

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 22ND JUNE 2005

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

MEMBERS OF COUNCIL: Good afternoon, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: And members of the public who are joining us, welcome to you, too.

Can I just make what I am sure is a totally unnecessary comment, which is I was asked just before I came in to announce that it will be in order for both ladies and gentlemen to remove jackets if they so wish. Looking round, I think it might not have been necessary! But please do, if that makes you more comfortable.

Can I also please remind everybody about the standing instruction on mobile telephones and other electrical equipment in the Council Chamber. Will you please ensure that any such equipment is switched off.

Can I also, before getting into the agenda, remind all Members of Council about just two of many procedural rules. They are to do with personal explanations and Lord Mayor's ruling is final. I say this not for new Members, perhaps, but for ultra-experienced Members' benefit, in that I know they will try and get round these particular procedure rules given half a chance, and ---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Name them. Go on.

THE LORD MAYOR: You make the point perfectly, Bernard. I want to be absolutely clear, they ain't going to get away with it. 14.16, "Personal explanation. A Member may make a personal explanation at any time. A personal explanation may only relate to some material part of an earlier speech by that Member which may appear to have been misunderstood in the present debate" - and that is the important bit - "in the present debate. The ruling of the Lord Mayor on the admissibility of a personal explanation will be final", Councillor Carter. And the other one, which is the catch-all, of course, and everybody knows this one, 14.17, "The ruling of the Lord Mayor on a point of order or on the admissibility of a personal explanation shall not be open to discussion." Thank

you very much for that.

Can we move on to the minutes, and I call on Councillor Proctor to move the minutes of the meetings held on 20th and 23rd May.

ITEM 1 - MINUTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON 20TH AND 23RD MAY 2005

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

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

THE LORD MAYOR: Did you notice I said, "Anyone against?"

Yes. No-one is against. That is wonderful. They are carried unanimously. Can we hope that that spirit continues through the rest of the afternoon.

ITEM 2 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 2, Declarations of Interest. 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. Also to invite any further individual declarations or corrections to those notified on the list. Yes?

COUNCILLOR GABRIEL: I would like to declare a pecuniary interest as I work for the Mental Health Trust. Prejudicial. And I would also like to declare an interest in the Morley White Paper as my son was in the team that played at Twickenham, so obviously I have a personal interest.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much. We note that and we hope you will be able to stay for most of the Council Meeting at least.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Lord Mayor, I declare an interest in Item 16 as a non-executive director of the South Leeds Primary Care Trust, and that is a personal interest.

THE LORD MAYOR: Personal interest, thank you.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: As I understand the ruling, if you are on the PCT there is a prejudicial interest on the White Paper on the Mental Health Trust. Can I just get that clarified and declare an interest at the same time. Thank you.

THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES (Ms. N. Jackson): I do not issue rulings, I give advice. Members need to declare a prejudicial interest if they are a non-exec member of the Mental Health Trust, I would advise, only if they have been involved in some of the decision-making in relation to the ---
Sorry, I will start again. Members only have to declare a prejudicial interest as a non-exec member of a PCT if in any of their dealings with the PCT they have been involved in any decisions relating to the Mental Health Trust. My understanding is that they are two separate things, the Mental Health Trust and the PCTs. The PCTs fund the Mental Health Trust.

THE LORD MAYOR: Is that clear?

THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES: No! It wasn't clear at all. At the end of the day, it is a matter for ---

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It is safer to declare a prejudicial interest.

THE LORD MAYOR: I think it would appear to be safer, Councillor Wakefield. Thank you for that. If anybody is in any doubt about it, it is probably safer to declare a prejudicial interest.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Deputations 2 and 3 in the order paper ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I come to that in a minute because we have advice on that separately. So, having dealt with that, I hope that everybody is confident that they have read the list and they agree the contents in so far as they relate to their own interests. That is what it says you have agreed to here. Sorry, yes.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I wanted to declare a prejudicial interest in the item we were just talking about, Item 16.

THE LORD MAYOR: Right. Noted, thank you. So is everybody now happy with the list as it stands and as amended verbally just now? Please show? All those in favour? Right, thank you very much.

Can we move on then to what we are here to do? First of all, Communications.

ITEM 3 - COMMUNICATIONS

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Mr. P. Rogerson): Lord Mayor, yesterday as the Council's Proper Officer, I received from Councillor Greg Mulholland notice of his resignation and, at the same time, I received notice from two electors within the Councillor's area of the wish to see that vacancy filled. Accordingly, a bye-election will be called for 28th July and notice of the poll will be given no later than tomorrow.

ITEM 4 - DEPUTATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Before notifying the three deputations that we have, as Councillor Gruen indicated a minute or two ago, we are calling on the Chief Executive to give clear guidance on the position of Members in relation to the second and third of those deputations.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: I think the best I can say there, Lord Mayor, is that on the last occasion that deputations were made to Council in relation to possible school closure proposals, members of the School Organisation Committee did see fit to leave the chamber whilst those making those deputations spoke to Council in order to avoid the appearance of possibly having pre-judged matters when these matters came on, if indeed they came onto the School Organisation Committees. That was the view that members of the School Organisation Committee took on that occasion. They may wish to reflect upon that today as well.

To go on with the business, there are three deputations today, the first by the Scholes Residents regarding local bus services. The second and third, as you have indicated, do relate to proposals relating to school closures, first the Campaign Committee against the Closure of Fir Tree Primary School, and lastly Parents and Governors Against the Proposed Closure of Miles Hill Primary School.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter, are we going to receive the deputations?

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

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Yes, I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

(The first deputation entered the Chamber)

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon. You have, in accordance with the Procedure Rules of the Council, 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 of the spokesperson. Thank you.

MR. HALL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The deputation are local Scholes residents and it is in connection with inadequate local bus services to Scholes. My name is George Hall.

My name is George Hall. My colleagues and I are residents of Scholes, which is within the parish of Barwick-in-Elmet and Scholes. It is also part of the Harewood Ward.

Six months ago our only public transport service was reduced by 50%. We currently only have one bus each hour. The service was imposed without any prior consultation, which is contrary to Local Government Consultation Guidance and the Bus Partnership Forum Code of Conduct. It has caused great consternation in our village, as a result of which the Parish Council and Harewood Ward Councillors became involved. We thank all our Ward Members, and especially the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Ann Castle, for the support which we have been given.

More than 200 people attended the public meeting held in our village during March. Metro and the bus operator heard Scholes residents vigorously express how the less frequent service inconvenienced and disadvantaged them. Written notice questions remain unanswered. Two meetings have since been held with Council Members, Metro and the bus operator which a limited number of residents have also attended.

The most recent proposals given by the bus operator which

would restore the half hour service are not as comprehensive as first thought. We therefore remain deeply disappointed that our concerns on the key issues have not been wholly met.

Firstly, the frequency of the bus service between Scholes and Crossgates will still only be one each hour, and this will apply to the service between Scholes and the Seacroft Civic Centre.

Secondly, no bus service link is to be provided between Scholes and our sister village, Barwick.

And finally, the reliability of the present service has been less than acceptable.

It is our view that the Quality Bus Partnership system is not operating in the interest of passengers. At best it is failing, at worst it is being abused, and we respectfully request Members to consider the following:

At our public meeting the operator stated that the reason for the service alteration was due to a shortage of drivers. This is not sustainable because of the mandatory conditions which apply prior to an operator's licence being granted.

The present system also appears to allow the operator to cherry-pick routes and dictate the frequency for commercial gain, placing profitability before accountability, and this was confirmed by the operator at our first public meeting.

Service failure, reliability and punctuality issues continue. These need to be raised with the Traffic Commissioners' Compliance Section.

Not only has the operator failed to honour the Code of Conduct, they have also failed to follow the recommendations of other bus Partnership Forum reports, specifically I quote, "Harnessing the Potential" and "Understanding Customer Needs".

National Planning Policy Guidance, PPG13, consistent with Regional Spatial Strategy, which incorporates the Regional Transport Strategy, together with our own Local Transport Plan, all seek to encourage the use of public transport and discourage the use of the private car, and yet traffic counts show that 4,000 vehicles enter and leave Scholes daily; a further 6,000 do the same from Barwick.

So the question arises, what should be done? We would suggest that the answer is to provide a frequent, reliable bus service.

A requirement of the Transport Act 2000 is to justify to the Secretary of State that there is good reason to introduce Bus Quality Contracts. We believe that PPG13, Regional Spatial Strategy and the Local Transport Plan policies offer unequivocal reasons for justification to the Secretary of State.

We respectfully request that this authority and Metro call on the Secretary of State to sanction the implementation of Bus Quality Contracts, also to ensure that Consultation Guidance and Codes of Conduct procedures are followed in future.

Council Members, we thank you for your time and ask you to exercise your duty of care to us, give us your support and please refer this issue on to the Executive Board for due consideration. We thank you. (Applause)

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

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Mr. Hall, and for your deputation attending today and just to confirm, as you have heard, that the Council has unanimously agreed that your comments will be referred to the Executive Board for consideration. You will be contacted in due course as a result of that. Thank you for coming.

MR. HALL: Thank you.

(The first deputation left the Chamber and the second entered)

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon.

MS. CLAY: Good afternoon.

THE LORD MAYOR: In accordance with Procedure Rules of 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.

MS. CLAY: I am Linda Clay, headteacher of Fir Tree Community Primary School and I am the spokesperson this afternoon. To my right here is Pat Stead, Chair of Governors at Fir Tree. To my left, Parent Governor at Fir Tree, and here Sonu, who is in Year 3 at Fir Tree.

Thank you, Lord Mayor, and Members of the Council. What follows is not a standard "Save our School" petition. Rather it is, "Save our community and secure our future".

Recently, Fir Tree -- there was a proposal by Education Leeds regarding closure, and Education Leeds has been asked to look at the proposal again and consider faith and ethnicity. We were really excited about that because we feel that therein lies one of our major strengths.

We fully acknowledge that in the Alwoodley area there is an issue of falling rolls and that something has to be done about it. Next year there will be 180 places for reception children, 60 places will be in state provision and 120 places, if Fir Tree was to close, would be Anglican, Catholic and Jewish provision. Now that means, we believe, that that is not real choice for our parents.

The existing 128 pupils at Fir Tree Primary, if our school was to close, would be rehoused either in over-subscribed state provision in portakabins or the parents would be invited to choose faith provision in the Catholic, Anglican and Jewish schools. We don't think that that choice is good enough for our families and, anyway, why should they make that choice?

Fir Tree Community Primary had a very good Ofsted inspection in January of last year, and our governors have worked really hard in terms of our community provision. In front of you we have taken the liberty of leaving two leaflets, one small white one saying some of the community services we offer, and another colour one saying some of the services that we hope to offer in the future, housing a children's centre.

I recently went to look at a school in a neighbouring authority. I went at 7 o'clock in the evening and saw the shutters down all the windows and the shutters down over the door. I was horrified. If anyone was to come and see our

school at 7 o'clock in the evening or at weekends they would see a thriving community school.

We know that there is to be a children's centre housed in the Alwoodley area to serve the Lingfield and Cranmer Bank estates and we want to have it at Fir Tree. We already have integrated services on site. We have Education Welfare, we have the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Team, and we are soon to be developing as a Pupil Development Satellite, so we are already on the way with that Government agenda, and we would like to be seriously considered to continue that Government agenda into and through the next 10 years.

In terms of investment, there has been three-quarters of a million pounds spent on Fir Tree over the last two years in my time as headteacher. We have got a brand new foundation stage, which is superb. It opened in November 2003. We have got a fantastic oracy provision to provide for children who are new to English. That opened in February of this year at a cost of £120,000. It is the only provision of its kind in Leeds and has been acknowledged as a really innovative project.

We are recently really excited because we are to get the Pupil Development Centre in autumn of this year, 2005, and we really want to press on with that agenda.

Bringing me to a conclusion now, I would like to introduce Sonu. We don't have any drums here today but we do have Sonu instead. Sonu is a pupil at our school, and we have many others like him. We have children from 13 different countries across the world. Sonu lives opposite our school. He has two brothers who attend. He is from Afghanistan and was on the road 2 years from Afghanistan. He has now got successful refugee status. I believe our school is very special and offers a special service to his family. We are able to give the bi-lingual support from our Education Welfare Services. We are able to teach Sonu how to speak English. He is to have a new baby in the family soon. Well, we want the children's centre at our school so that we can provide for that family right from the birth of the new baby and right throughout their lives within the community.

So, in conclusion, I would like to say, please don't send Sonu to a portakabin or to other provision, faith provision. His family are Sikh. They want to be with us at Fir Tree. We ask you, what is the real cost to the community if we get

this wrong? And we believe that it is a huge cost to families like Sonu's.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can you conclude, please?

MS. CLAY: So please look at our vision, please do come and visit us at Fir Tree, and thank you very much.
(Applause)

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

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I, on behalf of the Council, thank the members of the deputation. I am sorry, we have got to take a vote first and I will thank you in a second.

(The motion was carried)

THE LORD MAYOR: Back where I was, thank you for coming. You will now have appreciated that, following that vote, the matter will be referred to the Executive Board for consideration and you will be contacted when the decision of the Executive Board is known. So thank you once again for coming this afternoon.

MS. CLAY: Thank you very much. Thank you.

(The second deputation left the chamber and the third entered)

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon. In accordance with 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.

THE REV. HUGHES: Reverend Angela Hughes, spokesperson.
Geoffrey Wong and Clarice Craig, children, and Louise Robinson and Lynne Peacock, parents.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Please continue.

THE REV. HUGHES: Thank you. Lord Mayor and Members of Council, I have been asked to speak on behalf of the children, parents, staff and governors of Miles Hill Primary School against the proposed closure of Miles Hill Primary and

its rebuild on the Potternewton site. I am a Community Governor and Minister of the local church, working in the Miles Hill/Beckhill communities for just over 4 years.

Miles Hill Primary and Potternewton Primary serve differing needs in two very diverse communities. Education Leeds do not appear to have consulted outside agencies, in particular the police, regarding the likely outcome of such a merger. Experience tells us that rather than social cohesion we will have social chaos.

Miles Hill is fully sustainable as a one form entry school with both current and predicted numbers. Resiting on the Potternewton site would take away parental choice, as the other local schools are already full. This would mean that the least mobile parents currently served by the two schools would be penalised because they cannot afford transport.

There is a long established inclusive link with Penny Field, North-West SILC, when large sums have been spent in order to accommodate the Penny Field children. This work has begun to flourish. What would be the impact of such a move on such children, their parents and staff?

The children at Miles Hill have deep roots in the school, as many of their parents attended, and every class is full of cousins, half siblings, aunts and uncles. This school is a family which provides much needed stability in a community where stability is a scarce commodity. Over the past years it has been a great encouragement to those who work in and with those families to see confidence grow and potential realised. Such development does not happen in a community overnight. It takes time, patience and persistence.

Miles Hill was told in the last review that it would be four years before we were reviewed again, and instead it has happened within two years, further undermining a community which has been let down so often.

Over the past two/three years on the Beckhill/Miles Hill estates there has grown a new willingness among the local agencies to work together. There are now inter-agency meetings and forums across wards. We are working together to ensure that we discover gaps in provision, assist each other in meeting need and complement rather than duplicate services - Area Management, Councillors, Police, Youth Service, Housing,

Health Visitors, Schools, Church and voluntary groups all working together. Leeds North-East Homes has invested a great deal of money in this area. Trust has built up so that next month residents are planning their own Fun Day. Don't underestimate that achievement.

Why is Education Leeds not a part of this? We understand financial shortfall but this cannot be just a paper exercise.

We are not dealing with statistics but with people, many of whom are incredibly vulnerable.

How does the school fit into this?

Already we have: the Nurture Group; the Sure Start Bungalow, newly refurbished; the multi-use sport court, already used by the community; the Zoneparc scheme; well-established and successful wrap around care; a thriving Breakfast Club; educational courses for parents, leading to Further Education and employment; Flagship Leeds Healthy School.

We ask Education Leeds to consider, to think creatively about ways that this school can be further used to foster the cohesion we all seek, not destroy it; to consult with local agencies so that these facilities can be used across service providers, not to work in isolation; to look again at the catchment areas and consequent statistics in light of the actual communities involved.

I ask Councillors to visit the school and to see for themselves facilities, children and staff. This school is at the heart of this community and it already does much. There is potential for so much more. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

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

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

THE LORD MAYOR: It has been proposed, seconded and unanimously agreed that the matter which you raise is to be considered by the Executive Board of the Council. You will be notified in due course of the results of that. Thank you very much for

coming along this afternoon.

THE REV. HUGHES: Thank you.

(The deputation left the chamber)

ITEM 5(a) - REPORTS

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

COUNCILLOR M. HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, I second.

COUNCILLOR BEEVERS: Lord Mayor, I am commenting on this minute to say that the Scrutiny Board works hard throughout the year, looking closely at all issues that were brought forward before it. All Members from all political groups have made a valuable contribution. I would like to offer my personal thanks to all the Officers and witnesses who contributed to the Board's work.

We would also like to recognise the commitment of Councillor Barry Anderson on the Board and to acknowledge his hard work and the leadership he has given over the past year. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for the brevity of that speech.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Thank you very much, Gary. I think this is the first time I have ever stood up in Council and not been criticised, so on that note, while I am ahead, I will quit. Thank you very much. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much indeed for the brevity of your speech. I hope we are setting a new standard here.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to comment on the annual report of Scrutiny Board (Neighbourhoods & Housing), which is to be found on pages 41 onwards in the minute book, to thank the Board for its report on gypsy and traveller sites.

Anyone who has read the full report will agree that it is hard-hitting. It criticises those travellers who cause unnecessary distress and nuisance to others, and it underlines the need to take action to provide more authorised sites.

In Morley, as in other places, we continue to have visits

by gypsies and travellers. Our latest group left Magpie Lane, just outside the town centre, last Sunday, and it must be said that they left behind very little rubbish. In fact, because they had a few horses, they helped with the grass-cutting. Like the rabbits at White Rose, they seem to do a far better job than the Council's contractors, (Interruptions) though admittedly on a smaller scale. Nonetheless, the arrival of this latest group did cause alarm following earlier visits by far more anti-social travellers.

It is to be hoped that Executive Board will take the report to heart and do something about it. It must not be pigeon-holed or allowed to gather dust. Gypsies and travellers will not go away or, if they do, they will only go somewhere else to come back another day. Gypsies are our longest lasting ethnic minority in England; they keep themselves apart and refuse to live in houses after nearly 500 years in the country, so it is unlikely that they will give up now. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Another brief response. Thank you, Councillor Leadley, for that.

We were very pleased to pass on our recommendations to the Exec Board and to the departments from the Gypsies and Travellers Report, and I thank all the other Board Members for their assistance in the preparation of that report. I, too, hope that the Exec Board and the Departments, and I know that City Services Department for one has given us a positive response to our recommendations in their field already, will work to help gypsies and travellers find better facilities in Leeds. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Well, I shall look forward to working with colleagues in the coming year on Overview and Scrutiny. I shall note that on the minutes of our first meeting of 6th June it was indeed noted that we needed to provide more and better information regarding the monitoring and implementation of Scrutiny Board recommendations in terms of outcomes.

If I could just very briefly say to people that we have also been looking at how can we make sure that we improve the publicity on corporate governance decisions, so it has recently been agreed, and you will start getting the e-mails soon, that - what do they call it? Not major decisions - key decisions, thank you, Peter, that key decisions to be taken by Officers

will be circulated to all Members of Council and put on the web in future.

I found just a week or so ago that it was only me and whichever relevant Scrutiny Chair it happened to be, and that Scrutiny Board Chair was decided by Officers, were the only two people in the whole of the City of Leeds to know which key decisions were about to be taken by Officers, so it has now been agreed, I am glad to say, that the form has been changed, thanks to Ian Walton, and everybody will now know, will be given notice of those key decisions to be taken. You will also, of course also get the notice for the call-in of decisions and which has already been agreed will be reviewed in six months time. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Exec Board Members within the administration, can I thank all those who played an active part within Scrutiny last year, and I am sure - or at least I hope anyway - that Members will play a constructive role in assisting the Executive Board in their work this year as well. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

(The Scrutiny Boards' Annual Report to Council prepared in accordance with Article 6 of the Constitution was received)

THE LORD MAYOR: We are being remarkably unanimous this afternoon. I fear it might not last.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Don't count your chickens.

ITEM 5(b) - REPORTS

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

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The Report of the Director of Legal & Democratic Services on appointments was approved)

ITEM 6 - QUESTIONS

COUNCILLOR SELBY: Lord Mayor, will the Executive Member responsible advise Council of the work carried out, the resources budgeted and the number of staff employed to implement the right of way closures approved by the Government prior to June 2004 under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act

2000.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I was very surprised at this question because I thought the Member would know the answer. I mentioned this to a colleague of mine who said, "Well, if he is a solicitor he will know the answer but he will still ask the question".

Lord Mayor, prior to June 2004 you will remember was your administration and I would have thought you would have known the answer which you had no work carried out, you had no resources budget for and the staff was partial staff which you started but it continued. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR SELBY: By way of supplementary, could the Executive Member tell us how much is in the budget for this year, how many people are currently employed, and does he recall endorsing a document marked, "Safer Leeds" because on page 5 there is a picture which looks very much like him, and how does he reconcile whether the non-activity that appears to be taking place with page 31 of that document which refers to acquisitive crime on the comments, "to reduce the opportunities by such things as alley-gating". Could he explain the situation, and how would he explain the situation to the Audit Commission as well?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Wonderful comment, my Lord Mayor, but I will try and answer the comment.

My Lord Mayor, just going back to what is going on at the present time, and I think it is important that we say what is. (?)CROW - and that is what this is referring to - has turned out to be something of a bit of a nightmare in the costs that this can actually incur as far as Councils are concerned. This is one of the reasons it went to the Scrutiny Board for the Scrutiny Board to look at it. It has even been said that if some of these are challenged to a public inquiry the closure of one road could cost -- the cost could easily exceed hundreds of thousands of pounds. Now, no-one in this Council would say that is a proposition that we should be jumping on board to until we know a lot more about it.

Could I also say that the partnership, which is the one that he is referring to in that book there, are not prepared to put any money into this because they do not feel it is well spent at the present time, so any money that was spent into

this would have to come out of mainstream funding as far as the Council is concerned.

Now, it is not a question of this Council not putting money into these areas. Let us not forget, £1.1 million was put into the budget last year for public safety services, some of that for new PCSOs and some to cover the cuts of Her Majesty's Government.

My Lord Mayor, all I can say to you at the present time is that until the report comes back, and I have asked the new Scrutiny Board Chairman, because it is now going to switch Scrutiny Board, if he could ensure it comes back to Executive.

When it does come back to Executive we will see how much we can progress this particular matter.

I would finally add one point. At the present time we are employing a further -- a member of staff to deal with alley-gating, which is different to CROW, alley-gating and that person in the past has done some work in this particular area and we would expect them to do so again. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Lord Mayor, would the Leader of Council care to comment on the grass-cutting contract?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, I remember as a child, which was only last week, that I was always very fond of children's parties and I used to love Pass the Parcel and Musical Chairs but I never seemed to win, so I am a little alarmed at the ease with which I appear to have sat down in the chair today and the parcels stopped with me. However, at last, good fortune.

I did want to make a statement prior to the minutes of Council on the question of grass-cutting, but Nicole advised me that that was setting a difficult precedent and so the way in which we have got it into proceedings is by Councillor Campbell asking me a question.

It is not my intention now to confuse an explanation with what may be considered excuses. My purpose at this part of the meeting, separate from the debate that we will have later, which I am very grateful to Labour for providing us with the opportunity to debate the issue, the purpose of my speaking now is to say what I always said would be the case when we took

over. I will not insult people either in this chamber or the public by pretending that all has been well. It has not. I have already written to the papers and my letter has been published in which I have apologised to the people of Leeds for the fact that this contract has not proceeded in the way in which it should have, and I do not intend to change my comments in that respect.

Finally, I would like to say as well that as an administration of our own volition we have taken the extraordinary step, I would suggest, of Councillor Steve Smith himself referring the whole matter to Scrutiny for this to be looked into. This has not been forced upon us by the Opposition or anybody else, for we clearly recognise that there are issues here and lessons which have to be learned and that it is important for Scrutiny independently and coherently to look at exactly what has happened with the current grass-cutting contract. So with that, Lord Mayor, I think I will sit down. I appear to have completely silenced the Opposition.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: You haven't said anything, that's why. We are waiting.

THE LORD MAYOR: Any supplementary, Councillor Campbell?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: No supplementary, Lord Mayor?

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Will the Exec Board Member for Development tell me how much the Chancellor's new stealth tax on Stamp Duty affecting land sales is likely to cost the local authority over the next 12 months?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Thank you, Councillor Anderson, for asking that question, because --- (Laughter) I appreciate the laughter coming from the people opposite but, of course, the Chancellor indicated in his last budget how very clever he is at raising tax without anybody noticing, and certainly nobody on that side ever raised the issue of this particular tax. But what has happened is that because the Chancellor - and I am going to tell you in a minute precisely the details of this tax, which I don't think you will be too happy about at all - but basically it is going to cost, in the course of this Capital Programme rather than 12 months, something in excess of £2 million.

That is a tax on the disadvantaged, and I will tell you why it is a tax on the disadvantaged: Because prior to 2005 there was no Stamp Duty payable on land transactions in disadvantaged areas, and on commercial land sales in disadvantaged areas. There was a rebated system or a reduced system of Stamp Duty on housing land sales in disadvantaged areas. It is quite specific. These tax concessions were for commercial and housing land sales in disadvantaged areas.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, and I am interested to see the White Paper Motion a little later which we shall all be supporting where the Chancellor is doing his best, and quite rightly, to offset some of the debt in some very disadvantaged countries, while the same man seeks to introduce a very mean tax on the disadvantaged residents of cities like Leeds, because this tax is a tax on future regeneration in inner city areas. That is what it is, spelt out very plainly. The Chancellor has effectively reduced our ability to close the gap by £2 million. It was a quite deplorable and mean-spirited tax. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Does the Leader of Council agree that this is yet another example ---

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: He is not the Leader of Council.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Oh, sorry. Well, I think he is. Well, he is the joint Leader of Council. Sorry. Sorry. My apologies, Mark. My apologies. (Interruptions)

THE LORD MAYOR: Order. Please let him put his supplementary question.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Does the Executive Member for Development agree that this is yet another example of the Government having ill thought out policies and previously shown by their administration of the people that they try to pretend that they represent, and in fact they are shooting them in the foot yet again?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: There is no need for apology, Councillor Anderson. I take your comments in the spirit with which they are meant. (Applause)

Just to remind colleagues opposite of the wards that are going to be or that are affected by this tax. They are

Beeston, Chapel Allerton, City & Holbeck, Harehills, Hunslet, Richmond Hill, Seacroft and University - the very wards where this administration is seeking to pump in extra funds to regenerate these wards that have been deprived for so long. This is what your Chancellor has imposed upon this City and your residents. You should be joining us in condemning the Chancellor for, I repeat, such a mean-spirited and ill thought out tax on people who can't afford it. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Could the Executive Board Member for Leisure - I think he still is for Leisure - please update Council on the current position in relation to Whinmoor Cemetery?

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, Councillor Gruen will know that there is no such thing as Whinmoor Cemetery. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Don't laugh too soon. Don't laugh too soon.

By way of supplementary, what plans is Councillor Procter implementing to ensure that the situation regarding Harehills Cemetery is put to rights and that there are new areas found for burying people in East Leeds, and can he also explain how much money has already been spent in preparatory works for a cemetery at Thorner/Whinmoor?

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Councillor Gruen and his colleagues really should pay more attention and, if they have ever heard me speak about this matter, they would know that the correct title is the Whinmoor Grange Farm Cemetery Proposal, because that is exactly what it is.

Lord Mayor, Officers of the Learning & Leisure and Development Department will shortly be bringing to Executive Board some outline proposals of the work that they have already undertaken in creating a short list of sites that will be suitable for a smaller cemetery that is community-based and which was originally proposed by the Leisure Scrutiny Board, which I was very pleased to serve on for a number of years with Councillor Atha and a number of other distinguished Labour Members, who all unanimously agreed that the Whinmoor Grange Farm Cemetery Proposal was perhaps not the right way to proceed and smaller community-based cemeteries were the way forward. I see Councillor Bruce scratching his head thinking, "Did I vote for that?" but, yes, Councillor Bruce, you did at the time.

I am sure, though, that Councillor Gruen will wish to endorse the actions that I am taking as the last opportunity that Members had to vote on the Whinmoor Grange Farm Cemetery Proposal was actually in a Plans Panel meeting, and I am pleased that Councillor Gruen endorsed my view and indeed voted with me against the Whinmoor Grange Farm Cemetery Proposal.

But, Lord Mayor, a more serious point: this is yet another example, as was The Mansion, as was, dare I say, the Civic Institute, where the Labour administration decided to plough ahead with an unpopular policy, disregarding either the users or people in the local vicinity. They didn't listen to what any of us had to say. They didn't listen to what the people out there had to say either, and now that is why they are sat over there and we are sat over here, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Will the Executive Member for Corporate Services tell me what the new administration is doing to promote equal opportunities in the City?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Yes, Lord Mayor, Council will remember at the last Council Meeting Councillor Wakefield asked me this question and I was only able then to give a partial response to certain specific issues he raised. I promised him then answers to everything I had in writing on the issues he raised, and that has been provided for him, but in particular I wished today just to return to the question of the issue of racial harassment and the work that the Council does to support this very important aspect of dealing with equal opportunities in the City.

Some of you may have had circulated a letter some weeks ago. I am afraid to say it is one of several letters or suggestions made that Council, the administration, is reducing the amount of funding it gives such organisations. We have consistently said this is not the case and indeed I want to reiterate now that the funding crisis that the Racial Harassment Project found itself in was due entirely to money being withdrawn by other agencies and not one penny was taken away from them by this administration.

However, so much importance do we attach to the work that they do and so committed are we to supporting equal opportunities in this City that we have decide post-budget to

increase the amount of money that we give this particular organisation by £15,000, so we are now in a position, just so that the Labour benches understand it, where this administration is committing more money to equal opportunities in the shape of dealing with racial harassment than anything that you were ever able to put into it, so don't keep pointing the finger at us and understand the level of commitment that we show to these issues. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: Will the Executive Board Member responsible for Development update me on the progress of the Private Streetworks Programme, please.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I am pleased to be able to tell Members of Council that of the 18 streets in the first tranche of the programme in this financial year the residents of 16 of those streets have responded positively and those streetworks will go ahead during this financial year. There are 16 streets in 11 different wards.

I am further able to say that we shall begin consultation in the autumn on the second tranche of streets, which is 19 in total across 12 different wards of the City.

THE LORD MAYOR: Supplementary?

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: No supplementary.

COUNCILLOR MURRAY: Could the Executive Board Member for Learning please inform Council how many staff in the Council's adult learning centres such as TechNorth and the South Leeds Learning Centre are dedicated to finding employment or training opportunities for local people and assisting with "Closing the gap" in the City?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Lord Mayor, 300 full-time equivalents.

COUNCILLOR MURRAY: Lord Mayor, it is a matter of capacity, I think, Richard. I have heard that currently there are possible redundancies in jobs and skills, because of the fact that the Department has not successfully been able to obtain a number of contracts. Having heard that, I think we are a bit surprised because we are in a city which is booming and there are a lot of jobs and I assume that there are a lot of contracts, so what I would like to know is, there are going to be in the future a lot of regeneration projects around Holbeck,

the EASEL Project, there is St. James's, there is the Aire Valley. What are we doing to be able to guarantee that we get those contracts to be able to get local people into local jobs?

I think they are expecting it. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Lord Mayor, jobs and skills is currently undergoing a significant change to the way it is structured and managed in order to revitalise the service and to re-align it to the priorities outlined in the Government's skills agenda, and particularly to respond to the immediate budget pressures we are under brought about by changes, mostly Government changes, to external funding streams.

We need to achieve more, I agree, but we are given less resources to do it with. In the point on redundancy, yes, managers were asked to look at this staffing and eight posts were identified as being possibly earmarked for redundancy. Three of those members of staff have already been successfully redeployed, and we are working to find work for the other five.

The end of the year performance though, shows a marked improvement in the jobs and skills provision in the City. One of the things that embarrassed me when I was first called to account for the targets that were set for me was the number of red lights I inherited. Fortunately, many of those have turned to amber, and I hope very soon they will have turned to green.

This administration is dedicated to getting people into work, improving the qualifications of those people who want to retrain or to get their first qualifications. Our priority is to work with those in receipt of Incapacity Benefit to help them find work in the workplace, with those who are very hard to place and to lone parents.

I want to talk about some of the successes we are having and perhaps touch on EASEL2. Councillor Wakefield, I know, recently visited, as I did, as Councillor Bentley did and Councillor Blackburn did, the successful, very successful Construction & Skills Centre that the City operates. As well as that I went to visit the Building College recently to talk to them to see how we can work together much more closely, and Officers are currently looking into ways we might be able to find extra funding in the City as part of the many developments that are taking place, and I hope to come back to Council very soon.

One of the other modernisations which has helped is the Leeds City Job Shop which, since it opened on February 14th, has had some 730 customers.

The City Council is doing its bit as well. The City Council is now the largest contributor, the largest employer to the Jobs Guarantee. We have had the first of a new style Jobs Fair and I am pleased to say that that Jobs Fair was very successful, 450 visitors of which now 101 are in work, and we could go on, Lord Mayor, citing some of the successes we are having.

This administration is dedicated to having the best possible service we can so that every citizen in this City can share in the prosperity which is very obvious as we look around us. And finally it is rather nice, as far as TechNorth is concerned, to tell Council that the Government Office has approved the extension of the TechNorth Family Learning Centre, and this extension will allow an expansion of the services there. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Lord Mayor, could I ask why does the fountain in City Square not work and how much did the previous Labour administration spend on the fountain?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I seem to have inherited this problem along with a number of others that my colleagues have inherited (Interruptions). I am sure you will all be interested in this.

Well, it cost the hard-pressed taxpayers of the City £240,000, just over, actually, nearer a quarter of a million pounds for this non-functional fountain.

The previous administration, my Lord Mayor, when they decided to redesign City Square took the maintenance and running of City Square away from Learning & Leisure. Unfortunately, as was their wont, they didn't think to give it to anybody else, so actually no department had responsibility for City Square and the new scheme went ahead.

I am now going to give you the technical reasons why the fountain doesn't work. It amazes me it has take so long. This has never worked since this lot spent the money on building it, and just now people are beginning to realise. A

few months ago I wandered through and thought, "Every time I come this damn fountain is never working", so I began to do some digging. It is funny how nobody volunteers to give you the information unless you spot it for yourself and start to ask the right questions, but it appears, my Lord Mayor, that the main technical problems associated with the feature are with the automatic backwash and flush ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Oh, that is Bernard.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I don't flush ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: The valve being subject to repeated failures; intermittent power supply interruption to the main pump caused by repeated failures of a specific relay which is thought to be located - it is still "thought" to be located - in a position that is unrepresentative of wind speeds. The result is that it over-estimates average wind speeds and causes the fountain to shut down. Perhaps all the Labour Group are down there too often: that's what is causing the wind speed. Furthermore, there are now health concerns regarding the bacteria in the water due to the fountain not being operational it says, "for some time". It should say, "hardly ever".

The Land Drainage Team, which is why I now found all this on my desk, the Land Drainage Team have therefore concluded that the feature should not be made operational again until a risk assessment has been carried out and a regulator testing regime put in force, following completion of remedial works by the contractor. These remedial works have been going on since you opened the damn thing.

My Lord Mayor, the interesting thing I think Members of Council should be aware of is that the Labour Party's double standards know no bounds. When there is a problem and the administration here are in power they call, as we see later on, for resignations. When they have a disaster of this sort, what do they do with the Executive Board Member concerned? Why they promote her to Overview Scrutiny. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Just a very short supplementary, Lord Mayor. Could I ask then of Councillor Carter, would you like Scrutiny to look at the situation?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Yes, absolutely, Councillor Cleasby, I would love you to scrutinize the situation. One thing I

have to say to the people of Leeds, I suspect we will have got the grass-cutting under control a long time before we have fixed this other broken wagon of the previous Labour administration. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR IQBAL: Will the Executive Board Member for Leisure confirm to Council that older people are not being forced to pay more for leisure services since the new administration came into power?

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I hope you are ready for this. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

Leeds Leisure Centres offer excellent value for money, maintain high attendance levels, high income and also low cost. Leisure Centre prices were increased as of 1st April 2005 in line with the annual inflationary price increase. This affected all leisure centre users and, as far as I am aware, was not opposed by Labour in their budget amendment.

Due to changes which Councillor Wakefield I understand sanctioned in the first instance with the Leeds Card in June 2004 to create two separate Leeds Cards, for those over 60 the Leeds Card 60 Extra, for those receiving additional financial benefits, for those on low incomes and for those with disabilities, and the Leeds Card 60 for all those over the age of 60, leisure centre prices were reconsidered to ensure that those who were most financially disadvantaged were asked to pay the lowest price, and I am quite sure Councillor Wakefield will signal that he actually ---

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I will claim that one. I can't remember it but I will claim it.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: -- sanctioned it and approved it and indeed was generous enough to give additional monies within the Learning & Leisure budget to accommodate it, and I understand that there was quite a specific reference to that at the time from our departmental accountant.

Leeds Card 60 holders, who had previously received a maximum discount from the standard price of up to approximately 40% were therefore now asked to pay a rate for their facilities which was approximately 25% less than the full standard price.

Leeds Card 60 Extra holders were largely unaffected and were simply asked to pay the standard 3% increase.

Following some complaints received about the rate of increase, certain activities were reconsidered and Members hopefully will remember a question from Councillor Coulson at I believe the last Council Meeting when I was able to announce the price reductions, and that specifically was for Active Life and also other various fitness classes, including line-dancing.

These were reduced at off-peak times to only 10p above the rate of charges for Leeds 60 Extra holders.

Now, Lord Mayor, I have to say I do have another two pages of briefing notes. However, I don't intend to continue reading them, save to say ---

COUNCILLOR E. NASH: Good.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Yes, and I hear Councillor Nash at the back as usual shouting ---

COUNCILLOR E. NASH: The red light is on.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Councillor Nash, if you actually understood the procedures of this chamber you would know that it is for the Lord Mayor to determine when people sit down, not you. (Interruptions) And in any event, whilst the time is up, I am allowed to remain on my feet and answer the question, Councillor Nash ---

THE LORD MAYOR: I am advised that is correct, Councillor Procter. You can complete the answer.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: To say, Councillor Nash, that you have just been appointed as a Deputy Whip of the Labour Group, you really should familiarise yourself with the procedures of this place.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor, he has time to answer the question.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Councillor Taggart can give advice.

Lord Mayor, the real issue here, and what I hope I have demonstrated, is that currently there is in place a hugely complicated system of pricing within leisure centres. As I said at the last Council Meeting, over 600 different price points, which frankly is ridiculous. There is no means of

centrally programming the tilling systems for all of those leisure centres; they have to be manually programmed at each individual centre, which can lead to price variations as well.

It is something that we are aware of, Lord Mayor; we are trying to tackle to simplify the system overall. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I am afraid I can't offer you a supplementary, Councillor Iqbal, because Councillor Procter has given such a detailed reply that we have run out of time for Questions. I am sorry, Councillor Gruen. (Interruptions) I am sorry, Councillor Gruen, the Standing Orders -- the Procedural Rules, let me get it right, are quite clear. We have now reached the end of the time for Questions and the answers to Questions 10, 11 and 12 will be given to Members in writing.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: In that case, can I move extension of time for questions, please.

THE LORD MAYOR: As I understand it, Councillor Gruen is moving an extension of the time for questions, is that correct?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Yes.

THE LORD MAYOR: Just a tick. Can we turn to our Chief Legal Officer for advice on the procedure here. We have to suspend part of the regulations.

THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES: Councillor Gruen I think is proposing that Council suspend Council Procedure Rule 11.6 which talks about the expiry of Question-time, so there will need to be a proposer, Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Yes, I proposed it before.

THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES: A seconder.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: I just seconded it.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Seconded unanimously on this side.

THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES: And then a vote on that.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: And I also propose a recorded vote.

THE LORD MAYOR: We have a proposal duly seconded which we have to put to Council without debate. We are going to take a recorded vote. Are we agreed that we take a recorded vote? Yes. Okay, we will take a recorded vote on the question of whether we allow any more time for questions. It is going to be a long Council Meeting, colleagues.

THE CHIEF OFFICER: 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". Those Members in favour of the motion put by Councillor Gruen to suspend Councillor Procedure Rule 11 relating to the time allowed for Questions 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. The vote is complete.

THE LORD MAYOR: Of the Members present 94, 42 voted in favour, there were no abstentions and 52 voted against. The proposal is therefore lost.

ITEM 7 - RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXECUTIVE BOARD

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

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

COUNCILLOR PARKER: My Lord Mayor, the minute I am referring to is on page 28, fifth paragraph down on the Council Plan. I will just read it, "Development, Town & District Centre Strategies and Action Plan in all five Area Management areas to create sustainable commercial centres. This work is supported by £5 million of capital investment over two years and the focus for initial activity will be", and the one I am mostly concerned with now is the East Leeds one which refers to the EASEL area, Halton and Garforth.

The question I would ask to the Leader of Council is, who has made this decision? There has been no consultation with the Area Committee Elected Members to the best of my knowledge.

I am not sure what has happened in other Area Committees and whether they have been consulted or not, but if I go back to the initial YEP item in March, earlier this year, when Councillor Andrew Carter was then Leader, and I support what

Councillor Carter said in the article that small towns such as Morley and Horsforth, district centres like Oakwood and Holt Park and villages including Farsley and Kippax. Kippax seems to have disappeared off the map, and I am not prepared to let that happen.

Councillor Lewis and Councillor Wakefield have spent a lot of time on a plan for Kippax. It will be sent in as required by the end of this month and hopefully we will get some fair consultation, and possibly some funding, but why Officers are dictating and not Members as to what is going to be in these areas I would ask a question of the Leader, but regarding going back to Kippax that concerns me, and I know grass-cutting has been mentioned earlier and it will be debated at great length later, but I rang up questioning grass-cutting in Kippax. I had a document which I think all Council Members have got saying how it would be addressed and the Officer's reply was that, "Team 11 will cater for your requirements."

I actually did drive round to see what Team 11 had done and, following the instructions in the paper, I actually dropped in on South Milford. The grass there I thought was like Wimbledon, excellent job done by Glendale, but the response was, and I am sure Councillor Taggart who masterminded the electoral boundary changes, South Milford doesn't belong in Leeds, does it, Neil?

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: No. Not unless part of Selby is put into Leeds to take account of recent moves of certain Councils.

THE LORD MAYOR: Sorry, we can't do it that way. If you want to speak, Councillor Taggart, you will have to do it separately. We don't do duos.

COUNCILLOR PARKER: So Kippax has missed out again, but the Department and I am sure I have read it where resignations should be considered, whoever is responsible to send the contractors out to South Milford thinking it is Kippax should possibly consider their decision. Thank you very much, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR S. HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, I would like to comment on the Executive minutes for the 18th of May 2005 regarding the Area Delivery Plan for 2005/2006. Specifically, I would like to focus on the area priorities and the key action contained within the Inner North-East Leeds Co-Operative Plan.

Although they are worthy initiatives contained in this plan which will be of benefit to some of the community in Chapel Allerton Ward, I do have some concerns which must be highlighted at Council. It is a well-known fact that sustainable jobs create confidence in local communities. However, areas in my ward, and in other areas of Leeds for that matter, simply do not have this. Therefore it is imperative that we put forward projects that encourage the creation of sustainable jobs in our communities, because the knock-on effect of such initiatives can only be positive.

Areas which have sustainable jobs inspire confidence in those living in our communities, which in turn interests potential developers who are always keen to expand into places that are on the up and up. It can be no coincidence that areas offering little or no job opportunities usually exist in environments of boarded-up shops and run-down properties and suffer from problems such as anti-social behaviour. However can we expect people in these communities, especially the young, to have any confidence or indeed any pride in the area where they live, when it seems that those who have the power to make a difference, such as their local Council, do not.

By putting forward projects geared specifically to create long-term sustainable jobs, I hope we can begin to show people that this is not the case by including Chapel Allerton Ward in all future development and investment plan, to include sustainable investment opportunity which I know to have been put forward in the co-operative plan for the area of the North-West.

I would like to see this incorporated in the Chapel Allerton Ward and elsewhere in the City, and I hope we can begin to improve all the communities to a standard that everyone can be proud of, and do note that there is nothing there for Chapel Allerton Ward, especially in my ward, the Beckhills and Chapeltown. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I am merely going to comment on Councillor Parker's observations in the first part of his comments relating to the fund for the regeneration of the small towns, district centre and villages which we set up under the auspices of the Development Department. The two senior Officers who will be evaluating the schemes will be Jean Dent and Alan Gaye. We will expect the schemes to meet our

corporate priorities as well as meet the target of regenerating those areas of the City which have had little or not investment for years.

I don't particularly want to get into a debate about Kippax or anywhere else, as I am sure Kippax is very worthy. However, I would suggest perhaps to Labour colleagues they might like to look at where all the funding or the predominance of funding went from an organisation called Green Leeds and see how much their wards got from that particular organisation and how much certain other wards got.

The whole purpose of this fund is to ensure that we do regenerate our small towns, villages and district centres. That is what we intend to do. It is not a fund at the disposal of Area Committees. We have asked Area Committees to put in their suggestions. Those suggestions and bids will be weighed in the balance with any other bids and any particular corporate priorities that we as an administration have, and I did indeed in this Council Chamber highlight one in your area, Councillor Parker, and I hope that you have taken it on board, because when I mentioned that the Halton area was a priority because it had been neglected for so long, and I am talking about the Halton District Centre here, I anticipated it would be taken on board. I know it has been taken on board by the Ward Members but I hope it has been taken on board by the Area Committee.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: First of all, grass-cutting. Well, we will debate this at great length a little later on, but just as a sort of starter for ten, I just want to suggest to the Labour benches that they get their tin hats out.

I remember when I was a solicitor's clerk, you always knew the Prosecution were on a big loser the moment they attempted to introduce issues about the good character of the defendant, which of course always allowed the Defence team to introduce issues about the character of the witnesses for the Prosecution. Well, thanks to you when we come to debate later on because you are so keen on introducing this word that we must all resign, because you are so keen on that, you will give us ample opportunity to introduce into the debate issues about your previous conduct when you were in control of this City.

Councillor Hamilton, obviously you do need to have a discussion with the Chair of Inner North-East Area Committee.

I am sure that will help with the situation, but you raised the question of sustainability for Chapeltown itself. I am not aware that this administration has reneged or gone back on anything that was in place when your party was in control, and so it is a little rich for you now to stand up and demand of us that we include Chapel Allerton in everything we do when your own administration never ever gave such an undertaking. It is impossible for any administration to give what is effectively a blank cheque and say that Chapel Allerton or any ward will automatically be included in spending plans whatever the issue may be, but with regard to sustainability and closing the gap, I do want to remind you that we are the first administration to create a position at Exec Board level with specific responsibility for closing the gap. You never did that.

It does beg the question exactly what importance the Labour administration attach to closing the gap when you never took such a step, and you will see in the forthcoming months a series of initiatives coming from David Blackburn, new initiatives, innovative initiatives that will specifically address issues of closing the gap, both in the seven most deprived wards of the City but, I hasten to add, in all the other serious pockets of deprivation around the City that were always excluded from your closing the gap initiatives. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

(The Council Plan was approved)

ITEM 8 - RECOMMENDATIONS OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE
& AUDIT COMMITTEE

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

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

(The motion was carried)

ITEM 9 - MINUTES

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

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

(i) Central & Corporate

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: Lord Mayor, the minute I raise is to do with the Corporate Contact Centre. Councillor Harris may remember a discussion we had in Executive Board some time ago on this issue, and he was very clear then that in his view this was the right size, because it was round about 28,000 square feet, right in terms of cost, and it was in the right place.

Having had discussions with Officers and gone into this in a bit more detail, I do wonder about the whole issue of the right size, because we are talking about a contact centre that will contain all the contact centre staff plus the hierarchy above them for those contact centre staff who purely deal with phone contact. So there are plenty of members of staff who actually do contact work but that is only part of their job who are not included in this, so you never get a complete 100% contact centre.

Cost obviously is a serious concern and I fully understood the view that was taken at that meeting, but I wonder has there been any progress on the other issue which was raised then which was to do with the potential for further business with the landlord concerned which could be of benefit to other areas of the City, which Mark may remember, but particularly - and it is interesting when people have been talking about closing the gap. We have had Andrew talking about it. We have had Mark talking about it. Is it right to place this call centre in the city centre?

We had, and we still have, Harehills Middle School as a building that has no use. Not the same size as the building in question but certainly a major building that, if it were put to good use by this local authority, would be of huge benefit to the area both in terms of not creating hundreds of jobs overnight but in the long term of creating a steady flow of jobs that would benefit an area, and again we are talking about EASEL earlier on, not just Harehills but the whole East Leeds area. A building which would also, by creating those jobs, bring huge business into that area, which we all know is a very deprived area.

I also have concerns about bringing jobs into the city centre. While we have talked about, and Officers talk about this sense of not having a large number of parking spaces,

there is a huge assumption there that is just going to mean that all the Officers who are working there are going to look to alternative means of getting into the city centre. My experience is that that tends not to be the case, that you actually create another car park, much as we have created Little London as a car park for the city centre, and creating this will help create more car parking, more areas, residential areas that are actually car parking areas near the city centre which don't address any of the issues to do with travel to work plans, sustainability and the like.

I think we have missed a major opportunity to create, as I say, jobs within the East Leeds area, to send a real message to people that as a local authority we are concerned and we do want to bring regeneration to all parts of the City, particularly the most deprived ones, and I do question really that we have not just jumped straight into a decision that looked like a good one from an Officer point of view but from a wider Council perspective perhaps wasn't the right one. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: Lord Mayor, this is the same minute, 289 on page 85. As I understand it, if I have got this right, Harehills Middle School was considered as an option for this centre. The problem with the school, of course, predates the present administration, so this is not an opportunity to try and whack the present administration over the head, but I would be interested to know a bit more about the principles according to which the decisions were made in order to turn it down.

I do appreciate, of course, the advantages of it being in the city centre for buses being able to reach it. I understand that it is relatively cheap to rent and all the people can be included on one site. On the other hand, as Richard said, whether this kind of centre does need everybody to be on one site, and although initially Harehills Middle School would cost a lot more, in the end, of course, it would be our building.

But the key question is how this relates to the "Closing the gap" agenda. It obviously would be a very powerful statement if this building were now used by something that is so important to the life of the City. My colleagues know as well as I do how many residents say in meeting after meeting, "What is going to happen to this school?" and therefore it

would have been excellent if it could have been used for this purpose.

As I say, I do appreciate why it might be better for it to be in the city centre, but I would be just interested to know the principles about how you relate the commercial advantages with the potential for the "Closing the gap" agenda to be sure that a key regeneration possibility hasn't been missed. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, let me deal with a general principle first, and it is one which I have voiced and Andrew has voiced many times since we formed this administration. Our principal function here is to deliver services. That has to be our overriding concern and nothing -
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COUNCILLOR TAGGART: What about grass-cutting?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: We will deal with grass-cutting later. I think you must be daft. Have you got your tin hat on yet? Don't worry, you will be included in the bayonet charge.

Now, look, the principal objective has got to be to deliver the best service possible, and you can't start introducing criteria into the decision-making process that detract from that principal objective, so the issue is how can we best deliver an improved contact service for this City on behalf of the Council. That is what Officers were asked to look at, and we clearly said to them that of equal importance, because we are bound by this by the district audit, it has got to show value for money. Now, after that I did make it clear to Officers that if we could have a triple whammy by introducing a "Closing the gap" aspect to the new contact centre, then we would have a win, win, win situation, and Officers went away to look at that, and they gave me the same answer with regard to Harehills Middle School that they had given you when you were in administration, and because you have got selective amnesia let me remind you of what you were told in 2003 when you asked about the Harehills Middle School for a prospective new contact centre.

You were told, and you agreed, that at 21,000 feet it was too small to house the 350 people needed for the new contact centre, so we would have had a double site contact centre in the first instance.

Secondly, you were told that the simple conversion costs would be in the region of £5 million, the capital cost before we start introducing the new telemetry, the new IT, the conversion cost would be £5 million, and that, too, was beyond any budget that was available, so when I again asked Officers to look at the situation they came back to me with exactly the same situation - by housing the contact centre in Harehills Middle School we would not provide value for money, we would not provide an improved service because we would have a split site and I have to say, although I agree it would have sent a message to that local community, because we would be importing 250 jobs from the other existing contact centres, with no room for expansion there would have been little or no opportunity to create jobs in the contact centre for the local community.

Now, that was the rationale behind the decision that we reiterated, the decision that you had already made about Harehills Middle School, and so we had to look for alternatives and Officers looked right across the City and I have already reported that we thought that we were close to an agreement with a building in one of the seven most deprived wards and at the eleventh hour the landlords of that building gazumped us to a level where it ceased to be value for money, and so we carried on looking, and we have found now at an exceptional deal - I am not going to go into the figures here but an exceptional deal - that demonstrates value for money, a central location that allows people from all ten current contact centres to commute into the City and will give us room for expansion and will provide state of the art facilities so that we can deliver a better service to the people of Leeds.

Before I conclude, I just want to go back to the question of Harehills Middle School. We are looking at what we can do with Harehills Middle School at the same (inaudible) which is being marketed but I have to remind you, because you have still got selective amnesia, I have to remind you that under your administration Harehills Middle School sat empty and abandoned for 10 years. What were you doing with that great landmark building to "Close the gap" in Harehills? The answer apparently was nothing. (Applause)

(ii) Development

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Lord Mayor, I am speaking on minute 273 on page 81. I would like to confirm the continued backing

of all three Otley and Yeadon Councillors seeking the ban for HGV traffic in Otley, which I have explained previously at length in this chamber. We also have the support of our new MP, Greg Mulholland, who up until last Council Meeting sat next to me when I was sat over there, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for all his hard work as a Councillor in this chamber, and I am sure he will be missed, certainly by my colleagues over here, and I wish him all the best for Westminster.

I would also like to add I am pleased that the Executive Board has endorsed progressing the development of measures to alleviate the problems caused by HGV traffic in Otley, and I await the outcome of the further report and subsequent recommendations emanating from the consultation and review with an air of hope that the issue of HGV traffic in Otley may be resolved as soon as possible.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Lord Mayor, I would like to speak briefly on minute 290 on page 86. In particular I want to welcome the progress made on the Eastgate and Harewood Quarter developments, to thank Councillor Andrew Carter and the Development Department Officers for the work they have done in securing such a large and beneficial scheme.

Leeds is not currently well served by modern major store outlets, and the potential arrival of the John Lewis Partnership at this site is something I hope everyone will applaud.

I just want to pick out two snippets from the Executive Board report to explain something of what this might mean for a number of deprived communities nearby. I quote, "The proposals will create physical linkages from the city centre through to Harehills, Richmond Hill and Osmondthorpe." Now, that does not mention Burmantofts and Lincoln Green, which are much nearer, but for all of these areas walking routes to the Harewood Quarter will make them much more attractive places to live.

Finally, an unusual turn of phrase in an Executive Board report, "The architecture", we are told, "will be contemporary, reflecting values of quality and integrity whilst adding elements which will surprise and delight." I can't wait.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: I would ask Council to give full attention to the next speaker, who is making a maiden speech, Councillor Galdas.

COUNCILLOR GALDAS: Lord Mayor, I would like to speak on minute 291 on page 86, the Town & District Regeneration Scheme. It is an excellent scheme giving outlying areas a chance to improve and regenerate their own wards instead of all the money being spent in the centre.

Rothwell, as an example, has suffered badly by a very old-fashioned Morrisons store supermarket. It is a fact that about 60% of local shoppers go out of the town to do their shopping, and Rothwell sometimes looks a ghost town. Morrisons are now about to rebuild, which will definitely improve the area, but would leave the periphery of the town looking very shabby.

This regeneration scheme will give us a chance to improve those areas and do exactly what the scheme advertises and regenerate Rothwell. I would commend this scheme to all relevant Councillors. Have a look at your own ward and see what needs doing. In recommending this, I hope it is not at the cost of Rothwell, because we certainly need regenerating. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Lord Mayor, can I thank you for gracing us with your presence last Sunday at (inaudible) Morley? Thank you.

I want to speak on minute 292, page 86. It is regarding the safety camera update and the future support of the West Yorkshire Casualty Reduction Partnership. On 14th February this year I was pleased to be invited to the Safer Roads Day launch in Bradford, not as an Elected Member of this Council but as the secretary of Churwell Action Group. I am also a member.

I was privileged to have met Mandy Fox, whose daughter (?)Dara, aged 12, was killed by a speeding motorist in Huddersfield in 1997. Her contribution to that road safety campaign was phenomenal and it was instrumental in West Yorkshire Casualty Reduction Partnership winning a silver medal at a prestigious international event in New York. It was sincerely hard-hitting, and it had to be. It also reduced me to tears, and I can assure you that that is not an easy thing.

Mandy's daughter would have been the same age as my son, or our son, should I say, who has just completed his first year at university. Dara could well have been in that same university, studying the same subjects.

My own cousin, Neil, was knocked down on the A650 and killed in 1970. Last September 2004 he would have celebrated his 40th birthday. He died at five, for all those unfamiliar with maths.

I want to just draw your attention to this booklet, and I will just read you the first bullet points: "Driving at excess or inappropriate speed is the single biggest cause of fatal and serious casualties on our roads. Where speed control cameras have been installed, casualties have fallen by 35%; the number of vehicles speeding has fallen by 67%."

Drivers who are speeding are breaking the law. It is one of those supposedly minor crimes that has a major heartbreak for at least one family.

On the Safer Roads Day on 1st May there were no deaths and only two casualties, which I am led to believe from the Chair of the Reduction Partnership was by a couple of drunks trying to flag down a taxi very early on Sunday morning.

Safer Roads Day 2005 was a success in which I am proud to have played a minuscule part just by being there at the launch.

It has been so successful it is likely to have gained Ministerial support for a national event in the future, perhaps even 2006, so I would like to congratulate Steve Thornton and Phil Green of the West Yorkshire Casualty Reduction Partnership. I hope that, like No Smoking Day or National Women's Day or even National Black Pudding Day, or something like that, we have some annual event like that.

Love them or loathe them, safety cameras do work. I know they have made a really tremendous contribution to the community where I live. You have got a situation now where drivers not only adhering to the speed limit, it is also improving driver behaviour, and I would just like to say they do really work. Remember speeding is against the law and remember speeding does kill. I know it does. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, I am speaking to page 86,

minute 291, Town & District Regeneration Schemes, very much to echo what has been said by Councillor Galdas, and I accept entirely what he is saying in terms of Rothwell. In Morley we face similar problems, similar difficulties. We do see this as a real opportunity to regenerate areas of Morley, specifically Morley Bottoms, and we are grateful that we have this option to get involved with that.

What we would say is that contrasts somewhat with the way our predecessors approached this particular problem. Now, there used to be an organisation called Morley Forward, not to be confused with Labour Forward - two different organisations, or so you might think (Laughter) - but the reality was that in Morley Forward was like a secret organisation, unless you knew the right handshakes you weren't allowed to actually get into the organisation.

Subsequent to my election and my good colleague Councillor Leadley's election, we found out that we didn't satisfy the appropriate criteria to get involved. Being elected by the people apparently wasn't enough. We were of the wrong political persuasion.

What we will say is any new plans that are drawn up will involve everybody across the political spectrum, everybody including the residents, everybody including the traders. We will get everybody on side on this one. We are hopeful that we will be successful with this particular bid, and we are grateful for the opportunity, along with our colleagues in Rothwell, to make sure that some money is distributed to the outer areas.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to comment on minute 293 of the Executive Board meeting of 18th May 2005, which is to be found on page 87, and it is to do with the refurbishing of Briggate. We are always ready to find fault when things go wrong so I think it is only fair to praise Briggate's new look, which is far better than the old and has been done with good workmanship, especially when set against the infamous Landmark Leeds, so I think some lessons have been learnt there.

We should look forward to the rest of the street being done in similar style. It is to be hoped that the present openness will be kept and that it will not become cluttered with bandstands which are seldom used, fountains which do not

work, or other unsightly street furniture. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I will try and go through in the order that the comments were made.

First of all, Councillor Downes and Otley. Yes, it is a tricky one. We know it is a tricky one. The people of Otley have suffered for a long time because of the pollution and disturbance caused by the HGVs. What we are trying to achieve, however, is something that does not merely transfer the problem from one group of people to another. That is essential. It is a balancing trick that is difficult to perform, but at least we are going to give it a try.

Councillor Brett, thank you very much for your kind comments in connection with the Eastgate and Harewood Quarter.

I have to say that the Officers in the Development Department have done an absolutely marvellous job in terms of negotiations not just with the developers, Hammersons and Town Centre Securities, but also with what we hope will turn out to be, if you like, the cornerstone of the development, the John Lewis Partnership. I have been extremely pleased, and proud indeed, to be able to be part of that team this year, and when I met with the Board of Directors of the John Lewis Partnership they are very keen and enthusiastic to come to the City of Leeds, and they will bring with them a wonderful ethos in terms of staff recruitment, training and retention, and that in itself is going to play a major role in the regeneration of the areas that you mentioned, and we will create those linkages between this development and those areas of the inner city, and the jobs, quality jobs, that can be generated on a long-term basis by an employer such as the John Lewis Partnership cannot be under-estimated.

Interestingly, they also wanted - and I am thankful for Councillor Leadley's comments - they also wanted to know what the City's plans were for ensuring the continuous improvement of our public realm in the city centre, and they were impressed with the first part of Briggate. The second part I hope will be equally impressive. I have to say it rather accentuates, does it not, the shambles that lies beyond it known as Landmark Leeds, the unmaintainable scheme that was put in place by our predecessors.

But we will continue to find ways of funding city centre

improvements that don't mean that we have to take money away from other areas of the City, but we will continue to improve the city centre and we will continue to bring an inward investment that will help us to close the gap.

Councillor McArdle, thank you for your comments about the Casualty Reduction Partnership. They do splendid work, but we have inserted a clause in the report that has never been there before, and that is about Ward Member consultation. I think it is essential that Ward Members, who perhaps have as much knowledge as anybody about the difficult areas in terms of road safety in their own ward, are consulted and not just presented with fait accomplis, and those consultations will continue I hope every year that passes from now on, so that we can get some further input into what we want to see happening in our own wards.

Okay, the Town & District Centre Regeneration package. Thank you for the comments. It is quite clear that there are going to be far many more interesting bids for a lot of the work that has been left undone for so long and there is money to accommodate.

We have to stop the spiral of decline in terms of a lot of our town and district centres. It is essential that we have in this City a spirit amongst everybody that we are part of one city, that people who live in some areas don't point to the city centre and say, "All the money goes there", that people in the inner city areas who are being helped and will be continue to be helped by this administration with millions of pounds of investment to close the gap don't point to the city centre or the outer areas and say, "They are getting all the money." But equally it is important that we recognise the place that the small towns and villages and district centres play in this city of small communities, because that is what Leeds is in comparison with other major cities, and that goes back to 1974, so the spiral of decline has got to be stopped.

Councillors Harris, Blackburn and myself will be looking at a raft of innovative ways of doubling the £5 million for the Town & District Centre Regeneration Initiative to make sure not only that we can take on board as many proposals as are put forward but also that we can spread those proposals perhaps out over a third or even fourth year, so we get real sustainable programmes of improvement in all our communities - something, my Lord Mayor, that they never did in 24 years. (Applause)

(iv) Neighbourhoods & Housing

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Lord Mayor, I want to speak to minute 278, page 82. This minute refers to a scheme called the Sanctuary Scheme, which is a scheme that deals particularly with women who are at risk from violent partners but who want to stay and be protected in their own homes. Clearly, for those women for whom this is suitable we would welcome this scheme, but I think all of us acknowledge that it won't by any means satisfy all of the issues that are presented connected with women subjected to violence from violent partners.

Sadly, we all know that there is still an enormous need for emergency provision for those fleeing violence, and I just want to connect with the whole debate that we have had about the proposed closures of the hostels St. Michael's and Prospect House. Obviously St. Michael's particularly was pertinent in the discussion for women fleeing violence.

Can I say that I welcome the opportunity afforded by the Neighbourhoods & Housing Scrutiny to look at the issue of hostel closures, but I have to just bring to the attention of Council that, despite all our best efforts on this side at Executive Board, in here at Council and then at Scrutiny to delay these closures, they are indeed scheduled to go ahead a week on Friday on July 1st.

We are still receiving expressions of concern about the capacity in the City to deal with the effects of these closures and to come up, as I say, with the necessary emergency provision not only for women but for young people who are currently provided for at Prospect House. I understand that from the closures, the money that will be saved from the closures, less than 50% of the money is actually going to be targeted towards the alternative provision in terms of supporting vulnerable people at risk in their own homes, and I would like to know how the progress of this is going on, and whether indeed it is going to be adequate.

I have to say, and I will repeat again and again, that I think it is a matter of deep regret that the most vulnerable people, and those supporting them in this City, feel that they have been let down by the process of the implementation of these closures, and particularly by the lack of adequate consultation at the relevant times during the process.

Indeed, the Scrutiny inquiry did lead to an acknowledgement from Officers that the process could have been handled a good deal better. However, I do welcome the recommendation that there will be an ongoing scrutiny of the effect of the closures through the new Thriving Communities Scrutiny Board.

It goes without saying that I and all I think certainly colleagues on this side welcome any improvements in services for the homeless, including greater flexibility and more preventative work, which is absolutely crucial, but Lord Mayor again, as I said, I wanted to bring to Council's attention that these two hostels are going to close in just over a week before, however valuable they might prove to be, schemes like the Sanctuary Scheme are actually introduced into the City.

I believe that there is still an issue of emergency provision and temporary accommodation for the most vulnerable people in our City at the very least in the short term. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I have to a certain extent just let a lot of things that Councillor Blake said right over my head in the last few months for one simple reason, she was in the middle of an election, and all sorts of nonsense is talked about in elections. However, I am no longer prepared to sit here and listen to some of the tripe she is making.

Let us just talk about some of these things she is referring to. She is totally unfounded that the two hostels referred to will leave us without units. We have 200 accommodation units for this particular group of people. One other point, the closure of the one we are closing now will actually have a planned increase - increase - that means it is going bigger if you don't understand the words - going bigger - and we will have more people and we will have more units than we ever had under your administration. That is increasing.

One other point which she ought to take on board as well, and I am proud of this, for all your carping about what this administration has done about homelessness, we have received a Regional Champions Award from your Government for the way we have dealt with tackling homelessness. We have received that and you are moaning. It is a good job you weren't elected,

you wouldn't have been able to vote with them half the time!

You might think that the YEP, when it said that you are the next best thing, was true. I can assure you it is not.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Next best thing to what?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: You were thrashed by the Student Prince. There is no way you are going to come back.
(Interruptions)

My Lord Mayor, you also totally ignored - you have totally ignored them through all this - that our Supporting People's budget which is paid for by Her Majesty's Government was cut by £3.5 million. Your Government slashed it. We have to react to it and we react in the best way possible. We are moving the service forward, we are improving the facilities for people. At the same time we are doing what the Government have said, "Can you do?" and that's why we have champions awards. I am going to get a badge made, "I have the Regional Champions Award for homelessness", and you lot don't accept it. I cannot understand it.

My Lord Mayor, let me just say this finally. I think you should stop this. This is a very serious issue, a really serious issue. We are talking about violence against females, which I am not going to play about with, and it is usually perpetrated by men. I have no time for it. They are cowards and we should do everything possible. The Sanctuary Scheme is to stop trying to institutionalise people into institutions, which you seem to like. You seem to like to put them into institutions where the children - most of the children - are not even going to school. It is appalling the way they are being treated, absolutely appalling.

What this will do, this particular scheme, if it is successful, and it is voluntary, it is not compulsory. If females want to accept this, it will protect them in their homes and protect them in their families, and we also have talked to our legal people who have got to take legal action, the best and the quickest legal action, about any perpetrator as well. You should be rejoicing in this. I think you would have done a damn sight better in the election if you had done.

My Lord Mayor, that's all I have got to say. Thank you.
(Applause)

(v) Learning

THE LORD MAYOR: I am moving on to the Learning section of the minutes. I note in particular that minutes 245 and 271 appear to be very popular, a number of people wishing to speak on one or other of those two minutes. If, in fact, you find that your point has already been made by a previous speaker, there is no harm in declining to speak. It will help the moving of the Council Meeting on.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Lord Mayor, it is with respect to minute 271 on page 80, and it is regarding the deputation to Council from Mount St. Mary's, 13th April. I have got a couple of confessions to make: I don't read the Evening Post, so I was totally unaware until then of the campaign to save Mount St. Mary's and, despite my surname, I am not a Catholic. I come from a Catholic family but I am not a Catholic, so I have no religious axe to grind and no preconceptions.

Mr. Flannery, the headteacher, came on the deputation and he invited us all to go there, as today they invited us all to go to their respective schools. So I went. I actually went without any preconceptions and I just thought, "What's all the fuss about?" and I was prepared to give it my best shot at making an opinion or having an opinion either way.

I didn't know exactly where it was, so I got my A-Z out and I looked at it, and I thought, "The A64, Burmantofts on the one side with St. Patrick's, Richmond Hill leading to East End Park and Mount St. Mary's." I thought, "Politics. Politics here", and I think I am right.

The roll call of St. Patrick's is 182 as of Monday. The roll call of Mount St. Mary's is 136 as of last Monday, so it is only the equivalent of a 1.5 form entry year, and everybody knows about the social make-up of Richmond Hill, and I certainly know about East End Park, and the same goes for Burmantofts.

So I went to this school, again no preconceptions. What I saw was a little gem of a school. It really was a gem of a school. How they had got all the Beacon status and all these awards in such disgraceful conditions is beyond me. And they have been working from this site for 6 years. I think for the last 18 years they have been pushed from pillar to post and the

teaching conditions and learning conditions are not only unacceptable but they really are a disgrace and they are a disgrace to the Catholic Church, to the Catholic Diocese of Leeds. I really am appalled at their behaviour.

I am a governor at two schools, one a PFI school, love them or loathe them, a PFI school and non-PFI school, it is a school. We should be educating our children. It doesn't really matter, our priority is to our children. I am also a governor at the school I actually went to, Ardsley Grammar School - it is now a comprehensive. No doubt about it, children shouldn't be used as political footballs. Again, it is an absolute disgrace.

Everybody knows about the conditions. We know about Saxton Gardens and all these other areas. It is really ripe for regeneration. What happens if Mount St. Mary's is actually closed and Richmond Hill is actually regenerated, are you wanting school places there? What is going to happen? There is going to be no school for them, and I just find it absolutely appalling, and the blame lies with the Catholic Diocese of Leeds, and they really did ought to be ashamed of themselves. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, I am talking on page 74, minute 251, specifically paragraph (h). This is a theme that we will return to time and time and time again. People will be aware, ever since I got elected on this Council I have been going on about catchment areas. Sorry?

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Which time?

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Second time. First time. Second time. The issues to do with catchment areas are pretty well documented, certainly in the Morley area, and we have got Woodkirk High School who have asked for a reconsideration of the way that the admissions policy works, and the reason for that is that Woodkirk consistently get frustrated with the fact that you have got East Ardsley children, East Ardsley Primary School, half of whom are offered a place at Woodkirk High School, half of them aren't. At that particular point you have got a lot of parents, a lot of distress, a lot of distressed kids who are having to go through the appeal process to try and get this difficulty and problem resolved.

I had the privilege of representing one of these parents

this year at one of these appeal hearings, who just happened to live on the wrong side of the road and was frightened that their child would end up without the help and the support of the other children who were moving up to the Woodkirk High School, and certainly speaking to the teacher representative who had been sent to the appeal, they were as bemused as I was about why they should be there. They felt that it should be an automatic right for all East Ardsley kids to move up together, if that's what their parents wanted, and you are never going to get that on the present admissions policy. You are never going to get that, and you are going to create problems and difficulties and parents under stress and children under stress until it is resolved.

The other point to make about this - and I see Councillor Geoff Driver will be speaking on the same minute after me - at the last Council meeting we had a discussion about the whole admissions policy issue, a very cordial issue. I suspect we disagree fundamentally on how the present policy operates, but it is my view that we will ultimately have to come back and revisit this matter. I suspect, with the best will in the world, when the new Inner South High School is actually built, that you are still going to get that particular drift from Inner to Outer. The number of high schools you have got in Inner South area is decreasing. It continues to decrease. We are down to two. Unless there are some solid, good reasons to try and make sure that you keep those particular parents committed to those Inner South schools, you are going to get the drift out. You have got the drift out from Inner South. You have got the drift across the border in our area from Kirklees, and somewhere down the line that is not sustainable. We will be revisiting this in years to come. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR R. FELDMAN: My Lord Mayor, do I need to declare an interest because it mentions Allerton High School and I am a governor of the School?

THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES: No. We are dealing with comments on minutes at the moment so ---

COUNCILLOR R. FELDMAN: Okay.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am sure we note your declaration anyway.

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: After what was said a moment ago by my

colleague, I feel I do need to say something. Can I comment on resolution (d) of 251, where the point is made that the number of preferences that parents will have should in future be reduced from five to three.

One of the things I have noticed this year, Lord Mayor, because in my ward we see a lot of cases of parents wishing to make application to not one but two, three, four, even five schools, is that even at the end of that we are still seeing a lot of young people being allocated by Education Leeds, by the LEA, independently of any choices that parents have made, and they end up being even more upset because those choices very often are to fill up schools which need their places filled, and that is the only logic that Education Leeds puts forward.

Now, one can understand that from the school's point of view and from the Education service's point of view, from the financial point of view. However, from the point of view of our policy as a Council to bring the two Leeds's together, we have got to create healthy, balanced, well-mixed schools in the inner city, and what I am concerned about is that I see nothing in that resolution, or indeed in most of the rest, which suggests any change in the direction to which we are all committed.

I would like to be convinced otherwise, and if Councillor Harker can do that I shall be delighted, but I must say I don't see it in 251 as it stands.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, it is minute 245, and I would like to welcome very much Professor Mary Warnock's comments quite recently about the debate on the implementation of Special Needs education, because I think it comes at a timely moment, given the North-West SILC's experience, where I think many parents, many governors, many staff and particularly many children have gone through a very long, traumatic period.

Now one of the good things coming out of our meetings with them, I believe, is that it has demonstrated occasionally when all parties get together they can work in the interests of young children, as they did particularly when they met with parents and, although Andrew is not here, and I don't pay him many compliments, and sometimes this debate gets down further and further, I do want to pay tribute to the way he handled the parents of the children who came in to see the Executive Board on May 9th, because on that occasion we met parents who firstly

knew a lot more than us.

Secondly, I thought they were very calm, they were very rational, they were very passionate and they were very knowledgeable about the education experience their children had, and I learnt many things that night. More so than I have learnt from many hours sat in here about the debate and many hours sat at the Executive Board. So I started to query my memory, and I started to think, "Why is it I thought things were going reasonably well?" So I checked back in my file and I saw a letter from Councillor John Bale, who I believe is sincere and committed to this debate. Absolutely no problems about the letter.

The letter said - it was in the Wharfedale Observer, as you remember, John - that there would be no redundancies. He had been reassured that there would be no redundancies at the North-West SILCs and, what is more, the letter said that he had received a specific pledge by Councillor Richard Harker that there would be no redundancies at North-West SILC.

That was in December. On 13th April I sat through a debate here. I think it was a question from Councillor Gruen who asked Councillor Richard Harker could he reassure us about any plans for redundancies. Now, Councillor Harker was a bit more evasive but I think his words, and I have read through them a few times, meant no redundancies.

You can imagine the surprise I had when I found out that actually 16.5 members of staff had been alerted to being redundant and governors were having to make choices, and that was back in March. So it is a question really to Councillor Harker, when he is summing up, is, as a governor - I believe he is a governor - sometimes he declares it, sometimes he doesn't, but as an Executive Board Member, when did he know about the 16.5? Why did he say, when there were notices issued in March, in April there were no plans, because I think in many ways certainly the impression I got was that many of us thought that the problem wasn't on the scale that the parents alerted us to.

Now, I am pleased and I hope that we carry on the all-party consensus, and I understand in July there will be an Executive Board paper actually helping to resolve this problem in the interests of the children, but I think - and it proves actually there - that we can actually move, and if it is a

political decision that helps and puts extra resources in, then, good. It is in the interests of the children. We have done it on other schools, why don't we do it on this?

What I do want to know when Councillor Richard Harker is summing up, what exactly he was trying to do giving pledges back in December to Councillor John Bale and even coming into April saying there would be no redundancies when clearly the parents were absolutely convinced and knew there were redundancies way back in March. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Lord Mayor, just continuing from Councillor Wakefield's comments, I would as well like to welcome progress that has been rather tortuous and long in coming, but indeed coming it seems to be.

Councillor Wakefield made reference to Councillor Harker's position in this, and I hope he will clarify this to Council, because I understand that he is actually a governor at the North-West SILC. If you look through your papers, there is no declaration of this interest in the first paper that it is brought up and indeed, now I know Councillor Smith is under an enormous amount of pressure but under the June 8th Executive paper it actually claims that he is a governor at the North-West SILC. I accept that this is probably an administrative error, but I do think that on an issue as important as this we are absolutely clear of your role in this, particularly as you are the Executive Member for Education of this Council and therefore responsible for policy for Education Leeds, etc., etc.

We have gone through the papers that have been prepared by Education Leeds for Executive Board and, despite all the issues about compulsory redundancy, I think it is fairly clear to say, and I think perhaps you might outline for us, that there will be voluntary redundancies in the North-West SILC which, of course, would have an impact on the overall levels of staffing within the North-West SILC which, of course, obviously leads to anxiety amongst parents who, let's be absolutely clear, are parents of children with immensely complex needs, are deeply vulnerable and have profound and multiple disability.

Lord Mayor, Chris Edwards talks passionately about the need to reduce, in his phraseology, "turbulence" for these children and their parents, and I think we would all agree with

that, particularly in the day-to-day programme of support and care, and I believe that parental worries have been justified and furthermore that they have every right to express their fears and to seek reassurance on these matters.

Is it not unfortunate, therefore, that the report to the Executive Board on June 8th, and I quote, states that: "It is a matter of great regret that the natural anxiety of staff over their own futures has been transmitted to parents and raised unnecessary concerns about the future education and the care of their vulnerable children."

Lord Mayor, I am profoundly disturbed that a derogatory comment of this nature against the staff was included in the report. In my experience, the staff involved in Special Needs sector are totally committed to the welfare of the children in their care and to their needs, and I have to say parents share this view.

I am even more disturbed that Councillor Harker, as an Executive Member for Education and a governor at the SILC, allowed this comment without challenge to go through, and I urge him as a matter of urgency to seek to distance himself from these comments and to apologise for the deep anger and upset that has been caused by the whole way this issue has been handled. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I follow on on the same minute and the same saga, and I wish to particularly examine, as Councillor Blake has, the role played by Councillor Harker in this saga, and indeed the advice Education Leeds have given to the Executive Board and separately to the School Organisation Committee.

It was on 13th April that I asked Councillor Harker the question of redundancies. I knew at that stage, because I had had information from teachers and from parents, that 16.5 members of staff were going to be made redundant; the discussions had been held, the dye had been cast, and Councillor Harker said no such plans were yet in swing, but they were shortly afterwards.

At the School Organisation Committee we commissioned a paper from Education Leeds at the request of Members for the School Organisation Committee - the request did not come from myself - but I obviously acted on what colleagues wanted and we

got the paper.

Councillor Cleasby was swift off the mark - I give him credit for it - because the advice obviously that we had heard from the Executive Board paper and the advice we were given within days of that meeting at the School Organisation Committee were almost entirely different. The Education Executive Board paper said "No redundancies, all dealt with." One of the first remarks from an Education Leeds Officer was, "It won't be 16 staff redundant, it will be fewer but there will be some redundancies." In straight away comes Councillor Cleasby, absolutely right as a member of the SOC and questions, "Why is this differential advice?" I don't think we got a real answer but we were left certainly at the SOC with the impression that there would be redundancies.

There were three people at the SOC when we made our original decision who were extremely pivotal to that decision.

They were Father Willis of the Roman Catholic Diocese, Councillor Bale and Councillor Cleasby, and frankly we were on the edge of whether we supported the formation of the North-West SILC or not, and at the end of the day we just about went along with it on the guarantees that Education Leeds were giving us.

Their handling has been profoundly disappointing in how this matter has been handled, to the point that the SOC unanimously referred back to the Executive Board by a resolution that we regret what has happened and that this matter should be referred to the appropriate Scrutiny Board, which I have every confidence that Councillor Bale as its Chair will take seriously and bring to a proper fruition. I am sorry, like Councillor Wakefield was, that Councillor Bale was misled, as the rest of us were, about the question of redundancies.

But the other interesting thing in the SOC that came up was that there was a movement of something like 40 pupils amounting to £370,000 in a matter of weeks almost, curiously from the date that the SOC had given approval to almost within weeks suddenly this figure emerged of over-estimates, over-optimism and therefore this couldn't possibly happen, and therefore there was this immediate danger of money of £370K. Well, that really needs to be explained because the governors have been scape-goated for this, frankly, and I don't think it is necessarily the governors' fault.

But now we turn to the part played by Councillor Harker. When he answered my question, apart from saying it was my fault because I was Chair of the Governors' Forum, which I am not, and they are saying it is my fault because I am asking silly questions, which clearly it wasn't a silly question thereafter, and then accusing other people of, "It was their fault" and, despite the very adroit footwork by Andrew Carter, almost like auditioning for "Come Dancing" on BBC1, but it certainly was adroit footwork, he couldn't save Councillor Harker either.

What I want to know is when we talk -- when he says to me in his reply, "It is the job of the governors to run the budget. We will work with the governors to bring the budget crisis under control", and then the comment in answer to an intervention by Bernard Atha, "No, it is not my responsibility; I am not doing the planning", everyone thinks, don't we, that this is the Executive-holder talking to us, the portfolio-holder. Nobody in this chamber was aware at that stage it was also a governor. No declaration was made in any meetings I have been to until very recently I have become aware of that.

That frankly is a matter, and unless Councillor Harker publicly apologises today, will be a matter for a body outside of this Council, because it is absolutely preposterous that we should be misled in this Council.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen, you are out of time.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Thank you. One more sentence. It would be helpful for him today to publicly apologise.

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: I just start by saying a point of information. Minute 254, page 75 - it was my colleague Councillor Renshaw who wished to speak on that item, and I will restrict my comments to minute 245, page 72.

THE LORD MAYOR: Okay.

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Thank you, Lord Mayor.

I am a relatively new Member to this Chamber, having only been elected last year, and I am still trying to get to grips with many of the procedures and systems that the Council has in place. However, in the small time that I have had to look into the circumstances surrounding the position the North-West SILC is now in, I am simply puzzled that this situation has

been allowed to develop.

I understand that the authority has procedures in place for the merger of mainstream schools but that these same procedures were not used in the formation of the North-West SILC. I am astounded that, when lessons have already been learned from the merger of mainstream schools and procedures put in place as a result of those lessons being learned, that those procedures were not applied in the formation of the North-West SILC, potentially reducing a lot of stress and anxiety for pupils, parents and staff. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR RENSHAW: Lord Mayor, I would like to comment on minute 254, page 75. I am delighted to see the investment in the Children's Centre in Little London, thus carrying out the Labour Government's agenda and the national strategy.

This is the first time an Extended Beacon status, as far as I am aware, has been awarded for any service nationally. I therefore wish to congratulate the Sure Start service for delivering such a high quality and an enhanced service. I am looking forward to the extension of this service and the rolling out programme being put into place to move it forward.

I am particularly interested to know how the present administration are going to encourage this service to move forward and hopefully making such a high quality service accessible to all communities throughout the city. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR DOWSON: I would like to comment, please, on page 80, minute 270, that is the Meanwood Primary Review.

I love my children and I did all that I could to actually make sure that they had the best education I could, and I am sure looking round the chamber that all of you who have children did the same, whether you chose state education or whether you chose to pay for that education.

Now, we are in the position of looking after the welfare of other people's children. Education Leeds, when they do these reviews, seem to look mostly at the finances and the savings that can be made and the number of bums on seats, number of children in places. Surely, in communities like the one in Meanwood, we should embrace the possibility of smaller

class sizes for the children.

What we are able to do is look at the bigger picture here and how the two schools directly affected, Miles Hill, which as many of you know is a subject I have brought up here many times is on the Beckhill estate, and Potternewton, fit into the bigger picture.

I will make the position perfectly clear of myself and my fellow Ward Councillors, Councillor Rafique and Councillor Hamilton. We believe that neither school should close. They both reflect the special and the unique character of the communities they serve. We talk about wrap-around care for the children; what these communities need, these disadvantaged areas, is wrap-around care for the whole community, for everyone who lives there.

Leeds City Council have a unique opportunity to do something really special here, to act on Chris Edwards' pledge to make sure schools become the heart of the community. Depriving these areas of schools will leave a time-bomb of neglect which social services and the police will have to pick up. Poor Council housing, high rates of unemployment, a high concentration of drug misuse, crime, anti-social behaviour in these communities leave the residents feeling truly neglected and lost in a system with which they have no power and no-one listening to them.

What these areas need is for two small units with staffing and facilities to give the children the start that we would want for our own children, and the innovative wrap-around care for the whole community. They also need the stability of knowing that these schools will not be closed or be under threat for at least ten years. Parents need the confidence of having that assurance and for making sure that Education Leeds will be made to comply with that assurance.

And let us not forget the children from Bentley Primary, who were displaced only two years ago and now go to Miles Hill, or the special facilities that have recently been put in for the very special children of Penny Fields within the North-West SILC who also go to Miles Hill School.

I have throughout this speech referred to "we", what "we" have to do, but we all know that at the end of the day after the public consultation it is you, the members of the Exec

Board, who will make the final decision, the decision to take it further. I stand here now and I actually beg you to look at the bigger picture here and retain both schools as community schools, as community facility at the heart of these very, very diverse areas. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor, well, Councillor Harker, I am not going to play hell with you like all my colleagues are. I am going to thank you for coming up to Mount St. Mary's - I am speaking on page 80, minute 271 - to take the time to come up to the school, I did appreciate. The Leaders, Councillor Wakefield came up and spent some time, Councillor Andrew Carter spent quite a bit of time there. David Blackburn spent a lot of time there. Peter Harrand came up and Councillor McArdle came up, and they were all surprised at what they saw.

When you see the results that we get from Mount St. Mary's and then see where it comes from, you would think we were in a third world country, the premises that we are teaching from, it is ridiculous. It is ridiculous for me to come forward and say, you know, the Council have got it right for a change. I think everybody on this is saying as far as we are concerned we are doing a good job. You all saw what we was up against.

Now, the latest thing is that the Diocese have said --- Oh, by the way, they have moved our parish priest because he didn't get us shut down fast enough. That is a fact. It is true. The Ward Councillors will tell you. The Liberal Democrat Ward Councillors will tell you that they moved the parish priest, but now they are going back to the old trick, and if you think in politics that you have seen tricks played, what they did a few years ago, the foundation governors that were moved by the Bishop's people, etc., were there to do the bishop's bidding. Unfortunately they didn't, they put me as Chair to start with and then, following that, they opposed the closure of the school, so what happened in actual fact was that the foundation governors were sacked and they were changed to suits to come up and vote to close the school. Well, God is good, and I'm still a Catholic so He is good, and one of the priests was taken ill so it was a straight vote and we won. So that is what happened.

What I am saying is they are trying the same trick again. What they are saying, and you think people are bad when they talk about your schools. What they are saying is, what do you

think a parent governor is? Well, I would think it is a parent of a child attending that school. Oh no. Not the Catholic Diocese. It is a parent of a child attending any school, so that they can send their people in, and they have nothing to do with Mount St. Mary's.

When the deputation came here and you all listened, and you all listened to the children singing, I went and spoke to the children and I told them that the people that were coming round the schools were the wise men and women of the Council and that big white building that belonged to their parents and them when they got older - it didn't belong to us as Councillors, it belonged to them - was where the decisions would be made.

I am thinking, after you have seen and heard all that has gone on, that there will be no doubt in most of your minds of which way you should be going. I am not here pleading, because what I said to those children and the teachers that asked them to say a prayer for all the Executive, well, it will be a Catholic prayer so I have asked them to transfer it to whatever God you happen to be serving. So if you get it from your God and Rabbi, it will be whatever faith you are, it will be transferred over.

So the children know that providing we have stuck to the truth the whole way through, haven't told any lies, argued our case and stuck by our case that as far as we are concerned they are right and the Executive, the wise people of the Executive, will know what to do. So I am thanking them for coming up to the school and thanking them in advance for what decision they are going to take. Thank you very much. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Lord Mayor, I want to set on record my personal position over the four schools in the Richmond Hill planning area in my ward. I have, within the last few weeks, visited all four and All Saints, Richmond Hill, Mount St. Mary's and Victoria are all good schools, making an excellent contribution to regenerating a very deprived area of Leeds. It is my clear view that none of these schools should close. I want Mount St. Mary's to stay open but as a state school, because it is quite clear that the Catholic Diocese do not want two Catholic schools in the same parish.

It is my hope and expectation that in the next few years millions will be spent regenerating East End Park, and that

could produce more pupils and the extended schools agenda should lead to more pressure on schools for space, so the last thing I believe we should be doing is closing an outstanding school. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW: My Lord Mayor, I refer to page 72, minute 245. Frankly, to hear some of the comments earlier really does beggar belief. The only reason our SILCs are having the problems and our Special Needs children are having the problems is because of the problems that this Government have introduced through an ill thought-out policy. It is.

Well over a year ago, when you were in control, I stood in this chamber and I spoke highlighting problems that were faced by families with Special Needs children all over the country. I gave examples of children who are not being catered for properly within mainstream schools that are now being educated at home. I was assured by the Councillors opposite that it would not happen here.

Education Leeds, when you were in control, gave assurance to the parents of the schools at the public meeting. I know that because I was there. I said at the time that our special schools were great and it seemed ridiculous to me that we were trying to bring up a new policy when one was working excellently. The Government policy has made a mess of special education in this City and all over the country. Even Baroness Warnock has even admitted that and backtracked. I hate to say it, but I told you so. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor, I wish to speak on the same page and the same minute. I find it quite incredible that Councillor Gruen as Chair of an independent School Organisation Committee can bring the discussions and deliberations of that committee into the political arena of this chamber and use the discussion so politically. When I saw his name on the order paper, I knew he was prepared to step across the line and he has done so. I would like, Lord Mayor, for Councillor Gruen to be investigated by Standards in his role as Chair.

I can assure Council that when I stepped in, and I asked to speak first on this topic the other day, that my main concern was the redundancies. What was the cost to this Council? I am assured there isn't a cost to the Council because people are taking voluntary early redundancy, those who

wish to do it, at no extra cost to the Council. They are not having an enhanced payment as a result. Others are being found jobs within the organisation, which is quite normal.

It is also fair to say that the reason that the £300,000 credit became a £300,000 deficit, i.e. suddenly £600,000 disappearing, were that Governors used the money to pay for staff because they didn't have the money coming in through the children through the door because those children were being taught in mainstream schools and the funding was going to the mainstream schools, so those speakers who spoke about the situation, and I found it quite enlightening that at the very start of this day Councillor Wakefield actually had the audacity to mention the great lady who started this ball rolling, when you mentioned Ms. Warnock. I find that --- You did, Keith. You spoke about it earlier in the day, and I find it outrageous that when you and your Government were pushing mainstream schooling on these youngsters in the situation that you have to take the attitude that you have, all lined up like ducks to cluck, cluck, cluck over the same thing, talking about 16.5, 16.5, 16.5 when it doesn't occur, and Peter Gruen, if he was totally honest with Council will tell you what I was concerned about was I had asked for a briefing within 24 hours of our meeting when I got an answer back by e-mail saying there was nothing more to add, it was all in the paper that went to School Organisation Committee.

Unfortunately, the Officer concerned started talking redundancy. I now have discovered that he should not have been talking redundancy (Interruptions) and as Chair you should have been finding that out on our behalf and you should not have been bringing our deliberations into this Chamber in such a political way. Again, Lord Mayor, I ask for Councillor Gruen's role and involvement here today to be investigated by Standards. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR BALE: Lord Mayor, I would like to comment, if I may, on the North-West SILC from my standpoint as Chairman of the new Scrutiny Board for Children and Young People. Shortly after my appointment to that role, I had a briefing meeting with Councillor Harker who indicated at that time his support for the new Scrutiny Board to continue the process of scrutiny begun, Lord Mayor, by the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Board under your chairmanship.

At the first meeting of the new Scrutiny Board last week

it was indeed agreed to carry out a comprehensive inquiry into the development of the SILCs within Leeds and the implementation of that policy. I shall approach that inquiry with both an open mind and a passionate concern for the future of special children in this City.

In view of my Scrutiny Board role, I don't think I should comment on Councillor Wakefield's comments on my letter in the press earlier this year, other than to say that my remarks were made in good faith, as was the advice given to me by Councillor Harker at that stage. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Lord Mayor, let's start with declarations of interest. If, on any occasion, I have failed to declare an interest as a governor of the North-West SILC then I apologise to Council unreservedly. I have never ever intended to disguise the fact. I have stayed away from some of the governing meetings recently in an attempt to work to try and resolve the situation that seems to have occurred there.

I want to make one or two comments. First of all, we have gone through a very traumatic period but I can report that I have been --- Oh, sorry, let me deal with the letter first.

When I first began to worry that there might be something wrong with the budget, I began to ask questions and I was assured by Officers that there would be no redundancies. My letter was written on that basis, and it might be worth Scrutiny Board finding out why I was given that advice, and I did work on the advice I was given by Officers.

To deal with the current situation in the North-West SILC --- I do apologise, I have just mislaid a paper. When Councillor Gruen asked me the question in this Council about redundancies I had not been informed, I was not aware of anybody having been given redundancy. I have to say that. That is what I was told and that was the information I was given.

At the current situation in the SILC in terms of redundancy notices, of the seven teachers who received redundancy notices eventually, no teacher now faces redundancy.

No teacher now faces redundancy. Five have accepted alternative permanent job offers. Offers have been made to two remaining teachers to take temporary contracts and at the end of those temporary contracts we will have worked, as we always work, to make sure they have got permanent contracts.

As far as the nursery nurses are concerned I expect -- there is still one nursery nurse to confirm that she will take the offer that has been made to her of alternative employment.

We should therefore, by the end of this week, hopefully know that nobody will be made redundant in the Leeds North-West SILC. (Applause)

I have also been advised that parents will by this Friday be told what the staffing will be and who the staff are. When I asked questions about whether we were continuing as far as possible to keep children with staff they knew, I was assured that was going to happen, and I did ask the question.

The other question that comes up there is was the staffing going to be worse than other SILCs here in Leeds, and I was assured yesterday, in front of other people, that the staffing in the North-West SILC should be better than - students to support staff and teachers - better than the other SILCs in the city.

My commitment to special education I think has been brought into question today, and I would like to just quote some figures to you. This year, in this financial year, this administration has put an extra £3.4 million. After inflation that comes out at £2.4 million into Special Needs. Funding for Special Needs SILC schools was increased by £640,000, that is £367,000 above inflation. Funding for SEN within mainstream schools was increased by £2.35 million, that is £1.6 million above inflation. In addition, £450K was made available to the "No Child Left Behind" agenda to meet the needs of young people with challenging behaviour. My philosophy has always been the best possible education for every single child no matter what their needs are, and you know that, Keith. It was true when I was a teacher and it is true still today.

The other good thing is the Executive Board have asked Education Leeds to prepare and bring forward three papers which will be submitted to Scrutiny Board and to other fora on the future of special education in the City, so that everything that went wrong, and something must have gone wrong and I still cannot say to this Council what I think that was, to have caused the situation we got ourselves into.

I think a point was made, and I do apologise, I was so

taken with making other notes, that somebody made the comment that they thought that the special school, the Leeds North-West SILC had been treated differently from mainstream schools in a change-over situation, and I think that is possible. I think somewhere along the line the inherited budget, the two years of the inherited budget, were lost sight of. I don't know but that's what I think happened.

Hopefully the Scrutiny Board, the papers to come to Executive Board which we have asked for, will put this matter to bed once and for all, and I can only apologise for all the distress that has been caused to all the parents and students.

I have worked very hard to try and alleviate that on every possible occasion.

To turn now to some of the other points, if I may, if I can pick up admissions. Yes, I think we are always going to have special discussions about areas on the edge of the City where pressure comes in from children coming over the border. We have had a reverse situation in the north of the City where children who used to go over the border into Harrogate suddenly found they couldn't go, and that put added pressure onto our schools at the edge.

Councillor Driver mentioned problems with children in south-East Leeds. I think he was referring possibly to children who were allocated to Agnes Stewart when he was talking about vacancies, but I did ask before I came into the chamber and at the moment I am told, and I have it written down by an Officer, only seven children from South Leeds have been allocated to Agnes Stewart, some of whom - three I think it is - had it as their first preference. Okay, well, I apologise but I thought that was what you were coming to.

If we now look at the reviews of Miles Hill, Potternewton, and also the problem that we inherited from the Catholic Diocese in relationship to Mount St. Mary, I would like to point out the Leader of Council went to visit all four schools in that area last week and was also very impressed.

I think Councillor Brett was probably right. We have asked for a review of the area. I think the review will probably come up with something along the lines of, yes, it will have to close as a Catholic school and reopen as a state school, but I can't prejudge a paper which is yet to go to Executive Board and is still being prepared, but I hope that

gives you a crumb of comfort, Mick.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I have no Catholic priest so somebody ought (inaudible).

COUNCILLOR HARKER: As for Potternewton and Miles Hill, I am not sure because Miles Hill I think takes one or two students from my ward, whether I need to declare an interest in Miles Hill. This is I think an issue that was left over from the last administration and should have been dealt with. I think partial reviews leave problems behind them, and I think there was a partial review of this area. I think the same is going to apply possibly to Fir Tree. It may be that when the Fir Tree report comes in we have to widen its geography, because I agree with many of the things that have been said, I do see Miles Hill and Potternewton as serving distinctly different communities.

Let us hope that everybody can make their views known rationally and in depth during the review period, and let's make a rational decision. Nobody wants to stand where I am standing now talking about closing schools. I am quite happy to see all the schools stay open but, as more and more autonomy is given to primary schools and to high schools, the responsibility of governors not this Council, I am afraid, the responsibility of governors to balance their books, to pay for staff, heating, lighting and all the other costs out of the money they receive from central Government will become a much, much more critical factor in all of our lives. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

(vi) Leisure

COUNCILLOR ATHA: My Lord Mayor, I just wish to refer to page 87, minute 294, which refers to the disposal of the Roundhay Golf Course. I am a member of the Labour Party and have been all my life. I see fundamentally that there are public assets which should be owned by the public and other assets which quite rightly should be in other domains. I hate to see public assets being got rid of, being sold. There is always a case for doing that, and the case is often one difficult to balance, and when Scrutiny looked at the future of the golf courses in Leeds we in fact took, I think right across the party divisions, an actually unanimous view, if I remember rightly, and that was there was a course at Oulton which could be disposed of and reasonably there was a good case for doing

it, and on balance the balance went towards disposal, but on the other courses not. And in particular there was a strong feeling about Roundhay remaining within the City Council and, of course, we were supported - it was a cross-party view.

I remember my colleague Councillor Hyde, as reported in the press release which was reported in the Evening Post, Councillor Hyde said, "A report on the future of municipal golf courses will be put before the Council's Executive Board in October." This is in 2003 last year, or but one. "We want this meeting to reject the idea of the wholesale disposal of local run golf courses." A very clear statement.

He also continued, "Whilst I have no personal objection to private money being used to upgrade facilities at the local authority golf courses, I am opposed to them being hived off." Again, I couldn't agree more.

His colleague Councillor Schofield said something very similar, "We want to see local golf courses kept in the control of the local authority." A very precise statement, "And the City Council have an obligation to local people in Halton" - he was referring there to a specific interest but it was a general comment he was making - "to maintain Templenewsam as a locally run facility and they should be looking at making the investment needed to upgrade the car park", etc., etc., "but more importantly to ensure the access to this facility for local people." I am sure Councillor Schofield would say, if I could see him here, would be saying, "Yes, it would be right for Templenewsam. It would also be right for Roundhay."

And so we are faced with making this balanced judgment. Is it right to sell off - it is actually a long lease being proposed of 75 years but for most of us, some of you less lucky ones who don't have my anticipated longevity won't see the 75 years out, but quite frankly, it is equivalent almost to selling off. And so the proposal is to do just that with certain conditions which are very good conditions, ones I do, of course, support, and it depends then on the balance.

If the premium paid for this 9-hole golf course in the most expensive part of Leeds sells for £1 million, that would be, if I work it out correctly, about £13,000 a year over the 75 years. That is a damn good bargain for someone, but at least £1 million premium is a reasonable figure and I think most would say if that's the case and the conditions which have

been put in are maintained and the investment proposed - we don't know how much it is because it is not specified - goes in, that would appear to be a reasonable figure.

If it is half a million premium, then the balance comes much more close to being either yes or no and I would say on the balance at that stage I would say definitely no. There is not the advantage to the Council in letting it go for that kind of figure. If it goes lower than half a million, guess the position you are in. It will be going for 75 years at a price which is less than the houses that overlook the course all round. Less, and so ---

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: It will be going for, Bernard, will it?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I don't know what the price will be. In due course the Council will be entitled to know, but what I am saying, Councillor Procter, is quite simple and even you can understand this, that if it is £1 million there is a very strong case for the process that is being gone through. If it is half a million, then it is very much more finely balanced and I would say in my case the balance is wrong and it should not go for that price.

If you end up negotiating a figure under that price, then you are getting a 9-hole golf course, a golf house and all the other facilities and all the other works that have gone into it, for a price less than you get from a three-bedroomed house overlooking the course.

Now, we will await and see what the end result of this negotiation is and if, in fact, the negotiations are satisfactory I will be the first to compliment Andrew Carter, the Leader of the Council, because it is stupid when we always oppose each other. I was not pleased to hear what he said about this stealth tax he referred to. It is an unfortunate term. It is a term with pejorative meanings, but I didn't know about it. Now I do and I thank you for telling us because we should take note of things which adversely affect the people in Leeds.

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

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I have indeed, and I was just in full flow.

COUNCILLOR LANCASTER: Lord Mayor, I wish to speak to page 75, minute 255, with reference to The Mansion at Roundhay. I want to take this opportunity to mention about the Leeds Tapestry because it was in this Chamber that it was mentioned that there might be room for the tapestry after the renovations, so I just want to bring Members up to date that this tapestry, which was initiated in 1992 and depicts people, activities, scenes, buildings of Leeds and incorporates a wide variety of subjects from sports, health, education to transport, the legal sector and the environment has been created by 600 volunteers, 520 sponsors have participated in bringing this tapestry alive, and that is from people from all over the City to contribute to that effort.

Several other tapestries in the UK all have a permanent home, and the tapestry moved from the Royal Armouries to the Library last October, and every time it moves it costs thousands of pounds which are raised by volunteers from the books and talks that they give and other money that they apply for from organisations, so on that I have to say I am very pleased with negotiations with the Leeds Library that they have agreed to keep the tapestry at the Central Library until May 2007, which gives us a breathing space to pursue this, where the tapestry is best suited, whether it is in The Mansion, which seems to have a lot of support for that, but it is whether the logistics of that will be. I just really want to ask Members for the support to come up with other ideas or to support the idea that they do look at The Mansion. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: Lord Mayor, I would like to also speak on page 75, minute 255, just really to add my support to what Councillor Lancaster has to say. I don't know how many people in the chamber here have been to see the Leeds Tapestry. I was alerted to it by one of my local residents and it really is absolutely fabulous. It covers the whole history of Leeds. It has numerous local distinguished people and possibly also Bernard as well (Interruptions). Yes, in the historical section, and it really is something worth going to see, so if anyone does have the time I would urge you to go down to the Central Library. I am very pleased that they have given a leave of stay for another couple of years for that, and I, too, also, would like to see a permanent home for the tapestry, and I very much hope that we will be able to do something whereby The Mansion could be its final resting place, although I do appreciate that there are all sorts of issues involved in that,

so, anyway, here is looking to the future. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I will deal with the last comments first I think. I would also like to thank all those who have previously been involved in the tapestry for creating it in the first instance, everybody because people across all parties were involved. Indeed, I seem to remember that Councillor Loudon was heavily involved in the tapestry when it was first brought about. All those who had contributed to the tapestry in the first instance we owe thanks to, but also can I say that the present - "committee" isn't the right word, really.

COUNCILLOR LANCASTER: Board of Trustees.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: The present Board of Trustees for their quiet determination and perseverance in pressuring elected Members and also Officers of Council to make sure that we do what is right and that is find a permanent home for the tapestry and also provide a degree of certainty to its medium term future. I, too, am delighted that we have managed to do that in the Central Library, and hopefully the project committee will be able to secure a more permanent and long-term home within the development that will be The Mansion, and I sincerely hope that that is the case.

When people mention The Mansion, unlike Councillor Blake, I don't go weak at the knees. It is a sensitive (Interruptions) It has been a sensitive --- Councillor Blake should go weak at the knees because someone somewhere (inaudible) the previous scheme was weak in the head, that's for sure. I am pleased that we will be able to bring a report to the next Executive Board outlining what I believe are first-rate plans for The Mansion and I hope - I hope - having fixed the unholy mess that the Labour Group got us into, that we will see their full support for these imaginative ideas.

Lord Mayor, let me now turn to the comments made by Councillor Atha. Garbage, garbage, garbage.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You aren't collecting that either.
(Laughter)

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Refuse collection does not fall under my portfolio.

I know Bernard is not quite as youthful as he was, not quite the Peter Pan of the Council Chamber as some try to portray him (Interruptions) but Bernard, really, you know, you really need to develop your short-term memory a little better, never mind your long-term memory. It really is quite strange and again, of course, those who are familiar with the routine will understand that Bernard, being an old hand at these matters, not only puts a question down in Council but also selects the very same minute as well ---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: What a coincidence ---

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: -- to ask a question on. Normally his Chief Whip really doesn't seem to like Bernard asking the questions so he forms them in such a way that he never actually answers the question ---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I noticed that.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: -- but he hasn't quite found out how to stop him making the same fool point in the full Council Meeting. Again, those who know how Bernard operates will know that in advance of him speaking in this place about anything first of all he issues a press release, Labour Group news release should I say, and again for those of you who know how Bernard operates they know that what he actually says in these things - or should I say the people in the back office, what they say - what they actually say he says never actually correlates with what he actually says when he gets in here, does it? So it is interesting that Councillor Atha talks about all these issues about public assets. I mean, he then goes on in the final paragraph of this - this just must be Bernard, it cannot be people in the back office because they are New Labour and we know Bernard is old Labour ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: He is just old.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: He talks about we should stop selling the vital assets belonging to the citizens of Leeds, and that these assets should be bequeathed to future generations and indeed our forebears. I mean, you know, really, this is the guy here who has presided over the biggest sell off - he and his predecessors - the biggest sell-off of assets this Council has ever had over the last 24 years. You have disposed of things left, right, and centre and, to be frank, when we were sat over there we were scratching our heads thinking, "Well, by

the time we are over here is there going to be anything left? There will be nothing left to fund a capital programme, will there? Of course there won't." Pretty much like the travesty that is the rest of the lack of investment within Leisure Services.

Sports centres - how much do we need there? Well, £50 million, £60 million to sort the sports centres out. What about the parks as well? How much do we need to sort all of our parks out? Don't know, probably another £10 million or thereabouts. Libraries. What about our libraries? Sorting all of our library problems out - again, who knows? Another £15 million to £20-odd million as well. None of which has ever been thought about in terms of planned preventative maintenance. None of which was ever factored in year on year with their capital programme, and exactly the same applies to golf courses. Never supported, never funded, never invested in.

I think there was this sort of idea, "Well, really, you know, our constituents don't really play golf, do they, so we don't really need to be bothered about them." Forgive me if that's not the case but I have to say to the people who use municipal golf courses around this City that is their view, that is for sure.

Lord Mayor, Bernard knows how much we are going to sell the lease interest for a limited period for. The lease interest. He knows that because he comments that in his press release. He actually falls foul of the code of standards.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: No, it is actually --- Point of order, before he makes a fool of himself, it is actually in the minutes.

THE LORD MAYOR: Sit down, Councillor Atha, you are out of order.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Oh what a wonderful turn of phrase you have, Lord Mayor.

Councillor Atha states in the news release that we are selling it too cheaply. Well, he must therefore know how much the sale of the lease is for. He was very careful to dance around the below the line issues. I did mention to his Chief Whip that he would be best advised to do so or else we would be

seeking advice from the Chief Legal Officer. He knows full well because he has seen the pink papers what the proposal is.

Once again Bernard is in variance to the views of presumably the rest of the Labour Group, but particularly the Leader of the Labour Group because when this matter was considered at the Executive Board meeting Councillor Wakefield didn't object ---

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I opposed it.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Well, Keith, if you opposed it you certainly didn't subsequently seek to correct the minutes because in the copy of the minutes that I have got here it doesn't say that you opposed it at all. It says that ---

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I want to explain the conversation we had at the Executive Board ---

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Well, it says here that there was nobody who was opposing this proposal.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Mark agrees I opposed it.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Indeed. Perhaps you should have corrected the minutes of the Executive Board at the appropriate time.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Perhaps you should have listened a bit more.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: The fact of the matter is that this is a policy that was set in train by the last Labour administration. They knew the situation. They knew the proposals. They knew the plans, because they drew them up. You drew the proposals up. You drew the plans up, and the only reason, the single only reason why this hadn't already happened before this administration came into office was because of a minor detail, a minor detail (Interruptions) that Councillors Harris and Carter wanted clarifying at the relevant Executive Board meeting. It was they who actually ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter, I'm sorry, you have run out of time. I shall have to ask you to sit down.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: And unfortunately, Members of Council, and

please don't shoot the messenger, I did hint earlier that there was a possibility we might not get through this section.

Indeed we haven't. We are now at the stage where we have to call on Councillor Harris to exercise the right of reply for this section of the minutes, and after that we will break for tea.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, can I just first of all say something to Mick Lyons: Please go back to Mount St. Mary's and tell the children that they pray to the same God as Jews and Muslims. The misconception that we don't breeds division and misunderstanding, so that is the first thing.

Now, Roundhay Golf Course. Let me finish off what I think John was trying to say, although in fairness my recollection is that Keith Wakefield did object, even if the minute does not reflect it. However, that does not detract from the fact that the proposal to lease off our golf courses was a Labour administration proposal that you brought to Executive Board several years ago, at which point Andrew Carter and I asked you to get on with it because we told you the market was failing and you umm'd and ah'd and some of you wanted to and some of you didn't, and there was a strong market then and admittedly now the market is weaker now but had you implemented your own policy instead of prevaricating, which is the way in which you conducted so many things, then we would have had an immense capital receipt instead of the much lower capital receipt that we may now have to accept.

Well, of course, I am not as stupid as you think I am to put those figures into the public domain.

I want to deal with this appalling drivel that Councillor Blake and other Labour Councillors are peddling about the way in which this administration approaches issues to do with deprivation and people in a variety of need where we have a duty to help them and you are peddling these misconceptions and half-truths, I have to say, all the time. The half-truth that we are responsible for what happened at St. Anne's Detox, the half-truth that you tried to introduce that somehow we were responsible for the lack of funding for the Racial Harassment Project, the half-truth now that we are just closing hostels and throwing needy people out on the street without anything to replace that service. It is a half-truth and it is misleading and it is dishonest of you because ---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: It is half true, is it? (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Yes, it is. Well, unfortunately, let me tell you, unfortunately, Bernard, as a historian I know the Nazis prospered on selling half-truths, and it is the small lie, it is the small half-lie that is the one too often that is accepted. Now, you are like dinosaurs; you want to keep people institutionalised. If it had been up to you, you would have kept public bath-houses because we always had them as an authority, instead of bringing forward other measures that provide better, more comprehensive services to help people in need like the Sanctuary Scheme, like the PFI Scheme that we are introducing now for people with special needs to get rid of the hostels that we have had for years which keeps them closeted together in awful, old-fashioned institutions, and yet you tell the people of Leeds that somehow we don't care and we are throwing them on the scrapheap. It is a lie and you should be ashamed of yourselves.

Councillor Dowson, I don't remember your Government saying we could have the money to fund schools for 20, 25, 15 to a class. Believe me, let your Government give us the money and we will fund schools at that size but they don't. They don't give us the money to do it, and they never gave your administration the money to do it, and that is why when you were in control you were faced with closures. I don't remember you not closing Bentley Primary School or not closing schools in Otley. You did close them because you knew the problem of funding but interestingly, and I remember making this point at Executive Board, the moment you side-stepped the politically tough decision on Potternewton Primary two years ago, you were leaving open the certainty that there would then be problems in that primary review area and what you have done, just like with the golf courses, is you prevaricated as a group and you have side-stepped the issue instead of facing the hard reality of what has to be done, and we are going to have to look at that primary review area. We have got to review it, as we have got to review the rest of the city now, a job left half done that we have had to pick up the pieces to deal with, and we are not going to be irresponsible the way you were in leaving jobs half done.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: How many have you closed, Mark?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Does that mean you are going to close schools?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Yes, it means we will have to close schools without any question. (Interruptions)

Now, Mount St. Mary's. Well, I don't want to get into a "Bash the Catholic Diocese" session. All I would say is, and you know I say this as somebody who represents an outer leafy suburb, I was shocked by what I found in that primary review area. I was appalled that any child has to be educated, as much as everybody is devoted to it, that they have to be educated on that site where sadly Mount St. Mary's is (inaudible). It is Third World standard. It is appalling that anybody has been left there. I was shocked at some of the deprivation I saw when I met Sue Mudie at Richmond Hill Primary, and I have to say I didn't make the connection that she was George's wife - it wouldn't have made any difference. I was shocked. I have not seen deprivation like that in a long time. When I saw some of those kids I could see in their eyes a dullness that sort of shouted desperation and lack of hope, so we are going to have to do something there, but it is a situation made a hundred times worse by the complications of the Mount St. Mary's position that the Diocese has effectively forced on us.

Finally, I just want to come back to the question of the North-West SILC. You know, we have this discussion so often now, and there will come a time legitimately when you will be able to say to us as an administration, "Those initiatives are all yours. You thought them up, you introduced them" and then we will have to absolutely stand behind what we have done, but the SILC came from your Government, it was your administration that brought forward the plans and we have implemented it, so to somehow make out the suggestion that the SILCs are some evil plot on behalf of the nasty Tories and the daft Liberals and the funny Greens is absolutely (Interruptions) That is a whole truth. It is absolutely ridiculous.

Now, I heard Baroness Warnock speak as well, and there is no question what she is now saying is that, you know, the famous Warnock Report was either misinterpreted or over-enthusiastic educationalists have taken it much further than what she had intended, and Andrew and I and Richard have already said quite clearly that there is going to be now a fundamental review of this authority's policy as concerns provision for Special Education Needs.

I am not going to say obviously what will come out of that review, but it has to be looked at. It is quite clear there is a national mood now that things have gone too far and we have to look at the precise way in which we can best serve all our children, most of whom I believe will benefit from inclusive education, but those who maybe in extreme cases still need separate specialist provision, we are going to have to look at it and decide what is the best way forward.

With all these things I reiterate and underline we are not going to shirk these things. You are beginning to hold us to account for very difficult decisions that we are making. We will stand by those decisions because it is the responsible thing of a responsible administration. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Harris. I did have my finger on the button. It never got pushed down but it certainly would have done in another second or two. Perfect timing.

Can I invite members of the public to join us for tea in the Banquet Hall. Before we go, we need to just take a vote on the section of the agenda that we have covered. I also need to tell you that we really need to be back in the chamber at 5 minutes to 6 because - I know it should be half an hour and it is only going to be just over 25 minutes but we have got a tremendously long agenda ahead of us and not all of us want to be here into the middle of the night, so with your kind co-operation we will reconvene at 5 to 6.

With those few words, can I just ask Council to approve the minutes that we have been debating for the past hour and a half.

(The motion was carried)

(Short adjournment)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for being so prompt, ladies and gentlemen. Can I ask Councillor Procter to move a variation in Council procedures in order for us to take the first two White Papers.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: My Lord Mayor, I am actually moving a variation of the variation as well, so I move in the terms of the order paper with the exclusion of the final sentence,

Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Is that understood?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Don't worry about it.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, they don't need to understand it - just vote for it.

THE LORD MAYOR: Will Councillor Hamilton second it?

COUNCILLOR M. HAMILTON: I would like to second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much, so there's two of them understand it. Really the purpose, as I understand it, is to enable the White Paper motions in the name of Councillor Grayshon to still proceed but, because he is not here, for somebody else to do it. Is that it? Okay. So everybody understands it now. Thank you very much.

Can we then first of all take item 10, White Paper. Sorry, I keep forgetting that we need to vote. Very difficult to remember that we are in a democracy! All those in favour of that change? Thank you very much. That is virtually unanimous, so I won't even ask for those against. Oh, Councillor Driver. I might well have known.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Ever the rebel.

THE LORD MAYOR: Indeed. So now I think we can go on to Item 10, the White Paper motion about Morley Rugby Union Football Club.

ITEM 10 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - MORLEY RUFC

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: My Lord Mayor, we are grateful to the Council for agreeing to take this particular resolution. If we can explain that Councillor Grayshon is presently out in Sri Lanka in (Inaudible) undertaking some work with the charity that he helped set up, which is the reason he can't be with us today.

I will formally move the resolution. We went to Twickenham. It was an excellent day. Leeds won the major cup, Morley won the secondary cup, and even the junior cup was

won by a Sheffield team, so it was pretty much a Yorkshire whitewash. I think that is excellent. We are particularly pleased that Morley dug in deep and worked very hard to achieve this. I formally move the resolution, Lord Mayor, thank you.

COUNCILLOR BEEVERS: Lord Mayor, I am seconding the resolution as a proud Morleian who attended with my colleagues Councillors Finnigan and Grayshon Twickenham on that day. This was a remarkable achievement from a small club that does not have the same access to many of the resources available to bigger clubs.

Morley Rugby Club battled and showed grit and determination in winning this competition. This is the Leeds way. This is particularly the Morley way. I formally second this resolution. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR JENNINGS: Lord Mayor, just a very brief comment to support this White Paper. As has already been referred to, that afternoon at Twickenham was a great afternoon for Yorkshire rugby, both for the Sheffield team, for Morley and for Leeds Tykes winning the Powergen Cup, which incidentally means that for the first time ever, I believe, in history the top prize for both codes of rugby are held in the same city, which is a great credit to this City.

For any rugby player to play at Twickenham is the ultimate, be it at any level, and I think in many ways the Morley achievement at its own level may be seen to be better than that of Leeds Tykes because, unlike a Premier Division team that only enters the Powergen Cup in the later stages of the tournament, Morley had to fight its way right through from the beginning when I believe there were over 200 teams involved to reach the final - a great credit to Morley and Leeds, as is the victory of Leeds Tykes. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Finnigan, do you want to comment further?

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Put it to the vote, Lord Mayor, thank you.

(The motion was carried unanimously)

ITEM 11 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - VE DAY AND VJ DAY

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 11, I understand again that we have a slight change in that I believe that Councillor Elliott is moving White Paper 11, is that right?

COUNCILLOR ELLIOTT: My Lord Mayor, I would like to propose the resolution that this Council sends grateful appreciation on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of VE Day and VJ Day to the people of Leeds and further afield who served in the Second World War. We also send our grateful thanks to those who served in the Armed Forces in current day conflicts.

Regarding Victory in Europe Day, this was on May 8th in 1945, the date when the Allies during the Second World War formally celebrated the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of Adolph Hitler's Third Reich. On that date massive celebrations took place, notably in London where over 1 million people celebrated in a carnival atmosphere the end of the European War.

The rationing of food and clothing was to continue for a number of years. In London crowds massed in particular in Trafalgar Square and up the Mall to Buckingham Palace where King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, accompanied by the Prime Minister Winston Churchill appeared on the balcony of the Palace to cheering crowds. Princess Elizabeth and her sister Princess Margaret were allowed to wander anonymously among the crowds and take part in the celebrations in London.

In the United States President Harry Truman, who celebrated his 61st birthday that day, dedicated the victory to the memory of his predecessor Franklin D. Roosevelt because he had been so committed to ending the war. Roosevelt had died less than a month earlier on April 12th.

The Allies had agreed to mark May 9th 1945 as VE Day but western journalists broke the news of Germany's surrender prematurely, precipitating the earlier celebration. The Soviet Union kept to the agreed date and Russia and other countries still commemorate the end of the Second World War, a significant part of which is known as the Great Patriotic War in Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union, as Victory Day on May 9th.

By 8th May 1945 most of Germany had already been taken by Allied Forces, hence VE Day itself was not such a drastic change for most German civilians. In the years after VE Day was predominantly perceived as the day of defeat, but over the decades this perception changed, culminating in the speech by West German President Richard von (Inaudible) on the 40th

Anniversary of VE Day in 1985 in which he called the 8th May the Day of Liberation from the Nazi Government.

Regarding VJ Day in Japan 1945, on August 6th 1945 at 8.15 the first atomic bomb was dropped from a B29 Superfortress bomber on Hiroshima. The bomb was codenamed "Little Boy". 70,000 people were killed. On August 9th 1945 the second atomic bomb was dropped from a B29 on Nagasaki. A second B29 carried Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC as an observer. On 15th August 1945 Japan surrendered. When the war in Japan ended the celebrations seemed much more subdued than the VE celebrations but nevertheless everyone celebrated in the hope that this was a war to end all wars.

In July of this year Leeds City Council are holding a special celebration to commemorate both VE Day and VJ Day. We are proud that Leeds City Council is commemorating these important events which have affected the whole world. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to second the motion now put forward by Councillor Elliott and add a few words of comment.

We are now well into losing the generation which fought the Second World War, as we have all but totally lost those who fought the First World War, but for many years we will have a lot of younger people who were children in World War II.

In both Europe and the Far East the remarkable feature of World War II was the huge number of civilian deaths, often of helpless innocents in the most awful ways. This is something we should never forget. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, that I was able to correct Councillor Lyons a few minutes ago on matters of religion, and that we can stand here today and throw insults across the chamber at each other with reasonable impunity, is entirely due to the fact that Facism was defeated in 1945, and that was Facism across the board. That sort of freedom is not easily won and we ought not to lightly forget it, just as much as we should remember everybody who fought, I think, and as Tom has mentioned, all those people, innocents who died, we ought also I think in the same breath to say thank you to the entire civilian population. It was a total effort during the last War to defeat Facism and those forces - I use the word advisedly - forces of evil they were. I don't often use that

word but I really do believe they were forces of evil.

So we have a great debt and we ought to be truly grateful and thankful and we ought not to forget what all those people have bequeathed to us. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I am very happy to associate myself and indeed all the Conservative Group with this resolution. Most of us in this Council Chamber will have had near relatives who participated in the Second World War at some level, whether it be in the Armed Forces or equally importantly in keeping morale at home at a high level and contributing to the war effort by producing armaments or indeed growing food. So most of us will have memories of very dear relatives, near relatives, who fought or worked for our victory in the Second World War.

Many of us will also have friends or relatives who unfortunately have been involved in subsequent conflicts. Judith mentioned the war to end all wars. What a great tragedy it didn't prove to be that and too many conflicts have taken place subsequently. My cousin's husband fought in the Gloucesters in Korea, and those of you who know your history will know they called them the Glorious Gloucesters. They were stranded for days on a pile of mud surrounded by Chinese and Korean troops.

Also Members of Council, of course, not long gone from this chamber, some now sadly passed away, played considerable roles actually in the fighting part of the Armed Services. One of my colleagues, Jim Bashall, who many of you will remember, was an extremely distinguished serviceman and it made me remember that many of the people who came back from the war came back seriously damaged in health and for the rest of their lives what had happened to them in the war just affected them extremely badly, shortened their lives, gave rise to all sorts of illnesses subsequently caused by their injuries or illnesses that they suffered far from home. Many of us can, I think, quote cases like that, and we should remember their service to this country.

Mark is right. It is not too strong a word to say that a cloud of evil descended on the continent of Europe. It also descended further away, and I do think we sometimes forget that in the Far East our soldiers, Australian soldiers, American soldiers, Malayan soldiers, Indian and Pakistani soldiers were

treated little better than a lot of the victims of the concentration camps when they were caught. Pictures of some of those soldiers who were captured is almost as horrific, if not as horrific, as some of the photographs we see of the atrocities in the concentration camps.

I just hope that when we all celebrate, as we will, and give thanks to the people who fought or worked for our victory in the Second World War, I just hope all of us in Europe and across the world can reflect on the comments that I think many people will make as well as you, Judith, that it was supposed to be, as was the First World War, the war to end all wars, but it simply wasn't the case, and you have to wonder how much longer we have to go on having conflicts that can be settled hopefully by reasonable people talking to each other.

Someone once said to me politics is wonderful because at the end of the day invariably you compromise, because invariably most of us in this Chamber are at bottom perfectly reasonable and can see that there can be differences of views which we argue out - we argue out between ourselves very forcibly - but at the end of the day we do come to an agreement. If only that could happen on a much wider scale then perhaps we wouldn't, or generations in the future wouldn't, have to be recording resolutions like this which, welcome though it is, really, I think, reminds us of what human nature is all about and that really perhaps we don't advance as much as we ought as the years go by. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, naturally I would like to associate our Labour Group with many of the comments that have been said, and I won't try and repeat many of them but I think it is important the point being made that it was men and women from all races and all religions that sacrificed their lives to give us the kind of peace and security we now enjoy. And, of course, as you rightly say, it wasn't just military forces, it was civilians, it was people working in munitions, it was people who were doing the Home Guard, and so on.

Councillor Bernard Atha told me a story about the bombing around this place which I think is very relevant because I understand that bombs went off in LGI, the Town Hall, indeed the Museum, and sadly and tragically on a group of flats just up by the LGI, and I think although the Hiroshima bomb is horrific in terms of its scale, some of those small stories get over the evils of war a lot more powerfully than that.

You know, originally, until the format was changed, I wanted Councillor Lyons, who did serve in the Korean War with medals, and indeed Councillor Lewis to speak instead of me because I thought that was a far more powerful message in terms of people who have served and sacrificed and the future generations who actually are here today, as you rightly say, because people sacrificed things - their lives - which I doubt very much we would get today in such a way that they did in Second World War. So, as Mark says, today, of course it is going to get heated, of course there are going to be insults, of course there is going to be anger, but above all we ought to remember ---

COUNCILLOR LYONS: That's only the Labour Group.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Yes, that's just us falling out, yes, but we ought to just remember why we are allowed to do this. And I think there is something a bit more: we are public representatives and public Councils and I think Andrew is right. In a sense these resolutions are important, but we have also got a duty and a responsibility to make sure those people you have talked about who came over for the War, were injured, ill health and so on, they are looked after by public servants and public service, and I think if anything that is something that we should remember every day of the year and also celebrate both Armistice Day and days like this.

I think July 17th, as Judith mentioned, is a great opportunity for all of us to go along to the Town Hall - I think that is where some of the -- 3 o'clock and 4 o'clock - and I would want as many people in Leeds to do that because all we need to say to people is, the people who sacrificed, sadly many of them not here, is thank you because what you have done is allow us to become a great City and a great country for your sacrifices. I move, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, I would like to join and associate our Group with this motion. War is a very, very evil thing but on occasions is necessary, and 60 years ago it was necessary. Total evil existed in Germany and in Japan and, to protect things like ourselves, democracy, and so we can do what we do today, a generation of people had to give up their youth.

I am also glad to see within the motion it mentions the

people who served out in the Far East. As some of you know, my father, who died a week last Friday, served out in the Far East. He spent about three years in his early twenties out there, taken away from his family, thousands and thousands of miles away from his kith and kin, but, I mean, at least he came back. A lot of people didn't come back, and we owe a great, great debt to those people. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor, the reason that I am in Leeds is that my dad served in the First World War in the (?)Connaught Rangers, an Irish regiment. He was gassed and lost the use of his right hand so they put them on the troop ships and sent them across and then on trains and he finished up in Leeds in a military hospital in Leeds.

After the First World War, he had to keep coming back for operations, so my mam said, "We're fed up of you going back to Leeds" so they all got together on a train, me with them, and we came back to Leeds. That is how I come to be annoying the Liberals and Tories and, by the way, my dad was a member of the Labour Party.

But as far as I am concerned what they said then, and as a lad I remember it, "Homes fit for heroes to live in" was the banners. That's why I joined the Labour Party, because they didn't come up with their promises, but taking it on from there, during the war my brother served in the Gordon Highlanders. He was missing and was wounded, and so war to me, you know when they started in the sixties wearing them badges, "Make love not war", that's what I was wearing, "Make love not war". Now I wonder what it's about. I don't know much about war and I've forgotten all I knew about love!
(Laughter)

It goes on. The hardships and the normal people that lived in Leeds, when you talk about bombing places like this, it was more important to us that lived on the estates in the city that they were aiming for the marshalling yards and that was Leeds City Station, Marsh Lane, Neville Hill and across there, and they must have been drinking schnapps or summat because they missed most of them and hit the pub. They hit one of the pubs. It didn't matter because we had a lot more pubs, but they hit the chip shop. They bombed our chip shop. That is a fact, is that, they bombed our chip shop and the direct hits that they scored on was schools up Ellerby Lane,

different places like that. We thought, you know, as far as we were concerned, going to school, it was wonderful going to school then. They boarded all the windows up and put tape on and all that. You didn't get caned as much, and I went to a Catholic school and you always got the bloody cane at a Catholic school.

But if you go on about the war and the people that served in the wars, what we should be thinking about is that we are stood here in a place where it should be democracy and argue out our differences with democracy. We should be all very proud that we represent the people of Leeds and enabled to do it and we are only here because of people who lost millions and millions of people trying to do it.

I fortunately or unfortunately got called up and I was in the Northumberland Fusiliers, and I was on that same hill next to the Gloucesters, and it was alright but your corned beef got all warm in this kind of weather, so that's the only thing there. But it was tragic all the way round because people that you knew one day you had to leave behind, and we didn't bring our dead out, we left them and went back and buried them later, not like American Marines, but thousands and thousands of people in Leeds and the people that I represent and the people that I go to the homes for, you can see photographs of a young lad with sergeant's stripes up and you are taking to an 80 or 90 year old chap. They were the people that went forward. There was no suggestion whatsoever of them not going. Everybody did it and everybody went forward.

I willingly joined in this support to say to those that are left, but we have forgotten a hell of a lot because we are still fighting damn wars. We are still going to war. We are still saying which is the best gun to kill somebody with. You know, one of these days it will stop but until it does we can just keep arguing in this chamber. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Lyons. I am told that Councillor James Lewis who was to follow Councillor Lyons has decided that he is not going to attempt to do that. I can't say that I blame him. He has withdrawn. Can I then go on to Councillor Feldman to comment.

COUNCILLOR FELDMAN: My Lord Mayor, Judith commented about the fact that how many people in London went to the Palace.

I think that she doesn't realise possibly, living in Morley, how many people in Leeds went to celebrate. I was a young lad at the time and there's not many here who will remember that when the war ended there somehow seemed to be an urge to come to town. I don't know why it was. We all walked to town and I have never ever been in such a crush as there was in town. I have been to football matches, Cup finals and everything, but it was absolutely impossible. I went down with four friends to Leeds and I hate to admit it, I lost three of them, and one couldn't wander around - you just went along with the surge.

I remember going up Park Row where the Art Gallery had been when it had been actually hit by an incendiary bomb. You didn't go where you wanted, you just went where the crowd went.

There was that feeling that the war had ended. Everyone had had family who were in the Army. My brother had been in the Army. Others had had relatives all over and there was this tremendous urge. It wasn't only in London, Judith, it was throughout the country, everybody wanted to go and end up most probably as we did somewhere round the Town Hall because you couldn't move, as I say, you went with the crowd.

My only other point is this, there is a famous song that says, "When will they ever learn?" and I think it is the most poignant statement that can ever be made. "When will they ever learn?" Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR ELLIOTT: My Lord Mayor, Ronnie is quite right. I am sure that there were celebrations throughout the whole of England, if not the whole of the world, but I do have to admit that I wasn't old enough to remember what was going on at the time. That's my excuse and I am sticking to it.

I appreciate what has been said around the chamber. I am sure that we could stay here all evening hearing people reminisce if not of their own experiences of family's experiences, so I thank everybody again, and thank you very much, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

(The motion was carried)

ITEM 12 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - PROVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: My Lord Mayor, I think that was the only debate in history of the City Council that includes reference to Hiroshima and Councillor Lyons' sex life.

(Laughter) I imagine it was.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: They are both explosive!

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: How do you know?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: What Mick has told me.

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: What does Marlene ---?

Lord Mayor, I will not take long because what I have to say is not at all controversial. (Laughter) I must also stress it does not apply to all Members of the Opposition. A few regular offenders on the other side but most Members opposite seem to understand what we are trying to do.

Some of us in Social Services get regularly cheesed off with a small-minded persistent denigration of social services, the accidental or conceivably deliberate misuse of incorrect statistics and the use of incorrect individual circumstances that are miles away from the truth.

Now, we are all used to letters in the Evening Post, and that is legitimate politics, but a lot of us find that if you try and trace these people who write letters to the Evening Post the streets don't exist, the people don't exist, and people who are closely involved with the Labour Party (Interruptions) make party political points and forget to tell us that they are connected to the Labour Party, so there is some imaginative correspondence to the Evening Post.

But some of this misinformation that we grumble about comes from real people. In the Evening Post on March 7th Keith spoke of £4 million worth of cuts. In the Evening Post on April 9th, after the General Election had been announced it became £8 million worth of cuts. There is a lady in Keith's ward who was told to use a Chinese takeaway. The first time she was told this she was 90. A month later she was 91. A month later she was 80.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: It is all that Chinese food.

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: I have spoken to the social worker who helped this lady and he thanked me for taking the time to correct this story in the letter to the Evening Post.

Councillor Atha claimed in the Evening Post that we were moving 3,000 people out of home help care, he said. As the great orator to me once said, "Garbage". Also in the letter he accused us of removing medical support from drug-users. Now, what on earth is medical support to do with Leeds City Council? We don't have any doctors or nurses. Medical support comes from the National Health Service, not Social Services. Could somebody explain that to him?

It is this repetition of cuts that makes these ramblings so annoying. I have said it before and I will say it again. Your last budget was £184 million. The Coalition budget is £200 million. Social Services are spending more this year, this month, today, 10% more than you thought was necessary. More money is being put into social services, more into children's services, more into adult services, more into people with learning difficulties services than the Labour Party wanted, and that is the truth that one or two Members opposite find indigestible.

We have a duty in law - Labour law - to review all cases. "Cases" is the wrong word, but you know what I mean. When we had the Social Services Joint Review 2 years ago they said we weren't very good at that and we ought to accelerate that. The Audit Commission, the Social Services Inspectorate said we were not as good as we should be. Therefore we tried to put it right.

I don't want to talk about individual cases and I would recommend that nobody else does, but that is over to you, but people's circumstances change and different packages of care are appropriate. When we did the review, we came across the file of a lady who had a hysterectomy and from whom we had recently withdrawn some services. She had the operation 12 years ago and she was wondering why people kept going round every week all these years later.

I sit down now and let's see what you have got to say for yourselves. When I sum up later I want to take up some aspects of the press release that came out last week from the Labour Party and ---

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Why don't you say it now?

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: I don't want to bore you. It will bore you later. (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: We have nothing to hide.

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Mark earlier on described you as dinosaurs. You remind me of those horses at the end of the Grand National. You know those horses that are in front of everybody else and can jump and go round all the fences because they have got no jockey. They have got no jockeys. They have thrown off the jockeys. They have no responsibilities. They can run faster, going off in all directions. They don't have to carry the responsibility. Over on this side, we still have our jockeys, we still have our responsibilities. You can chase around all over the place.

Lord Mayor, the resolution only asks for the truth, and that is all we require from Members opposite. I will come back to the other aspects later. Thank you very much.
(Applause)

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

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, what Councillor Harrand has done is opened up two issues. One is the integrity of the people who have been dealing with cases, and the woman I mentioned is an actual case. He knows that to be true and I can certainly take him around to the house tomorrow, and I think there are many people who have got cases here, and I think our integrity is being questioned.

The second thing he is doing is actually trying to distort the impact of the cuts that people are feeling now with the withdrawal of services, and I do find it, Peter, pretty rich about telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth because some of us can remember Fairer Charges when the seconder of this motion here whipped up a frenzy with the most vulnerable disabled people in this City to pack out this place and on the streets to tell people they would be a lot worse off. Was that actually telling the whole truth, nothing but the truth? Did he once say on their leaflet that there were going to be people who were going to be better off? And they were under Fairer Charging. No. So I do think, Peter, that kind of comment, "The whole truth and nothing but the truth" is pretty rich when many of us can remember the Fairer Charges debate and you were successful. You did whip up anxiety, correct. They were coming in here and marching up and down.

There were letters everywhere, but not many were truthful, and that was sad.

But I think it is very dangerous when people, Councillors, start talking about telling the truth as if they are the only ones who tell it and everybody else doesn't. Let me just question some of the statements you have made and whether you could be questioned whether you were telling the truth, and I refer to the 14th of the 7th last year '04. "Councillor Harrand would like to thank Mr. Gaye and his colleagues in Finance for their understanding of this problem and helping paper over the cracks. We are now in a position to assure Members of Council that actions have been taken that will guarantee that this potential disaster will have no impact on front line services."

Question 2, the same day, "As the decisions have been made, well, again I will tell you elsewhere how we did that but I can assure you it had no effect on direct services to elderly people and to children in this City."

Even more rich, and I know people or Councillor Harris was saying on the 8th of the 9th, "I am interested in providing more social services", but the other quote, Peter, on the 12th of the 1st this year, "Can I make it clear again, we are not closing any day centres. We are not closing any day centres", he repeated. "We are suspending for a few weeks the Saturday and Sunday provision of meals. They will be resumed after a few weeks when we have got the staff sorted out." Is that the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Of course it is not, and the fact is the truth is this, that there were £4.5 million cut from Social Services' budget when they introduced an eligibility which took 3,000 people out, and there is a further 1.5 million people been cut.

And so you can't just --- It is illogical. (Interruptions) Yes, it went to the Executive Board last time. You cannot introduce the scale of those cuts and not expect it to have some impact. The £300,000 you have given to the voluntary sector works out at £100 each and can I say, and I spoke to you at tea-time, there are some of those voluntary sectors that have been asked to pick up cases that have not been given any extra money.

So what do you have? What do we have? We have cases that I have been out to see yesterday just to make sure. We

have a 70-year old man -- sorry, 80 has suffered from cuts. He has one lung and one kidney and he has had his cleaning withdrawn. I have another case here, a guy who was blind and left with a directory of numbers to go and get help. The truth is that you cannot make those cuts and just hope that the voluntary sector pick it up because they have not got the capacity, they have not got the courage, and the truth is there are people being taken out of that, and you and I know that. I have got many more cases here which you agree with, Peter, that have been suffering as a result of the cuts, and really to come here and say that we are not telling the truth is misleading. There will be hundreds more that have been withdrawn, and I just say this, you can't make cuts without the pain, and that's exactly what you have done. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRISON: Lord Mayor, I was absolutely astounded to read this White Paper when it was submitted. I cannot believe that such respected Councillors as Peter Harrand and Mark Harris are suggesting that members of the Labour Group have taken part in scaremongering. I and my colleagues who have been committed on Social Services provision have never misrepresented the truth and certainly have never ever been involved in scaremongering. Anybody who knows me knows that I would never ever take part in any scaremongering to do with any elderly person.

I have met with individuals who have had their services withdrawn. I have met with various neighbourhood networks groups who have come to ask me for help because the new sign-posting system is not working. The neighbourhood networks have been inundated with calls from elderly people who Social Services have redirected and who are not equipped to help. The overwhelming feeling among this sector is that Social Services are pushing the problem onto the voluntary sector and forcing them to take the responsibility for people's welfare.

It saddens me that the Exec Board Member responsible for social care appears to be so out of touch at what is happening among the elderly in Leeds. I know Peter is an honourable and caring man who is concerned about the welfare of older people, but I am also concerned that he is not fully aware of the seriousness of the situation.

It is heartbreaking to hear some of the cases that I have heard over the last few weeks, some that I would not like to mention in this chamber. There are minuted examples. There

is no scaremongering, and this is what is happening in Leeds.

I think it is about time the ruling administration took some responsibility and started to recognise the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: My Lord Mayor, I do hope, by the way, we can sort out these microphones. When certain people have been speaking it sounds as if they are surrounded by ghostly beings, poltergeists or whatever. Do I sound okay? Can you hear me? Right.

Very surprised at Peter's motion. In fact, in all my years on Council I have never actually seen anything like this.

It is very vague, isn't it? It just smears everybody in the Labour Group and then we think we can't wait to hear what Peter has to say because obviously he will come forward with hard evidence, and then he has the gall to tell us well, actually, he has got a news release but he is not planning to -- he is not going to read it out to Council, he is going to wait until he gets to summing up because he knows then that nobody has got a right of reply. This hardly democratic, Peter. You should do better than that.

I am going to raise an issue I have raised before and there has been an absolutely deathly silence every time I have raised it. It is the Breece at Scarborough. The Breece at Scarborough. It is unique, really, because we think it is the only hotel in the UK which is also a registered care home and it provides accommodation for many, many people throughout the year and it is a valued resource. There was an idea it could be closed. In fact, when the Labour party was in power we actually considered it and we got a lot of objections and we reconsidered.

It has a value which can't really be replaced by other types of holidays because when we went - when Andrew and I went - many of the people there were not the sort of people who could sort of jump on a jet and go to Benidorm for two weeks because the facilities are there. It has got a lift. It has got support staff. It has got lots of things that you couldn't possibly have anywhere else.

Now, there is an argument for talking about how it is managed, how it is run, how capital investment would take place, and we recently met with Rosemary Archer, didn't we, and we had an honest discussion about all of that. But the

budget, of course, shows a cut this year and next year, and these are real cuts. These are real cuts, subsidies going, and the year after. Cumulative savings of £600,000, and when I spoke in Council in February I quoted Peter, who had been happy enough to go in the Evening Post and say he had absolutely no proposals at all to shut The Breece.

Well, we were puzzled by this because we had been told it was closing, and the ruling administration had taken the line out of the budget for three years in a row. That is where you get your £600,000 savings from. That is the subsidy for the place. Now, you are either closing it or not closing it, or you have got some other plan. I mean, I know Peter wrote to every Councillor, and I suspect he is going to tell us in a few minutes how many bookings that has led to. I suspect it might be up from zero.

It is a funny thing, this, because I rang up trying to get my father in, who doesn't live in Leeds and, by the way, for people who come from outside of Leeds we actually make a slight - we don't call it profit but we more than cover the costs, let me put it like that, because we don't make a loss when people go there from outside of Leeds. In fact, when we went there were people there from Nottinghamshire and Bradford, weren't there? But I rang up. Would you believe, you wouldn't find any hotel in the world that did this. You ring up, can you have a room. Think of any hotel, any boarding-house. Not on the day I rang because on that particular day they didn't deal with telephone queries for taking bookings. You know, it is like something out of Soviet Russia, isn't it? It is just not believable. If you are serious about taking bookings as a hotel, you need to make sure that you have adequately staffed the place, Peter, to make sure the people who are working there can take the bookings.

Anyway, you have chopped the subsidy, and then we heard a rumour that once you got the General Election out of the way you would be coming back with some paper to the Exec Board. Well, there hasn't been one so far. Now, when I asked in February you were sitting over there and I couldn't see your facial expression but my colleagues sitting over there said that you put your head down as close as you could between your knees, but I couldn't see it because you were obstructed by some prominent Conservatives, but you are sitting over there and I am looking you straight in the face.

We don't like your motion. We think it is a load of rubbish. However, this is your golden opportunity to stand up in Council, Peter. You said it in the Evening Post. You went public, "No proposals to close". You still voted for your own budget, slashing £600,000 subsidy, 100% of the subsidy for three years. It seems to me you have got no plan or, if you have a plan perhaps I will give way. I offered to give way in February. That's what it says, and then there were interruptions. There was deathly silence. No, there were interruptions as well. And I have got a minute so I am willing to give you 60 seconds to give way so you can tell Council now, or are you going to wait until your summing up? Wait till your summing up, like everything else, you see.

COUNCILLOR FELDMAN: It is not your prerogative to give time.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: There is a convention where Members can give way. Bernard does it very often. (Interruptions)
So there we are. You remain silent. You attack Labour Councillors for something and you have got no evidence. If this was a court of law the judge would have already stopped the proceedings, and you had more than one opportunity, Peter, to deal with The Breece and here is your chance today. We plead with you now, when you get up on your feet give us something firm about The Breece. Thank you very much.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I know, of course, you, Lord Mayor, will pay great attention to the summing-up, because it says in the rules that the summing-up should not introduce new material but simply refer to what has already been in the public domain during the debate, so if Councillor Harrand is saving up all his little bits and pieces for later then hopefully that won't be the case.

Anyway, I want to talk about the day centres, and I want to just refer to the resolution, because if Councillor Harrand had come here and said to all of us, "This is such an important area I am imploring all of us in Council to only tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth", that would have been one thing but, of course, he assumes that this lot always tell the truth, nothing but the truth, and all this lot tell nothing but the untruths, always the untruths, and that is slandering and libelling.

Now I remember Councillor Cater, Andrew Carter, when he

was over here, it could have been over there, and he stood up (Interruptions) Hang on, and he stood up and what he said is, "I won't take lessons from you. I will not allow you to take the high moral ground and put us ---" Yes? Remember? On a number of issues. Now, this is exactly the same. You are trying to take the high moral ground as if you always tell the truth, all of the truth.

Now, in the day centres rarely has there been a more scandalous situation of how that came about. None of the Ward Members knew about it. Officers are taking decisions without any remit to anybody else, and we then had a new phrase invented called, well, these were managerial, operational decisions. These were operational decisions which nobody is accountable for and therefore another one of Councillor Carter's credentials he said to us, "You are quite right to hold us to account. If we do something wrong, hold us to account." We tried to hold you to account. We couldn't find a minute. We couldn't find anything. It was all hidden. Now, is that fair play? Is that the way you want to conduct yourself in Social Services?

In the end, I appealed to the Monitoring Officer and her great good commonsense on this occasion, she did actually go back, I think, to the Officers in Social Services and say they had to make a decision. Either it was a key decision or a major decision but they couldn't just carry on saying, "Well, we are not making a decision. This temporary thing is going to carry on a little bit longer. We have not closed them really, we have only closed them for Saturdays and Sundays so we haven't done much, and nobody has complained because we have just shoved them somewhere else, and they are quite happy wherever else they are, but we haven't got back to give them the alternative offer that they could return, and we haven't told Council how much money it is costing, what we are saving, etc., etc.", and all this went on and on and on. And now, suddenly, we have had our further letter because Nicole has spoken, must be obeyed, and so there must be a letter come round now that says to us, "Ward Members, we are consulting you now. We are about to take a decision." We still haven't seen the decision but I can tell you with no authority whatsoever the decision will be exactly the same one he made before but it will now be permanent instead of it being temporary and Ward Members comments will be totally ignored. They might get one little byline in the mention somewhere, "We have consulted Ward Members and they are all opposed to it",

and that is all it will say.

Is that the kind of truth that you are talking about from your side? I really don't think you want to do that. Really this is a misguided resolution. It is an offensive resolution because people deal with casework properly. Earlier on we could have made hay in the debate about the North-West SILC, about comments made by Councillor Bale. Did we do that? No, we didn't. We said we respect him as an individual. We respect that he was talking in good faith. We respect that he had been given information which he took in good faith, and we respect the fact that then he got it wrong because that is how he was briefed, but it wasn't his fault and we are not blaming him for it and not saying, "Hey, you are not speaking the whole truth all the time", are we? No, we are not, because that would be unfair on him, and you are being totally mischievous and unfair on us, and this resolution does not deserve support. Actually I think you ought to withdraw it. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR J. HARPER: My Lord Mayor, like my colleagues I also was very upset - we are echoing, aren't we, round the chamber? - when I saw this White Paper which clearly infers that some of us may have made misleading statements.

Council may recall that I spoke about the need for respite care and the shortage of the electronic profiling beds. Mr. Howgate is 78 and he is the sole carer of his 80 year old wife. I have to tell you, my Lord Mayor, that it was only after I raised this matter in Council - in fact it was only three days after I raised this matter in Council - that Mrs. Howgate was offered respite care at Halcyon Court, and for that I am grateful.

On 18th May I wrote to Social Services Department and stated that now the occupational therapist had assessed Mrs. Howgate and recommended the profiling bed, when would this 80-year old lady be likely to get one? I have to tell you, Council, that the response from Social Services did not arrive until 10.52 a.m. this morning - this morning - more than 4 weeks later and really it offered no solution for this couple.

Now, I think that is appalling. I also, of course, have electronic confirmation of this, so I am clearly not lying.

Finally, my Lord Mayor, I have to apologise now because unintentionally I may have been misleading at the last Council. At that time I believed what I was saying to be correct. I

stated that 15 people were on the waiting list for the electronic profiling beds. Mr. Howgate was told he would have to wait 2 to 3 years for a bed, so he did further research, bless him, and he now tells me that there aren't 15 people waiting for these beds. In fact there are 50 - 50. I have written to Social Services asking for some support for my constituents and no doubt I will get that report at the eve of the next Council. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR SELBY: My Lord Mayor, when I looked at the wording of this White Paper I thought, well, what the hell does this mean? What I tried to work out when this resolution was drafted and how it was drafted and the only feeling I could come was it was drafted after a very enjoyable lunch on Friday and they drafted it on the back of one of Les Carter's discarded fag packets because ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I don't smoke, sir, believe me.

COUNCILLOR SELBY: A fag packet that had been retrieved by Councillor Harrand from the tip. It is as bad as that on the face of it, but that is just the drafting. When one actually goes further into this White Paper, what it is really down to is certain Members opposite do not like being criticised. They do not like their shortcomings being exposed.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Speak for yourself, sir.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Just be very careful.

COUNCILLOR SELBY: Let's take, for example, the issue that Councillor Taggart has just raised, The Breece. He has asked lots of questions. He has raised issues about this. He asked a question in Council last time, which for some reason was filibustered out. When we got the answer, just about two days - on a Friday afternoon just before Bank Holiday, which was when it came, we got a very sort of vague answer that all but confirms Councillor Taggart's suspicions. Why was that information not given to Council when Councillor Taggart asked earlier?

We have got this resolution. It says "regular scaremongering". Well, what degree of regularity are we talking about? Is that asking a question, is that scaremongering? When we talk about scaremongering, could you

perhaps define what you mean by "scaremongering". Is asking questions about day centres scaremongering, or querying what is going on? Which Councillors are you talking about? Because we are still waiting to hear. We have got this promise, this promise in the summing up that we are going to be told, in which case no doubt those who are named will have the opportunity, no doubt, Lord Mayor, you will allow anybody who is named by Councillor Harrand to respond to defend themselves.

So what I would invite Councillor Harrand to do is to exercise his right, you know, come on now, tell us who you are talking about, what was said, when it was said, in what circumstances was it said? Because if you don't, if you don't, then in years to come somebody is going to write to somebody like Councillor Brett when they look at the division list and say, "Why, Councillor Brett, did you vote for this resolution? What information did you have that enabled you to make this decision?" An elector no doubt in Temple Newsam might well write to Councillor Schofield and say, "What were the circumstances that led you to vote for this White Paper?" and at the moment all we have heard from Councillor Harrand is, well, Councillor Wakefield said something which Councillor Harrand claims to be wrong and Councillor Wakefield says is correct, and a minor remark made by Councillor Atha. That is all we have. So can I suggest that you either withdraw this White Paper now or provide the evidence. I appreciate that is difficult in your group because you quite often, you quite regularly make allegations in this Council chamber against people, accusing them of doing various things. We had it last year from Councillor Carter when he accused Councillor Taggart of fixing the boundaries, called upon to produce evidence, never did so.

When we had the debate about Landmark Leeds, what did we have then? We had an attack upon people who were not here, no opportunity to defend, and the remarks, "We believe they have done this. We believe that." Attacks on unnamed people, smear, smear and smear again, and that is basically what this White Paper is about. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, continuing on with the smear sort of theme, I hold up, "Vote for Joe", a Labour-produced document. There we are. The face that launched a thousand ships, all of them emigrating. We can point to the actual stuff at this particular point about evidence. "Independents propose £5 million cuts in social services for

pensioners", and this is where it gets quite interesting. Blah-blah-blah, "Not only did the Independent Councillors fail to support Labour in their bid to stop the Tory/Liberal", I am afraid you, David - oh, he is not here. Oh yes you are. You were ignored in this particular one; it is not your fault, apparently. "... stop the Tory-Liberal controlled Council implementing £4 million worth of cuts, they went one step further than the Tory-led Council by proposing a further cut of £1 million, meaning £5 million in total." So no matter what you are doing, apparently we are doing substantially worse than that.

But we would like to say (Interruptions) that we believe in Morley we contributed more to preventing the biggest cut that could possibly have happened to Social Services in the Leeds City Council area by getting rid of Councillor Sherree Bradley. (Applause) And we are proud of that because that £15 million black hole would have been a cut that would have substantially impacted upon pensioners and disabled people across the whole Leeds City Council area. (Interruptions)

Now, we must say we are in a situation where Sherree Bradley will be challenging us next year. Now, we are clearly quaking in our boots about that particular one and we might wish to point out to the people of Morley, who had the great judgment to dump her, about what they are likely to get at that particular point. But let's leave that particular smear to one side.

Let's deal with the fabrications that you get with the Labour Party. Now in Morley we have something called the Dorothy Sanders Experience, and you might be thinking, what's that about, the Dorothy Sanders Experience? Shall I tell you?

Shall I tell you, Brian? We got this letter in the local Morley papers from Dorothy Sanders lambasting us for all sorts of cuts involving pensioners. We thought, "This is a bit severe. This is not only severe, it is unfair", so what we thought we would do, we thought we would go and find Dorothy Sanders and perhaps speak to her. So we looked her up, not on the electoral register - not altogether surprising ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: It wasn't Peter Gruen's auntie, was it?

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Looked in the phone book. Was she in the phone book? No. So we thought, if all else fails, what we will actually do is go along the whole street she

claims to live on, knock on every door and say, "Are you Dorothy Sanders?"

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: They are not going to tell you that, are they? Not with your reputation. Nobody is going to do that.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Can you guess what happens next? Can you guess what happens next? Knock on every door. One particular door we don't knock on belongs to the Chairman of Morley Labour Party. (Applause) Good Lord, what a coincidence, but it gets even better, Brian. So what we do later on, then, we go back and look through some of the back copies of the Morley papers to see if there are any other of these letters. We find an A. Carter lives on the Newlands. Now, unless you have moved into our area and not told us about it --- We are suspicious. Check the electoral register. Were they on? (Cries of "No") Check the phone book, were they on? (Cries of "No") Knock on the streets, can we find them anywhere? (Cries of "No") So this is getting even more and more suspicious. These are all very positive pro-Labour letters, so we look again and we have an L. Gallagher who lives at East Ardsley, surprisingly, just down the road from our Labour MP, so is he on the electoral register? (Cries of "No") Is he in the phone book? (Cries of "No") Can he be found anywhere in the East Ardsley area? No, he can't. All of them are absolutely consistent. We are in a situation where time and time and time again this sort of tripe is smeared by the papers without any accuracy involved, but ultimately the responsibility for this should be borne by the Labour Government.

Are we spending more money than the Labour Government said we should be doing on Social Services? (Cries of "Yes") Why are this lot not going back and ramming it down their MPs' throats that we need the extra money to prevent these sort of difficult decisions we have got to make? And that is ultimately the most glorious of hypocrisies. (Applause and interruptions)

THE LORD MAYOR: Members of Council, please. Thank you. Thank you, Councillor Finnigan, and thank you also the chorus.

COUNCILLOR BLACKBURN: My Lord Mayor, I thought I was supposed to be doing the acting job but, Robert, you did a really good job

there. Let's get summat straight here. You know, every verse end, every leaflet, there are one or two scattered around here, every Labour leaflet talks about cuts in this, cuts in that, cuts in the other. Right, 12 months ago when we took power Peter come running to us and had a meeting with Councillor Carter, myself and Councillor Harris and told us about the big, deep hole in Social Services' spending that you had left us. The fact is that you don't cut Social Services, you just don't put enough in the budget. (Interruptions)

We took the necessary actions to bring that under control and we have put more money in, and we put more money in this year, more money than you have ever put in, so don't come to us about cuts. If it were left to you, we would be finished. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR CARTER: My Lord Mayor, of one thing 98 Members of this Council can be absolutely certain: if any of us ever attain the moral high ground, Peter Gruen will not be on it. (Laughter) Nor will he ever reach it. Whether the rest of us ever do is a matter for debate.

My Lord Mayor, I don't know about other Members of Council but I am getting an increasing mailbag of complaints about ---

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Grass-cutting.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: As well as grass-cutting. -- not Leeds Social Services but the NHS, the delays, the infection.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Rubbish.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Rubbish? The infection. Talk to your constituents. Talk to some real constituents. Talk to some real constituents, for preference. (Interruptions) Talk to some real constituents. (Interruptions) My Lord Mayor, next week I shall be going to the second appeal with my constituents to the National Health Service over alleged mistreatment. I have to say that it is quite a new experience actually going with your constituents, for me, to a National Health appeal where the patients are claiming serious, serious maladministration. I am not judging it whether it is right or wrong. (Interruptions) Shut up, Ted. It is a serious matter. When we want a Liverpudlian comedian, we will ask for one. (Interruption)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hanley, you are out of order. Sit down. Sit down.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, later today we will be debating a very serious resolution that has been put down by Councillor Finnigan, one which I shall be supporting, along with a number of my colleagues. As that particular issue has been on the boil for some time, I am sure Members opposite must have known about it. Why is it that they never come here with some of the stories we are all getting about problems in the National Health Service? Why is it they never do?

The other issue, which I think is very important, is about these letters from people who apparently don't exist. Now, where are these letters coming from? I think it is a fairly serious issue. There has already been a television programme about people planted in the Labour Party's dirty tricks department to see, you know, exactly what went on during the General Election. That was a revelation - if anyone wants to see the film, I will let them have it - about people who were planted in the media, people who were planted as so-called residents, who weren't, who put fictitious letters in the paper, not least the Evening Post, from people who don't exist.

It appears still to be going on. Now, where are these coming from? I sincerely hope they are not coming from the fourth floor of Leeds Civic Hall, the left-hand side of the fourth floor of Leeds Civic Hall.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: My Lord Mayor, point of order, is this what the Councillor is saying? Is this what the Councillor is saying?

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we just have clarification? Which point of order are you speaking on?

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: The statement that false letters are coming from the fourth floor of this Hall. That is what he said.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: No, I didn't.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am sorry, that is not a valid point of order. If you wish to raise the issue with the Councillor who is making the statement, you will have to do it outside this chamber. I don't mind if you do it with pistols at dawn but we really must --- No, seriously, colleagues, we really must

make some headway. Until the last three speakers, I thought we had done reasonably well. At the moment, we seem to be deteriorating. Can we please observe the procedural rules, Councillor Lyons, and everybody else, and then we will get through much better. Thank you very much.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I have now spent 2 minutes of my allotted time ---

THE LORD MAYOR: We shall add you a minute.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: -- while Councillor Hanley rattled on from the back.

THE LORD MAYOR: We shall add you a minute on, Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I repeat, I said, "I hope fictitious letters are not coming from the fourth floor, the left-hand side." I will repeat it again if you wish, Councillor Hanley. It is clear to your colleagues, they are nodding. If it is not to you, I don't really show much wonder. Right.

My Lord Mayor, I do not know why the Labour Party have the cheek to impugn the honesty of Councillor Harrand. One thing has changed.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I didn't.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I am sorry, but Councillor Wakefield did. My Lord Mayor one thing has certainly changed in Social Services in the last 12 months. We have replaced an incompetent Social Services Chair with a highly competent Social Services Chair.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: My Lord Mayor, on a point of personal explanation, which I think is 14.1.

THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES: 14.16.

THE LORD MAYOR: Carry on.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I did not impugn the integrity of Councillor Peter Harrand. I did say one might question whether it is truthful or not. Just like you, I used a weasel word so I couldn't come out, and I would never question --- In fact, many of us recognise that Peter Harrand is an honest

person who is committed to --- We like him, but in actual fact he was not impugned by me or any other colleague.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I accept the apology, Lord Mayor.
(Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Lord Mayor, you should intervene now ---

THE LORD MAYOR: I think you are absolutely right, Councillor Atha. The situation is that you might disagree with what a speaker is saying but you are not allowed under the regulations to disrupt the debate, even though you may disagree with what he is saying. Councillor Wakefield made a perfectly proper point of personal explanation.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I accepted it.

THE LORD MAYOR: If, in fact, he is not satisfied with the response to that then he will have to raise it elsewhere but he has made it, he is entitled to make it, and it has been noted. Can we finish this particular bit of the debate? Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, of course the bottom line of this debate is simply this, that this administration has put millions of more pounds into the Social Services' budget because we are committed to helping the most vulnerable in this City. It is £1.5 million more than Government guidelines, their Government guidelines. It is more than they ever spent on Social Services.

If Councillor Wakefield wanted to tell the truth about what was going on, this is what he would say. He would say, and he could say quite legitimately, we would spend £3 million more than the administration are doing, not that we have cut Social Services. How is it a cut from £181 million to £200 million? I have to say you understand why they made such a financial mess of the City when they can't understand that £19 million is actually one heck of an increase.

My Lord Mayor, what is annoying this side again is that the people opposite, three times they tried to close all the day centres. Three times they tried to shut the lot and three times backed down. We have closed no day centres. They go on about privatising services. Councillor Atha voted for the

biggest privatisation in the history of this City with elderly people's care beds.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Carter, I'm sorry, we have allowed you two and a half minutes extra.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, before we finish up with some facts, because the Labour Group have introduced trial by anecdote again, I will give way in 10 seconds for anybody on that side who wants to stand up and tell me why Social Services under your administration abandoned my dying mother. I will give you 10 seconds to answer me.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I will accept the offer and say if I have ever heard a more specious request to Members, that is disgusting. How on earth anyone can use politically the death of his mother in this way is a disgrace, and it shames you in a way which I would never have accepted. Now, you have given way, give me the chance to speak because I am not going to have, and we aren't going to have, the fact that the Leader of the Council over there, when he hears a proper statement under Standing Orders saying you misrepresented me, he then says, "I accept your apology". That is disgraceful. You did not. You did not accept that you had misrepresented his statement, and when you talk about the problem of going before hospitals with a patient who has got a problem, I'll tell you I have been Chairman of the Tribunals that heard (Interruptions) medical administration. It is open and clear, and so I would say to this side, if we can retain the high ground, we should never sink to the levels we have just seen from Councillor Carter. (Applause) Thank you very much.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: You see, Lord Mayor, that illustrates what happens when you try and conduct a debate like this on anecdotal evidence. That is exactly the point. It is an absurd way to try and do anything, and you are quite right to take me to task for introducing that issue. Well, I am trying to demonstrate the point and stick to the facts, and let's keep these daft anecdotes out of the debate. (Interruptions) Excuse me, my mother was a person. I mean, you might not think so but I definitely think she was.

Now, here are some facts. Do you want the good news or the bad news? If I were you, I would take the good news

first. The good news is in the promised review of Social Services under your administration, which I have got the report in front of me which will be put to Executive Board in the next few weeks, it clearly says that the auditors could find no evidence that the previous administration deliberately set a misleading budget for Social Services, so when I said previously that I thought that's what you had done, I apologise to you. It doesn't appear that (Interruptions) Well, it is a bit late. It doesn't appear that information is available.

But now is the bad news, because you want to read what the rest of the report says, and here are some tasty little bits about the way in which you conducted the Social Services budget. It says, "On the evidence of discussions we believe the position arose due to lack of accurate information for projecting the position of weaknesses in the budgetary control process including difficulty relating financial and non-financial information systems to each other." Well, if ever there was an indictment that you are not able to connect the two issues up, what was going on over there?

What else does it say? Well, it says that in 2003/4 you identified three specific areas of overspend and that exactly the same three areas appeared in the following year which you were unable to correct, and then it goes on to say that there appears to be evidence that you then changed the budget in order to create the figures necessary to create a balanced budget.

Lord Mayor, those are the facts arising out of this report which, as I have said previously, does not suggest that you were deliberately misleading but it is proof positive, as Andrew Carter said, that you were completely and utterly incompetent.

In 2003/4 there was a £10 million overspend in Social Services from the original budget. If you look at the previous 8 years the variation had been £1 million or £2 million, and then it jumped to £10 million. Anybody with half a brain would have seen something was going seriously wrong, but what did you do? (Interruption) Lord Mayor, Councillor Atha spoke for 2 minutes. Anybody with half a brain would have seen something was going wrong, but you proceeded merrily and did absolutely nothing and put us into a situation where the budget was utterly out of control. Our response was to

fund it with £14 million and then add another £4.5 million on top of that in this year. By no stretch of any imagination is that a cut. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: Lord Mayor, I think we are on extremely dodgy ground when Councillor Mark Harris is quoting a report that none of us have seen on this side, giving us verbatim and expecting us to make some kind of comment, and you know, Mark, that it is totally out of order to just suddenly produce a report. Yes, give it to us to read. Published? Unpublished? What is its status?

You know, your behaviour strikes me as being so utterly outrageous, you are quoting the case of your mother. I truly sympathise. I truly sympathise if you feel that your mother was badly done by and your family were. I think that is awful, but there is a huge difference between that and us coming along with actual firm cases that people have brought to us. If you were to get up here and give us chapter and verse on your mother, doubtless we would comment. All we have got are a large number of cases here - I am not going to read them; I agree with the Lord Mayor, I don't think debates should go on forever - but quoting a report that none of us have seen is completely out of order. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Lord Mayor, you will be glad to know I have deleted some of the comments from page 46 of this speech. We did hit a nerve though, didn't we?

Just going quickly through the responses we got. I remember July 14th, Keith. I remember the week before when we were suddenly given the projections for the budget for 2004/5. I shall never forget that. I have been in financial affairs all my life but I have never seen a budget like that.

Andrea, thank you for your contribution. We didn't mean you.

Neil, thank you for your contribution. If you want to go to The Breece, we will knock you 10% off and I will pay it myself.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Pick a week when the weather is better. (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR ATHA: We will share half the cost.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: We will all chip in.

THE LORD MAYOR: Work on the switchboard.

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Councillor Gruen and day centres - you want to go see them. You want to go see the people who have been affected by these things. I have been to Bramley Lawn a couple of times. Last time I was there I said ---

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Not on a Saturday or Sunday.

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: No, during the week I have been there, and I said, "What about your Ward Councillors in Bramley?" I said. "Oh, I don't think they have been." So he looked in the book and you went there last November. You were there last November. (Interruptions)

THE LORD MAYOR: Come on, come on. Sit down. Let him finish. Children, please.

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: If you have been in the past four or five weeks, I apologise, but you hadn't been there since November 10th. Throughout all this long period of debate your name wasn't in the visitors book, because mine was. They thought Arthur Miller had been, by the way!

Janet, if you have got a case and we have got it wrong, we apologise and take responsibility. Tell us tomorrow. (Interruptions)

THE LORD MAYOR: Please don't goad him any more, just carry on.

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Brian, I have wrote this down. I saw this paper and it referred to truth and I thought, "What does he mean by that?" What do you do for a living? This is a concept to which some of us are not totally estranged. Truth is fairly simple and it shouldn't be too difficult for you to identify.

The point I was going to make which I have saved to the end which is perhaps something I should have mentioned earlier. This list which was attached to the Labour Party press release last week gives eight individuals. Now, anybody with a brain and 10 minutes could work out who these people are. They give the correct surname initial and the street they live in. Well, you could find that out in minutes if you look at

the electoral roll. (Interruptions) Well, they exist. This is private information about them. It has been publicly disseminated and if you want to know any more about them - not to Keith, who I would have no problem knowing - if you want to know any more about it contact Andrew Fisher, because he knows the details. Not clever. There are data protection rules in the disclosure of information, and if you are going to break it like that I think you ought to reconsider what goes on in the group. I move the resolution, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

(The motion was carried)

ITEM 13 - WHITE PAPER MOTION -
ROAD PRICING AND TRAFFIC CONGESTION

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we go on to the next White Paper, which is White Paper 13, and we have a White Paper in the name of Councillor Harris, and we have an amendment in the name of Councillor Lyons, and we just need to clarify the purpose of the amendment. Bear with me a minute while the Council clears. It is just simply that there is a reference, Councillor Lyons, to "This Council" and, having discussed this with your Whip, we believe that what you intend is a reference to the first of the six Council references in the paper.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: That's how it should have come out but it didn't.

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, okay. Well, there was that confusion so what you are saying is that you delete all after the first -- well, all including the first line and replace it with, "Council believes that vastly improved public transport", etc. Thank you. Okay. Can I ask Councillor Harris then to move the White Paper.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, earlier today I had a guest here from the USA who I was showing round the Council and, when I show people round this marvellous building, I am always keen to try and underline what a great place Leeds is, and I particularly take them into the Banqueting Suite and in here to tell them what I know about some of the famous sons - I wish we had some famous daughters listed around the building - but some famous sons of the City. I tell them about - and not many people know this - Joseph (?)Asbury, the Leeds boy who invented cement; John Fowler, the steam plough, and then I bring them in here and I tell them about Matthew Murray, and I tell them

about the debate, however many years ago it was now, which I am sure Mick Lyons proposed it and there was all-party support but it was the enabling debate which allowed us to accept that we were going to get the legislation for Supertram, and I remember from that debate Mick made the point that the very first Act of Parliament enabling a railway to be built was to allow Matthew Murray to build the Hunslet Railway, and by a historical quirk, the very last such Parliamentary Act to enable the building of a railway, I am sure this was the case, was the one to allow the building of Supertram in Leeds.

As I recall, that was the debate, and I remember all those years ago that there was unanimity around the chamber. We have maintained that unanimity. I know the Morley Independents of late are not quite so on board, but we maintained the unanimity but that sort of transport system - I am reluctant any more to say "state of the art" transport system - but that sort of transport system that we discussed and we were so over the moon this great City was going to get all those years ago, there was unanimity here that we were going forward and we looked forward to the way in which it was going to transform the transport system in this City.

And the years have gone by and gone by, and successive Governments have dithered and umm'd and ah'd and, "Well, maybe" and "Maybe not", requests for further information, "Yes, it is", "Well, no it isn't", and so we reached the point at which frankly nobody could really say any longer what is going to happen. And then, with sort of absolute certainty, what is the first thing that Alistair Darling does as he retakes office for Minister of Transport in this new Government? What is the first major proposal he announces without apparently reference to anybody else? We are going to have, we are going to introduce road charging. It is going to happen. We have got the technology. This is why we have got to do it.

There is a flurry of activity, the papers, the radio phoning me, Andrew, asking for comments at the weekend, what do we know? Leeds has been mentioned. Is it true? Are we going to get road charging in Leeds? What about Supertram? And what are we left with? We are left with a situation of complete confusion and uncertainty with the public justifiably saying, "What on earth is going on? How can you have this situation where the Minister of Transport can be so certain that he must take that course of action when for 15 years he and all his predecessors have dithered over what was once an

absolute commitment to this City having its Supertram?"

I often talk in this place about what is happening in China. Don't worry, I won't again today, but just look what is happening all over Europe. Look at every major European city. For heaven's sake, look at our arch-rivals Manchester.

I mean, they are complaining about what they haven't got. Look at what they have got. Nottingham, Croyden - you look at what they have got, and this great City, we are still here with the begging bowl out wondering will we, won't we, completely unable to properly plan a coherent transport system for the 21st century.

It actually beggars belief. It does lead you into the realms of conspiracy theory. You know, is somebody conspiring against the City to somehow punish us for the fantastic economic miracle and progress that we have made in this last 15 years?

So, Lord Mayor, the purpose of this White Paper is really to elucidate this point and to say absolutely, and we are going to have an amendment discussion in a minute but I would expect we are not going to accept the amendment, but once that is over I hope then there will be unanimity on this White Paper that we can say once more to central Government, "You have got to get your act in order. You have got to give this great City the means to transform its transport infrastructure. You cannot just keep abandoning us, and you cannot almost in the same breath put the cat amongst the pigeons with suggestions of what is essentially a tax system to tax cars out of this City which can only be harmful and detrimental to the economy and to the progress we all hope for.

Surely it is not asking too much of Westminster that they finally give us a coherent definitive answer, and then we can pick up the pieces, and they are pieces - even if they say "Yes" to Supertram now, we have still got so many pieces to try and pick up to make it work at the eleventh hour - that they will give us the go-ahead now to proceed with Supertram and, if it is not that, then to tell us clearly "No" instead of keeping us in this state of suspense all the time and allow us instead to develop an alternative transport system befitting a city of this importance, and so that we can better plan for the future of the economy of Leeds instead of having to deal with rumour and innuendo all the time. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

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

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor, of course what you said is right. You don't say it all in the White Paper. What we are saying in the amendment is, until we have got such public transport in situation that we don't accept road charging. It is simple. It is straightforward and it is telling everyone down there what we are about.

Now, I can't understand why you don't accept the amendment as it stands. There is no trying to get political, no trying to get this, no trying to get that. I wouldn't even argue if we got Supertram tomorrow that we should accept road charging, because we have such a way to go on bus regulation, Quality Bus control, Quality Bus contracts, you name it, making the railways work as they are getting paid to work, because not one day since they were privatised - it is the buses that were deregulated - have they worked in accordance as how they have been getting paid. They have not worked to contract. Until we have got all this in operation, until such times as people feel that they can go out there and catch a bus, a train, Supertram or whatever in confidence and know where it is going, why should we be charged?

I have talked to Ministers of all colours, and you do put in your White Paper the last 15 years. I am pleased about that because I was down 15 years ago arguing with a different coloured Government. At least I used to get a cup of tea from them and not, "Shut the door on our way out, Mick" off the people that I know now.

I mean, it is quite true that as far as they are concerned whatever they can get away with, whatever colour the Government, they will do it, and the Tory Government did it to us, and Steve Norris I remember quite plainly he said to us, "Go tweak the buggers a bit more", meaning the private people of this City, "to see if you can get some more money out of them, Mick, towards Supertram." There is very little difference in what is coming out of the Ministers now and what is coming out then only they gave us 350 million quid that we never quite got our hands on because we dithered too much, or somebody dithered too much.

It is a must that we have got proper public transport in

this City. Now, what we have got, we have got privatised buses, privatised trains and I am not arguing against that. I didn't privatise them. I wanted to work with them and argue, you know, what is going on, so if we are paying millions and millions of pounds to bus operators and train operators every year, and I am talking about £30 million, £40 million, £50 million, then there is summat up. If we have not got a public transport system in operation, I accept and would say that it has been more frustrating to me because I have been arguing this for some years and I don't care what colour the Government is, what we want in Leeds, and I happened to be talking about democracy earlier on, I can argue with any of you, and especially on transport, we have not got a public transport system in operation and this goes back, as you say, 15 years.

What they have needed to know and need to know from all of you, and the Greens - don't fall asleep down there, David - what your party said, we should only accept road charging if we have got public transport in situation. Mark, that is what your spokesperson says, that we should only accept road charging - they are not opposed to it - we should only accept it if we get a public transport system in situation.

Make no mistake about where we are going and where we aren't going. When we set off, we set off in unity and we said we would go forward to a Tory Government and ask them for cash, and that's what we did, and we carried on with the Labour Government, and we are where we are, but I am fed up, like Brian Walker standing on his feet and saying, "I have told you before, we are not going to agree with road charging until such times as we get proper public transport in situation." We haven't, so therefore this particular group are saying as far as we are concerned we are just not going to accept it, so what is the difference between what you are saying? You are asking for a report and a report. We are saying - we make it dead easy for everybody - as far as we are concerned, you put public transport in or you don't get us to work your road charging. That is easy.

What really annoys me is that across the districts, and by the way all the district leaders in the Transport Plan have said the same as what I am saying now, it is in the Transport Plan, so whether you have missed it I don't know, whether it was the change-over of leadership but all the five leaders in the Transport plan are agreeing with this, that we should have proper transport, public transport in situation before we agree to road charging. That's right across West Yorkshire, and it

is what you think but you put a White Paper down that doesn't say this. That is what we are saying and that is simple and I am not going to get accused of saying one thing or telling porky pies. It is truth and that is where we are coming from and it is as simple as that. Either vote us out, go your way or the long way, or we will keep saying we will not accept road charging until we have got everything in order. Come along with us. (Applause)

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

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, Councillor Harris's motion is far too long and certainly taken at face value I found Councillor Lyons' amendment rather better. However, both are likely to be overtaken by events within a few weeks when the Government is expected to make an announcement about the Leeds Supertram. If it does not make a decision then the scheme will run out of time and that will be the end of it, and that in itself will reveal a new public transport landscape.

What neither the motion nor the amendment mentions is that the Government might not give a straight "Yes" or "No". It might try to tie Supertram to road charging, either by saying "Yes" to Supertram "but only if you accept road charging", or by saying, "No, but if you volunteer to have road charging we might think again." Either of these would give the worst of all possible worlds. You know, two albatrosses for the price of more than one tied around the City's neck, or a variant of the old music hall joke in which you were told that you had won not one week's holiday in Barnsley but two weeks holiday in Barnsley.

It is possible that we shall be back in this chamber --- (Interruption) Well, it was an old music hall joke. You might not be old enough to have heard it. It is possible that we shall be back in this chamber before long for an extraordinary meeting of Council at which we will be asked at very short notice whether we would accept road charging as an addition to the price of Supertram. It may still be hoped that Supertram will be judged on its own merits, which should ensure refusal, but sometimes life is not as simple as that.

As both the amendment and the motion are likely to be swept aside by events within a few weeks, I would tend towards abstention from voting on the grounds that the outcome of the

vote itself would be swept aside, but I might be tempted to support Councillor Lyons if he will say that his motion is aimed purely to get public transport improvements and can be taken to exclude both Supertram and road charging. It looks to me as if they might leave the door open to both, which would bring us back to the twin albatross question, though I am encouraged by what Councillor Lyons has said in support of his amendment. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, to some extent I am rather glad Councillor J. L. Carter isn't here because he might not like my first words, being a Mercedes man as he is. I have got to say in principle --- (Interruption) Oh, you give me a lift, though! In principle, as a Green, I think that road pricing is a good idea in the right context. Not just stuck in one northern town and leaving the rest of them behind. Basically, if you put road charging in Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield are near enough for car drivers to get to and it will affect our economy. There is no point in destroying our economy just for that.

The other thing is, even if we get Supertram, Supertram is three lines. We had a deputation in earlier from Scholes about an absolutely awful bus service. Is that public transport? No, it isn't. What we have got to do before we can even think about doing anything like this is we have got to put together a public transport system equal to London, and I know Londoners who complain about that but it is a ton better than what we have got up here, and what we have got to do is we have got to have a level playing field so places like Bradford, Sheffield and Manchester are on the same level as we. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: My Lord Mayor, public transport. It seems to be a very strange concept because it affects people in very strange ways. It makes Mick Lyons support Tories and Liberals on a local level. It brings Bradford and Leeds together on a common front against road charging in West Yorkshire. At the same time you hear Governments in waiting going on and on about it at the stump and then as soon as they get into power they all of a sudden get collective amnesia and then metropolitan myopia, because they can't see past London, so as soon as you get an Olympic bid coming in, you can find the money for things like Crossrail but if it is a little bit further away all of a sudden it is a problem. And what is more, it is a problem that we have got to solve ourselves,

apparently, and we have got to swallow the trouble that goes with it. I don't think that is going to happen.

I think the problem is that the Government doesn't seem to be --- Can you switch this off, please? Can you switch it off? I would rather shout. Is that better? It seems to me the Government doesn't seem to speak to itself ---

THE LORD MAYOR: What we will try to do is to close it down and start it up again. That might help. Just hang on a minute. I think probably all the mikes are off, so we will have to ask for them to be reset. Okay, let's try this.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The Government doesn't speak to itself. On the one hand you have Transport Ministers who all of a sudden won't touch any kind of transport proposal with a bargepole, and then on the other hand you have John Prescott talking about the northern way, talking about how connectivity is essential to investment for the north of the country so that it can close the gap with the south, and never the twain shall meet.

Lord Mayor, the Government talks about road charging as a response to congestion, yet demand management measures also cover things such as the A65 bus corridor which they have said there is no money for. It also covers Supertram, of course, which they have not quite made their mind up for yet. And then, Lord Mayor, in the same week as they are talking about road charging there are proposals to compulsorily raise fares on trains during peak periods to control demand on trains. Now, if you are going to control the demand on roads by creating more public transport but then you are controlling that public transport so you can't get onto it, what are you supposed to do? Work from home?

The reason why I am talking about it, Lord Mayor, is because it is not just a matter of theory any more because transport as an issue used to tarry behind things such as crime and used to tarry behind things such as education but increasingly, Lord Mayor, it is a very important factor, and the reason why I am mentioning it today is because we might have felt some of that electoral factor.

The A660, which is one of the major routes that Supertram is supposed to go along, has suffered for the past 14 years from not one penny of investment along its route because we

have been waiting for that answer. We have been waiting to know whether or not we are going to have Supertram. You don't do resurfacing or any major remedial works if it is going to get dug up again for a major scheme, Lord Mayor. That is 14 years of under-investment. During that time congestion has got worse and also during that time the streets have been clogged by people who have been using it as an unofficial park and ride scheme.

Lord Mayor, I do believe whole-heartedly considering the feedback I got when I was out canvassing that that was one of the reasons why the Liberal Democrats were able to make a breakthrough in that particular part of the City, and all I am saying, Lord Mayor, is that if we don't find a public transport solution for the City, if our Government doesn't actually end up listening to us, or at least talking to each other, there will be an electoral harvest for those of us who make the case to the people. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR SHELBROOKE: My Lord Mayor, road charging - it really is an ill thought out policy. I represent a rural ward, Harewood Ward, as many people know, and the idea of road charging is that the heavily congested roads will be charged a certain amount and that charge for going on those roads will decrease on the smaller the roads. Now, I am sure it is not beyond the wit of man or anybody to realise that if we take the rural roads into Leeds it is going to be a lot cheaper than coming down the A64. It will have a devastating effect on many of the smaller villages in my ward in particular and the outside wards because people will quickly work out the cheapest and easiest way to get into the town centre.

It has been mentioned about congestion charges in London and how successful that has been, but there are two important points here. First of all, the congestion charge covers a complete area. There is no avoiding the fact if you want to get into that area you have to pay the same price. There is no getting round it, you have got to go in, and there is evidence that many small businesses within the congestion charge have seen a reduction in their takings, and that really echoes the points that Councillor Blackburn was making and the fact that if we take this City and charge in this City alone, no-one is coming here; they are all off to Wakefield or Huddersfield or Sheffield or, worse still, over the Pennines.

Now, the other point is, of course, that congestion

charging perversely widens the gap. At a time when we are trying to narrow the gap, it widens the gap. Now, many of you will realise, perhaps, that Councillor Finnigan drives a wonderful car. He drives a Citroen 2CV, which I have seen him in, and I indeed used to have one myself, so I can talk about the merits of this car, but isn't it a bit perverse that under this scheme, if you are taking all the tax off petrol and car tax and all being charged the same, then Councillor Hanley in his great big car is paying relatively the same amount as Councillor Finnigan. Of course, perhaps that is why the Socialist Government are going to bring his policy in, really, so rather than making everybody have equal they are just making sure the rich pay the same as the poor.

Young drivers. In my ward I have a lot of pubs and things and there are a lot of --- (Interruptions) There's a lot of pubs and they employ a lot of people who are 18 years old, and this is often their first job on the ladder. They have got cars and they use those cars to go there, but if they are having to pay increased charges to do that, we are limiting their ability to take responsibility for themselves. These are some of the far-reaching parts of it.

I think we are likely to see all the taxes disappear into the Government (inaudible), and, of course, as Councillor Golton has just mentioned, this comes in the very week that we have heard that they are thinking of putting congestion charges on the trains. It just doesn't add up.

Now, as you know, the first deputation today was from residents in Scholes. One of the areas we are fighting for for the residents in Scholes is for a direct bus link between the village of Barwick and Scholes. Barwick and Scholes share the same parish Council. They share a lot of the same amenities and they cannot get a bus from one village to the next. How can we be talking about penalising the car driver when people in my ward already at this time cannot use the facilities which are less than a couple of miles away?

Now, I have a feeling that this idea of road charging might just be to frighten the public, frighten us all. My goodness, we are all going to be paying £35,000 a year to use our cars, and then sure enough the Government come along with a totally different proposal which will be another stealth tax. Our taxes will go up but we will be so relieved that it is not this one that they will let that one go under the radar.

I will give you another example. Tomorrow I am lucky enough, I am going to see the cricket up in Durham and there's four of us going and we thought to ourselves, "Well, we will get the train." Well, first of all the train ticket, £33 each. It is not going to cost us over 100 quid to take the car. Second thing, the last train back to Leeds, what time do you think? 7 o'clock. Cricket doesn't finish till 10. I mean that just blows that idea straight out of the water. So it is not really an alternative, is it?

But, of course, the big point is this, and this is why I support Councillor Harris's paper, because if the public have an easy way to get into work, a reliable way, a way which is there convenient to them and cheaper, they will take that alternative. Nobody wants to sit in their car for ten minutes at each traffic light when they can be in town in ten minutes, so I support Councillor Harris's paper and I urge this Council to do so. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR J. LEWIS: Lord Mayor, I am here to second

Councillor Lyons's amendment which is considerably briefer than Councillor Harris's original motion, which must have taken several fag packets to write all that across, and I think one of the important things to remember is that - and I am going to have to agree with Councillor Golton here - transport is moving up the political agenda.

Councillor Shelbrooke, who represents the ward next to mine and lives in mine, talks about the problems in rural areas. Myself, Councillors Wakefield and Parker know increasingly people are coming to our advice sessions and they are asking for not much more than the timetables that Metro publishes on behalf of the bus companies are stuck to by the bus companies so that they know when they go for a bus it will turn up. So when we talk about improving public transport it is not just about creating a great wish list and calling for reports from Officers and blaming the Government and blaming everybody else. There are some steps that could be taken in this Council, and in Metro to make improvements to public transport that many people want to see, and it might take massive regulation and a lot more subsidy to make the bus services run as to the timetables and make sure that they serve all the communities, not just the profitable routes but, you know, let's move down that road and, as Councillor Blackburn says, Supertram will cover a lot of the City but there will be a huge part of the district that won't be covered by Supertram.

Again, I am going to agree with Councillor Leadley here, who sat with many of us on Metro this year, and we have to talk about more than just Supertram when we talk about improving public transport in Leeds. So I am going to draw these brief comments to a close by saying let's be brief, let's make it absolutely clear whatever happens over the next weeks and months that this Council will not have any form of road charging using trial whatever without improved public transport. Let's support Councillor Lyons's brief motion which says that and let's all move forward with all modes of public transport in the City. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, obviously I reserved my right to speak so I am supporting Councillor Harris's White Paper. I don't think we should be accepting Councillor Lyons' amendment.

I want to make it crystal clear because, unlike some of the speakers, I am opposed to road charging in this City, as are all members of my Group. We don't think it is necessary.

What is necessary is investment in the public transport system. We have waited 15 years. We had promises from a previous Government. We had promises from this Government. As yet, none of that has come to fulfilment.

Worse than that, it has already been mentioned, the A65 bus corridor, we were promised that by this Government. We are now told it is on hold. At the end of the day we are talking about investment in public transport in a major success story, the City of Leeds.

I also get very tired of people saying we are reaching logjam. We are reaching nothing of the sort. Anybody who travels anywhere outside of Leeds must realise that Leeds is one of the least congested major cities in the country. That is why so much inward investment has come into the City. You might not like having to take half an hour to travel 5 miles, which most of us do, but in many major cities you would take an hour or an hour and a half to travel 5 miles, so we are not reaching logjam.

That does not mean that we don't need the investment in Supertram, and it does not mean we are complacent, because there are clearly major public transport issues. We have

already heard reference made to the deputation that came earlier today, but the biggest fear of all that I have is that we have given too many wrong signals over the past 2 years to the Government, and I worry that they think we are a soft touch. You know, we went along with these cameras to trial the technology. I said at the time, "This is not the right thing to do. The perception of the civil servants will be, 'Here we have got them'." The faster we get those pieces of metal taken down, packed up and sent back to Alistair Darling, the better.

I mentioned earlier today, and you want to listen to this very carefully. I mentioned earlier today major investors that this City has been talking to. I will tell you this, that if this Government forces this city into road charging we will seriously jeopardise major investment into this City. We will set the economic expansion, the "Closing the gap" agenda, and various other things back for years. I can tell you as a matter of fact that six other cities not far from here are already talking to companies in Leeds saying, "Come to us. We are not going to have road charging. They are." That is a fact. That is already happening. Don't shake you head, Liz, that's what is happening. That is what is happening. We cannot put in danger the economic prosperity of this City all for the imperative of making sure that more people in this City share in the prosperity.

I was given a statistic by a major player, who I will not name, who said that their turnover on Oxford Street dropped by 8% when Livingston introduced road charging. Why can that be survived? Because London is a capital city. A lot of small businesses are feeling the pinch very badly. The major businesses have to grin and bear it because they are still probably, quite frankly, doing very well, thank you very much.

There is no major business in this City that could stand 8% off its bottom line. That is not a politician speaking, that is somebody in business speaking, and the message to this Government has to be loud and has to be clear, "You have promised us investment. You are spending 20 times the cost of Supertram on Crossrail. It is time to invest in the north. It is time to invest in the City of Leeds." (Applause)

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I just wanted to draw attention to the wording of the amendment, which I thought was extremely cogent, lucid and well explained by Councillor Lyons. It says, "before any form of road use charging is considered". It is not saying

that if we get the public transport that we require we will concede road charging as a result, because none of us would have gone along with that.

The amendment is quite clear, "before any form of road user charging is considered for Leeds", because many of us would consider road charging a tax really on the poor, because wealthy people like Andrew Carter and Leslie Carter with these big motors can afford to pay an extra tuppence a mile or 10p a mile or whatever it may be. There are many people who simply could not afford that and it would be a severe imposition on the poorest people, so there are other issues, social issues.

But what we are concerned about is getting a proper infrastructure in Leeds. I think what Councillor Lyons' amendment is saying very clearly, this is what we need, and if it needs banging on Ministers' doors, let's go and bang on Ministers' doors, but let's make sure we are not misinterpreting, as I felt Councillor Carter was, this amendment which does not concede in any way road charging.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, I think the problem really is that we are all pretty well of the same mind. I mean, we all want an improved public transport system, and that really is where the debate ought to stop. The two things ought not to be linked. Road charging and an improved public transport system are two completely separate considerations and one must happen no matter what else then follows.

I mean, it is worth considering that if road charging is in any event the flavour of the month in 15 years time or whenever it is that it may be introduced, who knows how old hat and absurd the idea of road charging may have become by then, whereas there can be no doubt at all that the only way you can get people out of cars is if you give them an alternative means of getting in and out of the city. That is the only thing on which we should currently focus because Andrew and I perhaps have a slightly different view, and maybe in certain circumstances there may be - I have said this previously - a case for road charging. There may be, but that is a completely separate debate in its own right.

The danger here is by linking the two in the same breath you send a signal to London that says, "Ah, you know, here is the coded message. Here is the foot in the door. What they are really saying is, well, go on, you know, scratch our backs

and if you scratch our backs we will scratch yours." That is the danger of the amendment.

Now, in the end, as has been said already, and unless you are a car fanatic like Les or ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Don't be mean. I haven't said a word.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Nobody in their right minds would spend hours sat in a car and the expense of that if there is a cheaper, faster, efficient comfortable way of moving around the city and around the country, and that is the issue. We have got to have that no matter whatever else happens, and that's what we should say with an absolute unequivocal united voice, give us a proper alternative public transport system and let's start from there, and then we will see what happens. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Next we take the vote on the amendment in the name of Councillor Lyons. Those in favour of the amendment please show.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Recorded vote.

THE LORD MAYOR: We have a request for a recorded vote. We will now have to wait for everybody to come back into the chamber.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Will all Members ensure again please that they are in their allocated seats. All Members should refer to their desk unit and press the button marked "P". Those Members in favour of the amendment in the name of Councillor Lyons should press the "+" button. Those Members against that amendment should press the "-" button, and any Member wishing to abstain and have that abstention recorded should press the "0" button.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, I cannot get my "P" to work.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: So that rumour is true, then! (Laughter)

THE LORD MAYOR: We will make a note, Councillor Wakefield. Okay, Councillor Wakefield's vote has now been recorded. Out of 91 Members present, 43 have voted in favour of the amendment and 48 have voted against with no abstentions and therefore the amendment is lost and the resolution now becomes

the substantive motion in its original form. The original motion in the name of Councillor Harris ---

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord mayor, can I request for a recorded vote.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we have a seconder? Thank you. We are now going to repeat the process. Wait a minute. We think we have lost somebody, just hold on a minute. It appears to be a technical problem. Apparently we haven't got a recording of the recorded vote. However, it is written down so we know what happened and it can be recorded manually. Okay, so now we go on to the original motion. Oh dear. I am sorry, apparently it is not written down, although I have seen it on the screen, so we know what the result is going to be but we now have to go through the procedure of doing it manually, I think. No, we don't. We are alright again now because it might have been delayed but it has in fact now recorded, so what we said before is now a matter of record.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Yes, it all seems to be working and in order and I apologise that Councillor Wakefield's prevarication on the last occasion caused those --- On the basis that all Members are in their allocated seats, would they please refer to their desk unit and again press the button marked "P". Those Members in favour of the motion in the name of Councillor Harris should press the "+" button. Those Members against that motion please press the "-" button, and any Member wishing to abstain and have their abstention recorded, please press the "0" button.

THE LORD MAYOR: We have a result. Members present 91. Those voting in favour "Yes" 48. Those voting against "No", 38. 5 abstentions. That is carried. Thank you.

ITEM 14 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - GRASS-CUTTING SERVICE

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, I know many of us know that there is global warming and the impact of global warming in our community, but nobody ever expected to see Brazilian rainforests grow in our communities either, and they are. In fact, I understand we have lost a few people who have gone out to hang the washing out in Bramley and they are looking for them now. And if it wasn't through Councillor Harris's mantra that he brings into the Council every time, it would be laughable, but we all know that Councillor Harris comes in and

tell us how front line services have been protected, how we are going to get innovation and excellent delivery, and here we have an absolute shambles of a service. And, you see, this is the same Councillor Harris that once said about Councillor David Morton he had a bright future. David, I can't see you dazzling us but it is lovely to see you back. We wish you were back because I think you did a better job when you were there. It has gone worse since you were off. Councillor Harris is now sounding more like Comical Ali every week. You know, I read his letter of apology in the Evening Post. He apologised to the people, and he loves apologising. It must be the easiest thing in the world, but guess what. (Interruption) You didn't, so you need to keep quiet.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I have not spoken yet.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You know, he even blamed us in the apology, and let me give you Councillor Steve Smith's - a nice bloke, but this is his excuse for the worst service that any of us have seen. Listen to this one. Councillor Steve Smith said, "We have experienced teething problems with the new contract but we and Glendale have pulled out all the stops to solve them." Can you believe that? It is just like saying the Titanic has got a small leak. It has been an absolute disgrace, and it still is 4 months later, and then he went on to say another quote under pressure, and guess what it says. Here is another cracker for you. He says, Councillor Steve Smith said, "It would be greatly appreciated if people could be patient and give the special teams a few weeks to restore our grassed areas to full standing." How many months is it now, Councillor Smith? Four months and we have still got grass that is 4 feet high.

You know, I do think, on a serious point, that this service is letting people down who have a high degree of civic pride and participation. It is no good issuing fines for litter which we believe in, or dog fouling which we believe in, we introduced, if you are going to let people down by letting the grass grow far too high and making the whole place look an absolute tip.

You know, there are organisations in our City, and I will give you some of them, Kippax in Bloom, Micklefield in Bloom, Oulton in Bloom, Rothwell in Bloom and many other villages who work hard every week and every month to make their flowerbeds look good, who feel profoundly let down. At a crucial time of

the year when judges are coming round to judge villages, they can't see the flowerbeds because they are covered up in weeds and grass, and there are a number of people in Kippax who are really, really annoyed about the Council letting them down during a crucial stage.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: My Lord Mayor, I understand that Councillor Wakefield has very kindly given way to me, and it suddenly occurred that unless I rose to speak now we would all go home now. (Interruptions) So, Lord Mayor, I would like to beg leave of Council under the provision of Council Procedure Rule 22.1 that Procedure Rule 3.2 be suspended to allow all White Paper motions to be heard.

THE LORD MAYOR: Is that seconded?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

THE LORD MAYOR: In that case we are here for quite a while yet. Please resume, Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Plus one minute or ten minutes as somebody else over there had when there was an interruption by Councillor Atha - I think it was Councillor Harris.

Let's go back to a very, very serious point, that these people who work for weeks and months voluntarily to make their communities, their village look good, have been profoundly let down. And the other group who have been let down are old people. There are many old people who like the recreational ground in the summer to socialise, to play with their children, to walk around, and they cannot go out because the grass is far too high, and now they are phoning me up, and I am sure other colleagues have been phoned up, because where they have cut the grass they have just left it on the pavements and there is worries about it raining and old people slipping.

And the other groups who have been let down are just ordinary people, people who work in their own gardens next to verges where there is dandelions and grass blowing into their gardens day in, day out, and again undermining civic pride and civic participation.

Now, you have got to ask why. Why has this happened? And it is simply this, a contract was let in March, far too late, with a company that hadn't got the resources, hadn't got the staff, hadn't got the equipment and, in fact, hadn't got the wherewithal to keep up and maintain the grass, and you have to ask the question, why did this happen? Surely you should have backed off. You should have backed off and said, "We are not letting the contract, it is far too late, it is grass-growing season", but instead they let it out and now we have, as I say, a fiasco in this City and a fiasco in every community.

Now, the other issues, and I hope that Councillor Smith can answer because if any one of us were performing this duty you would have to ask whether they had been fined, or we had been fined. Have the contractors been fined? Have they been monitored? Have they been asked to improve their act? Because so far we can still see 4 months later hundreds of letters, pressure throughout the City, and yet we can still see parts of our community that have not been cut.

It is simply not good enough, and let me just say why I think this is a matter of resignation. Councillor Carter said earlier we never resigned. Absolutely true. There were one or two cases. If we had made mistakes as big as this I think we would have had to consider resigning, but let me just say this. Councillor Harris ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Would you just repeat what you just said?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: No.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Please repeat it because I really, really am having difficulty. Repeat it, please.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You have difficulty listening. You got it wrong last time, so --- I remember you couldn't hear last time so you get a hearing aid, Andrew, and then you will get that.

Councillor Harris said this, "We won't sit there until we are dragged screaming and kicking from office. If the City says we have done a bad job we will go, and we will deserve to go, but I will wait and see and Andrew, David and I are very, very confident that they will appreciate what we are about to

do for them." Well, I think the public have already given their statement. I think they have already said it is the worst service they have ever seen. You can check the letters up for all you like, I am sure you are being lobbied in your own communities, in your own surgeries. We are, day in and day out, because to be quite frank and to be quite truthful it is an absolute disgrace for the people of Leeds and they deserve their money back for a service they are paying week in, week out. I move, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR LOWE: I thought I would introduce a bit of light relief. On the front page of the Evening Post, the poor citizens of Wetherby are so desperate to get their grass cut that they have invited the burglars from Whealston to cut their grass for them and unfortunately they do what burglars do, which is burgle the houses.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Not the case. Not the case.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: Well, a bit of levity, but anyway I am here to give a West Leeds perspective, because clearly West Leeds has suffered along with the rest of the City during the last 4 or 5 months. I was called to an area called the Snowdens a couple of weeks ago. It took me 10 minutes to find the constituent - he was stuck in the middle of the grass - but eventually I saw his hand at the top and I was able to see him, and we walked round the estate, and I was really shocked to see where the grass hadn't been cut of course it was very high but where it had been cut it was worse than where it hadn't been cut. It was actually very similar to a Mohican haircut so there was one straight bit and then this massive big bit in the middle and then one straight bit, so we have dubbed it now the Snowdens are now the Mohicans, so if you can't find it on the A-Z, that's why - because we have renamed it.

I was pleased to be asked to speak today because I wanted to say that actually, on a very serious note, we are going to be scrutinizing this issue on the City Services or Environment or whatever we have decided to call it nowadays, and I wanted to offer the Council Members the opportunity to work with us to develop the brief. We are already looking at the brief and we are going to be asking the questions about how the decision to tender came about, why we chose Glendales, you know, from beginning to end we are going to be looking at that. We will be really happy to receive comments from other Members about what happened during this process, because I think it is really

important, and I know that on this side Members have got every faith in the scrutiny process, and even if I don't ever say it to your face, Barry, you are an excellent Chair and I think you are very fair.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Kiss of death, that.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: Well, you are an excellent Chair and I think there will be a very fair process, so we will be happy to stand by the outcome of that, and I am sure it will find that there have been lots of mistakes made, and hopefully we shall learn from those mistakes and end up being a better administration globally as a consequence, but I do feel that there has been quite a lot of mismanagement, lots of things that have gone wrong. We will find out the detail. We will be able to make some proper recommendations, but in the interim I think it is right that people should feel a bit sorry for what has happened, and it is right that we should apologise to the citizens of Leeds. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, as ever in Morley we will be constructive on such matters and suggest a third way that you may wish to approach particular matters. Now, we have not hit Year Zero at this particular point. There is no argument at all that the grass-cutting is poor. Nobody is disagreeing with that, but if we go back to last year and the year before the grass-cutting was poor as well. Probably less worse. (Interruptions) Well, maybe. Maybe it was fine in your areas, maybe at that particular point they screwed us in Morley, I don't know, but certainly in Morley it was poor under the public sector. It hasn't been any better as far as we are concerned at this particular point in the private sector, and we think that this is an opportunity for us to explore delegation down.

Recently we had a meeting with Les Carter, a very cordial meeting with Area Committee Chairs who were looking at different issues on how the Area Committee structure was working and where we were going in the future, and one of the areas that we debated and discussed was grass-cutting, was it not, Les?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I think it was.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: I think it was mentioned in passing, and one of the themes it came through was that Area Committees

were very, very keen on seeing if they could handle the grass-cutting better than not only the present way it is delivered but also how it was delivered in previous years. I think that is a very interesting thing we ought to really explore.

Now, we have a lot of Parish Councils. Certainly in our area we have Parish Councils, other areas have Parish Councils, and all of those are also very keen to get their teeth into providing some of the services that the local authority presently runs. They are keen, they are enthusiastic and, I will be honest, they think that they can do a better job, and perhaps this is an opportunity for us to challenge them to see if they can do.

Now, if the whole issue is ultimately localised, that gives Area Committees or Parish Councils or Town Councils an opportunity to go out and do the job for themselves, and who knows, they might do a better job. They might be able to do it cheaper. They might be able to create a scheme which employs local people providing the services locally, and we think that that is the way that you bring back confidence to the local community. It brings back a pride in the area because the people who are actually undertaking this service come from and live in that area, and are not rushing around day after day after day trying to chase their tails and trying to catch up with a particular programme.

So we would hope that people would accept that this is a third way. This is a way forward, different way of approaching it. Public sector didn't work so well, private sector is not working so well at this point. We are looking at a localised sector and we believe in Morley that we have companies who are prepared to undertake this particular activity. Now, there is no way in a million years that they could bid for all of Leeds, it is too big, it is too different, but what they could do is provide a better quality of service on a localised basis, and I suspect if you go to Pudsey or Horsforth or Wetherby or the East of Leeds, or wherever, the same opportunities actually present themselves. So what we are saying is this is a democratic process. This is passing down the accountability and the responsibility to a more local level. We think that you will get a better quality of grass-cutting at that particular point. I formally move the amendment, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ELLIOTT: My Lord Mayor, I would like to second the

amendment and reserve the right to speak.

COUNCILLOR JAROSZ: Lord Mayor, I would like to thank the current administration because they have really made my relationship with my mother a lot better. As Councillor Harris often likes to tell about his personal life, I will tell about my personal life. I have been a great disappointment to my mother.
(Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I can imagine.

COUNCILLOR JAROSZ: My mother wanted me to be somebody like Brenda. Hi, Brenda. She wanted me to have a proper job, you know, be a personal assistant to somebody important. Politics - rubbish. Politics - irrelevant. Local politics - irrelevant, nothing to do with her. But this administration has shown her differently.

First of all, she goes to the local café and the first thing she is told is that, despite Councillor Carter's promises, any of her friends over 60 are now paying £2.80 for a swim instead of £1.50. That is a big 10p. That is a big 10p.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, we are not talking about swimming, are we?

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: No, but you are in deep water.

COUNCILLOR JAROSZ: No. Okay, but the next thing was then she looks out of her window, she can't see a thing - grass up to here. Her neighbour, 95, falls. Why does she fall? Because she is trying to get to her own washing line.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Is it a Council property?

COUNCILLOR JAROSZ: Of course. Trying to get to her own washing line, you know, and she has to pay for somebody to mow it. My mother has to get her daughter to hack her way to her washing line, but that is another point. So, suddenly --- And then she can see all the weeds coming up the paths so as soon as we get a bit of wet weather we are going to have an old person falling because the weeds are all in the paths. So, you know, suddenly she realises what politics is about and, if that wasn't enough, just this last week she gets her neighbourhood warden taken away from her. She was quite happy with that

neighbourhood warden. She was quite happy under Fairer Charging to pay for it, so she is 80, with a heart condition, and she has had her neighbourhood warden taken away from her.

Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Lord Mayor, I would like to draw attention to the experience of some of the residents in a sheltered housing complex in my ward. I could talk about the grass verges in Tingley, East Ardsley and Lofthouse, but I am going to talk to you instead about the experience of residents in Jarvis Square in Robin Hood.

Residents in their 70s and 80s have been distressed at the condition of their gardens with the grass, and I have photographs to prove it, 3 ft. high and weeds even higher. Two elderly residents fell trying to get to their washing lines to hang their clothes out. Another elderly gentleman attempted to cut the grass himself and collapsed through over-exertion.

These people are in sheltered housing for a reason. They should be getting an enhanced garden maintenance service. Instead, up until about 10 days ago, they and their warden were left to fend for themselves. In addition to the physical and emotional impact of the authority's failure to meet their needs, they have also been inundated with characters calling at their doors offering to cut their grass, trim their hedges and tidy their flower beds, all for a small fee, of course.

The service, when it finally was delivered didn't really meet their requirements either. The grass was cut, all 3 ft. of it, and was left behind. The warden, when she went and asked the people who came out to do the work whether they were going to take the grass away, was told it wasn't in their contract.

I would describe this service as much worse than poor, unlike Councillor Finnigan. The residents I spoke to could not understand why a service that they felt had always served them well had had to be changed. I, for one, am appalled at the way the residents of Jarvis Square have been treated, and I am sure many other Council Members would agree. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: My Lord Mayor, for many years many of us have trumpeted the fact that Leeds is the greenest city in Europe, (Interruptions) but there are signs now that that

greenness is tasking on a worrying turn. I quote from an e-mail from a constituent sent to my good friend and colleague Councillor Denise Atkinson, "Dear Councillor Atkinson, I was wondering if you could help me trace my lost grandson. I live on the Fernbank Estate and last night he went out to play on the green facing where I live, but unfortunately the grass is so long he has not been seen since and we are concerned that the lions, or any other wildlife that may inhabit there, has had a free lunch. In my travels I have gone as far as the outer reaches of Alwoodley and other far-reaching areas and found that the plains up there are so much shorter than the rainforest of Bramley. Must be the climate change. So I leave this matter in your more than capable hands and hope to hear from you in the near future. PS - Thanks for all the good work that has been done by you on this estate."

Next e-mail. That was the end of May. 15th June, "Dear Denise", same constituent, "Just a quick update on the state of the Fernbank Steppes. At this present moment in time, the natives are very restless due to the fact that my grandchild is still missing. Rumour has it now that he has been adopted by the wildlife in the plains, which on the last visit by the head gamekeeper was half hacked down, and I use that term "hack", very loosely. There is talk that we may have to import a flock of sheep to help maintain the wild and luscious plains which are now abundant in this part of far off Bramley, but that will be a last resort as we don't want to start a plains war. There has also been talk of the BBC coming down to do a wildlife programme, maybe even a series like Mowgli Beware, or something like that. Anyway, the last report is since we last talked there has been no-one back to cut down our plantation and it now looks like natives reclaiming our streets as the weeds are now about 2 ft. down the street from the car park. It doesn't bother me much as I have a 4 x 4 vehicle but the other residents complain when I have to charge them to tow out.

Anyway, Denise, that's my report for just now. Just glad we have e-mail and not jungle drums as my arms would be aching now. All the best and good luck on your safari."

From outer space, my Lord Mayor, you can actually see the Great Wall of China and in December and January you can actually see the Leeds Christmas lights, I am told. Now there is a new scene and a growing green glow in this great City of Leeds where the grass is out of control. The rumour is that the Boundary Committee for England is to consider renaming Leeds wards to better reflect the situation here on the ground,

for example Middleton Park is apparently to become Middleton-under-Grass. Councillor Gruen's ward is to become Crossgrass and Vergemoor and, of course, Burmantofts should obviously become Burmantufts. Even Hollywood has got in on it. The great 1941 film classic, "How Green was my Valley" is apparently to be rereleased in a new print especially for Leeds citizens and it is going to be retitled, "How Green is my Alley", and George Lukas is going to bring out a special Star Wars film, and this one again is for Leeds citizens, "Star Wars: The Return of the Scythe". Even J. K. Rowling has got in on it and she is writing a brand new book called Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Glendale". (Laughter)

In Bramley, my Lord Mayor, we have many tethered animals, you will see, who munch the grass and Councillors have been to two meetings recently of tenants who are pleading for more animals because where the animals are tethered the grass is actually shorter, and there does seem to have been an increase.

Now, there was a rumour going round - I am glad Councillor Procter has returned, perhaps he can help on this one. It is said that he summoned a meeting of all the animals at Templenewsam Home Farm and at Lotherton and gathered them together and said, "Listen, you lot, all you do is eat and drink and sleep all day. Those days are gone. No more free lunch. From now on you work", and apparently the idea is to help out his colleague Councillor Smith, the animals living for the Council are going out munching the grass, but certainly in Bramley the answer seems to be more sheep.

I am going to come on to a great man now, David Morton, what a great man. Only a year ago we had so many high hopes of David, how bright the political future was going to be, and he realised in just a few weeks he wasn't up to it, he couldn't do the job and he lost the trust of everybody, and did he hang on? No, he didn't, because in the Evening Post it said he resigned, it wasn't true, and he did the decent thing - he fell on his sword. Keith Wakefield has already said we want you back. We do. We are glad to see him, aren't we? (Cries of "Yes") We thought you had got lost in the long grass, actually.

Councillor Smith, your time is up. You have had weeks and weeks and weeks to get the grass right. It is an absolute disgrace. It brings a laughing stock on Leeds. We used to be proud. We won these awards, Britain in Bloom - no chance this year. The judges will come to Leeds and they will say,

"Who is in charge?" and we will say, "The Crazy Gang". Thank you very much. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Beevers.

COUNCILLOR BEEVERS: Lord Mayor, I would like to withdraw, please.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: (Applause) Before I say this, there is a "but" coming up, I warn you. The people of Leeds deserve a better grass-cutting service, and I don't think there is anybody in this chamber would dispute that. The "but" is the grass needs to be cut to a better standard than it has been for years and not just in the last 4 months, and I will come to that shortly.

First of all, I must deal with Councillor Finnigan's amendment, and at least it has the benefit of being constructive, or trying to be constructive. Morley Independents, the effective Opposition. The scheme of delegation to Area Committees is to be considered by Executive Board in the near future. However, at this stage there are no proposals to delegate grass-cutting. There are economies of scale to be made in having a City-wide contract and now is not the time for further change, and we will not be supporting the amendment. However, we do note Councillor Finnigan's comments and will consider the issue and the implications during the discussions on future delegations.

Back to the problem. There have been ---

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: You.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Well, let's see what the problem is. There have been problems with grass-cutting in Leeds for years, so making a change was the right thing to do. Why do I say that? Well, the Audit Commission, that independent body, in their original reports following ALMO inspections in the summer 2003 identified grounds maintenance as one of the, and I quote, "clear weaknesses in the services provided by the Council." The negative outcomes of the inspections meant that the ALMOs were unable to access millions of pounds of funding in the following year. Your administration, Councillor Wakefield.

In order to raise the standard of grass-cutting right across the City it was decided that the contract should be put

out to tender and Highways and the ALMOs were all included to generate the critical mass necessary to get the best possible terms. The decision to go out to tender was taken under the previous administration, as Councillor Wakefield well knows. It was discussed in his presence at Leader Management Team in February, March and latterly on 17th June 2004. 17th June, remember that date. Today he is calling for resignations. 17th June was during the period when he had been voted out of power by the electorate but declined to resign his office.

Now to the tender. The Highways part came in on price but there was a delay in the tendering process caused by the fact that the original tender bids couldn't be afforded by the 6 ALMOs. I understand that they wanted, for instance, to remove cut grass from sheltered housing sites, Councillor Mulherin - an admirable aim - but prohibitively expensive. Yet, despite being advised that the cost would be prohibitively expensive, they nevertheless insisted on continuing the tender process resulting in contractors having eventually to reprice the contract with a consequent 2 month delay - 2 months while the grass grew unabated. Personally, I suspect this is the prime reason for the disruption to the service.

I look over to the benches over there and I see three of the six ALMO Chairs sat on the Labour benches.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: One there.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: I am looking to my left, Peter, listen. I wonder what they will have to say about the time lost resulting in delays to the start of the contract. Time whilst the grass was growing. I wonder what they will have to say about the quality of the mapping data they passed over - data that didn't include all the areas that needed cutting. I wonder if Councillor Wakefield is going to call upon them to resign.

In any event, I am not going to speculate further as to the root cause of the problems seen. I have asked for Scrutiny to get to the bottom of what went wrong. Better to let that investigation take place without trying to second guess the outcome. I do look forward to the Scrutiny Board's report so that we can all of us, and I am looking over there as well as over here, all of us can learn the lessons from this contract start and avoid such problems in future.

The decision to tender was correct. Leeds residents deserve a better standard of grass-cutting than they have had in past years. We are now moving forward. Glendale are working on the second cut on a two-week cycle and this is scheduled to be completed by the end of this week. The situation will improve as more cuts are done and I am confident that the end result will be a much improved service.

Some ALMO Chairs and the last administration who should have known what was going on either did not know or are making mischief with the consequences of their own actions. My view is the latter, and they should widen the range of this motion if they are not to be considered by some to be hypocritical, as the reality may actually show them to be. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: 21 years I have been here, Lord Mayor, and for 20 of those years I never remember any Member of the Labour administration apologising for anything or conceding that they had ever done anything wrong or mishandled anything.

I started today's meeting by openly apologising, as I have done in writing, to the people of Leeds for a service that has not been delivered in the way it should have been. You have had an apology as well tonight from Steve Smith and a coherent explanation of some of the circumstances which he quite rightly says, as Alison Lowe said, should now be left to Scrutiny, which we have asked for, not you, for Scrutiny to report on.

But, Lord Mayor, as much as it is right that we should be criticised, and to a large extent we accept the criticism at the moment of the way in which matters have been handled, for the Labour Group to be calling for resignation after some of the things that they have presided over in their 20 years, 24 years in office is absurd. There is no sense of proportion whatsoever to what you presided over and the severity of the situation in which we find ourselves now, and we do regard this as serious.

Keith Wakefield described grass-cutting as the worst service we have ever seen. Well, Keith, what has happened to your memory? Let me just try and jog it slightly. What about a £60 million backlog in road maintenance across the City, so much so that the roads of this City have taken on the appearance of a Third World banana republic, quite frankly. That is not selective, it is not some parts of the City are okay and others not. Right across the City that is what you

presided over. Did anybody over there resign over it? No.

What about what happened to our Education service when it went into an absolute tailspin? It went through the floor. So much so we received the worst Ofsted inspection of just about any local authority in the country, which resulted in the running of education being placed in the hands of an independent third party arms length company. Did anybody in the Labour Group apologise for that? Did anybody resign? No, they didn't. Was that not a serious deficiency in a key service in this city? Yes, it was but you just sat it out and never once said, "Sorry", never once put your hands up.

And then more recently, what about the South Leeds Stadium? You presided over a four times overspend on the cost of the original budget for the South Leeds Stadium. Has anybody over there resigned or apologised about it? No. £9 million down the tube on South Leeds Stadium, and what was your explanation, Keith? "Well, for 12 million quid we have got an absolute state of the art facility there." Well, for 12 million quid we ought to have a state of the art facility there. In fact, I can't think of the superlative that exceeds "state of the art". Was that not a serious deficiency and failing? Of course it was. Did anybody apologise or resign? No, they didn't.

And then we discussed today Social Services. You presided over a free-fall of the Social Services' budget and did nothing. You will see in due course the report says that but, worse than that, think about it, whilst you sat there refusing to leave office there was an interregnum, so to speak, when by my calculation £1 million was added to the Social Services deficit because, according to you, nobody over there knew what was going on so nobody was attempting to control it.

Did anybody over there apologise? No. Has anybody over there ever resigned? No. And that is a catalogue of what the Labour Group has presided over.

I go back to where I started. What we have provided is not ---

THE LORD MAYOR: I'm sorry, Councillor Harris, you don't go back to where you started. It has been very interesting but in fact you have used your time up. Very sorry.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: And I just again wish to apologise. Thank

you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Lord Mayor, if I could pick up one of the items as an example that Councillor Harris has just referred to which shows the - well, for want of a better word - the hypocrisy of the Labour Party, and I am referring to the Gus John case that myself and Councillor Procter on this side were involved in, and if I could read from the verbatim of Council of 13.10.99, and this is former Councillor Sara Perigo, who is trying to give an explanation to Council. She said, "If you are called upon to take part ---"

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Cleasby, could you just hold the folder to the side, perhaps, a little? We are having trouble hearing you.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Lord Mayor, I thought this was my microphone.

THE LORD MAYOR: Well, for some reason we are not getting any sound out of it. It might well be the system.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Lord Mayor, under 14.4 which reads, "Members shall direct their speech to the question under discussion", then is it not the case that he is diverging from that, therefore is in breach ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: We don't know yet. (Interruptions)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Atha, if we can't hear, we can't make a judgment, really. I am just trying to get to a position ---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: You are more fortunate than we are.

THE LORD MAYOR: -- where we can make a judgment. Councillor Cleasby, continue please.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: My Lord Mayor, could I apologise to you in your great office for the inability of the system that we have as a legacy of the old administration not working correctly in this chamber. (Applause) Thank you, Lord Mayor.

Then if I could continue, former Councillor Perigo said, "If you are called upon to take part in appointing an officer, the only question you should consider is which candidate would

best serve the whole Council. You should not let political or personal preferences influence your judgment. You should not canvass the support of colleagues for any candidate and you should resist the attempt of others to canvass you."

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I again repeat, my Lord Mayor (Interruptions) I ask you to rule on 14.3. When a point of order is being raised the polite thing is to sit down and wait for the Lord Mayor's decision.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much, Councillor Atha. I have in fact taken advice from the Chief Executive on this point and because of the wording of the original White Paper which refers to "Executive Member responsible for a fiasco" the view of the Chief Executive is that Members opposite are entitled to raise issues of what they consider to be a similar nature. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR ATHA: If that is the case, it is an Officer's ruling, my Lord Mayor. Could you direct us how we can challenge that?

THE LORD MAYOR: I am sorry, I have ruled, Councillor Atha. I am sorry, I did remind you at the beginning of the Council meeting of 14.17 which says that the ruling of the Lord Mayor on a point of order or on the admissibility of a personal explanation shall not be open to discussion. Having said that, I would urge Councillor Cleasby to stick to the point that we are debating. Councillor Harris, your Leader, was given a great deal of latitude in the remarks that he made of a general nature. I would ask if you can, please, to now be specific to the issue in hand. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: I am attempting to make progress, Lord Mayor. If I can bow to your greater knowledge, I have to give examples of why I believe the motion as put down by Councillor Wakefield is unjust and unfair and why I oppose it, and I am trying to give that evidence, and what I am doing, Lord Mayor, is not only reading from the Council verbatim minutes but if, with deference to you, Council will allow me to read from the evidences given by those involved to the Tribunal, then what I am trying to attempt to do will become patently clear, Lord Mayor, and if I could turn to the gentleman next to you and ask Mr. Rogerson, would it be in order for me to read part of your evidence given to the Tribunal, please?

THE LORD MAYOR: Okay, we will ask him. Just hang on a minute. Mr. Rogerson will reply directly.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Yes.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: In that case, Lord Mayor, what Mr.

Rogerson said in his evidence, and we all gave these statements and signed them in front of witnesses, "It seemed to me on the information available that Mr. John's informal contact with the Chair of the Council's Education Committee" - that was Sara Perigo - "represented and would be seen by any reasonably objective third party to represent a clear attempt by Mr. John and others to advantage over potential candidates for the then vacant post of Director of Education." Now that is totally contrary to what Councillor Perigo had said, but even worse, and as obviously you don't like the truth, because I am reading the truth, I will read from the witness statement of Councillor Alec Hudson who said, "On the first occasion when Mr. Dalton was present Mr. Hamilton informed me that he wanted to appoint Gus John to the post. I was astounded, particularly as that suggestion had been made in front of an Officer, even one of the seniority of Mr. Dalton, and I brought the conversation quickly to a close by telling Mr. Hamilton that he should simply tell Mr. John to apply if he (inaudible)." That was totally wrong and breaking the rules of this Council by Mr. Dalton, by former Councillor Hudson (Interruptions) and the point I am trying to make, Lord Mayor, if I could go right back to the beginning, this is all because (Interruptions) a White Paper ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Hang on, Councillor Cleasby. Let's just calm down for a minute. The situation on the advice I have been given is that Councillor Cleasby is entitled to make the points that he is making. The question about the red light, I think people would accept that it is fair that there have been interruptions and that on my view he is still entitled to approximately another half minute of his time in order to wind up his point, but I do appeal to you Councillor Cleasby, to make it relative to the issue in question. (Interruptions)

He is not getting more than another half minute, and that gives him an opportunity to conclude his remarks in relation to the topic that we are discussing. Now please, Councillor Gruen. I am sorry, you can't comment, Councillor Selby, at the moment. Let's just get this bit of the debate through. Councillor Cleasby is going to finalise and then we will take

anybody else who hasn't previously spoken who wants to speak in the debate are perfectly entitled to do so in accordance with the procedural rules, and they should do that. Will you continue, please.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: I will, Lord Mayor. Thank you very much for your help and guidance.

Lord Mayor, I am not sure if you were on the Council, had been re-elected at this point, but the point I am trying to make - and they obviously know the point I am trying to make - is all the Opposition then, that is these parties here, were asking was for a censure of the people responsible. They had taken this Council into disrepute. We only asked for censure.

We have a hiccup in grass-cutting that they started and they ask for a city hanging. I think I rest my case, Lord Mayor, and encourage people to support the opposition in voting against this White Paper. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I have got another five speakers on the list, so those Members on my left who wanted to make a contribution to the debate, if they would kindly advise us then we will extend that list as long as is necessary.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, to get back to the issue of grass-cutting. Like Councillor Harris, I entirely accept that the grass-cutting this year has been a shambles, quite frankly - a shambles. A shambles. It is not up to standard anywhere in the City. It has to be got up to standard as fast as possible and, having been got up to standard it has to stay at that standard, which we intend to be better than the standard was hitherto.

But, my Lord Mayor, it is perfectly right to look at how this all began, and I have to say that Bernard Atha sent a very interesting e-mail around and I wondered whether he sent it before he had any knowledge of his Leader's White Paper, because he seemed to be indicating this was a Council problem, we should all be very grown-up about it and address it as being a Council problem. It is a Council problem but we are the administration and we take responsibility for it.

The saga started, as Steve Smith has rightly pointed out, way back in 2003, and I have gone to some lengths to get a chronological order of events, which I am not going to go all through, but I would like to highlight one point in particular,

because it was the first point of a whole series, many in your time in office, many in our time in office, when somebody could have said, and should have said, "Hang on, we are heading for a serious issue here" and nobody did.

The first time was when it was suggested to the ALMOs and Steve Smith was quite right, this all came about because of those inspections that highlighted a bad grass cutting service from your administration, helped to contribute to the lack of two stars for the ALMOs and they got jumping about, exercising their rights, which they are always doing. It was suggested to them by the centre, "Well, perhaps it would be better if we just trialed this in one ALMO to begin with" and a very clear message came back, "That's not acceptable to the ALMOs." Well, my question there would have been, "Who the hell is running the Council? The ALMOs or the administration?" because a big job like this, if there was any doubt about its success, it should have been trialed.

The second point, to address Councillor Jarosz's intervention. Pity Councillor Jarosz never talks about all the wonderful things that we are now doing to invest in the outer areas, things she never did in any time she has been on this Council. All she does, as I have said before, is look as though she is sucking a bag full of lemons when we announce how much we are going to invest in her ward in Pudsey.

COUNCILLOR JAROSZ: I always look like that. I do.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, where was I? Yes. So the ALMOs set the specification for the Council properties, Councillor Jarosz, and this is what they have done. They seem to have somehow segregated different types of sheltered housing. I can take you to some sheltered housing in your ward and in mine where the grass has been cut three and about to be four times. (Interruption) Looks better - hang on, I have not finished - better than it has ever looked. But I can take you to a lot more sheltered housing schemes, the difference being there is no actual warden on site, where the grass is up here in my ward, in your ward. What the hell are the ALMOs doing? Why isn't the spec the same for all the elderly people's housing? They would have all had four cuts then.

So, my Lord Mayor, let's just get this in proportion. Let's get it in proportion.

The other key point is, as Mark has already mentioned, what sort of a system is it that we have that allows an administration seven days after the election result to still be having meetings with Chief Officers, which Councillor Wakefield did, to sign off at LMT the Council Plan which agreed them outsourcing market testing of grass-cutting. There is something seriously wrong with a system like that.

My Lord Mayor, I could go on to just remind Councillor Wakefield of some more issues where people should have resigned, but I will mention only one, Landmark Leeds. The cost of Landmark Leeds was supposed to be £3.65 million. It cost £5.5 million, £2 million more. That is enough to do the grass-cutting contract in a whole year, by the way. Did anybody resign over Landmark Leeds? Some of you are still here. You can go trip over the stones for yourselves that you paid for laying, or the Council Taxpayer paid for. The man who masterminded it, and this seems to be common for the Labour Party, was promoted, if promotion it is. He went to the House of Commons. But some of these people were in it up to their necks, Councillor Wakefield included. The thing with Councillor Wakefield is, my Lord Mayor, that whenever these decisions are made, he is like George Bush senior, he was always out of the room and at the toilet. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I didn't think I was on the order sheet at this present time but can I just start by one or two particular points? First of all, the question of a meeting of which I was Area Chairman which appeared to be on grass-cutting. Let's just make this absolutely clear, it was not. It was on all sorts of different things and somebody actually mentioned the question of could grass-cutting be something that is passed down to the Area Committees. It was not a meeting with the Area Committee Chairman to say, "Let's talk about grass-cutting."

Can I also come across to you on here about as far as a warden is missing. If there is a warden missing, and I have got to be careful here because it might not be Housing, but if it is Housing, why haven't you written to me? Because I want to know why a warden is missing, and I don't know why. I assume you are not saying they are lost in the grass as a joke.

I assume you mean genuinely that there is no warden there. Well, why haven't you written? Why haven't you told me?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: She would rather make publicity out of it.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Oh, is that what it is?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: She is renown for it. Doesn't get anything done but complains a lot.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: That is why your mother is disappointed in you. (Applause) Please, just let me know. Anybody, there's loads of Members over there writing on all sorts of things. I do not ignore things that are said to me. We try and do whatever we can and I didn't know your mother has no warden. I want to know why she hasn't a warden and if it is Housing, and I don't know because I know Social Services have some, then I will be finding out why. In fact, an e-mail has already gone off while I have sat here. I have sent one off. You wouldn't know I have done it, but I have done it.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: He has a Blackberry, you know.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Don't tell everybody! Now, we know it is silly season, and we know it is fun time, and you must be having a great time over there. I would.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Well, they don't look as though they are. (Laughter) They look as though they have dropped another clanger. If that's having fun, I wouldn't like to see them ---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Well, it is because you are speaking.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: It is alright. It is quality heckling! We don't usually get that from you lot. (Interruptions)

Where the hell am I? I haven't got a clue. The resolution itself - let's stop the silly nonsense now about people resigning. You know in 30 years none of you ever resigned and you have been told about the mistakes that have been made, mega mistakes because let me just tell you this ---

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: David Morton resigned.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I am not talking about David, I am

talking about you. You never resigned in 30 years, any
of you.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Never apologised either.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: You never apologised, you never
 resigned under any circumstances for whatever thing it is.
 Let me just say this to you ---

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: (Inaudible) resigned.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Will you be quiet, Neil, for God's
 sake, boy.

THE LORD MAYOR: Come on, please. Councillor Carter, can you
 just pause a minute. We really need to have some sense
 in this debate. We are just sort of rattling round the
 chamber. If you wouldn't mind just getting on with the point
 that you are making ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I am trying, Lord Mayor. I am trying.

THE LORD MAYOR: -- and kindly stop encouraging Councillor
 Taggart. Thank you very much.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: You have done it. I won't tell them
 the story why you come at me. I know.

 Lord Mayor, they are talking about resignations. I will
 say this to you. You say Councillor Smith, you mentioned
 Councillor Smith but you do it plural. Now, I don't know who
 you mean. Do you mean my colleague down here who has to do
 with grass-cutting for the parks?

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: The parks have done alright.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Parks have done alright, so you don't
 mean John. Well, who is the other one? Because I will
 tell you this, I was a bit cross to start with because I
 thought you did mean John. John is one of the finest,
 youngest Members we have got on this Council, and I'll tell you
 what - shut up, John - I'll tell you what (Laughter), this lad
 is going to be a Leader of this Council one day and he is going
 to sit there with a majority for the Conservatives, and I look
 forward to being an old man sitting up there and watching it.

Lord Mayor, just cut the nonsense out. I will tell you this, that grass is going to be sorted and I will tell you what. People will forget when it is back down to its proper level, it will be sorted and people will then say, yes, that administration got it right because, unlike your mistakes which have cost this city millions we can never get the money back, we can sort this one out and will sort it out. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, I have got some rather interesting newspaper cuttings here. "Let's have our pathway cleared again", West Ardsley residents say. "I am trapped in my own home", a disabled lady says. "The green, green grass not mown". "Leeds Council accused of breaking promises. Lives being put at risk by overgrown verges. Grass peril, the Council grass-cutters are here again. It is a disgrace."

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Resign. Resign.

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: "Drivers obscured by long grass."
"On the verge, a Rawdon mum battling to get her grass cut. We don't want any more of this. Why can't the Council clear up this mess." "Grass-cutting" again. "Verging on a mess" about grass-cutting, and the fact is, unlike recently, there is no MPs with shears supposedly cutting grass. There is no Councillor Wakefield creeping up behind some grass, a photograph. There is a very nice picture of Councillor Cleasby, mind you, but when are these newspaper cuttings from? I will tell you - 14th October 1999, 20th October 1999, 7th June 2001, (Applause) 6th September 2001, 14th September 2001, 1st October 2002, 18th September 2003 and the 5th and 6th of May from last year.

The fact is things don't change, do they? In fact, actually I think it was in 1999 just after I got elected a new contract with Leisure was signed, and again we had the same problems as this year. It was signed late, two months late. It was signed in March and I can recall most of my first summer on this Council I was being contacted by grass-cutting and it was just as bad as it is now.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Worse. It was worse.

COUNCILLOR D. BLACKBURN: It was, but you forget that. The

one difference is that Councillor Smith and the three Group Leaders have been trying to do something about this and turn this round, and we will do. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Where were you in '99?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Where was I in '99? Lord Mayor, this has been an interesting debate. Until Councillor Blackburn spoke this side spoke about grass-cutting and you spoke about anything other than grass-cutting, anything you could think of other than grass-cutting.

You called, when in opposition, on many occasions for the resignation. Whether it happened or didn't happen is a secondary act. We are calling for the resignation of the person who was in charge of this particular portfolio. Clearly - person or persons - who may own up or not. Now, clearly he is not going to resign, but it doesn't mean we are not entitled to ask for that resignation.

Over the last three to four months, and Councillor Carter, in fairness, and Councillor Harris, have admitted that the grass cutting has not been up to standard. It is interesting when you want to go back and just about sort of 14 months into the administration you can go back, just about, but it is your implementation, it is your delivery, and you said you would be measured by delivery. You have asked the people of Leeds to measure on how you will deliver, but so far you have not delivered, and that's the fact. Everything else is window-dressing, and the fact that Councillor Andrew Carter --

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Swarcliffe, was that window-dressing?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: The fact that Andrew Carter wants to keep going back and blame the ALMOs, I can now detect a new policy from the administration evolving here. If we can't do anything about it, let's blame the ALMOs. We didn't set the ALMOs up so therefore let's blame the ALMOs and say it is all their fault.

Next to him is Councillor Les Carter who talks about his two-star generals, delighted when more money comes in, delighted when good work is being done, and also there is Amanda Carter going round with Les Carter talking to all the ALMOs constantly. So let's have an even playing field. Stop

always denigrating the ALMOs and having a go just some of us, four of us in this chamber, actually chaired the ALMOs. It could be somebody else another time, who knows. So therefore the ALMOs were quite entitled to ask for an improvement, quite entitled.

Now, all of that, all of those discussions, I tell you, took place between Officers at the centre and Officers at the ALMOs. I can't recall, frankly, the new grass-cutting specification ever coming to any board. Nor should it. It is an operational issue. Nor should it. So if Officers at the centre and Officers with the ALMOs agreed the new specification, well, so be it. The fact now is that the service is not and has not been delivered apart from, as Councillor Rachel Procter pointed out so eloquently, in a place not in Leeds at all but in Harrogate. There it is absolutely perfect because they stray across the border not realising that they are no longer in Leeds.

I am speaking following the quite I think bizarre advice that has been given to the Lord Mayor about Councillor Cleasby's contribution. All I would say to Councillor Cleasby is, it doesn't have to be a resignation. I remember that that particular individual to whom you refer ceased to be Chair of that particular portfolio fairly shortly and fairly quickly after what you were saying. So there are different ways. You might not remember. There are different ways of dealing with this.

You also mentioned an Officer in your speech. Well, I think it would be very interesting to go back and look at exactly the behaviour and the role that was played and, you know, the issues surrounding those circumstances, but we can talk about that, if you want to name names, with other people as well. You are not being fair. You are not accepting your responsibility. You are trying to go and blame everybody else.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: The only time you ever heard anyone accept responsibility in this place was when (Inaudible) spoke.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: But then you went on to blame everybody else and saying it was everybody else's fault.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: No, I said "Let's get things in balance"

is what I said.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: We will come back. We will come back in 6 months time when we can put another White Paper forward and see what difference to the service has been made.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I shall be very brief and I won't provoke that side at all! First of all, there has been comments made that calling for resignation in this case is unreasonable and improper. Can I remind Andrew Carter that he called for my resignation three times in 18 months. The last time was to do with one of the big concerts we were putting on in Templenewsam and, as a result of that, I wrote to every Member of the Council - his lot, my lot - and simply said that these allegations he is making are so improper I wasn't going to respond to them but they ought to know that the allegations he was making by implication about dishonesty and dealing with the Mean Fiddler, I think it was at the time, and arguing with the chap that runs -- Branson who ran Virgin Records and so on, he alleged by implication some malfunctioning and called for my resignation. I wrote to every Member of Council. I have still got that on record and I could show you all.

Now, I am not criticising for that. That is just a fact, so resignations have been called for before. I personally wouldn't call for resignations because I have been to some extent the injured person. In fact, I suppose you are dealing as an individual to the best of your capacity, which I am sure is very considerable, and I am not demeaning it, I am not being ironic, but what has happened is you have been let down. I would be looking for failures below the level you are on, the people who have got you in the position you are in where you are having to carry a can, because you have not acted on your own advice, I presume. You have presumably acted on the advice of others, so where does the fault really lay? On who should we (inaudible)?

I hope the scrutiny will in fact reveal the basic problem that occurred in this case, and you demean yourselves a little by pretending that the condition of the grass now is only a bit worse than it has been in the past. (Interruptions) Some of you aren't. Let's be honest. Some of you have made it quite clear. Andrew was very clear. He said exactly what it was.

I couldn't have put it more accurately, but some are saying that this is not nearly as bad as you are claiming. In fact it is diabolically bad, and let's accept that, but let's find

out why and who is responsible.

And so with those few words all I would say is let's look for the real culprits, the real people who are responsible, but in the end you have got to face this. The day began with Andrew being his usual ebullient self and tackling Councillor Minkin and really suggesting that she was responsible for a defective designed and operating fountain. Now, she didn't design it. She didn't place it. She didn't do the plumbing.

She didn't do any of that, but you were saying she is responsible. Now, if you claim that in that case, we are legitimate ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I realise she is not the plumber.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Wait a minute, old boy. We are legitimate if we ask for his resignation. I think both were wrong. I think you shouldn't have made that accusation because you know darned well that when an architect comes along or a designer comes along, you take their advice. If you don't, you act at your peril.

So let's find out where the problem is, and so I just sympathise with you. You have taken on a rather sticky stick at the moment. I hope it is right. We want to see the grass cut. We want to see it cut well but, by God, I will tell you, it proves once again to me that public service nearly always is a better method of providing a service than a company that works for profit. (Interruptions) Not in every case because I am passionately supporting --- (Interruptions) They didn't tender for this contract, I was reliably told, and that was a decision made by whom and when you start looking at scrutiny go back to the point at who made the decision not to tender.

And we also know the pressure that the ALMOs have been putting on people. I just think Leisure Services have been reviled. I think they would have made a better stab at this, and I would say this, if you are looking at the contract, I would have said that the contract that was let has been broken so badly by now it is grounds for revocation of the contract and suing for liquidated damages, but if you have not got liquidated damages in, go for unliquidated, because if you don't we are known as a soft touch.

COUNCILLOR JENNINGS: Lord Mayor, I hadn't intended to speak on this White Paper but it has become obvious that, as the mood of the evening is apology and confession, from what has

been said by Councillor Taggart that it is probably I who is the second man because I presumably as the Executive Board Member for Children's Services am responsible for these children lost in the jungle. (Laughter) If anybody else wants to admit to being the third man, they can speak after me.

I did just want to make one slightly serious point and that is I am certainly not going to belittle the problems being faced by residents in certain parts of the City and by Councillors receiving a lot of complaints. I don't know what it is about the residents of Weetwood but, having spoken to my ward colleagues, I first thought we had three complaints. It turns out when I do a bit of investigation actually it is three complaints by the same person to each of us.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: West Park Fields are done by Parks.

COUNCILLOR JENNINGS: No, I am not talking about West Park Fields. Weetwood Ward, although the West Park Fields are an important part of it, is a little larger, otherwise our electorate would be small and probably my dogs would win then rather than me, which would be very embarrassing, although they might make a better job of it!

So I decided to talk to a few neighbours and friends and people I see around and about who I know and the admitted truth was, listening to them, I think the point that Councillor David Blackburn made; they hadn't noticed it was worse this year because their comment was, "It is pretty awful every year". Maybe that's because we, not being represented by members of the former administration, didn't get a very good grass cutting service before this year, but I would just like to say that although obviously it is not within my remit I would like to say that the whole of the Executive Board, lead Members and every Member of the Council at all levels on this side of this chamber, although we know there is a problem, also know it is our job to get it right, and that is something that we will do. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, I thought I should just correct some of the comments that have been made, and one quite specifically - it seems a long time ago that it was commented on - but that was in relation to Leeds in Bloom. It is not true to say that we won't win prizes at Leeds in Bloom. The people who are out there across the City work very hard within the In Bloom organisations, and I thank Councillor Robinson for

taking the lead for these matters in the City now and Denise for previously heading up the In Bloom people. They worked exceptionally hard to deliver a truly stunning environment for all of the people who live within those areas, and we are determined that those In Bloom committees will succeed this year and we as a City are working closely with Glendale to ensure that that will happen.

I would advise you to talk to some of the people who are on the In Bloom committee to see if that is happening on the ground, and you will find that it is, and we are determined that we are going to win prizes despite these difficulties that we currently have.

Something that has not been mentioned so far, I think Councillor Carter alluded to it, and that was the issue of Parks & Countryside actually cutting the grass. It is no secret, I don't think, to anybody that Officers in Parks & Countryside and certainly the entire workforce were almost overjoyed when they knew that they were not going to have responsibility for certain areas of grass-cutting within Leeds.

I know certainly that large numbers of members in the Labour Group were overjoyed because they knew what that would then do and what actually happened is a large number of people, all of those people who were involved previously in grass-cutting in fact, did not transfer over to Glendale. Maybe you could argue that they should have done and that knowledge would have transferred as well. But what actually happened and what we were all, weren't we, keen to do was reinvest that workforce into our parks, and so if you go round our parks at the moment you will see a dramatic difference, actually, that has taken place over the past year.

It is interesting Councillor Leadley - he is not here at the moment - he commented on the wonderful grass-cutting on roundabouts and he attributed it to rabbits, I think, in his local vicinity. Well, actually all of the roundabouts are looked after by Parks & Countryside and again I hope we would all agree that the standard of maintenance on the roundabouts has dramatically improved, but there was a rationale behind what was done.

It is this business about, "Nothing happened under us. Nothing happened under Labour". Well, it did. Look, here are the pages. This is the flow of e-mails and correspondence

that moved around under your administration on this subject, and again no doubt Scrutiny will have an awful lot of reading to do to see exactly what took place, and it is Members opposite who will have quite a shock. It is Members opposite who will be surprised at the detail of the information that Councillor Wakefield certainly was aware about in terms of how we got to the position that we ultimately inherited.

We should also remember that we all had a part to play in the establishment of this contract, and the people who had a very important part to play, that seemed to think everything would be alright, I guess they must have been convinced that the whole of the set-up of the contract was right, the frequency was right, the mobilisation period was right: Councillor Lyons, Councillor Lowe, Councillor Lewis and Councillor Grahame, all of whom sat on the City Services Scrutiny Board had the issue before them on a number of occasions, as I understand it, in terms of regular updates and didn't choose to launch an investigation into the minute detail of the contract. Perhaps we could argue that they should have done, and that Members on this side should have done as well, actually. Perhaps they should have done that, but that is the role of Scrutiny. That is what your role is. That is what the role should be and perhaps all of us, those on Scrutiny, need to look a little closer in terms of the amount of detail that they paid to this particular issue.

In terms of what colleagues have already said, clearly the situation has to improve. The situation will improve, and I hope we will see a little less of some of the articles we have seen in the press. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I think you will probably have some later dispute, John, with the Members, I was hearing, about your version of the events on Scrutiny. (Interruption outside chamber) There you are, they are cheering me already. That was quite good because actually I thought Stephen got a round of applause when he stood up, Councillor Smith, and I thought, "What happens if he does a good job?" I mean, he got that round of applause for doing a terrible job.

But can I just remind Councillor Andrew Carter, I did apologise once when I was Leader, and I apologised to Les Carter for not being at the conference, for not sending an invitation to him at the conference and Les, in his true statesman way, accepted that apology and, like Bernard Atha, I

think my resignation has been called for on similar occasions by Andrew Carter on many, many occasions, and in fact I think there is not many people whose resignation --- I think, Tom Murray, you were called for once, so there's not many of us who have not been called for to resign by Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: There's not many of you who shouldn't have resigned.

COUNCILLOR MCKENNA: Nothing as changed then, Andrew.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: But, you know, I always know when the administration is in trouble because they bring out Brian Cleasby as the village idiot, and off he goes. He talks about everything and nothing - it goes on forever - and then you get the Andrew and Les show, again everything bar grass-cutting. History of the world since the Big Bang. They have been on 30 years and all this. You get to hear their life story and you get a little nugget there about the truth but the rest is just bluster and smokescreen and deflection all the way along.

Let me just say to David Blackburn about his articles, no-one on this side has ever said the service was perfect. We acknowledge, and all of us round here would acknowledge that the grass-cutting was not good enough under our administration.

That is recorded and, in fact, there was a debate, and in actual fact it got to --- The heart of the debate was really, should it be a public service or should it be a private service? And we took the view, like we did with the refuse collection, and that is that you have to give the public sector an opportunity to improve. On doing so - this is the absolute, you know, as I said - in doing so we said we needed to test it and put it out to tender. What we don't know, and Bernard is absolutely right, is how our public sector - they might have been relieved but I can assure you my understanding of this was that the public sector would tender alongside the private sector, and the truth is that you have acknowledged it.

You have acknowledged it.

What happened is you should never have let that contract out at that time of the year. It was wrong to do so. The grass had started to grow, the company wasn't equipped. You are now chasing frantically, or they are, and that is why we have got such a shambles, and I defy anybody with their hand on their heart to say that it is as bad now as it has ever been. It is worse. Far worse.

We were bad but this is far worse, and I think there are some fundamental questions which unfortunately Stephen hasn't addressed in his contribution. He didn't say whether the company were going to be penalised. He didn't say whether there was going to be --- Well, it can all be scrutiny but, come on, you elect a Member to take some leadership and responsibility. I have got every faith in Scrutiny but sometimes you have to hold your hand up and say, "I should have monitored it. I should have asked the question and I should have pushed", you know.

And I don't care, by the way, if ALMO are letting people down, they are wrong, Les. If people are not getting the service and ALMOs haven't done, I don't care whether it is us, ALMOs or anybody, the simple fact is this, that cutting grass is very simple and it is very important, because nearly everybody in this City needs that kind of service. It is a public service. We ought to be able to deliver it better. We ought to be able to deliver it efficiently.

I acknowledge the words that Stephen and others have said about the need to improve and, as people said, in 6 months time we will be able to judge you again, and it is right that the Opposition does come back with a White Paper and does the things that you used to regularly call on and that is, if it is not right, then we need accountability. No good hiding behind past history now. That argument is losing its resonance now and I can assure you there are many people in this City are not bothered about the history of the world of the Council, all they want to know is that there is a basic good public service which they believe they are paying for and they believe they deserve, and if they get that then, quite frankly, that is about closing the gap and it is about providing excellent service, and sadly they have not, and what I would say to you, Stephen, if you do the honourable thing, which I don't think you will, I have got something for you. I have got a nice little cap here for you that you will be able to go to called "Glendales - Think Green, think Glendales". I am sure that you will wear it with pride. On that, Lord Mayor, I do think, as I say, there is a huge responsibility.

I am pleased that the administration have acknowledged the mistakes, the weaknesses, the service improvements and, quite frankly, Stephen, you have got a lot to do to actually explain to the people of Leeds, without blaming us, how you are going

to improve that service. I move, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: First of all, we need to take the vote on the amendment in the name of Councillor Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Can we have a recorded vote, please, Lord Mayor?

THE LORD MAYOR: Recorded vote - can I have it seconded?

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: I second.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Would all Members ensure, please, that they are in their allocated seats. All Members are asked to refer to their desk units and press the button marked "P" to activate the unit. Those Members in favour of the amendment in the name of Councillor Finnigan should press the "+" button. Those Members against that amendment should press the "-" button, and any Member wishing to abstain and have their abstention recorded should press the "0" button.

Councillor Atha, is your machine working?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I keep pressing the correct button but (inaudible) and I have pressed the "-" button.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: That is fine.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: I think your pacemaker is interfering with the signal, Bernard!

THE LORD MAYOR: Okay, we have a result, Members of Council. Members present, 93. 4 voted in favour of the amendment. There were no abstentions and 89 votes were against. That is lost. Narrowly, I must say.

Can we take a vote on the original motion in the name of Councillor Wakefield?

(The motion was defeated)

ITEM 15 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - POVERTY IN AFRICA

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: Lord Mayor,

Well, hello, everybody, I've a story to tell,

It will take a little time but I'll try and tell it well
About some people, and one of them was me
Who went on a journey across the sea.
Well, we had to take a plane 'cos it is rather far
To get to the countries of Africa
And when you get there, well, what do you know,
We didn't go the way people usually go.
We went by a way not everyone would like
'Cos we went on a bike.
Yes, cycling in Kenya and Tanzania,
Would the alcoholic cyclists get enough beer?
What was going on? What as it all about?
Were we just skiving off?
Yes, of that there's no doubt.
But there is another reason I would like to explain,
It is the "Make poverty history" campaign.

You see, my friends, brief cartoon history of the problem.
It is like this:

Once upon a time there were people in poor countries like
Kenya and Tanzania who wanted to borrow some money and
they said to the rich countries, "Can we borrow some?" Rich
countries like Britain said, "Yes, you can have some money but
will you be able to pay it back?" and the people in the poor
countries said, "Yes, because we have tea and coffee and sugar
and cocoa. We will earn enough money and we will be able to
pay it back." "Alright then, but we like to make a small
profit so for every £1,000 we want £1,100 back. 10% profit,
is it a deal?" "Oh yes because we have tea and coffee and
sugar and cocoa." "What's the matter?" "We are not getting
the price we expected for our tea and coffee." "Well, you
will just have to work harder, won't you?" "We are working
hard but you are dumping the sugar from your CAP onto our
markets. You are not letting our coffee into Europe." "I
can't help that. You will have to work harder, and the
interest rates have gone up, and the price of oil. Look, stop
making excuses, will you, just give us the money." "If we give
you the money we will not be able to pay for our health and
education." "I can't help that. We want our money back and
all our friends are saying the same thing, aren't you?" "We
sure are. Want the money back right now." "Certainement,
vous de vais paye maintenant, n'est pas?" "Sie müssen jetzt
bezahlen, ja?" (Italian and Russian spoken)

Yes, that's the sort of thing the rich countries used to say,

Even though the poor countries couldn't quite pay.
Yes, they themselves are sometimes to be blamed
As corruption and waste must be named.
But if for health and education, the country is too poor,
Should the rich keep saying, "You've got to give us more"?
Well, to find out for ourselves what conditions are like,
We thought we would pay a visit on our bike.
Well, I do have stories that could last hours,
But here is just a short one about flowers.
Yes, the pretty, pretty flowers we so casually buy,
I wonder how many people they have helped to die.
You see, in Kenya they export them,
But this is what it has meant:
Of local water they take 75%
And the women who pick them get £1 a day,
You can guess what they do to increase their pay
Which in turn increases HIV AIDS
But on our flowers no blood is displayed.
But I don't just have stories to depress,
I also have stories about success.
Outside Nairobi farmers in the hills
Are finding new ways to pay their bills.
Once they were told, "It's coffee you should grow,
The price will be high", but it wasn't it was low.
So they needed to find a way to recover
So their communities needed to find a living to discover
So their communities could recover.
They showed us special bags that they grow stronger seeds
Better crops, better food and hunger recedes.
They make their own detergents,
They have saplings to sell.
They are discovering new diets so they can eat well
Chapattis and fritters made from cassava
And cabbage made from banana plant.
Is it good? Rather.
They are making and selling dresses
With attractive decoration
These are people who say, "Stuff desperation.
We have a project, BIDDY is its name
To help people help themselves,
That is the aim.
BIDDY means "effort"
And just see the life these people have made.
They did it themselves,
And some help from Christian Aid.
Yes, I have had the privilege to see at first hand

The hard, hard struggle of a beautiful land
Which we mightn't manage, find it too painfully tiring
But to meet people managing is humbling and inspiring.
Facts may seem just dull and dry
Until you meet someone whose neighbour had to die
Because the health per person, the cash for one year
Is less than we could spend on a pint of beer.
Yes, anyone can rattle off appalling statistics
But there are one or two that should make us go ballistic
So that we don't see this as some unsolvable mystery
But the motive at last to make poverty history.

That is the name of the campaign, as you know, that has come about. 300 different organisations in Britain have come together to make use of this year when Britain is hosting the G8 Summit and also is President of the EU. Three aims of the campaign, as you may know, are to cancel debt, increase terms of trade and increase aid, and it seems like the Government are no longer behaving like the cartoon picture that I put but they themselves are trying to respond to those three aims. As you may have read, £55 billion already taken away to cancel debt. £45 billion in order to increase aid, and attempts being made to finally stop the protectionist policies which make it difficult for poorer countries to export to our country things like coffee.

So for the first time it looks like, instead of being accused of giving with one hand, giving aid or decreasing debt, but bringing it back by bad terms of trade, the Government is trying to get the balance right. Yes, we may be suspicious of the Government, many probably here in this room will be. People in poorer countries are probably thinking, "Another initiative. Hah-ha, where is that going to lead us?" but it is a unique attempt, an unprecedented bringing together of three key things which I think the Government needed to be supported in trying to bring about.

In this City, as you probably know, there is TIDAL, Trade Injustice Debt Action Leeds, and they are the group that is trying to co-ordinate it here and arrange for as many people as possible to go up to Edinburgh for the July 2nd demonstration, that is the Make Poverty History demo: it is not the Bung a Brick through the Window Brigade of a Bank. It is the people who are trying to protest in order to persuade Gordon Brown and the others to agree with the arguments.

TIDAL are doing a fantastic job and Leeds, it was discovered, didn't need just one train to be hired to get us there, but two. There are 1500 people going by train to Edinburgh, not to mention the people who are going by bus, people who are driving up, and there are five groups of us who will be cycling.

TIDAL is doing a magnificent job. It brings together, as you may know, people from different aid organisations and different parties. It is an all-party affair and I am hoping that therefore today also, as I am sure will be the case, all parties will support this particular motion, and I hope also that the Leader of Council will at some stage meet with TIDAL.

Of course, the Council has done a great deal, the City has done a great deal. We are a Fair Trade city. We have done a big response to the tsunami. We are twinned with Durban but the Leader of the Council I think would profit or it would be good if he could speak with TIDAL to see what has happened in the campaign not just up to July 2nd and the summit but after that.

To eradicate poverty might seem naïvely idealistic, a silly way to put it, but as the poet said,
"Two people looked out from the prison bars.
One saw the mud and one saw the stars."

As far as Africa is concerned, it is certainly time we saw and aimed for the stars.

We have stories the G8 leaders need to hear
And as we crossed the border from Kenya to Tanzania
We met a young man who put the message well
He said, "Tell the G8 we are suffering.
That's what you should tell".
So now we are pedalling off to Edinburgh
And that's the reason why.
There's too many dying who do not need to die.
Debts can be cancelled, terms of trade improved,
Aid increased, bad conditions removed.
Another world is possible if the right work is done
Kasanani, as the Swahilians say
It says in Swahili, "Work for it".
Kasanani, work for it, and the right change can be won,

(?Kasanani asunta sani). Thank you very much. Lord
Mayor, I beg to move. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I am going to formally second and reserve my right to speak.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: I shall not add to that, Lord Mayor. I shall let it stand on its own merits. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: My Lord Mayor, I wish to support the motion and I welcome Roger's initiatives on recently cycling to Africa and also the next one that he will be cycling to Edinburgh.

However, I feel, Roger, that you could have gone a bit further on world-wide poverty in relation to some of the residents myself and Roger represents, for example, Kashmiris, Pakistanis, Indians, Bangladeshis, Afghanis and many, many more, and I think that is something that could have been taken on account and you could have addressed it. Thank you very much, and I do support this motion.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I would like, if you would, just to give me a moment's indulgence. We have just had some very bad news. Councillor Procter has just informed me that there appears to have been a tragedy at Roundhay Park lake. It would appear two young children have drowned. The police are there at the moment. Apparently there was a group of children playing in the lake and two have not surfaced. That is the information we have at the moment. Denise Preston is there and reporting to us all the time, and the police are mounting a major operation. We felt we ought to tell you straight away. Let us hope and pray it is not a major tragedy.

On that note, very briefly, can I associate all the Members of the administration with the resolution, which we absolutely support.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I am sure we are all very sad to hear that news. I think Councillor Harris wants to say something before I call on Councillor Harington to sum up.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Roger just asked that I meet with TIDAL. I already have but, of course, I am happy to meet with them any time they want and that was a great performance but it was sentiments well put. I am sure the entire Council support

every single thing that you said, and whatever is within our power to try and help eradicate poverty, then I am sure the entire Council will try and do something.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harington, I think there is very little to reply to, but you might wish to.

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: I have nothing to add, Lord Mayor. Could we move to the vote, thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: I have a suspicion that we might not need a recorded vote on this matter.

(The motion was carried unanimously)

ITEM 16 - WHITE PAPER MOTION -
FIRE SAFETY STANDARDS WITHIN LEEDS MENTAL HEALTH TRUST PFI

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, could I ask for the consent of the Council to alter the motion to incorporate Councillor Harrand's amendment?

THE LORD MAYOR: Is it the wish of Council that we accede to Councillor Finnigan's request to accept the amendment?
(Agreed)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: I will be very brief, we have been here a long time. People will know that there are issues about fire safety here. What I would conclude by saying in formally moving the new resolution is that we need a public inquiry, that is absolutely clear. We need to find out what went wrong and why it went wrong. Running internally as well with an inquiry by the Scrutiny board is something that we are more than content with.

The final thing that we would say on this particular one is that we admire - we should all admire - the courage of those particular people who are prepared to take a risk with their livelihoods to make sure that this information runs through into the public domain. We are in a situation where these people are very, very courageous, they are prepared to put patient safety before profit, and certainly I would like it acknowledged that we owe those people a particularly large debt. I formally move the resolution as amended, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ELLIOTT: My Lord Mayor, I would like to second

Councillor Finnigan's resolution. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lowe has indicated that she wishes to withdraw her amendment. Councillor Lowe?

COUNCILLOR LOWE: Yes, I wish to withdraw my amendment.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Withdrawal seconded.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we ask consent of Council for that to be withdrawn. (Agreed)

Councillor Harrand's amendment has been incorporated. Councillor Harrand, do you want to speak to the amended resolution? Councillor Phillips? No? Okay. Councillor Kirkland? No. Councillor Andrew Carter?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: No, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Finnigan to sum up. I am not sure that --- Councillor McArdle, I am sorry, I didn't have you down.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: It's okay. Thank you, Lord Mayor. Very briefly, I too have been privy to this report and I want to echo the comments of Councillor Finnigan with regard to courageous behaviour and actions of some of the individuals. The report does highlight serious deficiencies in the design and implementation of that design through construction. Numerous instances of poor design and poor construction have been identified. It is what my late mother would have called a tuppence ha'penny job, and I welcome this resolution and hope that Scrutiny gets to the bottom of this, and hope that reparations are made to the good of these buildings. Let's hope it is all got to the bottom of. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: As I understand it, we have a substantive motion which incorporates the amendment put forward by Councillor Harrand, having the other amendment by Councillor Lowe withdrawn, so the substantive motion as amended by Councillor Harrand's amendment and as accepted by Councillor Finnigan.

(The motion was carried)

Okay, thank you very much, Members of Council. I really

thought we might have been here much later but, with your kind co-operation on the last two White Papers in particular, we have been able to get through expeditiously. Can I thank you for your co-operation in regard to that, and wish you a pleasant journey home and look forward to seeing you next time.

(Council rose at 9.50 p.m.)