like particularly to reinforce some of the things that Councillor Shelbrooke said. He and I have similar problems in our wards. His people have to wait an hour or more and see if it turns up. So do mine. They have to walk a

mile or more to a bus stop, and so do mine. And I have some problems that you don't have. I have two parallel roads with two bus services going along them, going approximately the same distance, and one charges twice the fare of the other. Now, you know, this is something else that we have got to deal with.

I wish, for instance, that the buses were clean. They are the filthiest buses I have ever seen. You don't know what is coming - a great grey monster appears, and that's it.

I would like to thank Councillor Blake for reinforcing my sentiments about my own ward in Hyde Park and Woodhouse, where we are very badly served by buses. We don't have many cars and perhaps that is because there is no room for residents to have cars because we are full of commuter cars. I don't know.

My last plea is for those people, the elderly and children, young people, students, who want to go out after 6 o'clock at night. How do young people stay at out of school clubs if they can't get home safely? These are the sorts of issues that don't affect every ward, but they certainly affect mine and, please, please, can we have a better one. I went to talk to Metro about it and it was, "Use it or lose it. If an average of 6 people don't use the service every time it runs, it comes off." Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: No, thank you very much. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR GRAHAME: My Lord Mayor, in September 2005 the

Transforming Services Scrutiny Board, which I chair, began an inquiry looking into how bus services are delivered in our City. We were inspired to take this action after being informed by Councillors of all parties in wards across the City of the negative impact a number of changes to bus timetables and routes by operators were having on local residents.

To undertake our inquiry it was vital that we seek co-operation from the relevant bus companies (inaudible) and the West Yorkshire PTA. In the subsequent report produced following this inquiry the Board reached a number of conclusions and recommendations that, although not entirely surprising, would I am sure interest many of you here today. I hope many of you listening to this debate in the near future request a copy of the report.

The de-regulation of bus services by the Conservative Government through the Transport Act of 1985 has not worked in our City. The basis behind deregulation was to ensure competition between operators and would result in customer benefits such as low fares, passenger (inaudible). We in this City are left with First (inaudible) and Arriva who in most cases do not compete with each other. As both companies are plcs, profit is the over-riding factor in how our bus services are managed when they are deciding on timetable, routes, frequency and

cost of any service. Unfortunately, this has meant many residents of Leeds are simply not getting a fair deal or the standard of service which should be expected. Is this acceptable in a city that boasts to be the UK's favourite? For example, in our Scrutiny Inquiry, looking at the problems experienced by the residents of Scholes, they have seen their community bus service to Leeds city centre reduced from half-hourly to hourly. The reason for this decision they were told by the bus operator was because of commercial reasons. While pressure from local residents and Ward Members has, I gather, been successful in reinstating this service, unfortunately, as my colleague Councillor Blake has highlighted, this is not always the case for people living in other areas of Leeds.

As a Council, we must start taking a proactive approach to trying to change primary or secondary legislation which will allow us at the very least to have more control over the quality of our bus services. Our inquiry highlighted a number of different types of legislation that could possibly succeed such as Voluntary Quality Partnerships, Statutory Quality Partnerships leading to Quality Contracts. While I understand that some of this legislation may be more attractive and indeed more workable than others, I would urge Council to take heed of the Scrutiny Board reports, conclusions and recommendations and indeed to use these findings in a positive way.

De-regulation of our buses has not worked, hence we have to do everything we can to move away from de-regulation and finally re-regulate bus services, and it is a shame that Councillor Shelbrooke did not get his question in before, because it would have been interesting.

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Lord Mayor, I would like to say a few words on behalf of my constituents in Ardsley and Robin Hood. My ward does not benefit from a district centre. There are no great shopping centres inside the ward itself. You have to travel to Leeds, Wakefield, Morley and Rothwell to visit schools, hospitals, leisure centres, GP services and shopping facilities.

We have had numerous cuts and changes to bus services in the last few years. People are really getting quite tired of the problem. In a recent survey, 300 households in Tingley which has been affected by some of the most recent cuts the people came out to us to say that the services they did have were unreliable, that they were tired of the chops and changes to services in the recent years, that the Leeds timetable had changed so often they no longer knew which services they could use or where they were going to, and also they did not appreciate the lack of notice or consultation when these changes took place.

Our communities like East Ardsley, Thorpe, West Ardsley, Tingley will continue to lose out unless we have a regulated service. That is why I will be supporting this motion, and I hope that Members will do too.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: My Lord Mayor, just firstly on Alex Shelbrooke and

David Blackburn's points, that the Labour Government should have done something, they should have done something. One thing I would say is that it is a damn sight easier to break things up than to put them back together again, and that is what we face now, putting together something. They broke up a network that worked. They broke up bus services that worked run by West Yorkshire, split them into a thousand pieces. Far more difficult to then put all those bits back together 20 years later. Yes, Labour Government should do something.

I have been thinking a lot about de-regulation since Black Prince's demise a few months ago, because Black Prince was the last of the independent bus operators within this City, and as soon as Black Prince went we went back from the public monopoly we had 20 years back, we have gone through a thousand (inaudible), Amberley, Airbus, Beeline, various different companies come and gone, and where are we now? With ineffective private monopoly, and private monopoly or duopoly, it works the same way, let's be honest. Let's not pretend that Arriva and First Bus are in desperate competition. They are both large companies that do extremely well out of their bus operation. The most profitable part of those companies is their bus operations. The amount of profit they cream out of those is unbelievable. Under a regulated system, what you did was pour back the profit into the system to make it work better.

Now, 20 years back people like myself and Jim McKenna as bus drivers were busy campaigning against the Transport Bill and, okay, it wasn't Margaret Thatcher, it was the late lamented Nicholas Ridley, bless his cotton socks, eh? Madsen Pirrie of the Adam Smith Institute used to be shown on TV with two little red buses, pushing them across the carpet or a table and showing how the new system would work. He is still knocking about, that man. He is still one of your ideological leaders. It frightens me, but everything that we said at that time has come absolutely true about higher fares, about unreliable services, about changing services, about areas left without buses, about no through ticketing, no joint ticketing, services that were in no way co-ordinated, services that were based on the idea of competition which would actually prevent people from making maximum use of them. Absolutely everything we said was true.

There is no joy to us in that. Just to say this was an act of kind of criminal folly and vandalism in destroying a public transport network. But what that network had, and can I just give a little history lesson for some people. What you could do when you controlled buses in a regulated system, you could achieve wonders, and when John Gunnell and Labour took control of the old West Yorkshire PTA and West Yorkshire County Council, what they did, they had seen how the buses were run under the Tories, running the PTA, and it wasn't a disaster, it was just that the characters didn't know what they were doing. They had the problems of diesel prices would go up so the only thing they could think, "Right, we must pass those on to the customer." You would pass those on to the customer, you would lose more customers, so you would have to have another fare increase. Some years we were going through two and three fare increases in

a year. Absolutely disastrous.

When Labour took control of the County Council they came up with a simple idea, and that was to actually maximize the use of the vehicles. The vehicles were there, they were on the roads, so what did they do? They introduced 30p maximum off-peak fares and, yes, okay, it was criticised hugely at the time but it actually worked. They went from having 200 million journeys per year within West Yorkshire to 300 million. They were able to actually take cars off the road. Congestion went down, as it went up when de-regulation came in. That is where the real damage has been done, in our ability to actually control what is happening in a bigger environment. It is not just about bus services, it is about what we can do to reduce congestion, to reduce pollution and to make the City a better place to live.

That is why it is important that we go for re-regulation as soon as possible. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor, I have listened with interest to some of you, what you know about buses and what you know about transport, and I am amazed. You have forgotten 1985/86 de-regulation when it was a political hot potato, when a lot of us were down in London with the unions arguing for the people, not for politics, but for the people to have a proper bus service.

Now, does any of you think you have got a proper bus service in Leeds or West Yorkshire? If you have, would you please tell me, because the only ones that think it is a good service are the bus operators. They are making millions and millions of pounds out of our people's taxes, what we are getting in here, what we argued about all day, the budget. There is an amount of that going in for profits for the bus companies.

Well, alright, everybody has got to work and everybody has got to make a profit, but what are they doing? What they are doing is what Richard has said; they have taken each other over and the little fish have been eaten up all the way along the line until there are very few, you might as well say two or three at the most in West Yorkshire that run transport. But, for a start off, they won't use their own money to buy new buses, etc. They won't improve the service at all. If their services are anywhere like falling in profit, not losing, falling in profit, they take that bus off.

I represent Templenewsam Ward and they have taken a bus off there, the 88, near where the Lord Mayor lives, and it comes round. It used to go by St. James's Hospital. They have taken that bus off. When we argued for it to be put back on they said, "Oh, we will put it back on if you pay", if we pay Council Tax money to pay it, and it would cost £100,000. So all they are thinking about is their profit.

What does worry them and what we are talking about today - what does worry them - irrespective of which party you are, you all represent people that want to travel on buses and want to have a clean, nice journey at a reasonable price. That is all we ask, and they are taking out of the bus industry millions and millions of pounds in profit without putting anything back in.

Now, what has been proposed by two parties is regulation. What the Labour Government has done, and I have argued long and hard, they have got the regulation in but they call it the Quality Bus Contracts. That is the name it goes under, the Quality Bus Contracts, because everyone is frightened to death, if you are a politician, you are frightened to death and somebody admitted it today, to say about regulation.

Now, regulation should never have come in. De-regulation should never have come in. It came in, so we can't do a lot about that but argue for it going out like it did in London. So what do we do? We try to enact this Quality Bus Contract which in all but name is to say that we are regulating the industry again.

Now, the Labour Government in my opinion as lagged way, way behind and sided with the big lobby of the bus operators that has gone down like any Government. They don't care who is in power, they go down and they argue to see what they can do and what they can't do. I don't want no public money giving to bus operators for working bus services that they should be working now. They should be doing them now, and I am getting close to the light so I had better hurry up.

What we should do is go for the Quality Bus Contracts. All parties, all where I have spoke across the country, have said that they agree with Quality Bus Contracts and we should bring them in and we should tell the bus companies if they don't put a service on and do it right and do it properly and make a decent profit, then we should be giving them Quality Bus Contracts and telling them where to run, how to run them, and what we were doing. Never mind waiting an hour in the rain, as has been spoken earlier about. They are missing buses, they are doing everything, and they are getting millions and millions of pounds of your people's money in profit. Well, I don't mind the profit but they are not putting up the service, and if you go out here tonight you will find that they have not put the service up. After 6 o'clock on a night, you pay in any case, it doesn't matter. They will not book a service that they think they are not going to make a profit to. It is not a matter of politics, it is a matter of you saying you want, what is right for your people who you represent. Put this Quality Bus Service in, this regulation back in. It is done everywhere else, do it here. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I ask Councillor James Lewis whether he wishes to exercise his right to speak on the reserved ---

COUNCILLOR J. LEWIS: Please, Lord Mayor. First of all, I listened very

carefully to what a lot of people in this Council chamber have said, and a lot of people like Richard as an ex-bus driver and Mick has a long time on Metro, have long memories about the history of this, and I don't wish to go back to 1985/86 when, for Council's interest, I was still at infants school, but I do wish - I do wish - the free market parties opposite would learn from their lessons, and I don't think they are doing, because earlier today in the budget debate they voted for consultants to start the process of setting free leisure centres from the control of Elected Members in this Council chamber, and I fear we will be back to a similar debate we are having today in the future when Councillors in this chamber will be saying, "I wish we could provide socially useful services in our leisure centres, but unfortunately in 2006 they were set free from Council control", and no doubt the free market parties opposite will be saying, "Oh you are just talking about the past. You are just talking about the past when you go back to 2006", and I hope that lesson will be learnt.

Turning to Councillor Shelbrooke's comments, he mentioned about profitable routes, and I am pleased to hear a Conservative that is finally learning lessons about some of the inherent failings in capitalism - all it is interested in is the pursuit of profit rather than looking at the needs of people, and that is two of our bus companies. All they are interested in is the profitable routes, and they are quite happy to leave people behind in rural areas, in areas where the patronage is not high enough to sustain a profitable service, and I am pleased that Councillor Shelbrooke is starting that long march towards socialism, that long march to where some of us are over here.

COUNCILLOR SHEL BROOKE: No, I am not. (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR J. LEWIS: He may be singing the Red Flag at the end of all of this. (Interruptions)

I am turning to the motion I am seconding. Metro did some market research on how to get people onto buses and it came back with a rather stark conclusion: make it simple, make it reliable, and I am going to argue in seconding this motion that it is only regulation of bus services that can bring those two objectives about.

Make it simple. Firstly, as Councillor Mulherin referred to, there is a constant wave of changes to bus services across this City. In 2004 Metro produced 24% more bus timetables than 2003. That just shows the changes. And also complicated things like fares, there is different tickets, different passes, different tickets that are only used on some operators.

In Turin, which has just hosted the Winter Olympics, I had a Smart Card you could use to pay for your transport and you could use to pay for your skiing and your snowboarding on the piste. Things like that will make public transport easier. Operators don't want it, so only regulation can bring it about.

How about make it reliable? 75% of services in December in West Yorkshire didn't run on time. 5% of services in West Yorkshire in December didn't turn up at all. Metro has a bus strategy which sets targets of 95% running on time, 0.5% turn up altogether. The bus companies are taking millions and millions of pounds of taxpayers' money, yet there is no way that Metro can ensure quality on that and issues that Councillor Ewens touched on about cleanliness, there is no levers under the current regulations to bring that about, and only regulation will do that.

In West Yorkshire alone in the last 10 years there has been a 17% decline in the amount of people using buses but, whilst you have all heard about the problems of the funding regime and the problems of the regulatory regime, in some places that trend has been reversed. In Brighton bus patronage has gone up 4.6% a year since 1994, in Cambridge 20% since 2001, in Oxford 50% in 10 years, in York 15% in a year. These are things that are happening in the current funding regime and the current regulatory regime. I think it is up to the Conservatives and Liberal Party which run this Council and run Metro to look at some of these good examples and look what can be done now, not looking for schemes that may or may not come in the future and not whining with the intellectual rigor and the tone - -- (Interruptions) Les, we have been listening to you all afternoon. -- not whining with the intellectual rigor and the tone of a teenager who doesn't want to tidy their bedroom that we can't do anything. It is time to act now, Lord Mayor.

I hope we all support this motion, but I also hope we look at what can be done now under the current funding regime and under the current regulatory regime. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Lord Mayor, I think one of the things I certainly said in my speech was that when it comes to buses everyone has a story to tell. I think we have been proved right this evening. It is an issue that is close to all of us as representatives, as well as our own personal experience.

I think in answer to the issue of why we are asking a Labour Government to do this, we have to acknowledge that it is an issue that has moved up the agenda of so many people that we work with. I was at a meeting this morning with Health officials from the City and transport, I have to tell you, was at the top of their agenda. Business talks about transport all the time and, of course, it is something that all of us get probably on a weekly basis through calls and through contacts from the people we represent.

It will take time to work this through, I think all of us have acknowledged that, but in the meantime there is a lot that we can do on this Council, and I hope all of us will put pressure through the mechanisms that are available to us now to ease the situation with regard to buses and public transport in this City.

When we have Planning applications through, anyone on Development Panels has the ability to question developers about the robustness of their green travel plans, for example. We have a real issue about the hierarchy of road space. We must, I think has been argued successfully, give priority to buses so they can actually get through the streets and that people do choose to switch to buses.

Location is absolutely crucial, and I think we have had a good debate tonight, Lord Mayor, and we will, I assure you, keep putting pressure on. We have a groundswell of public opinion. We have a groundswell of opinion from across the political divide, although I would like to just see more robustness in the terms of the commitment to public transport from some parts of the chamber.

I understand, just in moving this through, Councillor Leadley, you are happy for your amendment to be included in our motion, and I put it to the Council. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I just be clear, Councillor Blake? Does Councillor James Lewis support your proposal that Councillor Leadley's amendment effectively becomes the substantive motion?

COUNCILLOR J. LEWIS: Of course.

THE LORD MAYOR: Yes, and does Council agree that we make that change? Yes.

(The substantive motion was carried unanimously)

ITEM 10 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - LEEDS UDP

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, pardon me if I just pause a moment to contemplate on ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Suicide.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: No, no. Les, I came near to it when I was counting the number of reasons why Judith Blake is not a Member of Parliament, and she was giving me four or five more every minute. Of course, Councillor James Lewis, he is a good lad. He sits quietly. Yes, you. He sits quietly there all through hours of the meeting, never moves, doesn't go out, sits there, doesn't say a word, and I have come to the conclusion there is a handle at the back of the seat that goes in his back and every one of them that walks past winds it another crank, and it gets to 9 o'clock at night and he shoots up and gives us this enthusiastic nonsense (Laughter) but never mind, it is really entertaining. It is really entertaining. It is really entertaining.

My Lord Mayor, I have never known a group, in all the time I have been on this Council, accept an amendment that deleted every word that they put down. (Laughter) They have really hit it, haven't they? Nearly 2 years in opposition and now they are so desperate to get a win that they are prepared to accept something that removes every word they have said, and then they vote for it. Well, there we are. I mean, you learn something every day. Roll on the next Council Meeting and see what your next little ruse is, boys and girls.

Right, now for something more serious, the UDP. It is perfectly obvious to everybody that the revised UDP, the whole process that we went through was not of our making, it was the decision of the party opposite to go in for a revision of the UDP, and the result --- Well, we could have, I suppose, and some people thought perhaps we should really seriously consider it, of pulling the plug in the middle of the UDP process. My view always was, and I think I have been proved right, that we would have finished up with a review with an allocation of housing suggested through the RSS which was a great deal worse. I regret to say that view has been proved absolutely right, because this UDP review was conducted on the basis of us providing and achieving 1930 houses a year. In fact, we have been exceeding that because of the amounts of flats that are built in the centre of town on brown field sites. There is a limit to how long that can continue.

The RSS, of course, is now out for consultation demanding that Leeds takes a share far greater than that per annum of 2,600-and-some. We are objecting to that. We are statutory objectors to the RSS, and we have heard some talk today about lack of democratic accountability. I went to the Regional Assembly, that last vestige of Labour's regional nightmare, to argue Leeds' case for not having an allocation of 2,600 at all, because we were being penalised for over-achieving on our housing targets while other areas in the RSS area who had failed to meet the targets were being let off with it, and to me that is perverse.

I didn't have to argue with a politician. All the politicians, (?)Box and company, they all sat there schtoom while I argued with a civil servant - somebody paid by us as an officer. Now, how would you like to have to argue with an officer rather than an elected Member in the Council chamber, because that is the position. That is the position on the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly, so when this lot talk about lack of democracy, they want to have a look at the Assembly where we are facing an over-mighty civil servant who has decided apparently that we almost have no right at all to object to this new allocation of housing. Well, in my usual style, he got to understand differently fairly quickly. He really got upset when I told him that Councillor Anderson, who was our representative on the RSS working group, was not going to chair one of his very few consultation meetings because the civil servant had told an Elected Member it wasn't appropriate if he was going to chair it for him to voice Leeds' objections. I said, "Well, that is very simple. We won't chair it. You chair it. We will sit in the audience and make our objections." He soon backed down on that, too, and he allowed Councillor Anderson to make objections and chair the meeting. Good of him, wasn't it, a civil

servant, that. Good of him to let an Elected Member make a few objections. Anyway, you need to remember that is the backdrop.

So what we decided to do was to reluctantly accept some of the recommendations, or all of the recommendations, that the Inspector has put forward, but to make it very clear that the Council's policy is crystal clear. We are opposed to building on the green belt. We will defend green field sites for as long as we can against building. We will protect PAS land for as long as possible, wherever it is in this City. This is not a party political issue. We will defend our open spaces for as long as possible because, unlike the regulation and deregulation of buses, when you have built on a piece of green field land you can't undo it ever, and we know what John Prescott wants to do; he would build on green belt and green field all over the country. The only thing balanced about John Prescott is he has got a big chip on both his shoulders. That man has a malevolent determination to destroy anything that is green and pleasant anywhere he finds it. Well, he is not going to do it in Leeds, if we have anything to do about it.

My Lord Mayor, we are meeting our targets and we will continue to meet our targets. We will bring forward brown field sites to build on. We are fortunate in two respects. Under the current housing requirement for this City, 930 per annum, we have 11 years worth of active past planning applications for housing. Even if this undemocratic bunch in the Assembly get their way and they make us accept 2,600 - they can't make us accept it, they can force us to have it - 2,600 a year, we still have 9 years of past applications but, of course, unfortunately for us they won't fall year by year. Thereby hangs the problem. But we know we can defend the green belt, green field areas, and I would hope at some stage garden areas, too, because when you come to some of the more inner city sites what you find is the green space is probably a big garden. Mr. Prescott, of course, now says, "Get ahead and build on that. Knock the house down. Knock it down straight away and let's put 40 flats on it. Remove all that green space at least people can walk past and look at." Well, it is time local authorities all over the country stood up to Mr. Prescott and the ODPM.

I was reading an article on Sunday in one of the Sunday papers about - I am sorry, Nicole - about the zealotness of Monitoring Officers, encouraged by the ODPM to stifle Councillors' objections to planning applications, particularly on green field sites. Apparently it is happening all over the country. The particular instances quoted there were in Shropshire where Councillors were virtually -- were leaned on via the ODPM via the Monitoring Officer not to represent their constituents' views opposing building on open space. Let me tell you this, it ain't going to happen here.

We have put down a very, very firm commitment which is this administration's commitment in all its parts. I think it reflects the views of most people in the Council chamber.

We also have to make sure that we create more green space. This Government has increased the amount of building on green field sites by 60% since 1997 - 60%. That is a fact. You cannot get away from it, and it is small green field sites in urban areas. It is urban areas where there is pressure from ODPM to build more houses, and those urban areas are typical of many in Leeds. We have to resist them, and we have to do it together. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, I think every Member at Development Plan Panel, certainly on our side anyway, is fully behind this motion. What the Inspector has done to us in the review is, to be quite honest, disgusting. It has taken no account of what the situation is, and it would appear as well, as Councillor Carter says, from the regional spatial strategy point of view and the number of houses, central Government have not taken account at all of the fact that as a City we have taken, I think, our share of housing and we should be protecting our green field sites.

As I say, I would think we are all united on the Development Plan Panel, and I would hope all Members opposite support this resolution. I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor McArdle.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Thank you, Lord Mayor, for the final time this evening. I am pleased that --- Well, this City can be proud of the fact that it has exceeded the 1930 targets in terms of the UDP. I thought under PPG3 we actually exceeded well over 60%. In fact, I am pretty certain in my mind that I have seen 82% quoted in the documentation, so it is even greater than 60%.

Again, where I live in Churwell, on either side of the A643 Elland Road, there are two PAS sites. There is the Laneside and there is also the land in the UDP papers called "Land west of Churwell". It is actually known locally as the pit hills. We also have two other PAS sites in Morley North, two in Morley South and there is also two in Ardsley and Robin Hood.

I do support this motion. We need to protect green field sites to the best of our ability and our capacity, but I would just ask Councillor Carter perhaps in his summing up, because I asked a question earlier on in the middle section on the UDP Inspector's report and I don't necessarily agree with him. How did these PAS sites get put in as PAS sites? Thank you.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, as a member of Development Plan Panel, I wish to speak in support of Councillor Carter's motion. Without giving away too much detail, it can be confirmed that the Panel twice took legal advice about the UDP Review Inspector's findings on protected areas of search, and on neither occasion was the advice encouraging.

Morley Town Council was set up in the year 2000, so it could not have taken part in the early UDP consultations or the inquiry, though it did comment on the UDP Inspector's report between its publication and UDP adoption in August 2001.

There are no fewer than eight PAS sites in the Morley planning area covered by UDP Chapter 17, 7 of which might have been returned to green belt. We questioned the Inspector's decision to allocate so much PAS land across Leeds, about 560 hectares or 1380 acres, as against about 160 hectares or about 395 acres which had originally been asked for by the City Council.

His report had been written before publication of revised PPG3 in March 2000, and his calculations were based on an assumption that houses should be built at 25 to the hectare or 10 to the acre, which was the ruling density between 1920 and the 1980s, though it was already well out of date even before the 2000 revision of PPG3. New houses in Leeds were built at fewer than 30 to the hectare only in one year during the 1990s.

In Morley, we wanted to challenge the original Inspector's findings, even if it meant a secondary public inquiry, and it would be no exaggeration to say that our representations were rubbished by the City Council. When the UDP Review came along it was breathtakingly astounding to see that the City Council had stood on its head and taken exactly the same view of PAS as we in Morley had done in the months leading up to UDP adoption.

What the UDP Review Inspector then said, and within narrow logic his view can be appreciated, is that not much had changed in Government guidance on housing land since UDP adoption in August 2001, so there were no grounds for returning PAS land to green belt. It would seem that the City Council had made a major tactical error when it failed to challenge the original Inspector's findings before UDP adoption.

It should be remembered that part of the attraction of Leeds is that it is easy to get out of. You don't have to travel 15 miles out of the city centre before seeing a field with a cow in it, even southwards or westwards, into the West Yorkshire conurbation. This is invaluable when attracting inward investment as well as for the quality of life of those already here, so in future we must take every chance and make every effort to keep our land green. I support the motion. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Lord Mayor, also as a member of the Development Plans Panel, we were also disappointed by the Inspector's conclusions. We believed that our approach was justified and, again picking up on the issue of the record development on brown field land, and also the amount of permissions in the pipeline that we felt would adequately serve our housing needs for some years to

come.

As has been mentioned, the Panel did seek Counsel's Opinion but I have to tell you, for those of you who have not actually read the paper commenting on the Inspector's conclusions, his language couldn't have been plainer and blunter. He used words like "imprudent" and "premature" and "totally flawed", and we were given strong advice that it would be illogical and difficult to go against the Inspector's recommendations.

I think we, all of us in this chamber, would support the most robust implementation of policies that we have through Housing and through the emerging Local Development Framework, and I would add a very, very strong plea that we are as robust in the defence of open or green space within our inner city wards as we are in those that we are discussing at the moment on green belt land.

But, you know, we have to have a look very carefully about this. I mean, it doesn't seem two minutes ago that we were in this chamber discussing the impact of PPG3 and the housing requirements of the City. We have to look very carefully at how we can supply the housing needs of this City without infringing on green space, wherever it may be. We cannot on the one hand welcome the economic success of the City and on the other hand put up a "Closed for business" in terms of the housing needs of the City.

But there is one issue I would like Councillor Carter to comment on, and that is the information that came through the press about his national party's comments. The actual quote from The Times on 9th February starts with, "The Conservatives abandoned their traditional defence of the green belt yesterday and promised a programme of house building for first time buyers. In a speech that ignored most of last year's election manifesto, George Osborne the Shadow Chancellor said he would change the tax regime, planning system and supply of public housing to increase the number of affordable homes." It goes on, it also says, "The Conservatives would change the definition of a green field site in a review of the planning system."

Let's have some clarity and make sure that we all work together to protect the green space in this City, and let's make sure that through the Local Development Framework we can build up policies that we can all work to, that there is clarity in the planning system, that developers coming into this City are very clear about what is expected and what will be achieved through the planning process, and above all let's not just not play to the gallery and whoever happens to be there lobbying us at any particular time. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: My Lord Mayor, thank you very much. I am going to leave the national ping-pong to other people in the chamber. I want to speak today quite clearly on behalf of the issues in our ward of Crossgates and Whinmoor. As long as I have been in this Council, we have always felt that local

decisions are better than Planning Inspectors appointed by whichever Government, whichever party, and those of us on Plans East that I serve with are always incredibly disappointed when outsiders come in and make judgments about our community and our neighbourhoods without any of the background that we feel we give locally.

So I happened to appear in front of this Inspector at the Inquiry I think on the same day as John Procter, and Councillor Carter may well use this to come back at me, but I was not very persuasive on that occasion, because the Inspector simply rode over all of the comments that people made about brown field sites, sufficiency of brown field sites, and not bringing into play genuine green field sites, until that land supply was exhausted, and certainly it will not be exhausted, according to the advice from our Planning officers for many years, so why threaten neighbourhoods with what they perceive to be massively important issues about green belt, local amenity and tranquillity?

I think Councillor Blake has made some very important points that those virtues are not just found in the very outer wards but throughout the whole of the City and the city centre.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Absolutely. That is what I said.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Indeed, I wasn't disagreeing with you.

I specifically want to put on record today, as we have done throughout as Crossgates and Whinmoor Councillors, that we are opposed to the Grimesdyke and Redhall developments in Phase 2. We are particularly appalled if building happens at Redhall which is not just a sort of greenish area but actually has playing fields, 4, 5, 6 playing fields, which would have to be replaced somewhere.

So I think our position is very clear. We wish we were left to make local decisions for local people, and we hope very much that Council will be unanimous in terms of saying we wish to protect that.

I have not seen the advice Councillor Carter has from Council and I wonder if he was willing to make that available to us so that we can all see what that advice actually says, because all of us are involved in wanting to defend green belt land and space for our residents and our citizens, and it does seem to me interesting that very few people have read it and the majority don't know what it is about, so I hope he can do that. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, it is amazing, isn't it, if you actually listened to this debate you would actually start to think, well, how on earth are we in this position? How come we are faced with a situation - having listened to what Members over there have said - of accepting something that no-one seems to agree with? Well, the fact of the matter is that the Members over there -- sorry,

over there - over there - did agree with him. They did agree with the bulk of what the Inspector reported on. They did agree with the bulk of his findings. They didn't agree with the element of PAS land, but to hear Councillor Gruen speak, and I am glad Councillor Taggart is going to speak as well, to hear Councillor Gruen speak, anyone would think that the East of Leeds development is something that materialised from absolutely nowhere. It was something that he and his colleagues actually supported. It was something that Councillor Minkin championed. It was something that I opposed in the UDP Panel all the way along and criticised the then administration for supporting it. And yet what did we hear from Councillor Gruen at the time? Absolutely nothing. When did all of that change? I think it all changed when he came within 200 and a few votes of losing his seat, in actual fact. (Laughter) And then when do we see Councillor Gruen? We see him indeed at the Public Inquiry. He scuttles in under the cover of darkness almost, scared that his fellow colleagues will see him appearing, but that is not our way.

Let nobody be in any doubt whatsoever, this is a review process that we inherited from Labour. It is a review process that I for one and many colleagues on this side of the chamber was deeply, deeply unhappy about. I will hold my hand up. I was one of those people who was urging the Executive Member responsible for development to abandon this inquiry. I was one of the people who was saying, what can we possibly do to get out of this situation which we are all so deeply unhappy that we are actually in? Very, very regrettably, very sadly, the advice came back - quite categoric advice - that the group over there had managed to stitch it up so well that there was absolutely no wiggle room whatsoever when it came to the Inquiry because all of the proofs had been submitted. Everything was already there and at the 11th hour, which is when we actually came into office, we couldn't actually change the position that we were in, but that is the fact, that is the situation.

I would like to refer Members to page 199 of the minute book, Minute 65, and if Members go to the bit just above what was resolved they will see the words, "Members considered this information and it was the majority view of Panel to request Counsel's advice on this." Well, that is officer-speak, really, for what actually occurred at Panel which, for those Members who were not there, let me enlighten you.

Again, some of us were concerned about East of Leeds, some of us were very troubled that we were being boxed into a position as an administration, and so at that stage the Chair of the Development Panel, Councillor Andrew Carter, actually halted proceedings and moved that the whole Panel resolved that we have some further Counsel's Opinion to see if, once again, there is any way out of the situation we find ourselves in.

What happens? Completely amazingly, Councillor Taggart pipes up and says, "Oh, well, you might want to do that as the administration. Well, that is your

right, to seek further legal advice, but let it go on record we don't want to do that. We are not interested in taking those further steps. We are quite content to let it go ahead as it is." They sit not a spit away from each other; one is opposed to East of Leeds fundamentally and will do all he can to stop it happening. The other is more than happy and content with East of Leeds going ahead and doesn't even want to take Counsel's Opinion. What on earth is going on in the Labour Group, I ask myself, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Sounds very balanced to me.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Bernard, anything would sound balanced to you.

Lord Mayor, this is one of those issues that really, really, really annoys me - really annoys me. I can cope with losing an argument. I can cope with losing a debate. What I really can't come to terms with is the hypocrisy and the double-standards of the group opposite that on the one hand say, when they were in control, "Well, we have got to have development on 500 acres of green belt to the East of Leeds because it is absolutely the best thing for this City", and then when they find themselves in opposition, "Well, it is the worst thing on the planet and that nasty appointed Government Inspector that John Prescott put up here in Leeds, well, it is really quite awful, isn't it, really, and we should not agree with a word that he says", because that is the situation we find ourselves in, Lord Mayor.

Lord Mayor, just in case anyone was in any doubt, let's be clear. This is a review that we inherited, that we didn't want, and we tried to do everything we can to get out of. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, I would like to move under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 22.1 that Procedure Rule 3.2 be suspended to allow all the White Papers to be heard.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Just so that everybody understands, it is so that we can continue the debate and finish the White Papers.

(The motion was carried)

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: First of all, Leeds should be congratulated, really, for its number of housing consents which it has achieved in recent years. Councillor Carter is quite right, a significant number of consents have been given and Leeds, unlike several authorities in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, actually takes notice of PPG3 when it comes to density issues.

I know one local authority in the region - I was talking to the Chief Planning Officer who said, "Oh, Mr. Taggart, we don't bother with PPG3 here at all really. It is for places like Leeds and Sheffield." They had no idea that (1) I was a Member

of Leeds City Council or (2) that I sit on the Planning authority here. But it is interesting, in looking at his borough's figures I understand why they have given so few housing consents in recent years.

The second thing to say is, there are some local authorities in the Yorkshire and Humberside region who seem to have it in for Leeds. They are jealous of our success and they resent us. They hate our football team, whichever division it might be in, and there are some circles where you go and if you mention you are from Leeds you might get hissed, even from members of your own party, but we are big enough, it seems to me, to be able to cast all of that aside.

In a funny kind of way, the regional allocation for Leeds that is now being sought - there are two sides to the coin. It can be seen as a tribute to the greatness and the great success of the City of Leeds. If you look at the population figures, in terms of trends over the last 20 years or so, for many metropolitan districts up and down England you will see population losses. I mean, Liverpool seems to be in almost terminal decline in terms of its population. Manchester has gone down. My home city of Birmingham has gone down. Leeds is one of the few that is showing a trend the other way.

In a sense, you can say that Leeds has become a very successful city and that the city has transformed itself in the last 10/20 years. It is completely unrecognisable in many respects, although I must say, growing up and born in industrial inner city Birmingham and having the good fortune to come and live in Leeds as a student and attend Leeds University, the thing that struck me immediately was that, unlike in Birmingham, where you could go considerable distances within the city boundary and not see any greenery at all, really - you could see Cannon Hill Park, but in many areas that was it - and it was just mile after mile of industry and housing and tight development, and it was a breath of fresh air when I came to the City, and then I had the good fortune to represent Chapel Allerton, which had Gledhow Valley - marvellous in an inner city ward - and Meanwood Valley. And now I represent Bramley and Stanningley, we have got fantastic Rural Fringe for the North Award. Marvellous, so we can be really, really proud of what we have here in Leeds.

When I was Chair of Recreation all those years ago, we used to say there were more parks and green spaces in Leeds than any other city in Europe. It is great. You look at Leeds from the aerial maps and it is great. So that is all prologue.

Then we get to the situation where we had the meeting of the Panel, and I have been around long enough, and I must say when I was Chair of the Police Authority I have to say we were always - Mark will know this - we were always taking Counsel's Opinion on all sorts of issues, and Members would have to take a considered judgment about whether it was worth using public money to get Counsel's Opinion on a particular matter, and we used to do it with Tory Police

Ministers and Labour Police Ministers, actually as well. Charles Clarke was regularly being looked at when I was Chair of the Police Authority, and it is not that on the Labour benches we want to destroy green belt or lose our green spaces, because that is clearly not the case at all.

It is an issue, having read the Inspector's report, every single word, loads and loads of detail, and then having considered alongside that what our professional officers, working for us, some of them paid large sums of money for salary, weighing up their view as well, and their view was that basically you were more or less going to have to go along with the Inspector. That was their considered view, and Andrew Carter was right: Elected Members are there to take decisions in the end.

It is the right of Elected Members to say, "Well, actually we don't accept that, and we will explore elsewhere", and I was one of those who was attempting to say, Andrew, before you so rudely interrupted me in the Panel Meeting, you were the administration, that was your right but we weren't necessarily confident on the Labour side that going to Counsel would necessarily get you what you wanted and, of course, when we got Counsel's Opinion back that is what Counsel said. It didn't back the direction in which the Panel wanted to go. Andrew pushed it to the vote before the discussion had ended and we didn't vote against, we didn't vote for, we just abstained because we recognised that we are not in control.

I think our view is that you do sometimes need Counsel's Opinion. On this case ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You voted against.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: No, that's not true. We abstained. Honestly, not one of us voted against. As God is my witness up there, strike me down now - I abstained, definitely abstained. (Interruptions)

My time is running out. It is a case of judgment as to whether we went to Counsel's Opinion. It is not that we have a fundamental disagreement on East Leeds or anywhere else. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Thank you, Members of Council.

COUNCILLOR SHELBRooke: My Lord Mayor, it is very interesting to hear the flip-flopping which takes place over there from Councillor Gruen. I remember when I hadn't been on this Council very long and Councillor Gruen put a question to Councillor Procter which said, "Could he update him on the Whinmoor Cemetery" to which, of course, Councillor Procter replied, "As Councillor Gruen knows, there is no such thing as the Whinmoor Cemetery", which demonstrated perfectly at the time, and demonstrates perfectly now, how when the party over there are in power they were determined to put through on people in that area what they wanted, not what the people of that area wanted.

There are real concerns, my Lord Mayor, for the people of Scholes especially and the people of Thorner, that they are going to see the rural countryside they live in now get swallowed up and become a suburb of Leeds, and all I can say to those people there is that they are lucky that we now have an administration running this City which takes account of their views, understands their needs, and will do everything it can to protect the life which they chose and is not going to be overridden by the prejudices of the party over there. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR MORTON: Lord Mayor, there are other problems with the Inspector's report, other than green belt, and I know we have just talked about that, but there are other areas of the City so, if you don't mind.

The previous administration to its credit, albeit rather late, introduced the concept of the Assure Policy, the Area of Student Housing Restraint, which unfortunately is often referred to as just referring to Headingley. I am as bad myself. Certainly the community groups in the ward do themselves no favours by talking constantly about Headingley. It covers a large chunk of Weetwood, Kirkstall, nearly all of Hyde Park and Woodhouse, apart from Little London.

The growth of student housing and the problems associated with it don't need any further airing now, and at first deposit stage the new area of Student Housing Restraint had proved really quite effective in a negative way in terms of addressing the problems. I say negative in that it did nothing to improve the area but it stopped it getting worse; it put a floor underneath the decline of the area. If anybody has driven or walked round the area, they will be familiar with two/three bedroomed family houses knocked into five/six/seven bedroomed mini-hostels. Our record of having extensions refused and defending on appeal was very good. Purpose-built student accommodation was being refused. Large cluster flat applications were being refused, all being held upon appeal often, I have to say, on the existing UDP's Policy H15 which previously we had been told was no use but Inspectors at the first attempt of actually turning things down had been backing us up, so we would have a very different Leeds North West had that decision been taken 10 years ago.

However, the Inspector has come back with some fairly damning comments about our draft Assure Policy which was exciting, quite literally, national interest in this field. A lot of the core cities with problems around student housing were looking at this. The Inspector has made some fairly inflammatory comments about it, has more or less accused the Council of being anti-student.

Now, that is the bad news. We have got to change a successful policy on the diktat of one individual who is not democratically accountable, and I think as a Liberal that that is wrong.

The good news, such as it is, to try and drag a silver lining out of it, is that we have found some sort of way forward. We have turned a negative policy, "You can't do X" into a positive policy, "You can do X if you meet the following conditions", so we may be able to get some kind of restrictions still. We are now calling it an Area of Housing Mix, but it simply is not as good.

Now, I am a little bit disappointed, to be honest, at the text that has come out, and I need to get some officer advice and consult colleagues, but certainly community groups in the area are asking if we can slightly tighten this up. I have looked quite closely at what we are now putting forward and I don't think it is going to offer the level of protection that we might otherwise have got. We need to top and tail that.

But we are faced with real problems as well, and I know that there will always be, quite rightly, political interest and emotional interest in defending green field sites. There are other kinds of sustainable communities, and if you go and look at a huge arc through Woodhouse, Hyde Park, Burley, Headingley, Far Headingley, increasingly Kirkstall, what are fairly - not wonderful but - okay communities with a good mix of housing stock with terraces with family housing, with flats, a mixed inner urban community which could be what we are really trying to create as an inner city community has simply been flattened and turned into an extension of Leeds University campus, and it seems to me really quite wrong. If you look at the inner urban squalor, the graffiti, if you look at the volume crime figures, if you look at the parking problems, if you look at the issue of transients, of low turn-out, and the fact that students themselves are often not very happy at living in fairly exploited accommodation, that we had struck out as a city 10 years too late but with cross-party support and that an Inspector turns that down.

So as Inner North-West I am hoping that at the end of March we will look at it as an Area Committee to see if there is anything at the last minute we can do to tighten it up. I fear the answer is, "No" and I just felt the need to put that on the record, that there are other issues with this Inspector's report and his approach, other than green belt. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, fairly briefly, I will start with Councillor Gruen, as you would expect. When Councillor Gruen smiles sweetly at me and agrees with everything I say, it can mean only one of two things ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: You are in trouble. (Interruption)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: We are not having him back - that was the first one. Or he is deep in the sh-- you know what, and let me just remind him, as Councillor Procter did so eloquently. This UDP review is your UDP review. Your party, all your colleagues, Councillors Blake and Minkin in particular, backed the East of Leeds Housing expansion all the way. They are the ones who put it in the proposals. They are the ones who are responsible for it being there, and it is no

good you saying anything other. Councillor Schofield, remember that.

Councillor Gruen is at fault. My Lord Mayor, very quickly, let us look at what George Osborne actually said, and I have it word for word. As you would expect, I have a copy of his speech which says, "We should take a fresh look at what we mean by green field" - note, not "green belt". "Too often our current system protects the marginal scrubland because it is green field, while at the same time lets precious urban spaces like gardens get built all over because they are labelled brown field."

Now then, if I guess George Osborne means what I think he means, that in some of the inner city areas these large garden sites desperately need to be preserved to keep some element of green space in the inner city, I would have thought we all sign up to that. What he has not said is that we should build on the green belt, and he has not said we should build on green field. He has just said, we should look at some of the marginal scrubland. You have been doing that for years and building on it, so let's keep it in context, Judith.

And when it comes down to quotes, let's remember good old John Prescott again who said, "The green belt is our invention and we will build on it." Now, I am not sure he knew what he meant when he said it, but I know what he has done and he certainly has built on it.

Judith mentioned the economic diversity and prosperity of the City. One of the reasons this City is so prosperous is because it is so diverse in every possible way, and that includes environmental diversity, that you can get easy access to green spaces that are publicly accessible all around the City. We have to keep it that way and we will.

I am afraid you are mistaken, Councillor Taggart. I was meticulous at that Development Plan Panel meeting. I made the suggestion, as John accurately reported, that we should seek Counsel's Opinion for yet another time on a specific issue of the East Leeds expansion. You opposed that and I immediately gave you your democratic rights and had a vote on the issue, and my recollection is very clear, that you did indeed vote against ---

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: No, I didn't.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: But vote against or abstain, you did not vote in favour of us seeking counsel's opinion. Let me tell you this administration will always go the extra mile to protect our green open spaces. Clearly, you won't.

We are going to make sure, over the years to come, that we do everything we can to have the right supply of brown field housing land available, wherever it is in the City, to make sure that houses are available, hopefully for families, hopefully with less density, because the other thing that worries me is that we are changing

the nature and characters of communities, deliberately being forced upon us by a Deputy Prime Minister who is nothing but an environmental vandal.

Communities are completely changing. Don't tell me it is fashion, as Councillor Minkin did. It is not fashion to cram the place with flats. If that is all that is on offer, that is what people will take. We want to see families coming back into the city centre. That helps us to keep some of our schools currently under threat open with more young people going to them.

Building on the outskirts of the City on green open spaces does nothing to help the regeneration of the inner city, so in short we will always go the extra mile to protect our green spaces. We will make sure an ample supply of housing land is available in all our areas, particularly for families, particularly for people who will stay and make communities truly sustainable, but we will never give in easily to see our countryside built over, never to be green again. We will not let it happen.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. It only remains for us to take a vote on the White Paper Motion.

(The motion was carried unanimously)

THE LORD MAYOR: We are being very unanimous this evening. That is carried unanimously. Thank you very much for your attendance, ladies and gentlemen. I declare the Council meeting over at 9.40.

(Council rose at 9.40 p.m.)