

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 5th APRIL 2006

THE LORD MAYOR (Councillor W. S. Hyde): Good afternoon, Members of Council and members of the public. I have a very pleasant duty to perform before we start the meeting this afternoon. Some of you will know that our stenographer and record-taker Diane Budding is in fact due to retire shortly and, since she has been doing this job for us splendidly for more than 40 years, it was felt appropriate that we should make a small presentation to her, and I am about to do that now. Thank you very, very much indeed on behalf of the Council. (Applause)

(The presentation was made)

THE LORD MAYOR: Just one or two announcements, fellow Members of Council, before we move on to Item 1. As you will all know, this is the last full meeting of Council before the local elections, and I think that we ought to just remember the excellent contributions that have been made by people who we know already at this stage will not be rejoicing us after the elections because they are in fact retiring from the Council.

You will know that Michael Davey has resigned, that Stuart Bruce will not be seeking re-election. Nor, I am told will Mitchell Galdas or Claire Nash, and I am sure that each one of those has made a meaningful contribution to the successful operation of this Council over the years, and I think perhaps we ought to give them a round of applause for all their contributions and wish them well. (Applause)

One other announcement, and that is to do with the Freedom of the City. Again, I think most of you will have read in the press that we are going to invest Allan Bennett with the Freedom of the City of Leeds very shortly, and the arrangements have now been made for this ceremony to take place at a special meeting of the Council to be held on Friday, 12th May 2006, and I do hope, although I realise that this is short notice and perhaps at a difficult time for some, I do hope that all Members of Council will make a special effort to attend, and the usual arrangements will be made that are normally made on these occasions. We will let you know details of timings and so on very shortly, but if you want to make a note in your diary, Friday, 12th May.

I think that is really about all I have got. We move on to the order paper. The usual reminder about mobile telephones; if you have got yours with you, then please do make sure that it is switched off.

ITEM 1 - MINUTES OF MEETING ON 28th FEBRUARY 2006

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: My Lord Mayor, can I move that the minutes be

received subject to the additional names as listed on the order paper.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I second.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, could I draw your attention to the item mentioned in connection with the declarations of interest? My declaration of interest is incorrectly recorded. It says, "School governor, Spring Bank Primary School". It should say, "Spring Bank Primary School and Westroyd Infants School", which I did in fact say.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much for that, Councillor Carter. We will make the necessary amendment. Sorry, we have another amendment. Yes?

COUNCILLOR SCHOFIELD: Lord Mayor, could I also ask for an amendment? I declared an interest on the floor of the chamber as a governor of Whitkirk Primary School, which is not recorded.

THE LORD MAYOR: That is in fact on the order paper: we have accepted that.

COUNCILLOR MILLARD: Lord Mayor, can I point out that a declaration that I made is not recorded: School governor of St. Mary's Church of England Primary School, Boston Spa.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, we will make a note of that.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Lord Mayor, may I have it recorded as a personal interest that I am a member of the GMB when we are discussing the pension situation?

THE LORD MAYOR: Okay, but we are talking about the recording of the declarations at the last meeting, so we will just get that right out of the way first. I have to say that, having looked at the declarations last time, it runs into 8 pages, and it is unfortunate that we have to go through this procedure every time but nonetheless we need to do it.

COUNCILLOR AMANDA CARTER: Lord Mayor, I am a governor of Calverley Parkside Primary, not Parkside Primary.

THE LORD MAYOR: Another amendment, please, to note. I have to say it does not surprise me that we do have one or two minor mistakes in these recordings because, as I say, it is a very lengthy process indeed. Anybody else unhappy about the record showing their ---

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: For last time?

THE LORD MAYOR: The last time.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: We are fine.

THE LORD MAYOR: We have not got to this time yet, Councillor Gruen, no.

ITEM 2 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: With those alterations, then, we will proceed to this year - this year? - this time's declarations of interest. The list has been on display in the Council ante-chamber. Hopefully everybody who has an interest will have declared it, and I say that each Council Meeting knowing full well that it never does work that way, so can I now invite those people who have not had the opportunity to put their name on the list to add it.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: My Lord Mayor, I wish to clarify an issue regarding White Paper No. 13 on pensions which comes up later in the Council meeting in order to save time at that stage. As fellow Whips and you know through discussions over the past few hours, the coalition is seeking to put leave of Council forward to have an amended version of that which seeks to take out Paragraph 2 and leave Paragraph 1 only.

The advice that my Group received quite authoritatively through the Legal Department was that we had, if we had any interest in the West Yorkshire Superannuation Fund either ourselves or spouses and/or partners, then that would be a pecuniary and it would therefore be a prejudicial interest, and our Group therefore went forward on that advice and has submitted en bloc, bar three Members, that that is the position for each of us, and we intend at that stage in the proceedings later on to vacate the chamber and not to participate in a debate which may well be prorogued by Members opposite. The reason for that, Lord Mayor, is that they got the resolution wrong: they should have withdrawn it and brought it back at the next Council Meeting and given us the opportunity to amend their White Paper in the normal set of circumstances. Instead, they are seeking leave of Council through their numbers to come forward on a debate on a half-baked White Paper which they have had to amend. We will not participate in that debate.

THE LORD MAYOR: So do I take it then, Councillor Gruen, that you are asking Council to receive notification from all your members of declarations of interest on that issue?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Indeed. Indeed.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we do that without every Member having to do that separately?

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Mr. P. Rogerson): It is already, I think, recorded in the register.

THE LORD MAYOR: Okay, everybody happy about that? Thank you very much.
Are there any other declarations of interest?

COUNCILLOR MILLARD: Lord Mayor, Item 13, member of West Yorkshire Pension Fund as a Councillor.

COUNCILLOR C. NASH: Same item, Lord Mayor, member of West Yorkshire Pension Fund.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Same item, my Lord Mayor, same issue.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: (Inaudible) prejudicial interest.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Well, you will be too old to be in the pension scheme, won't you, Bernard?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Item 9, I am a member of West Yorkshire Police Authority.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I am a member of a pension fund, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Another pension fund, yes. Anybody else?

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: As you are aware, I am a member of the GMB.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Member of the GMB, Member of the West Yorkshire Superannuation Fund, Drighlington Primary, Victoria Primary, Joseph Priestley College.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Item 11, Member of Schools Organisation Committee and 13 Member of West Yorkshire Pension Scheme.

COUNCILLOR CONGREVE: Item 13, close family member as a member of the West Yorkshire Pension Scheme, in addition to my own declaration.

THE LORD MAYOR: Alright. Okay, anyone else? Have we got them all? Oh well, that was relatively painless, I think, compared to some. Thank you very much for that, everybody. Can we then move on to invite Members by a show of hands to confirm that they have read the list, including the list as just amended by those new additions, agreed the contents in so far as they relate to their own interests. Those in favour? Anyone against? That is agreed. Thank you very much.

ITEM 3 - COMMUNICATIONS

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: No communications, Lord Mayor.

ITEM 4 - DEPUTATIONS

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: There are three deputations, Lord Mayor, of which notice has been given: one from Leeds Road Residents Action Group regarding road safety, another from Garforth Residents Association regarding planning matters and, thirdly, the Friends of Woodhouse Moor regarding the proposed construction of a car park on Woodhouse Moor. As regards the second of those deputations, as is recorded on the order paper, the deputation have indicated that they will not attend the meeting this afternoon following advice from the Chief Legal Services Officer.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: My Lord Mayor, may I rise to say that there are Members here who cannot hear. We did not hear Mr. Rogerson and we couldn't hear you. I have made this complaint two Council Meetings ago. Unfortunately, I missed the last one, but the sound quality in this place is inadequate for Members to fully participate in the democratic process. I did not hear what Mr. Rogerson said and I couldn't hear you.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am sorry you didn't hear it. I have to say that the standard of -- the levels of volume, and so on, were a lot better at the last Council Meeting than previously, but perhaps Mr. Rogerson's machine is a little bit further forward than most of ours, so if you wouldn't mind just repeating that, Mr. Rogerson. Thank you.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Yes, apologies for that, Members. As indicated on the order paper, notice was given of three deputations for this meeting, and the first from the Leeds Road Residents Action Group and the second from Garforth Residents Association and the third from the Friends of Woodhouse Moor. As regards the second of those two deputations, the deputation have indicated, following advice from the Chief Legal Services Officer, they will not in fact be attending the meeting this afternoon.

THE LORD MAYOR: Did you get that?

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: I did, yes, Lord Mayor. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: My Lord Mayor, can I move that Deputations 1 and 3 be received?

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

(The first deputation entered the Chamber)

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the

Council Meeting. When you are making your speech, will you please note that you have five minutes in order to speak to us, and if you would please give us the name of the spokesperson and the members of the delegation. Thank you.

MS. BRUCE: Yes, I am Karen Bruce and our deputation is the Leeds Road Residents' Action Group. Forming the delegation with me are Mark Gregory, Gill Morton, Gerard Khoshnaw.

Our campaign has been running for two years and our voice still hasn't been heard. We refuse to wait for the worst to happen and a child is killed before any action is taken.

Council monitoring shows that most vehicles passing through the ward are travelling at speeds well in excess of the speed limits. Recent traffic monitoring showed that more than 80% of vehicles travelling along Leeds Road were travelling in excess of the 40 mile per hour speed limit, over 5,000 vehicles were travelling in excess of 60 miles per hour, with 677 of those travelling at more than 70 miles per hour. This is a residential area.

Speed cameras would be an obvious solution but Council Officers, who have accepted that there is a serious speeding problem, say that there is nothing that the Council can do, other than bring the matter to the attention of the Police. There seems to be a major imbalance between the number of speed cameras in the north of the City and the number in the south of the City.

Government guidance in connection with vehicle movements to and from industrial developments has been overlooked, and there are significant numbers of heavy goods vehicles using the Leeds and Wakefield road link between Junction 44 of the M1 in Stourton and Junction 30 of the M62, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, when there is direct motorway access between these two junctions and next to nothing in terms of journey time.

Requests made to the Council for a HGV ban along this residential route for either a full ban or a night-time ban have been discounted out of hand by Officers of the Council. This flow of HGV traffic, particularly throughout the night, is having a detrimental effect upon the quality of life for people living along the route, and a loss of amenity.

There is already a HGV ban along a long stretch of the A642 and other 'A' classified roads in the Leeds area.

With regard to a possible night-time ban, we are told by Council Officers that the Police do not have resources to police such a ban, but this is in contrast to a proposed HGV ban in the Cross Green area of Leeds, where the Police themselves have confirmed that the ban is going to be self-policing.

We are very concerned about the road safety issues along Wakefield Road. Royds School has 1,400 children and those who live in Oulton or Woodlesford have to cross the road to school. These are 'A' roads and there isn't a pedestrian-controlled crossing point anywhere in sight. The bus stop where children get off the bus is also at the opposite side of the road.

Following the concerns of the Action Group in 2001, a detailed survey was carried out and Highways Officers confirmed in February 2002 that a controlled crossing was to be installed along the dual carriageway at the junction with Aberford Road. Nothing ever happened.

Unless the existing road problems are addressed before the opening up of the East Leeds Link Road, then the effect upon their quality of life will be horrendous, once the increased traffic volumes hit. Traffic counts have shown that there are already in excess of 230,000 vehicles passing through the area every week, and yet there are just 9,000 houses in Rothwell ward.

What we therefore ask is that the Council:

No. 1 - Supports our call for a HGV ban,

No. 2 - Supports our calls for a study to be undertaken on the probable traffic impact on local roads and to the area in general from the construction of the East Leeds Link Road and the Inner Ring Road link to the M62,

No. 3 - Supports our concerns that throughout the City double-standards prevail where the decision to locate speed cameras is made, and

No. 4 - Supports our calls for more positive road safety measures to be introduced to ensure better road safety protection for children attending Royds School. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: My Lord Mayor, can I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for consideration?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried unanimously)

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I thank you for attending, and for what you have told us. You will be kept informed of the consideration which will be given to your comments and the issues you raise by the Executive Board. Good afternoon to you all.

MS. BRUCE: Thank you.

(The first deputation withdrew and the next one entered the Chamber)

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon. Welcome to today's Council Meeting. Will you please now make your speech to the Council, not exceeding the time limit of 5 minutes. Thank you.

MS. MATTHEWS: Thank you. Lord Mayor, Councillors, my name is Freda Matthews, Chair of Little Woodhouse Community Association, here today as spokesperson for the Friends of Woodhouse Moor, which include Woodhouse Tenants' Association, Little Woodhouse Community Association, North Hyde Park Neighbourhood Association, South Headingley Community Association and Belle Vue Road Action Group. We are also supported by Marlborough Residents' Association.

I am speaking about the proposed car park on the part of Woodhouse Moor known as Monument Moor. These are our comments:

In spite of what the Director of Learning & Leisure says in the proposal and inferred by local Councillors' media statements that consultation with local residents was complete, none of the established groups mentioned was consulted, even though every one of them borders Woodhouse Moor. The first local community groups knew about this proposal was when we read about it in a Yorkshire Evening Post article dated 14th March 2006.

It appears, therefore, that funding was granted under delegated powers on a false premise.

We also object to Parks Renaissance money of £170,341 being used to tarmac over Monument Moor, a designated green space in the UDP, to provide car parking.

We maintain that the car park would primarily be for people using the universities and the city centre.

For those who visit the Moor from other areas, there is an excellent bus service on the A660 which runs across the Moor.

Parking problems in the area would not be solved since car parks attract more cars to an area. Only residents' parking zones will tackle those problems.

Motorists wanting to use the car park would cause tailbacks onto the already frequently congested A660.

We also feel car parks are not eco-friendly, for instance tarmac increases run-off.

Woodhouse Moor was acquired by the Council in 1857 as an attempt to provide a means of escape from urban squalor, and was the first public park in Leeds. Now, just as then, it is surrounded by large areas of terraced and back-to-back houses with no gardens of their own. For the residents of many of these homes, it is the only nearby open space.

Monument Moor is part of Woodhouse Moor that was formerly known as the Swing Moor, probably one of the earliest children's playgrounds. It is currently designated as a green space on the Unitary Development Plan and as such cannot be built upon. As a car park, what guarantee is there that some future administration might not be tempted, or even required, to sell it for building development?

The proposed scheme has too many consequences for local people for it to go forward on delegated powers and not to go to full Planning.

What we want:

We need more consultation, the format to be agreed with local groups, before this scheme goes forward to Planning.

We agree that this part of the Moor needs improvement: therefore we want a proper scheme for restoring this part of the Moor to recreational use, using the Parks Renaissance money already delegated. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: My Lord Mayor, can I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for consideration?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second.

(The motion was carried)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much. Thank you for attending and for what you have said to us. You will be kept informed of the consideration which will be given to your comments and no doubt after the Executive Board have met they will be in communication with you. Thank you again for coming. Good afternoon.

MS. MATTHEWS: Thank you.

ITEM 5 - REPORTS

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

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Second, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to speak on the Independent

Review Panel Report on Members' Allowances, in particular the part to do with allowances for Scrutiny Commission Chairs which is on pages 29 and 30, and I speak as a holder of one of those posts in the current municipal year.

This report draws indirect attention to the difficult progress of the Scrutiny Commissions during their first year, despite the best efforts of Members and support staff. What seems to have happened is that the idea of commissions was cobbled together shortly before last year's Annual General Meeting without thought as to how they would be fitted into the workload of the small number of Scrutiny support staff or slotted ad hoc into a largely fixed Council diary and Civic Hall room booking calendar.

When the Commissions have been able to move forward they have been fruitful. A lot of work has been done behind the scenes and Councillor Driver's Alcohol Abuse Commission has fallen back on a system of working groups to make up for its late start. Our Flooding Commission has packed a lot into each of the meetings which it has been able to hold. All three Commissions will publish valuable reports, though only one apiece rather than the three or four which might have been expected.

It could be said that the allowances and the Commissions are separate matters, but their fates are linked. Reduced allowances have been prompted by a perceived lack of activity, without much having been done by the IRP to find out what has been going on.

In February I was given a copy of the IRP report, though by chance in my role as a Group Whip. Copies do not seem to have been circulated to the Commissions or to Overview & Scrutiny.

My fear is that a simple reduction of allowances without looking at underlying problems will entrench and fossilize the unsatisfactory system that we have seen in the past year. If Scrutiny Commissions were to have worked as foreseen last May, they should have had enough resources to let them work in that way. If they were to have had no resources of their own, they should have been no more than occasional working groups of Overview & Scrutiny, looking at small topics. In that case, the appropriate level of Chair's allowance might very well have been zero. Councillor Minkin is to speak on this, and in a letter she has suggested a system of more or less sessional payments to be matched to what the Commissions were asked and able to do, but that would not address any underlying lack of resources which would limit progress.

Whatever happens, there must be urgent thought to plot a clear path for the coming year. Cutting what little Scrutiny cloth there is to fit what has happened since last May would not be acceptable. There are doubts about Scrutiny already and it would fall into disrepute if it were seen as a token show which did not have enough behind it to make it work. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: My Lord Mayor, I wish to speak on page 31 about 6-monthly Members' reports. I am really mystified as to why the Panels are disheartened about Members' disinterest in this. I have only been a Member 2 years and I did this original 6-monthly report and I have simply copied and pasted and made a couple of additions to this, and I am just a bit mystified why they should be a bit fed up of the Members' contribution to this. We get more than enough paperwork to read, and get lots and lots of things via e-mail, and I think this is enough. I wouldn't want it to begin and end in a competition about who is doing the most casework, who is doing the most efficient casework. To me casework is casework, whether it is a quick e-mail and the job is resolved or whether it is a 10-month case. I think casework is casework. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Lord Mayor, I comment on the question of Commissions. It was deferred to allow the Chairs of Scrutiny Boards and members of Overview & Scrutiny Committee to discuss this at their away-day, and we had a good discussion, and thanks, Tom, for your contribution, which fairly reflects the kind of areas we talked about.

I did summarize the consensus that we reached in a letter to Councillor Andrew Carter, and I am going to read that so that I don't inadvertently say something different, so, "Last year we all thought Scrutiny Commissions would be a way of tackling cross-cutting issues quickly and efficiently, allowing a group of members to concentrate on one issue at a time on an ad hoc basis. The reality has been rather different. The Commissions have been more like Scrutiny Boards, finding themselves bound by the bureaucratic requirements of a democratic Council with extra difficulties because no meetings are in the diary, leading to further delays getting Officers and Members together. However, we are firmly of the view that Overview & Scrutiny Committee should retain the ability to establish Commissions, for they do have the potential to be a powerful and responsive tool of thorough and focused investigation."

Indeed, and I will repeat Tom's comments, the Alcohol Commission chaired by Councillor Driver does seem to have found a way of working intensively and speedily through the setting up of working parties, and this may prove to be a helpful model.

We do believe that the issue of payment is separate and we did not come to a single view, but we all recognised that there being nominated and full-time paid Commission Chairs made us find work for them to do to justify the allowance, but some of us thought that the Commission Chairs to be unpaid would be unfair and that if Scrutiny Board Chairs took on being a Commission Chair as well, that the workload would be unacceptable.

And then I add, "Since our Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting, I have thought further about this and I suggest the following: Each political group could

nominate a standing Chair for a Commission but would only be paid for the period of that Commission's work, and the Independent Remuneration Panel could be asked to advise on the best rate and, of course, if that Member had one special allowance already, and that probably would be the case, they can only have the one, whichever is the higher. Each Commission would be expected to complete its work within a 3-month cycle. I think this is achievable and it would be best to have an explicit time-frame. Overview & Scrutiny Committee would nominate whichever standing Chair was most interested in this particular issue, the Whips would immediately find the group reps according to the already agreed formula of political balance. The Chair would draft the terms of reference and have the initial papers prepared for the first meeting of the Commission. Working groups, if required, would get going, and the dates of the meetings set in the diary to the end of the 3-month period, and OSC, of course, would set up a Commission only if it had been clearly demonstrated that there was no other appropriate route to deal with the issue."

So I hope that when Council - and, of course, Scrutiny is answerable to Council not to Exec Board: it is the Council - that when Council considers the Scrutiny function at the AGM these views will be considered alongside any recommendations the Exec Board may have.

As for Item 5 as it stands today, I don't think it makes any difference whether you agree it or not because we recommend Scrutiny Chairs and all members of Overview & Scrutiny Commissions that you do seriously look at these arrangements so that Commissions can indeed - we believe they can - be a powerful tool that is needed and that will be valuable for, I think as Councillor Driver put it, for gauging the public mood and being able to respond to it in good time. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, could I respond particularly to the comments made by Councillor Minkin, and I do thank her for writing to me setting out the views of her colleagues, and presumably herself, on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. As I think is widely known, we are going to look very carefully at how the Commissions have operated, and I take Councillor Leadley's comments as well. You are right, it doesn't make any difference to how you vote on this today, but prior to the Annual General Meeting of Council there will be discussions between Whips and Leaders about the way forward, and I have to say I think that your notes from your meeting are extremely helpful in that context, and they will be taken into account.

(The report was approved)

ITEM 5(b)

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

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Second, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I wish to refer to the order book on page 33, Amendments to the Constitution, and the following few pages leading up to page 49. I am going to attempt to do something, but it requires the understanding of Members opposite. It is to constructively criticise a system set in place without them necessarily taking it as personal criticism, but of their function, and the function of the Leader of Council was to, as we said at the last Council Meeting, agree these changes because he is Leader of the Council, and Councillor Harris made it clear that he and Councillor Blackburn were involved and therefore associated with these decisions.

It seems to us, Lord Mayor, that a more bureaucratic system could not be found. It seems to us that more people, when we compare this system to other local authorities, more people in the top layer at Director level could not possibly be found. It seems to us there is no streamlining of functions, and there is absolutely no attempt being made to allocate responsibility in terms of payment. You have to remember, colleagues, that these are all highly-paid Directors, all of whom received a bonus of £10,000 last year, and all of whom are now going to apparently continue in different roles in the jigsaw piece but still all working together.

We have yet to see unfold the structure below that, and mirroring that we are told here - I want to come to the Executive Member portfolios because actually the portfolio division shown in this paper is likely to last for just 24 hours, because in tomorrow's papers for the Scrutiny Board, the Learning, Children's Scrutiny Board, there is a proposal about these issues, and it goes something like this: "We know that we have not done very well this year, and that we have not seen very much from the one single portfolio holder, although we have tried to question him, so the answer is not that we should not now (Interruption) --- The answer is comrades not just to have one but to have two next year, so we are going to have two Executive Members with portfolio for this particular area, if the request from Learning is actually taken on board.

It won't take many of you to add up the maths, you know. If we have two of them together, £50,000. Actually, we could have saved the jobs of three part-time, lowly paid women in the kitchens instead of condemning them to the scrapheap but, no, here we are, we are going to have two portfolio-holders for this particular post, one more senior than the other - the structure is not explained.

The organogram that followed in that particular report of reporting lines and arrangements is almost impossible to follow. All lines end, quite rightly, with the new Director, but in between that it would take a genius to follow each of the lines and understand the responsibilities allocated to different people. (Interruption) Well, it would take a genius, and if you want to criticise, you may.

But the further thing is we then come to the contract with Education Leeds. I did have the opportunity yesterday evening to hear a presentation by Mrs. Archer, and I asked her about the relationship with Education Leeds, and I understand it is to continue on a contractual basis as it is now, but I also understand that she has ultimate authority and control under the Act to direct - to direct - as she sees fit. Well, some of us really think, why have that apparatus that was there for 2000 in 2006 and onwards when the whole legal area and road map has changed significantly, and do you really still need an Education Board, etc., etc. So there are real issues around, I think, this complex, highly-paid, highly bureaucratic structure that is being put in place.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, Councillor Gruen waited until the orange light came on before he got down to the real point of what he was saying, which was a veiled criticism of the structure for delivering education to young people in the City. We might have known. Nobody but nobody around these parts of the Council chamber, Councillor Gruen, will forget that you and some of your colleagues sitting there were the people responsible for putting the stain on the reputation of this Authority when its Local Education Authority powers were taken away from a Labour Council by a Labour Government, and were given back last week to our administration by a Labour Government. (Applause)

What a great feeling that was, and what a tribute to Education Leeds and the work they have done over the past 5 years in restoring the credibility of our education services in this City and in Whitehall. Councillor Gruen, you cannot disguise what you were getting at, and you cannot get away from the role you played in bringing shame on this Authority. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: I agree with him. (Laughter)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: That's how you got your job, isn't it?

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: That's why you are sat at the back, Mick.

Lord Mayor, perhaps I ought to stress, to talk briefly about this series of changes that there are no major changes as a result of this report among Exec Board Members from that which has existed since 2004. The Exec Board responsibilities of Brian, Richard and I have not changed since then. We already meet and talk about our priorities. We talked about the Children and Young People's Plan recently. (Interruptions) The point he raised about use of Officer time and the better arrangement for reporting arrangements is an entirely sensible reaction to the circumstances we are in. We have never been in such a period of change in Social Services and Children's Services as we are now, and it seems an entirely sensible use of the resources we have until we clear our minds, know where we are going, get better guidance from central Government.

For the avoidance of doubt, I am responsible for the provision of Social Services to everyone in the City between the ages of 0-95, and Bernard. Please

continue to ---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Would you demonstrate your professionalism more obviously.

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: -- any matters about Social services are sent to me. The arrangements in this document are necessary to reflect Rosemary's appointment on March 1st. We couldn't go on with the previous arrangement: it wouldn't have been legal. They are interim. There may well be changes at the AGM on May 22nd. Indeed, if there are 10 Labour gains at the local elections - 10 Labour gains at the local elections? - it will be your job to sort it out. It would be interesting to see what you would do different from this.

I would much rather Councillor Gruen stood up in Council and asked questions about the wellbeing of the older people and the children that we are responsible for, rather than asking for clarification of bureaucratic reports.

The Opposition knows there is a position in place for them to be briefed about any detailed or any large matters of principle at any time - I regularly go and talk to them. Take up the offer rather than raising it in here and wasting 90-odd people's time. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, I just want to reiterate what was said last time, since it doesn't appear to be sinking in with the Woodentop crew about what Brian Jennings' function has been in these last 2 years, and what other portfolio-holders have been doing with regard to, let's call it Children's Services. We have at all times made it clear that in terms of service delivery the responsibility for children has rested either with Peter Harrand or with Richard Harker, be it Social Services or Education matters, in terms of the delivery of the ongoing service.

The appointment of Brian Jennings was in order to bring forward the significant and, as you have quite rightly identified, extremely complex changes required under the new Children's Services Act. It is that role that Brian Jennings has been fulfilling and we now see, with the appointment of the senior Officers and the initial proposals which have gone to Scrutiny for the political arrangements after May, you now see what the changes are.

I will finish by saying this, as it is easy stuff for you to sit there taking a pot shot. Let me remind you that, when we took over control of the administration, the requirements for Children's Services and the new Act were already well down the road. Your administration knew that, but it is worth noting that you had done absolutely nothing to put in place what the ultimate changes would have to be. Now, who has acted responsibly and efficiently, we or you? I think the answer is evident in itself.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, I have nothing further to add in relation to

the Children's Services Report, but I will just touch, if I may, Lord Mayor, on the issue that Councillor McArdle raised in the previous item. I think I should have been called to sum up on that one. Yes, I think you are absolutely right in what you say about the 6-monthly reports. You may be aware that Democratic Services are bringing out in the new municipal year a new sort of web-based system where we can actually put lots of information on about our activities, and I think that is actually a much better way of communicating with people than a single sheet of A4. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

(The report was approved)

THE LORD MAYOR: Before we go on to 6, can I just make an apology. I have had a little note to say that Councillor Beevers is not standing in the May elections and I missed that information out, so apologies for that, and please feel yourself included in the applause that was accorded to everybody else. Thank you very much.

ITEM 6 - QUESTIONS

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, will the Executive Board Member for City Services please tell me what income the Council expects to receive from car parking income this financial year. I understand, Mark, you are standing in.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, you will have to bear with me whilst I struggle with my new spectacles.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: I thought you were going to say your hair.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: As far as I know, my haircut does not affect my ability to read, but I admit the jury may be out on that one. The answer, Lord Mayor, is £12,223,210.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think this is a supplementary that may not require you to read. Given that income includes a 33% rise on the Beckett Street car park, which is the car park near St. James's Hospital, would he agree with his deputy, Stuart Golton, who spoke about the rise some years ago with the following comments. "Again, we would see the Council making a decision without considering the impact that it might have on the most vulnerable members of the population. I am appalled that the Council feels it has the right to increase prices by so much above inflation without justification." Would he agree with that, or are there double-standards?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Well, you are right, I don't need those. That is better.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You should have gone to SpecSavers. (Laughter)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I didn't hear what you said. Please repeat it. I am also going deaf.

Well, I have no knowledge of that particular comment from Stuart Golton, so I am not in a position to deal with it. However, since the matter of Beckett Street has been raised, I am in a position to deal with that, and what I would say is this: it is breath-taking, gob-smacking hypocrisy on the part of Keith Wakefield to be in the paper complaining about Beckett Street when it was Mick Lyons who was the mover behind the whole thing in the first place. It was Mick Lyons who insisted at Scrutiny that the question of car parking fees at Beckett Street be looked at and that there was a need for a radical increase in the car parking fee. He insisted upon a report being brought which quite rightly Councillor Anderson in his wisdom - because he is a very wise person is Councillor Anderson and a very even-handed, fair-minded person - agreed to such a report. (Interruption) I would never do that, Ronnie. That report was brought forward last year with a series of recommendations about car parking at Beckett Street which were all put forward to Exec Board and in the budget process we have taken them on board lock, stock and barrel.

If you look at those Members present at the two Scrutiny Boards that looked at the question of this car parking increase for Beckett Street, you will see that the Labour Members were there and there is no indication of them dissenting or declining to agree with these increases. So it is, as I say, breath-taking hypocrisy to somehow make out to the public that you are the great defender of people in this situation when it is your own Members who have asked for this measure and we, quite reasonably, have agreed to it.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor, personal explanation. (Interruptions)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lyons, I am sorry but you have not already spoken in this debate and therefore you are not entitled to make a point of personal explanation. I am quite sure that an opportunity will present itself shortly, but at the moment we are dealing with a question. I will certainly allow you to put your point. I know where you are coming from, but it does not apply to questions.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: If somebody tells a lie in this Council, they should be brought to book and he is telling lies.

THE LORD MAYOR: Okay. Councillor Lyons, I hear what you say and you have said it, although you shouldn't have. Thank you very much. Can we move on.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, on a point of personal explanation (Interruptions) On a point of personal explanation, I have just been called a liar in

open Council. Now, in the past such words have never been permissible in this place, and it is not acceptable for me to be abused in that way. I am not a liar and Councillor Lyons should apologise or be asked to leave the chamber. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Can I explain?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harris, I hear what you say. It is something of a difficult situation because you have already heard me rule Councillor Lyons out of order. Therefore, officially nobody could have heard what he said. Councillor Lyons is not entitled to make a point of personal explanation. Nor is any other Member of this Council when we are dealing with questions. I take your point. I know that you are both concerned about the issue, and I would suggest that we offer Councillor Lyons the opportunity to withdraw his remarks that officially he didn't make. Councillor Lyons, do you want to do that?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: What I will do ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Not a long speech, Councillor Lyons. Do you want to withdraw your remarks?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I never make long speeches. He did not tell the truth. I will withdraw calling him a liar and I want chance to prove it in this room.

THE LORD MAYOR: Very good. Okay, we will deal with that later then, thank you. Can we move on.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Lord Mayor, can the Deputy Leader of Council, in the absence of the Executive Member for Corporate services - oh, sorry, I beg your pardon, you are the Executive Member for Corporate Services - agree that the Officers of Leeds City Council are competent and trustworthy enough to carry out their day-to-day duties without unnecessary interference by elected Members?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, I am very grateful for the opportunity to answer that question. Of course, unbeknown to me, we have already had the opportunity to discuss the question of the way in which education is handled now in this Council, so I don't need to reiterate that particular point in terms of Officer competency and Member interference. Suffice to say we do not interfere with Officers on a day-to-day basis with the running of Education, as was patently the case previously, and nor will we do so in the future.

But it does raise the issue of what senior Officers do in other areas, particularly with regard to delegated financial decisions. Let me remind Council, the entire senior officer corps is that which was in place when we took over the Council. They are the Officers in whom we have confidence and one supposes, since they were there when Labour were in control they, too, had confidence in them. Otherwise, why would they appoint them in the first place?

The powers for delegated financial decision-making are unaltered from when Labour were in control. We are therefore simply operating exactly the same system as we have previously.

I have absolute confidence in those highly-paid senior officers. By every external objective measure they are performing excellently. There is every means and opportunity for Elected Members to scrutinize and participate in the setting of budgets and the allocation of money, and I am perfectly certain that senior Officers should be allowed to carry on doing what they are now without undue interference from Elected Members. Were it any other way, it would clearly be a vote of no confidence in those Officers, and I would be very interested to know indeed if that is what the Labour Group in fact want to do as a vote of no confidence in those senior Officers, and it is quite right that they should continue exercising those powers so that we don't return to the bleak and dark days when this place was in semi-chaos because of the way in which the then controlling Group constantly interfered in what they were doing.

COUNCILLOR CASTLE: Lord Mayor, would the Leader of Council please comment on the restoration of education powers to Leeds City Council.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Thank you, Councillor Castle. I would be delighted to comment and, before I go on to some more particular points, I had hoped this would be the first thing I said on the issue of education, but unfortunately Councillor Gruen decided to make obvious what he wanted to do a little earlier.

The first thing I wanted to say would have been this, that I wanted to congratulate, on behalf of all Members of the Council, I hope, all the staff in Education Leeds, many of whom worked for the Local Education authority previously, many have worked for the Education Authority for many years, for the excellent work they have done under the new arrangement that came into place in 2000.

We have seen education standards rise at every level. We all know that they are not rising fast enough, but they are rising and we should be thankful for that. I have said on many occasions it is the duty of this local authority to do everything it can to make sure that every young person is able to fulfill their potential in our schools, and I believe we are moving steadily towards that. We must continue to do so. We must continue to support Education Leeds and our wonderful staff, our teaching staff, all the staff in our educational system, to achieve just that.

I was appalled, I have to say, Councillor Castle, when I saw the comments from George Mudie MP in the Yorkshire Evening Post of Tuesday. First of all, he went on to denigrate Capita which, quite frankly, coming from Mr. Mudie, a former Government Minister, I find quite astonishing, as his Government have given so many contracts to Capita, and we have all read so much about that of late. But

then to go on and say that there was nothing done to help education in East Leeds is an absolute travesty of the truth. There has been huge investment in East Leeds as elsewhere in the City in education, and we should be praising everybody connected for that progress, but for George Mudie, of all people, the man who began the trail of political interference in Education that was finally highlighted in the Ofsted report is nothing short of a disgrace. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Will the Executive Board Member for Leisure Services please tell me what his administration is doing to increase participation in sporting activities across the City?

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, Councillor Atha should know that there is no such thing as Leisure Services any more, and that happened under his administration ---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I understood that there were.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: -- but anyway, Lord Mayor, to answer his question, the Council has a proud tradition of offering sporting opportunity for everyone within the City, the service managers to strike an effective balance between helping people to be active in sport and keeping the cost of the service affordable. 25% of all visits to leisure centres, Lord Mayor, are made by those who either pay no charges or reduced charges. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I am delighted to hear that information. Possibly the Executive Board Member for Leisure Services, because you are responsible for the services which are leisure, would you acknowledge, and I would ask you, are you aware that Marketing Leeds is spending a very large sum on an advert which reads, "For more information on how you can live it, love it in Leeds, call 01271 336 091", and does he know that that number 01271 336 091 is in Barnstaple, Devon?

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Where?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Barnstaple, Devon. So in other words, when you ring up and say, "Could you tell me which sports centre I should go to or how I (inaudible)" I have to phone Devon, Barnstaple, no less. Could he explain why we should be outsourcing significant services to distant points like ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Is this a speech or a question? This is not a supplementary question, Lord Mayor. He is making a speech.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: No, I am not making a speech, I am putting a series of questions, and please don't interfere unless the Lord Mayor gives you permission to do, because that is wrong and contrary to the rules.

Could he explain then why we have to phone Devon to get this information, and is this part of a policy of Marketing Leeds which means outsourcing all the things that market Leeds, like choosing a PR firm in Harrogate or choosing a firm in Barnstaple Devon to provide the information that one wants about leisure services in Leeds? It really is a most remarkable situation and it may be one, Councillor Procter, of which you are unaware and so I would accept a word that you did not know but you will put the matter right.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, this may have escaped the notice of Councillor Atha, and many things do. I nor any other Member of this chamber are responsible for the actions of Marketing Leeds.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I must say I can well understand why you are pleased to make that statement.

COUNCILLOR HOLLINGSWORTH: Will the Executive Board Member for Social Care and Health outline the steps being taken to prevent information about older people supplied to elected Members in confidence being published in the Yorkshire Evening Post?

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: I suspect, David, you might be referring to the shameful episode in the middle of February when copies of a confidential document were supplied to the YEP and information about specific, identifiable, elderly people was printed for tens of thousands of people to read. Later in the same week we had an allegedly senior Member of the Opposition stand up in this chamber starting to quote the names of the organisations who had contributed to that debate.

We don't know how this information was supplied to the Yorkshire Evening Post. We are only 99% sure where it came from, and so are the people who work for the charities. The committees of some of these charities have written to the journalist involved, and I understand to the Editor of the Evening Post, and the subject, that is to say the breach of confidentiality, was on the agenda at the Older People's Forum Meeting on March 16th. I was there. I didn't say anything. It was quite a heated debate.

This is not the first time that confidential information has found its way into the YEP. Last year the Opposition put out a press release about individual service users. At the foot of it, it said, "For further information about the medical problems of these ladies and gentlemen, please contact the Labour Group Support Manager", who would give you more information about these poor people.

At the next meeting, which is scheduled for June 15th, copies of any information which is remotely confidential will be numbered, signed for and returned at the end of the meeting. Recent events have done enough damage to the relationship between ourselves and the charities, and it is our duty to make

sure that this does not happen again. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR BALE: Lord Mayor, will the Leader of Council please explain his views on engaging young people in democracy?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I think it becomes increasingly important for us in this chamber, and indeed every department of the Council, to engage younger people in the democratic process. It seems that almost daily Parliament, particularly the House of Commons, falls into lower and lower esteem in the public psyche. That cannot be good for the democratic process and we must do everything we can in this chamber to engage young people. That is why I was delighted that different departments of the local authority supported Local Democracy Week, and I will come back to that in a moment, but also that we have been extremely active, and I have to say along with the DFES, in supporting Youth Councils and School Councils which are now springing up in more and more schools across our City. Additionally, a Young People's Scrutiny Panel has been set up which again gives young people a great chance to participate in the political process here, and those of us who have met with groups of young people I think would all testify to the fact that they are extremely well informed, and they have a great deal to say to us which is worth listening to.

So I particularly want to commend to you the young people of Garforth Community College. Their manifesto, which was voted on by pupils and members of the public and published in the YEP, is a particularly good example. Following that they, of course, came to visit Council and one of their Members was Mayor for the Day, and he and his colleagues questioned me over a whole variety of Council matters.

Subsequent to that, of course, they came to this Council and addressed the whole of the Council, and then I went back to Garforth College to talk to the pupils who had come along about the ideas they put forward and which of those we were taking on board and which presented us with some difficulties, but we had a very, very good exchange, and this is going on in schools and colleges all over Leeds.

I would say to Members of this Council they should be proactive in engaging young people in this City and discuss with them the big issues that face us all.

(Applause)

COUNCILLOR LOWE: Would the Executive Member for City Services please confirm the dates the grass cutting was originally due to take place across the City this year, if he can be bothered to turn up?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: If by the question Councillor Lowe means the year commencing April 2006, then the contract originally stated the first cut should be in April 2006. If by this year, forgive me, she meant in fact last year, because we are on the cusp, then the contract was not running financial to financial year, so in the year 2005/6 the first cut should have been made in March of that year.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: By way of supplementary, can the Executive Member - of course he is not here so you will have to do it instead - apologise then to those areas who planted bulbs; quite a lot of community groups planted bulbs which were then desecrated and massacred by the grass-cutting that took place too soon, because it happened in February when it should have happened in spring, and the areas in particular that I know about are Middleton Park, Kippax in Bloom and, of course, Harewood village.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Well, Lord Mayor, the first thing I would do, as has always been my habit when faced with such things, is to apologise if indeed we have distressed any members of the public by inadvertently lopping off the heads of early spring flowers. Of course we apologise for that, and it would be churlish and absurd to do otherwise.

However, I would like to expand upon my answer, if I may. The first thing to say is that the early cut of February this year was one recommended to City Services by Scrutiny. I remind Council that Labour Members sit on Scrutiny. You were party to those discussions on grass-cutting. (Interruptions) You were party to grass-cutting discussions on Scrutiny and you were therefore party to the recommendations that there be two additional cuts each year which have now been injected into the contract.

If you look around the City, you will see in hundreds and hundreds of places crocii and daffodils sticking their nice little heads up out of the grass. It is quite clear that the City has not been decimated. There have been unfortunately some circumstances where that may have happened. We are in, quite honestly, unusual and uncharted territory where the seasons are merging into each other. The very fact that, as Scrutiny recommended, it is now necessary to have 15 rather than 13 cuts indicates that the growing seasons are completely out of sync with anything we have previously understood.

This is a learning process that we are going through and, as I said at the very beginning, if we have offended some people we apologise, but for the vast, vast majority they can enjoy those lovely pretty flowers which are still there.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, would the Executive Board Member for Leisure please inform me how the use of the Millennium Square has improved under this administration?

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Thank you so much, Councillor Hamilton, for giving me the opportunity to respond in this way!

I was reminded by Councillor Gruen earlier today that at one time it was called Minkin Square ---

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Because it has done so well.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Not any longer, thankfully. That is perhaps why the cloud has now been lifted from ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Manky not Minkin.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Oh, was it? Sorry. Understand.

I am pleased to say that the use of Millennium Square has radically expanded under this administration. Indeed, many would say we have actually found a use for Millennium Square which was not particularly apparent previously. Not only have we expanded the existing facilities, such as the Ice Cube which saw a number of celebrities present upon it this year, and I am sure everybody would like to join with me in congratulating Gaynor Thy, who visited the Ice Cube to get some additional practise in for her TV performance, which I am sure led to her ultimate victory on that show.

But in terms of the addition of what we have done, Millennium Square saw the Earth from the Air public art exhibition, which was a major success, I am sure everybody would agree. In addition to that, we have had Breeze on Tour, the addition of the BBC Big Screen, which has already screened the Live 8 Concert and later this year will be screening the World Cup as well. In addition to all of that, the Square has become an interesting and innovative space for bands to perform. The City has been criticised before for not having an indoor arena and yet this space now has been transformed into something that can challenge almost any arena in the country and, if Members aren't aware I am delighted to be able to tell them, that on 29th and 30th April we have a sell-out concert of the Kaiser Chiefs on two particular days. On 19th May we have a band by the name of The Editors appearing. 21st May, (?)Paad Fi and also on 27th May a band by the name of the Fall-Out Boys will also be performing on Millennium Square. I hope Members will agree, a good programme of events on the Square and indeed almost, almost continuous activity right the way throughout the year. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: By way of supplementary, Lord Mayor, I must say I am bowled over by the extent of activities that have taken place since we took over, and would he agree this hive of activity contrasts with the wind-swept white elephant that he inherited?

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Indeed I would agree, yes.

COUNCILLOR SHELBRooke: My Lord Mayor, could the Executive Member for City Services explain (Interruptions) what is being done to improve the condition of highways in Leeds, and how this compares with previous years?

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: Thank you, Councillor Shelbrooke. I am standing in today for this question for Councillor Smith. In June 2004 the backlog of highways maintenance was in the region of £60 million. Let me repeat that, £60 million.

£60 million, Peter, yes.

A commitment was given in the Capital Programme to major investment to reduce this backlog over the next 5 years to a manageable level within the budget.

Last year £8 million was spent and this year that has been increased to £9 million. Over the next year, with the major investment in the network, over £40 million will be spent on our highways. (Applause) Quite an achievement, I am sure you will agree.

We can also announce that a contract for the largest street lighting replacement programme in the country of £94.6 million was signed on Friday, on time and under budget. This is excellent news. (applause) Together with the capital investment in highway maintenance, there will be some significant improvements on the highway over the next year. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: My Lord Mayor, will the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing please update me on the current position in relation to the proposals for a wet hostel in Leeds?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, there are no proposals for a wet hostel in Leeds.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: Supplementary. I think Councillor Carter knows well what I was talking about, and does he not think it is a tragedy that £1.2 million of money could have come into the City to have been spent on a wet hostel had it not been for the incompetence of this administration?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Oh Richard, I can't believe you could even think it. Members may remember Councillor Patrick Davey and his colleagues in Hunslet going absolutely wild about (Interruptions) producing a wet hostel down in Prospect House. Now, our Leaders said we would support that, and indeed we went to find if we could do it somewhere else and indeed St. George's Crypt was chosen, and we went for that full blast, but his Government, the Labour Government, the ODPM, would not accept St. George's Crypt and they took away £1 million from this City, just like they have done with Supertram, just like they have done with everything else.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Carter, can you wind up, please, we are now out of time on questions.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Well, that is the answer, Lord Mayor, so I will sit down.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for your kind co-operation. I am sorry, Members of Council, with questions still outstanding we are not able to take them because the Question time has now finished, therefore everybody will get the usual written

replies.

ITEM 7 - RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXECUTIVE BOARD

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I move Item 7 in the terms of the notice in parts (a) (b) and (c).

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

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, just to perhaps make a few comments on the Children and Young People's Plan, and it is a particular opportunity to pass on my grateful thanks to our own young person, Councillor Gareth Beevers, who will be leaving us in May. Certainly, I think we all owe a debt of gratitude for the public service that Councillor Beevers has provided in keeping Sherree Bradley off this particular Council. (Applause) We will aim to continue with this public service with an excellent candidate, Terry Elliott, who will be standing for the Morley Borough Independents in Morley South this year, so watch this particular space. Comments have been made as to whether Councillor Beevers has been de-selected. He certainly hasn't. We certainly leave that sort of thing to the Middleton Park Labour Party, who are much better at it than we are. (Applause)

The second thing that we would say in terms of the Young People's Plan is just to ask all of the chamber to reflect upon the fact that Morley Rugby Football Club will be going to Twickenham for the second time on Sunday to defend the Cup that they won last year, the Powergen Intermediate Cup, and I am sure that all of this particular chamber will be actively supporting the retention of that so that Morley will be bringing the Cup back for a second year running, and we pass on our best wishes. (Applause) Thank you.

But to try and get back on track in terms of the Children and Young People's Plan, we think that there is a vital role here for the Youth Service that operates out of Leeds City Council. Certainly people will be fully aware of the fact that we have had significant concerns of how the Youth Services operated in our particular area.

I believe that that is shared by a lot of other Members, and clearly if there is to be a strategy that involves the Youth Service, then they need to be out there actively working with the voluntary sector and the faith sector, and anybody else who is providing a youth service, to make sure that there is a comprehensive approach to providing every single opportunity that we can for young people. We think that is vital. We think it is covered here and we are grateful for the opportunity we have had in Morley to develop a plan that will look at building a genuine partnership between the voluntary and the statutory sector. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Can I replicate on both counts what Councillor Finnigan said about Morley Rugby Club, and I hope Councillor Gabriel's son is playing on Sunday, and also the Youth Service issue.

I just wish to speak on the Local Development Framework - Statement of Community Involvement and, having read the reports about the community consultation, I know we are damned if we do and we are damned if we don't, and we have to fulfill an obligation, but it has been a poor exercise. I think there have been far few takers on the consultation. I think we need to develop some method of engagement of the public similar to what Councillor Carter has already alluded to in the engagement of young people. We need to find more vigorous and robust methods of consulting with the public in all manners of Council business. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: My Lord Mayor, I always smile at Robert. You know, Gareth, that is like the football manager's vote of confidence after you have been sacked, but anyway I hope it has satisfied the public. I mean, quite frankly, you should be the last person to talk about people moving on from Middleton. I seem to recall somebody else representing that part as well.

The point I wanted to make is really about the nature of this Children's Plan. I am trying to keep to it because, in a City this size you have got, as we often say in this chamber, a very diverse and a very unequal city, and one that I think we all share in terms of trying to narrow or close the gap, and inevitably in that category you have single parents and, despite what the Labour Government has done, and it has done a lot in terms of tax credit, child care, Surestart, and all the rest, I would still contend that single parents have some of the most difficult and challenging times on their own looking after children.

Now, you can understand why I think Councillor Lyons raised it first in the Evening Post, but many people have come up to me to share their anger and frustration about the cut to the Gingerbread grant. Now, for those people who don't know, and I am hoping to make a plea at the end, that grant was £5,400. Now, if people don't know the work of Gingerbread, it is quite simple. One is that they try to offer support and guidance to single parents, often women, about training, about employment and about nursery support. You know, many people have come up and said that they couldn't manage without that support.

The second thing, and this is why I think it is relevant to a Children's Plan, is they try to deal with children's poverty by actually again trying to get discounts for clothes, offering them support through holiday schemes like Legoland and others, and again I am sure all of us in this chamber realise how important and vital that is to children and indeed those single parents.

Now, I was amazed that Social Services had said to them, and perhaps Councillor Harrand may be able to explain why it isn't, but had said to the Gingerbread group that they were no longer core services. You know, that goes with Victim Support and many other voluntary groups, including Wheatfields, but I would have thought Gingerbread was really a core service, given the role and function that they carry out, and let me give you a quote from Social Services to

underline that. This is a quote from Social Services, not from Councillor Harrand, they said: "We know this charity has helped hundreds of single parents and their children across the country and we appreciate their practical help." Well, it is a funny way of showing support for a really important and vital organisation.

Now, sadly, like small voluntary groups, they were referred to Supporting People, or I think it was called Community Fund, and like a lot of people, you all know this if you know voluntary sector, that there are those that are big and powerful and well-resourced, and good luck to them, they do great work, but there are those that are often run by small groups of people, often a single mother, like this one was, working on her own, and sadly she missed the cut-off date for that fund, and that is not the first time. In fact, I know of a large organisation in this City that did, because of their -- but we all worked collectively to make sure that the Playhouse got that grant they deserved, and good luck to them. I am not opposing that.

What I am actually saying to Council is this, that it does happen. Single parents do have problems and struggles to try and get it in, and if we are really serious about Closing the Gap, about supporting this group who do fantastic work in this City, then I think - and this is my plea to the Leader of Council - that it is right and proper, there is a moral imperative on this Council, to have a look at this grant and try and reinstate it for them and give them support so they can apply next year.

Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, if I take Councillor Finnigan's comments first in connection with the Children and Young People's Plan, his comments about the Youth Service, he is right: there have been, over a number of years, far too many changes in how we deliver and how we staff the Youth Service, and the result is the one thing a lot of young people need the most, some stability and knowing that the service they are getting is going to continue, has not been there, and I think we have all been very conscious of the fact and certainly Members of all parties have complained about the rapid change-over of staff often, and some of this is very difficult to deal with, so it is not a criticism particularly of Officers either. We have to get the delivery of the Youth Service right, and I am sure that the Officers concerned will be dealing with that.

Councillor McArdle on the LDF and community consultation. He knows that I am very keen on community consultation, and what I would say to all Members is that the LDF is a massive undertaking. It is consuming inordinate amounts of time for the Department of Planning. We inherited a severely understaffed Department of Planning, which we are attempting to put right. A strategic review is going on whilst simultaneously we are trying to satisfy the Government's timetable and indeed our own on doing all the necessary reports for the Local Development Framework, but community consultation is key to it all, and I hope that part of the strategic review will come together with the Local Development Framework and make sure we deliver much more efficient community consultation.

Now, the final point. In fact, on my order paper Councillor Wakefield was not down to speak. In fairness, he did say to me that he wanted to speak. I just say this, if this had been drawn to my attention in the normal way we would have perhaps had an answer for Councillor Wakefield today. I just pose the question, I wonder why it wasn't. But what I will say is this, it is essential that the Children and Young People's Plan delivers better services and more support for all the young people in this City. When we talk about Closing the Gap that is quite right and it must be addressed, but we must also make sure that we are providing every possible opportunity, as I said earlier, for all young people to fulfill their potential, whatever part of the social spectrum they come from, whatever part of the educational hierarchy they come from, we must make sure they can maximize their potential and, of course, some families need a lot more support than others, so I am perfectly happy to say we will look at the particular case.

I am not going to say I know that there has been a problem here, because I don't. I understand from Rosemary Archer that she was not aware of the problems, and we will look into it and see what we can do.

(The Recommendations of Executive Board were approved)

ITEM 8 - MINUTES

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I move Item 8 in the terms of the notice and, whilst doing so, congratulate my colleague Councillor Harris on his haircut. Someone very unkindly said, "Had Glendales done it?" (Laughter) I personally think it looks splendid. I wish I had enough hair to cut that short!

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we move on to inviting comments on the minutes, and the first one I have got on the order paper is Councillor Golton.

(a) Executive Board: (i) Central and Corporate

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: No.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we move on, Councillor Brett?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: No.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Mention the hair.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Yes, I was going to. I just wanted to make this point ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Are you summing up, Councillor Harris?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I am summing up, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I wanted to ask a question on the minutes.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Well, I have already risen to sum up, Lord Mayor, so unfortunately (Interruption) but if it helps --- Look, will you just wait a minute. If it helps, I would give way to Councillor Lyons, if it helps.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I just explain to Councillor Gruen and Councillor Lyons that their comments come later on the next page at the top of page 10. We will come to the items on which you wish to speak then. Councillor Harris.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. What I was going to say, that the haircut is all to do with my religion. It means I don't need to pray again for 2 years!

(ii) Development

COUNCILLOR LATTY: Lord Mayor, I am speaking to page 75, Minute 240, and I do so to thank the Members of the Executive Board for saving an old and to us very valuable building in Aireborough, part of its heritage. I am referring to Rawdon Littlemoor School, the old school, which stood there in Rawdon for over 100 years and saw the start of education for a very, very high proportion of Rawdon residents.

It was in danger of being lost when the new school was built and the building became surplus to requirements. Developers bid for it and of course, as the way is with these things, some wanted to demolish it, some wanted to save it. It was finally whittled down to two, one of each, and in its wisdom Executive Board saw fit to retain the building. In doing that, they made an awful lot of people in Rawdon very, very happy and I would just like to thank them for making what I think was the right decision and to make the point that best value isn't always money. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, I am speaking to Minute 241 on page 75, the Gambling Act, and the view that perhaps Leeds should have a large casino within its district. We certainly have some concerns and some reservations about this particular proposal. We don't believe that the regeneration benefits have been clarified to a degree. We do think it is sometimes regrettable that certainly central Government seem to have the view that the only help and support that they wish to give us are on those vices that often have significant impact on families, whether that is in gambling or whether that is with the licensing legislation. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: My Lord Mayor, I wish to speak on the same minute as well, and it is, too, about the Gambling Act. I can well understand why any core city would want to have a casino or a super-casino, and I wouldn't even mind very, very rich people wasting a lot of money or losing a lot of money in casinos - it really doesn't bother me - but I do have concerns about people and their spiral of debt, and the tendency to actually try to address that debt problem by going into a casino and, you know, it is a double-edged sword. Any core city would welcome this, but I do have grave concerns. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR CONGREVE: My Lord Mayor, I am speaking on the same minute, 241, page 75.

Contrary to what residents of Beeston and Holbeck understood, that they were not going to have to put up with the associated problems that a regional or large casino at Elland Road would bring, what do we find? What do we find? An about-turn and the very real possibility of a regional or large casino being constructed in the midst of their community.

Some residents are saying, "Well, it is fixed already. There has been a done deal" and that if Leeds is successful in its bid, then Elland Road will be the site.

In the area surrounding Elland Road, there are major existing problems: litter, mainly caused by those attending football matches which neither the club or the Council Street Services Department take responsibility for: noise nuisances from events held at Elland Road, loud music, slamming of car doors, toing and froing of vehicles, and also from traffic generally. We have the M621, the Ring Road, Ingram Distributor and Domestic Street, all carrying heavy loads of traffic.

There are existing problems of congestion in Beeston and Holbeck because of recent major developments. We have the White Rose complex, we have the major retail park there, many industrial parks and large office developments all within the vicinity of Elland Road. Although these offer employment opportunities, the vast majority of employees commute by car.

Parking is a major issue. Because of the lack of on-site parking, match days at Elland Road are notorious for vehicles being parked -- no, being abandoned, vehicles being abandoned all over Cottingley, Beeston and Holbeck. It is horrendous for local residents who often cannot park near to their homes to unload their shopping and their children, not to mention problems caused for the disabled.

The casino would be built on the largest existing car park at Elland Road, which itself is inadequate for match day needs. Generally, because there are inadequate car parking arrangements for people employed by companies in the area, there is a daily problem of commuters parking their vehicles indiscriminately,

making access to some streets hazardous, and causing obstructions should a large, emergency service vehicle need to pass.

Health. Health is a major issue, a major problem and a recognised problem in the area. The area is one of the highest concentrations in the City of sufferers of heart disease, bronchial diseases and asthma problems.

Anti-social behaviour. We have existing problems of anti-social behaviour and, although the vast majority of visitors will be well-behaved, the casino will be an attraction for undesirable elements.

With estimated figures of around 3 million visitors a year, existing problems encountered by residents will increase beyond belief if a casino is built at Elland Road. Should the ruling administration, this rainbow alliance, proceed in supporting a casino at Elland Road, then they must (inaudible) to ensure that there is full and meaningful consultation with residents of Cottingley, Beeston, Holbeck, that residents are listened to and that their views are acted upon. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, let me deal very quickly with the first point from Councillor Latty. I think we have indicated by our action in this particular instance that we agree entirely with his summary that best value does not necessarily mean best price, and we listened very carefully to the Ward Councillors, to the Area Committee, in fact to two sets of Ward Councillors, the adjacent ward as well as the ward that you represent, Councillor Latty, the Area Committee and the residents of the area, and that is why it came to Executive Board, because we believed there was a strong case to accept less than best value to keep this building, which is an important one in the community, and I hope the development that takes place there is satisfactory, which I am sure it will be.

Now then, the vexed issue of casinos. Councillor McArdle is right. I would put it this way, we are between a rock and a hard place. I don't think there is any Member of this Council who has not got misgivings about a Government policy for regeneration that seems to be linked, as the one is linked on controlling the job culture and too much drink with extending licensing hours, so then you regenerate by allowing massive casinos.

We all have concerns, but you will have seen in the newspapers over this past few days the number of major cities, virtually every major city, which has given an expression of interest to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in connection with a regional or large casino. It is an expression of interest. There is a long, long way to go.

To Councillor Congreve let me say this, it is absolutely wrong, absolutely untrue for anyone to say there is a done deal. Now, I have looked at certain publications coming from your colleagues over this past few weeks and had cause to write to one or two of them where statements that have been made have been

quite simply untrue. I hope that the residents that you have mentioned in Beeston and Cottingley are not going to be told by members of your party that there is a done deal in connection with this casino, because it is completely untrue, and you used the words "done deal", not me. I am responding to your comments.

Let me make it crystal clear. All that has happened is that the development community have, of course, talked to us, as they talked to your Leader of the Council previously, Councillor Wakefield, and I know for a fact - because he had a very frank discussion with me when I took over on the issue of regional casinos - Officers have been present at all of those, and they have identified sites, and that does not mean we are going to accept them. Absolutely does not mean we are going to accept them because, as Councillor Finnigan I think commented about licensing and planning, we are the licensing authority, we are the planning authority, and I for one, if we were successful, would want to see the most rigorous planning discussion take place about whatever site a developer came forward suggesting, and I would want to see then the most rigorous and stringent licensing regulations applied, because there are undoubtedly down sides.

I would say this to you. If this Government links the sort of regeneration money they are talking about to a large casino, a regional casino, what would you say if we saw that level of regeneration money go 40/50 miles down the road, and that is the dilemma. It is a very, very difficult situation the Government have placed us in.

I have to say, as I said initially when I began to respond, it is a funny way and it is a funny old world when you regenerate an area by allowing massive gambling, but that seems to be the game in town, at least for the time being, but I can guarantee you there are no done deals. There will be stringent --- If we get that far, there will be stringent licensing regulations applied, and I know colleagues on Planning will take a very, very rigorous and vigorous course through the process. (Applause)

(iv) Neighbourhoods & Housing

COUNCILLOR ELLIOTT: Lord Mayor, I refer to page 75, Minute 242. The situation in Churwell is that the Stanhope Hall, previously available for community use, has been closed down. The other provision, i.e. the community centre, needs replacing. A piece of land has been identified as being a suitable location for the building of a new purpose-built centre, and I hope that this administration will be looking favourably and supporting the providing of this.

Many charities and chapels are already carrying out community work in their halls in areas where Leeds City Council makes no provision. I hope that this Council through the Area Committees will recognise this and be prepared to support these organisations, including financial contribution towards the upkeep of their buildings. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: Lord Mayor, just a couple of points on the same minute with regard to community centres. In my experience, it is often not as easy for a community group to run a community centre as it sounds in a Council Executive Board paper. I have seen a number of community groups really struggle with this function, and I suppose I am just making a particular plea that we give as much support as possible to groups. It is very difficult. It may sound easy, just, "Here is a lease" and what you actually pay out is not a huge amount, but for some groups it can become a real millstone round their necks and their whole existence gets tied up in keeping a centre open rather than concerning themselves with the activities of the community centre.

The other point I do want to make, the Executive Board paper does talk about a schedule for a backlog of maintenance for community centres. However, that schedule is not ready yet. There is an uneven spread of community centres, and the funding for those centres in capital terms will have to come from the Well-being budgets or else there will have to be a bid centrally.

Now, I am very concerned that the money may not be there to enable centres to function, so there may be that double-whammy where a group struggles with the day-to-day administration of a lease who is unsupported by the City Council, then puts in a bid for funding only to find that the budget has not been delegated in a sufficient amount to allow things to happen, and then when a bid is made centrally that gets knocked back. So, let's be realistic about the difficulties that are often faced by community groups. Let's make sure they get maximum support to enable them to carry out this facility and to ensure that the centres that we do have and which have a sustainable life are able to carry on. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: Lord Mayor, this is page 76, Minute 243. If there is going to be meaningful regeneration in Harehills, then obviously one of the crucial things is further control over landlords. Often a house is in a terrible state and some of the most -- many of the most vulnerable people in the city are in those properties. So it is very good to know of the consequences of the Housing Act 2004 and the mandatory measures that are coming into place in April, but I also wanted to ask about the discretionary licensing powers, which I know have been investigated, and I am pleased for colleagues and inhabitants of Beeston Hill and Holbeck and Cross Green, but I know that Harehills was originally considered and has not been chosen as yet, but also that the decision on that has been deferred, so I would just like to know more about why it has been deferred and when the provision that the Act provides will come into place and when they are going to be tried in Harehills, because obviously everything that can happen should be tried in Harehills to try and cope with the problem of these various landlords with properties in terrible conditions.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, first of all, I think it is just worth congratulating the staff, the Officers that have actually been looking at this scheme

and introducing it, because I know there has been an awful lot of work gone in, and I think to meet the various deadlines set by the Government deserves our congratulations, and I just wanted to make that point.

In my ward in Headingley, of course, a large number of properties come under the mandatory scheme, and I think that is to be welcomed, but I have to say that when this was mooted 2, 3, 4 years ago, the local MP Harold Best used to say, "Well, the Labour Government is going to introduce some legislation shortly and it is going to solve all our problems" and, of course, pretty much in the same way as the Licensing Act, yes, gave some powers to the local authority but also introduced a huge number of hoops that we had to jump through. I am afraid this legislation falls into the same trap.

I mean, it would be nice if we as local authority could make decisions ourselves that a particular part of Leeds should be covered by this legislation, whereas what we have ended up with are different categories, mandatory licensing, additional licensing, discretionary licensing, all of which have different rules and regulations attached to them, and so whilst I think it is absolutely right that the Council is looking at these specific areas of the City in relation to I think it is actually low demand rather than low risk HMOs, I mean it is low demand HMOs that should be referred to there, it would have been nice if it had the powers to look at some of the other areas within the City that don't necessarily fall within the Government's definitions but which would probably benefit from a wider application of the scheme, so I think it is a shame that we are not able to move on that, and that is largely as a result of the way the legislation has been framed.

But I would say in Headingley that we do have a situation now where, yes, Headingley has been recognised as a high demand area, an area that students want to live in, but in recent years we have actually found, of course, through the Assure policy, through the purpose-built student accommodation being built around the City, that there are an increasing number of properties becoming empty and, as a result of that, I think Unipol have predicted that there may be something like 2,000 properties or bed spaces vacant in Headingley over the next 2 or 3 years. So, in fact, we may end up going from a situation where we are in a high demand area to an area that is actually lower in demand, so I would say that, whilst I think this policy is absolutely spot on for the moment, I think there will come a time in future years where we need to look at areas like Headingley and look at whether these additional discretionary licensing powers could be adopted there. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, just in response to Councillor Elliott, she may not be aware in this that we are trying to pass these facilities out to the Area Committees to give them the opportunity to decide how the resources should be used properly and obviously bring a business case back, so when that comes back, when you have had the opportunity, when it comes back obviously it will be considered in a proper manner.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I can't hear you, Les.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Oh right, sorry. That is the first time anybody has ever said that.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: No, it was a treat but I think we ought to listen.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Could you hear me? Do you want me to repeat that? Could you hear me? That's alright.

Can I now go on to Richard, actually. Richard, I think it is a wee bit cheeky, actually, to ask us how much we are going to spend and what we are going to do as far as these community centres are concerned. How much do they need spending on them? It runs probably into millions of pounds. No, I don't know why. It hasn't happened in the last 20 months that it has suddenly run that way. I think it has been happening for a long, long time, and I think it is a bit cheeky to say that, but having said that, there are some points which I think are important.

The one as far as leases are concerned, we have got to be very careful with leases because you cannot expect to give a lease to a community group which is a self-repairing lease and the building is falling down. I mean, that would be criminal and it would be disgraceful and we wouldn't do that. We have got to see what the premises are, what they are looking like and how a lease is entered into, and that, I can assure you, will be taken into account.

But I am not certain that the Labour Party want these facilities to go out to the Area Committees or want us to return it in. I am not certain with them, but they are going out because we believe the Area Committees should have power, and they are going to go to them in any case.

Now then, finally, let me just come on to Councillor Harington. Councillor Harington, very interesting. Well, selective licensing is a very interesting subject and it is something I am not going to disagree with. We have chosen two areas, one in Beeston and one in East End Park. To be quite honest, Councillor Taylor and Councillor Hussain have been pushing me and very supportive of trying to get one in Harehills, and I am certain from their pushing they will get one in Harehills, but all I would say, Harehills will be a bigger scheme than the two that are chosen. We have to get permission from the ODPM. We have got to go to the ODPM and get their permission to do this and select these areas. We have to learn what it is going to involve. We have got to learn the work involved in it, but Harehills is a top priority because of what the two Members over here have been pushing and saying for some time.

Indeed, I remember when they also pushed us on the Gipton Arts Centre. Do you remember pushing us to get a Gipton Arts Centre? It is funny, I was

reading Councillor Harington's little note the other day saying that he had got the Gipton Arts Centre. I didn't see any praise to the administration about giving the money or getting the money. All I saw him further up having a go at the Liberals and Tories but totally ignoring the fact that Gipton Arts Centre, it was this administration who found the money to do it with. (Applause)

So just coming back in general, just let me say Harehills is important. Harehills is a big scheme. It will be a lot bigger than the other two that we have chosen at the present time. We hope to learn, and I can assure you Harehills will be one that is on the agenda and it will be brought forward.

Have I missed anybody out? I don't think I have missed anybody out of that. Thank you.

(v) Learning

THE LORD MAYOR: Now, Members of Council, for something entirely different. We have an amendment in the name of Councillor Atha, which we will take as a separate item from the other questions on the Learning section, but I am advised that I should remind members of the SOC that they will need to leave during the debate on this reference back if they are to take part subsequently in the SOC meeting, which will concern the same subject. I pause for a moment or two to facilitate that, and then invite Councillor Atha to move the amendment.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: My Lord Mayor, I am really going to do something quite different today. I think what we do in this Council often is bat insults backwards and forwards. We try to win party political points. No-one gives a damn whether we do or not because the Evening Post doesn't rewrite or write that kind of stuff. I would like to ask us all to do one thing now. I am particularly speaking to Councillor Carter, Andrew Carter that is, who has a particular influence over the Council.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I can't hear you. Can't hear you.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Well, I will speak louder.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Better.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Thank you. What I am trying to do is to ask everybody to not adopt a party political process but simply say if you were the Councillor for the ward which I now represent, would you in fact be supporting the plea I am making to you? And the plea is to keep, as you all know, Beckett Park School open. I have only got 5 minutes so I will have to do this by headline only:

(1) There is the grounds of equity. Two cases came to the executive Board a little while ago --- I have got ten? Oh, I will slow down. Thank you very much.

Ten, thank you. I love the way you do that and not that, Lord Mayor. That really reassures me. Thanks very much indeed for your kindness. I was going to do it (inaudible). I shall not take longer than I need, though.

The first is equity. We did have two cases come to the Executive Board some time ago. One was Fir Tree, one was Beckett Park, and I put to you, despite what Councillor Harris said, that these cases are virtually identical. One got a reprieve. Beckett Park did not.

The second point I would make is this: We have had reference to Area Committees, pushing things to Area Committees, because Area Committees are supposed to know what those areas require, what needs to be done there. It is the whole basis of a delegation. Three times the North-West Inner Area Committee, the committee representing this area, has said the school should be kept open. It said it once by resolution, second time by resolution and, asked only a week ago, the Chairman of that committee admitted, yes, our position has not changed. That North-West Inner Area Committee consists of nine Liberals, three Labour, and they were unanimous on three separate occasions saying keep the school open. If delegation means anything, we should be listening to their words.

There is also the question of a breach of promise. Nothing to do with matrimony or anything of the sort. It is to do with the fact that this school was given a promise two and a half years ago that the question of closure would not arise again within 5 years, because it was known that if you mark a school for closure the school will close itself because people will not send their children there, knowing they will be dislocated. That promise was broken. Education Leeds, to give it its credit, said they didn't know of such a promise but in fact it was made at a public meeting and there are X number of people who would say, "Yes, we heard it and we listened to it and we accepted it."

The next point I would make very quickly is that the school itself is a very good school indeed. It has had excellent Ofsted reports. Education Leeds has written to it complimenting it on its educational progress, and this is despite the fact that the school is based and takes in children in the top echelon of children with disadvantage. Under the statistics provided by the Council it is in that top echelon, and so it is getting these excellent results despite that fact, that they are deprived children. 13% come from children from different ethnic backgrounds. 42% are eligible for school meals. It gives some indication of the background of these children, and they have the great advantage that many disadvantaged children do not, because many disadvantaged children are in the deprived areas of the City. This school is based on the edge of a park, a beautiful park: it couldn't be more idyllic. It is an idyllic situation, everyone accepts that. The facilities are first-class. The playground alone is bigger than most footprints of most primary schools, and yet it is under the threat of closure.

So it provides an excellent education, despite its difficulties. Why are there

such current low numbers? Quite frankly, there comes a point when any school gets to a situation where it can no longer subsist. Funnily enough, in the countryside small schools of 60 or 50 do extremely well, but in cities we accept the rule that if it gets below a certain number it really cannot remain.

Well, the fact of the matter is we are still delivering, despite low numbers, good education. It is a very well-resourced school. It has a library quite adjacent to it - walk across 15 metres across the playground in the school. There is 1.28 computers for every child, which is much higher than most schools in the city.

It has just been awarded Investors in People and it has just been awarded Investors in Children, or it is in Pupils, actually. These are two awards recently given, first-class awards for a school which is performing extremely well in the community.

The community needs this school. If the school were to close then what would happen? Families or young people who are going to start a family would simply not move into the area because they don't want to take their children for a 2 mile hike or a 1.8 mile hike, or a 1.1 mile hike to a school down the valley, and so it has a very significant effect on the community's area.

It contains a unit for autistic children. Now, these children have great behavioural problems. One thing autistic children absolutely depend upon is a fixed regime. A move where they are all split up will have the most damaging effect on these children, who could be the children of any one of us. It is a random disorder. It could affect anyone, but whether it belongs to me or you or your child or someone else's child, each child is just as precious, and to destroy that autistic centre which has been integrated so well in the school would in fact be quite tragic, and the parents highly prize this school, and the nearest other centre, which is up in Cookridge, is already full.

And so for the parents - we have the full backing of the parents of these autistic children - what is the alternative provision? Well, as I am sure Councillor Minkin will point out, as I do now, the nearest school is St. Chad's. It is full. It is a Church of England school. It is (inaudible) over-subscribed. The next nearest school is Hawksworth, which is virtually full, maybe one or two spaces possibly. The next three schools down the valley, in this group which is being looked at, are between for some pupils 2 miles away, 1.8 miles away, 1.1 mile and then some children live quite adjacent to them, are three schools which have between them a very large number of spare places, but they are two Church of England schools and one Roman Catholic school. Now, I happen to be in favour of such schools but there are people who are not and who want their children to be taught in non-faith schools, and the nearest school to them, which is also another very good school, Beecroft, could only accommodate these children if the school is closed in temporary accommodation. I understand, Councillor Carter, that during the course of discussion you picked this up yourself because you didn't know that the

future accommodation was to be in temporary buildings, and so it really does ---

There is a very, very strong case for retaining this school. Again we go back to the low numbers. Why were the low numbers allowed to happen? Well, up to the year 2000 the position was the school was holding up its numbers just as well as any other school. There was a general decline but it was part of that general decline.

In 2000/2001 the school was first mooted for closure, and at that stage parents started to accept the school was going to close and stopped sending the children there. The school still remained, however, viable, until the year 2002 when a further proposal came along. That proposal was not proceeded with but the effect on the parents was to say the school is definitely going to go: it is like the done deal we were talking about. People, whether you like it or not, believe sometimes a decision is made even though the formal decision has yet to arise, and we all know that is true.

And then last year 2005 the next proposal came in to close the school, and this time it was clearly going to happen. When that was announced there were 18 children on roll for the school to go in January to the school in the following September. That number of 18 dropped immediately to 6, because the parents voted with their feet, and that is why the numbers have got so low. If the school were given a reprieve, with a promise not to raise the spectre of closure again, we could guarantee the school would have well above the 30 required to fill the first year school group.

There is a nursery on site. It has only just gone on site. It has been there about a year, a brand new nursery. There are 14 little children in there ready to move into the school if the school remains open. We could open the gate to the school and walk across the park from the Headingley area, taking the pressure off the Headingley schools, and the nearest children are the children just across the park. It is difficult for those of you who don't know the geography, but it is like a large doughnut with Beckett Park in the middle. Take that away and there is a great vacuum in the middle.

There is a further point I would make, and I finish on this. There is great new building in the area, 800 homes to be built on Kirkstall Hill, 1,385 houses are going to be built on Kirkstall Forge. There is already significant development at Woodside Quarry. On Hawksworth Road and Ring Road junction there is also major building now and families going in there. The in-fill sites in Headingley station, Hesketh Road, Burley Road, Woodside View, St. Annes Lane are all new-build, and I finish with what Councillor Hamilton said. Unipol is saying there is going to be a large number of empty places for students. Those empty places will be filled by families. They will need that school. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: I second. The debate at the last Council in January was

about referring back to Executive Board not to go out to consultation about the proposed closure. This is us asking Council to vote not to accept the Executive Board recommendation that it should close. The minute of Exec Board reads that, "Having considered the representations received, the proposal to close Beckett Park Primary School on 31st August 2006 be proceeded with." So the arguments that were given at last Council - it was in January - that the SOC is the best forum, those arguments fall. Council can vote, it should vote, not to accept the Executive Board decision.

As Bernard has said, the Inner North-West Area Committee confirmed unanimously again last Thursday that it is against the closure of Beckett Park School. Those Councillors, the 12 of us, cannot vote differently here. We can't agree with that Executive Board resolution, and I would like to refer to the advice that we were given about the way that this had to be dealt with at Council today. We were told that we could not have a White Paper on this issue because Council would already have voted to agree with the recommendation of the Exec Board to close the school, so it is now is the time when you say, "No, this school should not close."

Briefly, on the case itself: firstly, Councillor Morton was quite right when he made the comment at one Inner North-West Area Committee that on an issue of such major public concern everybody must be absolutely convinced. That is good governance. You cannot be just more or less convinced or just about on the balance of probabilities convinced. That is poor governance, and I come back to that and the whole question of the Granary Wharfe planning issue at City Centre Plans Panel.

I have only time for a couple of points, but I would like to point out that Councillor Mark Harris, when he said in Council, "The whole point is with Fir Tree that every other adjacent school, non-faith school, has no surplus places. There are no surplus places in the non-faith sector in the non-denominational sector within striking distance of Fir Tree, so if Fir Tree were to close then the only schools that were prepared to take those children are the faith schools."

Let me hold up this large-scale map, which is that way round, if Councillors Atha and Ogilvie can hold that up. That is the position which I would confirm again in this instance. You still can't see the bigness of it, but that is Beckett Park in the middle there, the blue are church-aided schools, that is Spring Bank, this is St. Chad's, that is St. Stephen's, that is Beecroft, that is Hawksworth Wood, and that is the new Headingley St. Michael's. You can clearly see there what a massive area is left and how few choices you have got.

Education Leeds itself said that there were not enough places in county schools to accommodate these children. Beecroft is willing to be supportive, but it can only accommodate children by Portakabins on that site which will, of course, affect the children of Beecroft School.

It is important to understand the question of distances. These children would, to St. Stephen's, a church school, have 1 mile; Beecroft 1.2 miles; Hawksworth Wood 1.8 miles; Weetwood 1.7 miles; Spring Bank 1.2 miles. You already know that Weetwood is full, that Beecroft is full, that St. Chad's is full, that Hawksworth Wood is just about full, that Kirkstall St. Stephen's does have room but it is a church-aided school. There is no indication that the parents of Beckett Park want to choose church-aided schools. There would have been plenty of room at Kirkstall St. Stephen's for them to have sent those children there if they had wanted to.

You know, Members for Headingley and Weetwood, that you need this school for your parents to have the choice for county school education. Weetwood is full. Spring Bank, as I understand it, is just about full. Why should your parents only be able to choose Headingley and St. Michael's, which is now a Church of England-controlled school, when Beckett Park can so conveniently serve the children of Headingley and Weetwood?

Finally, as has been said, this is a good school. It has had wonderful comments on the Investors in People. I will just briefly read one out, which says that there are many positive aspects to the school but the areas that particularly stand out: a clear and measured focus on the children, helping them to develop and learn. This is extremely good practice I have not seen operating in a school before. Leadership and management of the school is exceptional."

This is an excellent school. It is required. Do not close it. Confirm today that this school stays open and, as Councillor Atha has said, and as all the parents and everybody round including the Members on Inner North-West Area Committee, this is the future for Beckett Park. Don't close it today. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I put my name down to comment on Minute 231 of the Executive Board Meeting on 22nd March, which is on page 72, although once again I see I have been composited, as they used to say elsewhere, into a reference back to which I have not subscribed. Even so, I shall make the comments which I had intended, which was to do with the proposed closure of Beckett Park Primary School.

Firstly, I notice that according to the minutes neither Councillor Wakefield nor anyone else either voted against the proposal to pass the matter on to the School Organisation Committee or asked for any abstention to be recorded.

Secondly, at the Council Meeting on 28th March we heard that Councillor Atha had reported Councillor Claire Nash to the Standards Board because of her alleged mishandling of the meeting of Overview & Scrutiny held on 4th January, to which the Beckett Park closure had been called in. Those who do not know already may be pleased to note that Councillor Atha's complaint was thrown out quite quickly. It would have been unfortunate if that report to Standards Board

had dragged on for any length of time. Councillor Nash, who is retiring in May, might have left under some kind of cloud, even though it strikes me that she has worked quietly and conscientiously during my 3 years so far on Council.

As well as that, Councillor Atha, who is up for re-election, though no-one would have guessed it, may have ended a long and distinguished career on Council under another kind of cloud, having made an unresolved complaint against a fellow Councillor which eventually would have been shown to be groundless. It is to be hoped that this is a case of all's well that ends well, though it is a reminder that Standards Board complaints should not be made lightly or in haste. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harris, do you want to speak on the amendment?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: If I may, Lord Mayor. In fairness, although I accept that Councillor Leadley is taking what is in the book of minutes, my clear recollection is that Councillor Wakefield did not accept this minute. In fairness to him, that is my clear recollection, and if the book of minutes doesn't say so, it is incorrect.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield, you wanted to comment on the minutes?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: No, I think it has been done for me. I am just grateful for Mark's intervention, and I know that Andrew felt the same.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Lord Mayor, I listened very carefully again to the 11 reasons Bernard gave for us to reconsider the recommendation of the Executive Board that Beckett Park School should close. This will be heard by SOC this Friday coming.

The lead-up to that recommendation that I made to the Exec Board, and was supported by the Exec Board, was a long and painful one. I told the Council in January that there are no really poor primary schools in the City today, but there is still a problem, despite the generous settlement of 6% by the Labour Government for pupil funding, net 4%, because of the decrease and the continuing decrease of the population in our schools, and we should remember that this year 800 less children go into the secondary sector - that is the equivalent of a high school - many schools will have a budget problem because the amount of money going into them because of the decrease in students, and this will go on for another 3 years before the numbers leaving school equalise with the numbers coming in, which means that there is increasing strain on all those standing charges.

But I want to deal with some of the things that Bernard raised. The temporary accommodation - yes, if all the children were to go to Beecroft there would have to be temporary accommodation for about 2 years.

I want to deal with surplus places now in the area. I asked Education Leeds and they have given me these figures to analyse again the surplus place situation in relationship to Beckett Park within a 1.2 mile radius. There are 455 surplus places in a 1.2 mile radius of the school. Of those 455 surplus places, 270 are in community schools. I cannot and do not believe I made the wrong decision when I recommended to Executive Board that this scheme proposed by Education Leeds should proceed to SOC.

That is all I have got to say, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Now we proceed to the vote on the reference back.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Recorded vote, please, Lord Mayor.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Seconded.

THE LORD MAYOR: Do we have a recorded vote seconded? Yes, thank you. We will give Members a minute or so to return to their seats. We are taking a recorded vote on the amendment in the name of Councillor Atha, as shown on the order paper. I call on the Chief Executive to explain the voting procedure.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Would all Members ensure, please, that they are in their allocated seats and please refer to their desk unit and press the button marked "P" in order to activate the unit. Those Members in favour of the amendment in Councillor Atha's name 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.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. We have the result of the vote. 87 Members voted, 34 voted in favour of the amendment and 52 voted against the amendment. There were no abstentions and I therefore declare the amendment lost.

Perhaps those Members who left the chamber might wish to return.

Can we move on to the comments on the minutes on Learning.

(v) Learning

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Lord Mayor, speaking on Minute 228, page 71, I would like to draw Council's attention to the Ofsted report for a school in my ward.

In the last report in 1999 the Wartons Primary School in Otley was rated as "Very good" and received much praise from the Inspectors. Rather than resting on their laurels, the school has continued to strive to improve. Despite only the 2 days of notice that the Inspectors now give and a promise of tougher inspections,

the Wartons managed to achieve the highest Grade 1 rating of "Outstanding" in every single one of the key areas being assessed, and thus the school was rightly awarded the overall rating of "Excellent".

I would like to congratulate the staff, pupils and all those governors and all those involved on such an excellent result. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Lord Mayor, I want to speak with reference to amended Minute 230(a) on page 72 in the minute book, and I think I would like to just welcome Richard, Councillor Harker, back to the chamber, and I know that he has been quite ill and actually missed the last Exec Board Meeting which I want to refer to.

With reference to this report that came to Executive Board, I think all of us in this chamber want to recognise the real achievements made in our primary schools and, of course, in our secondary schools as well, and I particularly want to pay tribute to the hard work of staff, pupils and governors in the progress that has been achieved. I think all of us in this chamber, whether as Councillors, governors or parents indeed, must pay our real thanks to them.

However, this does not mean there can be any grounds for complacency, and I would like to pick up on comments in the report on achievement in primary with regard in particular to the predicted progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. I think the report makes very useful reading for all of us, whether we are governors or not, and I think we would welcome the breadth and depth of analysis on issues that we have repeatedly raised in this chamber and elsewhere as our priorities, and particularly with reference to looked after children, the difference in performance between boys and girls and attainment of pupils from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. I think it is fair to say that all of us as governors have increasing concern about behaviour in primary and attendance as well.

The main issue, though, that I want to draw Council's attention to today is that, despite the fact that we have had a very rosy picture painted when the discussions have taken place about the progress made by Education Leeds, I just think we need to be very clear about what is happening here, and the report itself under Paragraph 3.1.1 specifically makes reference to the fact that progress at these two Key Stages is static and indeed there is a real concern that progress has slowed particularly, I have to say, since 2003.

Indeed, in 2000 when the Ofsted report that you make reference to repeatedly, I have to say, Leeds LEA in primary was in the top 50% of performance of all of the LEAs in the country. I have to tell you now that that position has slipped and we are now, at Key Stages 1 and 2, in the bottom half of the LEAs. We have slipped back and the report makes note of that, but I am concerned, whilst you present a very rosy picture and there is good work to commend and celebrate, we cannot afford to be complacent about performance in our primary

schools.

On top of that, and I am sure, Richard, Councillor Harker, you are aware of this despite your absence, that predicted targets have been sent in to the DFES with regard to performance next year and on the back of those predicted targets the DFES have written both to the Council and to Education Leeds expressing their very serious concern about the lack of progress at these Key stages, and indeed asking what steps have been put in place to turn things round.

So in spite of all the rhetoric that we have heard today, particularly around the LEA Ofsted etc., etc., Councillor Harker you, in fact, have to deal with the reality of the situation and, Lord Mayor, I would like to have an assurance from Councillor Harker firstly that these problems highlighted in the report have been understood and acknowledged, and also can I have the assurance that they will be dealt with and treated as a priority, and that you will let us know as soon as possible what is intended to be done about them. Thank you. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor, welcome back, Richard. I must say that you have got a lot of friends in this chamber right across the board. Sometimes we think that you are not going the right way, but nevertheless we think your heart is in the right place, so I will have another go at you! (Laughter)

I am speaking, Lord Mayor, on page 72, amended minute 230(b). We have heard today, and we have kept hearing today, about education and how good we are doing and what is happening. It only happens if you happen to go to a good school with good teachers and, as Richard said, most of the primaries are good schools. It only happens if you go to a good school or can get in in your own locality.

In the locality where Temple Moor High School is, the reality is that there are 100 children, local children, each year that can't get into Temple Moor. We have argued and argued in this chamber and what we said and we thought, "Oh we have got it now because we have got the money and we have got the land. We should build the school to be bigger to take at least another class, another 30 children, on the admissions policy."

Lo and behold, it has come out again, and for anyone, and I think most of you, you are lucky if you have not had to deal in your time with people that have not got in to the school of their choice. It is worse still when you are in walking distance of a school that you can't get into. Nobody in this chamber came forward as Councillors to say we should be arguing about putting children of 11 years old on a dark winter's morning to catch two buses to get an education. It is ludicrous.

It is commonsense, and it is not even party political, isn't this: as far as we are concerned what should happen is there should be some more room at Temple

Moor so that what Andrew Carter said and what Mark Harris said and everybody else, if we are to enjoy the education that we have got for Leeds, let it be for everybody, not for a selected few.

We are getting to a point, and I address it through you, Lord Mayor, to Richard, where people think they have got a right, and I would agree with them, if they live a few streets away from the school to go to that school. It is no longer so, and I heard the Morley Independents earlier on in the year argue about spaces for local kids for local schools. Now, it isn't happening there at Temple Moor and I ask myself, well, why not? Because most of my time now is taken up with explaining to people they have got to go through appeal procedure, and the last one I spoke to was this morning and she said her son was 24th on the list and she didn't think they had much hope of getting on there, and the teacher had said, "Oh well, you are lucky, because there's a lot more than you after 24" and the average is 100 a year, and it is time in this Council that we all looked round, irrespective of which parties, and said, "Where are we going with education?" If it is right for some of our children, it is right for all of our children. Not just a few, it is right for all of our children, and we should be saying, and I have always said it - I don't know why I get mixed up in education - is that as far as we are concerned, if you live a few streets from the school and they build areas, these nice big posh areas and sell houses with the brochure saying, "Local schools" and you can't get into the damn things.

We have reached a ludicrous position, Richard, and I would ask you to please have another look or please talk to some of these people that can't get in that live locally. I would ask you that very sincerely. Thank you very much, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: Lord Mayor, on the same minute and in the same theme as my colleague Councillor Lyons, I want to talk just for a moment about the allocations this year and my experience with families in my own ward.

It came to my attention a few weeks ago that when the allocations were sent out to families that we had quite a lot of families in Belle Isle and Middleton who were clearly very unhappy that their children were being asked to be sent to schools on the far side of the City, two bus routes away in Moortown and Wortley. This, it turned out to be, 50-odd children in one ward.

I have already written to Chris Edwards 30 letters to indicate my support for the parents who are concerned that children from Middleton and Belle Isle are having to travel so far. My information is that there are probably in South Leeds as a whole at least twice that number of children who are having to cross the river to find schooling. Now, these are children of parents, and I have deliberately asked this, who wanted local high schools, by that I mean South Leeds high schools, inner South Leeds and outer South Leeds high schools, and they have got none.

I think this is particularly serious, Lord Mayor, because this is not going to be an exceptional year. For the next 5 years the high school numbers are not likely to be increased in terms of capacity of the schools, which means that we could expect not just 50 or 100 this year but 50 or 100 next year and the year after and the year after and the year after that, which is 500. That is a whole high school, and they are being exported to fill surplus places miles away.

These are children, many of them, from socially disadvantaged families. These are children for whom the Children Act was written and about whom earlier this afternoon we passed a resolution which read, "We will ensure services are seamless, organised around children and young people rather than agencies. We will deliver services through multi-agency teams working together in schools and children's centres in the heart of their communities." That is what we agreed this afternoon, Lord Mayor. I challenge us to do it. I challenge the Council to do it and I do urge Councillor Harker to bring back a report which tells us the facts about allocations and this export of children to the far ends of the City for their education. This is not the way to carry out the Children Act, Lord Mayor, I submit.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, on the same minute and the same subject, I want to make these comments in a totally non-partisan and non-political way as Chair of the East Admissions Forum, because the future life chances of children is actually far too important for us to toss insults around or whatever across the chamber, but I know Councillor Driver and Councillor Lyons and others have spoken to me, and I have had submissions from John Smeaton School, for example, and I am sufficiently concerned about what is happening within the admissions and allocations system I have actually asked for a meeting with Mrs. Archer to talk to her about these issues. I have also asked Officers to help set up an inquiry into the admissions issues from the Admissions Forum.

Those of us who feel passionately about education, and those of us who actually want to see children allocated to schools in a fair and equitable way and schools take their fair share of issues, and that is why this has been a passionate debate within the Labour Party, want to see the Admissions Forum strengthened and the Bill, to be the Act, will do so, and it will say that schools can no longer just pay regard to but have to actually implement those policies and the Admissions Forum, when you see the fine print, will hopefully be able to direct them to do so and will be statutory, hopefully, and independent. Many of us, and I don't think certainly on that side of the chamber here there will be much disagreement; on that side of the chamber there probably will be because you believe in a different kind of educational system of popular schools growing forever and more vulnerable schools being created as a result.

So I want to say very strongly that the admissions issues (Interruptions) Well, I am interested, Andrew, that you laugh at the fact that some children who are statemented and have learning difficulties ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I am laughing at you, Peter, and I will tell you why in a moment.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: -- are being hounded into certain schools. Well, it is not whining and moaning. This is incredible; it is a Leader of Council who does not understand the issues about children being railroaded into certain schools instead of ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I understand more about children than you do.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: -- all schools taking their fair share. So the Admissions Forum will look at that. I am grateful for the comments made by colleagues on this side, because we believe these to be serious issues and not laughing matters.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Lord Mayor, as Members would guess, I can't resist when my friend Councillor Gruen gets up. He is the man, Members of Council, who - standing over there, actually - when he was a member of another party pointed across at Councillor Wakefield who then had something to do with Education and said, and I quote, "You, you are unfit to run Education". That's what he said. Yes, Geoff, he said it to you, you are right. "You are unfit to run Education". That's what he said. It is probably the only correct thing he has ever said in this Council chamber.

My Lord Mayor, when he says am I laughing, he is right. I am laughing at him, the most cynical Member that this Council has ever had. How he has the temerity in this period of time particularly, when we have just had our educational powers returned to us, to comment on anything to do with Education, when he more than anybody else in this chamber was fingered by the Ofsted report for political interference in Education in this City and, Councillor Gruen, don't ever lecture me on how to bring up young children and how to make sure they are properly educated. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Oh dear, follow that!

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: We are good friends really.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Thank you. (Interruptions)

I would like, first of all, to address the points raised by Councillor Lyons and Councillor Driver. I returned to work yesterday. I have not been briefed on the admissions for this year and how it is going ---

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: You should have been. Sorry, I am sorry.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I am concerned at some of the matters you have raised. I will take it up with Education Leeds as soon as I can and come back to you. I

do need to look at the figures and the facts before I can make answer to that, but I am going to comment a little bit on Councillor Gruen. I am sorry. He is, of course, a governor on our behalf in the new Academy and their admissions policy that they want is a bell curve. If we could apply the bell curve admissions policy across the City then, yes, that would be great, perhaps, but we would have children moving in all directions. The problem is that the Academy was opened to serve a community that does not fit a bell curve intake, so a lot of very deprived children in East Leeds who might want to go to the new Academy will not get there. I don't really need lessons, Peter, in fairness of admissions.

I would like to pick up what Judith has said. I want to just pick up a couple of words she used, and then I am going to go into some more detail that she asked for. This is something that I did manage to get briefed on yesterday. She talks about the City slipping backwards and that we have slipped back into the bottom 50% quartile. The fact is that we have not slipped back in the sense I think what she says implies. It does mean that other cities have caught up with us. We were well ahead of other core cities and they have caught up, and it is not good enough that we have not moved forward, and we are aware of that, and I would agree with Judith, but to say that the City has slipped back implies fallen back a long way, that the grades have gone down a long way. That is not true. We have moved down, I agree, but mostly because other cities have caught us up. It means that they have raised their standards to reach ours.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: A bit like Chelsea.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Bernard, listen for once.

The authority is going to take action, implementing from next term a revised and more robust school improvement policy with support for heads and other partners. We acknowledge that there remains a persistent and stubborn group of schools which remain under the floor target, and they will have to be dealt with, approximately 29. A higher focus and targeted intervention in these particular schools using pupil level data to challenge schools on pupil progress; attainment charts in place of pupils drawn from the ISP model against which progress can be charted; a joint review group established for schools causing concern which include governor representatives as well as LEA personnel. Tasks facing the LEA: to ensure that the above processes are in place and effective across all the schools concerned. Additional actions to be incorporated in schools: school improvement policies will be non-negotiable conditions of target-setting meetings to take place.

We are taking this matter seriously, and I can assure you totally on that, Judith.

And finally, Councillor Downes, I too would like to add my congratulations to the Wartons Primary School. I am a little behind in writing to schools who had

Ofsted inspections because I have been away ill, but I intend to get that correspondence caught up with in the next 5 days. (Applause)

(vi) Leisure

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: My Lord Mayor, I am wanting to speak on Minute 246 on page 76, and just to talk a little bit about the Trust Options for Sports Services, and just to explore perhaps the opportunity to democratise the process of the running of our particular sports centres.

Now, this is an arrangement that already exists in local authorities in other areas, including Labour-controlled Greenwich, Labour-controlled Barnsley and Coventry, which was Labour-controlled at the point that they introduced this particular approach, and we think that this might be an opportunity to bring into the running of sports centres in a direct and vibrant way, users of sport centres and staff of sports centres.

Now, the way that it has worked at this particular point are the sports centre managers may have some input but this would give them an opportunity perhaps to have more vibrant approaches to providing the services that are required within local communities. Now, we do think that this is a good idea. We do think that this is an opportunity to explore the democratisation of this particular process, and we are in a situation where we believe that local residents, when they see that they can play an active role in developing what goes on at their local sports centres, will see this as a real opportunity.

We do know that it does operate in other areas. We do know that it operates in Labour-controlled local authorities very successfully as far as we can actually see. We do think that in terms of the Labour Party's position on the City Council they ought to either say that they are for it or they are against it. I know that Keith abstained on this particular one. I think it is an opportunity for us to explore. I think it is an opportunity to bring other people into the running of sports centres in our communities including staff, who we should have absolute trust in, and those users who also have a role in developing and deciding the direction sports centres should be going in the future. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR WADSWORTH: My Lord Mayor, I would like to comment on the same minute, 246 on page 76. I am pleased to see that Executive Board on 22nd March agreed the setting up of a not-for-profit trust for our leisure facilities across the City.

The centres were built mainly in the 1970s and like our roads and Council houses have had little money spent on them during the 24 years of the Labour administration. They now need approximately £20-£25 million to bring them up to 21st century standards. This City has not been as fortunate as Manchester or Sheffield to receive investment from Commonwealth and Student Games.

However, the setting up of a trust will produce savings of around £700,000 per year, which in turn will allow prudential borrowing of up to £10 million to provide the money needed, along with £30 million of PFI credits, and £50 million already being spent on the 50 metre pool and at John Smeaton will help to redress the balance and provide better facilities for young and old alike.

It is my understanding that a trust was discussed under the previous administration but dismissed by Councillor Wakefield. He would probably have preferred to have added the borrowing to the Council Tax which would have meant an increase of up to 5% for £10 million of borrowing.

Over the past few weeks I have visited a number of our facilities to see for myself the work needed to bring them up to standard, and last Friday I visited Kippax Leisure Centre - I am sure you know it well, Keith. I also met some of your constituents who left me in no doubt as to what investment was needed in that centre.

May I also pay tribute to our staff and managers, who do a superb job in very antiquated and difficult situations, and all the managers I have met and the staff pull their weight and really do do a splendid job and it is a credit to the Council that they do that in the very difficult circumstances.

I am also very disappointed to see that Councillor Wakefield is still against a not-for-profit trust and therefore against investment in our centres by abstaining, which in my opinion is as good as voting against. He is clearly proud of his decision by asking for it to be recorded, and I hope his constituents are as pleased for him to try again to stop investing in our leisure centres. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HOLLINGSWORTH: My Lord Mayor, can I just say I am glad we are finally treating this issue seriously. As Members who have been on this Council for years might remember, the setting up of a charitable trust to run our sports centres, which would save us hundreds of thousands of pounds a year in VAT and other costs, was first put forward by Councillor Winlow and pooh-poohed by the Labour party. As it was proposed quite a few years ago, it would have provided millions of extra pounds to invest in our sports centres. It is just the sort of irresponsible action the Labour Party goes in for, and it brings me to the second point: the scare stories they are running about investment in sports facilities in East Leeds.

They are trying to frighten people that things are going to close down when what we are proposing and what will be proposed is investment. We are going to be very shortly consulting people about what facilities they want, but the Labour Party don't seem to understand that because their consultation exercise is mainly a sham and then they did what they wanted to do without listening to what people wanted.

I will never support the reduction and closure of our facilities in East Leeds unless it has been replaced with much better facilities, and what we will be proposing across Leeds with investment in PFI and other things is state of the art facilities that the residents of Leeds want. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HUSSAIN: My Lord Mayor, I would like to speak to Minute 247 on page 77. It perhaps comes as no surprise that I would like to take this opportunity ---

MEMBERS OF COUNCIL: We can't hear you.

COUNCILLOR HUSSAIN: I think I will start again. It perhaps comes as no surprise I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the report on the cemetery provision that went to Executive Board on 22nd March. As a proud member of this City, I am delighted to see that this current administration has taken steps to address the very pressing issue of creating an additional Muslim cemetery in East Leeds.

Council Officers are currently looking at the feasibility of developing a site at Brander Mount, adjacent to Harehills Cemetery. This site has already been identified as having the potential to serve the Muslim community in that area for several decades to come. Whilst this project is still in the early stages at the moment, I am sure that this chamber will agree that this is further evidence that this current administration is committed to addressing the needs of all its citizens, regardless of the ethnic and religious backgrounds. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: My Lord Mayor, I would like to speak on Minutes 247, page 77. I would like to echo the sentiments of my colleague Councillor Hussain and welcome the Executive Board's recommendation for the feasibility study for the Brander Mount site, known to the locals as (inaudible). However, I would like to underline what a scheme it is that has taken a change of administration to see the needs of Leeds Muslim community to be addressed.

At present there are two designated Muslim cemeteries in Leeds. However, the Muslim community here in East Leeds needs to have an additional burial facility. I am very grateful to the Officers and the members of this administration who have worked on this project ensuring that the concerns of Muslim communities are not ignored, my Lord Mayor. This administration decision to review the Council's cemetery strategy way back in July 2004 has brought this issue - an additional Muslim cemetery - right back onto the top of the agenda. I wish to thank the administration once again for its commitment to the Muslim community of Leeds. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR SELBY: Lord Mayor, same minute. It is a very interesting report that we have in front of us that went to the Executive Board. What it referred to

was previous reports and the comments about small cemeteries, referring to the problems of high access and development costs, more costly per grave, higher maintenance costs arising out of staff travelling time, moving equipment that smaller sites would result in. And yet we have a recommendation to go for smaller sites.

One wonders why it is - wonders why it is - that suddenly -- what the thought process was for the Executive Member to move away from a large site to incur what is something like - it was again referred to in the report - something like £2 million of capital expenditure and again the report gives no indication whatsoever of what the revenue costs are likely to be.

Interesting again, bearing in mind that Whinmoor, based on this report, if we had gone for the medium or the large site would be working within 6-12 months. We are talking about some time, if we go for small sites, and again on paragraph 4 of the report it makes reference to the fact that there is a pressing need for burials based in North Leeds and noting the fact that it is essential to see it going because of the time to plan and develop cemetery sites. One can imagine, of course, that when such applications come into Planning, Plans East, on sites, there will be a lot of objections particularly in so far as loss of green space.

Lord Mayor, you may well recall that our esteemed Lady Mayoress, together with Councillor Anderson's wife and Councillor Schofield's sister, were seen a couple of years ago with a big placard saying, "Save the Green Belt" - a picture publicised I think mainly in the Crossgates, Whinmoor area.

We also have in this report a suggestion to take away or to use the Killingbeck Fields site, to go to the owners and say, "Can we change it?" Well, I am a bit intrigued about this because, at the same time as this report is talking about development on this area of green land, this green space which is as important to people in Killingbeck and Seacroft as is the green belt in Crossgates and Whinmoor, to see that there are people -- that Norwest Homes began a little while ago doing some work with the possibility of building a PFI leisure centre on the same site.

Now, what is going on here? Are we sort of using the same land twice? I mean, this is the sort of thing the Kray brothers used to do, selling off the same piece of land twice. So I would like to know what the basis --- First of all, which area of land they are talking about, because the report is not clear. You know, what is the basis of taking away green space from Killingbeck and Seacroft Ward?

What is the financial basis upon which we are changing the policy, because again there is nothing in the report to indicate why we should go for additional capital expenditure or, for that matter, additional revenue costs.

There has been no consultation certainly as far as the Killingbeck Fields site is concerned with residents or Ward Councillors. Is there going to be any? As I

said, I am conscious of the problems that we are going to get when we may have the planning permission on all the sites that have been talked about. Just as there was opposition and complaints about Thorner and the result was the references to Scrutiny, the arguments on planning permission, I can see the same arguments coming to Plans East, and I will listen with great interest to Councillor Procter both so far as protection of the green space today and protection of the green space should he and I happen to be on Plans East in the future. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: My Lord Mayor, I wasn't intending to speak on this point at this moment without having all the details about the Muslim Cemetery proposal but ---

MEMBERS OF COUNCIL: We can't hear you.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Sorry - but having heard Councillor Akhtar saying that after nearly 2 years of this administration being in power has come up with this alternative proposal, I think we need to bear in mind that we have just about run out of space in Harehills Cemetery. There is nowhere to go for Muslim people in North-East Leeds. The size of the extension or the plot we are not sure. The Whinmoor site, having been part or a member of the Muslim Cemetery Committee, which is a City-wide thing, I know that there were two and a half thousand graves which is like a proposal or plan for the next 50 years. I am not really sure this particular proposal will actually give us such a number of graves for the next 50 years and, you know, there has been no consultation with the local community to come up with this, and I think that is very important that we have a consultation with the Muslim community in particular in Leeds North-East, and the time it is going to take us to --- Even if we actually are going to go ahead with this, the time it will take us to get to the completed extension at the Harehills Cemetery, I think all in all we are not moving forward with this.

It is a very sensitive matter. I am not really sure, to be honest with you, you know, that the current site is a not obvious site where it is. There have been problems with water. There have been a lot of concerns and I, having spoken to people in the community after it has gone to Executive Board, it is not an acceptable proposal and I think we need to revisit this as soon as possible. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Before calling on Councillor Procter to sum up, I just want to make it clear to all Members of Council that the Lady Mayoress must have made the comments that she made, whatever they were, in a previous persona. She certainly made no political comments at all in the last ten and a half months, certainly not as Lady Mayoress.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, let's deal with the last issues first of all, shall we?

Councillor Rafique, you have not been to see me or spoken to me at all about Muslim burial provision in the nearly 2 years I have been doing this job. On the other hand, however, two Members who have just spoken over here have been to see me and have spoken to me about the provision of Muslim burial facilities within the City, and I for one am delighted that we are finally in a position that we can deliver something that I know full well the Muslim community of this City has been looking to the Council to provide for quite some time. Indeed, during the course of looking at these matters in a former incarnation when I sat as a member of a Scrutiny Board, I remember seeing a piece of paper, a document, that the Muslim community in Leeds had sent to Councillor Brian Walker asking for a certain type of provision.

I have to say what was proposed at Whinmoor Grange Farm would not have satisfied the provision that the members of the Muslim community were asking for. That is the fact of the matter, and I am hopeful that what is illustrated in this particular minute on page 77 will fulfill that particular requirement.

Let's move on to Councillor Selby. Well, Brian, as ever, reasonably entertaining, but factually I have to say way, way off the mark. For Members of Council who aren't aware, let me tell you that Councillor Selby is probably the only Member of this Council who has passed up the opportunity to influence this precise debate, in that when all the provision was being made for the redeployment of land at Killingbeck Hospital, some Members may be aware that the previous administration thought it appropriate to designate a substantial proportion of that land for a cemetery site. Hallelujah, you should say, shouldn't you? Great, we are actually providing smaller cemetery sites within the City. However, having negotiated that with the developer and the Secretary of State, what did that administration then do? Well, they gave it to the Roman Catholic Church to utilize as their cemetery site, forgetting the requirements of the City.

Brian, it shouldn't have gone amiss to you that actually that particular site, the former NHS site, is the site that is referred to effectively in this minute. You know what a 299 Agreement is, and you should know that that minute refers to an element of that site, in actual fact, not a different part of the site that you are trying to make out is actually green belt.

In terms of your comments about large versus small cemetery sites, it is interesting, isn't it? With the benefit of hindsight Keith Wakefield and others say, "Well, actually, we wanted small cemeteries all along but we were told there was no provision for small cemeteries", and I hear what Keith said at the Executive Board. This position is one that has presented itself to us now. I also accept that this position wasn't available when Keith and his colleagues were making those decisions, but it is available now. It is a position which an all-party Scrutiny Board came up with recommendations on and supported. Even Councillor Atha supported me on that occasion on that particular Scrutiny Board, and I am pleased. I am pleased. I would like to think, Bernard, that you were carefully led on that

particular occasion.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Easily led.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Easily led, indeed, and indeed we end up with a position which hopefully - hopefully - we can all get behind and support.

Let us now move on to the PFI -- sorry, the trust status (Interruptions) but also I may comment on the PFI matters that have been talked about. I hear little today about the trust from Members opposite. They are quite happy to talk in their leaflets about privatisation, but when it comes to this place they don't actually couch it in those terms because they know full well trust status is not privatisation. Under the trust model that we are currently looking at all of the buildings will remain the property and in the ownership of the City Council. The City Council will be responsible for improving those buildings. Now, that is not privatisation as far as I am concerned. It certainly is not as far as this administration is concerned.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Or their Government.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Or their Government, for that matter, who, on the very day that Councillor Wakefield was rubbishing our ideas in terms of moving forward, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced proposals for actually pursuing these matters and forging ahead ---

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Nothing to do with it. I read it.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Forging ahead with public/private partnerships in sport.

Councillor Finnigan makes comment about the trust status and he and his colleagues have also been speaking about potential for PFI provision as well.

I thank Councillor Wadsworth for his comments, and he quite rightly identifies a point that Councillor Wakefield made at the Executive Board effectively saying, "Borrow all the money to improve all your leisure centres" ---

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I didn't say that.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I think you probably did, Keith, and a quick calculation was done and that is 2% on Council Tax to actually fund those improvements and that provision.

Let me come now to what Councillor Hollingsworth was saying. It is interesting, isn't it, the Members who sit on the back benches of the Labour Group and remain silent. Let's pick one of their number. Councillor Harington. Councillor Harington when he is in this place appears to be quite eloquent, doesn't he, but when committing words to a targeted mailshot is not quite so eloquent.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Did you get one, John?

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: It starts off like this, "Not much shock me but discovering the Lib/Tory secret plans" and then he goes on to try and rubbish what we are seeking to achieve. Let's just be very, very clear. Councillor Harington claims in this letter, targeted letter to his constituents, that the Libs and the Tories have a secret plan to build a private sports centre on Killingbeck Fields. Councillor Harington, do you honestly believe that? Presumably you do, because you wrote it in here. It says, "Secret plan to build a private sports centre on Killingbeck Fields." Absolutely categorically untrue. No question about it. Untrue. Untrue. One more time - untrue.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Until after the election.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Untrue. Do you get that? Do you understand that? Untrue. It is really making him worried, he goes on to say in his letter here. We also intend to demolish Fearnville Sports Centre, presumably so that the private centre does not have any competition. What absolute garbage. Absolute garbage. Base level rubbish. Absolute rubbish.

I have to say, Councillor Harington, if you honestly think that people are going to vote for you by peddling this sort of stuff around your constituents, you really should think again. You really, really should, and I am happy to be able to share this with your ward colleagues and I hope they can make some use of it, in actual fact. It is for their bits of paper that they may be putting out.

I then further turn - and he is waiting for me - I turn to Councillor Lyons as well. It is amazing they give me their leaflets. Councillor Lyons in his leaflet again talking about the nasty Conservative - I'm sorry, guys, you have been missed out this time - the nasty Conservative plan to close East Leeds Sports Centre.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You are doing.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: It is quite bizarre, isn't it? Here they are saying all these things in their leaflet, and yet who do I have in my office today? One George Mudie. (Interruptions) What does he come to see me about? "I hear you are making a big investment in East Leeds. I wonder if I can talk to you about it, actually. It sounds all very interesting to me, all very interesting to me", and isn't that the real thing? When some of us are looking to deliver multi-million pound facilities, £10 million worth of an investment into an area, what are they doing about it? "Oh, well, we are not sure we really want it." Well, absolutely fine. If you don't want £10 million worth of investment, on your feet and say so, say you don't want it. What some of you fail to see is that whilst we built something - I think of the Library in Otley. We closed the library in Otley, yes, we did, but we opened a brand spanking new library as well, and I look forward to being able to

open new facilities in the east of Leeds. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

(vii) Children's Services

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: Lord Mayor, I wish to speak on page 72, Minute 232, and more or less to continue the same theme as I was raising before about the new commitment that we have taken on as a Council with regard to the Children Act - taken on today under Item 7 of our proceedings - and I want to just draw your attention to the reality of the situation.

I have already told you about the allocations and how they do not fit with what we are committed to as an authority implementing the Children Act. I want to make just one other example, and that is also in the plan that is in 7(a) on page 9, "We will support children and young people by working with their families and carers and with their communities" and lower down, "We will devolve services and support as far as possible to allow local communities to develop services that work with us and allow front-line staff to take the initiative."

I just want to draw your attention to one practical example I am dealing with at the moment, and that is there are at least three primary schools in my ward which currently have extended school activities of one sort or another which fall within this broad category of the kind of activities that we want Children's Services to do.

I discover that Education Leeds has written to them and said all activities that are not strictly within the school day and involve school personnel have to be separately insured and you have to find the insurance. Now, if this kind of petty-fogging bureaucracy is going to get in the way of a vision that we have for the future for people who are already trying to implement that vision, we are seriously misleading ourselves that we are going to make progress.

Lord Mayor, I think what I want you to understand and want the Council to understand is that the Children's Services vision is something that is going to require us to change - us to change, not just the Officers to change - and when I said last time that I believed that the holder of the Executive membership for Children's Services needed to resign, it was because he has not helped us to see and understand our responsibilities in that. I still believe that is the case and, quite honestly, Lord Mayor, if we have two people doing as much as this one person has done, it won't add up to very much more than we already have, and at the moment I think we do have to see the development of these responsibilities as a high priority.

I believe that we have a great vision here but we have got a long way to go to carry it out, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR SELBY: Lord Mayor, same minute. In October Councillor

Jennings, together with Mr. Rogerson, attended the Children & Young Persons' Scrutiny Committee, and I have to say that we had an excellent presentation on how things were to work. Excellent, that is, from Mr. Rogerson. Until towards the end we managed to get a few questions in to Councillor Jennings. He was asked how he saw the role of members and the structure of the Department. All he said was that he would wait to see what would happen when a Director had been appointed. Well, we now have a Director.

At the last meeting I indicated that there were still a number of unanswered questions. I asked for Councillor Jennings' views on those matters. We did not hear from him. Instead, we had the pleasure - if you can call it that - of Councillor Harris, and at no time it appears that Councillor Jennings has spoken or answered questions in Council about his portfolio, so today is an historic occasion - Councillor Jennings is going to speak. He is down to speak and, who knows, unless they filibuster he will be speaking.

Other authorities have not only appointed a Director, they also have an Executive Member ready to take on full responsibility for children's issues, even though there is no current legal requirement to do so. I was over there last week in Manchester talking to their Executive Member on Children's Services. They are well ahead so far as Member involvement is concerned. They know what has got to be done and they are making progress.

So what do we know about who the Director reports to? At the moment there is no clear line. Why has that situation occurred? We know there is a suggestion to have two Executive Members. Well, why two? On what basis? The only view I can see is that it is clear that the two main parties over there cannot decide who is going to have the portfolio and tomorrow's Scrutiny meeting is going to have a very interesting discussion. We also do not know at the moment who reports to the Director, which Executive Member, and the questions I asked in February are just as relevant now.

We cannot really wait for the Annual Meeting, because if anything goes wrong an Executive Member must be there to take responsibility. Is it going to be Councillor Jennings? When it comes to Education, is Councillor Harker going to be reporting to Councillor Jennings about Education matters? If not, why not? Will Councillor Harrand be reporting to Councillor Jennings about child protection issues? If not, why not? Or are they on a job-sharing basis like Councillor Harris and Councillor Carter?

And then one looks at once further in terms of the role of Area Committees in the area of Children's Services. Could Councillor Jennings tell us in his review of the Children Act whether that has been considered. If not, why not? Could he tell us how many meetings he has had with the new Director to discuss all these issues.

As I say, it is important. Today is an historic day. We are actually going to hear from Councillor Jennings. Councillor Driver raises the issue about what has Councillor Jennings been doing. So far as Members here are generally concerned, all we have done is see Councillor Jennings chair a few seminars, and he left one half way through, leaving that to the able chairmanship of Councillor Bale, but other than that we have no idea what he has been doing, no idea (inaudible) why he has been drawing his responsibility allowance and, as I said last time, what have we been paying him for? I would like to know. I am sure everyone on this Council would like to know.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I understand Councillor Brett has withdrawn. Can I ask Councillor Jennings to sum up.

COUNCILLOR JENNINGS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Councillor Selby must have been asleep because I think this is the third or fourth time in the last 18 months that I have responded to the minutes on Children's Services.

The Children and Young People's Plan went to Executive Board, the minutes are here today. The Leader of the Labour Group did not raise any of the issues which have been raised by Councillors Driver and Selby today, so I presume it is just their own little conspiracy that they are running, and I am quite aghast that some sort of personal attack on me seems to be appropriate and therefore a comment on the hard work of the enormous number of Officers of this Council, of Education Leeds, and I would also like to point out to Councillor Selby and Councillor Driver this document was the product of probably the most far-reaching consultation and work in partnership with other agencies that has ever occurred in this City.

Now, I don't know what you were proud of in your time, Councillor Driver, as Chair of the Education Committee. I don't know what you want to be remembered for.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: We know what he is going to be remembered for.

COUNCILLOR JENNINGS: But I will say this, you might not like the way I operate but, by God, I know there are a lot more people who would question how you used to operate, and I have been asked not to raise issues about some of your behaviour recently, which I hope at a later date I might be able to. I am sorry to be so cryptic about it but on the request of a senior Officer I am not going to comment, and it unfortunately refers to some of the things that you raised in your - I won't call it a speech because that would be to misuse the word.

Can I also pick up on a couple of things today? Firstly, petty-fogging bureaucracy. You accused us and this Council, I believe me and the Officers with whom I work, of petty-fogging bureaucracy. Can I tell you what the real example of petty-fogging bureaucracy in this whole process has been? The 17 sets of

guidance that we have received over the last year that contradicts itself. Guidance that comes out once a month but then is replaced next month by another set of guidance because they are contradictory. Please don't accuse me, the Officers that I think have done such a good job for this Council of petty-fogging bureaucracy. Go and talk to your masters in London.

Incidentally, talking about your masters in London, you might not like what we are doing in Leeds. You might not like what I am doing. You obviously by reference don't like what the Officers have done with this. Amazingly, quite a lot of people do, including Ofsted, who have commented very favourably on the process and progress in Leeds, the Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, who have commented very favourably on what we are doing in Leeds, the DFES who has actually now taken one of our fairly senior Officers on two days per week secondment so that he can help them guide other Councils round the City. I also - -- (Interruption) Sorry, Councillor Driver, was that something sensible for once?

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: They didn't take you, did they?

COUNCILLOR JENNINGS: You obviously don't understand how Councils work, Councillor Driver, which is probably why what happened 10 years ago happened. Officers run, politicians oversee.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: He thought he was the Director of Education, that's why. That was his problem.

COUNCILLOR JENNINGS: The DFES think so highly of us they are even recommending to other Councils, the most recent I believe was Newcastle, to come and see what we are doing here. I am amazed, actually, I am even bothering to respond to this contemptible sort of thing. (Applause)

Can I (inaudible) this is, I think, the second time it has been said this afternoon and probably about the sixth time it has been said over the last few months. The situation is as Councillor Harrand described at the beginning of the meeting. I am not going to waste Council's time, or certainly this end of the Council chamber's time, repeating yet again. Read the minutes next time.

Anyway, all I can say is I think the Children and Young People's Plan ---

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: (Inaudible)

COUNCILLOR JENNINGS: Sorry, what was that? I keep hearing funny voices coming from ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: From funny people.

COUNCILLOR JENNINGS: This is a good document. It was recognised by the

Leader of the Labour Party as a good document, I presume, because he did not criticise it. It is a document that is setting out the stall for future work and it represents the ambitions of this Council, our Officers, those of us who as Councillors are involved in it and, more particularly, the agencies, organisations and our partners who work with us on this agenda and I hope and I believe, irrespective of the comments from people opposite, that it will in time see an increase and improvement in services for young people in Leeds.

A final point. Is it not always interesting that Councillor Driver, and Councillor Selby to a lesser extent, always want to talk about governance and what Council are going to do, and we very rarely - not totally never but very rarely - actually hear about what is most important in this agenda, improving services, improving the lot of the young people and children in Leeds. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: If Council will bear with me for a moment, I am just trying to arrange a facility for Councillor Lyons to make a very short statement, because we have come to the end of the time allowed for that section. It will require the Leader of Council to agree to varying the Council's Procedure Rule regulations in order to make it possible, but I am conscious of the fact that we did say that we would allow Councillor Lyons to speak on this section.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: On what basis, Lord Mayor?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I think because earlier on he was given the undertaking that he would be able to speak on this issue. I am only asking for suspension for one speech.

THE LORD MAYOR: So can I ask, is there a motion that we suspend the Council Procedural Rules?

MEMBERS OF COUNCIL: Yes.

(The motion was carried)

THE LORD MAYOR: That is narrowly carried, so can I ask you, Councillor Lyons ---

COUNCILLOR LYONS: The story of my life, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: -- to make a very short statement.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I will make it very short and very speedy. I am speaking on this particular minute but what it is really about is the statement that Mark Harris made earlier on today. As far as I am concerned, Mark Harris is an honourable man. I class him as a friend of mine (Interruptions) --- No, I am serious. Friendship doesn't always involve being nice to one another. Outside this chamber, he is a very, very good man. Now, let me tell you --- (Councillor

Harris hugged Councillor Lyons) (Applause) I tell you, Lord Mayor, what Councillor Harris said ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Does that mean I have to go hug Peter Gruen?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: No, no.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Thank goodness for that.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Seriously, what he said was that Councillor Mick Lyons had advocated the parking fees at St. James's Hospital going up. That is not true. You have been misled by whoever has told you.

I remember, along with Councillor Rachel Procter, the debate that took place, and the debate that took place was the length of time that you could park at St. James's Hospital, because it was 3 hours. It was 3 hours and Rachel and myself said it was ridiculous because I had got three parking tickets and Rachel hadn't got any because she sent somebody out to feed the meter.

What we are talking about here is at the Scrutiny Board we both argued that they should extend the 3 hour limit and that was put in. They extended the 3 hour limit. At no time did I or I believe Rachel agree to any increase in that particular parking fee. So, Mark, whoever has told you has got it wrong. That was the argument and, if you go and get the minutes or the recordings or whatever of that meeting, that is exactly what it will say.

I am the first to admit when I am wrong, and I usually stand up and attack, but as far as I am concerned here - as far as I am concerned here - my name was taken and taken wrongly, and that is not right in this Council Chamber. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harris, are you prepared to accept that statement from your new-found friend?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Well, Lord Mayor, of course I accept what he said to begin with was very nice indeed. It is right there are circumstances outside of this place where we are able to be decent to each other, so I am grateful for his comments, genuinely so.

However, with regard to the matter which has been referred to, I have the Scrutiny Board -- whatever Scrutiny Boards do on minutes, agreement or whatever it is, report, yes. I have never been on Scrutiny, and I have the Scrutiny meetings in particular in March and April 2005 dealing with this, and the second of those was the one at which the decision was made to make recommendations to Executive Board, and the minute is quite clear that the Scrutiny was asking for the car parking charges to be increased significantly at Beckett Street in order that staff at St. James's didn't park there, because there were other more expensive car

parks which they ought to be using, and this one is kept usually for patients or visitors to Jimmy's.

Now, I am reliably informed by our Members on those Scrutinies that it was Councillor Lyons who was advocating the increase in charges. There we have a difference of opinion, and I hear what Mick says. It does not alter the fact, however, that the report and recommendation of Scrutiny on 25th April, to which all Members of all the different parties subscribed, asked for the car parking charges to be increased at St. James's. That is a fact. It is here. It is an indisputable fact.

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move to the end of the section and invite the Leader of Council, Councillor Carter, to exercise the right of final reply.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

Can I deal first of all with the issues relating to Children's Services portfolio, although I think that Councillor Jennings more than adequately dealt with the comments, but I address Councillor Selby's remarks. I don't know why it is, Brian, that you seem to want to come across as thoroughly unpleasant when you (Laughter) --- I don't know whether you were born like that or you had to practise, but, my Lord Mayor, regrettably that is how you come across, and in particular your comments to Councillor Selby (sic) were, I thought, very, very unnecessary.

On the issue of the graveyards, it is a very simple situation. You lot, for whatever reason, decided you wanted large cemeteries. You were opposed by one of your own former Members, Councillor McGee, Chairman of the relevant Scrutiny Committee who prepared a report which my colleagues and indeed Members of the LibDems supported, saying that the City required smaller cemeteries. We made it clear that that was our collective policy and that is what we have introduced, end of story.

Now, let's go on to Education again, and just make this absolutely crystal clear. There is no complacency whatever in this administration about the need to continue to drive educational standards upwards. There is no complacency about the need to continue to improve the facilities in which staff at every level of education teach.

Councillor Harker inherited from you a situation where, although you had taken action since the Ofsted previously referred to, you were roundly condemned in that Ofsted for leaving a lot of very difficult decisions completely undealt-with, which caused you in your last couple of years in power and now us a lot of difficulty indeed.

Nobody takes any pleasure whatever in having to close any school, but my goodness, if you had done what you should have done years and years ago then

the difficulty of concertina-ing decisions much more closely together would not be with us now. You don't just stand accused of failing, you were found guilty of failing the education of children in this City, and you may well put your heads down but some of you who were here at the time either knew what was going on and did nothing, in which case you were guilty of dereliction of duty, or you did know what was going on and you were one of the people referred to by the inspectors appointed by your own Government. Either way, hang your heads in shame and don't criticise people over here who are trying to do something to support Education Leeds, and don't go on carping about Education Leeds. Education Leeds was imposed on this City because of your failure or dereliction of duty.

Councillor Harker is working himself into the ground as Executive Board Member for Education, and if I may say so, doing a damn good job. (Applause)

Okay, my Lord Mayor. The other point I want to very quickly make is the way in which the party over here seems suddenly to become aware of the neglect of a lot of our facilities. When Councillor Lobley rightly refers to the £60 million backlog in highway maintenance, that is just the tip of the iceberg. Social Services was under-funded by - what? - £17 million. The leisure centres were falling down. Every Council building had a backlog of repairs. The list was endless. Community centres, Richard. You know, I am delighted you realise what a difficulty people are going to face maintaining them. You sat there long enough and did nothing about it. You amaze me, the bunch of you. You left an inheritance which would frighten lesser people than us (Interruptions) but listen, Councillor Wakefield - where is he? Bless his cotton socks. Oh, there he is. You do well to sit over there. That might be where you are sitting on May 5th.

My Lord Mayor, leisure centres. At the very minute that he is rubbishing, as Councillor Procter quite rightly said, the proposals for a trust and the PFI schemes, this Chancellor was on his feet at the same time encouraging Councils to work in closer partnership with the private sector, and when he was accused - and he shook his head vigorously here - of wanting to borrow the money --- He did. I will tell you just what he said. He said, "We would use prudential borrowing". Now, he clearly believes his Government's own spin. He believes prudential borrowing is manna from heaven, that it drops from the sky and there are no interest charges applying to it.

So actually what he did when he rubbished our proposals was to propose putting 2% on the Council Tax. That is what he did, and he can shake his head all he wants. He didn't want to get the savings from the trust and the property would still be wholly-owned by this Council, made that very clear, and he said we should use prudential borrowing to make up this vast backlog of repairs that he had left. 2% on the Council Tax before we even begin. If this fellow got back in power the Council Tax next year already adds up to 6% and we don't know what the settlement is yet, and this is the sort of stuff he has been peddling.

My Lord Mayor, this administration knows how big the task is. We know the mountain that has to be climbed but we will continue to deliver improved services across the piece in every service and in every area of this City. No wonder so many of his back-benchers keep saying to me, "How come you can do this stuff with the roads? How come you can do this? When we used to moan to Wakefield and Walker and Trickett, they always said, 'There's no money'. Where has it come from?" Well, I tell you where it has come from. It has come from good management and getting your priorities right. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: I think on that note it is time for a cup of tea. Before we do that, we need to vote on the minutes.

(The Minutes were received)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much. Could I invite members of the public and our Officers to join us for tea in the Banquet Hall. Resume in half an hour, 10 past 6. Thank you.

(Short adjournment)

THE LORD MAYOR: Before we go on to the White Papers, Members of Council, our Acting Chief Legal Officer has asked me to allow him to say a few words about declarations of interests, just in order to make sure that everybody is informed of the position.

THE CHIEF LEGAL SERVICES OFFICER (Mr. S. Turnock): Thank you, Lord Mayor. It might be helpful to Members if I gave some further comment and advice on the question of declarations of interest, in particular in light of the comments by Councillor Gruen at the start of the meeting, and also with particular regard to White Paper Motion 13, in which a considerable number of Members have declared an interest in relation to that motion which is looking at the question of the West Yorkshire Pension Fund.

I think the declarations that have been made to date were made on the basis of earlier advice given, and that advice was given in relation to the wording of the motion on the summons. I should say at the outset, as I always do, and all of us would do giving advice in these matters, that declarations of interests are matters ultimately for Members to decide themselves and to make their own judgments on, and they are held to account for those judgments, and it would only be through the Standards Board mechanism, where there was an investigation and a decision made following that investigation, that a definitive view could ever be given. However, Members often find it helpful to seek legal advice which can be given based on our knowledge and experience of the Standards Board and the processes and cases which they have dealt with.

A personal interest is an interest that affects to a greater extent than other

Council Taxpayers Members who are making a decision in respect of a matter, and one that affects the wellbeing or financial position of themselves, a friend or relative, in essence, and that gives rise to a personal interest. A prejudicial interest arises where there is a personal interest and if a member of the public, with knowledge of all the relevant facts, would regard or reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgment of the public interest.

Those are the tests where there is a personal interest and a prejudicial interest arising from that personal interest, and the advice that was given in respect of the motion on the White Paper dealing with the Pension Fund was that, viewed as a whole, my opinion was Elected Members who were in the West Yorkshire Pension Fund or had a spouse or friend or relative in the fund would have a prejudicial interest.

The advice was also given, however, that if the motion was looked at in its two parts, and it was phrased in two distinct paragraphs, no prejudicial interest would arise if one looks solely at the first paragraph. The prejudicial interest arises when the second paragraph was considered, but the motion at that stage was on the summons as a whole.

Now, there is on the order paper an application under Procedure Rule 14.9 by the mover of the motion to seek leave of Council to delete the second paragraph as notified in the summons, so Members would therefore wonder where does that leave them when they reach that part of the order paper, and how do they deal with that situation.

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room or chamber where a meeting is being held whenever it becomes apparent that the matter is being considered at that meeting. My opinion is that there are two issues that will be considered. The first issue is the application under Rule 14.9 to seek leave of the Council to delete the second paragraph of the motion, and that goes to the form of the motion and not the substance of the motion. So in those circumstances my opinion is that there is no prejudicial interest arising merely because you are in the West Yorkshire Pension Fund when considering that particular matter.

When that matter has been considered, and depending on the outcome, Members would need to reflect again on where they stand, and certainly if leave were granted and the motion were amended by deleting the second paragraph, then in my view no prejudicial interest would be found to arise, as we would only be looking at the first part of the motion and, consistent with the advice given throughout, no prejudicial interest arises from that part.

If the application were not passed and the motion remained as it is currently on the summons, then a prejudicial interest would arise, and that was the advice

that was given before.

But in short, dealing with the first matter for consideration, should the motion be amended, that in itself in my opinion does not give rise to a prejudicial interest for those Members who are members of the West Yorkshire Pension Fund or have a spouse or friend or relative in the fund.

I wanted to give the advice at this stage. I know we are a little bit in advance of reaching that White Paper Motion but I didn't want it to get lost.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Could you repeat that, please? (Laughter)

THE CHIEF LEGAL SERVICES OFFICER: I could ask the shorthand- writer to read it back!

THE LORD MAYOR: I am sure that is very clear. Can we move on to the White Papers. Sorry, Councillor Harris?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, just on a point of clarification, can I ask, has that advice ever been communicated to me by Legal Officers?

THE CHIEF LEGAL SERVICES OFFICER: The initial advice in respect of the summons on the White Paper was communicated to members of the Group Office. My understanding was I spoke to one Officer who told me that the other Officers were in his company at the time, and so that advice was given on the White Paper -- the summons on the White Paper.

The advice I have just given about the issue in respect of dealing with the matter in two parts was dealt with with the Whips just prior to the Council Meeting commencing.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: So, for clarification, as the mover of the White Paper I have never been given that advice by Legal Officers. That would be correct.

THE CHIEF LEGAL SERVICES OFFICER: It is correct you were never directly given that advice by Legal Officers, yes.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, may I comment on what has been said and again seek to clarify, because I have every sympathy with Councillor Harris, which I actually expressed at the Whips' meeting yesterday evening and the other Whips will tell you that I have that sympathy.

Our difficulty, apart from the prejudicial interest, is that because we were told by Monday evening that it was unlikely that this resolution could be heard, we therefore did not put in any further amendments which we would have done to have a proper debate about this matter. Probably we think it is a serious debate

that you want to have and you ought to reflect on what you have said, bring it back in the next Council Meeting and give us the opportunity democratically to amend it.

Because of the advice, the lateness of the advice and all of that, we have not got that opportunity today, and for those reasons we are not going to take part in this debate.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Well, no, I am about to report something second-hand. If I may, Lord Mayor, I will defer to John Procter on an issue of ---

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, on this precise issue, earlier today we had discussions much along the lines that we appreciated the situation the Labour Group found itself in and we, for our part, said that we were more than willing to support an amendment tabled on the floor of the chamber to this particular motion, and so that offer still stands. If the Labour Group wishes to table an amendment to that particular White Paper motion, we would be happy to facilitate that occurring today.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Could I also join in this debate? First of all, I would have thought a reading of either of those two paragraphs would indicate to me that if I, as I am, as a recipient of a tiny pension fund, West Yorkshire Pension Fund, that that would be a prejudicial interest and I have to declare it and move out. I think that applies to both paragraphs.

But, I mean, John has offered very generously to say, "Put an amendment in now". This issue is such an important issue that we don't want to be scoring points. We want to come to a sensible consensus, and we can't do that by doing an off-the-cuff amendment to this resolution, part of which may be withdrawn. So I would ask that if we take this back, we could actually come together with a composite resolution with which we would all agree, and we could all then not play silly party politics about a big issue, but come up with a sensible set of recommendations for the whole Council, and that could be done quite easily by withdrawing it.

It is not as though there is an urgency. There is no urgency on this. We could do it properly and sympathetically and understandingly at any time between now and the next election.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, just to again join in this debate, as they say, because I am sure that Mark didn't intend for all of us to be caught up in this kind of difficulty, and had you been advised then, as we well know, we could go to Standards Board and seek collective exemption to have a proper debate. I was not aware, John, probably because I had not seen the Whip, that you had offered - - made that amendment, but quite frankly I find this idea that we can deal with the first paragraph, and you talked about public perception, and not be perceived as arguing about public pensions - a very difficult one to accept logically.

I think, as we all know, this issue is not going away. This issue will come

back and will be around for many years, and I know that we all feel quite passionately about the issue, whatever side we are on, and it would be impossible to cobble together an amendment now, John, as you would appreciate the same with you.

I just think it makes much more commonsense to appeal to the Standards Board collectively. Let's come here and let's come with a clean kind of breast in terms of declaring our interest and be able to have a proper and informed debate. At the moment a lot of us who are in the public sector, particularly the West Yorkshire one, would feel if the public heard us debate and we said, "Well, it wasn't about West Yorkshire, it was only about in general", I think frankly they would find it very hard to believe and I would as well, so I am making an appeal, and I don't know whether we can get further clarification on that Paragraph 1, Paragraph 2 difference, but I am making an appeal that we defer this to when we can all take a proper look, a sensible debate, because it is an important issue for public sector: it is an important issue for all Council Taxpayers, and I have something to say, like many other of my colleagues but feel I am constrained by the current ruling.

THE LORD MAYOR: I wonder whether it might be helpful to suggest that, during the discussion on the two or three previous White Paper resolutions, that the Group Leaders might be able to get together to discuss the implications of this, so that when we get to it we have an agreed position. Is that any use? Well, you can do it if you wish or not if you don't wish but we must press on or else we will be here until midnight.

ITEM 9 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - POLICE MERGERS

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, the Government's restructuring agenda for Police Forces stems from a report commissioned by the Home Office and carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors known as Denis O'Connor. The report is called, "Closing the Gap" and was published in September 2005. Please remember that date - September, 2005.

It is because of this report that police authorities are now being told to put voluntary plans for Force mergers to the Home Office by this Friday, 7th April. It should be noticed that West Yorkshire Police Authority was only informed of the Home Office preferred option known as the Greater Yorkshire Force on 21st March this year, 17 days ago. That is only 17 days and the Police Authority has got to say whether it is accepting a voluntary or not merger.

The Home Secretary has refused to accept the request by the West Yorkshire Police Authority to remain in its current form.

I have to say, my Lord Mayor, that the Denis O'Connor report which proposed the restructuring programme has been condemned as a poorly written and muddled report by a leading academic. It also goes against advice which was

given to the Home Secretary by his own people in 2004, recommending that the Government should concentrate on improving co-operation between Forces rather than wholesale restructuring.

In addition, my Lord Mayor, ACPO, the Association of Chief Police Officers, have indicated that they feel the proposals are rushed and being forced through. Despite this professional opposition, the Home Secretary has used spurious reasons and ignored his own criteria when it suited him to press ahead with the merger.

This report said the size of a Police Force should be a minimum of 4,000 officers to deal with counter-terrorism and organised crime. West Yorkshire Police Force easily meets this demand, with around 5,200 officers and 2,300 support staff, making the Force the fourth largest in the country. He requires the enhancement of protective services specifically in relation to organised crime and counter-terrorism. My Lord Mayor, haven't these aims been covered recently by the announcement of SOCO, the SOCO initiative, and the fact that West Yorkshire Police is setting up its own counter-terrorism unit? I consider it to be more sensible to have the national SOCO organisation supported by our current structure of local Police Forces to deal with crime and gather local intelligence so that both may work together.

The Home Secretary claims that to deal with serious crime we need to change Police Force boundaries. We all accept that the criminal does not respect Force boundaries, we know that. However, are we really supposed to accept that the Regional Government Office boundaries are the perfect boundaries for policing? It is a nonsense. I believe the Home Secretary knows it is a nonsense.

We know it is a nonsense. I think everybody knows it is a nonsense. Indeed, in the old Police parlance, he is just trying to set us up by making the facts fit where he wants them to fit.

My Lord Mayor, the recent report by Policy Exchange, an independent think-tank, has estimated the cost of £627 million for Force mergers with no improvements in service. The Home Office believes that merging Yorkshire's four forces could save £18 million. I was going to be facetious there but I won't. I was going to say this is the same Government who told us there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and that they don't sell peerages for loans, but I won't do that. We will try not to do that.

However, let us assume that this is true, Lord Mayor. It needs to be set against the estimated cost of the Police Force merger in Yorkshire which is as much as £50 million. This money, in my opinion, and I am certain most of the Members of this Council, would be better spent on front-line policing.

The Government this week have stated they will pay for the costs of the merger. However, Members should be aware that the precept for the people of

West Yorkshire will still increase by 20% with no improvements in service. Over a 3-year period, a 20% increase and nothing given.

I believe the merger would have an adverse impact on policing in Leeds, a worsening of police performance, at a time when West Yorkshire's Police Force are the best performing of the region's Forces. Indeed, these figures are interesting to know. The HMIC Protective Service Assessment awarded West Yorkshire Police a combined score of 53, compared with the totals of 42, 35 and 32 for South Yorkshire, Humberside and North Yorkshire respectively. We are way ahead of these other authorities which we are being asked to join or told to join, and at the same time we are going to have a worse service and pay more for it.

Worst of all to me, my Lord Mayor, is this new Police Force would be less accountable. It has always been, I believe, every attempt to centralize power removes power from the people it is meant to serve. The larger the area covered by an authority, the less clear it becomes who is responsible. In addition, we in Leeds have every right to be proud of the performance of West Yorkshire Police Force.

In recent years a real improvement has been made on crime levels. Between July '04 and December '05, total recorded crime in Leeds fell by 20% compared with the same period January '03 to June '04. Indeed, between January '05 and December '05, the total recorded crime in Leeds fell by 9% when compared to the period January '04 to December '04. We should be pleased and proud of these figures.

My Lord Mayor, Members of Council should be aware that on Friday, 7th April, the West Yorkshire Police Authority will meet to decide if they are to accept a voluntary merger. My Lord Mayor, it is obvious that I will be voting against this. Indeed, I believe, my Lord Mayor, that a majority of the Elected Members from all parties, I have to add, will vote against it. However, we should be aware that it will only take one or two Members who do agree with this merger and supported by non-elected members of the Authority to carry it. I consider that if that happens there is a massive, massive deficiency as far as democracy is concerned, because if the Police Authority do not support this, the Minister has to go to Parliament, which will give MPs a chance to comment, I understand to the House of Lords, which would give the House of Lords to comment, but it will also have to consult with the local authorities. These are all elected representatives of the City of Leeds, 720,000 people. If unelected members of the Police Authority can stop us being consulted on that, then I am certain you will all agree with me there is something seriously wrong.

Given also that the Home Office has allowed Thames Valley, Hampshire and Kent - all smaller authorities - to remain as stand-alone forces, I sincerely hope that this Council will join me in continuing its opposition to the so-called Greater

Yorkshire Force proposals. It is vital the Government are persuaded to change their mind and allow West Yorkshire Police Force to remain a stand-alone force. Why should the people of West Yorkshire be denied their wish to allow their force to stand alone? One must ask if this does not happen, is there a north/south divide now extending to police? Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR BRETT: My Lord Mayor, I am seconding the motion in the name of Councillor J. L. Carter, furious at a Government that doesn't listen. At several points in the last few months West Yorkshire Police Authority members have expressed concerns about the financial accountability and governance aspects of this merger plan, or these merger plans. I have to say that despite face-to-face talks at various points with Authority members, Mr. Clarke and Ms. Blears have not listened at all.

We have already heard that the finances of this remain disastrous for the people of West Yorkshire: a 20% increase in precept, yes, over 3 years, for at best, if there is no dip in service, the same level. I think that is totally unacceptable. The situation is no better on accountability. The proposals in the new Police & Justice Bill make accountability to the public a responsibility of the Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships in each area. These are meetings of partners with the Police, Probation, Crown Prosecution Service and others. There is little democratic involvement and almost zero public awareness of these committees. Worse, there is no detail from the Government about how these bodies might be transformed into bodies which might give the public confidence that they can hold the Police Service to account at each divisional level.

There is a similar situation on governance. Hazel Blears stated in February that the new all-Yorkshire Strategic Police Authorities could have up to 29 members. This would mean that legally there could be 15 Councillors which, amazingly, is just enough to have a single Councillor from each of the 15 major Councils covered by the proposed new Yorkshire-wide Police Authority. Leeds would have just one - one representative - and so would Calderdale, which is less than a third the size. There could be no guarantee that the ruling group in Leeds, whoever that was, would be represented because of political balance considerations.

Worse, the Government say that over time the number of members of the Authority is expected to reduce to a maximum of 23 but, of course, they don't say how or when. The most frightening thing is that Charles Clarke proposes to take power to change the rules governing Police Authorities without primary legislation. If the Government's current Police Bill goes through, he can do what he likes by laying an order in Council.

I will certainly be voting against this plan at the Police Authority on Friday. We are being asked by this Government to trust them and accept a plan which is not even half-baked. It is nowhere near oven-ready. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

(Applause)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, a lot of the issues that I was going to cover have already been covered by Les. Certainly the justification for this particular decision about you need to have a strategic force and all those other sorts of issues seem to have been dealt with by the formation of SOCO, the new FBI. They seem to be able to deal with the concerns that Charles Clarke claims that he has and are behind this particular idea.

The thing that worries me about this is the anti-democratic approach to this whole particular process. Now, as people will know, certainly in Morley, we are great believers in bringing the decision-making down to the most local level possible, and certainly when we recently went to our local Police Forum to raise these particular concerns, everybody was there, or all residents, were basically saying, and this included Labour Councillors, to their absolute credit, "This is not a good idea. This really isn't what we want."

If you talk to the people that we represent and you talk to them about this particular idea, what they want is the policing to be closer to their neighbourhoods not more remote, and if you talk to those at the cutting edge, those officers that are actually serving, you know, the constables and the sergeants, the inspectors, go up to superintendent level, all of those basically say, "We don't want this. We don't need this. What it is going to mean is that a whole lot of money is going to be wasted and you are not going to get an improved service in any shape, way or form."

So it is anti-democratic. Nobody wants this. This is being imposed. The Police Authority don't want it, the Labour Party don't want it, we don't want it, you don't want it. Nobody wants this. The police officers don't want it. The people don't want it. It is a bit of a rum do at this particular point where one bloke down in Westminster believes that we will have it whether we want it or not, and that is entirely unacceptable.

One of the other things that gives us great concern is what we are hearing from somebody who works within the Police Authority, in as much as, "If you don't accept this, we will punish you. We will make sure financially that you are penalised for not accepting that." It is basically saying to us, "You will go quietly, because if you don't do we will beat you over the head financially speaking". Now, that is entirely unacceptable.

There are no good reasons whatsoever for this particular merger. It is anti-democratic, and I am hoping that we can all collectively send a clear message down to Mr. Clarke and the Labour Government that this is unacceptable to the people we represent. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: My Lord Mayor, I am a big fan of the City & Holbeck

policing team, particularly Chief Superintendent Geoff Dodd and his operational Divisional Commander, Peter Nicholson, and our very own local resident Inspector Justin Pedley of the Morley and Neighbourhood Policing Team. I think they are all very measured individuals who are thoroughly committed to bringing down crime and also bringing down perception of crime.

West Yorkshire Police, as Councillor Carter has already alluded to it, it is the only force in Yorkshire that can do this as a stand-alone police force, and the diktat that has been handed down by Charles Clarke is just misplaced, ill-informed and ill-judged.

I think local policing is the key to all this and to all good things pertaining to crime. The amalgamation of West Yorkshire Police Force with other Yorkshire Forces is not conducive to that ideal or that ethos. I compare this, the penalties imposed upon the residents of Leeds, as tantamount to Leeds getting the Olympic Games. The residents of Montreal are still paying for the Games from 1976, 30 years ago.

As I said, I think this is misinformed, misplaced, ill-informed and ill-judged. I sincerely hope this comes back to haunt Charles Clarke. I hope, and seriously hope, it doesn't come back to haunt the people of Yorkshire. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, I think the fact is if we talk to all our constituents, I mean, the one thing they always say to you is, "The police are distant, even now, with West Yorkshire. We want more accountability." Well, I mean, over the years, and I am not just meaning this Government, I am talking about central government in general, central government have come up with lots of barmy ideas, but this must be the barmiest of all. It is doing exactly the opposite of what our electorate wants. It is going to cost us more, and we are going to get a worse service.

I say to the Government, it is time you changed your mind. Look at it again. This force is large enough. This force actually now is probably more successful than it has ever been. We do not want the merger. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: Lord Mayor, like Les and Richard, I am a member of the Police Authority, and on Friday we will be continuing our debate about this issue. I am, on this issue, at one with both our other representatives in that I oppose what the Government is proposing.

Most of the points have been made previously, and indeed in the debate we had only a couple of meetings ago when the West Yorkshire/North Yorkshire option seemed to be the preferred one. I think, if you look at it logically, this is not driven by anything to do with West Yorkshire. It is about Yorkshire. It is about

Humberside's performance. It is about South Yorkshire's performance, about North Yorkshire's performance.

West Yorkshire's force is not wonderful. I don't think any of us can claim that. What I think we would all claim is that it has improved significantly over the past few years and we have increasing confidence in it. To put that at risk by shackling it with poorer performers is incredibly dangerous. To tie it to organisations that - in Humberside's case I would say it is failing - is dangerous because you are assuming that your good practice percolates through the whole organisation. It doesn't necessarily work in that nice, neat way.

You have this kind of --- Take four forces, you bang them all together. You spend the next 2 years thinking about how you can work that out, where the headquarters are going to be, where this is going to be. All your energy is forced into things that are not vital to what you are doing. As you can see, the debate is almost happening as we are talking about it, as people are saying, "Well, we may not win on this one", people will be thinking, "Where is the headquarters going to be? Who is going to do this? Who is going to do that?" And that is all pointless activity.

The concerns that we have as Elected Members are about good policing, and I want that to continue, and the way that it will continue is through us continuing to have a West Yorkshire Police Force.

Now, I think the issue of governance has been touched on. Again, the Government does not seem to have grasped the importance of having an accountable force, and I deeply regret that we are not really addressing a serious issue in terms of policing. You have to have an authority that reflects the people who it represents or who it looks after.

We have had problems. We cannot just blame this Government for this, because we have a kind of skewed system where we put magistrates on. I think we would all have big reservations about the magistrates on the Police Authorities, and people feel differently about Independents. Some people say that they bring a kind of breath of fresh air into the organisations. You know, I have not got strong feelings either way.

I believe the Police Forces should be governed, should be accountable, should be democratically accountable. That is important, and we seem to see - Richard alluded to it - your work becomes a matter of orders in Council and the secondary legislation as to how you decide that. No, that is vital, and unfortunately Charles Clarke has got tied up in thinking this is all just about business, it is about basic command units, as if they kind of just float off and do their own thing.

It is not like that. There is a bigger picture here. For us, there remain

severe concerns. I am sure we will be offered all sorts of things. I am sure we will be offered money that will, you know, cover all the costs and there will be question-marks there but they won't be quite resolved but, you know, "If you go along with it, it will all come out."

Well, I still say that from my point of view my responsibility is to the people of Leeds and the people of West Yorkshire on this issue. Is this going to do them any favours? Clearly it is not, so I will be opposing this on Friday, and I hope that we have a good result and that it goes back to Parliament and we have MPs like Paul Truswell, who has been absolutely excellent on this, take up the case again and argue it, argue it in Parliament. He has been very good, has Paul, and he has had nothing but praise from the Police Authorities, others as well. We need the rest of them on board saying what Paul has been saying, and we really force this case into public debate down in Westminster. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

(Applause)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I will be very brief because I think the main points have already been made by particularly colleagues who serve on the Police Authority. All I would say is, both to Richard and Les, I still think there is a long way to go on this. I know this is the Friday deadline but, as you well know, if somebody opposes it as he lays it out in Parliament then there is a 4-month statutory consultation and, just as Richard has said, the MPs - I think 13 have already signed up on opposition and probably that is gathering - but certainly Paul Truswell and the Leeds MPs have all argued against this, and I think it is extremely important that we keep this consensus, because we have got to hold this all the way through, and that is going to make us much stronger because I know of nobody who I have met outside of political parties, inside political parties, that thinks this is a good idea for West Yorkshire. I know of no stake-holders, who are vitally important, who think this is a good idea. So when you have got that, you have got a fair ground of consensus, and I can honestly say that those points have been made to Charles Clarke.

Now, in actual fact I am going to be slightly controversial because I think there are some merits in Charles Clarke's argument outside of West Yorkshire, and I think when you know that say only 13 of the 43 police units have fully resourced units to deal with murder, when you see cases like Soham where there was clearly a small authority that couldn't deal with the complexity of the issue, when you know about - even though I accept Les's point about the new SOC - you do think there is some merit in the argument, and I can assure you that the point about neighbouring has been recognised by that, and it is not true to say everybody is against it nationally. Both Sir Robert Flannagan, who is the HMA, the North Yorkshire Chief Constable is for it, so is the Humberside one. As far as I am concerned, they can have their own view.

For me it is totally, and for us, inappropriate for West Yorkshire, for the reasons that have already been well stated. One, as Les says, performance is

improving, a good inspection. A long way to go on citizen focus, but at least we have almost a viable authority performing well and improving.

And the second one, I think, is the finance. The finance doesn't stack up. In terms of grants, we get 157 and North Yorkshire get 87. That is double the grant. If you start equalising that out, Leeds lose out, and the argument also applies to costs.

What I think is a powerful argument, and I think Richard spoke very well on this, is the accountability. I don't care which party goes. If you pay your taxes and you pay your precept, you are entitled democratically to be represented on that authority, and as both Richards have said, this is not guaranteed. You can get people paying Council Tax and not being represented. I think that is undemocratic and unfair. I think it is a very powerful argument to put to people, as we will do later on.

And I have to say this - we have not discussed it much but I think that it is important about policing styles. West Yorkshire is not North Yorkshire, it is not South Yorkshire and Humberside. We have totally different communities. We have black and minority ethnic communities. We have inequalities of rich and affluence. To suddenly pretend all that can be merged into one I think is a grave mistake and, as we all know, the total figure, if you put all that together, is 5 million people. That is ludicrous.

I am sorry I missed your points, Les, on that if you already made those, but I think it makes our arguments very strong. Keep together. It is a daft idea. I think the consultation process has been absolutely disgraceful, and I think that has been said publicly by the MPs. It has been a flawed process. It hasn't involved --
- We don't see anybody in this City or in this West Yorkshire authority for it, and we should hold the line and vote against any merger that is coming along. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HUSSAIN: My Lord Mayor, I think most of the arguments have already been put forward, but I would like to take this opportunity just to add a few more.

I think obviously this would have detrimental impacts in terms of community relations and with the police, because at the moment we have PCSOs obviously playing a vital role on our front line services, and obviously they can relate better than what the Home Secretary is proposing.

I also think obviously the cost of this proposed merger, we are talking about in excess of £500 million, as Councillor Carter has already mentioned, and this is bound to lead to more higher Council Taxes, and obviously could have a detrimental impact in terms of the number of officers on our streets.

Furthermore, I think the Home Office is riding roughshod over the views of all of us. This is obviously the biggest shake-up in our history in the last 40 years of policing in this country, but just like some of the other legislations have been pushed, forced through in this Government, like the anti-terror legislation, I think this is another example of another blunder that is just waiting to explode.

I also feel that this is utter contempt for Police Authorities, local governments, and also all the other organisations that are working with the police.

My Lord Mayor, there are other alternatives which I feel that this Government has not considered, for example, working with other police forces in terms of sharing resources, therefore creating efficiencies that will be an alternative to actually this proposed merger. Earlier this week, with respect to serious organised crime - the body that has been introduced - this further, I feel, weakens rather than strengthens the Government's case for arbitrary merging of the Police Forces. Therefore, this new body should be more of a wider move to free up Police Forces to focus on front line policing in our communities.

My Lord Mayor, I also feel like many of the speakers before me have mentioned in terms of the precepts that is obviously going to affect our City. The worry that I and many others would have is that our residents will end up paying a lot more than, say, North Yorkshire, which obviously charges a lot more than us, and I also feel that West Yorkshire currently has the lowest police precept for a Band D property, while North Yorkshire charges much, much more, but if we combine these two budgets we are talking about in excess of 20%, and that is going to have a detrimental impact on the residents of Leeds.

Furthermore, my Lord Mayor, I also have concerns about public accountability, which has already been mentioned. This proposed merger would have less representations from Elected Members, therefore giving local residents less of a say on how their police force should be run. If this was to go ahead, the number of Elected Members allowed to sit on the Police Authority could mean that many local people would be left without any local representation on their Police Force whatsoever. Therefore, I would like to move to support Councillor Les Carter's White Paper and urge that all our Leeds MPs strongly oppose these misguided plans. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Beevers.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I am actually Councillor Grayshon, but we do look like each other. (Interruptions) I'm sorry, say again? Peter is trying to be funny, I'm sorry ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Sorry, Councillor Grayshon.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: My Lord Mayor, we have heard this afternoon a number

of tales from people as Councillors, and perhaps I ought to give you a story as a user of the Police Service. I am sure some of you may be aware that around 3 years ago I was awoken from my sleep to discover someone in my flat, rifling through the belongings in the next room. So rather foolishly, in retrospect, I got up to see what was going on. The people I believed ran off and, as you would do under the circumstances, I dialled 999 and said to the police operator, "I think I've been burgled and I think they have just left" so naturally, as one would do, I assumed that within a few seconds I would hear the blaring sound of two-tone horns and see flashing blue lights. That is not what happened.

After a further three phone calls to the operation centre I believe at Killingbeck and five and a half hours, two officers came to see me, and they said they were very sorry but they were the only two officers on duty covering Morley, which has 55,000 residents. One of the problems they encountered was when they got so far up Churwell Hill monkey business was going on further on in Holbeck and City Division so they had to go and deal with a live incident.

As you can imagine, I wasn't particularly enamoured with this situation, and the Police Authority's own website says that I should have received a response within 15 minutes as it was an immediate crime, the crime which had just taken place.

I can't really see how Mr. Clarke's wonderful idea is bound to work, and it is alright for Charles Clarke - he doesn't have to get up to see if anybody is coming to burgle him, what is going on, because he has more policemen than we can shake a stick at protecting him. He is in a rather different position to me on that evening, or the elderly who are afraid, or those people who need an immediate response from the Police Service.

I do commend Councillor Carter and those people on the Police Authority for taking the message that we don't like the idea to them. I would point out that we appear to have this American idea that all things great must be good. What I was told in my response from West Yorkshire Police, and in particular the then Superintendent at Holbeck, was that force officers can be redeployed, so that would lead me to believe that if there is something going on in Hull, if this nonsense took place, people could be drafted from Leeds and other cities to Hull to deal with that issue. We would then have a reduced police service in Leeds.

The figures don't stack up. If only we could have a 20% increase in policing from central government, I am sure that we would all be a lot happier to see those police officers who should be on the street walking the street and dealing with crime instead of having this --- Well, is it? I don't know whether it is half-baked, pre-baked or yet still in the flour bag with folic acid, it is such a nonsense of an idea.

Please tell them, Mr. Carter, that the idea is rubbish and needs to be

completely rethought. I welcome the resolution and you have my whole-hearted support. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, certainly we will tell them. It won't be just Les Carter, it will be Richard and Richard and Les Carter will tell them when we get there.

The points that were raised about being anti-democratic, it is worrying because I understand that something of the order of 85% of the people of West Yorkshire do not want this merger, and to be forcing that onto people would be wrong, totally wrong. The 5 million population, when you think of the size of this, and Barry will correct me if I am wrong here, but I believe it is about the population of Scotland.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Yes.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: The population of Scotland, a whole country, and they are expecting this to be one force, so, you know, I think that is nonsense.

Keith made a point, which is right, about the fact of whether other people needed help when he looked at it as a total across the country, and there is no argument about that. Some authorities cannot operate. Some don't operate now.

There are all sorts of arrangements where people help other forces, but the three authorities which we will go on to, which we will be expected to join with, do actually border together, believe it or not. North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and Humberside actually have common borders, so we do not have to go there for the borders. They actually do have common borders. You have got to think where, but it is the Selby area which obviously joins South Yorkshire to North Yorkshire.

As far as the MPs are concerned, Keith is absolutely right, but let me just say this to you. I am not going to name MPs, because that would be wrong, except one of them we were talking about not long since. I went to Mark Burns-William who is the chairman of the Police Authority and also a member of your party and said, "Mark, this MP has been saying he will give you all this and he will do that and he will do the other", and Mark was quite cross, I will tell you. He said, "Why the dickens hasn't he said that before? He has not said it. We have written to them, we have called them to meetings and they have never been." Now, it could be that he hadn't woken up to it. I mean, he did praise, as you said --- This is not the one from Pudsey because the one from Pudsey he did praise, but he said they hadn't done that, but if you consider, forget any other party's MPs, but if you consider in West Yorkshire the number of Labour MPs, if you then go down to East Midlands and consider the number of Labour MPs, they alone could rattle the Government's cage so hard that this would not be pushed through. So we are right to say try and get the support of these MPs. We are right to push them. We are right to persuade them, and we are right to go at them, but it does need people like yourself, Keith, talking to them, persuading them, because remember Mark is a

member of your party but he feels a lot have not given him the support he expected.

Remember one final point I would like to make to you: in this country our policing works, as against policing in other parts of the world, because our police police by consent. Policing by consent is the key to policing in this country, and I think if you are going to police by consent there has got to be a partnership between Government, the local authorities and the police, and I think it is vitally important this is not railroaded onto us all.

But can I just say thank you to all the speakers for their support, and certainly we will do what we can on Friday. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

(The motion was carried unanimously)

ITEM 10 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, in moving the resolution under Council Procedure Rule 14.9, I beg leave of Council to incorporate the amendment in Councillor J. L. Carter's name into my motion as the final paragraph with the addition of the words, "This Council" at the beginning of the amendment.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Can we have Councillor J. L. Carter's agreement to that proposal?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Second, and I agree with it totally, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: The seconder, I think, is Councillor Schofield.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I wasn't seconding the motion, I was seconding the ---

THE LORD MAYOR: I know, you are seconding the proposal that we take it together.

COUNCILLOR SCHOFIELD: Lord Mayor, I second the proposal from Councillor J. L. Carter.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I then put that issue to the Council? Can those in favour of the leave of Council be given please show? Anyone against? That is agreed, thank you.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, can I begin by wishing our colleagues on the Police Authority good luck with Clarke and Blears. They are going to need it, because this resolution is in place because of a statement

supposedly made by Ms. Blears and issued by Labour Regional Office, although I suspect it originated on the left-hand side of the fourth floor of the Civic Hall, because it was incorrect almost in every respect.

I was so annoyed about Ms. Blears' inaccurate comments that I wrote to her over 2 weeks ago now. I have still yet to receive a reply. However, I do know that she has been able to write a letter to the Yorkshire Post, which I will come back to very shortly.

I also want to refer, albeit very briefly, to the exchange that took place in this Council at the budget meeting when I was speaking and I pointed out that this administration had in fact issued more Anti-Social Behaviour Orders than that administration, although I am not so sure the best way to deal with anti-social behaviour is to have a contest as to how many ASBOs you can issue.

I was interrupted by Councillor Gruen, who appears to have vacated, with the words, "It's a lie. It's a lie", and that is from the verbatim report. Well, it is not a lie. This administration has used more Anti-Social Behaviour Orders in 20 months than the Labour administration used in 5 years. At this point Councillor Lewis interjected and said, "That's not right either. You couldn't bring in Anti-Social Behaviour Orders in 1999". That probably accounts for the fact that he didn't bring any in until 2003, but in point of fact the law came into force in 1999.

So the Minister was then fed all this rubbish, for want of a better expression, which she incorporated into a press release from herself and Councillor Wakefield, to the huge embarrassment of her own civil servants, which I hope Councillor Harris will allude to very shortly.

The fact is that, as the Minister herself said in the columns of the Yorkshire Post, "But ASBOs are only one of the range of tools to deal with this problem. Dispersal Orders, fixed penalty notices, Parenting Orders all contribute to addressing anti-social behaviour." She also said, "It is not the case that it takes months for action to be taken. Interim ASBOs can be issued overnight to deal with nuisance." How many interim ASBOs did they put in place? None. How many have we put in place? 44.

I am going to go through the record of what this administration has done to combat anti-social behaviour across the City, not just in a few places that suited them, but across the City. They issued 126 full ASBOs between 1999 and 2004. We issued 141 between June 2004 and the end of 2005.

The Minister grossly misrepresented the amount of ASBO activity taking place, because in addition we have issued 49 full orders this year, 30 bolt-on ASBOs have been attached to people who have been prosecuted, and 44 interim orders which restrict people's activities in the same way as the Minister admits have also been put in place.

The interesting thing is that the Council is no longer necessarily paying, as we have to do for full ASBOs, because we are being proactive and attaching ASBOs to other prosecutions, the court system pays, the Home Office pays. Perhaps that is what Ms. Blears doesn't like, that we are being very economic with the way we are able to put these things in place.

But the main thing is, again as the Minister now seems to accept, it is not the sole means of dealing with anti-social behaviour, and we use the full range of approaches, some punitive and some preventative, and the end result is that youth crime is down in this City by 8% on the previous year, that is 2005 from 2004. 8%. A lot more needs to be done.

Don't forget this, that the number of ASBOs that this lot took out were inflated at the beginning of 2004 by the 55 that were issued in Little London. What they never told anybody is that was a police exercise. They only found out when the work had been done. Interesting.

We have taken very tough action to deal with the issue at its root cause. We have practically wiped out rough sleeping and begging in the city centre is now well under control. The Council, under their administration, received a warning about the problem. Now we are regarded by the Home Office as a trail-blazer. The Council continues to take out ASBOs whenever necessary. 16 interim orders were obtained in October to protect children in a South Leeds school. That is one particular example. So the Council now uses a much wider range of measures than it did before. Education, Social Services, the Youth Service, the Youth Offending Service all work with the police to sit on a panel and decide the appropriate action, but we will never flinch from using full ASBOs where they are necessary.

But let's have some more comparisons between what this lot did and what we have done. October 2003 to September 2004 under them, 97 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts were issued. October 2004 to September 2005, this administration issued 274 orders. In addition, we have issued 300 orders to kerb-crawlers in our fight to crack down on prostitution. Between October 2003 and September 2004, they issued 11 housing injunctions against nuisance neighbours. Between October 2004 and September 2005, we issued 47. Between the same period, 2003, 7 eviction orders from them for anti-social behaviour. Comparative figure for exactly the same period between '04 and '05, 18 eviction orders issued by this administration.

We have issued 42 Parenting Contracts, 15 Parenting Orders, 10 Dispersal Orders, 4 Designated Public Place Orders with more to follow and 26 crack house closures. It is a record of a firm authority cracking down on anti-social behaviour and on crime wherever we can.

The administration also introduced an innovative arrangement of having a police officer in charge of Leeds Community Safety, and that has been extremely beneficial. Additionally, of course - something that this lot did not support - the administration has added 34 joint-funded PCSOs and made provision for a further 33 in this budget, operating in every ward in this City because, unlike them, we know that anti-social behaviour, low-level crime, is everywhere in the City and has to be dealt with everywhere in the City. All our residents deserve a service and deserve our support.

The Council is also supporting programmes that seek to prevent young people getting into trouble. I was listening to Radio 5 last week and a young man was being interviewed who had been given an Anti-Social Behaviour Order which has now been lifted 2 years early. To hear him talk about the way the rehabilitation services have operated in this City was absolutely delightful, because it proves that we are seeking to make sure these orders work long after they have been lifted because the people who receive them realise there is a better way of conducting their own lives.

My Lord Mayor, I said a little earlier in the day that a lot of information was coming out of this lot over here which can only be called downright untrue. The catalogue of misrepresentations that they have tried with crime and anti-social behaviour is perhaps the most classic and vivid example. They are putting out information which is, quite frankly, a pack of downright lies. It becomes even more worrying when a Government Minister is stupid enough to sign up to it, because I believe that is what it was: she never read it properly, she just signed it and now she will have to pay the price. (Applause)

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor J. L. Carter, do you wish to speak on the composite motion?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I would want to speak on the motion but not just yet, so I reserve my right to speak. I don't want to move it in the amendment, so I will speak on the motion a bit later. Thank you. Reserve my right to speak, yes.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Schofield, do you wish to speak on the composite motion?

COUNCILLOR SCHOFIELD: No, thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: You are not getting away that easily! Thank you, Lord Mayor.

Looking at this particular resolution, there are a couple of things that I would like to really raise. Now, there is absolutely no doubt that PCSOs have been an absolute and total success. Certainly in the area that I represent, the area my colleagues represent, there is no doubt that what people are asking for is high visibility policing and, despite some scepticism at the point where the PCSOs were appointed, it is clear that your communities accept the PCSOs and accept entirely that the fall in crime levels in those particular communities are directly related to this high visibility policing, and Leeds City Council have contributed. There is no two ways about it: they have contributed to that success in Morley, and we understand and appreciate that particular support.

But Morley Town Council has also been successful in being one of the first Town Councils across the country that has also financed PCSOs and again putting the numbers up on the streets, making sure that we are in a situation where we actually deliver on high visibility policing.

Drighlington Parish Council, formed as a result of a campaign by your Independent Councillors on the City Council, are again going down the same route. Drighlington Parish Council believe that PCSOs have been a great success. They are in a situation where they are digging into their finances to provide even more PCSOs.

Gildersome Parish Council have come to the same conclusion. They do believe that what they want to see, or what their residents want to see, are PCSOs on the streets and firm and vigorous policing, and that is what they are getting.

I am told by my local policing team that, as a result of that high visibility policing, that crime levels are dropping in Morley quicker than anywhere else in the City. That is what I am told by our policing team. It is directly related, it is clear to me, to the fact that we have high visibility policing and we are getting more and more PCSOs on the streets. There is no doubt whatsoever that that actually works.

But going back to Mrs. Blears. Mrs. Blears came to Morley. Does anyone want to hear the tale about what happened when Mrs. Blears came up to Morley?

MEMBERS OF COUNCIL: Yes.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Mrs. Blears came up to Morley round about May 2004 and had a photo opportunity with somebody called Sherree Bradley, you may remember that. Yes? Hazel Blears walking down the precinct with Sherree Bradley and other Labour candidates basically saying what a great thing PCSOs were. Didn't disagree with that, but the PCSOs that were on Morley streets at that particular stage had been put there by the Independent-controlled Town Council. Now, was that mentioned? What do you reckon? Was it mentioned? No.

Did she mention the fact that Independent Councillors had also supported the conversion of the Street Wardens to PCSOs? An offer that was made going right back to 2003/2004. Was that mentioned? Not one point whatsoever.

But the interesting thing about Mrs. Blears turning up in May 2004 was that it was very, very successful for us, because it did mean when it got to June 2004 that they threw Sherree Bradley out. Now, what I am asking for this time is, is it possible, as a favour to us, could somebody get Hazel Blears back up again to support Sherree Bradley this time, and then hopefully we can guarantee getting Terry Elliott elected as well in May. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, I would like to make something absolutely clear for Andrew's sake, and anybody else who have heard him. That press release was not issued from our office: it was issued from the Regional party, and I think it is unfair and wrong for Members to abuse Officers when they cannot defend themselves. I hope that is accepted.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I didn't abuse Officers. I was referring to you.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Yes, you did.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You don't know what I am talking about.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Let me just say this, Robert. Hazel Blears also helped Colin Challen during the General Election. I think we know the result of that one as well.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Remind me, Keith.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You don't need reminding. When I looked at this White Paper I had to smile because I have never - and people have been on longer than me - I have never ever seen a White Paper introduced by a Leader to be amended by a Deputy Leader. Now, the reason why he is so aggressive about Hazel Blears is because this is just a smokescreen for the complete cock-up and farce that this White Paper reflects and, frankly, in terms of a proper debate, there are very tenuous connections there and, of course, Les, they make Gordon Brown and Tony Blair look like good friends with this. One is talking about Hazel Blears, one is talking about PCSOs and, frankly, it is an almighty cock-up, and they are supposed to be leading it and they can't get a White Paper that makes any sense together, so how can we accept what they say?

Let me read out what Hazel Blears said, because it is worth doing, and then we can see why she is quaking in her shoes at this present moment. "I am disappointed to see that after a number of high-profile ASBO crackdowns with Labour, the Tory-run Council have failed to keep up the pressures on louts and yobs in Leeds. I understand that the number of ASBOS issued by the Council has

dropped significantly and that funding for proof of age scheme to stop under-age sales of alcohol has been withdrawn. These are not measures that will make local streets safer or help to reduce crime. The Labour Government has made numerous powers available to Councils and it is up to local politicians to make use of them. There is much more that can and should be done in Leeds." End of quote.

What is wrong with that? Now, let me back it up, because your figures were wrong. They were wrong on the 55: It was actually 66 in Hyde Park, by the way, not 55, and you can get that from Officers after. Let me give you a quote, because I quoted this at the budget, and they are not made up from me. We asked the Officers of the Department this, and this is their answer: in 2004 we issued 147 ASBOs. Up to now we are talking about pure ASBOs, not bolt-ons, because they are criminal activities. We are talking about ASBOs dealing with anti-social behaviour, 49. Now, doesn't that suggest that Hazel Blears might have a point?

You know, in Manchester, which is a Labour-led authority, there is 433. In Nottingham there is 111. One point I will agree with, Andrew, it is more than about a league table of ASBOs. Obviously, when you are tackling anti-social behaviour, then you need more than just the orders, and I will give you an example where again - Manchester - what they have done, and just test it if you are doing it here before you actually come out with any judgment whether Hazel Blears is wrong. In Manchester they actually do roadshows with citizens and they actually do questions and they enlist the support of the community. They answer questions, they clarify the law, they help to support people all round the communities. They go to schools and they start talking to school-children about what anti-social behaviour is like and what good citizens are like. And above all they are not frightened of getting tough with anti-social behaviour families and, in fact, they evict them and they put them into a house and make sure that they don't get released until that behaviour has changed.

And Sheffield has a hotline that you can actually go to. You can go to a hotline when you have got Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. This authority has issued no Parental Orders.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You are lying again.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It has cut back on alley-gates, has cut back on CROWs, has actually cut back on the Proof of Age Scheme, and Hazel Blears is absolutely right, you have let this community (Interruptions) and this City down by your backtracking on anti-social behaviour, and I suggest a lot is due to that behaviour, and I have got the facts in there. (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You have been caught lying and you can't take it. Lie, lie, lie. (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: We can't call him a liar, but you can call him a liar. Isn't that amazing?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You called me one. You were out when I asked you about it, Peter. You are always missing when you are held to account.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: Lord Mayor. Alright, alright. Come on now. It is very interesting. I was reflecting how different Governments behave towards Councils, and that Hazel Blears should come in for this stick, because I remember the Tory Government - a lot of you may have forgotten about it. A lot of you may have forgotten ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: You were at school, Richard.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: I wish. You are lovely, Les, aren't you? But all these initiatives that you are trumpeting are all Labour Government initiatives. It is the Labour Government that has made it possible to tackle anti-social behaviour problems in this City and across the country. Don't forget it. Don't pretend otherwise. Perhaps we should have had an amendment which should have said, "This Council welcomes the Respect agenda", because that is what it is about, isn't it? It is about using what the Government has allowed us to do. (Interruptions) It is nice to hear from you, John.

Just to think back to how things were under a Tory Government, because the Tory Government didn't really give a damn about what you did. It just said, "Don't do --- We won't give you the money to spend. We are not really interested in you hitting targets or you performing", and that is so different to the way the Labour Government has been, and I remember - I am just trying to think which Minister it was who came. It was Harriet Harman came up about street robbery. Now, at the time I thought, "What a pain. They are really hammering us on street robbery", which wasn't the kind of biggest of offences, but looking back in retrospect you realise that they were quite right because what they were saying was, "We are going to drive you to perform better. We are going to make you focus. We are going to make you perform", and that was really good, and I welcome the fact that we have got a government that is interested in what happens in our big cities, because I certainly don't think your lot was interested.

Now, you just mentioned the issue of rough sleeping. Let me just come back to something else. Rough sleeping, heavy drinking, wet hostels. Now, Les pretended that, you know, all the problems with us not getting a wet hostel were down to Ward Members who were consulted at the last minute. Let's be honest, there was £1 million-plus that was lost to this City ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Who took it away?

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: -- lost to this City because we didn't consult. You didn't consult properly with Ward Members. You consulted days before the paper was due to go to Exec Board. You didn't leave people -- you didn't give people any chance to really consider an idea, so you then come up with a kind of half-cocked scheme to try and get the money back, and it gets knocked back, and then you say, "Well, isn't that terrible?" Well, that is the way it worked.

Well, just think about it. Rough sleeping, heavy drinking, inner city centre problems, they all go nicely together. Just think about it, and you threw away that money.

Just other things you were talking about. You were wrong about interims because I think all the ASBOs, or a lot of the ASBOs, in the Hyde Park operation were interims to start with, so I query your figures, certainly, Andrew.

Let's just think, over all the years of our control we were always at the cutting edge. We were at the cutting edge in actually setting up an Anti-Social Behaviour Team, because I remember when there was just one guy, who was Josie's uncle, who used to have to do it for the City - Barry - did a good job, but we just had one bloke. We got a team working. We started using things like injunctions. We started actually using evictions, and we took on the departments of the Council that were very reluctant to use all those weapons and who said, "Oh, you can't do that to people. Just think of this individual." We said, "Look at that individual and what mayhem they are causing for the community." We were prepared to take the initiative with everything that the Government has allowed to do and things that the Government didn't come up with. We were at the forefront, and I look now and I compare the kind of complacency we seem to be getting from the new administration to what Keith did, and Keith was always out there, he was out on the streets, he was showing himself and showing us as a Council that was interested and concerned.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Doing your job for you, Richard.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: No, he is the Leader. He is the Leader, Andrew. I understand that, how it works. Actually, all I have heard from Andrew has been a kind of Stalinist list, you know, a bit like the 5-year Plan, "We have done this, we have done that, we have done the other." There is no perspective there, no understanding of how you have been able to -- how we were able to use tools that were given to us, and when they were given to us we grabbed them and said, "We will take action". Instead of which we have now got you saying, "Aren't we doing well?"

Well, it ain't good enough. You are not doing well enough. There was that quote of Les's, what was it? "Short of putting people in the stocks, there's not much more we can do about anti-social behaviour"?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I didn't say that.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: It is in the Economist, Les. What more can I say about it?

So what we have got here is you are being very smug about your performance. It ain't good enough. You want to think about how you can do a better job, not sit here congratulating yourself. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR SHEL BROOKE: Lord Mayor, a very interesting speech we just had from Councillor Lewis there, with his history lesson.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: And you youngsters need it, you know.

COUNCILLOR SHEL BROOKE: Well, that is true. That is true but, you know, I don't need to be that young to remember that. It wasn't long after Labour took power that Garforth Police Station was shut, so perhaps, you know, PCSOs are having to be put into the wards to replace the lack of policemen which has been quite significant under your Government.

Moving on, what I really want to comment on is the very fact that we have now got three PCSOs in each of the Wards across this City, and that is more than to be welcomed because if we consider what Councillor Andrew Carter has said, that anti-social behaviour is a City-wide problem, there are concentrations of it but it is something which affects everybody across the City and, indeed, if we consider what Keith Wakefield said in the fact that there is more to this than just a league table of ASBOs, that is very true.

What we are trying to do is to get a better society for everybody so that they feel comfortable in the area they live in, and I have noticed it in my ward. We now have three PCSOs in my ward. We have had two in for the last two years. We are now increasing it to three, and when you are out on the street and when you are talking to people in the ward, they actually recognise the policing presence which is around, and the intangible effect of this is that people actually feel safer, and it has to be noted that you have opposed the three PCSOs in every ward, and it would suggest that you would move them out of my ward and back into the city centre, and that is something which --- Well, Keith, you shake your head but you may not have said it but certainly when you oppose what we have done, and you opposed it in the budget, that is what it suggests happens, and the people in my ward hopefully will recognise that under this administration and across this City every resident in the City gets the service they deserve in this Council and not just those on the inside of the Ring Road. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR WADSWORTH: I just thought I would draw Members' attention to this picture here, which is in the paper. Councillor Lewis says that this party is not serious about being out on the streets and fighting crime. That picture is probably

hard for you to see, I know --- (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR SHEL BROOKE: They are old enough to give history lessons.

COUNCILLOR WADSWORTH: You have difficulty hearing, but it is actually Councillor Carter, a PCSO and myself outside the Open Door, which 12 months ago I started a steering group and along with the members of the community and Councillor Lancaster we have put in a lot of hard work into the Open Door project which houses the PCSOs, and I can't get enough PCSOs because they are absolutely wonderful and the public really like them, and they have cut anti-social behaviour in the local area that his place is, which is in the Brackenwoods, from 115 to 54 in the first 6 months, and I think that has just to be commended.

As I say, the public really like PCSOs. Every time I go round that area people say, "It is wonderful that we are seeing the PCSOs. We all know them by name. We get to know them. We feel we can tell them things", and they are just a wonderful resource and I just can't praise them enough. Thank you very much, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: This Government and now our Labour Opposition are obsessed with numbers. They get so obsessed that they forget what it is all about. (Interruptions) In health matters they are striving to perform more operations to say, "We are getting the job done" when more spent on preventative medicine would perhaps mean missing targets but might mean a healthier nation that needed less operations.

I believe it is the same with anti-social behaviour. Labour seems to believe about statistics giving a picture of what is going on, and particularly statistics about Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, as if that was a criteria for whether an administration was successful or serious. I believe that is the wrong target to look at.

If we are successful in Leeds, and I believe we are beginning to be, we would be giving out fewer Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, not more. Hazel Blears appears to agree with me. On 15th December 2005, Ms. Blears said, "This is not a numbers game. I have no league table. It is not a matter of forcing anyone to issue more orders. What I want to see is anti-social behaviour reduced. How people go about that is a matter for local decision-makers." Hear, hear.

If we are talking about who sorted out what, I think I ought to mention that Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, ABCs for short, were pioneered in the late '90s in a LibDem Council, I believe in Islington, but we don't shout about that. Perhaps we should.

The bottom line here is that under the new administration Officers have not been given different orders than they had under yours. We are fully behind attempts of the police, community safety and other partners to tackle anti-social

behaviour, and it is mischievous of the Labour Party to suggest otherwise. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: My Lord Mayor, I would like to comment on some of the misrepresentation that is going around on this issue, not just in Leeds but places like Newcastle, Lambeth and (inaudible) and many other places where no doubt Labour took a real hammering at the last local election. It seems that Charles Clarke and his team of junior Ministers are wandering around the country bad-mouthing the local Councils, while at the same time the non-officials in the Home Office are praising some of the Councils for their actions in combatting anti-social behaviour. No doubt some of the comments are being written by these same desperate Labour Councillors trying to hang on to their remaining influence and the seats they probably will not have in control on the next local election. But even so the Government Minister should not treat anti-social behaviour as a political football. It is no laughing matter for the people of Gipton and Harehills and anywhere in our City who have to put up with the daily disruption of their lives by the anti-social elements which is not accepted anywhere in any part of our City.

But the answer is not to just hand out the hundreds and hundreds of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. Just doing that means they become less and less effective as the police are stretched to the limits enforcing them. Instead we need to use a range of measures. Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, first pioneered by the Liberal Democrats in Islington have proved an effective measure, and even now accepted by those same Government Ministers as a useful tool.

Actually removing graffiti rapidly and keeping local communities neat and tidy also have major roles to play. In that I am glad that this administration has increased the number of anti-graffiti teams and, while it is not long battle we are making real progress in tackling litter and dumping across our City.

There has been also a real fall in local crime reported to the police. Burglaries have fallen by 40% in Leeds over the last 2 years, and I am sure that the hard work of our PCSOs and the neighbourhood wardens across the City have made a major contribution to the deterring and low level of crime.

My Lord Mayor, I also wish to share the positive role of this administration. When I took the office 2 years ago many of my local residents were suffering from anti-social behaviour problem in the Seaforths, Broughtons and across the road in Bellbrookes. People were living in fear behind the hardboards. This administration, and thanks to the officials of Anti-Social Behaviour Team, today those people are living in peace and harmony, and thanks to this administration.

So like in many other things, the truth is a long way removed from the political spin games being played by Labour both locally and nationally. Liberal Democrats are not soft on crime. We aim to be effective in tackling crime. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: What about riots? You back those as well, do you?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Don't be stupid. That's not something we should be discussing.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, before I get to the - I call it - the coup de grace - we will get to the coup de grace in a minute that Andrew alluded to earlier, I just want to deal with some of the things that the Woodentops have been coming up with for the last few minutes, and what I can't work out is whether they know what they are saying is wrong, or whether they have actually now reached the point where they believe what they are saying is correct, and I have to say I am inclined to think it is the latter, that they do now believe their own propaganda, and I want to focus, if I can, on three particular things.

First of all, the assertion there have been no Parenting Orders. Well, I know there have been Parenting Orders because the Home Office Ministers I met with told me they were so pleased about the way we were using Parenting Orders, so that is not me, it is not our Officers, that is the Home Office civil servants who said that to us.

Proof of Age Scheme. You actually do believe that there was a Proof of Age Scheme. There wasn't a Proof of Age Scheme. You hadn't funded it. It wasn't in any budget that we inherited. It wasn't there.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: He is going out now.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: It just wasn't there and you run round the City peddling this idea that we have got rid of the Proof of Age Scheme. It was never there to get rid of, but we have this year given it to the Area Committees for them to use if they so wish. But the real proof, and for this I am grateful to the razor-sharp intellect of my friend and colleague Stuart Golton, it is Keith Wakefield citing the statistics for ASBOs in 2004 to prove the case that the Labour administration issued all those ASBOs. Well, as Stuart quite rightly pointed out, we took control in June 2004, so for half of the year of the statistics you are quoting to support your argument, we were in control. We were issuing them, not you. You really have lost the plot.

Now, we come to the meeting with the Home Office civil servants. On 7th March I was called to a briefing with Paul Rogerson and the (?)Elevens to brief me on what was going to happen when we were meeting the Home Office civil servants who wanted to come and speak to us about the Respect agenda that Thursday, and the entire briefing really informed by a press release and the comments made by Hazel Blears. I have to say the briefing was defensive. The assumption was because of what the Minister had said that those civil servants were coming here to rollick us and tell us everything was wrong, and I was given

chapter and verse on how to defend the situation.

So I go in to the meeting with the civil servants on the 9th March and how does the meeting start? "Councillor Harris, I am terribly sorry about what the Minister said. We are so apologetic that she said things like that. We told her it wasn't correct. We don't know why she went ahead and did it. We really do hope this has not prejudiced the opportunity of you and us working together on the Respect agenda." That is what the civil servants said to me, and they then went on to literally plead with us to ignore the damage the Minister had done because we were a model authority dealing with anti-social behaviour. They were desperate that they could work with us to promote the Respect agenda, and we went through the whole catalogue of things that we were using: ASBOs, interim ASBOs, ABCs, Parenting Orders, PCSOs. We are a model big city that they want to work with. You really have this time peddled a complete load of drivel. It is to your detriment. It should be to your shame. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR MILLARD: Lord Mayor, I would like to pick up on that point that Councillor Harris has just said, a load of old drivel. I remember when I was first elected to this Council in 2003. Later that year, I think, if my memory serves me correctly, it was in November there was a vote by this Council on whether we should part fund PCSOs, and every single Member of the Labour ruling administration at that time voted against part-funding PCSOs. Sorry, Richard, it is no good shaking your head, but you did.

Labour has also voted in the recent budget against having three PCSOs per ward. Well, that is interesting because in some election literature that I have got here for Beeston, Cottingley and Holbeck, we have got Councillors Congreve, Gabriel and Ogilvie saying they will fight for more Police Community Support Officers, but then earlier this evening we have heard from the Leader of the Labour Group saying that we, the new administration, scrapped the Proof of Age Scheme.

As we have heard from Mark Harris, that is not the case but then, of course, Tom Murray, who I can't see is around - is he still here? No, he has gone. He is obviously canvassing, trying to get some votes - says that, and I quote, "The Conservative and Liberal alliance that is in charge of Leeds City Council has scrapped the Proof of Age card." Not correct, but then it is not just local Councillors, it is actually Government Ministers as well, and this goes full circle because we had another Government Minister here recently, Consumer Minister, Gerry Sutcliffe, who is saying, "At a time when the Government is giving local authorities more powers, it is sad to see that the" - and I quote - "Liberal Democrat and Conservative Councillors running Leeds City Council need to think very seriously about whether cutting funds for this scheme" - and he is talking about the Proof of Age Scheme - "will make the city a safer place to live."

And there is someone in the Burmantofts Labour Rose, I presume who will be their candidate called John Hardy, saying that the Proof of Age Scheme was considered to be a real success before the funding was stopped by Liberal

Democrat, Conservative and Green Councillors back in September 2004, and that is wholly untrue.

The Proof of Age Scheme was and never has been funded by mainstream funding of this Council. It was funded from CIT monies voluntarily agreed by local Councillors. We have had a number of Councillors in the press of late complaining that it has been cut centrally. That is not the case. If they want it back they fund it locally, and they can do so from their area money.

So, Lord Mayor, the whole thing goes full circle. We have a Government Minister complaining, saying that we are not tackling anti-social behaviour effectively. We have got another Government Minister saying that we have scrapped the Proof of Age Scheme. These untruths are endemic, they go right the way to the heart of central government, and I support this amended White Paper motion. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: My Lord Mayor, I am really surprised by some of the comments being made by colleagues on the other side of the chamber. Only two weeks ago we completed a report, the Scrutiny Board for Environment and Community Safety concluded a report on anti-social behaviour. It made 23 - I repeat, 23 - recommendations including more PCSOs and Wardens on our streets, better access for young people for specialised facilities and accessible community centres, and we also found out that 63% of the ASBOs in Leeds have been breached, compared to a national average of 42%. This is a fact.

Now, talking about LibDems and its tough stance on anti-social behaviour, and Councillors Akhtar and Harris always surprise me, but can I just say, you know, talking about your model city example and yours about Islington, the truth of the matter is that the LibDems' policies on Anti-Social Behaviour Orders are very well documented. LibDems are against tough stance against anti-social behaviour measures. LibDems are against Labour's measure to break up teen gangs. LibDems are against Labour's measures to restrict sale of graffiti spray paints to teenagers. LibDems are against sending teen criminals to court. These are facts. LibDems are against jail sentences for drug possessions, and LibDems want to give the right of a prisoner to take part in the electoral process. That is the facts. The truth is you have lost it. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, just one or two points. Let me just say this, how delightful to hear what is going on over there. It just shows how totally and utterly desperate they are for this election. They know they are on their way out and they know they are going to have to try and do whatever they can do.

Let me just say this to start with, and I will say this as the Executive Board Member responsible for this. On no occasion - no occasion, not one - has the Liberal Party opposite ever come to me and said, "Ease off on anti-social behaviour". Never once have they said that, implied or asked it, so just let's get

that straight on the table.

The second part of this is, I was asked recently, "How many ASBOs should you issue?" How do I know? I am not on the streets of Leeds. The people who do know are our police, our Social Services and all the other agencies. They are the people who know, and they have been told from me there is no restriction on it whatsoever. If they feel they need to issue an ASBO, they will have our support, so they will decide how many are issued.

Let's go back to this so-called 66 in Little London. It turned out to be 55 because a lot of them were rejected in the courts. They appealed against yours and they came down to 55. It could have been a lot less because (inaudible) but it was a police exercise which you cottoned onto at the end, and your Leader starts running round the streets of Leeds with a policeman at the side of him claiming credit. I thought he had got credit. I thought he had got credit for this. It was only later did I discover he had nothing at all to do with it. It was the police of West Yorkshire who had done it. He had tagged on at the end, but in tagging on, by the way, we picked up the bill for it. We picked up the bill.

As Mark said, it is a complete nonsense to say some of the things have not been issued. Parenting Orders have been issued in this City, and I hope the Leader, who is sat at the back, of the Labour Party will apologise to this Council. No, just laugh. Laugh if you want to laugh, but how can you say they haven't been issued when they have? Either you don't know your facts, you are not interested in your facts, or you have gone completely blind on everything.

Bernard Atha, he was putting out leaflets saying we were cutting this and cutting that. When you checked it out, his Government had cut money for Wardens. We found the money put in to keep those Wardens, but did he tell his electors? Did he heck. He didn't apologise to them for lying, not in one state ---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I take exception.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Now, let me just talk about ASBOs. Let me just talk about Anti-Social Behaviour Orders.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: You be careful, Les.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I apologise. May I correct it? Bernard, listen. I am correcting it. I believe you have lied on this issue. That is different to calling you a liar, alright? You know that, you are a barrister.

My Lord Mayor, I believe --- I keep being asked by the press, do I believe that ASBOs work. I believe they do. I believe Anti-Social Behaviour Contracts work. I believe the lot work put together, but it is not the total solution, and one of the reasons why I am so keen on supporting the administration on PCSOs on the

street, I think they will do a lot more for bringing anti-social behaviour down than any of our anti-social behaviour.

Look at the numbers. Forget Leeds, look at Manchester. They have issued 1,000. What is 1,000 in a city the size of 720,000 people? And you are praising them as being the best thing going. We are using every possible way of doing things. The PCSOs, I first came across them with a resident in Morley when the Parish Council put them in and this resident said to me, "Hey, this is marvellous. We are getting policing at last." That is the first time I saw it and I am determined to put it in. All I would say to you over there is, "Okay, the election is over on 5th May. You will still be sat there. There will be less of you. Just be careful what you say because it is going to be thrown back at you from now until Doomsday. I can assure you on that because when you lie or issue a lie in a leaflet, it is going to be thrown and thrown back at you.

So, my Lord Mayor, (Interruption) No, I haven't, actually. I am being an angel today. I have not lost my temper. All I can say to you over there, "Please, look at your leaflets again." I wish you could be reported to Standards for them. I wish there was an independent body I could take them to and say, "Please show that these are telling lies", because who you are lying to is the people of Leeds. It is not me. You are lying to somebody. It is not very clever, it is not very good and it will not help you in this election because you will still lose seats. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, don't knock this off my time, but I must tell you a funny story which I know Bernard will appreciate. Somebody said to me last week, "Well, whatever you in your administration have achieved or haven't achieved, you have achieved one thing I have noticed very, very definitely. For the first time in 25 years Bernard Atha is delivering leaflets." (Laughter) True story.

My Lord Mayor, we have witnessed today the finest demonstration of blind panic that I have ever seen in my life. When I use the word "lie" I want to just clarify something. If somebody says, "You have not issued any Parenting Orders" and that is blatantly untrue, and they do not withdraw it, that is a lie, and it makes them a liar. I am sorry, that is the only way it can be looked at, and Councillor Wakefield said - it will be on the record - "You have not issued any Parenting Orders." In fact, we have issued 15 Parenting Orders and 42 Parenting Contracts. Those are the facts.

And when I say this rubbish that the Minister trotted out had more likely come from the fourth floor here than from the Regional Labour Office, that is a direct accusation against the politicians, because presumably it is them who are in touch with their Regional Office and them who give them the information which then the civil servants --- I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, the civil servants from the Department came and apologised to the Council for the Minister's incorrect

statements.

I mean, you know, you have really hit rock bottom, and to look at your faces, it is written there for all to see.

My Lord Mayor, let me just refer to another interesting statement, this time actually part of the same infamous pack of rubbish. Councillor Wakefield, he said, "Alley-gates work". They do. Why didn't you put any in, Keith?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: We did.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: We have got them in our ward.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Well, I am sorry. (Interruptions) Promises, promises. Here we have --- (Interruptions) 27 alley-gates have been installed under this administration. None were installed under the previous administration. Look, this is a briefing note. This is a briefing note. (Interruptions) That is your problem. That is your problem. They still think they are in charge. (Interruptions) My Lord Mayor. Listen ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Would you let him speak, please.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You are going to learn something. You are in charge of diddly-squat. You have not been in charge of anything since the elections in 2004. This administration is run by the Conservatives, the Greens and the Liberal Democrats. We are the administration that have put in the alley-gates, not you. You aren't in charge of anything.

Now, my Lord Mayor, let's just go back to why you did nothing between 1999 and 2003, because loads of these powers came in in 1999. Now, the man in charge of law and order policy in the City was Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: No, it wasn't. I'm sorry, Andrew, it wasn't.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: That is a lie.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I will qualify that. The man who was supposed to be in charge but as we all know ---

COUNCILLOR R. LEWIS: Lord Mayor, by way of explanation, I think I was chairing the Scrutiny Board in 1999.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: When he should have been in charge.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Alright. Well, in 2002 and 2003, you certainly were. Hang on, but here comes in the word "supposed", because whenever the

issue was discussed it wasn't Soft on Crime, Soft on the Causes of Crime, Lewis; it was Rambo Meldrew at the back. What a combination. I think I prefer him as Victor. There he was in trenchcoat striding through the ginnels of the inner city.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: He thought he was Columbo.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Yes, well, the mack did look a bit dirty, but have you seen the car? Anyway, my Lord Mayor, I didn't know whether he had been arrested or he was on parole. He was always flanked by two burly policemen. Rambo Wakefield.

My Lord Mayor, let me assure everybody, this administration is not complacent about cracking down. We have done more in 20 months in every aspect of this Council's business than you lot did in 24 years (Applause) and, my Lord Mayor, yes, Councillor Lewis, you did vote against deploying PCSOs in every ward in the City. We know, you know, and everybody in Leeds is going to know. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: I call for a vote on the motion.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I move a recorded vote, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

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

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: My buttons aren't working. Can you make them work?

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Can we take it you are not supporting the ---

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: After much consideration, I am opposing.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I have the attention of Council, please, for a moment just to announce the result. Of 83 Members present and voting, 52 voted "Yes", no abstentions and 30 voted "No". It is therefore carried.

PROPOSED WITHDRAWAL OF MOTION

COUNCILLOR ATHA: In view of the earlier decision, Lord Mayor, I request

permission to withdraw this item.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

ITEM 12 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - BLACK BIN COLLECTION

COUNCILLOR LOWE: Lord Mayor, the Council's vision is to bring the benefits of a prosperous, vibrant and attractive city to all of its citizens. I believe that the proposals to reduce the black bin collection from weekly to fortnightly are in direct contravention of this philosophy and, furthermore, represent a real abdication of responsibility by this joint administration to "Narrow the Gap" between the richest and poorest in our City.

The entire Waste Management Strategy is predicated on the premise that the citizens of Leeds should deliver the changes we need but offers nothing in terms of investment from this authority.

The facts of our situation are clear. Under the recently introduced EU Landfill Directive Targets, Leeds will be paying £53 million in LATs penalties by 2012/13 if we continue to divert our current levels of waste to landfill.

At the same time, Leeds will also have to achieve a national recycling target of about 30% by 2010 or face further penalties.

The problem we face is huge and it merits a proportionate response. Leeds City Council's response is the Integrated Waste Strategy 2005-35. This is a worthy document but it lacks detail and, most importantly, it lacks investment. To achieve the objectives of the strategy, the citizens of Leeds are the only ones having to give anything up. They are giving up weekly black bin collections, they are giving up black capacity and they are even giving up the collection of side waste. Currently, every household pays £92 per annum for the service it receives.

Will a reduced service mean a reduced Council Tax bill? I think not.

Members of Council, it is estimated that it will cost about £1.8 million to increase the green bin collection to fortnightly. Rather than finding ways to deliver this enhanced service, this administration is proposing to cut the existing black bin collection instead.

City Services has just submitted a Neighbourhood Renewal Fund bid for £2.8 million to undertake street cleansing work across the City. Street cleansing should be part of the Department's core budget and any additional income from NRF or anywhere else should rightly have gone towards supporting the waste management strategy objectives, but it has not.

12% of Leeds residents have no access to recycling facilities. This

represents nearly 38,000 properties and does not even take account of any of the high-rise flats, many of which have no recycling opportunities. 15,000 households only have access to green bags for recycling and then they are only given one for the entire month.

Before you begin your protestations to the contrary, I refer you to a letter not from an Armley constituent but from a Harehills constituent, a Miss Ward. "Dear Miss Lowe, I read with interest your article on recycling in the YEP. I live on a private estate and we are issued with green bags monthly. When we first started I could fill five bags but unfortunately I was left only one. I rang the appropriate department to complain but was informed that two bags were the maximum provided per household. I also got a false promise that extra bags would be sent to me, but that didn't materialise. I also find the recycling collectors are less than helpful. I have filled see-through bags with newspapers, obviously for recycling, but they have left them behind for black bin collectors. I do know that my neighbours have had the same problems as I. Perhaps that is the reason targets are not being met."

I similarly have evidence of green bins being constantly emptied with black bins over a several month period, and in Armley a whole estate has had their green bins burned out by youths and these have yet to be replaced.

St. Bartholomew's Centre, off Tong Road, a local Council facility, has a recycling bin but this is always full to overflowing because it is never emptied and the cleaning staff mix up the rubbish, therefore contaminating the entire load.

So, Members of Council, tell me this: if City Services cannot get its act together, how can the citizens of Leeds be expected to? No wonder 80% of our waste goes into landfill.

Another way that the people of Leeds are expected to deliver the objectives of this strategy is by taking action for themselves or, as it says in the strategy, "empowering consumers", and this is done via education and awareness. Before you ask, though, the answer is "No", there is no additional investment identified in the strategy that will support this element of the plan.

Nearly 800,000 citizens will be expected to know about the need for additional recycling and how they should go about it, and that there will be enforcement taken against those that don't comply, and all this without an effective communication strategy to support it. Education campaigns cost money but they are essential if the roll out of this strategy is to be fair and meet the needs of vulnerable citizens.

Leeds is a relatively wealthy city but there are areas of real poverty and deprivation where targeted support will be needed to ensure that enforcement does not impact disproportionately. For instance, 14% of 16-24 year olds in this

City have no formal qualifications. This figure rises to over 25% for Asian and African Caribbean young people. 44,000 people are unemployed, again BME groups are most adversely affected, and around 150,000 in Leeds - that is nearly 20% of our population - live in areas officially rated as among the most deprived in the entire country. All these facts are from the Leeds Regeneration Plan.

It is your duty to ensure that all citizens can fully participate in any new system imposed, but how can this be possible without proper resourcing? What safeguards are there to ensure that it will not be the poorest, the elderly, the disabled who won't be the ones who are subject to enforcement actions, while those with the means to find out once again prosper? I didn't know until now that poverty was a crime.

There is a total lack of leadership in regards to this strategy, and this is evidenced by the abject failure of this administration to get to grips with the issue of composting. Leeds City Council undertook a market testing exercise a year ago to assess how much contamination of rubbish was taking place. 50% of black bins and around 24% of green bins were contaminated with kitchen and garden waste.

Composting then is crucial to the reduction of waste to landfill. Once again, the recognition that this will cost money has failed to hit home. Certainly I acknowledge that money has been set aside for a small garden collection pilot in Leeds, but this is for between only 5,000-10,000 properties and we have 320,000 homes in Leeds. This will have no impact on the amount of waste going to landfill and represents an enormous failure of leadership again in this area.

I have spoken about lack of leadership and disproportionate impact of parts of the strategy on the poorest in our society, both issues that I have raised in Scrutiny, by the way. What I have not pointed out is that the longer term resolution to the LATs problem, the energy from waste plant - incinerator, to you and I - cannot take place until 2012 at the earliest. The LATs penalties kick in in 2008/9 and, as I said, this will rise to about £53 million by 2012/13. There is no contingency plan for the period between 2008-2012/13 except the reduction in the black bin collection. That is the contingency plan. As contingency plans go, I think that this is - pardon the pun - a load of old rubbish.

Investment now could save the city and its services millions of pounds in the future. This administration must grasp the nettle and, instead of telling the people of Leeds what they should give up, this Council should be identifying savings now from across departments and investing that money in delivering this strategy. Yes, expect the people to contribute, but this is a shared endeavour not a sole voyage. So, if you want to demonstrate leadership, fairness and strategic vision, don't reduce the black bin collection; increase the green bin collection and find another way to pay for it. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR DOWSON: Lord Mayor, yes, I would like to second this motion in the name of Councillor Lowe. Many of us do actually represent inner city wards, whose housing stock consists of many back-to-back houses and terraces. Many of these will have little or no garden space. Black bins here are not at the bottom of some long garden, they are actually immediately outside the front or back door.

Into that black bin perhaps we will put nappies, food waste, chicken, potato peelings, who knows, left-over dinners, meat going off, left-over takeaways. Now, just imagine, you close that lid and then you leave all that to cook slowly in the summer sun, and we all know black absorbs the heat, so you are looking at about 28 degrees in that bin. Periodically you probably put more into that bin, and when you open the lid the wonderful aroma of rotting food can escape even faster. After a week or so when you lift that black bin lid, well, you might get the accompaniment of buzzing bluebottles. After watching numerous episodes of CSI I can now tell you that the gestation period for a bluebottle maggot is actually 5-6 days, so you are going to get it after that time, and if the smell doesn't put you off at first then when you look in the bottom of that bin you might just see a few things moving.

After two weeks, if the bin lorry doesn't break down, and if the scratch crew can actually find you, after two weeks with that smelly bin in your little back yard, it has to go. But what happens if it doesn't, and you can all see that this is a recipe for absolute disaster. I can tell you many residents in Leeds struggle to get the weekly collection now. Examples in my own ward in particular are the Beckhills where, on one memorable occasion, they had to wait nearly three weeks for a bin collection.

Not only do residents often have these collections missed, but when they do get a collection, and bear in mind this is bin bags, the famous green bin bags, they see both black and green bin bags thrown into the same lorry, and they like I cannot understand how they are going to sort these out at the other side.

Many houses still don't have green bins. I mean, we have been campaigning with residents and we are pleased to say that over the next few weeks about 700 green bins are going to be put in place on the Savilles and Mexboroughs.

Your proposal altering black bin and green bin collections will also result in actually a reduced service. Over a four week period with four black bin collections and a green bin collection is five collections, but if it is going to be alternate over those four weeks, that is actually only four bin collections, so that might be an issue as well.

Now, I am sure we all get behind the opposition in the fact that they are trying to increase green collections, but you need to have the services in place to back this up. As Councillor Lowe said, Environment Education Team needs to be

beefed up. There needs to be extra funding in place because people do need help in understanding the principles behind green and black bin collections. The Enforcement Team, as you all will know, just cannot cope at the moment; there are not enough Enforcement Officers, so what would happen with fortnightly collections? Also, what about kerbside glass collections? Have we put anything in place for that? Alison has already mentioned community composting. You need to get it right. I mean, you rushed into the grass-cutting contract and look what happened there, and my residents actually are some of the ones who have had their crocii and daffodils chopped off on Spencer Place after spending a long time planting them.

Please, don't do that with the bin collections. Consultation with all the residents, including the disadvantaged, who often feel they have little or no voice, is really important, so please think about that very strongly. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: My Lord Mayor, fortnightly collections. This is added to a long list now of areas where Labour Group has practised major back-peddalling from the time that they were in administration. It joins the likes of discussing shared ownership in the airport. It joins advertising on street lamps. It joins things like the private contract for grass-cutting. These were all things that all of a sudden were such a terribly bad idea, but actually started while they were in charge.

Now, added to this comes the issue of fortnightly bin collections, which was also discussed and started while they were in charge, but the difference on this one is that we have not actually come out and said, "This is our policy". We haven't got any proposal on the ground at all to say this is what we are going to do, so really it is all smoke and mirrors, so you have actually got a little bit ahead of yourself, but it is not surprising because in this back-tracking you are like desperate prospectors. You are panning these waters of revisionism and hoping to get a golden nugget for the election, and it is getting increasingly desperate.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Rumpelstiltskins.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Rumpelstiltskins, thank you, Leader.

Let's just start with our record, for a start, because I have to say I take a little bit of exception when she talks about City Services cannot get its act together, because I think that is a terrible thing to say about one of our most highly performing departments. If you actually have a look at our record, Councillor Lowe, you will see that we have actually been able to put extra money into City Services that you had been under-funding for quite a bit of time. £355,000 for two extra SORT rounds in the 2006/7 budgets. We have also increased our recycling rate. Now, if we can't get our act together by achieving 21.1%, which is the highest recycling rate of any core city, and the second highest recycling rate of any metropolitan borough, if we can achieve that and your lot only achieved 14%, if we

can't get our act together, you can't even get into rehearsals, I have to say.

Now, when it comes to another element you mentioned as well which puzzled me a little bit. It comes to the garden waste pilot. Now, I know a little bit about this because it is going to happen in my ward, and your colleagues know something about it because it is going to be happening in Kirkstall Ward as well, and we have all been briefed very well on this, and one of the things that has been really, really impressive about this green ---

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Which is your ward, Stuart?

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Which is my ward? My present ward, in which I am elected and which I am representing here today. What was our ward before you got kicked out, Councillor Taggart? As it is, Councillor Taggart, I am elected as a City Councillor and that is why I am talking on City-wide issues, so it affects your ward as well so I suggest you listen up.

Here we go again. The example that we are going to have in Weetwood and Kirkstall is that we are going to pilot a kerbside garden waste scheme. Now, this is being funded up to £330,000. I don't know where you are coming from when you say that there isn't any money going to City Services schemes, there isn't any money in terms of education and consultation in terms of the kind of extra services that we want to provide for the people of our City.

All of our people in those two wards have had extensive consultation. They have had leaflets galore. They know exactly what is going on there and, to tell you the truth, Councillor Lowe, in the year 2004/5, which is our year as opposed to that year that the Labour Party tried to take account of in terms of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders where they tried to take half of our year, this is our year, financial year 2004/5. It was the first time that this Council ever achieved its composting targets. So I don't think we are going to take any lessons whatsoever from you in terms of our lack of commitment to composting in our review.

Now, if you actually get back to the meat. The Waste Solution Strategy ---

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: The meat in the bin.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Not the meat in the bin. We will come back to that a little bit later. The Waste Solution Strategy, Lord Mayor, is one of the biggest issues facing the City. Because it is so big, we need to be innovative but we also need to be inclusive.

Now, Councillor Lowe was right on one point, in that if it is going to be a success and it gets implemented properly, the collection service that we actually create for our City needs to have the active involvement of every single person who lives in the City, because the only way that we will ever achieve any of our

recycling rates, or a reduction in landfill, or compliance with the way that we run our collections of waste is that we will have the input of every single household. They need to know what is expected of them in terms of how their waste is reduced, to begin with, because, of course, we want people to reuse as much as possible, but also in terms of how it gets divided up, so we can have the different collections working as effectively as possible, and also in terms of collection preparation.

Now, that is why we are consulting very heavily and very deeply on the options for the Waste Strategy. It has been very widespread and it has been over a very long period, and I repeat again there are no proposals; there is no policy because the consultation is not finished.

Now, I appreciate that this kind of deep consultation is something that is a little bit alien to the Labour administration because they were not very used to it in the past, but it does not really excuse their unsophisticated approach to the Waste Strategy, because one vital point that they miss in all of that document is that one size does not fit all, Councillor Lowe, and the solution for the whole City will involve smaller solutions for different parts of the City and for different communities. I have to say Councillor Dowson hit it on the head when she was talking about the back-to-backs and the terraces within her ward. For instance, we wouldn't really wish to introduce garden waste recycling in areas where you have back-to-backs or terraces with brick yards because they don't have anything to recycle, so it would be a waste of money. But that does not stop us doing it in areas which are nice and leafy and you have lots of middle-class green people that want to get rid of as much of their green waste as possible (Interruptions) and it will help the entire City achieve its targets, and it will help the entire City to benefit from the lack of Landfill Tax that their Government will expect from us.

Another example of where it wouldn't be appropriate to have fortnightly collections of black bins, for instance, would be in those areas where we have a very high density of population. If you are living in Harehills where there are quite large family units, on average, or if you live in Headingley where you have houses which are full of young adults who consume a lot, then you are not going to introduce fortnightly collections because it is absolutely ridiculous.

In fact, one of the things we have done is we have introduced twice-weekly collections, I understand, in some areas, Councillor Hamilton. So the strategy should give us the option not just to reduce collection but also to increase collection where it is appropriate, because one size does not fit all.

Now, the Labour Party in their motion have thrown in the terms, "well-being", "closing the gap" and "public health". I have to say I get a little bit sick of the Labour Party bandying these around as if these terms are solely within their remit and they are the only people who know what they mean, because in their use of them in this particular context it shows that they are quite ignorant of what they

mean, because leaving things exactly as they are, which is what they are advocating in the City, will not reduce landfill in the city. Leaving things as they are will not avoid the tax that their Government would charge us for because we have too much landfill and, more importantly, it will not provide a low-tax, greener future for the children of our City. It will not provide a sustainable future for our city. Just by standing still and not looking at the options isn't going to work.

By keeping our minds open on this side, Lord Mayor, and considering all options, we are not only being fairer to our taxpayers, we are also following the guidance of their Government Ministers and also Friends of the Earth, and by doing so we are more likely in the end to reach an outcome that will promote "narrowing the gap", "well-being" and "public health" in this City to a greater extent than your proposals do. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Before I ask Councillor Procter to second the amendment, I think Councillor Hamilton wishes to, under the provisions of Council Procedure Rules, move the suspension to allow all the White Paper Motions to be debated, is that right?

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: It is. Could I move that, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I second, Lord Mayor.

(The motion was carried)

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, can we just be quite clear, and Labour Members please pay attention, switch your hearing-aids on, get your notebooks out, listen, please, to what we are saying. There are no proposals to implement alternate week black bin collections. Got it? Got it? It is pretty simple, pretty straightforward.

What is being done, however, as Councillor Lowe and Co. are quite well aware is a public consultation on a whole range of options is currently taking place. Why is Councillor Lowe aware of that? Well, Councillor Lowe is more than aware of that because she sits on a Scrutiny Board which actually okayed it.

What did Councillor Lowe say at Scrutiny Board? Did she say, "Oh, I don't like this idea. I don't think we should be going to the public and consulting on alternate week black bin collections"? Did she say that? No, of course she didn't say that. She was more than content at consulting with the people of Leeds on alternate week black bin collections. That is the truth of the matter. She said absolutely nothing on these matters when it came to Scrutiny. She said (Interruption) --- That's not true. I have got the Chairman of the Scrutiny Board sat to my right, and I have spoken with other colleagues already about what has and has not gone on at the very working group and also at that particular Scrutiny Board.

So why is this such an important issue now? Why are we talking about --- The Scrutiny Working Group, by the way, I understand, was taking evidence in October - October - of last year, and yet suddenly it is so desperately important that we have to talk about this matter now. Clearly they didn't want to talk about it before, they just want to talk about it now.

Well, could it have anything to do with the Garforth Rose? Could it have anything to do with the Rothwell Rose? Could it have anything to do with the Beeston, Colton & Holbeck Rose as well? I think it probably does. I think there is a plethora of Roses around the Council chamber, Lord Mayor. This is the real fact of the matter, isn't it, Lord Mayor? It is clutching at straws. That is what this whole issue is about. That is why this motion is before this Council today. It is what is stuffed in their leaflets. It is the only thing they have got to say, frankly, Lord Mayor, and it is the only thing, actually, that is in all the leaflets. Clearly, there must have been a directive from Tony Blair or somebody saying, "You must talk about the black bin collection in Leeds" because it is the only damn thing that they have got of any consistency to talk about in any of these particular leaflets.

But what are their proposals? There aren't any. There aren't any proposals in terms of refuse collection. There are no positives in any of this. It is simply saying, "We oppose. We oppose what the LibDems and Tories are doing."

Well, that is fine, oppose it if that's what you want to do, but, please, what you should do is you should reply and respond to the public consultation. That is what you should do, and I would be interested to see, and Councillor Smith is not with us today. On his return I will be asking him and Officers of the Department just how many Members of the Labour Group have actually responded to the public consultation at this moment in time. I suspect not very many of you, if any of you, and what I would have thought you would have all been doing is urging your constituents to respond, to contribute to the debate so they can influence the debate, because contrary to what Members over there and the way in which they ran this Council, we actually do believe in consulting members of the public. We actually do believe in trying to deliver what people want out there on behalf and for the benefit of the City, and what do we hear opposite? The cry is all the time, "But you haven't asked us. You haven't asked us what we think about this." Well, we have asked. We have not just asked you, we have asked the people of Leeds what they think. I, for one, look forward to seeing what they have to say.

In addition to all of that, I understand that whatever proposals are ultimately made they will be the subject of debate at Executive Board and thereby be the subject of debate in this place, and I presume as well thereby being the possibility of being called in as well by a Scrutiny Board, all of which is yet to come, all of which is yet to happen. The only reason we are talking about it now is for the purpose and the benefit of your leaflets. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, my predecessor in the Morley North Ward

was Frances Jones. People will remember her with fondness, of that there is no doubt, and if you remember the whole issue to do with wheelie-bins back in '92 or '93, whatever it actually was, Frances was in charge of the Environment Committee, that that was introduced at that particular time on an alternative basis - one week was green, one week was black, one week was green, one week was black. It was withdrawn at that particular stage, which I think is regrettable. I think Frances, to her credit, was visionary in figuring out you just cannot keep filling rubbish into holes at that particular point, and I think it is worth revisiting this at this particular stage.

Now, there is no option in terms of us continuing to fill holes in the ground with rubbish. That really is not an option. People are not overly enthused neither about incineration, and to a degree incineration can only do so much anyway, so we have to drive up those recycling rates. Now, there is no doubt that Leeds, in terms of its core city status, is doing very well with its recycling, and I think it is a bit unfortunate that we should suggest that recycling is just something that the middle-classes do and that those who are on lower incomes don't have the same commitment to the environment, don't have the same desire to recycle in any shape, way or form. Now, I am absolutely convinced that if you go to those communities that we represent that tend to be lower income communities, the Denshaws, the (inaudible) or whatever, they have the same enthusiasm, I am sure, for recycling as anybody else does. I think it is a little patronising to suggest that if you are on a low income you don't have the same commitment.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: My Lord Mayor, on a point of personal explanation, I was talking about green waste. I was implying that people who have access to gardens ---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: You were being patronising.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: I apologise if it came across as patronising.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: That's alright then.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, getting back to the actual point is that everybody, regardless of their income, I believe has a genuine commitment to try to drive up those recycling rates, and in Morley we have said consistently to anybody who will listen to us, if you want to run a pilot project, fine. We will do one week black, one week green and see if that actually works. We are in a situation where we believe that there is an opportunity out there to drive up those recycling rates, and if you give people an opportunity, if you put a bit of trust in your communities, they will help and assist you.

I tell you what we are being told often is that people fill up their green bins and, at the point they are filled, the recycling stuff goes in the black bins that get emptied every week, and what they will say, consistently point out to us, is if they were given the opportunity that they would recycle more. Green bin fills up after a

week, ten days, whatever, and at that stage everything else goes in the black bin because you can get rid of that on a weekly basis.

Now, perhaps we should put trust in people. Perhaps we should put the trust in our communities and seriously look at giving them the option, maybe on a part basis or whatever, giving them the option of helping us to reach these particular targets, because one thing is absolutely for sure: If we do get penalised, if we do end up having to pay out these large fines to central government, it won't be recycled back to us, we won't be in a situation where the money can be used to offset the problems and difficulties we have got. It will inevitably mean cuts in services, and those who are likely to bear the brunt of cuts in services because we are paying back this lack of recycling vision are those who tend to be on lower incomes.

I am suggesting to this Council that we need to go full steam ahead in looking at visionary approaches and, at the end of the day, perhaps that is the greatest thanks to give back to Frances Jones, who was perhaps 10 or 12 years ahead of her time. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: My Lord Mayor, one of the disadvantages of Councillor Finnigan is he steals all my best lines but, anyway, I will press on. Never mind.

I have attended all the seminars and briefings to do with waste management and I think when they have finished I have always been enthused by them and had a commitment to waste management. It is pretty certain, I think it is pretty fair to say, that nobody likes change and I think in this particular instance with waste management we need to take action now. We need to change.

One thing we don't need, if we do nothing, we have to find ways and means of funding fines of up to £50 million by 2015. It is quite evident we need a recycling centre and I will come back to that a bit later on.

We also need to explore quite sensibly the sensitive issue (inaudible) recycling facility. It is quite patently obvious that zero waste - that the aspiration of zero waste - is a pipe-dream at present, we cannot fulfill that aspiration. We are disposing of 340 tonnes per annum and at the rate of development in future - and this is an ever-growing, ever-increasing developing city - that 340 tonnes is not going to decrease pro rata, so unless we take action now we are going to be stuffed financially.

Leeds City Council is on target to recycle 30% by 2010 but it is still woefully inadequate when compared to other European countries, particularly the Scandinavian countries, and Robert Finnigan was right, in 1993 when Leeds City Council started the SORT collection, they actually started right. They were in actual fact ahead of their time because they did an alternate green and black bin collection, but people were totally unaware of how to deal with that. I think Robert

is right, they were massively ahead of their time whoever sorted it out, and I presume it is Frances Jones. She was way ahead of her time.

However, that is 14 years ago. We have moved on in leaps and bounds since then. Times have changed immeasurably and whatever this waste management strategy consultation period comprises we really do need to look realistically at an alternate green bin/black bin collection. That must be part of the equation, without any doubt.

This morning or last night I put my green bin out for collection. It was collected at half past eight. I had also four green bags for collection. That is the equivalent of another bin full. That is in four weeks. Where I live, we are usually a typical nuclear family of two adults and two children. My son has vacated the premises to go and live in the beauties of Hyde Park for some reason. I can't understand why. Maybe it is something to do with University and women, but anyway that is another story.

What is also needed in this debate is education and awareness and a commitment from all residents and all stake-holders and it is pretty evident from (inaudible) of this Council because I think I could say there is widespread corruption of bins -- contamination, but it needs looking at. One thing every constituent of mine always requests is, "Why don't the bin men put the bin back where they got it from, from whence it came? It is always across the drive or across the road or wherever." That is just one of the problems.

We also need to put pressure on the producers and retailers to stop using so much packaging. I think Robert has mentioned it. I am sure David Blackburn has mentioned it so many times in this Council, the polluter should pay, but unfortunately it is us via the producers and retailers who are being forced to pay for this. I think we need to bring far more pressure on the producers and retailers to stop packaging. Why do we have to have apples pre-packed? Why do we have to have pears pre-packed? It is bizarre, absolutely bizarre.

Anyway, finally I wish to highlight to the benefits of whoever may be listening, and I hope they are ---

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: We always do, as you know.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Dare I mention Morley? I can think of a particular site quite near to the A650 which, of course, borders Bradford, Kirklees and Wakefield as well as being within the curtilage of Leeds City Council. There are excellent motorway links, and maybe the difficulties of transporting ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Time's up, Councillor McArdle, I'm sorry.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: I just want to say Morley is a perfect spot for a recycling

centre. Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR BLACKBURN: My Lord Mayor, I have got to say --- Well, first of all, I will say what Stuart and John have said. John and I are both in Cabinet and have looked at the waste strategy and there is no policy for this authority at the moment to introduce alternate week collections. It is a consultation. The people over there don't understand what consultation means. What you do is you tell people, then you ask them. What we do, we put in front of them -- ask the people and then we make our decision based upon what the people say to us.

The fact is the Labour Party have done nothing for years. We have not moved forward at all on recycling. We have done nothing about reducing. We have done nothing about reusing. This waste strategy brings both of those things in and will deliver higher rates of recycling, but we have got to take the people with us and we have got to see what they have to say.

What this comes down to is like a number of other things that have come up recently. You know, we have all been out canvassing, knocking on doors, and have you noticed that the Labour voters seem to be somewhat extinct, although not quite extinct (inaudible). This motion and the other things they are doing is to try and scare the people of Leeds. Well, they are not that thick. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR TAYLOR: Lord Mayor, I am a great fan of Gilbert and Sullivan and, in particular, of The Mikado, and it just so happens that I have got a little list. Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Blackburn Borough Council, Blyth Valley Borough Council, Clackmananshire Council, Copeland Borough Council, Corby Borough Council, Derby City Council, Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, (Interruptions) Ellesmere Port, Neston Borough Council, Lincoln City Council, Midlothian Council, Newport Council, North-East Derbyshire District Council, North-West Leicester District Council, Nottingham City Council, South Derbyshire District Council - only four to go. South Lancashire Council, Stirling Council, Telford and Wrekin Borough Council and finally Wansbeck Borough Council.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: What do they all have in common?

COUNCILLOR TAYLOR: What do you all have in common? They are all Labour Councils.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: At the moment.

COUNCILLOR TAYLOR: What do they also have in common, Lord Mayor, is that they all have alternative refuse collections. Five of those Councils actually are 4-star Councils, so can I suggest that you have a chat with your colleagues in those Councils - there are 21 authorities there - to see what they have done and

how well they have performed. As I say, four of them are excellent Councils, and I am just getting the impression that you are not quite sure over there what you are actually voting for, because Councillor Lowe has said she is asking to consult. Councillor Dowson, we will consult, and that is the purpose of the amendment, and therefore I hope you will be voting for it. Alison, you don't seem to know where you stand on it, with all due respect, but please don't sound intransigent, like the rest of your colleagues. We do have to move on and I think we need to continue this ongoing public consultation, and in doing that I hope we will bring about a service that we can all be proud of. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, somebody has given me Councillor Rafique's speech, so I thought I would refer to it. Unlike all the Labour leaflets John Procter referred to, this one is not called The Rose, this one is called Chapel Allerton Labour News. I suspect they didn't call it "The Rose" because they were not sure whether they should spell it R O W S or R O E S or R O S E, so they called it "News" instead, and this is a complete and utter fairy tale. I know it is a fairy tale because on one side you have got the Brothers Grimm and on the other side you have got Mork and Mindy.

Why is it a fairy tale? Well, it is a fairy tale because it is packed full of fairy tales, of complete make-believe. I have been looking to try and find out who is the author of this leaflet, but it does not say who the author is, so that anonymous person I am afraid is a liar, a complete and absolute liar. I am not suggesting that anybody over there is a liar because I am the gentleman but whoever wrote this is a liar, and let's look at the lies.

It says here that this administration has wasted £2 million on the following things: £500,000 for a new Council newspaper. That is a lie, complete lie. £200,000 on the Councillors' lounge at the Civic Hall. That is a lie. £150,000 on the "Leeds - Live it, Love it" slogan. That is a lie. They are correct with the last thing, the bonuses that senior Council managers are paying. That is correct, we do pay those bonuses because that is the policy that you, the Labour administration, put in those senior directors' contracts. You put it in. We are paying it. It was your policy.

But, of course, the biggest lie of all is what it says about refuse collection. Now, it quotes Councillor Dowson and, although I know it says that she said this, she cannot possibly have said it because, if she had, that would make her a liar and I know that Councillor Dowson is not a liar, so it cannot possibly have been her who said this, but she says, for instance, that the LibDem/Conservatives - it all depends who they are feeling under pressure from - the LibDem/Conservative administration want to privatise refuse collection. That is a lie, a complete, absolute lie. Andrew Carter and I have said categorically we have no wish to privatise the refuse collection at all, and we want our current Refuse Collection Department to stay as we have said quite clearly. (Interruptions)

You go on to say that the decision to introduce twice-weekly black bin collection is in order to save money. That is a lie. Well, first of all, we have not made such a proposal but even had we it is not to save money. It is a complete lie.

But the worst thing of all about this leaflet, and this really gives a lie to the lie, is Councillor Dowson talking about consultation. Nowhere on this leaflet is there one word about, "What do you think in Chapel Allerton about any of this?" There is not one return address. There is not one telephone number. There is not one e-mail address. There is nobody who could possibly read this and could find a way of replying to it. Frankly, it reminds me of the propaganda that the Russians used to drop, a complete load of nonsense thrown out of aeroplanes for the poor, unsuspecting people underneath to read and lap up. Well, as Councillor ---

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harris, you are out of time. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Lord Mayor, I am amazed at Councillor Harris. What is the point? I am not sure why there has been so much fuss and bother over the other side and why they have yelled out in this way. Alison gave a very quiet, considered, thoughtful introduction to this debate, and that is all we are all doing is contributing to the debate, and nowhere has there been any suggestion that we want to leave things as they are. I mean, would you want to with this lot? Of course, we wouldn't, and no-one knows better than us how much work you have to put in to get these things to go. Who started all this in '88/89? Neil Taggart did a lot of work on this. I did a lot of work. I am glad you mentioned Councillor Frances Jones. One of the things you really fundamentally learn is how much communication you need with people in order to get them on your side, and that is the question-mark about what is the subject of this debate.

The composting scheme that Councillor Golton referred to, it actually wasn't that easy to progress, was it Stuart? There wasn't really 100%, by any means, support and understanding from City Services. The amount of pressure that we had to put on, and it did in the end I think come in (inaudible) in order to really get it going was not just a matter of course, and I am glad you are now 100% supportive. It is going to be a very good model for this City. It is going to cover Kirkstall and Weetwood in the first instance. Let's make sure we learn from that.

You do need to have that thorough explanation of what is required and why, and you need the performance to match our City Services. We have been going out to consult (inaudible) in Kirkstall and the clear majority is certainly, "No, we can't. We cannot have a two-weekly black bin collection", but other things they have been telling us, for example, in the Vicarages time and again the green bins are being chucked into the back of the black bin lorry. I don't know how many times we have had to communicate about that. In the end, Councillor Atha wrote to Councillor Smith and asked, "Would you please get this sorted". I am not sure

we have had a reply, actually.

In the Stanmores --- My mouth has gone incredibly dry. In the Stanmores the green bins have not been collected since last October.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: I hope that's not gin.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I hope it is; it might get more interesting!

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: --- even when the greens are supposed to be collected. However, that suggestion that was made I think again by Stuart that we would be looking at different solutions for different parts of the City, recognising the different conditions that people live in, the different kinds of households, I think that is a good point, and let's hope we can build on that. Certainly the Inner North-West Area Committee, the StreetScene Sub that we have one each of the four wards represented on, I think we are going to make good progress on that and we are determined to make progress.

I do wish, Councillor Procter, wherever he is, that you wouldn't try and make cheap political scoring points out of Scrutiny. If you are not careful, you are going to subvert the whole status of Scrutiny in this Council. (Interruptions) --- clearly a non-party political basis. (Inaudible) but it is completely out of order to bring in Scrutiny in that kind of forum.

So finally we are simply opposing the introduction of a two-weekly black bin collection at this point because there is no evidence whatsoever that it has been thought through what this will mean or how it will be implemented. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor, I wasn't going to speak on this but, I mean, people have been telling us what we have been doing and haven't been doing when they don't know themselves. It is always pretty obvious to me that they say, "Oh, we haven't made our mind up yet. We haven't done it" and we get my friend Mark reading out of a leaflet over there when I believe what they used to call, before they got "Focus" on the top, was "Billy's Weekly Liar" what used to go round before you got that dead parrot that you have put on it (Laughter) and you read through it which, in my opinion, had nothing at all to do with the disposal of rubbish in this particular thing. You give them one kiss and they expect it all day.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: Lord Mayor, this has to stop.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: The point I am making, Lord Mayor, is simply this, that if you are talking about how we are going to dispose of our rubbish in this City, then the Area Forums have been meeting and we have had people coming from City Scene to look at the waste and how we are going to do it, and one of them was this suggestion, and the other one was that we build an incinerator somewhere in an inner city part, and watch out because it could affect all of you, and this is what you are talking about, and this is consultation, John, that we come out to talk to. This

is who you send out and, right enough, I was with David Schofield when David Schofield chaired the meeting and this is what they told us.

Now, I following from that meeting, Lord Mayor, I done a survey, I done a very big survey of an area of Templenewsam and asked them what they preferred, and with the suggestion that they had made at the forum ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: A very big survey?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: A very big survey knocking at doors. Now, I didn't interrupt when Councillor Carter was speaking; I don't expect him to interrupt when I am speaking. So the survey what we have done is what you are talking about, is Councillors consulting with the people that they represent. That is what you should have been doing, Allan, and not going down to Nottingham.

So what I got back was about 20% replied and of that 20% 20% was not in favour, not in favour, of a fortnightly black bin collection. Now, I am asking (Interruptions) You listened (inaudible) and carried on, now listen to the truth. What we are saying is that if we ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: How many was 20%, Mick?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: -- carry on, and we are on about numbers and I've got the floor, not you, so as far as I am concerned if we go round and we consult like you have all been talking about, Stuart was talking about, and it comes back and it says, as I would expect it to say, that, "We want a weekly black bin collection", I would fully expect you to say, "Well, that hasn't worked so we will carry on with the black bin collection and look at some other way of how we collect the green bins, etc." But what you have done is to personalize and shout across here at what people are doing. I won't tell everybody you are wearing a red rose, John, and not on your tie, but the very fact is this: Instead of shouting across the chamber the people of Leeds, and most of them if you set a percentage in local elections there is only 15% of them vote, so what they are interested in is their bins collecting. Let them decide what, as far as Councillor Lowe is concerned, and she said this, "Take notice of the Area Committees." They have sent round to the Area Committees, (inaudible) to the Area Committees, what they are going to do.

What frightens me most of all is where we are going to build this incinerator. I look down towards Cross Green, you know, to a Liberal area, to see if we will build it there, but the smoke might blow across onto Templenewsam so we might shift it further over, possibly to Headingley.

Be very careful, all of you, because what you are doing here, you are trying to trivialize this White Paper we have put down and it is just not on. What we are saying seriously is take notice and take notice of the people. Don't go (inaudible) consultation. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Lord Mayor, Councillor Lyons, I am very interested in this survey. We had "hundreds" in it, "a very big survey".

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I never mentioned a figure, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: No, a very big --- What do you call a very big survey, Councillor Lyons? What do you call a very big survey, Councillor Lyons? Answer the question, Councillor Lyons. What do you call a very big survey, Councillor Lyons? (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Is Andrew Carter requiring you to break Standing Orders?

THE LORD MAYOR: Alright, Councillor Atha, I have got the message. You are quite right. Councillor Carter, I'm sorry, Councillor Lyons is not allowed to answer that question.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: No matter, I will repeat what I just said to the Chief Executive. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

My Lord Mayor, it is very difficult to trivialize a White Paper that refers to something that doesn't exist. There is, and I repeat what Councillor Procter has said, and I repeat what Councillor Golton has said, Councillor Harris has said, there is no policy to introduce fortnightly black bin collections. It does not exist. (Interruptions)

Hang on, we have been going through, and are still going through, an extensive consultation exercise carried out by the Council about which every Member opposite is perfectly well aware - perfectly well aware. We are getting responses. It will be discussed by this Council, as has been said, by the Executive Board, by every part of this Council, and it is quite legitimate, Councillor Minkin, for Councillor Procter to introduce the issues of scrutiny. It doesn't undermine it. It actually informs the rest of us about something we didn't know - Councillor Lowe's role in that particular Scrutiny Committee, and the fact that she raised no objection to this consultation process.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: That's not true.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: We will listen to what the people of Leeds say, but Councillor Harris is absolutely right. You complain if you think we are not consulting. Now we are consulting and all it underlines is the increasing desperation, and I am astonished that Councillor Minkin, and indeed Councillor Dowson, want to get involved with the sort of debate that has been conjured up by their leadership on this particular issue.

There is no intention by anybody in the administration to introduce any sort

of system that would result in the sort of things that you, Councillor Dowson, have highlighted. Interestingly, in part of your speech you seemed to infer that an education process was required. Well, in that respect you are, of course, absolutely correct, there is an education process required, but it is quite wrong - quite wrong - for anybody in this Council to say that a policy exists when no such policy exists, and to make out that consultation with the public is a foregone conclusion in one particular aspect. That is to undermine the whole process of consultation, but I would remind you of this, that the rules governing consultation in this authority are extremely clear. They make it quite clear that if the Council, as a corporate body, is undertaking consultation, then Elected Members should not duplicate that same consultation, and that is a matter, I think, that we would want to have some very urgent opinion on, because it seems to me from what has been said today that a consultation has been entered into, possibly at the expense of the local authority, and we need, I think, to have some clarity and some answers on that particular issue.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen, I have just received a note that you want to speak in the debate, is that right?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I do, thank you, having just listened carefully to Councillor Carter's contribution.

Sometimes the perception of people in the Civic Hall is different from that of people actually being consulted, and Councillor Armitage and I were at the North Whinmoor Forum recently when there was a presentation by Officers and there was consultation about this scheme. I welcome that. The Officer, and if you don't believe me, Les, ask my colleague to say whether what I am saying happened there did or did not happen. The Officer very clearly steered the debate towards, "This Council wants to introduce more green bag and less black bag." That is exactly what was said at that meeting. It wasn't, "There is an option". No other option was given.

Look at the consultation paper, that leaflet that goes out, and point to me the other option that you say in your White Paper here. What other option are you offering to fewer, less, black bag collections? If you can find it for me on that leaflet and show it to me, then I will withdraw that comment, but you will not be able to find it because it isn't there. It is the only option that is on that paper where there are four or five distinctive questions.

So in that forum, in that consultation, we were clearly given the impression, and that is the people who were there, clearly given the impression that that is the way the Council is now moving, minded to move towards a fortnightly black bin collection. That is what the impression was, and that is what people took away from that consultation. You weren't there, you don't know, you can't comment.

What I do also know as a Ward representative is that the black bins are full

after a week. They are full, and if they are not collected people will ring up and hopefully on this gold or silver number, whatever, eventually get through somewhere and actually get someone to come out and do something. More often they have to wait for another week for a service.

I want to ask the question that Councillor Lyons asked as you were shouting him down, Mark Harris. If this is consultation, and if the answers come back from the public and they say, "We do not want a two-weekly black bin collection. We want to retain a weekly black bin collection", are you standing up now and saying you will listen to the people and that is what you will do: you will not impose on them what City Services clearly want to impose on them. Are you now saying you will not impose that on people if they vote against it? "Yes" or "No"?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I don't know what this Officer said. Officers say all sorts of things. Junior Officers say all sorts of things, they have done for years. They don't actually set the policy of this Council. The policy of this Council is set by us. Let me finish. That is where it is set. People do say things, but I know many Officers who have a desire - a desire - to see more green things going into more green bins because they want to see more separation of waste, and they want to sort waste. Now, is that bad? If an Officer thinks that, is it bad? The Labour Party think it is. They don't believe. They are not a green party. We know they are not a green party and they don't believe in sorting waste. That's what you are saying, Peter, you do not believe in it. (Interruptions)

What has been just said over here is quite true. Is Les Carter listening to it? Yes, because I will tell you this, if my electors don't want their black bins emptying every week, they would be like yours, they will have them emptied every week. But I can tell you this also, I know a lot of my electors who are playing pop because they want to sort more than they are sorting now. They do. They want to sort more than they are sorting now. Not Les Carter. Not Les Carter. I haven't joined the Flat Earth Society. Not me, but they do want to sort more waste, and if you are serious about sorting waste, if you are really serious about that, you wouldn't have taken this cavalier attitude to this particular issue.

It is right to consult. It is right to go out and consult. The Leader of my party just said to me, "We won't force it on people. If it comes back, we will not force it on people", and that is something we won't do.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: That's why we are different from you.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: That is what he said to me, and I agree with him, but I tell you what, let me ask you this question: if it comes back and says that they do want it this way round, are you going to support it? Are you going to say, "No, you can't have it", the other way round. Are you going to do the same as us? Are you going to do it?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: What are you going to do?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I will say, "Yes".

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Good. Now, is your Leader saying that?

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Let's hear from Keith Wakefield. Is the answer, "Yes"?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Is he saying, "Yes"? If it comes back and if it says, "We want the black bins emptied fortnightly, the greens weekly, every day" is he prepared to accept that? Because we will accept what the people say, because we do believe in sorting waste.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Come on, Keith. Let's have an answer. We have given the answer, you give the answer.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: The answer is very simple, when you are in power ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: He is your Leader. He is your Leader. You are not the Leader, Peter, yet, of the Labour Group. You may think you will be on May 5th but he is your Leader. Come on, Keith. We want the answer from you, not the monkey.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Keith ---

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Who is speaking, Lord Mayor?

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: At the moment, the organ-grinder.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Can I just ask if Councillor Wakefield will give the same undertaking which Councillor Carter would have stood up and given me if he could have said it.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: It is the Tony and Gordon Show again.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Don't be silly. You silly, silly boy. Grow up, Peter. The sooner you grow up the better. You will find you are completely wrong.

I am not arguing to be Leader ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You are.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: -- but you are. We know you are after his seat.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: We know you are after his job.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: We know exactly where you are going.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: We know just what you are up to.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: So, coming back to the recycling, we believe in recycling. Recycling is important and if we don't recycle you know your Government is going to punish us, really punish us. Don't say you agree with things and then get up and say you don't agree with it. That is what you are saying. "Ooh", you are saying. You frighten people to death. You are going out and trying to put surveys out against the Council. You are trying to do all sorts of things. Mike says, "Oh, go on, it is wrong, they are not going to do this." There is no question of talking about what recycling is about. There is no question of saying the importance of recycling. It is just part of this worry they have got: they are terrified of this election. They are saying anything, "We will do anything." They will go against their own principles, because many of them do believe in recycling, and I know they could stand up and say, but having said all that, can I just now throw the challenge back to Councillor Wakefield, is he going to give the same undertaking that Councillor Carter has given through me. Thank you.
(Applause) (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: As usual, no leadership from Councillor Wakefield.
(Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR LOWE: I have laughed all the way through, thank you. Can I just read again the opening line of my presentation, "I believe that the proposals to reduce black bin collection" blah-blah-blah, so I did never say that this was policy. I always started by saying that these were discussions that were ongoing, but it is not true to say that (Interruption) It is not true to say that these proposals have not been ongoing for a long time and that I raised this in the Scrutiny Board on several occasions, and I am really disappointed, Barry, that you say that I have not raised this legitimately in Scrutiny.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: I didn't say you hadn't raised it. Am I allowed to explain? (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR LOWE: As long as you accept that I have been raising this as a legitimate concern, and I can tell you the day that it happened, in the October Scrutiny when David (?)Bow was present, and at that point I was led to believe that the proposals, as they were then, to both reduce the black bin collection, reduce the bin size and even stop picking up side waste, that they were going to go back to the drawing board on those proposals in the October meetings and, in fact, it is not about the election that I have come today to raise this matter. You might have forgotten that I represent Armley. I am not a candidate. It is one of the safest

seats in the City. I don't need to play silly games to win Armley.

This is about the genuine concerns that I raised in the Scrutiny Board which I felt had been taken on board and I believed was not now going to be enforced upon the people of Leeds suddenly appearing in this strategy. I did raise those concerns with Councillor Wakefield so that he could take those to the January Executive, which I understand that he did, and still in here and then, of course, the final trigger to this White Paper was this document with this consultation question on the back. Clearly at that point I realised that because we do not have a choice about reducing black bin collection because it is the only way you can fund the additional green bin collections. You do not in this strategy have any other options for investing for a green bin collection, other than reducing black bins, so that is why I decided it was necessary to bring this to the Council to discuss, because there is no opportunity in this document to raise funds in any other way, other than reducing black bin collection.

I should also point out that I have had several briefings with Helen Finnister, and Helen Finnister has been very up-front about the way that this increase in recycling will take place and the black bin collection reduction is key to that, so that is another way that that has been brought home to me and, as I say, it has been discussed several times at Scrutiny and it is now in both the strategy and this document, so I think that the people of Leeds can quite safely bet that the reduction in black bin collection is very much on the cards, and we want to make sure that that is not what happens without proper investment on the whole package of measures, because that is what I worry about. It is not the principle of reducing the black bin collection per se; it is that you are doing it in isolation. You have not considered a wider strategy and you have not invested in a wider strategy. It is all or nothing, and it is all that the citizens of Leeds have got to give up, and we are not putting anything in place.

We have got 2 years until the LATs start to kick in, 2 years, and I am sorry but increasing the green bin collection is not going to save us having to pay millions of pounds in 2 years time. You won't have Social Services, you won't have litter, you know, in the pavements or the highways because the money will all be going in LATs and we need to make some really huge changes, and we need to make them now.

I could say quite a lot of things about, you know, who has got the best performing departments, and Stuart is there, I will say one thing - grass-cutting. I will say no more.

I understand that consultation is taking place but, please, please, please, it may have been the promise that any consultation that comes back will be listened to and heeded. I am not saying that every bit of the City has to be treated the same. We obviously are a diverse community and if outer areas, or even some inner areas, want to have fortnightly black bin collections, fine. That is fine by me

if that is fine by them. I am not some Stalinist person who makes people have what I want them to have. All I am saying is, let's ask the people what they can do, ask them to contribute to developing a strategy, ask them to help us to contribute to delivering this strategy, but let us have some transition arrangements in place so that eventually, when we do have a fantastic recycling facility in place and people do know how to recycle, we have invested in a proper education awareness strategy which, quite frankly, will cost millions of pounds if we are doing it properly, but when all that is in place and that won't be in place in a few weeks or months, that won't be in place in a year, when people know how to properly recycle, they have got the education and information to do that, bearing in mind currently we open the big bin and it says, "Plastics 1, 2" or whatever. I have got a Master's degree in Latin; I don't know what that means. No-one has told me, and I sit on the Scrutiny Board, so if I don't know how can our constituents know.

So be really clear that before we bring anything in that you are giving everybody the information they need to be able to make a proper decision.

So I will finish by saying that I am not against the principle of reducing the black bin collection in some parts, or even all parts, of the City. What I am saying is it cannot be in isolation. That cannot be the only backstop. We have got to have a proper strategy in place and it has to be funded. That is what is key, and that is what is missing from this. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

(Councillor Golton's amendment was carried)

(The substantive motion was carried)

ITEM 13 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - PENSIONS

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Nice to see you, John and Michael.
(Interruptions) They don't get rid of you that easy, Mike, do they?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: That's nothing to do with you; you are not our Whip.

THE LORD MAYOR: (Inaudible) We will get on with the business now
(inaudible).

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: First of all, Lord Mayor, I am asking leave of Council to amend my original motion, which I understand I have to do, and I require the seconder of the motion to support leave, that I request leave of Council.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I second, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: There is no discussion allowed under the Procedure Rules. I put the matter to the vote. Those in favour?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor ---

THE LORD MAYOR: No, there is no discussion.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Move a recorded vote. (Interruptions)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Who is your seconder?

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I ask if that is seconded? Can I, in that case, ask for those in favour of a recorded vote? Those against? That is lost. I am told I can't prevent it, though, so we have to go through the motions. Was it a serious proposal, Councillor Lyons?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: It was a serious proposal and I would like to be able to speak to it but you stopped me doing that. I would like to speak but unfortunately you won't let me.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, shall I continue?

THE LORD MAYOR: Well, I think we have to go to a recorded vote because we have a vote seconded and we need to deal with that before we can move on to the main item.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: We just did. We voted against it, Lord Mayor.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: If two Members request it, the vote has to be taken as a recorded vote (inaudible).

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: I give up. Only in this Council could it be so complicated. We will sort that out as well.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: I take it by this stage all Members are too weary to be anywhere other than their allocated seats. Would they please refer to their desk units and press the button marked "P". The light is on. Those Members in favour of the motion by Councillor Harris to amend his motion, please press the "+" button, and those Members against that motion please press the "-" button. Any Member wishing to abstain and have their abstention recorded, please press the "0" button.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I'll bet we win. I'll bet you a tenner, Mike, we win.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Let me tell you this, you don't know that yet. Have a look at the electrics.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: It is not working. We have worn them out. Sorry, machine is broken down.

THE LORD MAYOR: Just hang on a second.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Yes, I am in business. (Interruptions)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lyons, have you voted on Councillor Nash's machine?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Yes, I have.

THE LORD MAYOR: I will transfer it. (Interruptions) We have a shock result to announce. Of Members present 48, 46 voted in favour and 2 against, so I fear that that is lost.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You didn't answer me when I asked about taking photographs in the chamber.

THE LORD MAYOR: I'm sorry, I didn't hear the question.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Is taking photographs in the chamber allowed at this stage? Did you give permission?

THE LORD MAYOR: It is if I say so.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I just want to say, have you given permission?

THE LORD MAYOR: I am not sure which photograph you are talking about.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Over there, that young lad over there is taking photographs.

THE LORD MAYOR: I shall remonstrate with him later, Councillor Lyons. Thank you for your concern. Can we move on? It is now half past nine.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Is it morning yet, Lord Mayor? Well, let the record show that as we embarked upon the debate about services being withdrawn on a sadly regular basis, so it would seem, from the people we are here to serve, that the Opposition, bar two, left the chamber, and refused to debate. (Interruption) Well, that is a very interesting point. They refused to debate the issue.

I see, for the record let it show, that the Morley Independents stayed to participate. (Applause) And the only Independent stayed (Applause) and I fear that the ghost of Doreen Hamilton has stayed to debate the matter as well, but there we are.

So I am glad that the record shows that, and the record will also show that the opposition, in my opinion, have hidden behind a very weak procedural issue

and have behaved in an utterly gutless manner, rather than stay here and deal possibly with what is clearly not only a difficult position for the Council itself but obviously a difficult position for the Labour Group, since we are in this position only because of the very ill-advised actions and policies of the Labour Government.

In fact, you know, one could say that the Labour Group's actions in walking out are, in their own way, a form of strike, are they not, which illustrates that they are of the same mentality as perhaps some of our more intransigent union leaders who still believe that striking is always the answer to a problem. Some things, sadly, do not move on.

We do not need to debate this at length because, unless Councillor Lyons and Illingworth participate, there probably is not a debate, but the issue is really very simple.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I will decide whether I debate or not.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Okay, well, I will be pleased to hear what you have got to say. The issue is very simple. Let's just deal with why the Labour Group have departed, on the - I regard spurious now - belief that somehow they are in a personal and prejudicial position in debating this particular motion. Well, the test, of course, is what the public think, and if the public really think that we are here attempting to feather our own nests whilst somehow bolstering our pensions whilst debating this, well, I just don't believe the public will ever believe that, and in my case, even though I freely admit I am a member of the West Yorkshire Pension Fund, let the record show that on the actuarial advice I have been given I will be 75 before I can get that pension, and if anybody really thinks I am still going to be here in 25 years time, they have another think coming, so there cannot possibly be any personal or prejudicial interest for me in this matter.

Now, we are in this situation very simply because of the worst set of double-standards from a Government I have ever come across. If that is not double-standards, it is triple-standards. Firstly, because they have not got the guts to stand up to their own civil servants over the issue of pensions, they have brokered a deal with them which now turns out to be radically different from the one they are suggesting for local government officers. But worse still, in the same breath, MPs have managed to do a deal to improve dramatically, improve their own pension rights, at the same time as saying to everybody else they have got to tighten their belts and the pension system across the country is in a mess. That, as I say, is not double-standards, it is triple-standards, and it is hardly surprising in those circumstances that here in Leeds, and of course across the country, local government workers have seen the red, if you will excuse the use of that colour.

The problem, of course, is that the argument is with the wrong people. Not only is it harming the people that they are here to serve but the argument is with us as collectively employers, but we are not in charge of the decision at all, and it is

for that reason that it was right that this White Paper be put down, that this matter be dealt with really as an appeal, and the unions locally, I would say have this power. Regionally there is an appeal not to continue with industrial action taken against this Council and against the people of Leeds but rather to find a means of protest directed against those people in Whitehall and Westminster who are really the culprits and those responsible for landing us in this unfortunate situation.

Lord Mayor, that is the crux of the matter. In finishing, I have to say this is the most hollow debate I have ever participated in, and it really fills me with awful dismay that this actually is what this Council has now come to. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: My Lord Mayor, as Leader of Council I think it is right that I should be seconding this motion and passing my own comments. Somebody said to me, do I have sympathy with all the members of our staff whose pensions have been threatened? The simple answer to that is yes, I have absolute sympathy with them, in the same way I have sympathy with everybody else of working age in this country who has a pension who will be very lucky if their pensions as well have not been damaged and devalued by the act of -- well, of a number of issues but one person in particular who some people over there, when there is anybody over there, they think that he is God's gift, and that is the Chancellor of the Exchequer, because let's not forget that in 1997 his first act was to impose a tax on pension funds of £5 billion. It wasn't a windfall tax. It was a tax every year, so in 9 years Gordon Brown has taken £45 billion out of pension funds.

I actually think that some of his mates in the unions were naïve enough to think it didn't affect them, that actually their pension funds were not invested in precisely the same way as people in the private sector but, of course, they were. Everybody who pays into a pension has been affected by a variety of things, but one thing above all, which is a direct act of the man in Whitehall, nobody in this Civic Hall, and that was the tax he imposed on the dividends paid into pension funds. It was an act of burglary, an act of political burglary from people's pension funds.

What government in their right minds wants a generation in future of impoverished pensioners? It makes no economic sense whatever to have pensioners, regrettably like some people in the current generation of pensioners, and certainly people in the generation before that, who struggled to make ends meet and relied on hand-outs from the State, unless, of course, you actually want people to be dependent on the State, and thereby I think begs another very interesting question.

Of course, there is one group of people who have been saved from the tax on pensions, the Members of Parliament. Not for them the closed down final salary scheme. Not for them a change in the rules that means they have to work longer, whether they are in the private sector or the public sector. Oh no. Oh no.

The taxpayer, all of us, are footing the bill to make sure their pensions, interestingly also underfunded for the very same reasons that everybody else's are underfunded, because the Chancellor raided - raided - the pension funds of millions of people.

So at the next General Election, if the Members of Parliament go, and I sincerely hope they will, John Battle would be able to get a pension of £38,000 a year. £38,000 a year. Hillary Benn would get a pension of £41,000 a year. Burgon, Hamilton and Truswell would get £21,500 a year for doing a mere 12 years service. You would have to be earning hundreds of thousands a year to get a pension of that size after 12 years service. These boys have well and truly lined their pockets at everybody else's expense. No wonder, Lord Mayor, national politics and national politicians are held in such low esteem.

I am just sorry we didn't get the right legal advice on this White Paper because it gave an excuse to the people over there to vacate the chamber and avoid embarrassment. That is no way to behave as an opposition. It is no way to behave as Members of the Council. We are talking about people's future livelihoods here. I have pleasure in seconding the motion, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Very briefly, Lord Mayor - it is getting late. (Inaudible) probably says it better than I could, "Hypocrites". People will see the headline there (inaudible) Two days after condemning the pension strikers, MPs (inaudible) of their own to cough up even more for their cushy retirement and, you know, the gold-plated final salary pension scheme enjoyed by MPs (inaudible), because part of the bloggers - that's what it says here - the bloggers are living longer than they used to do so there is a big hole in their particular pensions.

Just to make an interesting observation following on from what Andrew said, this means that somebody who has been an MP for 30 years can retire on almost £45,000 a year. For every £30,000 workers in the private sector have to save to afford the same pension as an MP, Parliamentarians must put aside just £6,000. If that is not hypocrisy, then I don't know what is. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Lord Mayor, I wasn't down to speak but I just wanted to put some personal perspective on this. I am not a member of West Yorkshire Pension Fund, I am a member of the Stuart McArdle (inaudible) Pension Fund. I provide for myself. Since 1997 the value of my pension - at the last count I had nearly 7 years of contributing into my pension scheme. Since '97 my standing has gone down by 55%, so for every £100 I had in I have £45 now. (Inaudible).

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor, you know, you carry on, you are all looking over what is happening and what isn't happening. Mark says he has never been to a Council debate like this before. Unfortunately, I have, and they have,

because the Tories have walked out, to my knowledge, on two occasions and left this chamber.

Now, as far as I am concerned, my colleagues in the Labour Group here walked out for a very, very good reason ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: They are chicken.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: And the legal advice that is given, that it is up to each Councillor to decide whether he has got an interest or not or should declare an interest or not, that is quite alright, and that is what happened.

You know, you carry on about pensions. I worked nearly 50 years on the railways as an engine-driver. You couldn't even join the pension fund until you were a driver, and you didn't get to be a driver while you were about 46 then, and what happened? The management found out they had that much money in the pension funds they all took holidays - not going to Majorca - they all took pension holidays. This wasn't Government. This was management up and down the country. They didn't pay into the pension schemes, they took what were called holidays, and most of them were for 5 years plus.

So if you are getting on about what has happened up and down the country, and what has happened across here, don't be surprised because it has all happened before. What you are trying to do, and what the speaker was trying to do, I mean, you would think that there were only Labour MPs in Parliament. I have news for him, there's a few more: they call them Tories and Liberals and they have got Irish Nationals and all sorts in, and they are drawing this pension, and they are down to draw this pension. You forgot to mention all these when you talked about it.

If you are going to be hypocritical, do it right and do it proper and don't say they walked out ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: You mean like them?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You have walked out, Andrew, and I have known you have walked out, and you have, Les, out of this chamber in the past. The Tory Group have walked out ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: So have you.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: They have walked out, and I can prove they have walked out. Don't tell any lies when you know they have.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: We didn't say we hadn't.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: No? Well, you were all carrying on. He was carrying on to say as if it is something new. What you have left in is one person when you left in the chamber before and it was on Education, and it was Paddy Crotty that stopped in, if you remember rightly. There was only one of the Tories then. Mind you, you got down to eight so you were nearly used to it. I have been around, Andrew, a long time and whatever happens happens and what comes round goes round. It doesn't stop me, whether I lose a debate or I don't, provided I have had my say in this Council Chamber and say what I believe in, and what I believe in is that you are wrong. You are trying to put everything onto the Government. I am not saying that they are squeaky clean, but you are trying to put everything on the Government, "It isn't our fault, guv, it's your fault" and it ain't on. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Lord Mayor, he remembers when we went out of the chamber. He remembers when we were down to a small number. Presumably he is just practising for when he is like that in a few weeks time when there's two of them left here.

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: He won't be here.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Oh, is that right? Oh Mike. Well, goodbye, Mike, it's been lovely knowing you.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I won't tell you where I am having the party but ---

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Don't go hugging.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: Let's just be actually factual on this. The Government say they are going to take retirement ages up for everybody all over the place, except what happens? They chicken out as soon as it happens. Civil servants, "Oh, you can't do that to us, sir. Do that to us and we won't write you another report". Police, they take the police, accuse every other people. The only people they attack is the local government employees by removing the rule of 85, and that is stopping employees now. Young people are getting a scheme which ends up at 65. Now, I am not particularly arguing that because the whole world is having to change and a lot of people are changing outside, but I don't believe it is fairness across civil service and officers. I don't believe that. I have no way you can prove that to me.

The other thing is we have a funded scheme, and it is quite well funded at the present time. Its employer's contributions have gone in and it is funded well. I am not even certain if that scheme requires to change the age, but that is what it is proposing to do.

When Andrew talks about the tax credits which were removed by Government, I don't think your party had any idea what that meant. So far in

straight costs it is £45 billion. If you add growth to that, you can certainly double it. That is something like £80-£90 billion taken from people's pensions.

That is why they are desperate. That is why a whole profession has changed, to remove final salary schemes, because employers can no longer afford them. The whole of the final salary schemes have been removed. It has not happened here yet but it could happen here, and if this particular dispute --- There is no way of placing it on the Councillors sat here. There is no way of placing it on the administration sat here. It is an argument with Her Majesty's Government and our Officers and, Michael, no matter what you say, no matter what you scream, no matter how sophisticated you have been at being hypocritical, and maybe you have had a lot of practise at that, I don't know, I haven't had a lot of practise at being hypocritical in the same way as you have, but you cannot argue that it is not. It is a case of Government and our employees.

Now, all your people have walked out because they don't care about the services which have been disrupted and will continue to be disrupted and could get even worse if these strikes keep going on. They don't care. They are not bothered about service. They claim they are. They might cry they are. They might say all sorts of things, but you know as well as I by walking out of that door they are saying, "We don't care about the services of the people. We are more bothered about protecting our Government. We don't want to debate stuff which might affect our Government." Michael, I am pleased to see you are here. John I know is staying because he ---

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I am not in the pension scheme, so ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I'm not in the pension scheme. But I am pleased to see you here. John, well, he has been in opposition for 24 years, so it is no different for John. (Laughter) You know, it is great. It is lovely to see you, John, and it is great to continue the way you are going but, Michael, don't ever say this is not a fight between Government and our employees, and I don't like being pig in the middle. That's what they are doing to us. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: My Lord Mayor, I wasn't down to speak on this but I really am, I suppose, incensed. I look incensed, you can tell that, can't you? Like everybody ---

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I have never seen him aggravated in his life.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Members will recall, I think all of us must have received a letter, several letters, from our employees asking us what our view was on the proposals which effectively removed from our employees some of the conditions that they had been hoping to have when they retired, and I wrote back and I said, "When people sign up for a pension scheme, whoever they are, they should expect to get that pension scheme. They shouldn't expect to pay in for 30 years and then

suddenly be told, 'You can't have that.'

Now, that applies to the private sector, it applies to the public sector, and I think I am consistent on that, and in fact the Government have been consistent on that too. They have actually proposed to do this, as they are proposing with our employees with a whole range of people: civil servants, yes: teachers, yes: judges, yes. But those groups of people have said, "No, we don't think that is fair", and they have argued with Government and one or two of them have threatened to strike, etc., and in fact the Government has changed their mind and the Government have back-pedalled on that. The Government have said, "Okay, existing Members to a scheme keep their rights", and I think everybody accepts that, and Les has touched on the point that times change and if you are new into a scheme you must accept that that is the scheme you are joining.

But this particular group of people seem to have been left out of that, and I feel this is so unfair to them. We have people who have worked for us for 30, 40 years. In fact, if you look on the website we have got a list of people who, between them, have got 150 years unbroken service: they haven't had a day off, and what is the good of saying to them, "Well, yes, well done, thanks for coming in for 150 years but we are still going to take some pension away from you". Now, it is just patently not fair.

I don't really know why we have only got two people from the Labour Group here. We can all speculate about that, but I will tell you this, when I get the next letter from one of our employees who says, "Will you support us in our fight to keep our pensions?" I shall write back to them and say exactly what I said last time, "Yes, I support you. If it is a new entrant to the scheme I think you have to look at the approach differently, but existing members of the scheme should get what they signed up for" and I will say that I stood up in Council and said that, and I stood up and the Members of the Conservative Group listened to me, and the Members of the Liberal Democrat Group listened to me, and the Morley Independents listened to me and the Independents listened to me. Unfortunately --- Oh, sorry, the Greens listened to me - there's that many in this Council - it used to be okay when there was two or three parties - but the members of the Labour Party didn't listen to me. Why? Because they went out of the room. I am not going to say why I think they went out of the room, I will leave that up to our employees to work out why they went out of the room and why they can't say what we are going to say today which is, "It is not fair. Change it." (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: That is altogether too subtle for me, Colin, altogether a bit too generous, but I repeat what I said. The Labour Group, with the exception of Councillors Illingworth and Lyons, have behaved gutlessly in the face of the serious problem facing this Council, and they have used a pathetic technicality, and I go over the same point again. The legal advice we were given was it is personal and prejudicial if the public would think that by us taking a certain course of action in here we were personally gaining by it. We clearly are not gaining by discussing

this issue.

Now, everybody has said, and I won't, of course everybody has sympathy for our employees. That is the point but, as everybody else who has spoken has said, times do move on and pension funds right across the country are in all sorts of difficulty, but what is really unfair about this situation is that we know that the West Yorkshire Pension Fund is properly funded. That is what is unfair.

Now, one is bound on this point to speculate, and it is worth speculating. Is it possible that a pension fund supporting all the public sector workers in West Yorkshire - it is a huge pension fund - is it possible that the Treasury don't know that that pension fund is properly funded? It is speculation, but I am prepared to say they must know it is properly funded. Therefore, what is behind what they are saying? Well, and it is speculation but this is what I fear: First of all, the 85 year rule will be removed; because it is removed it puts the pension fund into surplus. What happens next? We are told, "Well, because it is in surplus we had better take a pension holiday and not pay into the pension fund, and that, Council, is a saving and we expect you to make that saving." Mark my words, I can see it coming a mile off. That is the road that we going to be forced down. It is iniquitous. It is wrong. The whole situation is patently avoidable.

I say again, our employees ought not to be put in this position and we ought not to be put in this position, the people of Leeds ought not to be put into this position. We are all innocent victims because of the completely unprincipled, ruthless behaviour of the Labour Government in London and it won't do.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Recorded vote.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Recorded vote, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: We have been asked for a recorded vote. The Chief Executive.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Would all Members please refer to their appropriate desk units and press the button marked "P" in order to activate the unit. Those Members in favour of the motion in the name of Councillor Harris should press the "+" button. Those against that motion should press the "-" button, and any Member wishing to abstain and have their abstention recorded should please press the "0" button.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: He is voting twice up there.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I have moved my seat. (Interruptions)

THE LORD MAYOR: Please, Members of Council. With 48 Members present and

voting, 46 voted for and 2 voted against. Therefore the White Paper motion is carried.

ITEM 14 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - NHS FUNDING

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Lord Mayor, when I came into politics I hoped that thought one day I would introduce (inaudible) at 10 o'clock on a Wednesday night with nobody listening. This is the peak of my career. Make it short, right.

This is the first debate we have had on the National Health Service apart from the preliminary report on fire precautions from Councillor Finnigan, for a long time. The Labour Party, who were so keen to tell us what they were going to do before they came into power, they don't want to talk about it. Not the slightest doubt if the Tories were in power, the National Health Service would be on the agenda every time. If it was going in the direction it is going now, we would be talking about it every week.

I think we ought to talk about the real National Health Service in the real world as it appears, and not the media-release world. Some things have got bigger (inaudible), some things have grown under Labour. The number of press releases and guidance notes issued to doctors under Labour is greater than ever before. In the real world, there is a freeze on non-essential equipment in some parts of St. James's Hospital.

Labour invented Primary Care Trusts. Now it is disbanding them. It has cost millions. In the real world 20,000 people in Leeds are looking for a dentist. Which would you rather have, a PCT or a dentist?

Labour has presided over a quantum leap in the number of hit squads of accountants who fill up the car parks of the hospitals with BMWs. Inside the buildings all over England operations are being postponed.

Shortly after he came to power, Tony Blair presided at a press conference to announce the introduction of NHS Direct, a very sensible, modern use of technology. Many people in Leeds would find it very useful. Now, 1,000 people including nurses are to be made redundant at NHS Direct. I don't see Mr. Blair presiding at the press conference to launch the closure of eight call centres.

Who said about the NHS, "We need to make sure services are available for an ever-increasing population? I and my fellow ward colleagues have been inundated with requests for a new surgery" - Councillor Iqbal, February 27th in the Evening Post. That is a clear indication we don't think we need one. The Health Service in Leeds are not reaching the right people.

Roger's amendment is straight out of Patricia Hewitt's greatest hits. 1,000 extra doctors in Yorkshire. Well, doctors aren't like Councillors that you can get off the shelf, put them in office and they are up and working in a few weeks. Doctors

take 6 or 7 years to train. Every doctor who is starting to at least 2005 started training when John Major was Prime Minister - nothing that the Labour Party could create doctors.

Roger says 2,000 extra nurses. What has that cost the health services in Kenya, and Trinidad and Poland and the Philippines? Perhaps you should have Fair Trade in nurses, Roger.

Nothing in the Labour amendment deals with the second half of this White Paper. If you don't know what that means, I will tell you. All National Health Service research and development funding is to be taken back to the centre, away from local centres to the Department of Health in London and merged with all the funding of the Medical Research Council. Instead of Leeds Teaching Hospitals being responsible for their own clinical research programme, they will have to bid to London for their fair share, and there are going to be 10 major centres for medical research and five of those are certainly going to be in London. One is almost certain to be in Cambridge, one is almost certain to be in Manchester and probably only three in the rest of the country. If we pass this resolution, the Leeds Teaching Hospitals Trust will be able to say uniquely among the cities of England, the Leeds bid has the full support of its City Council. I will leave it at that, because it is 10 past 10 or whatever. Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. I move the White Paper. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR KIRKLAND: My Lord Mayor, perhaps I had better explain that this is water.

When I was about to become Lord Mayor, I retired and I haven't done any National Health Service work at all since, that is 8 years ago, and I actually first started in the Health Service in 1954, so that is over 50 years ago.

Now, I have nothing but praise for the hard work and dedication of the staff at every level of the Health Service. Often they are under very severe strain. They often don't know what the future holds for them, but they work their socks off to make damn sure that the patients get the very best possible deal, not just in Leeds but right across the country, and to do that the Health Service relies on their goodwill.

Unfortunately, that goodwill is being undermined, particularly in the last few months, starting in a hospital in Staffordshire, which I happened to work for for nearly 3 years, when they suddenly found out they were £10 million-plus in the red, and up to 2,000 staff could get their P45s, and then it followed right across the country, and as Health Trusts declare their accounts for the last financial year in the near future this is going to be repeated time and time again in the next 2 or 3 months.

It is not just the fact that there is a shortage of money. I can tell you that

you could double the amount of money and there would still be a shortage. If you think of all the hospitals that have been closed and all the services they provided, you realise that there is a lot of services which could be replaced, and it is not just hospitals either. Primary care has got problems. The mental health sector has got problems. Dentistry has got big problems, and all the ancillary services have problems, too, and this applies to the residents of Leeds, to the region and the country, and they are bemused. They thought everything was going along swimmingly and then suddenly everything seemed to fall down like a pack of cards, and the impression has been given that the NHS is going down the pan, and it is all sudden and it is all unexpected, and this isn't a woof, woof, woof story, like we have had on one White Paper this evening. It is the real account of real Health Trusts and it is a real threat to real jobs.

Primary care in my area is teetering on the brink of a crisis - lack of funding. Now, it is the Leeds Primary Care Trust, but the service is run by the North Yorkshire and Tyne-Tees Ambulance Service and it has been run from Otley for 10 or 11 years and it is about to start being run from Harrogate, and the story that the spin doctors are putting out is that if you ring for a doctor you used to be able to go to Otley Hospital or the doctor would come and see you, no problem, but now the doctor will be based at Harrogate Hospital and in theory the doctor is going to come and see the patients. Now, can you imagine that doctor traipsing from Harrogate to Otley 4, 5, 6 times a night ad infinitum? Well, I cannot, and in fact what will happen is that the patients will have to go to Harrogate.

Now, the bus companies have just taken the buses off and First Bus is just about to take the evening bus off during the week as well, so you have got double problems there. Ask a consultant at the hospital and he will say, "Tell us what you want and we will get on and do it. In the meantime, stop messing us about" because, just as in Education, there is a new set of rules every week, the same thing is happening in the Health Service. The managers are managing but they are managing it far too much and, instead of letting somebody find out what they are supposed to be doing and letting them get on with it, they are interfering. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I second. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harington to move an amendment.

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: Lord Mayor, I must apologise to the speaker. Our system did not work very well at the start of your speech before we came back in, so if I missed any points I am sorry. But certainly you said a lot of things, you highlighted obviously some very real difficulties and I can't pretend that they are not there.

Councillor Kirkland said that it is not just about funding. I know it is not, and I am sure that if you got in touch with any of the PCTs they would be very happy to show you on the ground the services that are so excellently happening and able to show you that managers are often doing excellent -- or most often doing a most

wonderful job in enabling the service to be delivered.

But Peter's motion does actually talk about funding so, surprise, surprise, I am just going to point out some obvious facts, that in 1997-1998 the funding was £34.7 billion for the NHS. It went up to £69.7 billion in 2004/5 and it has gone up to £92 billion, or will do, in 2007/2008, so it will nearly have trebled. Also the amount spent on each person has gone up or will have gone up from £903 to £1300.

What has that meant for Leeds? Well, you have got a handy list. Peter was very dismissive of the list of things that it has meant, but there you are. If you ignore it, you are too much like the Judean National Front in, "Life of Brian" who, if you remember, asked of the government, "What have the Romans ever done for us?" Well, it is a bit like, "Well, what has the Government ever done for the NHS?" "Well, all they have done is produce all these new centres." "I know. What else have they done?" "Well, a £220 million Oncology Wing." So not to give the whole picture is simply not to be honest.

In addition, you mentioned research. Well, of course, research doesn't just come from the NHS. As you say, it comes from the Medical Council and also drugs companies, but in the last 5 or 6 years of which you are talking about underfunding, it clearly hasn't been; research money has gone up £20 million.

So it is too late in the night to debate this in great detail. I just want to say that this motion is very inaccurate in the picture that it is giving you, that if you look at the amendment of it that is saying that there has not been underfunding, that hasn't prejudiced the research gone to Leeds Teaching Hospitals in the last few years, and there is no reason why we should not be, and with the funding in place with £226 billion extra for the NHS this year in Yorkshire and £533 million for Yorkshire as a whole, that means that there is secure investment and that Leeds Teaching Hospitals will continue as a major centre of clinical research in the country. I move the amendment in my name. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: My Lord Mayor, very conscious of the time. I have to say when I first read this White Paper coming from Councillor Harrand, I had to wonder whether it was an early April Fool joke coming through.

Councillor Harington has pointed out the massive increase in funding under the Labour Government which will by 2008 have trebled. Also if you are talking about problems of funding, the notion that there were not any deficits under the Tories is an absolute nonsense. In fact, the deficits in 1997 were running at 1.5%, which is actually higher than the deficits that are running at the moment.

Can I just ask any of you who you would think in May 2002 voted against increase in funding to the NHS through increased National Insurance contributions? I will give you one guess. It was David Cameron. Remember, he

had his signature all over it, the famous Tory flagship Patients' Passport Scheme - suddenly abandoned after the election. Well, what are your policies now, Peter? I don't know if you actually know, because I certainly have not got a clue.

What I do know is that on budget day this year in 2006 Teresa Villiers, if you have ever heard of her - she is actually the Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury - actually admitted on Sky News that the proposed Tory fiscal rules, that Cameron's so-called proceeds of growth actually will mean that the Tories will spend far less than Labour on the Health Service and, taken together with the proposed flat tax, the cut to public spending is predicted to be billions, using current figures. Can you say the NHS would be safe in their hands? No, I do not think so.

We have got some real, tangible improvements, Peter. No patient is waiting longer than 6 months. Can you all remember the annual winter beds crisis and people waiting on trolleys, the cuts to operations, and all of those things that have now moved on? There are 79,000 more nurses in the country now and over 27,000 more doctors. I am sorry you are so cynical about this, Peter.

We had, as Roger says, seen the biggest ever hospital-building programme in this country, £220 million on the Oncology Wing at St. James's. A brand new £20 million Wharfedale Hospital. £26 million being spent on major reconfigurations in Leeds alone, and there is much, much more in our communities and all the work that is changing towards Primary Care, walk-in centres, etc., etc. Of course, this translates into real progress in the country. We have got premature deaths from cancer down by 14%, premature deaths from heart disease down 31.4% - both ahead of the targets that this Government have set. These are real results. This is real progress in patient care in this country.

Peter, you said that you want to support the bid for research that is coming through Leeds. Well, I find it strange the way that you have put the question-mark over the possibility of the Leeds Hospital Trust to bid for that money, and I have to say that if you talk to the Trust - I know you have and you have talked to them on this issue - the academic medical centres are not the only way to draw money down from the centre, and if you actually talk to the people responsible for research and development you will know that there are other ways coming through.

The crucial part of making services better in this City is through the change to community services, the shift from secondary to primary care, as described in the White Paper, "Our health, our care are safe".

Peter, I will never forget the debate in Council last time when you were more concerned about the exposure of your cuts to home care and to vulnerable older people in this City than the actual fact that they were happening, and you were trying to deny that they were happening. All of us in our communities know

that they have happened to people, and we all know people who have been affected by it.

I would suggest, Councillor Harrand, that you concentrate on the job you have been given in this Council and work to restore (Interruptions) that you and your administration have imposed (Interruptions) on the vulnerable (Interruptions)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blake, I shall ask them to remove you if you don't sit down. I have to say that was the most disgraceful behaviour I have experienced in my year of office. I understood there was an agreement by the Opposition Group that they would support the Lord Mayor in his determination. On an issue like this, if I ask you to sit down, you sit down. A very, very disappointed person I am, I must tell you.

COUNCILLOR BALE: My Lord Mayor, the underfunding of the Health Service at the point of delivery is painfully apparent. It is apparent to patients denied Saturday morning surgeries, unable to find an NHS dentist. It is apparent to professionals unable to find jobs on graduation, even though their skills are needed, and it is apparent from news headlines on NHS Trust deficits and job redundancies every day of the week.

So are Roger and Judith lying when they say that Labour has put more money into the Health Service? No, they are not. As usual, they are simply looking through the wrong end of the telescope. To mix the metaphor, Labour is pouring more money into the Health Service and it trickles down slowly, nourishing successive levels of bureaucracy, target-setting, strategising and childish initiatives.

I had a blood sample taken the other day. The phlebotomist said, who was right at the end of her career, in her sixties. She said, "I am going on a course tomorrow on hand-washing. I have been a phlebotomist all my life", she said. "I wouldn't mind but this is the second hand-washing course I have been sent on in the last 18 months."

So what comes out at the bottom, Lord Mayor, in the form of improved services is pitifully small compared with what has gone in at the top. With Socialism it was ever thus - high taxation, high public spending, inferior services and bureaucrats valued more than the professionals who deliver service.

There is, Lord Mayor, an instructive comparison between the National Health Service and this administration in Leeds. We believe what the professionals tell us. We trust the professionals to get on with the job, so we are able to improve services, more PCSOs, more spending on Social Services not less, more, more spending on road maintenance and keeping Council Tax down. Labour's management of the Health Service, as you full well know, pours more money in, yes, has raised spending almost to European norms but has not

improved the service to patients, as we see painfully every day of the week.
Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: (Inaudible) Patients need to be told why there are debts of hundreds of millions of pounds and why thousands of staff face the axe.
Thank you. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Lord Mayor, in the first week of March this year all the PCTs in Leeds, the Mental Health Trust and the acute hospitals received a letter from the Strategic Health Authority telling them they had to immediately cut 2.5% off their budgets - no debate, no consideration, no exchange of information. As from that date, 2.5% had to come off. That was sent to the SHA - who elected them? - who then decide where this money is to be spent. A straight 2.5% cut of their budgets without any consideration at all.

I wish the Health Service in Leeds was as you wish it was as well. You are anaesthetized to the problem, you don't see it. John has got it exactly right. It is fine in theory, your White Paper is in Patricia Hewitt's office, but in the real world trying to find a dentist, trying to find somebody to come out to see you, a doctor to come out and see you, in the real world it has never been as disappointing - not as bad - as far away from the theory as it is at present.

I think you have got a bit of a problem now with how you are going to vote, because our vote refers to supporting the Teaching Hospitals Trust in its, we hope, successful bid to get the chair of the National Research and Development Fund. Yours doesn't mention that. Now, you can either vote for your amendment and not say anything about the Mental Health Trust or vote for my original motion and acknowledge that there is a serious problem in research and development in the City. But see which way you go. I move the White Paper, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, a recorded vote on the amendment.

THE LORD MAYOR: Another recorded vote. Who was the seconder?

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: I am.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Would Councillor Lyons ensure that he is in his two allocated seats, please! (Laughter)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: (Inaudible) that £10,000. Being a granddad now, he'll need every penny of it.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Would all Members ensure, please, they are in their allocated seats and press the button marked "P" to activate their desk units.
Those Members in favour of the amendment in the name of Councillor Harington

please press the "+" button. Those Members against that amendment, please press the "-" button. Any Member wishing to abstain and have their abstention recorded, please press the "0" button.

THE LORD MAYOR: We have a result. Of those Members present

MEMBER OF COUNCIL: Lord Mayor, we misheard what was said.

(Interruptions) I heard the word "Harrand", not "Harington". It must be the acoustics.

COUNCILLOR J. L. CARTER: I thought we were old fellows over here.

COUNCILLOR A. CARTER: Speak for yourself. (Interruptions)

THE LORD MAYOR: Alright, we had not quite completed the totalling and so we have now got a correct figure of 79 Members present, 32 voted "Yes", 2 abstained and 45 voted "No", and therefore the amendment is lost.

We now go to the vote on the original motion.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: My Lord Mayor, can I request a recorded vote.

THE LORD MAYOR: Certainly. Why not? We have done it all night. A further recorded vote. (Interruptions)

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Taking it that all Members are in their allocated seats, would they please press the button marked "P" to activate their desk unit. Those Members in favour of what is now the motion in the name of Councillor Harrand - Harrand - please press the "+" button. Those Members against that motion, please press the "-" button. Any Member wishing to abstain and have their abstention recorded please press the "0" button.

THE LORD MAYOR: We have got it now. Of Members present 79, 49 voted in favour, 1 abstained and 29 voted against. The motion is therefore carried.

That concludes the items on the agenda for this evening's Council Meeting. Thank you very much for those who stayed, and the best of luck to everybody and we will meet again - some of us will meet again - at the Annual Meeting of Council. Thank you.

(Council rose at 10.30 p.m.)