

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20TH JULY 2005

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

THE LORD MAYOR (Councillor W. Hyde): Good afternoon, Members of Council, members of the public. Welcome to this Extraordinary Meeting of the City Council, the purpose being to appoint Honorary Aldermen, and can I call upon Councillor Harris to move the resolution.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Yes, Lord Mayor. I am very pleased indeed to have this opportunity to propose that Martin Dodgson, Leonard Grenville Fletcher, Graham Platt, Stephen Sadler and John Sully be admitted as Honorary Aldermen of the City.

As I have always said on such occasions, I regard the conferring of this position as a very appropriate honour and recognition of what the service the former Councillors give, not just to the Council but to the City as a whole, and again I am happy to say that there will come a point, I believe, in the not too distant future where we see former Councillors coming forward who have benefitted from the more recent pay structure and allowance structure that as Councillors we now all benefit from, but I say again, and I will stand to be corrected, as I look at those who will shortly become Aldermen, they are all from that era, the era that when I joined Council, Andrew, a few more of us, when not by any stretch of any imagination could one believe that you were joining the Council for any form of financial reward.

On the contrary, it was, almost without exception, you became a Councillor at some personal financial cost to you in reality, and I think that I am not in any way decrying the modern intake of Councillors but I think it does say so much for a certain generation of former Councillors who, without any question whatsoever, no matter whatever the public may think, that generation only had in mind that they were here to do a public service without any form of reward whatsoever. In many respects, I regret that perhaps we have all become far more professional and far more party political as the years have gone by, and so I am always pleased when I see these former Members of Council being offered this great honour.

I know that Keith and Andrew will speak about their own former members, so please forgive me if I don't say anything about them, but Stephen Sadler of course, as a former LibDem, or indeed Liberal in his first incarnation as a Councillor, is somebody who I may say a few words about. I remember when I was attempting to get elected myself 22 years ago, 23 years ago, seeing the headlines then that this young Liberal candidate against all the odds had somehow won in the then Richmond Hill Ward, and I would like to say to you personally that, having suffered two defeats myself in Moortown, that was one of the things which gave me encouragement to carry on

fighting perhaps against the odds, and in that respect I owe Stephen a personal thank you, because perhaps if not for the way in which he won that first time round in Richmond Hill I might have personally given up the ghost, and you would have been saved the pleasure of having me here today, and I know you all regard it as a great pleasure!

Stephen, of course, did 4 years in Richmond Hill and then went on and did a further 4 years in Burmantofts before then retiring of his own volition from Council. I remember he was always a very important member of our then Group, and he had much to tell me and teach me, and so it has continued since. Even though he has not been a Member of Council for so many years, his interest in this City, and the future of this City, has never faded or waned at all, and I am sure that now becoming an Honorary Alderman will only lead to him redoubling his efforts to do the very best he can for our great City. So Stephen in particular, but I no way decry the others who will shortly become Honorary Aldermen, I am very pleased indeed to be able to propose that this honour is conferred upon him. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, I am delighted to be able to second all the nominations on the paper, and I echo very much the views of Councillor Mark Harris about recognition.

I do want to concentrate on the two members put forward by our Group, John Sully and, of course, Graham Platt, because both of them share the same characteristic as having more come-backs than Frank Sinatra, and both of them have actually represented different parts of the City, and both of them were used as shock troops in so-called unwinnable seats, in which they achieved success.

If I can go to John Sully, as you know, he is like Graham, he has been about a bit - as a Councillor, I mean. He started off in Burley, '71-73. He then went to represent Osmondthorpe on the West Yorkshire County Council, where I think he would say he made some significant contributions to the cultural life of West Yorkshire and Leeds, both in opening up the canal, cycleways, footpaths and indeed preserving Thwaite Mills and giving a significant donation to the West Yorkshire Playhouse.

He then, surprise, surprise, came back on his bike to represent Halton, where he became known as the biking Councillor, and I think there are a number of people who would claim that title at the moment, Roger, and of course the biggest surprise is when he achieved the Mission Impossible of winning North Ward in '95-99, Les.

I think if you ever see John, if you ask him about accounts or the weather or his football or (inaudible), you will get the same conversation back, and that will be the Cross Pennine railway routes, and the need to improve buses and trams. It doesn't matter what you ask John, he is a fanatic about transport and, as you well know, has

written a number of articles and indeed has been a radio journalist, and probably still is, in a part-time capacity about transport. I know him and his wife have moved to Peterborough to be with their daughter, but I also know John comes up on a regular basis to not only wait for the tram but also to renew the contacts with his colleagues in Leeds, so I am delighted to do it on behalf of John, as well as I am with Graham Platt, who, despite him being a Londoner and coming up to Leeds in '51, he has been civilised by Leeds culture.

As you probably know, his main term of office was in Whinmoor from 1980 to 1990, where he groomed and polished Councillor Suzy Armitage to the position she is now. I am sad she is not here to receive that accolade. Is she? Oh there she is, yes.

You know, during those years I look to older colleagues on the other side as well, he formed a part of the Rat Pack, with the late Mike Simmonds, Terry Briggs and our own Bernard Atha, and it didn't matter which side you were on you dare not go into Members' Room when those four were together. You had to wear a tin helmet and, I assure you, earplugs because it was very loud, very raucous and very naughty most of the time, but just when we thought, after he had finished his term of office, it was safe to come in, and Graham went to France, he came back and to represent Weetwood in '95 with that awesome trio, as they were, with Graham, Judith Blake and Eileen Moxon and, yes, Les, you need wince, and single-handedly Graham saved the Meanwood Tannery and indeed the Community Centre.

But there is always a serious side to Graham, and that is his overwhelming professional and political commitment to deal with social inequality. He was the first solicitor to offer legal aid with Zermanskys in Chapeltown, and I know that when he was Chair of FE, and indeed Chair of Industry & Estates, he always put dealing with inequality at the top of his agenda.

Both have served with flair and character, as they say the character that we had and still have in some ways, and I think both have offered enormous contributions to the City, so I am delighted to be able to move them both on behalf of the Group. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, can I begin by supporting the nominations of the Liberal Democrat and Labour nominees, before I move on to comment about the two Conservative nominees. I was interested to hear Keith Wakefield's comments about the Rat Pack, and I was just sitting here wondering which was which. I presume that Bernard would have to have been Sammy David Junior, being able to play so many different tunes on the same instrument!

COUNCILLOR ATHA: What an instrument, though, Andrew.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: So presumably Graham, being the suave one of the quartet would have been Dean Martin, and I am not in any way commenting on his ability to consume alcohol.

It gives me very great pleasure to have been able to suggest our two nominations for Honorary Aldermen, because actually they have something in common, and that is that they both continued to serve the City of Leeds for very many years after they ceased to be elected Members of this Council.

I first met Martin Dodgson, I should say MBE JP, when I was elected to Leeds City Council back in 1973, the year that, I suppose, the interregnum year before we actually took over, and I think it is true to say we soon became great friends, and in 1979 I stood at the General Election as a Conservative candidate, quite naturally, in that Labour bastion of East Leeds and Martin and Vivienne were a great support to me at that time and I long remember the strenuous efforts they put in to help me reduce but not eradicate Mr. Healey's majority.

Martin had been elected to Leeds City Council back in 1968. His particular interest on the Council was always Education. He was Deputy Chairman of the Education Committee. In 1982 he was appointed a Magistrate, and in 1983/84 became Lord Mayor. Interestingly, that was the year I became Leader of the Conservative Group, and I am sure I can say this now - I wouldn't have been able to say it then - I was much encouraged by the little notes that were passed down from the chair which you now occupy, Lord Mayor, with Martin's - and some of my Members will recall this very well - with Martin's traditional handwritten signature in that distinctive ink that he always used, and all these wonderful things he has written for me to say about him he has not used that same ink today.

But the most interesting thing, as I said, is the fact that both our nominees have continued to serve this City since they left the Council. From 1987 until the present time, Martin Dodgson is a Director of Leeds Society for Deaf and Blind people. He was awarded the MBE in 2003 for his services to the community in Leeds, especially deaf and blind people. He is presently chairman of the Wade's Charitable Trust, a Trust that we all know does such outstanding work for the people of Leeds. I am delighted to be able to support the nomination of Martin John Dodgson MBE JP as an Honorary Alderman of this City.

As Mark Harris has rightly said, there are three things we can offer to our citizens: the Freedom, the Lord Mayoralty and being an Honorary Alderman. All three recognise exceptional service either to somebody who is still a Councillor or to people who are no longer Councillors, and I think that that is something that we exercise with great care and diligence, and the people who are nominated are all worthy of that distinction.

Leonard Grenville Fletcher, or Grenville as he is known to most of us, served on numerous committees including Social Services. He was elected to Council in 1978. It was that year that he joined the Lord Mayor's Charity Ball Committee as Treasurer, and he has continued to this date serving in that capacity. Over the years, the Lord Mayor's Charity Ball Committee has raised over £80,000 for the respective Lord Mayors' charities.

In 1984 he also joined the Committee of the Leeds Children's Holiday Camp Association, becoming a Trustee three years later and continuing to this date. A school governor for 20 years at three schools, but in particular at St. Joseph's Roman Catholic School, again an example of service to this City long after the individual ceased to be a Member of the Council. Once again, I have great pleasure in supporting the nomination of Leonard Grenville Fletcher as Honorary Alderman of this City. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, the Morley Borough Independents are absolutely delighted to support the nominations for all of these previous Councillors to become Honorary Aldermen.

The reason often that we are proud to support these particular individuals is that as a group that has got ex-Labour, ex-Conservative and ex-Liberal Members we clearly have a view from our own internal situations that we do understand and appreciate the sheer hard work that all of these people have put in over the years.

We have a particular affection for Graham Platt, who came up to Morley in 2002 and fought a particularly honourable campaign and was beaten by one of his opponents - I wouldn't like to say who! - but again I think it is typical of Graham that he was absolutely straight and was entirely honourable.

We are delighted to support the nominations and the appointments of all of these people as Honorary Aldermen of the City of Leeds. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, can I share with the other Party Leaders our support for the appointment of these former Councillors as Honorary Aldermen. As Councillor Harris said earlier, I think every one of the former Members we are talking about today served on this Council when, to say the least, you weren't rewarded very well and you did it for the right reasons, and I think it is even more of an honour to serve on a body in that way, and I think you deserve exactly what you are getting today. Thank you. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: The motion before Council is that Martin John Dodgson MBE

JP, Leonard Grenville Fletcher, Graham Platt, Stephen James Sadler and John M Sully be admitted as Honorary Aldermen of the City of Leeds, and I invite Council to vote in favour of that proposal.

(The motion was carried unanimously)

I am not surprised at the outcome. I am pleased to announce that all the named Honorary Aldermen have been elected unanimously. Thank you. (Applause)

(The Honorary Aldermen signed the Roll of Honorary Aldermen)

ORDINARY MEETING

THE LORD MAYOR: Members of Council, ladies and gentlemen, before we move on to Item 1 of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council this afternoon, I have one or two sad references to make.

First of all, I think we were all shocked by the bombings in London on 7th July, and particularly so when we discovered that there was a Leeds connection. I intend to hold a two minute silence before we commence the business meeting of the Council.

Just a very few words in connection with the London bombings. I think many of you will know that I have already issued a press release talking about recent events in Leeds being connected to the atrocities which claimed the lives of people from around the world and, as I said, we are going to have a two minute remembrance this afternoon.

Councillors of many faiths, religions and political backgrounds will stand together to condemn those responsible for the bombings and urge the people of Leeds to not be divided by the misguided acts of a tiny minority. Leeds's multi-cultural population has responded in the only way it knows how - by standing together and showing those who think they can break the unity of this City that we are more committed to living together as one than ever before.

Sadly, I have to also report the passing of my former Ward colleague Councillor Doreen Wood on 10th July. Doreen served on the Council from 1973 until 1988 and was Lord Mayor 1987/1988.

Perhaps somewhat unusually, because it is not the normal practice to refer to Officers in this way, but we will all have been saddened to hear of the death of Alan Theaker on 14th July and, as Alan was our own personal Officer, as the Members Services Officer, I felt it appropriate that I should include his name in those for whom we are now going to stand in silent tribute for two minutes. Could I ask everybody to stand, please. Thank you.

I also thought Members might like to know that Honorary Alderman Christiana Myers is in Ward 47 at Leeds General Infirmary suffering from pneumonia. I know many of you know that, but not everybody will. And I have been told that former Councillor Andrew Tear was involved in a serious road accident on 15th July. He was admitted to the LGI but was discharged on 19th July, and I believe is making a good recovery at home. On behalf of all the Members, we send all good wishes to both Christiana and Andrew for speedy recoveries.

With that somewhat lengthy introduction to the minutes, perhaps we can go to

Item 1.

COUNCILLOR R. D. FELDMAN: My Lord Mayor, is it possible to have the doors open? It is getting rather warm in here.

THE LORD MAYOR: Yes, certainly. Yes, we will have the doors open, and can I suggest that anybody who wishes to remove outer clothing items may do so. That is except for the Chief Executive and me, of course! Councillor Gruen is being mischievous, as usual.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: My Lord Mayor, surely not.

ITEM 1 - MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 22ND JUNE 2005

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I move the minutes be received, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

ITEM 2 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: I have to announce that the list of written declarations submitted by Members is on display in the ante-room, on deposit in public galleries, and has been circulated to each Member's place in the Chamber. I also now have to invite any further individual declarations or corrections to those notified on the list.

COUNCILLOR CONGREVE: My Lord Mayor, I have a personal interest in 80, as a member of the RSPB.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, we will duly note it.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I would like to correct the declaration of interest on page 47 which incorrectly records what I said at the Executive Board meeting. It should say that I declared a personal and prejudicial interest as a director of a company engaged in business with the parent company of ASDA, not the PFI contractor at the school.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for that, Councillor Carter; the alteration is duly noted. Are there any more declarations or amendments? Okay.

I now have to call on the Chief Legal Officer to give us some advice relating to this item.

THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES (Ms. N. Jackson): I have just been asked whether or not Members of the SOC ought to consider whether or not to declare an interest in the reference back. The reference back is in relation to Minute 29 on page 49 of the book. It is the Primary Review - Richmond Hill Planning Area. Members will recall that at previous Council Meetings Members of the SOC have felt it appropriate to not declare an interest as such but to absent themselves from any discussion on any school closure proposals so as not to be seen to be pre-determining in any way. Therefore, members of the SOC may wish to consider whether or not they wish to do that on this occasion in relation to that reference back.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Lord Mayor, may I on that basis then accept the Chief Legal Officer's advice and declare my membership of SOC and therefore being interested as a consequence.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Are there any other Members want to make a similar declaration? Yes. (Several members did) Have we noted everybody? Councillor Bale. Alright. We are all happy? In that case, can I invite Members by a show of hands to confirm that they have read the list and agreed its contents in so far as they relate to their own interests.

(The motion was carried)

ITEM 3 - COMMUNICATIONS

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Mr. P. Rogerson): No communications, Lord Mayor.

ITEM 4 - DEPUTATION

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: There is one deputation today, Lord Mayor, Residents of Carrholm Grove and Carrholm Drive.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I move that the deputation be received, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

(The deputation was admitted to the chamber)

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

spokesperson. Thank you.

MR. DUFFY: Good afternoon, Lord Mayor, Councillors. My name is Steve Duffy. I am the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator for Carrholm Grove, which has 23 houses. My colleague John Rodgers here is the Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator for Carrholm Drive, and the Drive has 43 houses.

We are here speaking to you today because we represent communities who very much believe in the Council's vision that people should be able to live in our community without fear for their own safety or the safety of others. We believe in the principle that the citizens of Leeds should be able to enjoy their homes in peace and quiet.

On Wednesday, 23rd March this year at 9 p.m., myself and my partner Mo were in our kitchen when there was a hammering on our front door. I answered it and was met by one of our neighbours shouting, "Get out of the house - it's on fire."

You don't know how you are going to react when faced with that situation, and we both seemed to go into a shocked automatic pilot. Mo was on her way to wake up our then 15 month old daughter Emma, whilst I was shouting at her to get Emma.

We both then went out into our dark street to be surrounded by dismayed and shocked neighbours. We had been the subject of an arson attack from the ginnel which runs between Carrholm Grove and Carrholm Drive.

It appears that the likelihood is that one of three youths who were in the ginnel immediately before the fire had thrown a petrol bomb into our wooden shed, which was once just below the main bedroom window. Had it not been for the professionalism and speedy response of the Fire Brigade, we would certainly have had extensive fire damage inside our house and possibly lost it.

This property is one of four which are immediately adjacent to that ginnel. Going to sleep at night has never been the same again, and certainly for at least 2 weeks after the attack it felt like we heard every noise which was made in the ginnel because we were scared and frightened of what else might happen.

Two of the other three properties which are immediately adjacent to this ginnel have been burgled in the last 15 months with access having been gained from the ginnel. Also, 8 weeks ago one of those residents had the rear window of his car put through at 4 a.m. in the morning whilst it stood on his drive, before the thief made his exit down the ginnel.

There has been a 100% increase in recorded crime this last year to March

2005 compared to the previous year, April 2003/March 2004 in the worst affected of these two streets, and these figures take no account of the ongoing anti-social behaviour. The crime and anti-social behaviour which result from the ginnel's existence are a long-standing problem, which is getting worse.

This ginnel is not necessary because there are two major roads within a very short distance either side of it, which provide alternative routes.

The vast majority of those who live in these two streets want the ginnel to be closed because of the difference it will mean to our quality of life.

I do not have time to list all of the different types of criminal and anti-social behaviour which the residents of these two streets have to put up with because of the existence of the ginnel, so I will mention a few:

A disabled child who lives in one of the streets has been abused because of their disability. A fence has been deliberately burnt down. Motorbikes are ridden up and down the ginnel at speed, and an old lady's bedroom window was put through by a stone.

A large proportion of the incidents of anti-social behaviour result from the unnecessary use of this ginnel as a route to and from the local high school for a small but significant and growing number of children.

Our community has had enough. We want to fight back against this crime and anti-social behaviour. Why should we accept that having an unnecessary ginnel between our two streets means we cannot enjoy our homes in peace and we have to live in fear of crime and anti-social behaviour?

We need you to help us. We are law-abiding people who want to enjoy our homes in peace and quiet. We do not want every day to be on our guard when the schoolchildren go up and down this ginnel. We do not want regularly to have to put up with foul-mouthed abuse when we challenge a group of children for writing graffiti on our property or for damaging a window in our house or car. This does not match the vision we have for our community. We want to sleep peacefully in our beds at night.

We ask the Executive Board of the Council to approve the requested budget from the Community Safety Department so the Council can exercise your powers under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000 to close this ginnel and others like it for the purpose of crime reduction and crime prevention and to reduce anti-social behaviour.

We ask that this budget is approved as soon as is possible, and for this financial year rather than delaying until next. If this is not possible, we plead with you to appoint the new Officer who will lead on this work as soon as possible to prevent further delay in enhancing the quality of lives of people who live in communities blighted by the crime and anti-social behaviour resulting from unnecessary ginnels.

Finally, please approve the requested additional budget from the Community Safety Department so the Council, when faced with one or a small number of unreasonable objectors, can take on those cases where the case is strong and the vast majority of reasonable members of the community want closure. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board of Council for consideration.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

THE LORD MAYOR: That is agreed. Can I thank the deputation and indicate to you that your comments will be, as you have asked, referred to the Executive Board for consideration and you will no doubt be informed of the outcome in due course. Thank you for coming this afternoon.

MR. DUFFY: Thank you, Lord Mayor.

MR. RODGERS: Thank you.

REPORTS

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

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

VARIATION OF ORDER OF BUSINESS

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

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

ITEM 9 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - LONDON BOMB ATTACKS

COUNCILLOR IQBAL: My Lord Mayor, over 3 weeks ago millions of people of all faiths and creeds, in a show of solidarity in a number of cities all across the world, came together to demand that poverty in Africa would finally be consigned to history. It was truly a wonderful occasion that I personally will not forget, and I am sure there are many of you here today who will not either.

Only days later we, as British citizens, had another reason to celebrate: after a long campaign London was awarded the Olympics for 2012, ahead of a very strong field of other candidates. This will be the biggest sporting event ever held in the United Kingdom. These are the sort of events that take place in a person's lifetime that you remember explicitly. You will always remember where you were and what you were doing when you heard the news.

Unfortunately, these joyous events were soon followed by a devastating tragedy in London. Even in my worst nightmares I would not have imagined that I would be standing in front of you today to express my, and indeed the Leeds Muslim community's, horror and revulsion at the events which occurred in London on 7th July.

To say we are still in shock about the attacks in London and subsequent events does not really do justice to my feelings. We, the Leeds Muslim community, would like to take this opportunity once again to totally and unequivocally denounce these attacks and express our deep anger at the atrocities carried out in London.

We would also like to offer our thoughts and prayers to the family members and friends of those 51 innocent people who lost their lives, and to those who were injured.

It must not be forgotten that those who perpetrated these attacks leave behind families and young children who had no knowledge of their plans, and who must now try to rebuild their lives in the face of suspicion and unfortunately hate from some aspects of society. They, too, are victims and must be given every support possible in these difficult times.

It has been very difficult to come to terms with the fact that the people who carried out these attacks lived in Leeds and came from our community. Rest assured, we will as Muslim Leaders stated yesterday when meeting Prime Minister Tony Blair and other political party leaders, be tackling the issue of terrorism in our communities head on.

We fully accept that as British Muslims we need to do more to tackle this evil,

and we will not rest until we have rooted out all those who hold such extreme beliefs, because they are in no way representative of teachings of Islam. However, we cannot do this alone and we all need to start looking at what we can do to solve this problem.

In a recent survey, 67% of people said those who attacked London did so because of perceived injustice against Muslims in the rest of the world. Whether you agree with this opinion or not, it exists and we must do something to tackle it. This must be done at every level of government, including the City Council here in Leeds. We must focus on firstly improving education, because this is one of our vital tools in getting our messages across to the young that such terrible actions are unacceptable and in no way represent Islam.

Secondly, young people of all faiths or culture need access to training and job opportunities, especially those living in less well-off city centre areas. It is in these areas such as City & Hunslet, Beeston & Holbeck, that people are able to use such disenchantment to manipulate and brainwash our young people so they can on their behalf carry out their twisted agenda.

Despite what you might have heard on the TV or read in the newspapers in the last few days, friendships between the different faiths in South Leeds community continue to be very positive. Once again it seems the amazing spirit of togetherness from British people of all faiths, be it in celebration or, in this case, tragedy is once again coming to the fore. Unfortunately, though, there has been some so-called "reprisal" attacks - not many in Leeds, I am pleased to say, but in other areas of the country. We must remain vigilant that abhorrent organisations such as the BNP do not use these atrocities to stir up racial tensions in our community.

Lord Mayor, Members of Council, after years of building communities in our great City together, let us not let those people with their own agendas use this atrocity as an excuse to divide different faiths and cultures. While united as communities and as a City, we can make sure this will never happen again, and rest assured Leeds Muslims will be doing everything in their power to make sure this is not the case.

Lord Mayor, I move the White Paper resolution in my name. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR HUSSAIN: My Lord Mayor, I wish to second the motion put forward by Councillor Iqbal, and I would like to add a few comments, if I may.

First of all, I would like to, on behalf of everyone in Leeds, from every faith and culture, to offer condolences once again to all those people directly affected by the London bombings. In particular, I speak on behalf of my residents of Hyde Park and

Woodhouse who have, of course, had to deal with a double shock. We were still reeling from the news of the atrocities when we heard of the horror of finding out that some of the bombers were from Leeds, and it appears that they may have used a property in Hyde Park when planning their attacks.

I would also like to take this opportunity to say, "Thank you" to the police for their handling of this incredibly difficult and potentially dangerous investigation in a very professional and sensitive manner, and I would also like to thank the support services, in particular the Leeds City Council staff, who helped with the evacuation and provided food and accommodation for all those that were involved in the evacuation.

Most importantly, I would also like to thank the people of Hyde Park who have had a difficult time over the past week because of the evacuation and the invasion of the media from all around the world in our community. It bodes well for the future of our community that the people have coped with all of this with great patience, calm and dignity.

It will take time for all of us to recover from the recent events, but I am sure we will. Vital to the recovery process is the need for the whole community to be united, no matter what religion we follow or what part of the world we come from, to work together shoulder to shoulder to promote peace and harmony in our multi-cultural, multi-faith and a truly cosmopolitan city.

In spite of recent events, I am proud of the fact that Hyde Park and Woodhouse has such a diverse range of cultures. It is this strong multi-culturalism that will, in my opinion, help us to get over these events and hopefully help us to build an even stronger community in the long term.

There has been a huge amount of discussion in the media about what drove those young men to do what they did. We will never really know for sure but, as a young British-born Muslim, perhaps I am in a better position than most in this chamber to try and guess. There is certainly a vicious cycle where young Muslims feel, rightly or wrongly, that they are unfairly discriminated against. This can alienate them from the rest of society and contribute towards further discrimination. There are also events in Iraq which, despite what Tony Blair may claim, have almost certainly contributed to this alienation.

The truth is, though, that there is no good reason for these young men to have fallen prey to extremists in this way. Despite the difficulties that Muslims sometimes face, I can tell you that there is no better place for these young Muslim persons to grow up. Leeds is full of opportunities for young people of any background, and I would hate to think that the people from elsewhere get the wrong impression that

communities like Hyde Park and Beeston don't offer choice for young people but to fall into the control of fanatics.

Unfortunately, these young men have been misled into believing that such extreme acts are a justified response to their situation. I stress there is no place in Leeds for the kind of people who brainwash young people in this way. As community leaders, all of us here have a duty to ensure that there is no place in this society for extremists of whatever persuasion who prey upon disaffected young people and drive them to commit such terrible acts. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, I will try to do my best to stick within the time limits, but I did want to put on record our Group's appreciation of the emergency services and the public services in London who worked so courageously and bravely in facing what was one of the most traumatic and tragic events since the Second World War. I would also like to acknowledge the work of the West Yorkshire Police, and indeed Paul Rogerson and his team, who acted so professionally and efficiently, with great concern and care, during last week's events in Leeds. Sadly, it always takes a disaster of these proportions for us to realise the importance and values of public service, and, as I say, our gratitude - I am sure I speak for everybody - hopefully is now recorded.

I think the sentiments so far, certainly from Councillor Iqbal, are the ones that we all share in this room. Like people here, I reflect on the extremities of the emotions that the nation faced on the 6th and 7th July. On 6th July, the announcement that we were hosting the Olympic Games was greeted in a way that I have never seen this country greet any decision, and we won those Olympic Games not because we have infrastructure, not because we have transport, not because we have a stadium, but we had ideals, and we had ideals about being a strong, democratic country that was confident about its identity as a multi-faith and a multi-ethnic community. That is why we won that, and people say that was a very bold and risky thing to do, but I am glad we did.

Sadly, the following 24 hours the whole of the country was plunged into shock, anger and anxiety and grief about the loss of innocent lives from all faiths, all religions and all nations, and clearly it was an attempt to undermine the very ideals that the Olympic Games represents about all nations competing together in one great sporting event.

I don't believe those ideals have been weakened at all. If anything, looking at the last two weeks, they have been strengthened, and I have been very impressed with the spontaneous and organised events taking place across the City as a mark of solidarity, and it is typical of Leeds people to do it with humour. I smiled at the story from John Battle who went round to visit a resident in Kirkstall who was living at a

neighbour's during the time of the evacuation, who didn't want to go back because he was being looked after better than he does at home. I smiled at the story from John Illingworth who told me about when he went down to the sports centre and he asked a local resident who had stopped there all night, "What's it like then?" and the resident turned round and said, "Well, it is like being on your holidays." He said, "We are 24 hours late, we have been held up. The food is terrible, and the beer is warm and expensive" and, you know, that does sum up the spirit of people. It is not always serious gloom.

It is about fighting back with that kind of spirit, and I have also been impressed with the Muslim leaders, indeed people like Councillor Iqbal who has fronted a lot of it along with others in this room, and the Muslim leaders that I have heard are not looking for excuses, they are not looking for alibis, they are actually looking how they can rid this wicked and poisonous ideology from their communities, and I have heard no excuses and no alibis by Muslim leaders for this atrocity, and indeed they get our 100% support on this side for the leadership they have shown.

30 years, Lord Mayor, I was in Birmingham, in the centre, lived amongst the Irish community and witnessed the retaliation against the community for the bombs that went off in the pub. 30 years later I hope we are stronger. I know we are stronger, and we need to stay stronger because all of us in this room, all the community leaders, all the Muslim leaders, have got a long hard road together and we need to stay together for it, not only to tell the terrorists that we will not weaken at all by their bombs and atrocities but also to give to future generations the kind of ideals that we won the Olympic Games, that we are a strong, confident, democratic country that does not have any deals with bombers or terrorists. I move, Lord Mayor, thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, I want, if I may, to begin as well, in my capacity as Leader of Council, again to send our condolences to all those people who were caught up in the events of 7th July in London, for those who needlessly lost their lives and those who were needlessly injured and traumatized for life, one supposes.

But I am glad that Councillor Iqbal made reference to the families of the bombers, because it seems to me there are degrees of depravity in all of this. It is actually very hard to construct any level of depravity that is worse than the next. Indeed, there can be no excuses for what those bombers did to innocent victims, but I cannot help but feel what they did to their own families, and indeed to their immediate community, was perhaps as bad, if not worse, than what they did to those victims of whom they had no knowledge, because whatever they may have thought they were going to achieve for their families, for their immediate neighbours, for their immediate community, they have brought despair and horror and sadness to them in a way that is very hard to understand how in fact they will get over it, and so to those families as

well I say, along with Councillor Iqbal, that they too have become victims of this most appalling act.

I must as well join with those who have already spoken, I am sure, in due course, those who follow me will say the same thing, in thanking everybody who was involved in dealing with the emergency both in London and, of course, especially in Leeds. Mention has already been made of the emergency services, of the work done by Council. We must indeed thank those people who were evacuated and displaced from their homes who, when I met so many of them, were actually exemplifying, and it is particularly poignant almost, you know, what I was brought up to believe, that World War II spirit that you laughed off catastrophe and disaster and you stuck together as a community and got on with it, and indeed in that respect I think we owe particular thanks to those members of the communities who took the vast majority of evacuated people into their own homes, so that in fact our own rest centres were only dealing with a minority of people at the end who were evacuated and, you know, that sort of Dunkirk spirit, if I can describe it as such, exemplifies actually what this City, I believe, and what this country is still like today.

I must thank the universities, of course, who without any hesitation made available much better accommodation to those people who were evacuated, so we must send thanks to them as well as I have said.

There is no place in our society, never mind in Leeds, in our society as a whole for a demonstration of this nature, because indeed that most certainly is what it was - a ridiculously misguided, depraved demonstration, but it was a demonstration, and whilst we have to recognise that something drove those young men to do what they did, I don't believe it is the position of this debate today to embark upon that. But, as I say, there is no place in our harmonious, multi-cultural society.

We have to look forward now, and I am encouraged by the way everybody has come together in these last few days, and I really do believe out of this awful tragedy we have actually been presented with an opportunity to build relationships and build a harmonious city greater than that which we had before. It is dreadful that it takes an event like this to perhaps bring us together in a more open way than we have been previously, but there is no doubt that we have that opportunity now, and it is one not to be lost or missed.

There are things that the Council must and can do, and those plans and ideas will be brought forward as the days go by, but I think there is perhaps as well a place for Scrutiny in this to look at the events, the way in which we handled things and, indeed, the circumstances surrounding all the events of the last two weeks. I am sure that the Council will continue to do all it can to bring all communities and all faiths together, and I believe that we can look forward with great confidence to the future.

Lord Mayor, before I finish, and it is on that note I think we must all be agreed that the really defining moment, it seemed to me, in the events of the last two weeks was in fact the two minutes silence in Millennium Square. There spontaneously thousands and thousands of ordinary Leeds people, together with all the faith leaders, all the civic leaders, came together in a show of unity and reconciliation and strength, and I believe that message that was sent out with the world's media watching us was the defining moment of what has happened, and from that we must take strength and we can have absolute confidence going forward. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Lord Mayor, before I begin I would like to join with other people, first of all, in thanking the Chief Executive and members of his staff, our emergency services teams in Leeds, who reacted very promptly and with great professionalism to the problems which we faced last week.

On Friday, I was in the company of Hilary Benn, Cabinet Minister, Member of Parliament, who was extremely praiseworthy of our Social Services Department and, indeed, of our emergency services for the steps they had taken.

Last week was a traumatic week for our City, following a week when there had been the terrorist atrocities in London. It left us all shaken. It certainly left me shaken. I can't think of a time in my political life when anything had left me as affected as those couple of weeks had done. Over the days since the terrorist atrocities and the revealing of the connection with former residents of our City, I have however been heartened by the demonstration of unity and determination displayed by so many people in this country, and particularly in this City, in the face of terror and terrorism.

I have also, I have to say, been saddened and distressed at some of the coverage, particularly on the radio and television, with some people who ought to know better seeming to me to be apologists for terror. This has to be unacceptable. There can be no doubt that our City's reputation has been seriously tarnished by the acts of a handful of individuals, and some of the comment about Leeds and the North of England, particularly in the foreign press, is simply untrue and wholly unacceptable.

At the end of last week, on Saturday, I was amongst the 48,000 people who attended Opera in the Park, who enjoyed the music with people of all backgrounds, religions, colours and creeds. On Sunday, I was privileged, along with many of the rest of you, to pay my respects to all those who served and lost their lives in the Second World War, when the City paid tribute in a moving commemoration. Again, this was an event that crossed all boundaries of race, religion, colour, creed or politics as we applauded the veterans as they paraded by, thanking them, in whatever

capacity they served during the Second World War to ensure our country remained free.

It would perhaps be appropriate if all citizens of this country reflected on the freedom that was bought at such a cost and that we are now commemorating 60 years on. It cost the lives of very many people so that victory could be won. If it had not been won, then this City would not be the place it is today. People would not be able to express their views, exercise their rights to worship as they see fit, or to go about the business of a free society. There would be no minority groups in this country. Heaven knows what would have happened to citizens of the former colonies and the Commonwealth. Heaven knows what would have happened to many of those of us who believe in democracy.

The two events I have highlighted are snapshots of the real Leeds - inclusive, harmonious, standing together in enjoyment or in commemoration. You could place those events along with the City's coming together after the tsunami tragedy and indeed the two minute silence last week. We were one community, and it is time that we stopped using the language of division, even by mistake.

I am getting a little tired of people talking about communities, as though underlining the fact that we are separate. We should be one community, the community of Leeds, the community of England, the community of the United Kingdom. Of course, respecting each other's diversity, ethnic origins, religion and politics, but nevertheless standing together as citizens of a free country.

There is no place in our City or our country for those who want to bomb and murder their way towards some incomprehensible goal. There can be no excuses. There must be no excuses, because there is no justification for evil. Now is the time to come together as one community. If we lose this opportunity, we shall regret it for the rest of our political lives. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, happenings over the past two weeks have made me think back more than 30 years to the 1970s when I lived in Coventry, a city where 1 in 4 of the people were Irish. Attempts had been made to set up a terrorist unit in the city, one of whose members was Father Bell, a Catholic priest. That cell had been broken up before it did any harm, fairly certainly following a tip-off from within the Irish community.

Towards the end of 1974 an IRA man called James McDade came by train from Birmingham with a bomb which blew up as he walked across the Telephone Exchange yard in Coventry, killing himself and breaking many windows, though injuring no-one else. Then a few days later I went in to work one Friday morning and found shouting matches going on between the English and Irish lads, and it turned out

that two public houses had been blown up in Birmingham the night before, both near New Street Station and which we used sometimes on Friday or Saturday evenings when we went over to Birmingham for a change of scene. One was called The Mulberry Bush and the other, I think, was the Tavern in the Town.

That anger soon blew over in Coventry, though we had to put up with countless false alarms and bomb hoaxes for a couple of years afterwards. Much deeper scars were left in Birmingham, where there had been more than 20 deaths. There were quite serious anti-Irish disturbances such as fighting in factories and protest marches by fairly large groups of people, and an atmosphere was created in which eventually the wrong people were convicted of the bombings.

Looking back over the past two weeks, one thing which stands out is how much more sophisticated terrorism is today, and another is how much more measured is our response to it. Now terrorists hide their plans so well that even their own families know nothing about them, though it seems that mistakes made by ordinary folk in the 1970s have not been made again. So far there has been no great upwelling of hatred against Muslims of the kind which the Irish suffered 30 years ago.

Although it had so many Irish citizens, Coventry was never attacked by terrorists after 1974, except that in the early hours of one Sunday morning, I think it was in about 1980, a large concrete plant pot was blown to smithereens in the shopping precinct. No-one was hurt though a few more windows were broken. With hindsight, it can be seen that whoever made the tip-off which broke up that early attempt to establish terrorism in the city saved it from great harm, not least the probable setting of its citizens against each other.

Our police need the same kind of help today. Meanwhile, we should learn from the 1970s and not allow terrorists to set the citizens of Leeds against each other. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, it was a week last Thursday and I think the first I heard of it I was out on a site visit with Councillor Taggart over there and, as you know, some of Councillor Taggart's family is in London and he got a phone call, and all through those site visits on that morning we were getting updates from London on what the situation was, which was extremely worrying, and I really didn't get to find out fully what happened until I returned to the Civic Hall.

What happened in London was appalling. There is no excuse for violence. It is wrong, particularly in a democracy. If anybody has any grouse here, they can put up for office, you can argue. You are free to argue what you want. I am an example of that. Councillors Finnigan and Leadley over there are examples of that, where you can put your views to the people and can get elected.

We should not have this kind of thing in this country, particularly perpetrated by citizens of this country. I think it is upon us all, all of us that are reasonable and sensible from any community, from any race, white, black, yellow, brown, whatever, or whatever religion, to go out there and find the extremists in each of our communities, and let's work together for peace, for brotherhood, for friendship. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: My Lord Mayor, at around 10.30 on the morning of 7th July, I received a phone call from a friend who informed me of the tragic events in London as he watched the developments on TV. He was very worried at the time and desperately trying to get hold of his daughter who lived in London. He later got the news that she was okay. Throughout that day and ever since I have been thinking and saying to myself, "It could have been any one of us or the people we know." Those who lost their lives and suffered horrific injuries in the trauma did not deserve any pain whatsoever. Our thoughts and deepest sympathies will remain with the victims and their families for a long time to come.

Only a day before on 6th July, like colleagues said earlier, lives that were united in celebration of the Olympic Games came under threat from people who have no respect for the sanctity of life. Nothing and no religion can justify the slaughter of innocent lives in the capital or anywhere else.

Sadly, while the perpetrators of this crime have succeeded in inflicting injury and damage on one of the most diverse cities in the world, where every language of the world is spoken, and many different cultures, faiths and non-faith, live side by side.

This is what the criminals of such atrocities threaten to destroy but they cannot, and we must not let them win.

Those who did it in the name of religion, let me tell you, my colleagues, that Islam does not sanction such murder. It is a religion of peace, harmony and tolerance. It is against the teaching of Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon Him, and Koran. There is a verse in the Koran which translates, "He who saves a life, saves the life of all mankind." Indeed, there is no-one with a genuine belief in God who can have sympathy for such criminal acts. The pursuit of justice cannot be used as an excuse for committing injustices against innocent people.

British Muslim leaders have made it clear that any attack on our society is an attack on us. We are all one community, one family. To see London come under attack and then to see some of the bombers linked with Leeds, as Councillor Iqbal said, for me and for many of us, it was one of the worst nightmares realised.

Over the past 50 years this country, and indeed the City of Leeds, has enjoyed

some of the best community relations anywhere in the world. It is our ability to debate, to disagree and yet work together for the common good of our society while living in peace.

My Lord Mayor, let me send a message to those who are behind these attacks, those who are behind these horrific attacks, and also those who want to sow divisions and hatred between our backgrounds and faiths by sending hate mail attacking innocent people, innocent Muslims and others who happen to come from the same race, let me tell them that we will not let them succeed and together we will shine through this difficult time.

Finally, can I take this opportunity to applaud the people of South Leeds, Hyde Park, for their patient togetherness through this difficult time, and in particular colleagues like Councillor Iqbal and the staff and police and all the emergency services for being brilliant in their respective roles. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

(Applause)

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: My Lord Mayor, may I take this opportunity to condole those who have lost loved ones on the 7th of July, and can I also pass my sympathy on behalf of the residents of Gipton and Harehills for the people who were injured.

I remember the 7th of July as a painful experience which was shared by all the citizens of this nation, and the worst came when we all discovered the people who have caused great damage to the capital and to this nation, they were from Leeds. That moment was moving and minds went blank, and I went through, alongside with the three-quarters of a million of population, in shock and the horrific moments of our City thinking, "What's going to happen next to the community's relationship in our City?", but thank God to the people of Leeds, they all came together, shoulder to shoulder and helping each other.

Many of my colleagues from the Christian and the Jewish, Hindus and the Sikhs community made their contacts with people like myself in showing their support to pass it on to the Muslims of our City.

When I visited Hyde Park on the following day, even though the people left their own homes and we were looking after them, but they had this feeling for each other and they were saying to me, "Councillor, we really enjoyed the pizzas which were sent by the local Mosque" and that is something that you need to take seriously, that everyone is working together.

May I also extend my thanks on behalf of the people of this City, the way the West Yorkshire Police have reacted to the incident's aftermath. On a regular basis they were in contact with the people like myself and the community leaders to establish a better relationship. I have been in this business for the last over 10 years.

This was the first time, and I agree with Councillor Harris, after every sad occasion there is a positive thing to come. This was the first time when I was approached by the local church, not my colleague Councillor Taylor's but in the neighbourhood in Burmantofts, to come along on a Sunday service and say a few words. Same went for the Sikh community in Beeston, which I obviously was invited alongside with John Battle as a religious Minister to this Government.

We all shared the positive things about the City but however I still have a concern, alongside with the many law-abiding citizens of our City, there will be people in the minority, people like right wing extremists to spoil this relation, so I urge this Council to be united and let's fight together on the same angles. I will say to those extremist Muslims or any extremists to stop bombing the innocents of our City. We are not afraid of any individual trying to take the democracy and the freedom of our citizens. We will be fighting together for years to come, and it is a hard work, Members of the Council. Let us all work together for each other, peace and harmony. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR IQBAL: Lord Mayor, to be honest, 7th July is unforgettable to me. It was one of those special days which you cannot forget when all these tragic atrocities happened. I would like to thank everybody, various Leaders of the Council, colleagues across the political spectrum, emergency services, public services, Paul Rogerson and his team, for giving all their support and ringing me and offering their support during these testing times.

I was particularly moved by what I heard this morning from Divisional Commander in City & Hunslet Ward. He said Mrs. Khan, who lived near one of these suicide bombers' house, when she saw the same police officer standing there by the cold for about over 8 hours she quickly went to the shop, got some sandwiches together and went and offered her tea and coffee, some food, and she said, "Officer, you are welcome to use my bathroom and kitchen if you need to do."

I would like to thank those people who co-operated with the police in a very effective and on a sensitive issue and co-operated with the police, and also finally I would like to thank my colleague Councillor Mohammed Rafique who has been a great help in assisting me in putting our message of togetherness across to the world-wide media on behalf of the City Council and Leeds Muslim community. Thank you. (Applause)

(The motion was carried unanimously)

ITEM 5 - QUESTIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 5, Questions. Councillor Richard Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: This question is withdrawn, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HOLLINGSWORTH: Would the Leader of Council, after the first year of the administration, care to comment on the budget out-turn for the last year?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Yes, Lord Mayor, I am very grateful for the opportunity to be able to explain to Council exactly how things have turned out financially after the first year of the joint administration.

There are certain key points I wish to highlight. The first is that in terms of actual budget, of course we came in on budget, which is a very important discipline, but if you look beneath that headline figure there are two particular areas I would like to point to in terms of budgetary control of financial management. The first is, if you look at departmental spend, you will see that this administration spent £19 million on departmental spend greater than the budget set by the outgoing Labour administration, and we have to remember that that is a budget we inherited and on which we had to deliver. So in actual fact we found an additional £19 million of resources to spend on departmental issues over and above that which was proposed by the outgoing Labour administration, and of that, as we know, over £13 million was on Social Services.

I am reliably informed by Officers that the Council has never previously faced a position that this incoming administration faced, having to increase departmental spending by such a significant amount literally within weeks of a budget having been set.

The second area I wish to point to are the area of reserves. The budget that we inherited indicated that at the end of the last financial year we should have had reserves of £7.4 million. We in fact ended up with reserves of £10.5 million. So what this indicates is that not only did we find an additional £19 million to spend on the services in this City, not only did we actually come in overall on budget, but in addition to that we found an additional £3 million to put into reserves. By any stretch of any imagination, Lord Mayor, that is first-class financial management, and it is worth reflecting on what the alternative might have been for us because had we, in fact, adopted the example of Gordon Brown when he took over as Chancellor of the Exchequer when Labour became the government in 1997, we would in fact have stuck to Labour's spending plans and would have ended up with the situation where we would actually have had to have cut £19 million of departmental services, but we did not take the example that Labour would like to have set for us. Rather, as I have said, we increased spending substantially and increased our reserves. That is the way in which we have started, and that is the way in which we will continue.

(Applause)

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Will the Executive Member for Development confirm that there are no plans to bridge the beck at Abbey Mills, making a crossing to land to the rear of the former Allders site?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I can confirm that there is no proposal to bridge the beck at Abbey Mills in order to access the adjoining site. All the proposals for both Abbey Mills site and St. Ann's Mills site are detailed in the Executive Board report of 15th December 2005(sic). The only proposal to bridge the river is at St. Ann's Mills for the purpose of improving access to the Riverside Walk. Any such proposal would be funded by a contribution made as part of the development scheme for public realm works.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Will the Executive Member please advise me if someone was to say that we had plans for a vehicular bridge, they would be not telling the truth? (Laughter)

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have any information on that, Councillor?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: If anybody was misguided enough to say that there was such a plan to bridge the beck at the Abbey Mills site they would not telling - not be telling - the truth.

THE LORD MAYOR: There you are, Councillor Anderson. You have got a "No, no" there.

COUNCILLOR A. BLACKBURN: Would the Executive Board Member for Learning care to join with me in congratulating schools in Leeds on the improved attendance and exclusion performance during the academic year?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Lord Mayor, in the last week of term it is very pleasurable to stand here and congratulate the schools in Leeds on an amazingly improved performance, both in the reduction of the number of permanent exclusions, down by 23% this year, and in the number of fixed term exclusions, which has also decreased by 16%.

I think it is very heartening that the extra investment that this administration put into Every Child Matters is now beginning to pay off successfully. I think what our schools are doing has been tremendous.

Also in the issue of attendance, although I don't have the final figures for this academic year, but Council might like to note that it has been estimated by Officers that there have been an extra 98,000 school days as a result of action taken by this

administration. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: Lord Mayor, will the Executive Member with specific responsibility for closing the gap please tell me what he is doing to protect low-paid workers in the City?

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, in November 2004 the Jobs and Skills Service was invited to pilot a Learning Skills Council programme entitled, "Train to Gain". This pilot project enables the service to support unemployed people when they move into the labour market by enabling them to continue to improve their skills whilst in work. The programme has proved to be a major factor in assisting individuals to stay in employment and maximize their earnings potential.

Jobs and Skills have subsequently won another LSC contract engaging learners in the workplace. Both contracts support the National Skills Strategy and Leeds City Council's vision to close the gap as they are specifically targeted to support employees who are assessed as below Level 2 and have no formal qualifications. These are generally people who are, and will continue to be, in low-paid work if they do not gain qualifications.

Both contracts provide an opportunity for the Leeds workforce to gain accredited vocational skills up to Level 2 and achieve literacy and numeracy qualifications, both of which are equivalent to GCSEs at levels A-G. Both contracts have engaged 280 employed individuals across the City. At present training is delivered at National Vocational Qualification Level 2 in construction, care, business administration, information technology, youth work and for Education Leeds in non-teaching assistant training. Over 100 of the learners have and continue to be supported with their literacy, English for Speakers of Other Language, ESOL, and numeracy skills to complement their occupational training. The literacy, numeracy and ESOL is accredited within the National Accreditation Framework.

As a result of the success of the Jobs and Skills, the Learning and Skills Council have increased the Training to Gain contract by a further 100 learners up to the end of 2005, and at this point it is anticipated that an additional bidding round will be announced.

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: Lord Mayor, in welcoming the efforts that are being made by Council departments, and in view of the Council's support for voluntary organisations and social enterprises engaged in bridging the gap by providing worthwhile employment for some of our most needy citizens, will Councillor Blackburn now assure us that the funding is fully reinstated for the Pay & Employment Rights Service so that it can continue to provide advice for these organisations and to employees and employers offering job opportunities to those in our City who most

need them?

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, the Pay & Employment Rights Service was provided with a £15,000 grant in 2005/6 to support low-paid workers in the City through its Advice & Information Service. PERS was formerly known as the Low Pay Unit, before it changed its role with the advent of the Minimum Pay legislation. The majority of local authorities in the region have ceased to grant aid to PERS but we continue.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Will the Executive Board Member for Development update Members on the progress of the Town and Village Centres Regeneration Project?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I am pleased to tell Members of the Council that the bids for the first year and indeed for future years have now been received with the fund being proved to be very popular. Bids totalling more than £8 million have been received. It is also encouraging that bids have been made from all parts of the City.

Officers of the Development and Finance Department are currently evaluating bids against the criteria, having consideration for the impact the schemes will have on the economic health and cohesion of the small towns, district centres and villages.

As you know, we said at the last Council Meeting that we intended to extend the scheme over 3 years and increase the scheme to £10 million. I have had discussions with the Director of Finance. This will mean that in the first year we will be able to fund £3 million, second year £3 million, and the third year £4 million. This should enable thorough, comprehensively worked out schemes to be put in place that can be put into practice over a sensible period of time. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: How would the Executive Member describe the quality of some of those bids?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, there are some excellent bids. There are also some bids which lack imagination and do not meet the criteria. I have asked Officers to make sure that when the evaluation is carried out that the bidding organisation, whether it be a Council department or an Area Committee, is informed of what we want to see, what the benefits we want to see come from this fund are, and for those areas that have not used the sort of imagination that this fund demands perhaps rebid. Because we have increased the fund there is more money available so hopefully we can achieve a great deal of what we set out to achieve.

And in answer to those people like the Leader of the Opposition who refer to

the fund as a drop in the ocean, I would merely say it is 10 million more drops than you ever achieved in 24 years. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Lord Mayor, will the Executive Board Member for Children and Young people, who I notice is not in the room, tell the Council what measures are in place now to ensure that the statutory requirement to conduct Regulation 33 visits to Children's Homes is being met?

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Lord Mayor, just to clarify things, until the rules change, until arrangements change, I am Executive Board Member for Young People and Children.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: What is his job?

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Brian is developing the Children Act and will answer a question on that or make comment on that later in the proceedings. (Interruption) Those are the arrangements. We disagree.

Thank you, Lord Mayor, formally. Before I begin I would just like to take the opportunity, as others have done before me, to publicly thank members of Social Services right across the City, particularly in the south and north-west, who did such a brilliant job in the aftermath of the problems in Hyde Park and Beeston. We have plans for these events but it is always very satisfying when the plans run smoothly and we give the help to people in need as quickly as we did, and we publicly say thank you to Social Services staff. (Applause)

I wonder if I could now, with the permission of Council, try and answer the Questions 7 and 12 together, in case we don't get to 12, which is very similar to No. 7. Regulation 33 of the Children Act 1989 requires us to arrange monthly visits to all homes by an independent person who is not employed at the home. Written reports of these visits have to be provided to those responsible. The visits should be unannounced. The report must be seen by the Director. It cannot be amended or in any way edited. In the case of a local authority home, Regulation 33 requires that reports be presented to an appropriate committee of Members.

We will all remember that for several years the review of Reg. 33 reports was conducted by the Social Care Scrutiny Board, and I understand that the depth of Member involvement at that time was as thorough as in any local authority. When we revised the role of Scrutiny earlier this year, a gap appeared in the Elected Members' review of the reports. This is not acceptable to any of us. We know about it. We are doing something about it.

The reports themselves still go to the Director and to Edwina Harrison, the

Chief Officer of Children's Services, where they are read line by line and action is taken as appropriate. However, it is right to imply that we need to bring back a closer involvement between Elected Members and we need to do it quickly.

The Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership is currently looking at this in a group of which I think, Liz, you are a member, with Adam and Brian and Ruth, and I can assure Council before the next meeting a new structure will be in place for Elected Members' review of these reports.

We also accept the need for a more formal reporting by which Members' comments after a visit, when Members go to homes, be they concerns or compliments, can be reported back to the Chief Officer of Children's Services and the appropriate actions taken put in place. There is no point in me trying to shame Councillors to turn up at Children's Homes if we then take no action on the reports that you feed back to us. Edwina is working on a system to ensure that we get the most out of these visits and this will be included in the new arrangements.

Question 12 refers to corporate parenting, and that is much wider than merely reviewing the information about 150 or so children that live in the City's Children's Homes. Again, a group of Councillors on the Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership is looking at all these in the wider aspects of corporate parenting and will finalize the report when it next meets on August 23rd. Again, the same four Councillors from all parties are involved, and the proposal will be available to all Councillors for consultation shortly after that meeting. This will help us to improve the service to children, and I know I can rely on the support of all Members to do that. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Thank you. I would just like to ask a supplementary question, Lord Mayor. May I start by thanking Councillor Harrand for answering the question that I addressed to Councillor Jennings. I think it is fair to say that Labour Councillors have been very constructive in dealing with this issue, arguing for sensible ways forward on the arrangements for criminal record checks and seeking a proper framework for Members in their role as corporate parents but, while I understand that Members of the old Social Care Scrutiny Board had acknowledged that the old system was not perfect, would Councillor Harrand agree that it was irresponsible to throw out the baby with the bathwater and leave a gap in the regulation and monitoring of the homes, care and environment in which some of our most vulnerable young people are placed when the constitution was amended earlier this year?

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Not irresponsible. I think that it putting it a bit too far. We still have these papers reviewed by the Director and people within Social Services line by line. There is nothing to put any children at risk or any implication like that, if that is what I correctly infer.

It was inadvertent. I think I wouldn't like to put anybody in the firing line for this, but we have recognised there is a problem. We thank you for your help in putting it right, and we will have it right by August. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR HARRISON: Will the Exec Board Member for Social Care please tell me how much of the £300,000 budget allocated to the Social Enterprise Scheme in this year's Social Services budget has already been passed on to neighbourhood and other voluntary schemes within the City?

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: £70,000 worth.

THE LORD MAYOR: No supplementary, Councillor Harrison?

COUNCILLOR HARRISON: No.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Lord Mayor, when will public consultation take place on the Council's proposals for Abbey Mills and St. Ann's Mills?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, with regard to St. Ann's Mills, technical survey work is nearing completion. In respect of Abbey Mills, the draft planning and development brief is likely to be completed in the next few weeks. Once the planning and development brief for Abbey Mills is completed, it is proposed that in accordance with Council policy the document will be available for public consultation. It is proposed the consultation will take place over a period of eight weeks.

However, we are mindful that the planning and development brief for Abbey Mills relates solely to this site. The planning and development brief is not linked and does not refer to any proposals there may be for the St. Ann's Mills site. It is important that this is recognised in the public consultation process. The public consultation for St. Ann's Mills site and the proposals as detailed in the Executive Board report is also likely to take place over the next few weeks.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Does Councillor Carter endorse the statements on page 10 and Appendix 5 of the draft statement of public involvement for the local development framework - that is this document recently circulated, my Lord Mayor - and that statement says that this Council will allow the people of Leeds to contribute their ideas to the development plan documents, and will Councillor Carter confirm that this includes St. Ann's Mills, Abbey Mills in Kirkstall?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I always support public consultation in the widest possible form, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Was that a "Yes" or a "No"?

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Lord Mayor, will the Highways Safety Audits for the proposed access road at Abbey Mills be conducted according to the professional recommendations published by the Institution of Highways and Transportation and the Highways Agency, and when will the results of the Stage 1 audit be made available to the public, Lord Mayor?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I can confirm that the Stage 1 Safety Audit for any proposed access proposals for Abbey Mills onto the A65 will be conducted in accordance with the Transport Policy QA Procedure OP 13 Safety Audit. The audit will be carried out in accordance with the information supplied in HD1903 and Guidelines for the Safety Audit of Highways IHT 1996. The results of the audit will be reported back to the design team who will respond to each point raised. At Stage 1 Safety Audit is carried out at an early stage in the process to ensure that proposals are able to be modified if consideration is necessary to improve the safety of any scheme. The Stage 1 Safety Audit forms part of the design process and when completed will have the same status as the rest of the design file in terms of Freedom of Information and available for public access. Other appropriate safety audits will be carried out in accordance with the guidelines.

My Lord Mayor, Councillor Illingworth is already in receipt of all that information.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Does Councillor Carter accept that highways safety information is an essential prerequisite for genuine public consultation on the future of Abbey Mills and St. Ann's Mills?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Yes, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Carter. Now, can I ask Councillor Illingworth if he is satisfied that all those issues have been answered?

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Yes, Lord Mayor. When will the Internal Audit report on the development proposals for Abbey Mills and St. Ann's Mills be available to elected Members?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, the investigation to which Councillor Illingworth refers was, as he knows, sought by him and I understand that the relevant report is now with him. There are no proposals to present this report on Councillor Illingworth's complaints more widely to Members because, as Councillor Illingworth is well aware, the Executive Board last December called for a full report back to them prior to any disposals of land at Abbey Mills taking place. Accordingly, this report will present the Director of Development with the opportunity to provide clarity on a

number of matters that have been flagged up by the Council's Internal Audit Team.

However, as Councillor Illingworth also knows, the auditors' overall conclusion is that the report of which Councillor Illingworth complained is a reasonable option appraisals that accurately reflects the information held at the time - their words, not mine.

Sadly, as we all know from bitter experience, this is highly unlikely to satisfy Councillor Illingworth. In the past, Officers, and even externally appointed investigators who have failed to detect the conspiracy theories which in Councillor Illingworth's mind lurk behind every endeavour of the Council's Development Department, have found their reports vilified and their contents and competence and motives questioned.

On this occasion, however, I have to tell Members of Council Councillor Illingworth has excelled himself. Just a few weeks ago he rubbished the anticipated report and accused the report's authors of a serious lack of detachment and professionalism.

We have been here before, my Lord Mayor and, for my part, I only hope that we don't have to wait too long before someone refers the antics of our own 21st century Witchfinder General to the Standard Board for England.

THE LORD MAYOR: No doubt a further supplementary, Councillor Illingworth?

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, does Councillor Carter accept that the present internal audit report must necessarily be an interim document since it does not address questions that were raised in public in January 2005 at the Scrutiny call-in hearing and were also raised in writing with the auditors months before the present report was published?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: No, my Lord Mayor, and further information Members of Council I think would be interested to know is that Councillor Illingworth's repeated efforts over these two particular issues have so far cost the Council Taxpayers of this City £26,000, and that is if you take into account the normal recharge mechanism. If you don't and you let him have it on the cheap, it has cost £15,000.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Surcharge him.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Well, this time the Council won't be bailing him out with his legal fees, that's for sure.

THE LORD MAYOR: Question 12 is Councillor Mulherin again. Can I just ask,

Councillor Mulherin, whether you wish to pursue Question 12, in that Councillor Harrand believed that he answered it previously, but you are entitled to put it if you so wish.

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Lord Mayor, I think Councillor Harrand has already answered both questions I addressed to Councillor Jennings, unless Councillor Jennings would like to add something to the points already made.

THE LORD MAYOR: I have to tell you, Councillor Mulherin, and Councillor Taggart, that the advice that I have received is that the appropriate Executive Board Member to answer this question is indeed Councillor Harrand, so that is why it has been changed on the order paper, not because of any other reason. Do you wish to ask the question to Councillor Harrand?

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: I think he has already answered it, thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: You are satisfied with his reply. Thank you very much.

ITEM 6 - RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXECUTIVE BOARD

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

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

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, in commenting on our proposed acceptance of the Provisional West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan, which is one of two Executive Board recommendations before us, I would point out that even its supporters now seem to acknowledge that the Leeds Supertram is close to its end. Others might claim that it never lived. Greg Mulholland MP spoke to me about this after the very moving World War II commemoration which we held on Sunday. He said that if approval were not announced before Parliament rose tomorrow, the project would in effect run out of time, and that seems to be a widely held view.

It is possible that a lot could happen in the next 24 hours. They might find Lord Lucan or even Shergar, possibly even David Morton, but both seem rather unlikely. It might be noticed that the Draft Summary Plan copied into the minute book does not mention Supertram at all, after the fashion in which East European Politburo members who had fallen under a cloud were never spoken of again, without even a footnote of explanation.

If Supertram is approved, a barrister might argue that it was included under, "Encouraging more travel by bus and rail" on page 27 of the minute book, though no doubt the same barrister would argue that it was not included if it failed to be

approved. The underlying difficulty of all this is that there is no fall-back position if Supertram does not get early approval. We have until 31st March next year to submit the finished Local Transport Plan to the Government so it looks as if a lot of rethinking may have to be done within the next few months. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: This is also on the West Yorkshire Provisional Local Transport Plan, and on this side we think the Government has been waiting for an opportunity to bury the bad news. It has not really arisen yet, but we have got a day to go.

My point is on the Metro proposals for local transport, and particularly on the aspect of delivering accessibility, and accessibility depends on two things for public transport users in Leeds primarily, and they are whether you have got a bus service or a train service to begin with, and whether you can afford it.

Many of us are having to deal with residents who have suddenly realised the problem of Black Prince withdrawing their services, which are not being replaced by First Bus, and First Bus, of course, is very nearly a monopoly provider of services in Leeds, but of course we don't have, or Metro does not have, as many regulatory powers over our bus services as, say, they have in London with an elected Mayor.

We have an additional problem, apart from the fact that First Bus will put their fares up by 17.5% or more in less than a year, that the Chancellor announced in his budget that bus services would be free for the over-60s for off-peak travel, and we are waiting with baited breath to find out whether the Government is actually going to fund this. They already know in South Yorkshire that they are £4 million short ---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Can we suggest you keep holding your breath?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Declare an interest, Bernard!

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: It would be very useful if we could have an indication as to whether the Council Taxpayers are being expected by the Government - the Council Taxpayers of Leeds are being expected by the Government - to fund their shortfall, and I don't know if we know anything more about that. That's mine. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, may I, before I actually comment on the issues of the LTP and Supertram, just take the opportunity of paying my personal tribute to Alan Theaker. As you know, his funeral is today. A very professional committee clerk who, even when extremely seriously ill, came back into work and worked for as long as he could. It is a tragedy that a young man should die in such a way and indeed so young, and I really do want to record my appreciation of the work Alan did for this authority at this Council Meeting. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

Now, if I may go on to the points that have been raised. Last Friday, as part of the Core Cities Summit, I had lunch with Transport Minister Karen Buck. It would not be right to divulge the contents of a discussion over lunch, other than the fact that I am sure you would know I would raise anyway. I asked her point blank to tell me how we were faring with Supertram. I got no answer at all other than, "Yes, we know you are very concerned." Well, indeed we are very concerned.

The situation now is it has reached the eleventh hour, if not almost the witching hour, and whatever Members of this Council think or don't think about the Supertram proposals, one thing is undoubtedly true. The lack of decision from this Government, the vacillation, the messing about, is now seriously damaging other development proposals and our ability to think in the medium and long term about the transport needs and the development needs of this City.

I have listened with interest to the comments from various Members of Parliament. Quite frankly, up to press they have managed to deliver nothing. We need to have an answer before Parliament goes into recess, as we were promised, and I do hope that even at this late stage some Government Minister will have the courage to put his head above the parapet.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, can I deal with Councillor Pryke's inquiry first. I do well remember listening to the Chancellor delivering the most recent budget, and I am pretty sure about this, that, building up to a crescendo, he came to his last point, and I remember him introducing it when he was talking about what the Government could do for pensioners and he said, "And I can do more" and then launched into the fact that it was now time for all pensioners to get free bus passes which, on the face of it, was a great concession to be welcomed by everybody.

We now discover, don't we, that the devil is absolutely in the detail, and it throws up a double problem. I will come to Supertram in a minute; as it so happens, not a problem we currently have in this City and, of course, we now know that the concessionary fares apply only to bus passes and to no other form of public transport, which does very much beg the question that if light rail, and indeed heavy rail, are increasingly preferred options for public transport in this country, it does actually mean that pensioners are now to be discriminated against because they will not have free concessions for travel on that form of transport that they will on buses.

But worse still we now know, and we don't get our figures from Metro, that the Government announcement that this will be fully underwritten is not now correct. In South Yorkshire and North Yorkshire they have actually been able to make a reasonable stab at quantifying what it means for them. In South Yorkshire they are talking about a £4/£5 million shortfall to provide free bus passes for pensioners. In North Yorkshire they are talking about a little under £1 million. We do know from

Metro that the situation in West Yorkshire is that we too will have a significant deficit, although a figure has not yet been put on it, and so we come to the point at which we then have to ask the question: in order to deliver the Government's promise, what are we supposed to do? Is Metro to reduce services in order to create the cash in order to give free bus passes, or is it to go on the Council Tax in order to raise the additional money? Either way, we have here an example of hype and loud announcements which, when it comes down to the detail, are in fact hollow, and it will be us again left holding the baby for Gordon Brown's largesse.

I now come to the question of Supertram and, before I say anything, I apologise to Andrew that I have not been able to tell you this, but literally as you got up to speak I was given a note to say that we have been told that no decision will be made prior to the recess. No decision will be made prior to the recess, and we will be issuing a statement this afternoon on the implications for us.

So Tom Leadley in that respect was right, the chances of a decision before the recess were as remote as finding Lord Lucan and Shergar.

The implications for the City are serious, but what defies belief is the refusal of the Government to make a decision one way or the other, and it is grotesquely irresponsible. I mean, people have accused me for years as a Liberal of sitting on the fence, not wanting to make a decision. I mean, I have got nothing, absolutely nothing, on this Government. The approval for Supertram was given 15 years ago. A huge part of our public transport plans rest on us going ahead with Supertram, and this Government, despite all our efforts, all our pleas to them, pressure that has been put on them, steadfastly refuse to make a decision, and they are in effect delivering a death blow to the scheme through indecision.

Well, if they think that by doing that somehow no blame will attach to them, they are completely and utterly mistaken, because the finger will be pointed at the Government, and I am absolutely certain this entire City will speak with a single voice in utterly condemning their irresponsibility in putting us in this position.

Finally, Tom did raise the question of the fall-back position. There are many of us who have had anxieties about the likely future of Supertram, and so I can say that last week we did ask Metro to start work on alternative plans so that, in the event of Supertram not being approved, we could as quickly as possible bring forward some other suggestions and alternatives for improving the public transport network in Leeds, and indeed the implications for West Yorkshire as a whole, so that work is under way.

There might yet be a miracle on Supertram but I have to say, finally, I take the view that it will never see the light of day, and that is a terrible moment for this City.

Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

(The Recommendations of Executive Board were carried)

ITEM 7 - RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

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

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

(The Recommendations of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee were carried)

ITEM 8 - MINUTES

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

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Are there any comments on the minutes?

(i) Central & Corporate

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Lord Mayor, good afternoon. I wish to comment on the minute described concerning the Building Hope Appeal, which I am sure you are aware is to fund the building of a children's resource centre in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo.

Through the work of a charity I am involved in, Morley for (?)Thoracoval, I have recently had the opportunity to visit the area affected by the devastating tsunami which struck on Boxing Day last year. The appeal in Morley was started following a visit I made to the Central Methodist Chapel to collect Councillor Elliott, who is a Methodist and goes there. Reverend Samuel, who is the Superintendent Minister, is from Sri Lanka and was born in the village of Thuracoval which is on the south-east coast of Sri Lanka. Under the circumstances, Councillor Elliott and myself offered any help we could to Reverend Samuel, to help those who had been affected by the tsunami in his village. Reverend Samuel had himself lost 30 members of his family in the disaster.

To date the Morley for Thuracoval charity has raised around £65,000 and has brought positive assistance to the villagers. We are about to embark on a building scheme which will provide accommodation for some of the services we already run in Sri Lanka, these being a sewing class, the aim of which is to enable young ladies to

develop tailoring skills and be able in the future to become self-sufficient by offering their skills to other people in the area for a small charge, thus providing them with an income. All the young ladies who attend have been directly affected by the tsunami, some of them losing parents and now living with extended members of the family unit.

We also run an out-of-school class which is attended by around 50 children who were originally housed in the nearby (?)Seralanka Camp, which is a resettlement camp. It was at the after-school class that I met one young boy. He would have been about eight years of age and he had a drawing. When I looked at the drawing I saw what I thought was a seascape, a beach, trees and the sea. I pointed to the picture. I unfortunately do not speak Tamil or Sinhala and he doesn't speak English so I communicated that way and asked if I could have a closer look. The little boy handed me the picture and repeated the words, "Tsunami, tsunami" pointing at the picture. Even after 6 months, the child is so traumatised by the events on Boxing Day that he is expressing his trauma in art work. The picture did contain trees and the sea. However, when I looked more closely the picture did not contain any beach; the trunks of the trees were covered by water.

I met one group of people who were living together in a resettlement camp in the village. We can never console someone who is bereaved. However, how do we cope when collectively people are bereaved? One lady had taken hold of her baby when the wave came. She clung to the child for dear life - quite literally for dear life. Unfortunately, the force of the wave proved too strong, the baby was plucked from her arms by the wave and was later discovered dead.

Her husband at this time was travelling to work in (?)Akarapatu, which is a nearby town. He travelled by bicycle. When the first wave came, which was a warning wave, it was of no real consequence to people, they had seen such waves before. The second wave, however, was a bit different and the gentleman stopped to assist people who he had seen in trouble. By stopping to help fellow humans he endangered his own life and was never seen again.

One little girl in the group lost both her parents in the tsunami. She was being cared for by an auntie. It was not unusual to hear similar stories throughout my stay in Sri Lanka. A great many people, both children and adults, are still suffering post-traumatic stress disorder following their Boxing Day ordeal.

I applaud the work of Leeds City Council Officers who are involved in the administration and fund-raising for the Building Hope Appeal. I would ask you fellow Members of Council to help in any way we can in fund-raising and helping the appeal reach the £250,000 which is needed to build the Children's Resource Centre in Colombo.

I know that the people of Sri Lanka are extremely grateful for the help and support they receive from the British public. I know because they told me so. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I want to refer to Item 35 on page 51, the Financial Performance Provisional Outturn, up to 31st March 2005, and to ask Councillor Harris if he has any idea what impact the costs of the new Licensing Act had in that financial year, and he might want to extrapolate that forward into the current financial year. Because, Members of Council, this Government, that we have just heard about in terms of Supertram, have introduced yet another piece of ill thought-out legislation in terms of the Licensing Act that has left this Council, and indeed all the other major Councils in the country, in an untenable position where we have had to take on extra staff - those who have not yet will have to - to administer this muddle-headed and useless piece of legislation.

I asked today whether our Officers, Councillor Harris, had been in contact with the Government, or indeed the Government in contact with our Officers, to be told, "Yes, we have had a letter from the Government thanking us for all our hard work, accepting how difficult it all is, and reminding us that the 6th August is still the deadline for all these applications to be dealt with."

At the moment, we have had 398 applications, which is a huge workload in itself. Let me tell you that in the city of Birmingham, the next largest or the one above us in terms of the number of licences it is likely to have to deal with, have had very few yet and they have said they expect 2,500 applications and they will have to work 24-hours a day, 7 days a week if there is to be any chance at all of processing these applications. If that is going to befall the City of Leeds, then there is going to be a significant cost implication on the provisional outturn for the year 2005/6, and there has probably already been an impact on this particular year in question. But let me say this, that the situation is such, and every Member of this Council should be very concerned, that the legislation is so worded that, if there are no objections to a licence, it can be dealt with by delegated powers of the Officers and I understand has to be deemed to be approved because there are no objections.

Now what happens where Members might have objected to one application in a street because they have received complaints but a public house or licensed establishment in the same street there has been no objection and has gone through. Well, when we come to object at the hearing we have very likely, I would have thought, to face a legal challenge. Has the Government not even thought out these basic principles, or are they leaving us, or more particularly our constituents, to be faced with a great deal of concern, a great deal of upset and Members, quite frankly, having egg on their face through no fault of their own, through no fault of our Officers, but yet again through the fault of this Government, its incompetence and its hopeless

legislative record. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR SHELBRooke: My Lord Mayor, I would like to comment again on page 51, Minute 35. As outlined by Councillor Carter just now, the Council faces potentially huge financial pitfalls due to the Government's whole alcohol policy.

The burden placed on this Council, quite frankly, is unacceptable. We are in a situation where I think the latest figures are only 15% of licences in this City have been applied for and, as Councillor Carter outlined, we have had to massively increase the staff handling this situation. But it is actually unfair to the people we represent. That is the people who are going to suffer from this. We can sit here and complain as a Council but it is our constituents who are the ones who are suffering.

Now, I have recently objected to an application in Barwick on the grounds that it wanted an extended licence for liquor and entertainment through to 2 o'clock in the morning. We are not dealing with a town centre. We are not dealing with the city centre of Leeds. We are dealing with small rural villages, and those rural villages do not need people coming in from all of the suburbs, which in this particular pub is where they come in from, with loud music and entertainment keeping people awake until 2 o'clock in the morning, which is what the licence wanted, when there are residents in this quiet village living not more than 100 yards away, and again the Bill is very vague. It says, "people within the vicinity". How do we class what "the vicinity" is? And it is within the rural areas where the blanket legislation could be a problem and the anti-social behaviour.

All of this could potentially add to the cost which this City has to administer, and if we oppose one and we don't oppose another because we miss it --- There was one in our ward recently. We were given notice of the closing date. We got it that afternoon. We had two hours to respond. You know, if we are not checking our e-mail constantly we don't know.

But also what particularly worries me about the whole of it is that we are going to have to increase our education on alcohol in this City, and that is going to be a potential cost to this Council running into hundreds of thousands. Reports have come back to me from residents of the very fact that you have got school children taking bottles of vodka to school, trying to sell it to people on the bus, and why is that?

That is not the responsibility of the schools. The particular school they go to is one of the leading health campaigning schools. The children are well educated. This is coming from a society point of view and, quite frankly, the Government have sent out entirely the wrong message to this country by saying we are going for 24-hour licensing.

We need to tackle the effects of binge-drinking in this country, because this is

the silent killer we all face. 10/15 years from now we can see a whole horde of people in their 20s and their 30s even who are going to be suffering from liver cirrhosis and it is not good enough. It represents a huge cost to all of us, not just financially but to the whole fabric of our society, and really it just goes on to say that, you know, whilst we are addressing to tackle the impossible issue this Government put us in, we really need to stand up and start addressing how we are going to educate people better before there is a huge financial implication to this Council and to the very fabric of this City. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR SCHOFIELD: My Lord Mayor, just to add one or two points about the practicalities, or the impracticalities, we should say, of this new licensing legislation. When I returned to Council 2 years ago, when the electors of Halton came back to their senses and voted Conservative again, (Interruptions) the first experience I had of the new system of briefings was with a new colleague, Councillor Coulson. You can imagine what an entertaining morning that was with Councillor Coulson in the room, amongst many other strong-minded Councillors. We were given an extremely detailed and expert briefing by a local government officer who had spent 30 years in Kirklees. He had experience and knowledge of all aspects of licensing relating to the pub trade. He said this was the worst piece of local government legislation from any government he had ever seen in 30 years of experience working for local councils around the country, and his prophesy of 2 years ago has come to pass.

The whole system, the details, are faulty. There are terms of objection which are difficult to sustain. Many of us will have to complain on the grounds of anticipated problems. It is difficult to prove something which we know will happen due to local experience, anti-social behaviour, noise nuisance and so on, at 1, 2 o'clock in the morning.

It is going to be difficult to alert the local residents because the notices are given out by the publican himself. Often the publicans are not aware of what is going on, they work for the large pub companies. In fact, many of them are against this legislation because it makes the job very anti-social, and I am sure the quality of people coming forward to run public houses will decline accordingly.

The whole thing is a shambles, and the pressures are made even worse because this is a new type of licence, it is for a long time, it is very important to the business concerned, so they are going to claim for everything, the drinking, the music, the films and everything, so the whole burden placed on our own authority is going to be much greater than it ever need be. I only hope we can cope with this burden put before us. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: My Lord Mayor, I have actually spoken numerous times about this legislation. It is ill thought-out. It is ill considered, and I can't for the life of

me see how it has come about.

What I can tell you is that last Sunday I was actually working on my PC and three e-mail messages came up from Licensing Officers working on a Sunday, and they are actually working Saturday and Sunday. I have already said I reckon this - from memory I think it said it cost this authority about £1.4 million, so I would be interested to hear Councillor Harris's projections for next year and the preceding year.

What I find extremely staggering is that this is just ill thought and ill considered legislation, and I think we are going to live to regret this. It is very similar to the legislation on environmental crime; it has given us all the powers; it hasn't given us any money. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR WILSON: As Chair of the Liquor Licensing Panel, I would just like to give the exact up-to-date position of this particular committee. We are currently in a 6 month transitional period in which applicants can apply to convert existing licences to a new-style licence issued by the Council under this new Licensing Act of 2003. That period ends on August 6th.

Any premises which fail to convert or apply for a new licence after the end of the transition will be unable to legally sell or supply alcohol, provide regulated entertainment, or sell hot food between 11 p.m. and 5 p.m.(sic) from November 25th of this year.

We are expecting in Leeds 3,500 applications for new licences to be made in the run up to November. Applications are currently being received at the rate of more than 300 a week. We may receive another 2,000/3,000 applications over the next 3 weeks, that is up to 6th August. In comparison, under the old Public Entertainment licence system the Council issued 500 licences per annum and dealt with in the region of 5 new applications per month.

This unprecedented level of activity is temporary, as there is no annual renewal process. Therefore it was impossible to recruit permanent staff to cover the application period. Staffing within the section has increased from 10 to 28 staff, with the bulk of the increase being made up with temporary staff. Six staff have been taken on in the last few weeks. However, we are at the physical limits of the existing IT system. The volumes have been exacerbated by the complex 17-page application form, which can only be checked by a senior staff officer.

The bunching of applications towards the end of the transition has been caused by the financial incentive to apply at the end of the annual period - regulations set by the Government. There is no requirement in the Act for the Council to notify Ward Members or the public, and the Act requires the applicant to place notices prominently at or on the premises and to advertise in the local press. This is the process by which the public should be made aware of any application.

Legal have tried to notify Ward Members of applications and maintain a list on the website for the public as a matter of good practice. However, due to the volumes being processed and the complex form, this has been unsustainable. New systems have been put in place to ensure that Members are at least aware that applications have been made at an early stage, rather than getting full details of the application nearer the end of the objection period.

Under the Act, the Council must grant what is the application as requested, unless it gets any objections. It is not possible to extend the 28-day period as this is set in the Act of the regulations. Therefore, Members should ensure that any objections are lodged within the 28 days.

That is the statement that I have got from the Legal section that is running it. I personally think I can only echo what has been said by other Members. This Council is going to hit the buffers very shortly. There is no way that the 15 Members that have been tasked with this in any way is going to be able to deal with the applications that will come in from Leeds. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, can I just, first of all, comment on what Councillor Grayshon said. I think all of us recall the recent visit to Leeds by the Mayor of Colombo and the signing of the agreement between our two cities, and the marvellous sums of money that have been raised by the people of Leeds to help the people of Colombo, children in particular, following the disaster of the tsunami on Boxing Day, so I am grateful to Councillor Grayshon for what he said. I am sure he is in a position of knowledge far greater than the vast majority of us, having seen at first hand what has happened in Sri Lanka, and I am sure that when people realised that he was also a serving Member of Leeds City Council that that will have stood our City in good stead in Sri Lanka, so I am very grateful to him, and the Council will carry on doing everything it can to help those unfortunate people.

Can I now then turn to the whole issue of licensing. Well, of course, we will have to see exactly how things pan out, but we certainly do appear to have a crisis in the making in terms of the number of licences we may have to try and deal with in the remaining time available to us, and it is in fact difficult to understand precisely why people have been so slow in coming forward with their licence renewals. Every effort I think has been made to remind them to get on with it but, for whatever reason, and it may be the complexity of the new system, certainly people have been slow in coming forward and we are going to have to try and deal with that but, as I said on the radio a few weeks ago, and it is not actually an absolutely absurd warning but we may find ourselves in a situation ultimately where significant numbers of premises don't actually have a licence in time for Christmas and, you know, with all the fall-out that will come from that.

Now I know that Officers and Members are doing everything they can and have, if I can use the expression, girded their loins to try and cope with the huge influx of applications we are expecting, but clearly this is a big problem for all of us.

As to what the eventual effects will be of 24-hour licensing, well, again that will be hard to say, but I think it is worth speculating on the fact that many of those who supported the idea of 24-hour licensing have done so by looking at what happens on the continent, and quite reasonably point to the fact that there does not appear to be a binge-drinking problem in Europe where they have 24-hour licensing except, unfortunately, where we see large numbers of young British tourists going to such destinations who do in fact appear to be incapable of pacing themselves in terms of drinking and indulge in binge-drinking 24 hours at a time, and that does perhaps send a bit of a warning. As much as I am - and I am - a European, I am very much pro-Europe. I know there may be some differences here between myself and my Conservative colleagues, but nevertheless the point is it is a different culture which you cannot just overnight supplant on Britain and think that British people will snap into that European way of dealing with things. So it could present a problem.

In terms of cost, 2004/5 it looks like £679,000 and 2005/6 £818,000 is the additional cost to us of implementing the new licensing before income is taken into account and, of course, income in all of this is the great unknown, as I have already explained, so it is a serious problem we have been presented with and, in the round, it is very difficult to understand why London dropped this new licensing regulation on us. It appears to be hopelessly thought-out. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

(ii) Development

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: My Lord Mayor, I would like to speak on page 52, Minute 38, that is regarding St. Aidans and Skelton Lake, which I also commented on at the Executive Board. I have got to say I really welcome this decision. I think anybody who has visited the area knows what the potential is there for wildlife and for recreation for people to go there. It is a wonderful place, and I feel that this is a wonderful move forward. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Lord Mayor, very briefly, it is about the Provisional West Yorkshire Local Transport Plan and most of my comments have been stolen by Councillor Pryke, but never mind. I would just mention that there is a serious problem here with financial inclusion, and it is about the affordability of public transport. I think that, too, needs to be addressed. It is alright having measures against congestion, about accessibility and various other things, but we need to extend the hand to financial inclusion and bring down the prices of public transport, whether you are on buses or trains, and I certainly would welcome a forward plan post-Supertram. Thank

you.

COUNCILLOR SCHOFIELD: Lord Mayor, again on the Local Transport Plan, I speak as one of the eight members from this authority who serve on the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport authority.

Some of the concerns that have been within our meetings in this authority have also been focused on by the West Yorkshire Transport Authority, who have a co-ordinating role. It is interesting the information which is coming to our meeting on Friday at Wellington House, information about the impact of Government guidance on the implementation of the Local Transport Plan. There is a very interesting paragraph on page 30 of the report we are to study on Friday. The guidance from Government states that no funding for new major schemes - in Government terms that is projects over £5 million, which would only buy you a corner of Millennium Square - but any project over £5 million should not be assumed to be available.

The conclusion from that from the Officers, the staff who have put together our report for Friday, is that the Government's approach does not provide sufficient funding to address West Yorkshire's transport issues or to implement Metro's aspirations for high-quality public transport. It is a major concern that adherence to the Department of Transport guidance under Government control will result in reduced aspirations and ambition, and hence a transport system that is not fit for purpose in supporting the visions of the West Yorkshire authorities.

So that is criticism coming from the experts, the Officers in Transport within this City, within this County. That is their thoughts on what the Government is offering us so far.

Even worse has been the headline-grabbing initiative by Gordon Brown, putting his mouth where we have not seen any money yet on the concessionary fares for pensioners. His scheme threatens to undermine the balance between local rail and local bus services. Local rail services have already been undermined by this Government by three recent decisions. The Transport Authority has lost its decision-making role in the provision and shaping of local rail services. The Government has taken that power away and left the Transport Authority as a mere consultee and observer. We are given no encouragement to enhance the rail network that serves the City of Leeds.

Talking of privatisation, Councillor Lyons, two franchises which affect Leeds were re-privatised in recent months. The contract for the trains from Leeds to London was re-privatised a few months ago. GNER were given the contract on the understanding that there need be no new stations, no new tracks, only a possibility of some extra electrification between the City and the East Coast mainline near Selby.

The local train franchise was re-privatised a long time ago, 8/10 years ago since the Conservatives were dabbling in this area. The Labour Government a few months ago privatised the local rail services in our area once again. A new franchise was given on the crazy understanding that there would be no increase in passengers, and yet the last 10 years have shown a tremendous increase - 30%/40% in many services - of extra people using the trains, whatever the shortcomings those local trains may have.

Despite the problems, local train services have been a success. They have been victims of their own success on the growth in passengers, but the Northern franchise was re-privatised yet again without any assumption of growth in passengers, and that company was not asked to enhance the service in any way. No more rolling stock was required, no more stations, no contributions to reopening old lines. The Government, far from being helpful, is undermining the local authority's very own Local Transport Plan.

Just to come back to the Gordon Brown headline-grabbing announcement on pensions, if I can be of assistance to Councillor Pryke, the meeting of the Transport Authority Fares Working Group was held on 21st June, and this very item was discussed, the impact on local services and particularly the impact on rail services which could be undermined by this emphasis on bus and bus alone. This was the expert opinion on Brown's intervention on bus concessions, many of which we already offer to our local residents, many of which are better than the scheme Brown is proposing. Brown's scheme is only for buses. Our scheme already exists for buses and trains.

The consensus is that the initial work carried out by the Transport Authority estimated there would be additional costs to Metro which would result in a budget shortfall. Members were advised that the provisional estimate did not include the impact of any decisions regarding the pricing of local rail travel by senior citizens. So we are going to be hurt twice. The railways are going to be hurt if people transfer from bus to rail and the budgets of the five councils, including ourselves, who contribute to the PTA, the budget of Leeds is going to be badly hit as well. Thank you, Lord Mayor. Those are my comments. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR TAYLOR: Lord Mayor, I would like to comment on Minute 38, page 52, and can I just sort of say it is good, I think, that perhaps today we can have a bit of good news, and certainly this scheme that has been proposed to work very closely with the RSPB and ourselves is splendid news indeed.

As perhaps most people know, the little robin that we find in our garden, the blackbird and the swallow and the swift that we see in our cities, they rely on waterways in order to get here, and in effect what we are doing as a City Council is we are providing that opportunity for many birds, migrant birds, many of which are on

the red list of threatened species in this country and in Europe to find a safe haven, and so I very much welcome all that is going on down at St. Aidans Drift and the Skelton Lake, and I hope that the RSPB will also be working very closely with the Astley Birdwatching Group in Swillington, where they also do a remarkable job in protecting birds on their journey to and from this country.

I think that one of the main factors in all of this is that we are going to touch the hearts and the minds of children, and if we can set the children on the right track in appreciating the beauty of creation and caring for the environment, then we can't be going far wrong. I very much welcome it. I hope not only will it be seen as a tool of education but also the possibility of increasing tourism, as it will link in with Fairburn Ings and all that is going on there with the RSPB. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor, I wasn't going to stand up and say anything, because I think we are having a quiet day, but as far as I can see we have David Schofield, all across there, and you have got memory loss. Who privatised the railways? Was it us? Who privatised the railways? (Interruptions) I didn't interrupt while he was speaking, you know, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: You didn't, Councillor Lyons, but if you expect to get any extra time, it is not going to work.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: If they want to come forward and put criticism forward, then they should do so, but they shouldn't have memory lapses because, as far as we are concerned, you know, and all of you know, it wasn't us - it wasn't either of us across here, it wasn't the Liberals neither - that privatised the railways, and it certainly wasn't us that de-franchised the buses. So what are you talking about? You are talking about some of your friends that has made millions and millions of pounds out of transport, and taken it out of transport, and taken it away from transport so that it can't be used.

I have argued, and argued in this room, time and time again that we should have money from the Government for public transport. I have never varied from this point, and I have always argued that we should have money for it, and I carry on arguing for money for it, but I don't forget things. I don't forget the £17/£18 million we have just got in from the Government for the school buses. Nobody has mentioned that. You haven't mentioned that. You haven't mentioned the schemes that we have got at Metro for the old people. You haven't told them what is happening and what should be happening. You haven't told them about the Access Bus, the millions of pounds that we spend on Access Bus.

Yes, I would agree with a lot of what you are saying, that we should have been

funded from Government, and I would argue and will continue to argue from the Government that we should get funding, but I don't stand back and say, "Oh, because it is a Labour Government, you know, we shouldn't say nowt to them", but you have done the same with the Conservative Government. You kept your mouth firmly closed, and you are keeping it closed now, because when we want Quality Bus contracts and we are arguing with this Government about Quality Bus contracts, the Tories are hanging behind and not coming forward from us because West Yorkshire, Bradford doesn't want it, and the Chair of Metro, his Leader didn't want Quality Bus contracts, so they don't want it.

So what you are saying now, it is alright to attack the Government. I would agree with you, attack the Government if we can get some money from them, but don't have memory lapses, and when you talk about all the money that was used from the railway, don't forget that when somebody put in for a franchise to do something they are putting in for that job and will say what they are going to do. What he has never told you is, since they were privatised, not one of those rail companies has kept to the contract that they were getting paid to do - not one - and yet you sit back on our hands and say nowt. Not one of the companies has carried out what they are getting paid to do.

You know and I know, and you did get on about the increase in patronage. They haven't even got the units for before we got any increase in patronage, never mind the millions of people we were getting before, and they are not going to put their hands in their pockets now. It is easier for them to pay out any penalties, any penalties, than to buy any new rolling stock. What they are telling you is that you should pay for it, and the people of Leeds should pay for it. Nonsense.

I would agree with some of the things that has been said. Of course we should have funding for Supertram. Of course we should have extra funding for public transport, but let's argue together and don't be coming across and arguing politically, because I never did. I always argued --- (Interruptions) Right, as far as I am concerned, I argued just as hard with all the Ministers that were Tory Ministers and just as hard with all the Ministers that were Labour, and anyone that came down with me can tell you that, but you are not playing that game. You want to play the game of all our three parties together saying, "Oh, we are doing marvellous and everybody else isn't doing nowt". You want to work as a Council, you should work as a Council, not pick bits of it. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR J. LEWIS: Lord Mayor, I would like to comment on the same minute on this one, and I think some people sat over there should be very careful about raising the issue of concessionary fares, because Gordon Brown has done you a huge favour because he has saved you from red faces from the massive increase in concessionary fares, which is one of the first things you proposed when the same

shoddy alliance we see over there took over Metro, and Gordon Brown came in with the money to avoid you having the embarrassment of having to put up a massive, well above inflationary increase in concessionary fares. So you should be thanking Gordon Brown, not criticising him. I hope that is reflected when the Executive Board Member sums up.

Secondly, I think I would also like to turn to the issue my colleague Councillor Lyons picked up on on buses. I am not quite sure when Councillor Schofield was pointing and saying "Re-privatisation" that he had been converted to the case against privatisation and converted to the case for greater Government regulation and greater indeed public regulation of public transport which, after all, is there for the public and not there and shouldn't be there for organisations to make massive profits out of.

So I hope the Executive Board Member will join me in condemning some of the privatised bus companies in Leeds, that since 1999 we have seen a 80% - that is 80% - increase in some fares in Leeds when, over the same period, inflation has run in single figures, and again this is money being taken from the travelling public and put in the pockets of private shareholders of private bus companies, and most of us on this side of the Council chamber believe that is wrong, and we are looking for steps that we can bring in to re-regulate buses, and I look forward to a very clear statement from the parties opposite that they support us in that; they support us in bringing public transport under public control; they support us in public transport being about the public not about profit for private companies, and they will join us at the right time in calling for Quality Bus contracts so we can finally bring some co-ordination, some regulation and some public service mentality back to public transport in Leeds and across West Yorkshire. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, if I can deal with Item 38 on page 52 first. Yes, it is a very welcome development. Thank you, Councillor Taylor, thank you, Councillor Blackburn, for mentioning it. We are very fortunate in this City. When this development at St. Aidans and Skelton Lake is completed, and it is some little way away yet, we will be able to travel from the very southern boundary of the City, which is at Fairburn Ings, basically, right the way through to the city centre, and when we formally establish our West Leeds Country Park and Green Gateways, that will create the top of the circle through the Upper Aire Valley within the boundary of the City of Leeds. From the sky, Leeds will look even greener and more pleasant than it does now, and I think we should all be very thankful for that, and I do thank Councillor Blackburn for the work he is putting in, particularly in connection with the western end of the Aire Valley.

I didn't know Councillor Taylor was a twitcher, but apparently you are, but I do hope that consultation will indeed take place with the Astley Birdwatchers and any other birdwatchers that happen to be around. I am fairly familiar with the Old Moor

RSPB Project in Rotherham, and I think some people will have received invitations to a display that is being put on there by the RSPB which is going to touch on the developments at St. Aidans. It will be well worth visiting, if only to look round the Old Moor Project.

Right. The West Yorkshire Provisional Local Transport Plan. Thank you, Councillor Schofield, for your comments. Thank you, Councillor McArdle for your comments. Councillor Lyons. Yes, Councillor Lyons said two things which were very interesting. The first was both of us over here, pointing at that group, so presumably that is the final admission that they are indeed at least two groups over there, if not more, because they were not including these, or at least it appeared not.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, memory losses. Now, Councillor Lyons appeared, throughout his entire contribution, to have completely forgotten that we have just had a very important announcement that Councillor Harris made in terms of the Government's failure to announce what they intend to do about our Supertram project. It took him - I don't know how long he spoke for - almost his entire quota, the orange light went on and he finally mentioned Supertram. Before that he rattled on and rattled on about all sorts of stuff which appeared to me to be the usual rubbish.

Let's get back to Supertram.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Oh no, that's unfair. That's unfair.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: The usual rubbish. Let's get back to the main issue, which is Supertram. Supertram and its future is interwoven throughout the Local Transport Plan. We have been working, Councillor Lyons, as well you know, for 15 years with two Governments. I, as Leader of the Opposition and then as Leader of the Council and now as Deputy Leader of the Council, have signed up to letter after letter after letter on an all-party basis. We have visited Minister after Minister, but the simple fact is that your Government - your Government - is too cowardly to give us the decision we need now. There is no excuse for that and, quite frankly, when I hear that your North-East Leeds Labour MP Fabian Hamilton has now tabled a written question asking for when a decision is going to be made but - good old Fabian - but true to form, of course, as Parliament is going into recess he ain't going to get an answer until October, so we are getting no further forward.

I cannot believe, when this Government has taken decision after decision since the election on Supertram schemes or tram schemes in different parts of this country, they have been unable to reach an answer on ours. As Mark Harris said, we have reached the stage where an answer is required, be it "Yes" or be it, "No". It cannot, unless they are even more incompetent than I believe them to be, to not be able to reach a conclusion. It is unfair. They have let this City down, and if you aren't big

enough to say, "The Government" - your Government - "have let this City down", then I feel very sorry for you, and the people of Leeds should realise that you aren't big enough to say that. (Applause)

(iv) Neighbourhoods and Housing

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor on the subject of EASEL, I want to really ask the Leader of Council, rather than my colleague on my left, to answer this particular point, but many of us at the Special Executive Board Meeting when this was discussed were extremely unhappy to have received a communication from one of the two bidders indicating that they had heard rumours about the content of the report.

Now, if there have been rumours about the contents of the report, then my understanding is that somebody has leaked the contents of the report. Now, let me remind all Members of Council that this is the largest procurement project that any of us in this chamber have ever been involved with. I think that this Council should mount a very seriously based inquiry into how that could have happened.

There are a very limited number of people who were in receipt of the documentation and, if it is proved that that rumour is in fact leak, and I don't want to pre-judge any inquiry but I can't believe that it can come to any other conclusion, then that is a very serious matter indeed. A very serious matter indeed.

Now, I find it unacceptable, wholly, wholly unacceptable, and I am delighted to see Councillor Lewis nodding his head, because I am sure - I am sure - he agrees with me. It is not acceptable. This issue of EASEL, this EASEL Project, is the major regeneration project of this City, started by them, continued by us. A serious competitive bidding process, very serious, which hopefully will result in a massive transformation in that part of the City, but let me say this: anything on that scale, conducted by whoever conducts it, will be very difficult, fraught with difficulties, fraught with opportunities for people who do not have goodwill to cause disruption and difficulties.

The marker, Leader of Council, should be put down now that we are not prepared to have undue influence, interference - of course, consultation - undue influence on a project like this, and people who have had hold of the documentation peddling what is in that documentation when it is confidential. It is highly dangerous and, at its worst, could hold this City in a very bad light indeed. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Can you just hang on a minute, Councillor Harris. Just a minute. The situation is that we have got a request from Councillor Richard Lewis to speak on this item. Councillor Carter has invited the Leader of Council to comment, but it still leaves us with Councillor J. L. Carter the right to sum up, so what I am going to do

is take Richard Lewis next and then, if there are any other items that perhaps the Leader of Council might need to know about, Councillor Gruen is indicating I think that he wants to speak, then Councillor Harris can come after Councillor Gruen and Councillor J. Leslie Carter can sum up after that.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: Lord Mayor, my comments are very brief. I fully support Andrew in his comments about it being unacceptable to leak any document, any document, but particularly one as significant as this, where it could influence the outcome of a huge contract that affects a huge swathe of the City which, I agree, is fraught with difficulties anyway, so it is absolutely essential that, you know, there should be probity in the process and, as I say, just to reiterate I support his comments. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Thank you very much.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I think the comment I want to make is, it doesn't need Council or the Leader of Council to come 4 or 6 weeks after the Executive Board to say we need to have a formal leak inquiry if something serious happened, and all I know is what I have been told in the corridors of the Civic Hall. I have not seen any correspondence. I don't know who has corresponded with whom or who has said what. I am not a member of the Executive Board. I wasn't at the meeting, but I understand there to be great suspicion about a leak. If that is the case, then I would have thought that the Chair of the Executive Board would have been able to set up a leak inquiry immediately, and we don't need to drag it into full Council and take away from what Andrew was saying quite rightly is potentially one of the biggest projects and the most important projects in our part of the City in East Leeds.

Many of us feel passionately about the fact that it has been a long time coming. We are on the threshold of something actually working its way through the right procedures, and many of us want to co-operate and work with whoever the developer will be at the end of the day to bring about these once in a generation opportunities, that we all have.

I don't want, and I hope Andrew wasn't saying that, because if he doesn't know where the leak came from and he is not pre-judging the leak inquiry, then when he goes on to talk about, "I don't want interference", etc., etc., then I hope he is not casting aspersions in particular directions, because I certainly as Chair of South-East Homes want to continue to co-operate in exactly the same way as we have been doing with the Executive Board Member, etc., etc., and I for one have every confidence in my Board of Directors that there is not a leak from within South-East Homes. That is my firm conclusion. That is my firm belief, that that is the case.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: The first thing is, Lord Mayor, that I have got to be careful that

we are not pre-judging the issue, but it is fairly difficult to believe that somebody did not leak the information, in view of a letter that Andrew and I and other people have received. Very hard indeed to believe that the information was not handed out to a particular source.

I am glad to hear what Richard said. It was unequivocal. It was unfortunate indeed that Peter Gruen was so equivocal.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Hear, hear.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: You had the opportunity simply to condemn the situation. Your Leader was nodding. Richard got up and did it. You were unable. Well, I am not suggesting it points the finger at you, but I do want ---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: On a point of order, if he is not pointing the finger at him, why does he say he isn't pointing the finger at him --- (Interruptions)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Atha, I am afraid that is not a point of order. If you wanted to speak you could have spoken earlier.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: It is just not decent. It is not right.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: (Inaudible) There is no doubt that EASEL is the most significant redevelopment regeneration project that the City has ever potentially seen and although, of course, just taking superlatives, looking forward, if it goes ahead it is hard to imagine another scheme of such magnitude both in terms of the potential effect on this City and the money involved. It is very hard ever to see another such scheme coming forward for the City, so it is of crucial importance, and so it is vital in those circumstances that we are seen to deal with the matter absolutely fairly, above board and, as Andrew says, without an undue influence.

Now, I am bound to say that if somebody - if somebody - did leak the information, they actually prejudice the people to whom they were making the leak. In fact, it actually was totally counter-productive for the people on whose behalf they thought they were working, because it puts us in a situation where clearly we couldn't take any account of what that particular organisation may have been asking for in addition to the process we had already gone through, and of this I am absolutely certain in dealing with this, or any other significant project in this City, and it is why we are so anxious about this. We are not going to give any potential partner - it is not just for the sake of the good name of this City, but we are not going to give any potential partner prima facie grounds to sue us and, as we have seen in so many situations in the past, we have given the partner organisations and contractors prima facie grounds to sue us because process has not been properly adhered to. That will

not happen here. Under no circumstances will it happen here.

Now, the Extraordinary Board was three weeks ago not six weeks ago. It is perfectly appropriate for us to discuss a matter of such significance and magnitude in this place. It is the right place to discuss it. It is the right place to discuss whether or not we should have an inquiry, and it is the right place to make the decision that we will have an inquiry. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, may I start also by saying that I was delighted to see Richard and his Leader nodding their heads when this was put forward. Peter, I think it would have been better if you had left that as it is. It is an extremely serious situation, and I think it would have been better for you to leave it alone rather than saying anything.

I know you are Chair of the Board so, as Chairman of the Board, when people start talking about who leaks what, did what, in my opinion, I have said it before, before there are too many people getting too many papers, I wasn't surprised that something went out. I tried everything possible to stop that. I said it to your boards in here that I wasn't happy with things going out, and I have said it in Cabinet, and I have said it to other people.

Now, unfortunately, it had to go out. It went out. The information was there, but it was a procurement which was so vital to this City that it had to be done right and proper.

May I just make a comment upon EASEL itself. Now, that will be dealt with a different way, and an inquiry will take place, and people will decide how that is handled. May I just talk about EASEL itself, and start by thanking our Officers. Over 30 Officers of this authority assessed this particular project. The recommendations that came to us were the recommendations of some 30 Officers unanimously across the City.

First of all, can I say I doubt very much if you could have collusion of 30 Officers in this Council. I don't think there was any collusion. I have to say that, but I just make that point, that can be the only sensible conclusion.

This scheme is vital. It is something which I met the first week that I took this particular role. It is something which I liked, and it is something I wanted to push forward, and it is something I put a lot of effort and time into. I want to see it come to some conclusion. We are not there yet. We are not there yet by any stretch of the imagination, but if we can bring assets of this kind -- this size, not kind - this size into an area, deprived area of the City, one of the areas we were talking about closing the gap or narrowing the gap, or whatever the words are, then this is a great success. It

has already been recognised nationally. It has already been recognised nationally as a scheme to go forward, so if we are going to keep pushing, and obviously I wait to see what happens at the end of that three months, but I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the Officers, all the Officers, and some of the ALMO Officers as well who worked on this, who worked on this particular budget to bring it to this stage.

Indeed, my Lord Mayor, it may be the type of scheme we have got to continue to push forward because, sad to report to this Council, that the Government have refused our Beeston PFI. Now, I believe that PFI should have been granted and should have been given to the area, and we are pushing behind the scenes to try and get that brought back into being, but the Beeston PFI was an important aspect. Following on from Swarcliffe, where Leeds obtained the first PFI for housing under the Government's new regulations which gave the Government a field and a base to work on from now and in the future, I thought they would be a lot kinder to us in Beeston, but they have not been to Beeston. I hope that the Government will be looking at that. I hope you will use your influences with your Members to try and get them to look at it.

Having said all this, we are going to push it forward in this City. We are going to push it forward as hard as we can. EASEL I am going to push forward and I will make certain it is pushed forward. Beeston I hope, I just hope and pray it will come back. There will be other schemes and we have to ensure that whatever happens in this City the narrowing the gap in housing and regeneration is going to be something which we can all be proud of. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

(v) Learning

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, can I firstly associate myself and my Group's comments with Andrew Carter's comments about Alan Theaker. We all found him on this side a very professional, very friendly, very responsive Officer.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield, just I just interrupt a second? Any Members of SOC who declared an interest may want to leave the chamber at this point. Just a reminder. Okay.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Sadly, I know that a number of colleagues have been to the funeral today from each Group, and I am sure many more of us would have liked to have gone had we had the opportunity, but democracy and Councils take place, but I did want to express our sympathy to his family, his children and anybody else who knew him as a friend as well as an Officer.

If I can now move to the reference back, and for colleagues who are not quite

sure what reference backs are all about, they are an opportunity for all of us to reflect on whether we believe it is in the right direction and, indeed, whether the right process has taken place.

I say that because, as we have said here many times before, the education that is given to the children of this area has been classified as excellent, and that is not just said by us, it is said by Ofsted, and every one of the Leaders in this chamber today, I think you have, Stuart, as well, haven't you - I suppose you are the Leader now, aren't you? - has been to Mount St. Mary's and said how amazed we are that such education takes place in appalling conditions.

Now, when I was at the Executive Board, I accepted that there had to be a preferred option on paper. As long as you have done your informal consultation, there has to be a preferred option. I don't like it. I think Andrew Carter didn't like it, but there we go, we have a preferred option after consultation. So the options we have now is, firstly, that you close Mount St. Mary's. As a Catholic school, that will happen anyway, but the option is you close Mount St. Mary's. The Diocese are not supporting it. The second option is you amalgamate with a school within the area, and the third option is that you actually rebuild a local authority school on the site.

Now, I accept that Councillor Harker and the Executive Board have a right to put a preferred option of amalgamation. I accept that. We differ and our Group, we prefer the rebuild on the site, and we would have preferred that as a preferred option.

We would have preferred to convince the Diocese to rebuild, because you can't amalgamate or transfer education at this level to another school. Nevertheless, that is a difference between us as a political party and the ruling administration, and it is called democracy.

Now, this is why I want you to think and take longer, and I don't care what party you are in, just think about this. Prior to consultation -- I am sure the Chair, Councillor Lyons, will tell you in more detail. I checked about this consultation. I phoned up. The only people who had been ever consulted the Chair and the Head, not about the options but about the demography. Just about the demography of the area, which we can have a debate about, look at the report in 3.10, 3.11. I am sure Les will want to talk about that.

I said, "Well, how many times have you been consulted?" "Twice". "Okay, what were you consulted over?" "Demography." Not once, not once, Richard, were they consulted on a preferred option.

Now, I don't care whether it legally qualifies. I don't care whether it is constitutionally qualified as consultation. I put it into your heads, just ask the question, on a decision as important as this, do you really think that is fair consultation

about the future of children's education in this City? It cannot be. If other governors have not been consulted, if the Head has not been consulted, if the Chairs of Governors haven't been consulted, regard it in our view - I am not interested in lawyers' views - in our view on fair consultation and democracy, I am asking you, colleagues, think. This is not saying opposition for opposition's sake. It is saying to Executive Board, take it back, enquire, ask the questions that I asked and really reflect on whether it is the right decision for this area and the future of these children's education. In my view, you cannot amalgamate excellent education.

I think other schools in the area are doing a fantastic job in difficult areas. You can't just transfer education like this. Really, we need to stop and think on whether it has been a right process and a right direction, and I am asking all colleagues - that is why I have moved reference back not Opposition White Paper - to support this reference back so that Executive Board can seriously look at the issues of the consultation that took place and, indeed, if it is the direction that all of us will have responsibility.

Let's put it like this. I know what Richard is going to say, "We are out to consultation". I am saying to you, if that is the preferred consultation, on the basis that they have already consulted, it is not right and we should ask Council to say it is not right and do proper consultation with local people. I move, Lord Mayor. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor, I think that the Executive Board have had a very difficult time with this, because we have all been to the school, including Richard has been up to the school, to see what it is all about, what they are doing and what teaching is about and, what is more, what the area is all about, and I don't think any of them has come back and said that we shouldn't have a proper school to teach our children in.

What the difficulty has been, of course, is the Diocese and the way Diocese have played things, and they are still playing this game. Up to now, the Foundation Governors are named by the Diocese. All other Catholic schools, or nearly all other Catholic schools, they are all into position. Not St. Mary's Primary School. We have wrote. I have wrote to the Bishop. I have wrote. I have sent him copies of letters. We have not or will not have a Governing Body, and what will they do then, because it is not the first time that they have recruited and brought in people, or the Bishop's people, to make a decision.

But your decision was different. When we talk about consultation, I have met once with Education Leeds and that was with the other Heads and Chairs in a little room and we were talking about how many school kids that were coming up in future, etc. Wasn't talking about whether we shouldn't close or whether we should close. It

was a straight opinion that the Chair or the Head had to give to Education Leeds. Not at any other time have we had consultation.

Andrew, you were talking about consultation, and one of the answers you gave was, yes, you believed in full consultation. We have not had consultation, and when the report said "further consultation" I don't know whether he knows what it means because if it is the same as what we have had, that is nil.

So I realise you have had a difficult job to put this into operation to make a decision. Now we are in the position where we have got another school that has been brought into the equation and they are saying, "We don't want to close and we don't want to build a new school. We are alright where we are." What Mount St. Mary's are saying is that, "We have got a site. We are all ready to go, and although the Diocese have lost the £1.6 million and cost the taxpayers of this country three-quarters of a million pounds as a result, we have got the site there, it is ready to go, it is all ready to go out to tender."

I think that you should really have a good --- I think some of the advice you have given, although strictly speaking it was within the law, it is to say, "Right, you had to have an option." What I am saying is, let's go back and let's look at what has gone on, and what has gone on leaves a lot to be desired. We have no Governing Body, or we will have no Governing Body, so we have got a site there, we have got it all tested for clean air and everything else. All we were waiting for is to go out to tender.

That was some time ago. Now, you shake your head, Richard, but I know because I have seen those reports and as far as I am aware there is nothing -- or I say there is nothing to stop us. I think the goodwill is there on everybody's behalf in this room. It is how we get there, and getting there by closing another school is not the way.

I think we ought to go out and really be consulted, because there is Councillors in this room from other than Labour that have been in touch with me and said, "We think you have been treated atrociously, the way that they have gone on." We have been 7 years in huts that rain comes through, that we are on a building site, etc. The way we are going, it will be 2007 before we move anywhere.

Now, if you lived in the area and you come up, would you send your kid to that school? You would on the results that we have got, because we have got the best results of ever before. I would ask you to just go back, because the Diocese will play the same game that they played last time. They are going to replace the Governors so that they can say, "Right", all these Governors in suits will be able to say, "Oh we want it closing. Get it closed. Forget all about it." So that's the way that they are going.

I appeal to you, you know the score, you know what is happening. Give it

another thought and have another look at it. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: My Lord Mayor, what I wanted to comment on was simply this question of they were being asked what -- and they said it has only been on the issue of demography. Richard will speak in more detail on other issues, but I am confused by that. I am not suggesting that anybody is deliberately being misleading, but on 17th June I visited all four schools in that Primary Planning Area, and obviously had detailed discussions with all four Heads, and all four Heads knew then about the proposed options and they actually raised it with me. They told me that Officers had already discussed with them options, and in particular the option of Mount St. Mary's closing and then being amalgamated in a new build. Lord Mayor, I saw when it came to Exec Board on 6th July, that is - whatever - two weeks before Exec Board, so I have to say to you on that issue alone I don't understand that comment, because the Heads clearly have been --- Well, (inaudible), that's for the Lord Mayor. The Heads have clearly been consulted on that particular issue, not simply on the matter of demography.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I think Members of Council need just to think where we are at with this, and where we have come from. The issues surrounding Mount St. Mary's have been going along, as Councillor Lyons has quite rightly said, for a number of years. These are not issues of this Council's making. The Diocese have made it crystal clear that they want to close that school.

We have already said, and I think we have acted very quickly, we have already said we are going to keep it open. We set down, as we are required to do, a preference, but let me just say this to you, that one thing Councillor Harker has shown while he has been the Executive Board Member for Education, is that he is prepared to see proper consultation and proper consideration on all of these issues, and we have made it clear as an administration that going out for consultation means precisely that. You know, if the evidence that comes back is, in our view, not consistent with the preference expressed by Education Leeds, well, hard lines for Education Leeds. But there has to be, regrettably, a preference.

We have shown by the way in which we have withdrawn items from the agenda in public where Members have said, "Hang on, you know, the information is not complete." Now, correct me if I am wrong, but I don't recall that happening very often previously. We have made it crystal clear that we find, and in fairness you find, that the issues surrounding school closures are extremely difficult. We all wish it didn't have to happen. Let us remember, there is an element of imperative behind this from the Government's point of view. They are pressing us forward all the time about surplus places, but we think in certain areas of the City there are special circumstances, particularly in regeneration areas, that warrant very close consideration before any decision is taken, and there is nothing in this resolution -

nothing at all - that says that is it, finished, that is what is happening.

It is precisely the same as many other recommendations that have gone before it, except for one thing, that this was not a situation that this Council sought. It was not a situation engineered by this Council, but a position which has been developing over a number of years, and with which we were confronted. That is the situation that we are in.

Many Members have been to visit Mount St. Mary's, and we are, all of us, to a man and woman, extremely impressed by the standard of teaching, the commitment of staff, teaching and non-teaching, the volunteers, and most impressed, of course, of all with the young people who are at the school. It underlines to me the fact that good support and good teaching can override issues relating to premises, because those premises should have been put right donkeys years ago, and we know because we have seen the plans and we know there was Government money. The tragedy is it wasn't moved forward.

But don't run away from the fact that we as a Council are going to take on that educational establishment, maintained by us at our cost, because we think it is the right way to go, but we would be very wrong if we were not to pursue the obvious alternatives which exist, and which are outlined in this paper, and I merely conclude by saying that I think we have indicated over this past 12 months our willingness to listen and take very seriously, sometimes under huge criticism, and we will come to another issue a little later on, possibly, where it went backwards and forwards like a blessed yo-yo, in my view for very good reasons.

So I think Richard Harker has got a very difficult job here and I think he has done it exactly right and we should support him in the resolution. (Applause)
COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, there can be no doubt in this Council Chamber that Mount St. Mary's is an excellent academic school. There is no doubt about that, no argument, no debate. I think it is recognised all the way round this particular chamber, and when you look at Mount St. Mary's you cannot look at it in isolation. There are four other schools in the same area: Richmond Hill Primary School, Victoria and Mount St. Mary's and All Saints C of E. It cannot be looked at in isolation.

Now, Councillor Wakefield talks about consultation. The report referred to consultation in 2.2. It referred to informal consultation - informal consultation - because that was taking place and that has taken place. He might not like what ---

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: What's that when it's at home, Les - informal consultation?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: The report referred to it as informal consultation. We are

now in a situation where we have to consult, and consult properly, and this is what this document is doing. It is not us that lays down the laws of this land, how you have got to state an option. Many of us wouldn't like an option. Many of us think it is right and proper to do this.

Can I say this, I have been amazed how much time Andrew Carter has spent on school issues since he has been Leader, absolutely amazed. I know there are many other issues, and I have seen Leaders across the Council for many years, and I have often seen Leaders who used to think it was an Education party and don't get anywhere near it, let it do what it wants and keep away from it. Andrew has taken that on, and he has gone out and spoken to parents, he has listened to parents, really listened to them, and been prepared to come back to the Executive Board and been prepared to challenge Officers' reports and make the Officers - make the Officers - explain why they have said certain things, or why they were arguing certain things.

Now, I will say this. I cannot tell you what is going to happen at the end of the day as far as this school is concerned because I haven't got a crystal ball, but I know this, they will have been treated as fairly as anybody could treat them in this City. They will have been listened to. Their arguments will have been listened to, along with other schools in the area, and if it be right and proper that a school is built, re-built, I think that will take place, if that is the right and proper decision.

Let me say this to you as well. Mick said it is perfectly okay, a nice plot to build a school on. I have no proof, and I have got to be very careful what I say here, but there is a six-lane highway going past that at the moment. There is a six-lane highway which is spewing out car fumes all the time. (Interruption) Let me just finish, Mick. All I am saying is I know the problems of asthma, I will tell you that now, and before I would be convinced, somebody would have to convince me on the health part that the children will not suffer from that, because it is an absolutely awful thing for people to live with. So, you know, I would really need to do that.

If I can just finally say, as far as I am concerned, this is consultation. The option is an option that has been put on the table. I know that this side, including I think Richard as well, will make certain that takes place. We will be challenging it if it is not proper consultation. We have a lot of admiration for the school involved and I just hope, in fact I am saying at this stage don't reject. I would reject what you are saying. It is time to get on with it and do something about it, because it will not help schools if they do not know what their future is. Parents can stop going to schools. They can close themselves. Bernard knows that, in the past one in his ward which would never have got closed, it closed itself - senior school - simply because parents went elsewhere, it couldn't last and they went elsewhere.

We are doing no service whatsoever to delay making decisions as far as these

schools are concerned, so with those few words I will hand over to Richard. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Just to further develop the comments that Councillor Wakefield made, and the response that you have given, I don't think any of us on this side have had any involvement at all in this issue, and particularly the education provision that comes through these schools and the sort of quality that we are getting is under any doubt or any illusion at all about the difficulties of decisions that have to be made, and we know that they do have to be made.

I think where you are missing the point of what Councillor Wakefield was saying, and the point we discussed at Executive Board, is that there is a real feeling from this side that those informal consultations, as they were described in the report, were not understood in the schools as being part of the formal process, and I think that is the issue, that if Education Leeds Officers were going out to the schools and talking about demography and the falling rolls and issues like that, that is one issue, but if they really wanted to bring this paper forward in this form they didn't go forward with the options as have been outlined, and what we are asking for is that there is a prior consultation about the options, and then all of us would welcome the full and detailed consultation that we know will have to kick in once we get to the point where we can make that preferred option.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Lord Mayor, somebody would think, listening to Councillor Wakefield, that I had invented a new method for approaching the way that schools are opened and closed. I am using exactly the same system that the Labour Party used when it was in power. Nothing whatsoever has changed. I am not interfering in what Officers are doing. I am not putting that interference in. We are following exactly the system the Labour Party used when they closed Tinshill Primary School, when they closed Otley Junior School, when they closed Bentley Primary School, and so on, and so on, and so on. We are using exactly the same system, the system that was in place when we took over in this administration.

Now, it is a complex situation. The Catholic Diocese want rid of a very, very good school. I would like to take it on. I don't want to see it closed, but when it becomes a state school it will become a very different school in some senses to what it is now in ethos. It will no longer prepare children for their first communion. It will no longer teach children their catechism. It will no longer prepare children for their confession. That cannot really happen. It will become a state school.

COUNCILLOR M. LYONS: That's what we're asking for.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Now, as to the site (inaudible), I am advised, if I can pick up the figures, that the site actually measures 4,958 metres square. A one-form entry

primary school, according to the Department for Education and Skills, requires 9,760 square metres. Until I can find more land in the area, and I know that Keith has mentioned the Wade Trust, but nobody at the DFES is going to give us the money we need to build on that site on today's figures.

The figures of the past changed, as you know, and the DFES have changed the building spec for schools even within the last 18 months. I have said, and I will say again, the actual formal review, the formal consultation starts now. It has to start some time. My preference would be - it always has been, and I took legal advice on this - that we could go out to review with no option. I have been told by the lawyers that the Government will not allow me to do that.

I couldn't - we couldn't - based upon the size of the site put up a false proposal. During this review perhaps we can all get together and find a site. This is a school that shouldn't close, but don't let's fool ourselves. It does have to close as a Catholic school. It does have to open as a state school. In future, Catholic parents may choose not to send their children there. Therefore the school will change. All schools do change. You know, 10-form entry good secondary schools can fail when the wrong decision is made about them, when no real consultation is given to moving them, as happened in this City not very long ago. So I have always said this will be an open consultation, that we will really get going after the summer holidays when everybody is back and working.

We have got to progress this. We really do have to progress it. This school will have to stay, I suspect, a Catholic school for another academic year, with the sort of relations that are now beginning to develop between the governors and the Catholic Diocese. I want this situation resolved as quickly as possible, but anything to do with schools works in academic years and not calendar years, and it is very, very difficult to break into an academic year and close a school midway through an academic year and reopen it again.

I want the best for those children. They have not had the best in the recent past. Just look at the state of the school that they are surviving in, the temporary accommodation. Six years it has been like that, I understand and that has got to stop.

We have a good school in Victoria, but we have an equally -- another school in the area that needs to be replaced, and so let's look at that option. It may be an option we choose to reject, but let's look at it, because the option does at least suggest we might be able to provide new accommodation for the majority of the children in the Richmond Hill area. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Recorded vote.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Seconded.

THE LORD MAYOR: We will just pause for a minute or two to allow our fellow Members to return.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: A recorded vote, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Just to remind everybody to take their seats in the chamber, rather than on the back bench. Thank you.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Would all Members ensure, please, that they are in their allocated seats. All Members should refer to their desk unit and press the button marked "P". (Inaudible) Those Members in favour of the amendment in the name of Councillor Wakefield should press the "+" button. Those Members against that motion should press the "-" button, and any Member wishing to abstain and have that abstention recorded should press the "0" button. That is complete, thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Of 88 Members present, 42 have voted in favour of the reference back and 46 have voted against the reference back, with no abstentions. I therefore declare the amendment, the reference back, lost.

I now invite comments on the minutes.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: My Lord Mayor, could I just indulge you and move a point of order under the appropriate Council Procedure Rule to extend the time for business for this particular item, because we are nowhere near the end of the consideration of these minutes and I would like to move an extension of time.

THE LORD MAYOR: You are proposing that we extend the time for the next item on the agenda, yes? Just to conclude this item?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: To conclude the consideration of the Executive Board minutes.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we be clear? The proposal is that we extend the time to take account of all of the Executive Board section remaining, yes? Is that seconded?

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Seconded.

THE LORD MAYOR: Any amendment? No.

(The motion was lost)

THE LORD MAYOR: Going back to inviting comments on the minutes.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Lord Mayor, I would like to comment on Minute 27 on page 48.

I find that this is a very strange decision to have arrived at by the Executive Board, and albeit I recognise it is based on a report by Education Leeds, and indeed a recommendation by Education Leeds, we feel (inaudible).

The decision that is to be made is not welcomed by any of the Ward Councillors. It is not welcomed by either of the MPs and our constituents with children in both of the schools. It is not welcomed by the parents. It is not welcomed by the Governors. It is not welcomed by the staff or indeed the local community. People find this a very strange situation.

My Lord Mayor, there is a very large tract of land between those schools that we have been asking for an analysis to be made of for a period of a year, and this has not been done and the result, of course, is this very strange decision that everybody involved with this situation (inaudible).

The proposal to close Rodley School is nothing short of disgraceful in these circumstances. It is odd to say the least. The decision to waste £250,000 of public money and more, probably half a million pounds of public money, (inaudible) Aireview School and then possibly to pull it down within a year or two years or 20 years is absolutely unbelievable.

The site is not acceptable for a primary school because it is a two-storey building. The economics of this particular development is almost magical. We have two sites, Lord Mayor, and where the estimated value of those is in the region of about half a million we need to build a new school. The new school will cost about £3.4 million. Half of that money will come from the two sites and the other half of the money will be easily borrowed and paid for by the £150,000 a year saving that will be made by a proper, sensible amalgamation.

People in Bramley and Rodley feel that this is a bit of a con, Lord Mayor, that it is Education Leeds and the Executive Board who are going to shove the children into the Aireview site, spend a few quid on it and really give us what they think we are going to put up with, that second-rate building that will produce second-rate education. It is absolutely disgraceful.

The way forward is pretty simple and very easy. The children themselves would have come up with a better scheme than we have seen to date. It is quite straightforward. Firstly, you do the analysis of the site, the whole site - a simple process. Secondly, put those alternatives - there may be just one, there may be several - put the alternatives to the parents and to the governors of those two schools,

and then we should construct a first-class new school that the children of Bramley quite rightly deserve.

The final thing would be to bring the children together into the new school and then probably close both sites, but we need consultation. We have been asking for it for long enough, and the people of Bramley feel that this decision is absolutely disgraceful and we certainly as Councillors, and our MPs, support this. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, three minutes, actually, and as quickly as possible.

First one, item 29, Richmond Hill Planning Area. Didn't the cat come out of the bag when, in the absence of Councillor Gruen, Councillor Taggart asked for a recorded vote? So after all the soft words of Councillor Wakefield and Councillor Lyons the truth of the matter was there for all to see - a piece of blatant electioneering. (Interruptions)

My Lord Mayor, now if we could move on to item 27. Glad to hear that Councillor Hanley is expressing his concerns. I visited Rodley School a few weeks ago when I was told that up until that time neither Councillors Hanley or Atkinson had visited the school.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Not true.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: It may well be that you rectified that since my visit. Councillor Taggart, indeed, had visited the school.

COUNCILLOR ATKINSON: No, not true.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: If you don't accept what I say, take it up with the head of the governors.

My Lord Mayor, the Stanningley Planning Area, why are we where we are? Very simply, first of all, long before Education Leeds was formed, somebody came up with the bright idea of building on a piece of land at the top of Coal Hill Lane. Finally, it was put into a PFI programme and it was then objected to by our Highways Department and our Planning Department, because of the access. A further review took place of the Stanningley Planning Area excluding Rodley School but including Aireview. The then administration decided that (Interruption) Well, they excluded any consultation with Rodley and they consulted only with the people in the Stanningley Planning Area, and they came back with a proposal which they found unacceptable which was to close Aireview, so they then began the process of bringing it back again, which we inherited, and Education Leeds came back with a proposal to

close Rodley, not that Rodley had been considered in the previous exercise.

In the meantime, of course, over the period of time both Rodley Village School and Aireview School had been shedding pupils at quite an alarming rate. The reasons for that have been given by Councillor J. L. Carter and they affect every other school which is put under this unfortunate threat.

Twice, I think, at Executive Board we were not prepared to proceed because some of us, myself in particular, believe that there is a better way forward, which is to provide a new school somewhere between Aireview and Rodley which allows the people of both sides to access the school.

That is why in this resolution there are two points included, (b) and (c) to explore another site option, the other site being the top of Rodley Park, not ideal but, in the words of Education Leeds, a better educational solution, albeit marginally, but also and more particularly that a further report be brought to a future meeting of the Board on transport and demographic issues, because the children who go to Rodley School who live in Rodley can't get to Aireview School. There is no bus. They have to walk up the hill, and we all know the problems.

The nearest schools on bus routes are the two Calverley schools, which are both full, so where do the kids go? And Education Leeds have been told that they have to bring a report back to the Executive Board on that particular issue.

I notice that Councillor Hanley throughout his comments referred to Bramley. I am sure the people in Rodley will be very interested in that because Rodley is, of course, a village of its own, and that's what the problem has been all along.

Both schools - both schools - understand the problems of taking no decision quickly, and that is why we are in the position we are in.

Very quickly, on Victoria Park, can I say I think this is a good result because there is an acceptance on Victoria Park, and about special schooling in particular, that we have to look at the policy from the beginning, come up with a new policy that provides inclusion but provides for those who can never be included at the very highest level of standard of education and care, and that's what this authority will deliver when the review is completed. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: My Lord Mayor, very briefly commenting on Minute 28, 29 on page 49. To take 29 first, Richmond Hill Planning Area, we don't think there will be any significant harm in running this through a cycle again and just having a little bit more in terms of consultation.

Similarly on 28, we have spoken to many of the friends of Victoria Park School who have some concerns about the integrationist approach and their view was that it would be in the best interests of their children perhaps to operate from a separate site. We just raise those particular concerns.

I did read with great interest the letter Andrew wrote on special schools in the Evening Post recently. We don't disagree with that. There are occasions when integration is right. There are occasions when specialist schools need to be given the opportunity to try and grow. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. That now concludes the time available for that section of the minutes, so I call on Councillor Harris to wind up.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: My Lord Mayor, there are two issues I want to comment on which, in the end, are actually closely related. First of all, Mick Lyons once again lecturing us on remembering what a Conservative Government did 7 years ago, 8 years ago now, and you talk about the Conservatives having selective amnesia.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: It includes you as well.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Well, alright, let it include me occasionally. However, if that is your line, then be consistent and remember what you as an administration did for 24 years, but that is not what you are doing. On the contrary - on the contrary - within weeks of you going into opposition all you could do was tell us we are in charge now, it is all our responsibility, and there was nothing that we were picking up that had been left to us to deal with by your administration. You are completely inconsistent on the two issues when it suits you. When it suits you, you talk about a Conservative Government almost a decade ago now, but similarly when it suits you you completely forget that you were in control for 24 years and some of the serious problems that you left us with, and the principal one we have been discussing this afternoon now is the issue of education.

Richard Harker quite rightly pointed out, we are using systems that you put in place, but let's just consider the discussion that is now being had about the ongoing need to review schools and, unfortunately, the fact that we will have to close schools. It is in the last four weeks your Group have made our cases for keeping three schools open in three completely separate areas of the City. Keith Wakefield and Mick Lyons arguing vehemently that Mount St. Mary's must be kept open, a special case. At the last Council Meeting, Councillor Dowson (inaudible) arguing vehemently that the answer to the Miles Hill, Potternewton situation is to keep both schools open - a special case. And at the last Executive Board a few days ago Keith Wakefield, again supported by Councillor Blake, arguing that keeping Fir Tree Primary School open was a special case.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Peter Harrand backed it.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: The issue is this, all three cannot possibly be special, exceptional cases. What you are now doing is, in the face of every school closure, you are now arguing irrespective of the financial implications, irrespective of the problems of demography and falling numbers, that every school is now a special case, and the point is this: in relation to what Mick Lyons was saying, it is staggering the speed with which you have flipped into opposition mode. (Interruptions) That is a good point. I am glad you said that because I was coming to that point, Keith. I was coming to that point.

I spent 21 years, my entire Council life until I became the Leader of Council during this administration, I spent it in opposition. Andrew similarly spent 24 years in opposition (Interruptions). At least I had an excuse. At least my excuse might have been that, never having been in control, there were things about the running of the Council, information, this report and this memo, never ever - ever - available to me and for 24 years hadn't been available to any of the Conservative Group, but only 12 months ago you were in control. You had no such excuse. You know exactly what the books said. You know exactly what the situation was. (Interruptions) You have got no excuse, and it leads one to ask the question, why is it that so quickly you have flipped into opposition (Interruptions) and why you left such a budget crisis to be picked up, why you left such a hopeless situation (Interruptions) road repairs, why you sidestepped many issues (inaudible) on school closures. Why have you flipped into opposition mode? And the answer has been either you didn't know what was going on, you didn't understand what was going on, or simply you flipped into a party political opportunism, and one is bound to draw the conclusion that it is all three and, frankly, all you are fit for is opposition. (Applause)

(The Minutes of the Executive Board were approved)

THE LORD MAYOR: Now I call on Councillor Gruen to propose that we don't proceed with Item 10.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Councillor Harris has almost tempted me to do the opposite, but I am nearly asleep so I will do as it says in the order paper.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: I second. I also nearly nodded off.

(The motion was agreed)

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I now call on Councillor Wakefield to propose the

withdrawal of Item 11 on the order paper.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I haven't flipped, my Lord Mayor, I do so in the terms of the reference. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was agreed)

THE LORD MAYOR: In that case, surprise, surprise, I have great pleasure in declaring the meeting closed. (Applause)

(Council rose at 5.50 p.m.)