

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2006

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
CIVIC HALL, LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR  
(Councillor M Iqbal)

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21<sup>st</sup> JUNE 2006

THE LORD MAYOR: Members of Council, Members of the public, good afternoon. First of all I have got a few announcements to make.

The death of Honorary Alderman J Astle, JP, who died on 18th July 2006.

Also, to congratulate Jane Tomlinson for her epic eight week cycle journey across America. Jane, who was given the Freedom of the City of Leeds in May 2005, started on 29th June from San Francisco and completed the 4,200 miles to New York on 1st September. We congratulate her on her achievement and welcome her back to her adopted city. (*Hear, hear. Applause*)

Another good announcement. We have our Councillor William Hyde and Pat Hyde. I would like to congratulate them on their 50th wedding anniversary. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HYDE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am sure I am not that old. I am told I am!

THE LORD MAYOR: Another special announcement. The success of Leeds and its communities in this year's Yorkshire in Bloom competition in the ceremony that took place in Bradford on 5th September, and the fact that Leeds and Beeston have been nominated to represent Yorkshire in the national Britain in Bloom competition. (*Applause*)

Can I invite Councillor Frank Robinson, Chairman of Yorkshire in Bloom, to say a few words.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Indeed, permission to speak on Yorkshire in Bloom is a great privilege and I must say at the meeting that our Lord Mayor attended, he was up and down on his feet time after time again, far in excess of any other Lord Mayor in Yorkshire. We were really proud and I know he himself was very proud to receive all these.

The extent of the list of our winners – if I just could read a few of them. In the small village we have Ledston a bronze, Ledston Luck a silver, we have got villages, Oulton gained a silver. In the large village we have Barwick-in-Elmet silver gilt, Great and Little Preston a bronze, Micklefield silver, Scholes a silver, Shadwell gold, gold and category winner, the very best.

On the urban communities we have got Beeston silver gilt and, as we have heard they are going to represent Yorkshire in the Britain in Bloom. Calverley silver, Guiseley silver.

Small country towns Kippax silver, Swillington bronze. The other town Wetherby silver gilt, Horsforth bronze, Morley silver, Otley silver, Rothwell Silver and there is a whole list of other areas like Rose Centre, Tropical World and others that have all received gold and silver awards. I am really, really pleased that Leeds made gold because that means, as we have heard, going to the Nationals next year and that is a most prestigious event. Leeds will be at the forefront of all the United Kingdom entries. What it means is that we bring in everybody who we have already mentioned to ensure the success of Leeds and, of course, we need the resources. I must make a plea for that, otherwise my target of gold in Britain in Bloom will not be achieved, so we must find it. It is going for gold. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Members. We will now proceed with the Council business but before that just a little reminder, if you have not switched your telephones off or any electrical equipment device, I would be happy to receive contributions towards the Lord Mayor's Charity. I am still waiting for the second contribution.

ITEM 1 – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19th JULY 2006

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 1, Councillor Proctor.

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the Minutes be received.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor, seconded.

THE LORD MAYOR: All in favour? Any against? Any abstentions?  
AGREED.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 2. Can I announce that the list of written declaration submissions by Members is on display in the anteroom, on deposit in public galleries and has been circulated to each Member's place in the Chamber. Are there any further individual declarations or corrections to those notified on the list?

COUNCILLOR : Item 11, I am a Member of the South Leeds  
ALMO.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR LATTY: I should have been listed as a Director of North-East Leeds ALMO and I declare that as a personal interest.

COUNCILLOR BLACKBURN: In relation to the White Paper on Social Care, my mother is in receipt of social care.

COUNCILLOR FOX: Item 9, my Lord Mayor, I am a governor of Leeds College of Technology.

COUNCILLOR MRS BLACKBURN: I am a Director of Leeds West ALMO.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Item 9, Lord Mayor, I am on the Priestly Board as a governor, the college..

COUNCILLOR ELLIOTT: I am a Member of the (*inaudible*) Item 11.

THE LORD MAYOR: Any other declarations? Can I have by show of hands to confirm that they have read the list, or the list as amended, and agreed its contents insofar as they relate to their own interests? Everybody in favour? Almost. Thank you.

#### ITEM 3 – COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 3, Chief Executive.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: There are no communications to report, Lord Mayor.

#### ITEM 4 - DEPUTATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 4, Chief Executive again.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. There are four deputations. The first is the Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange; the second the Right to Rent Campaign; the third local residents concerned about Rein Road Quarry in Morley; and fourthly and lastly the Queenshill and Lingfield Estate Residents.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Mr Rogerson. Councillor Proctor.

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the deputations be received.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we have votes, please? All in favour? Any against? Any abstentions? Thank you. CARRIED. Can we have the first deputation, please?

### DEPUTATION ONE

#### LEEDS GYPSY AND TRAVELLER EXCHANGE

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which must be no longer than five minutes.

HELEN JONES: Lord Mayor and Councillors, I am Helen Jones. I am the Director of Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange and I am accompanied by two committee members from Leeds GATE, Michelle and Maureen Baker.

Can we guess, perhaps, the images that come to mind knowing you were going to hear a deputation regarding gypsies and travellers? Are you bored already, expecting to hear about the Race Relations Amendment Act or the Human Rights Act? Are you expecting apologists for bad behaviour? You are not going to get any of that. What you are going to get is a solution.

We are here not because of Acts of Parliament but because of the reality that affects people's daily lives. On a regular basis Leeds residents and electors are denied access to places of work and leisure by the presence of unauthorised encampments. The Local Authority, local business and the police annually spend vast sums of money moving the problem from one doorstep to another, leaving totally unresolved issues of fly tipping, antisocial behaviour,

desperate poor health, poor education and causing increasing race hatred between communities.

Councillors are doubtless aware that harmonious communities is a key theme at the moment. Gypsy people have been in and around Leeds since the 1500s. Irish travellers built parts of this city and subsequent generations remain here today. There are many more gypsy and traveller people living in Leeds than just those who live on the roadsides. They are not going anywhere. This town is their home.

Yet we do not accept the gypsy problem as being our problem and we certainly do not accept gypsy and Irish traveller people as being ours.

Despite being aware of living in a global world and accepting that we are all connected to one another, we push this problem around as if it will somehow disappear, regardless of the consequences for our constituents and our neighbours. We go so far as to pay for a Gypsy Traveller Services Department to manage the problem like some sort of pest control but we do not enable that department to get on with the work that would solve the problem. Is there any other group of Leeds residents, constituents and potential voters that we view in this way? Is there any other problem where we resolutely refuse to accept the solution, preferring instead to put up with endless vast expense?

We told you early on that you brought with us the solution and you already know what it is. Our own Local Authority Scrutiny Enquiry has repeatedly identified the need for further sites within Leeds. So, if we know what the solution is, why do we not take action?

A vocal number of local people do not want sites in their area. Why not? Because when they think of gypsies or Irish travellers, they remember the last photograph in the Yorkshire Evening Post of their local Councillor standing next to piles of rubbish demanding tougher powers to move the problem. Or perhaps they think of the sprawling 41 pitch Cottingley Springs and imagine something of



that size along with no extra services landing in the field next door. Perhaps it is images of frightening, strange men in transit vans or the injustice of Council Tax being spent on providing luxury for people who apparently do not pay rent, tax, Council Tax and water rates.

We are not going to start quoting Acts of Parliament but perhaps we can remind you of the obligations, threats and opportunities presented by the new planning system, particularly the Local Development Framework.

The obligation contained within it with regard to gypsies and travellers is that the Local Authority must carry out detailed assessments of accommodation need amongst gypsies and travellers within its districts. Indeed, it must go further than just assessing need. It must provide details ultimately as specific as post codes as to which actual pieces of ground can be used either by the Council or by another party to address that accommodation need. We have known for over a year that these obligations were upon us and nationally many are under way. However, here in Leeds we have not made a start, tying ourselves up instead with arguments about whether it should be done locally or sub-regionally.

It is as though a site being built in Kirklees or Halifax, where there are currently none, would put an end to encampments here. Let us assure you that it would not. The threat which this presents is the possibility that if it is not done properly or not done at all, a planning inspector can reject any and all other plans.

The opportunities. We can, if we work together, put a final end to the running sore of unauthorised encampments in unsuitable places which cost the local economy well-rehearsed thousands of pounds every year, without providing any sort of solution – this despite there being 100% grants available from national government so the solution could potentially cost virtually nothing.

Gypsies and Irish travellers in Leeds suffer a life expectancy of 50 years of age. Their children are amongst the worst educated and experience tells them that there is nothing to gain in being polite to neighbours whose only wish is to see them gone. We can change this.

The obligations are yours. What we came here today to say is that we can help. Leeds Gypsy and Traveller Exchange is a nationally respected organisation with a reputation for positive pragmatism. We can help you to have the conversation with your local electorate that leads to happy, harmonious communities living alongside one another with security and respect.

We can open the door to dialogue with a wide range of travelling people who want also to live in harmony with their neighbours. We can help you to address the issues of rubbish and sanitation which so upset your constituents. We can show you that gypsy and Irish traveller people are already a part of our society, making a steady contribution to our local economy and culture.

It is time to open the door to gypsy and Irish traveller people, to be part not just of our society but of our harmonious community. We can help but it is up to elected Members to give the lead, without which we remain on the same old, expensive treadmill and risk the regeneration plans which will benefit all Leeds residents. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Proctor.

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: Lord Mayor, thank you. I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for further consideration.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All in favour? Any against? Any abstentions?  
CARRIED. Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which will be given to your comments. Thank you and good afternoon.

DEPUTATION TWO  
RIGHT TO RENT CAMPAIGN

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please, you have five minutes to make your speech and no longer than that. Thank you.

REPRESENTATIVE FROM RIGHT TO RENT CAMPAIGN: Thank you. We are here today to seek your support for Leeds Tenants' Federation's Right to Rent Campaign. We welcome the power that Leeds City Council has given to the development of more affordable housing in the city. We recognise the need for households to have access to low cost home ownership. We believe very strongly that people need a full range of housing options but what is happening in Leeds today is that there are less opportunities for people to get affordable, rented housing.

In 1981 there were 101,000 social rented homes in Leeds. By 2005 this had fallen to 74,000. More than 36,000 Council homes have been lost through right to buy or demolition. Less than 10,000 housing association homes have been built during this period. The net loss has been almost 27,000 affordable rented homes.

In recent years housing association new build has slowed. Less than 200 new, affordable rented homes are being built each year. At current levels of building it will take 83 years to return to the levels of social housing we had in 1995. If current trends continue, there will only be 5,000 social housing lettings available by 2016.

The dwindling supply of rented homes is increasing competition and frustration. Our campaign is uncovering hidden horror stories. Stories like these have been sent to Leeds Tenants' Federation.

“I have been trying to get a transfer since July 2005. I only have general needs, despite having three girls under 14 and a stepson aged 21 with cystic fibrosis, who sleeps on the sofa in the living room.”

Another one:

“I have been on the Leeds Housing Register since October 2004 and supposedly priority since October 2005. I am living in a two-bedroom back to back house, currently sharing one bedroom with my 17-year old daughter and 11-year old son while my sister and her daughter occupy the second bedroom.”

There are currently 31,000 people on the Leeds Housing Register. Homes in the most popular areas attract 500 competing bids. By 2016 it is likely that 83% of all lettings will go to the Priority Extra category. As a result, more vulnerable homeless families are being put in the private rented sector. Home ownership is out of reach of most households on low income. To buy the cheapest back-to-back in Leeds a couple would need to earn just over £22,000 but the average dual income for low paid in Leeds is just over £19,000 a year. The forecast for the Leeds economy shows that the main growth will be in the low paid service sector. These people are likely to find it almost impossible to buy.

We call on Leeds City Council to create a more balanced housing ladder in this city, one that meets the needs of the growing population of Leeds. We call on you to support the Leeds Tenants’ Federation’s Right to Rent Campaign. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Proctor.

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All in favour? Any against? Any abstentions?  
CARRIED. Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which will be given to your comments. Good afternoon.

### DEPUTATION THREE

#### LOCAL RESIDENTS CONCERNED ABOUT THE REIN ROAD QUARRY, MORLEY

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which must be no longer than five minutes.

TOWN COUNCILLOR A SLINGSBY: I am allowed to speak now? Yes. I am Councillor Albert Slingsby, Member for Elmfield Ward in which this quarry exists. What I would just like to start off with is that the road to the quarry via Rein Road started off as a cars only access to a fireplace showroom. Stone was originally taken from Britannia Quarries up to the saw mill by an antiquated railway prior to the Howley Park trading estate. There was a cart road to the Britannia Quarries between Tingley House Farm and the Howley Estate, but the owner of Howley Park industrial estate, a Mr Pullen, stopped this when he built this Howley Park East Road, because he did not want the quarry wagons dirtying his estate.

I have got dates from wagons – it is maybe not in alphabetical order. Dates from wagons not using the wheel wash, because Leeds Council says that the wheel wash is effective. I do not know whether it is effective or not, because it is clogged up with silt, but I have just taken a record of four vehicles

that the wheels was dry but mud stuck on the sides. I have got all the dates – Saturday 26th, Tuesday 29th, this week, 12th September. I have got the times of when they come out. The wheels are dry but there is mud falling off because they just have not used the wheel wash, because the operators provide the wheel wash, probably they are trying to do their best.

I feel the operators are between a rock and a hard place. The owner of the quarry appears to be getting away Scot free with him stopping wagons coming out, and this is the basic problem, wagons coming out on to Rein Road instead of coming out on to the A650, which was the road chosen after they finished with the railway.

I have two letters in conflict with each other. One Council officer, an environment officer, she attended the quarry and on the day she was there she admitted there was large amounts of dust being kicked up by the operation.

Then we have another officer who comes and appears to have rose tinted glasses on, because he says there is no dust. This officer came and he said there was no dust, he could see no dust, operators were doing their best idea. If he saw no problems he must have been wearing rose tinted glasses and he said the equivalent of Lord Nelson – “What dust? I see no dust.”

He also stated there were local residents living nearby and not associated with each other who had no problems at all with the quarry and no problems with dust. I would like these two local residents to come to our Action Group meetings – they are open to anybody – and explain the secret, because one of them, his neighbour, he has had to put that sponge, draught excluder, round his wardrobe upstairs in his bedroom to stop stone dust getting on this clothes in his wardrobe in his bedroom. I fail to see how somebody can live next door and say that there is no problem.

Leeds Council says they have no jurisdiction on Road Traffic Act and is enforced by the police. I have asked the police in Morley, I have rung up, I

went to Holbeck Police Station and the police say obstruction is their only remit and they will not get involved. I would like to ask the question, is this Road Traffic Act, is it like horse manure – if you kick it about long enough will it lose itself?

I rung Holbeck Police Station up, I had photographs for proof. There were 20 or 30 yards of road showered with stone. I rung the police up, they said it is a health matter. I had already asked them what part of the Highways Act was to do with them. They said, “While we are talking, vehicles are getting damaged.” I said, “While we are talking humans can be getting damaged.”

This lady said she would ring emergency highways to clear these fallen stones up. On the Saturday it was cleaned up, so whoever cleaned it up I do not know.

At the court case in Leeds on 15th June 2006, I was concerned at the lack of Leeds Council Enforcement Officers and Morley South City Councillors. I can count the Councillors that have come to the actual Britannia Quarry officers, I can count them on my thumb. That is me. I am the only person and one resident who attended last year’s Residents Liaison Meeting down at the quarry offices on 27th September 2005.

In court I was able to muster two Rein Road residents to attend along with the three who actually live on Rein Road. Mr Harris asked Councillor Finnigan to try to get liaison meetings going again. I find that amusing as your officers and Councillor Finnigan were the first to drop out. I cannot recollect ever seeing any Morley South Councillors at the Britannia Quarry meetings.

*(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: If you could wind up, please. You have had an extra minute.

TOWN COUNCILLOR A SLINGSBY: These are their exhibits.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Thank you for your contribution.  
Councillor Proctor.

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All in favour? Any against? Any abstentions?  
CARRIED. Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which will be given to your comments. Good afternoon.

#### DEPUTATION FOUR

#### QUEENSHILL AND LINGFIELD ESTATE RESIDENTS CONCERNED

#### ABOUT RING ROAD SAFETY

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which must be no longer than five minutes.

DEBORAH HILL: Firstly I would just like to say 'Thank you' for sparing the five minutes so we can get our concerns across. I am Deborah Hill, a 33-year old mum to six children, whom I love and protect with all my heart. I am here today so I can make myself and others heard over safety issues in my local community, Moortown Ring Road area, between Queenshill Crescent and Lingfield Road, where myself and hundreds of others cross to use the six local schools, Open House Community Centre, a hair salon and public house and bus routes.

The danger of this road is that we cross just yards away with a bend which is very dangerous. The speed limit at present is 70 miles per hour. I



have used this route for the last 15 years. I am a people person and feel strongly about looking after the local community and keeping others safe as well as my own family.

November 2004 was a tragic time for a well-known local family to lose their teenage son on this particular road. Why such a high speed limit where houses only stand feet away? Why not a crossing, reduce speed sign, traffic lights, signs that flash to tell drivers to slow down? How many more of our children have to be injured or even killed before something is done?

Two months ago I started walking my children back to school again after an 18 month battle with cancer. To stand at a roadside for some days up to ten minutes with the poorest visibility I have ever seen and to add to the poorest visibility there is an overgrown tree which I have recently cut back so we can at least see the road. We stand there four, sometimes six times a day and run for our lives five days a week. I have fought for my life once – why should I risk it every day?

Myself and others in my community want action, not words. We want reduced speed limits to 40 miles per hour and traffic lights or a lollipop lady to make sure we can cross as safely as possible on this stretch of road.

One death is too many in my eyes and children have to cross that road to get to school. There are six schools, five junior and one high. Children as young as seven have been known to cross the road alone. As a parent myself this worries me. I feel it is about time we say enough is enough and we want to be heard, listened to and taken seriously as a community. Prevention is what we want and to make the road where we cross a safer place.

We will not be losing interest in this campaign until something is done and we see a result. We understand things do not happen overnight but 15 years down the line and we feel no nearer to safety now as we did then until today, and I hope this is the start of the safety being put into action.

Also, I came with a petition with over 300 signatures and letters from local people who too feel the same as myself. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Proctor.

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All in favour? Any against? Any abstentions?  
CARRIED. Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which will be given to your comments. Good afternoon.

#### ITEM 5 – REPORTS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 5. Councillor Proctor.

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move in terms of the notice.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All in favour? Any against? Any abstentions?  
CARRIED.

#### ITEM 6 – QUESTIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 6, Questions.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Will the Leader of Council please explain to Council why the local people in Beeston and Holbeck have not been consulted about the Council's proposal to site a casino in their neighbourhood?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. The Council is not promoting a casino in Beeston or Holbeck or, indeed, any other specific location in the city.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Lord Mayor, notwithstanding what Councillor Carter has just said, does he not agree that speculative pieces in the YEP do nothing to reassure local residents in Beeston and Holbeck that a deal has not already been done?

Will he give an assurance today that detailed consultations will take place with local residents before any plans are given the green light?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I realise that the Labour Party electioneering has to start very early this year. I would strongly suggest to Councillor Ogilvie that he speaks to his Member of Parliament, with whom I am keeping in close touch about the fact that the Council is seeking to secure a licence for a regional or large casino. You should listen carefully to this, Councillor Ogilvie, so you do not mislead your residents.

We are applying for a licence for a regional or large casino and we have made clear in our submissions to the Casino Advisory Panel that this will be delivered through an open competition to ensure that we select the most appropriate site and operator and maximise the benefits from such a scheme for the people of Leeds. It is not our choice that the government has chosen the vehicle of gambling to promote investment in the inner city and we could have a long debate about that.

The Council's original submission to the Panel identifies a number of locations in seeking to demonstrate that there are potential sites available. Our statement clearly indicates that we are aware of a number of proposals that are seeking to include a regional casino. The risk comprises Holbeck Urban Village, the Aire Valley and Elland Road. These are given as examples based on known developer operator interest and not – I repeat not – as sites promoted by this Council.

You should be aware as a Ward Member, Councillor Ogilvie, that the sites at Elland Road and Holbeck Urban Village have already been subjected to planning applications from developers. This is a matter entirely for the private sector to lead on such proposals and will be dealt with through the planning system. You would not expect me to comment on those individual plans and I do not intend to and I would strongly advise that you do not either.

These matters will be dealt with by the Plans Panel and obviously consultation with local residents will take place.

As regards an assurance on the wider issues, I can categorically assure all Members that if Leeds were to be successful in obtaining a licence for either a regional or large casino and if proposals started to move towards a particular site, there would be widespread consultation which we would regard as a matter of the utmost importance.

At the moment let me outline, Councillor Ogilvie, this Council is not promoting a casino in Beeston or Holbeck or, indeed, any other part of the city.  
*(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Would the Leader of Council care to comment on the effectiveness of the Government's Community Cohesion Strategy?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, it is some 13 months since the tragic events of the London bombings in July and the news a week after that that three of those bombers had come from Leeds. Since then there have been numerous initiatives locally and nationally to deal with the potential fall-out of all of that and the way in which Community Cohesion could be dealt with. I would be happy to talk about what we have done, but that is not the nature of the question I have been asked.

The Government's response, I have to say, has been ineffective and has not been well received in this city. That is a fact. I regard what they have done to have been a knee-jerk reaction to a very serious problem and their reaction has been ill thought out.

However, a week ago we were visited by three Ministers on the Community Cohesion tour of Britain to once more, as Hazel Blears had done before them a year ago, consult with people locally on the issue of Community Cohesion and what the government could do.

That event can only be described as a complete farce and disaster. The event began 30 minutes late, I am told because one of the three Ministers had not yet arrived because he had to have his hair cut. It is a fact. That is what his aide told me. I will not name the Minister – that is what his aide told me. That created enough disquiet amongst those who had attended.

That all three Ministers then consistently throughout the meeting persisted in checking their pagers to look at what messages they had received, rather than concentrating on comments being made, did not endear them to those Members of our city who had gone along in good faith to speak to them.

There was unanimous criticism of the process which the government has embarked upon with regard to its Community Cohesion Strategy and not one Minister was prepared to listen or take on board what was being said. Rather, everything but everything was batted away and fended off.

It is indicative, I think, of this increasing malaise and I have to say it was perhaps the same under a Conservative government. I have to say, were there ever a Lib Dem government, perhaps it would be the same with us but there is this staggering divide between the national and local government when national government seems incapable of understanding that we here at the grass roots in a city like this have a far deeper understanding of the issues that affect our citizens and particularly on the issues of Community Cohesion.

A year ago this city, excused the use of the word, could have exploded. The eyes of the world were on us and there were many press pundits who were saying that is what would happen. It did not. It did not because of the calmness of the people of Leeds and the calmness of all community leaders, all faith groups, the calmness of all local politicians, irrespective of party politics – well, bar one but he is not in the Chamber – and because of the hard work done by officers.

If national government wishes to embark upon a proper programme of Community Cohesion, then it is best done in consultation and in partnership with local government rather than the opposite, which is what they seem set upon doing. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hamilton, do you have a supplementary?

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: I do not have a supplementary.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: Can the Executive Member for 'Going up a League' please let me know the benefits of the recent concert at Roundhay Park?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I begin listing the benefits that we have accrued by thanking the staff of Parks and Countryside and Events for the magnificent way in which they ran their part of the organisation for the concert. They did an excellent job. I have been, I have to say, somewhat dismayed that some of the letters that have appeared in our august evening newspaper seem to have completely forgotten that we had staff working all the hours that God sends to make sure that the event passed off safely and enjoyably for over 170,000 over two nights. They did a terrific job. From what I am told from people who attended the concert – my wife being one – it was a splendid event.

Certainly everybody I have spoken to since was particularly complimentary about the way in which traffic management issues were handled.

If we truly seek, Lord Mayor, to go up a league in this city, being recognised as a place where we can stage major concerts by the top entertainers in the world, then you know there is going to be a bit of disruption and there certainly was a bit of disruption, but then there was when we had all the other concerts in Roundhay Park as well.

The simple fact is that the Yorkshire Tourist Board have estimated that up to £10m was injected into the Leeds economy over the weekend of those concerts. That is a massive amount of money. When you think that they estimate that it is nearer £3m for a Test Match at Headingley over a five day period, and we welcome that as great inward investment into our city, £10m over a weekend is phenomenal, particularly when a lot of that money is invested in smaller businesses who take advantage of the fact that so many people are going to be around to spend money on their premises.

Indeed, I think sometimes we should remind ourselves that unless we go up a league and improve everything that we do, we cannot close the gap. What comes first? What comes first is more investment into the city going into

the pockets of people who perhaps could not latch on to that investment unless we had events of the sort that we had with Robbie Williams.

Additionally, there was worldwide coverage. It was broadcast by Sky to 26 countries, 300m people could have seen those two concerts. Amazing.

Couple that with the fact that in the city now one of our Freemen is running the Leeds International Pianoforte Competition and you have heard from Councillor Robinson about our success with Britain in Bloom – all these things contribute to going up a league. It is essential if this city wants to prosper and wants to make sure that more and more people can be part of that prosperity, that we are able to stage successfully events like this.

The other point, Councillor Lobley, is this – it has underlined that there is an appetite for this sort of event in the city. It reinforces my belief that we need an arena. Nobody has an arena unless it is a football ground that you are going to get 70,000-odd people in, but we can compete with any other city in this country if we get an arena and that is another of the objectives of this administration.

There were a great many benefits and I will say to those people who suffered from short-term inconvenience, we understand that there are logistical problems, there will always be logistical problems. You have to weigh in the balance as to what the total investment for this city is over the period of time and how we can minimise next time and, indeed, every time the inconvenience that they suffer. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lobley, do you have a supplementary?

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: I do indeed. Would the Executive Member for 'Going up a League' like to comment on Fabian Hamilton's anger at the Council over school closures, please?



COUNCILLOR A CARTER: If I really must, Lord Mayor. I would have thought Fabian Hamilton MP was the last person to comment on education.

I seem to remember the various reports about his infamous meeting at the curry house. Many Members here will remember that. It seems to be something, Councillor Lobley, that he spread like a contagious disease in Parliament, because I read in the papers this Sunday that there had been various meetings of Labour MPs in curry houses over this past few weekends.

We will take no lectures from Mr Hamilton about delivering education in the city of Leeds. Of course, however, we have to look at what lessons have been learned and I am sure all of us would take on board the fact that it is the heads and the governors of schools who have to make a decision on the safety and the ability to get their pupils to and from their schools.

I think there may be a number of Members of Council who would scratch their heads and wonder why the schools have to be shut for perhaps so long and why we have known for 18 months this concert was coming, I think we do need to look at precisely how that was handled. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

*(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can the Executive Board Member for Development comment on the successful appeal which confirmed the Council's refusal of planning permission for the Britannia Road site in Morley?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I am sure, like you, Councillor Finnigan, I was delighted actually with the result of the enquiry. In my briefing note it says that originally planners, whilst very concerned about the loss of the industrial land, wondered how strong a case it would be at enquiry, so I am very pleased about the result, because what it underlines is the fact that we can be and, indeed, should be more robust in defending some of the industrial sites, particularly around the outer areas of the city. I think about Morley perhaps in particular but

also Otley, Pudsey, where virtually every old factory site is now being flagged up for housing.

Some of them, they are brown field sites. Some of them have to go for housing, but we need employment land based locally and I think that this inquiry underlines that where there is a strong enough case we can win it at appeal.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: By way of a supplementary, would Councillor Carter agree with me that it is power to the people in terms of a result as published in the Morley Ob. today?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I have it here, actually, Councillor Finnigan. Yes, a victory for common sense. I would thoroughly endorse that and congratulate you and your colleagues for the way in which you ran the campaign. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR RUSSELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Would the Executive Member responsible for City Services care to comment on what plans his Department has to reduce the environmental impact of its transport fleet?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The Department has a number of major projects in place to manage the environmental impact of the Council's fleet operations. They centre on modifications to engines made in vehicle purchase and also to the Council's fuel strategy and I would just like to outline some of the main initiatives.

Firstly, modifications to HGV vehicles to reduce the impact of emissions. Where possible we fit aftermarket exhaust particulate traps to all fleet vehicles over 7.5 tons and this helps to improve the air quality in the Leeds area.

The particulate traps reduce gaseous and carcinogenic pollutants by more than 90% and diesel odour and black smoke is virtually eliminated.

The Council operates over 180 vehicles in excess of 7.5 tons and over 77% of these are now fitted with particulate traps. A significant number of vehicles which make up the remaining 23% cannot be fitted with these types of exhaust due to the vehicle's operating conditions.

Secondly, the Euro IV standards for reducing emissions. All commercial vehicles registered from the beginning of next month have to meet new Euro IV diesel exhaust emission levels. The original levels allowed a very strict - manufacturers have had to develop engine technologies to meet the required criteria.

We already have vehicles on order, both HGV vehicles and welfare buses, which will have Euro IV specification engines and for those who are interested, this involves an extra tank which holds a solution to mix with the diesel and help with the emission reduction process. This is called Ablue and we are actually developing fuel sites to supply these. Where possible we are ordering engines that meet the tighter Euro V exhaust emission levels.

Fuel strategy. We first used ultra low sulphur diesel in the Council fleet in 1998 and currently we are using about 4m litres of fuel a year. This fuel reduced emissions because it is virtually free of harmful emissions, producing hydrocarbons and chemicals found in ordinary diesel.

However, we have now gone a stage further and replaced low sulphur diesel with bio diesel. Bio diesel incorporates materials from renewable sources and its use gives reduction in overall carbon dioxide levels, carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide and particulate emissions.

This is the interesting bit. The EC proposed a bio diesel target of 2% of road transport fuel in 2005 rising to 5.75% by 2010. I am pleased to announce that at this moment in time all, i.e. 100% - not 2%, not 5.75%, 100% - of the Leeds City Council fleet vehicles are using bio fuel.

Joint preparation of a new diesel tender which is due to take effect next year, Environmental City have been given the opportunity to work with us focusing mainly on the renewable products involved and their sustainability in the bio fuel process.

Fourthly, driver handbooks and driver training focuses on advice to minimise fuel consumption while driving, another important aspect of this strategy.

Finally, Leeds City Council is also promoting the use of green vehicles where possible and we are currently investigating the use of an all electric delivery truck manufactured by Modec, for the Museums Department.

In summary, I am delighted to say that City Services puts green issues at the front of its agenda.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Russell, do you have a supplementary?

COUNCILLOR RUSSELL: No, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR. Thank you. Councillor Alison Lowe.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: Will the Executive Member for City Services please tell me how many young people have successfully completed the Council's apprenticeship scheme since it was started?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Over the last ten years 53 apprentices have successfully completed their training with City Services and a further eleven are in the process of apprentice training at this moment in time.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: By way of supplementary, will the Executive Member for City Services also clarify whether any new contractor undertaking works that were previously within the purview of property maintenance or will be within the purview of property maintenance, will they also be obliged to run an

apprenticeship scheme and in doing so invest in the skills and futures of Leeds' young people?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: I think Councillor Lowe is referring to the responsibility, perhaps, for housing maintenance which in a number of areas supported apprentice training. That has transferred out of City Services as ALMOs put arrangements in place for responsive maintenance. Their training schemes are theirs but what I can say is that City Services' commitment to apprentice training in fleet services and all other aspects has remained unaffected.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Can the Executive Board Member for Adult Health and Social Care please update Council on one of its favourite topics, The Breece?

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, the most recent news from The Breece is not as good as we had hoped. In August the bedrooms were 67% full, compared with 70% last year. Of these we reckon that a quarter are from outside Leeds. In the peak month of the holiday period it is 50% full of Leeds people.

Publicity in the YEP generated four new bookings, one of those four being a married couple. There were two new bookings from Dewsbury who heard about the Breece from word of mouth. There have been more expressions of interest but some people were put off by the lack of en suite rooms.

The two weeks following the article in the YEP on 17th July generated 110 brochure requests. These were followed up by seven confirmed bookings. No Councillors are recorded as having chosen The Breece for their own holidays.

Since the subject was discussed at the last Council meeting, Lord Mayor, we have been made aware of a best value review of The Breece, conducted in 2000 under the previous administration. It concludes that The Breece is not

part of the core business of the Social Services Department and we should enable The Breece to become self-financing over two years and reinvest the current funding in support of prevention services. Attempts to introduce this seem to have failed. The expectations continue to change, the decreased occupancy rate goes up and it is now costing us £1,000 a day.

I have therefore asked officers, in parallel with a continued search for customers, to look at a way of increased provision and choice of these breaks with an increased participation by elected Members. Current possibilities include respite care facilities in Scarborough provided through North Yorkshire Social Services, more direct payments for Social Service users and support for carers through a scheme administered by Council Area Committees with elected Member involvement. You can get involved in nominations and suggestions. This is similar to the Carer's Grant, which exists in mental health services.

Finally, Lord Mayor, I wish to draw attention to the recurrence of the phenomenon in the letters to the YEP about this subject. There was a letter from Mr Heald of Meanwood some weeks ago in which he complained he had been unable to book a room although he said there were plenty available. We spoke to Mr Heald and he tells me he never wrote a letter to the paper on the subject, or any other subject. He left a message on an answer phone but he has never written a letter to the YEP in his life.

It is all very strange, Lord Mayor, and it makes it more difficult to have sensible discussions about short breaks for deserving people.

In answer to the supplementary – Andrea, I will answer your question while I am here – the occupancy rate at The Breece last year, for the previous year was 60%, for 2005/06 it was 54%. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell, do you have a supplementary?

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: No.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Grayshon.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Could the Leader of Council comment on the spectacular achievements of Jane Tomlinson following her coast to coast bike ride across America?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Naturally I am sure I speak for the entire Council when I associate all 99 of us – all 98 of us – with the comments made by the Lord Mayor at the start of the meeting.

It is hard, really, to find the appropriate superlatives to talk about what Jane Tomlinson has achieved. I can only hope that she can continue doing this for as long as is possible. She deserves to succeed in whatever she does. We have got a remarkable adopted member of this city in Jane Tomlinson and we should all be not just proud of her but thankful to her, really, for the way in which she raises the profile of what can be done when you suffer from cancer and what she and her family have done to raise essential funds for the treatment of those suffering from cancer. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary?

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Indeed I do, Lord Mayor. Could I ask the Leader of Council to write to Mrs Tomlinson congratulating her and sending the best wishes of the Council, if that is possible, please?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I can tell Councillor Grayshon that that has already been done.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Harrington.

COUNCILLOR HARRINGTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Will the Executive Member for Leisure please tell me when he expects his department to submit the PFI sports centre bid?

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: December 2006, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARRINGTON: Supplementary, thank you very much, Councillor Proctor. I went to a briefing earlier on this year on the PFI sports centre bid and I also went to a briefing or two or three on EASEL, which refers to money that might be available for sports centres but it did not make any reference to any money coming from the PFI source.

I would just like to know whether there is any work being done or has already been done on bringing together the possible benefits from EASEL. I know we do not know how much money is going to be available from it but I would just like to know whether work is being done on trying to bring together what possible benefits there might be from EASEL with the PFI bid so that we have a coherent policy on the development of sports centres in the city as a whole. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I look over here to colleagues who represent the same ward as Councillor Harrington and refresh my memory, colleagues, I am sure that I recall Councillor Harrington issuing leaflets during the course of a local election that were saying how appalling it would be for a leisure centre to be built on the Killingbeck Fields sort of area. Yet here he is now saying, "Well, actually, yes, perhaps this is a good idea, maybe, and let us have some EASEL money in to help it."

Councillor Harrington knows full well that there was an EASEL proposal to actually develop a sporting facility on the Killingbeck Fields site. He knows that and yet he chooses to ignore this.



The fact is that there is no deal that has been signed, as far as I am aware, to enable any money to flow from EASEL at all because the deal has not been signed. Yet here Councillor Harrington is trying to spend the money before the ink is even on the paper, let alone dry on the paper.

I look to colleagues to conclude those negotiations and then let us see what funds are available to spend on sporting facilities and the like, but I do think it is premature, Lord Mayor, to spend the money in advance.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Hollingsworth.

COUNCILLOR HOLLINGSWORTH: Would the Executive Board Member for Children's Services with responsibility for Learning take this opportunity to congratulate the pupils from the Leeds area on their recent examination results?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Yes. The results this year have been tremendous. A vast amount of hard work by our young people right across the age range in our schools and colleges. We have everything to celebrate. It is a great pity, I think, that perhaps somebody in this Chamber had to try and make political capital out of this, but still. The interim results are very encouraging.

Key Stage 2, at grade 4 and better in English was 79%; in mathematics 75%; and in science 85%, which compares very well with the national achievements, which were 78% in English, 76% in mathematics and 86% in the sciences.

Key Stage 3 results, again the outcomes in mathematics and science have improved but I am afraid stalled a little in English after a significant improvement last year. We do not yet have the national figures to compare our results with.

Key Stage 4 again saw another area of improvement. Again, our best results. 51.7% achieved 5 A\* - C, or level 2. This compares to 49.7% in 2005.

At Key Stage 5, that some of us who are old enough remember as A-level, we again achieved our best results ever and our pass rate continued to increase. The points per entry have increased from 79.9% to 81.3%.

I am sure this whole Council would like to register with me and congratulate our schools on the fantastic service they give to this city. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Harker. That is the end of the question time. All the answers for remaining questions will be written to all Members. Thank you.

Members of Council, can I welcome Councillor Denise Atkinson (*Applause*) to our Council here and it shows her passion and commitment to work for the citizens of Leeds and towards the prosperity of our city. We really welcome her and we wish her well after the long illness she has had. We look forward to seeing her in future as well. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR ATKINSON: I really do not know what to say to you because I have been overwhelmed with kindness from Members around this Chamber and the business world as well. I cannot believe that for six-and-a-half weeks I was over in the madhouse, as I put it, and I have had my eyes opened, Lord Mayor, but I would just like to thank you for coming to see me a couple of times, to Councillor Wakefield, to the Labour Group who have been very good but also to Councillor Andrew Carter and some of his Members. They have been absolutely amazing, bobbing over, and Councillor Harris, I do thank you, so from the bottom of my heart.

I have just left it, I have got to go back next week but please God I am on the road and there is no bye-elections, you lot! None whatsoever! Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Atkinson.

#### ITEM 7 – MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 7 now, the Minutes. Councillor Harris.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I move, Lord Mayor.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we have the comments now? Councillor Kendall.

COUNCILLOR KENDALL: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. It is good to start on a good note. This is a comment on the capital programme. Roundhay Mansion – the work has started. I thought I would be getting cheers, ironic from *there*. Never mind.

You will be pleased to hear of one phoenix that has not risen from the ashes. It has sunk in its previous form and we want it to stay that way. I am talking about the Phoenix Bar which, along with other buildings to the rear of the mansion is being replaced as a visitor and education centres as per the plan supported in last year's public consultation.

It has taken long enough, you might say. In fact know some of the Members opposite will be dying to say it. The public made their voice known about what they wanted at Roundhay Mansion which, ladies and gentlemen opposite, was surprise, surprise, not offices. It was necessary to do this public consultation exercise and then go back to the Heritage Lottery Fund for their agreement. We could not apply to the ODPM for planning permission or engage a construction company without their approval, but now it is happening,

work started about a week ago and it is due to be completed in May 2007.  
Watch this space.

The bar and restaurant is everybody's main memory and main interest and that is the subject of a careful choice of operator. We have waited so long to get back what the people of Roundhay and Leeds want in the mansion – and this so nearly did not happen – that we have to choose carefully to get it right.

I am sure you will agree in the end that good things are worth waiting for.  
Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Briefly, Lord Mayor, I was one of those when the original plans were unveiled by the previous administration to support those plans. That is a well-known fact and in particular I was then swayed by the argument that we were not going to get any lottery heritage funding, unless those plans were pursued.

I was proved completely wrong. Councillor Proctor in particular is to be congratulated, along with officers who appeared to listen better to him than perhaps they had listened to the previous incumbent in his job as to what could be achieved. This is a first class result for everybody. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: I am speaking to Minute 37 of the Executive Board of 19th August, regarding the deputation from the Drighlington Conservation Group regarding the former junior school on Whitehall Road.

I accept that the report is slanted towards a certain result and I accept the principles of a primary school review. I would just like to draw Members' attention to one of the bullet points. One of the bullet points is the retention for the community of the clock tower and vane. That was paid for by the Drighlington community and it does not belong to Education Leeds or the Council. I would hope that there is some facility to ensure that that clock tower and vane is sited somewhere appropriately in Drighlington at some point.

By a strange quirk of fate I was born in Tingley, which has a WF3 post mark. It is now in Ardsley and Robin Hood. I now represent Morley North and parts of Drighlington has a BD11 post mark. One thing we have to bear in mind is that Drighlington, because it is right on the border with Bradford and Kirklees, feels really, really isolated and there is as perception that the big, bad city Councils do not care a jot about them and I think it is important that we all bear communities like Drighlington in mind. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to refer to Minute 49 of the Executive Board Meeting held on 16th August, which is at the top of page 24 and refers to the 780 bus service between Wetherby, Boston Spa and Tadcaster, which I understand has been reinstated at least temporarily with support from North Yorkshire County Council and Metro in West Yorkshire.

This illustrates something that we have noted in Morley, which is that if the public transport network unravels and gaps begin to appear, that process will begin at the thinly populated edges or on cross country or even cross suburban routes rather than along the main arterial roads within or between the larger towns and cities.

We have noticed especially in Drighlington and Ardsley, where some roads which have had services for many years now have none or are served infrequently, especially in the evenings and on Sundays. Quite a lot of work has been done by the Arriva company in Morley to improve reliability since service changes in January 2005, but this followed several years during which buses tended not to turn up at all, making them almost unusable for people travelling to and from work.

Many passengers were lost causing service reductions. People bought cars because they could not manage without them. Avoiding network gaps and maintaining reliability will be absolutely vital if we are to attract people back to public transport. Any step in that direction must be a good thing, so we

congratulate those campaigners who have succeeded in reinstating the Wetherby to Tadcaster service. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR WILKINSON: It seems like a bit of a duplication. At the last meeting of Council we received a deputation from Boston Spa and Clifford Parish Council, who expressed their concern at the withdrawal of the 780 bus service from Wetherby through Boston Spa on to Tadcaster. This was referred to the Executive Board, who asked the Director of Development to write to North Yorkshire County Council and Metro informing them of this Council's support for the retention of this bus service.

We have now been informed that this service has been reinstated with some financial assistance from Metro, albeit only until April 2007 when I assume a further review will take place.

On behalf of my two wards colleagues, Councillor John Proctor and Andrew Millard, the two Parish Councils and users of the service, I would like to thank the Executive Board for their support. Thank you, Lord Mayor.  
(*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR DUNN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I refer to Minute 50 of the Executive Meeting on 16th August on page 24. I refer to the proposed disposal of the former Blackgates School building. I have to say that I have been informed that this Minute is being called into Scrutiny, which I am delighted at. Ward Members have been very upset about the way this issue has been handled from the word 'Go'.

Ward Members were informed of this proposal at the South Outer Area Committee in autumn 2005. We had a presentation by one of the Development Officers regarding the proposal to dispose of this asset. Members present made it very plain that they wanted this building retained for community use. This building was historic, 1869, is a landmark, is a feature of Tingley and should no way be destroyed. No mention at that time was made of its ultimate possible

demolition. Members were of the mind that it should be retained for community use and should be explored.

Following that, community groups made applications to use the building or at least buy the building. I contacted the Development Section, who gave me the answer that, because a sweetheart arrangement was in place with the development company – and I used the words ‘sweetheart agreement’ because it is already in place – that they have first choice on the building when it is due to be demolished. Their proposal was to demolish the building and put a housing development on the site.

The community are totally against that. The Ward Members were never informed of this. Following that, the planning application was submitted by the developer and was consequently turned down and the recommendation that the building be retained.

Following that a meeting of the Development Management Team of 7th April recommended that negotiations still continue with the developer and that also an officer was designated to see what community requirements or facilities were in the area. No Ward Member, as far as I am aware, has been made aware of this enquiry as to what the community facilities are in the area. We would have enlightened them, without doubt.

It raises two questions. It applies to any Member in this Council. Is it then a blueprint that any historic building in the city is going to be demolished on paper before any discussions are taken? This could be this very building we are standing in, because this decision to demolish this building was made in 2003 before the last person walked out of the door and not one Member – and this came under Morley South at the time – was informed about this decision.

I raise another question, as well. If we are going to be a Council that makes Council services more transparent, then we ought to look at making them

transparent to the Ward Members in the first instance. Thank you, Lord Mayor.  
*(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to comment on the same Minute, though the issue would also be same as for Drighlington Primary, but also to connect it to page 98, Minute 27, and page 115 Minute 23, which are the Minutes of City Centre Plans and Plans West, where they had agenda item on national legislation changes, outline planning permission and reserved matters and the introduction of design and access statements, which is really to do with considering what is the impact of this new legislation on Leeds City Council and its role as a landowner and developer and seller of land and that potential conflict between maximising the receipt, which is on the one hand a legal duty, and what actually is best for that site and its neighbours and community.

To refer to the statement that there was in the Exec Board report in paragraph 5.5, that local communities are not consulted on the principle of retention or disposal of buildings. If that is the policy statement, I think I would request that that is actually looked at, whether that is right, and whether in fact it can possibly comply with this new legislation that came into force on 10th August.

What it is about is really about – we look forward to it, both Plans Panel Members welcomed it, but they both minuted, for example, page 98:

“Members noted the implications for applicants, especially for those making smaller applications, the impact on the way officers would be required to assess applications in the future and the impact on the development of land owned by the City Council.

There is a duty at outline planning stage for any owner/developer to submit design and access



statements, which will allow local communities, access groups, amenity groups and other stakeholders to involve themselves more directly in the planning process without needing to interpret plans that can be technical and confusing.”

I am quoting from this very illuminating paper that is a very good, straightforward paper, that was presented to both Plan Panels. “It will help to increase access(?) to the people affected by development” and so on.

Although not specifically required, the circular suggests it is good practice to use design and access statements as an aid to pre-application discussions. I think this is one of the points where I am not saying that I have got the answers, I just think this is something that the Council as a landowner/developer/planning authority has to think through what are the implications, because the Council itself will be having pre-application discussions about various pieces of land. It will need to have reference to this circular and to make sure that it is talking to its planning people as though they were any applicant like any other, not as though they were insiders asking for advice.

It is absolutely essential that it is demonstrated that involvement of both community Members and professionals are undertaken or planned, including consultation with local community and access groups and planning.

Finally in the quote from here – this is from the CAVE advice -

“A good statement will tell the story of how the scheme has reached application stage, including ideas that have been trialled but found not to work.”

I think that we must come to a position where we can be clear that Leeds City Council as a landowner and developer is subject to the same regime of openness and community engagement as everyone else is.

I notice under the delegated decisions that, for example, land adjacent to Bramley Falls Lodge and the site of the former Micklefield School have been declared surplus to the requirements of the Learning and Leisure Department. I think when they go over to the Development Department, the Development Department absolutely must think through how does it involve not just the Members by, as they did with Jack Dunn and colleagues, just asking them what do they think. There has to be engagement.

I would ask the same principle, I think, with advertising. There are two delegated decisions, I see, on billboards – approval to start a new tender inviting outdoor contractors to bid for the billboard licence. Maybe a good thing. Also, the potential opportunity to create landmark advertising features and structures at key highway entrances into Leeds. Could be potentially exciting, but there is no mention here of the Council requiring to comply with its own advice, it is now out in draft and I am very pleased that the draft advertising guidance. It would seem to me incumbent on the Council it should review its holding of land on which there are advertising hoardings. Do they now comply with that advertising guidance when it is confirmed? Sensitivity and openness I think is required on both issues. Thank you. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Councillor Dunn has drawn the attention of the Council the Technical Board Minute of 7th April 2006 in relation to Blackgates Infant School. I quote from that Minute:

“It was reported that a detailed planning application had been submitted but had been refused on the grounds of overdevelopment of the area and the building should be retained. It was noted that Minton Homes would like the opportunity to appeal the decision to refuse. DMT agreed that negotiations should continue with Minton Homes and let Minton Homes decide whether or not to

appeal the Council's decision to refuse the planning application."

Lord Mayor, there is an obvious conflict between the process of the Development Technical Board and the democratically elected Plans Panel. Elsewhere on this agenda I put down a question on the Technical Board, despite it being on the Council's order paper officers have this morning refused access to the relevant report. Senior officers have decided that elected Members have no access to Technical Board papers, despite the fact that technical board is apparently taking policy decisions that conflict with the views of democratically elected Councillors.

Fortunately for Councillor Dunn, the Minutes of 7 April 2006 in relation to Blackgates Infants School had already been circulated before access was refused.

Lord Mayor, the issues that have come to light in relation to Blackgates Infants School are only part of a much wider problem of excessive secrecy within the Development Department. Decisions are being made behind closed doors that are in conflict with the public decisions of elected Members, but these officer decisions are not reported under the Officers Delegation Scheme, nor are they open to scrutiny by elected Members.

Lord Mayor, I have requested access to all the Technical Board reports and minutes for the last six years under the Freedom of Information Act and this matter will be going to the Information Commission for a decision. Lord Mayor, will the Executive Member for Development agree to release all the Technical board reports and Minutes without further delay in the interests of transparency, good government and democratic accountability? (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I will deal quickly first of all with the issues raised by Councillor Leadley and Councillor Wilkinson. I am delighted that we have been able to help in some small way in at least temporarily getting the bus

service restored. It underlines that we do have a role to play in making sure that we make the right representations at the right time to those who take the decision on bus services.

Councillor McArdle, I can absolutely assure you that we will look to do what we can to save the clock tower. In the Executive Board I indicated as much and offices have been asked to look at what we can do to save this particular part of the site.

Now let me deal with Councillor Dunn's specific point and I suppose also refer to part of what Councillor McArdle has just said and then I will come to Councillor Nash and Councillor Illingworth.

On the issue of the two schools in question, I think I should remind Members opposite that the decisions on these schools were taken initially by the previous administration. The decision was taken by then to ring fence the capital receipts and we supported that. The capital receipts were earmarked for reinvestment in education and over the next three years £2.3m of educational investment is coming on stream in Morley North, £5.12 in Morley South and £1.17 in Ardsley and Robin Hood. This is on top of the £3.36 that has been spent on remodelling Drighlington School and the £1.76m that has been spend on remodelling Blackgates School.

When your administration suggested we ring fenced education receipts from surplus buildings, it was done so that we could protect that investment and recycle it back into education and we all agreed. I am sorry I cannot see Councillor Dunn but Councillor Dunn was a Member of the administration in 2003 when the decision was taken and, ladies and gentlemen, I think I am right in saying that Councillor Minkin was the Executive Board Member for Development. (*Interruption*) Do be quiet Liz – I let you speak, you let me speak.

You were the ones who set it in motion. That is why Keith Wakefield, to give him credit, at the Executive Board supported the comments that were made there by me about the need to ensure that ring fenced capital receipts were realised, otherwise there would not be the reinvestment in education that was required.

We almost reached the point where I have to say to Councillor Dunn, are you saying, Councillor Dunn, that you will forgo the £1.17m coming into education in your ward in reinvestment in schools and keep this former building? Why should I turn to Members for Moortown, for Otley, for Garforth, for wherever you want and say well, actually, this money that was earmarked for education is not available any more because we have changed our minds? That is the position that you are espousing.

Now then, the position is that we have ring fenced capital receipts which will have to be reinvested in the education portfolio. That is the decision of the Executive Board and the Council. I am delighted if you wish to refer it to the Scrutiny Board for examination, that is fine.

Let me just touch on Councillor Minkin's comments, which I find astonishing. Councillor Minkin was my predecessor as Executive Board Member for Development. As far as I am aware, precisely the same situation prevails now as...

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: I am talking about new legislation.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I am not talking about the legislation. Liz, please be quiet. My Lord Mayor, I can see Councillor Minkin is in a big hole because she will have had to explain to her Members how it came to pass that she agreed to all this in the first place when she was in my position. I can quite see why she is now verging on hysteria, but I do wish she would listen. I am not talking about legislation. You made a most unfortunate inference followed up by your ward colleague, which was that there were too close

linkages between asset management and planning. You put that system in. That is what I am telling you. You put the system in and you were the Executive Board Member responsible for it. It seems ridiculous to me that you should now want to try and criticise it.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Point of explanation.

THE LORD MAYOR: Point of explanation, please, Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Councillor Carter has entirely taken the wrong end of the stick and, of course, I apologise if I allowed you to get hold of the wrong end of the stick.

I was bringing to your attention – and hopefully the rest of Council, because I think it is important and it has implications in all our wards – the fact that new legislation came into force on 10<sup>th</sup> August which does change things. Don't hark at the past, look to the future and ask some of the questions and let us look at how we make sure it works for the best.

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: That is another speech, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: As I say, Councillor Minkin, I appreciate the difficulty you are in. You are in a similar one with street lighting and various other things as well. Unfortunately your finger prints are all over everything and we know where they are.

My Lord Mayor, Councillor Illingworth. A little later I am going to address some of the issues he wanted to raise through questions, but I think I will just say this. The inference, Councillor Minkin, that it was clear to me you were hinting around he actually spelt out. I suppose you can give him his due for that, except that this constant not veiled but direct accusations about officers –

and they were here again today and there he sits grinning and smiling – is wholly unacceptable to anybody who quite frankly believes that our officers in this Authority do a damned good job.

It is wholly unacceptable that this continues. Councillor Illingworth, it gives me the chance to answer one of the questions that you had down earlier on, and that is about the fact I have written in support of the reference to the Standards Board by officers of the Authority for your alleged misconduct.

I was kept briefed, Councillor Illingworth, throughout the time that you were conducting yourself in the way officers believe that you were and ultimately decided that I should write a letter supporting the employees of this Authority in their reference of you to the Standards Board. It is as simple as that.

I would suggest that other elected Members in times gone by might have thought of doing similar things had officers become so dejected, so oppressed by an elected Member's behaviour that they thought there was no other recourse but the Standards Board. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to speak on Minute 18 of the draft Minutes of the Scrutiny Board, Children's Service, held on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> July.

It seems to me rather ironic that the Chief Executive of Education Leeds fielded a range of questions regarding fixed penalty notice issued to parents in connection with the absence of their children from school when, as a result of the recent Robbie Williams concert, Education Leeds has itself had to keep children away from school.

Might I suggest that if Leeds had a suitable concert venue to stage the Robbie Williams concert, there would have been no need to keep the kids off school. Leeds is the regional capital of this area and should have had a concert venue years ago in order that big name acts could perform in a suitable

venue without problems being caused to our city which were witnessed last week. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Page 34, Minute 20. Last year the Children's Services Scrutiny Board conducted a detailed enquiry into the running of our Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres, or SILCs. It was a well-run enquiry looking into the way we educate and care for some of the most vulnerable children and young people in the city, many of whom, along with their families and carers, have suffered disruption and uncertainty over the future of that provision as a result of funding and staffing issues in the north-west SILC.

I am sure that Councillor Bale and my colleagues on that Scrutiny Board would therefore share with me my concern that the pupils of two special schools, nine primary schools and five secondary schools in north-east Leeds suffered further disruption to their education when their schools were closed for all or part of the day last Friday because of the eleventh hour notice given to those schools of the road closures and bus changes made to accommodate the Robbie Williams concert at Roundhay Park on Friday night.

From the conversation I had with him the other day, I certainly know that the Executive Board Member for education shares my concern.

Two SILCs were closed on Friday, four secondary schools, five primary schools closed for all or part of the day and a further two primary schools told parents that they could pick children up from 1.00 pm if necessary.

In total these schools have around 7,000 pupils – 7,500 if we include the two which invited parents to collect their children if they so wished. That is at least 7,000 children who missed out on a day's school when, as Councillors and school governors we are working hard to reduce truancy rates and parents are being subjected to harsh penalties if they do not ensure that their children attend.



Why were these school closures necessary? Tickets for the concert went on sale almost a year ago and the Council was responsible for the road traffic arrangements over the weekend. Why was there such a lack of forward thinking about the impact on children and families that these arrangements would have? Why wasn't Education Leeds involved in planning for the event to prevent the disruption to pupils' learning?

Just two days before the event, Education Leeds issued advice strongly supporting the SILCs if they decided to close for the day, citing concerns about pupils' safety in the fact of transport implications, heavy traffic and the expected large crowds. All of the schools in the area were encouraged to carry out a risk assessment, but only at the eleventh hour.

I wonder if Councillor Bale will share with me my utter disbelief that the wellbeing and needs of these children was not taken into account earlier in the preparation for this concert and if he shares with me the need to find answers to the question, why was the situation allowed to develop as it did?

It is worth bearing in mind in asking this question that this situation did not arise when previous concerts and large events were taking place in the city on a Friday night – for example, when the three Heineken Festivals that preceded the Leeds Reading Festival took place.

There is clearly a need to prevent this shambolic state of affairs from occurring again to the detriment of school pupils at SILCs, primary and secondary schools in Leeds and not to mention their parents' employers who will have had equally little notice to make suitable arrangements to cover the staff absence for those who had little or no opportunity to arrange childcare.

I am sure that we are all aware that Councillor Harris has once again tendered his apologies for this oversight, carelessness or mismanagement that led to this debacle, but surely the pupils in our schools, their parents and their employers deserve better than apologies after the event. Perhaps the

administration running the Council ought to consider the tongue-in-cheek suggestion in tonight's Evening Post that the more enterprising minds at Roundhay High School, who have apparently made £5,000 out of turning the school grounds in to a car park for the event, should organise the next major concert in the city. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I speak to the same Minute, Minute 20, Scrutiny Board Children's Services on 13<sup>th</sup> July.

I am fairly certain that Councillor Bale and Councillor Andrew Carter know my view on inclusion in the mainstream. I am not utterly convinced that including in the mainstream is the right way to go.

I just want to bring Members' attention to what these vulnerable children and students need is stability now and the recent change in travel arrangements has done nothing to alleviate the concern of parents and children. I would hope that something is done to ensure that children and these vulnerable students have complete stability for a long time in the future. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Lord Mayor, I am speaking to Minute 21 on page 36. John, I am sure all of us in this Chamber welcome your Board's enquiry into secondary achievement and look forward to its recommendations being implemented and I am also sure that you will join with me in welcoming the opening of three stunning, brand new high schools this term and the enormous investment that this represents in this city and look forward to the impact on achievement that they bring. I believe we should all celebrate the opening of these schools and welcome the excitement they are bringing to the pupils and their families across the city.

How typical of this administration, therefore, that this success should be marred by headline such as 'Parents' anger over school delay'. I know you cannot speak for Councillor Harker, John, but whilst all the stops were pulled out to open these schools on time – and I congratulate all those involved in doing

this – and indeed ahead of time in the case of Primrose and Shakespeare, it would appear that parents were not prepared for an extra week's delay at Primrose and Shakespeare and there were no plans in place to deal with the problems that this would raise for the pupils and their families in terms of childcare and the necessary arrangements. Where indeed was the contingency planning to make sure that they did not miss out on learning during this period?

Pupils at these schools have missed the best part of two weeks out of a seven week half term. What impact is this going to have on their achievement, bearing in mind that some of these pupils will be assessed for AS level in January?

Furthermore, what message does this give to parents who are being told that their children must be in school every day, that parentally condoned absence will no longer be acceptable and that they will be discouraged at all times for taking their children out of school for any other reason than illness or bereavement?

We have already heard today about the fury at the panic closures of schools because of the Robbie Williams concerts and the advice that schools received about this. I have to say, Andrew, Mark had the grace to go on the radio publicly and apologise for this. Schools were closed last Friday that had fought to stay open over years every day of term time whatever the odds, whatever the weather.

John, can you assure us in your role as Scrutiny Chair that you will, as Councillor Carter has already suggested today, investigate these matters thoroughly and that you hold the Executive Member responsible – and I leave it up to you to decide whether it is Councillor Harker or Councillor Brett – to account and ensure that schools in this position are given the necessary support to help them through these periods of time to ensure that the educational needs of our children are paramount and treated with the seriousness that they deserve. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR MCKENNA: The same Minute on the closer of schools. Earlier on I heard Andrew congratulate all concerned – the police, transport, environmental services etc – over how successful and well the arrangements were for the Roundhay Park concert. Can I remind Andrew that these concerts have been running 24 years and most of them under our administration, and most of this was a well oiled machine that rolled into motion. Nothing changed. We have already set the prototype. You took down the plans, dusted them off and nothing went wrong. It was great, the concert was great for this city, but if you notice, Andrew, in those 24 years never once was a school closed. That is your policy. That is your policy. You are the only ones who have got it wrong.

I have been contacted by parents of children. Children came home on a Wednesday night by pupil post saying there would be no school on Friday and they were demented trying to work out how they were going to achieve childcare on Friday because both parents were working. It is an absolute disgrace, John. We should really have an explanation from the Executive Member, Richard Harker, but I guess this is the only opportunity we will get, John. I hope you will put this right. I hope when we have concerts in this city that schools will not close unnecessarily. I was at the concert too, like Amanda, and again I can thank John Proctor – he is not listening – and I hope the donation that he kindly persuaded us to give - £100 in my case – will go, as I suggested, to the Lord Mayor's charity. Such donations always do go to the Lord Mayor and I hope we are not going to break with this tradition.

I would just like to say, we have a long way to go, Andrew. If this is an example of this administration's failure, you only had to do one thing and you got it wrong. Everything else was organised, the plans were there, it was great. The plans were there.

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: The plans were where?

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: The plans were there. It has been running for 24 years. I drove the buses myself to those concerts. The glory you took, Andrew, was the glory of the former administration. The failure, Andrew, Richard, is the failure of this administration. Thank you, Lord Mayor.  
*(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I would like to speak to Minute 21 page 36. I would like to join with Councillor Blake in welcoming the opening of the three new high schools and the primary school. It is a great pity, though, that Councillor Blake, who also sits on Executive Board as I do, chose to mislead Council this afternoon.

The completion date for all of the schools was the 18<sup>th</sup> of this month. It is a public record document. It has been to Executive board. Today is 13<sup>th</sup> September and not the 18<sup>th</sup>. The schools opened ahead of time. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Let us just deal with some of the rubbish, shall we, that we have heard from over there. There is a wonderful blue print in place for concerts at Roundhay Park. Yes, if it is a small, little concert, maybe, because the last concert to take place at Roundhay Park, U2, had 45,000 people there. We are talking about 90,000 people – 90,000 people – there on two days. 90,000 people on two days.

What really sticks in the throat of that lot over there is that they could not get anybody for the last ten years. On bended knee they went to try and get someone. No-one was interested in coming when they were in administration. Nobody wanted to know in recent years. Yet now, not a year in to our administration – not one year in - and we land the biggest recording star that is around in the world at this particular moment. You cannot bring yourself, can you, to agree with the words of Councillor Carter when he talks about being broadcast in 24 different countries, 300m people listening to that particular concert, publicising and promoting Leeds. It sticks in your throat, you do not

like it but, Councillor McKenna, you are happy to go to the concert, are you not? You are happy to go there. You want to be there.

Lord Mayor, the other thing that they do not like is having to pay. “We had to pay, we had to pay”. You are used to freebies, are you not, give it out – “I am a Councillor, I expect it for free.” Not under this administration. You pay like everybody else does. You might not like it but that is the way it is going to be.

Lord Mayor, let us just talk for a minute about the school closures and let me tell those Members over there something that they do not know, so listen up. The fact is that officers of this Council, the most senior officers of this Council and elected Members faced a difficult decision and that decision was whether to cancel this concert or not. That was fact. Why was that fact? Because there were issues to do with a traffic management plan and I am pleased to say that officers of the Authority felt able to come in and implement a traffic management plan which enabled this particular event to go ahead.

People over there, they just show their ignorance when they say, “We have done it for 24 years.” The last event they ran in Roundhay Park was Love Parade. Do we all remember Love Parade? Astonishing administration and organisation – complete chaos. Complete chaos and a catastrophe. We were determined not to have such a situation under this administration. That is why (*Interruption*) Lord Mayor, are you going to intervene and stop them or just let them continue? That is why this administration stepped in and came in to organise this particular event to be a resounding success and that is precisely what it was Lord Mayor, a success. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: Minute 21, Lord Mayor. Perhaps I could ask Councillor Bale if when he is carrying out this perhaps further investigation of the matters of the high school delayed openings, he would like to advise the Executive Board Member, who ever he or she is who is responsible on the

importance of liaising with parents over dates in advance of the events that are important.

The most important event for many children, particularly if they are starting high school or starting primary school for the first time, is that the date is the right date and that they are able to attend on that day. It is not an issue for me what date the contract was going to be completed on. The important contract as see it in educational terms is that we have a contract with those families and they know and understand exactly when they are to attend school.

There has been consistent mess-up with that this year and whoever you talk to who has been involved in these problems, they tell you that they did not get the information at the right time and they could have had better.

It is the duty of elected Members to protect the interests of the public and they failed to do it on this occasion. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: Lord Mayor, I would just like to take this opportunity to talk very briefly on page 36, Minute 21 regarding the Roundhay Park concert. Obviously as a ward Councillor I can speak with a lot more authority than some people who live and have their Council seats a long way away from Roundhay and I would just like to add my comments to those of Councillor Carter to say that it was a resounding success, the concert, and I have received from people living around the park as many compliments about the way it was run as I have criticisms. That is a major event because people do not go out of their way to say positive things about concerts or any other events and people are quite often keen to comment in a negative way about things.

I want also to talk on a couple of other points. Education Leeds recommended to Roundhay High School that they should not close. Certainly as Ward Councillors Councillor Kendall, Councillor Wadsworth and myself were against the school closure. We are also against the land being rented out for

car parking space. It is our view the children should be educated there, it should not be used as a fund raising opportunity.

This was the decision not of Leeds City Council but this was a decision of the Headteacher of the school, so if anyone had any particular concerns I suggest you write them a letter. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Bale to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR BALE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am delighted that the Minutes of the Children's Services Scrutiny Board have attracted such excited interest. I hope that perhaps at the next meeting of Council the interest may be around things that were in the Minutes rather than things that were not. (*Applause*)

I believe Napoleon said you should never interrupt your enemy while he is making a mistake. I hope no-one on that side is my enemy but I certainly felt that I should sit quietly and not interrupt them while they are talking about things that are not in the Minutes.

As for things that are in the Minutes, in relation to fixed penalty notices, we had an interesting discussion on that and Members may be interested to know that this is an Authority where schools do not have power to issue fixed penalty notices without the consent of the Authority. We have struck a balance there which I think is an important one and our discussion in Scrutiny Board concerned those situations where Education Leeds, on considering the case put by the school, decided not to issue fixed penalty notices. Of course absences from school are serious matters and, as we have heard in relation to temporary closures for events such as the Robbie Williams concert, there is now an interesting relationship between individual schools and the Authority and that is a relationship which measures being taken by the current government are going to make more interesting as time goes on and where we will have to keep the matter under very careful review. It is important, as a Member said a moment



ago, to recognise that many of these decisions are decisions for the schools and not decisions for Education Leeds.

On the matter of the Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres referred to by Councillors McArdle and Mulherin, our enquiry in to the SILCs last year made a large number of recommendations and we decided that it was important to set up a working party to pursue those matters, which we are doing. I note Councillor McArdle's concern about travel to school and I will certainly ensure that that is taken into our consideration.

The question of the SILCs is a very, very complex one. If nothing else our enquiry discovered just how complex and we are now maintaining a close dialogue. I was with SILC principals this morning and other staff concerned with the development of the SILC strategy this morning and that dialogue between Scrutiny Board and the SILCs is continuing.

On the question of secondary education achievement and the comments from Councillor Blake, not only did Members opposite speak on matters that were not in the Minutes, they did what examiners sometimes call producing a good answer to a different question but in the case of Councillor Blake in preparing the answer they did not even do their homework and I am grateful to Councillor Harker for pointing out the correct handover date for those particular schools.

Our secondary education enquiry again has been a very demanding one and I certainly join with Councillor Harker in commending the improvement that we have seen at all Key Stages this year, but we also recognise that there is further progress to make, particularly in relation to that approaching 50% of our school leavers who do not achieve this magic five A\* to C in GCSE.

In relation to the question of the concerts and the closure of schools, to refer to that again, I have no doubt that Members' questions in Scrutiny Board will raise that and other issues where there is a complex relationship between

Education Leeds and individual schools and no doubt, as always, we shall learn from the experience. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Proctor.

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Page 41, Minute 17. I breathe in when I address this Minute, childhood obesity – not the childhood bit but the obesity bit – and prevention and management.

As I have said before under these similar minutes, our sports centres in the city play a vital part – a vital part – in combating obesity, whether in children or in others.

COUNCILLOR : Not the South Leeds ones!

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: I am glad you mentioned it and with that in mind, Lord Mayor, I am delighted to be able to announce the reopening of the South Leeds Leisure Centre. (*Applause*)

Lord Mayor, I do that now. I do that now today rather unusually, rather than waiting for a formal response to the deputation to Council and I do that because all too often announcements such as that get lost in the criticism of Members opposite and do not get covered. I hope it does get covered in the paper.

We as an administration have listened – something that the last administration did not do – to local people and taken a value judgment in relation to that particular leisure centre, but – but – what Members opposite should be aware of is that the centre faces an uphill struggle and has a huge number of challenges to overcome.

When you actually look at the losses that are made at that particular centre, the claim that it is much loved and much used by the local community

do not actually stand scrutiny. There needs to be an awful lot more use by the local community and so I would like to, in a sense, throw the gauntlet down to elected Members for the area, SPLASH and other user groups to use that centre, to prove officers of the Authority wrong, and elected Members for that matter, and use it and get people through the door and add to the figures that are so crucially important.

I have asked officers to display within the centre the user figures so everybody can see, so there is nothing hidden or anything of the sort, so people can see the usage it is getting, they can see the losses and otherwise that are there, so people can appreciate the sums of money that the city quite rightly invest in centres such as this.

In the financial year 2004/05 the centre was subsidised to the tune of something like £300,000. That is an awful lot of money – an awful lot of money in terms of a subsidy. If you look around the city, Members in other areas – I think of Members in Rothwell in particular – could quite rightly say, ‘Hold on a minute here, our centre needs urgent investment and it costs the city nothing. Not a penny. Not a bean. Not one penny in subsidy.’

So with that in mind it is appropriate and it is right that we do say, come on people of South Leeds, use this centre and keep it open. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Minute 20 page 44. It is about the Leeds Mental Health NHS Fire Safety Standards review.

Like Councillor Bale’s enquiry into SILCs, it has been a very extensive and technical enquiry and dare I suggest it may well have been beyond the scope of this Scrutiny Board. I certainly would like to see it go a little bit further.

I think the stumbling block here has been about words and the interpretation of words in the Fire Safety Guidelines. Words are words and we are actually talking about vulnerable people in mental health who treat this environment not as their place of worship – it is their home. This is their home. I think it is very important that we recognise that. They are the most vulnerable people in society.

Councillor Finnigan previously called for a public enquiry into the machinations of this and I am still minded to support that, even if I may be the only one of 99 Members in this Council that does that

One of the points I raised when Councillor Finnigan put this resolution up previously is to ask whether the unions have been consulted and I would like to ask that question again. Have the unions been consulted on this, on any part of the enquiry?

I also highlighted the whistle-blowers. There are a number of whistle-blowers who actually blew the lid on this and they should be protected by the legislation governed by the Whistle-Blowing Act, I think it was in 1997. I sincerely believe that this has been a scandal, whether Members in this Council believe it or not, but I personally believe this and I would like to ask whether the whistle-blowers have had any disciplinary procedures put on them. Have they been suspended prior to being sacked, because if they have it makes a mockery of the legislation protecting whistle-blowers from providing a model stance on this sort of project. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Lord Mayor, speaking Minute 17, page 41. The Minute is about obesity but I want to introduce something else to this. It is the schizophrenia of our government.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has just introduced a very interesting paper called Play on Play but the Department for Education and Skills has decided that Play will not be designed into our new schools as part of

the extended schools core offer. I think that the Scrutiny Board could well look into that issue.

COUNCILLOR CONGREVE: I welcome the news given by Councillor Proctor and I have got to say we are all delighted but I would want assurance that when we talk about the sports centre we are talking about a generic term here. I would like assurances that the pool is opening, the squash courts and all the previous facilities. I see him nodding his head and I take that as a positive response. I would also add, I do not need to hold my stomach in!

It is page 41 Minute 17, Lord Mayor, on child obesity. I am especially pleased because that sports centre is the only one that many parents in that area of South Leeds with their children can get to and we have had lots and lots of parents with young children saying that more or less the child's certainly physical life has been somewhat ruined by the closure of the centre.

I do understand what is being said about low attendance figures but I also have to point out that I think there has been an agenda for running that centre down. The courses were withdrawn over a period of twelve months, staff gradually moved out until it ended up I think with one Member of staff and the manager there. Then of course, the pool was drained and once you start draining pools, then you end up with all sorts of problems when you try and refill them. That was supposedly then drained on the pretext that in case travellers climbed on the roof and fell in – health and safety to protect the travellers. Why would travellers want to climb on the roof, or anyone, I would ask myself.

I do believe that the community in south Leeds and the Councillors of Beeston and Holbeck and Hunslet have fought a vigorous campaign to reclaim our sports centre for residents of south Leeds.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Sue Bentley to sum up.

COUNCILLOR BENTLEY: First of all I would like to apologise on behalf of Councillor Lancaster, who is unable to be here due to unforeseen domestic circumstances. We were hoping she would be here by now but she should be here in the next half or so, hopefully.

I was pleased and delighted to hear Councillor Proctor's news about South Leeds and Councillor Congreve and everyone on the other side of the Chamber is equally pleased and, of course, we are delighted to know that this side of the Chamber does actually listen to what our electorate say.

With regards to Councillor McArdle's comments on the mental health, the high standards of mental health teaching trust, the Board did receive an independent fire safety review on the Trust's three PFI buildings. The Trust also highlighted an action plan for addressing these recommendations. The Board has now requested a further update in December and has specifically requested that a representative from the independent consultant's will be at that meeting so that we can speak with them as well. I hope that answers everyone's questions, otherwise I will pass on all the comments to Councillor Lancaster and if you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Speaking to page 49, Minute 13, the terms of reference enquiry into leisure centres. Just to restate clearly our position that we want a new leisure centre in Morley that will accommodate all the groups that are presently using the leisure centre at this particular point, but also to inform colleagues about what Richard Caborn is saying in terms of the options open to us for refurbishment.

There seems to be, according to my good colleague Councillor Elliott, some sort of rumour, suggestion that the PFI process can be used to refurbish what you have already got.

We have looked into this. We tried to persuade Richard Caborn to come to Morley to talk to us about the sports centre. We were unsuccessful with that but he was quite clear in his response to us to say you either have new build or nothing. There is not an opportunity to use PFI for refurbishment.

It would perhaps help colleagues not to waste their time looking for refurbishment if it is not a particular option at this point.

The other thing we would say about Morley Leisure Centre is that it would be almost the ideal location for the Morley Literature Festival, which is to go ahead on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September where we will have some superb speakers including Ian Macmillan, the Barnsley poet, who will be entertaining us on the Friday, and Gervaise Finn who will be entertaining us on the Saturday. Tickets are available from Morley, £2 for each evening excellent value I am sure you would agree and if we ever do get a new Morley Leisure Centre we will be expanding the Literature Festival hopefully to take on and compete quite accurately and well with places like Ilkley who are already many years ahead of us but please do not miss this ideal opportunity to come and visit us in Morley come and see the Town Hall and come and see some fabulous speakers on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> September. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The same Minute. As Councillor Proctor is in such a generous mood and obviously successful as pulling resources in to the city, can I remind Council that there is a bid in for extra water in Horsforth, my ward, a swimming pool bid, so please, Council, do not lose sight of it. We feel deprived in Horsforth as well. Thank you, Council, thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I assure Councillor Finnegan and his colleagues and also Councillor McArdle that I have been listening very closely to what they have been saying to me and colleagues regarding the new proposed leisure facility in Morley. I hope they will go back and tell the people of Morley that this administration has been listening very

closely to their words and we hope shortly to make an announcement regarding the PFI proposals for Morley and the like.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Pauline Grahame to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR GRAHAME: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I do not know whether I can because I do not know whether the Executive Member is on the same leisure issues as myself as Scrutiny Chair and our Lead Spokesman, Councillor Harrington, because we have attended the same meetings and regarding the EASEL, just for your information, it was put whoever got the contract it would be put to the would they contribute to a community centre and a leisure centre. It was also raised at our working group.

As to your issue, Councillor Finnigan, the Scrutiny Board are so concerned with delays for the business case and the dates being changed again, putting forward, that we are going to write to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport on the PFI credits as to whether they can be used for refurbishing. That has not already been done, not from our Board. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking to Minute 12 on page 54/55 and I am sure the Barnsley poet Ian Macmillan, who is attending Morley Town Hall on the 29<sup>th</sup>, would actually say that this is good news for people. We were concerned in Morley that we might end up in a situation where the vote would go for one ALMO rather than three. We think it is good news, we think that it is important to have that variation across the city that is relevant to local communities. A one size fits all we did not feel was appropriate and we are glad that we seem to have the support of tenants on that. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: As far as the EASEL is concerned, I just love the way that Labour spend profits before a contract is even signed, let alone profits are made. She is talking about Scrutiny spending this money but she does not even know what the money is. I have never heard anything so



daft in my life. As soon as she realises that she is in opposition and it will be the administration where it is spent, that EASEL money, the better.

My Lord Mayor, the other point I would like to raise under the same Minutes – and I think it is reasonable to do so – this is the first opportunity I have had. You will be aware the ALMOs have actually...

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Lord Mayor, the item is sum up.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: I thought we were on the next item, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Finnigan spoke.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Can you just keep that man awake, then, because he does not know what procedure is going on.

Lord Mayor, I think it would be right and proper at the first Council meeting following a vote of the tenants of this city. I will just give you the actual figures themselves.

Can I say how pleased I was by the number that participated in this vote? The actual numbers, 71,000 could have voted. The total number of votes received was 25,400. Total number of ballot papers received by post was 23,400. There were 808 by internet and spoilt ballot papers were 212, which I think is exceptional, all of us who know, only 212 spoilt ballot papers.

35.7% of people who had the opportunity to vote, voted. The vote for one ALMO was 10,776 – 42.8% - and the number for three ALMOs was 14,416.

I was very pleased with the tenants, I was delighted to find that they had participated in this and they had spoken. Now they have spoken I can assure

Members of Council that this administration will be dealing with three ALMOs in the future as and when it is dealt with. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Pryke to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Lord Mayor, to Councillor Finnigan first of all. Yes, the Scrutiny Board was quite pleased with the result of the ALMO decision as well and we are pleased that we are heading for three ALMOs with the boundaries outlined to us at the Scrutiny Board.

That presents a very good opportunity to one part of Leeds, namely broadly North-East Leeds and East Leeds with a bit of South-East Leeds ALMO, to co-operate with the EASEL bidder in promoting regeneration in the area.

As other people have mentioned this already, I will go into it as well. The regeneration that is starting, just starting, in East Leeds is the start of something very, very big, but it will take a long time to carry out. It is shame, therefore, that the Labour Party is a bit schizophrenic about EASEL.

For example, Councillor Harrington puts out leaflets which say, "Regeneration means good quality affordable homes, shops, schools, health centres, public transport and green spaces all available nearby. That is Labour's vision for EASEL." Then he goes on to say, "Will the approximately £100m from land sales be used in the ward and also will there be enough bungalows for the elderly and will there be necessary improvements in Council homes?"

It seems that the Labour Party wants the EASEL money to be spent on regeneration for everything in East Leeds and ring fenced to the ward where the demolition has happened already.

We have had and questioned in the past previous Labour leaflets where they have referred to Labour's plans for bungalows for the elderly on Amberton Close and Amberton Terrace. When the Scrutiny Board, under my chairmanship, asked the department, Neighbourhoods and Housing, for details of these plans and we also asked both ALMOs, particularly Leeds East Homes for details of these plans, they both came back to us and said there were no such plans under the previous administration. So, I am afraid you are conning the people of Gipton that you had plans for bungalows, because you did not.

I am pleased to say that Leeds East Homes with the EASEL bidder does have plans for bungalows for pensioners, because that is clearly where the demand lies at the moment, but we know – Scrutiny knows and I am sure the administration knows and I think Councillor Carter would agree with me – that EASEL money is not going to be ring fenced for Councillor Harrington's pet projects in Gipton. It will be available for the benefit of all of the people of East Leeds but it will take time to roll out. We are looking forward to that and Scrutiny will work closely with the department and we congratulate the department, by the way, on the ALMO decision and the processes that led to it.

The department staff worked pretty hard to get a good resolution to the problem of unaffordable ALMOs and we now have affordable ALMOs and I congratulate also the tenants of Leeds who took part in the ballot. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to speak to Minute 14 on page 60, Scrutiny Board City Services of 27<sup>th</sup> July. It is regarding highways maintenance funding.

I have highlighted before the unacceptable backlog of highways maintenance and I recognise the administration's contribution in addressing that. I would just like to ask in summing up whether that target, the 2011 target for meeting the target is feasible and whether it can be actually done.

Secondly, I would like to bring Council Members' attention to the scheme to adopt roads which has transformed the lives of quite a few streets in my ward, particularly in Cherwell five streets done just off Hartley Street and also Grayshon Street in Drighlington. I would like to scotch the rumour that that street is going to be named Terry Grayshon Street after the Member in front of me. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Barry Anderson to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: For the minute, we have actually asked for that information to come to the next Scrutiny Board if he wants to make sure we can do it, but do I turn Scrutiny into a political exercise here? I am just going to. Before anybody runs away with the fact, yes, that report was issued but as an administration we have had record amounts going into highways. We have been doing a number of roads in the city. We have hit most areas which are benefiting from the increased investment. We have put an extra £22.4m has been put into the budget. We really do take it seriously. We really do believe in the investment because we believe that people should be able to walk along our roads safely – it is better they walk on the pavements but walk along the roads as well because not everybody has got pavements – in a safe way. In the past, under the previous administration there were far too many claims against the Council for problems and I think we are now getting to the bottom of it, but we are not complacent enough to think we have solved it, we are still working to do it. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to speak on Agenda Item 81 of the meeting of the Plans Panel East held on 31 August, which refers to the Panel's refusal of permission to build a block of two flats in a garden at 47 Highfield, Tingley.

This lies in that part of Morley South beyond the Morley Town Council area, so in that sense the application was not one of mine, though I went on

the site visit and saw that the officer's report raised some interesting technical points.

An obvious question was, how could officers recommend acceptance of two flats when they had refused permission for one house on the same ground last October? This seems to have been because, according to standard guidance, garden space for flats needs to be only one quarter of the internal floor space of the dwelling rather than two-thirds for a house, so superficially at any rate it seemed possible to squeeze two flats on to a site which would not take one house.

Another oddity which occurred to me was that if a block of two dwellings was split horizontally it would count as flats and so have a lower parking and garden requirement than the same block split vertically, which would count as a pair of semi-detached houses.

Although this case seemed to end well for the objectors, it is clear that over-development in gardens is not addressed adequately by standard guidance and we really do need to do something about this. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR KENDALL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak on Minute 84 of Plans East, page 92. I want to talk about the Astoria on Roundhay Road. I am told that many Leeds people did their courting there. For those who did not or those who preferred speed dating instead, it is or was on an island surrounded by busy roads in my ward. Sadly in recent years it has passed its sell-by date with the necessary restrictions on large scale parking sounding its death knell.

So an application was submitted for flats to be built. The first application for 24 flats was rejected as only 19 parking spaces were proposed. The second, for 21 flats and 30 parking spaces, was approved by the Panel, as giving a much better balance, and building work started.

A matter of weeks later a third application – this is all within six months – reverting to the 24 flats and with three additional parking spaces was made. It sounds reasonable until you know that these three spaces were to be on the positively dangerous site on the side of Harehills Avenue.

Local residents and ward Councillors, Plans apparently took exception to this cynical attempt to manipulate the planning process. In fact one of them said, “What part of ‘No’ do these people not understand?” That was a panel Member who is usually sitting on the opposite benches.

Cynical, the three applications in six months? Yes. Refused? Yes, but it only needs for the building to go just a bit higher and no-one would know, until the three windows appeared in the roof, that this ruling had been flouted. I have asked the relevant controller to monitor it. Now, am I being cynical? I do not think so. It has happened elsewhere in Roundhay with extensions to individual houses that grow higher and wider and longer than they have got permission to.

Fortunately we have got two residents’ groups who are very expert in planning law and vigilant, but, my Lord Mayor, we all need to be vigilant. There is nothing wrong with reasonable development that takes account of the surroundings but the combination of greedy developers and the colour blindness of John Prescott, who sees brown fields in green gardens – they need to be told they cannot get away with it.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: Lord Mayor, I am sorry for interrupting but the acoustics on this side are very poor. We did not hear the answer from Councillor Harrand regarding The Breece. It is not helped when Members put their papers over the microphone but I have complained before and it is a continual issue that the sound over here is very poor. I know of two Members on this side who have hearing impairments and I really think that if a member stands up here, no matter what they say, they have a right to be listened to and

that is not the case. If I could suggest that you do not hold your papers over the microphone, we might actually hear a little bit more. It is an ongoing problem and it should be addressed by the people who run this Chamber.

COUNCILLOR : There is a spare seat here, Lord Mayor!

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: I did not even hear that, Lord Mayor, so that proves my point.

COUNCILLOR KENDALL: I will summarise briefly what I said. My papers are down there, I promise you. I basically said you have got to watch out for developers because they will creep around the planning permission that has been given and they should not. We have to stop them, we have to keep an eye on it because we have all got an interest in proper development but not improper development. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR FOX: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Two planning applications have been referred to. I am somewhat cautious in that either or both could be the subject of an appeal so it is perhaps best if one goes on to the more general aspects.

Firstly, this question of over-development or development that takes place subsequent to planning consent but does not conform with the planning conditions. It is a major problem and we are somewhat stymied by the test that an inspector always will apply when an item goes to appeal – even when it has been developed to a greater extent than the planning consent, they always apply the question, “Well, what is the harm?” Developers are well aware of that. An inspector can sometimes be somewhat more lenient with a planning application because he said well, it may be a foot or two higher but what is the harm, and that is what they legally have to consider. So, it is difficult.

I would just say that on Plans West recently where there was a case where a development took place which was not in accordance with the planning

application, the consequence there is the site was actually frozen. The developer actually had to close it down because Plans West were not willing to give a consent retrospectively, so there can be consequences of developers developing not in accordance with the planning consent, but each case obviously is judged on its merits. I do not know how the Astoria is going to turn out, we do not know. It is important in situations like that that due note is taken of the datum line to start with. It depends from what level you start building as to what your final heights are, so it is a difficult area.

When it comes to 47 Highfield, Tingley, I understand the concerns of Members about the way a recommendation has come through on the way policies are interpreted, but once again it is a matter of each one being looked at on its merits and it may be, if this item goes to appeal and the inspector upholds the appeal, he would effectively be saying well, the planning officers were right and the panel was wrong. It is very much a subjective area, planning always will be like that and there is always a need for Members to be constantly aware, watching developments and trying to ensure that anything that is developed is in accordance with the original planning consent.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to comment on Minute 34 of the meeting of the City Centre Plans Panel held on 17<sup>th</sup> August, which is on page 123. This mentions architectural awards given to the new Crown Street buildings next to the Corn Exchange. I have to say that everyone I have spoken to about it believes that the new building is at best mediocre, especially as it stands next to the Corn Exchange which is arguably the best and most original of the Victoria public buildings in the city centre.

It is to be hoped that we are not going back to the 1960s and 1970s when developers and architects seemed to award prizes to each other for buildings in which others could see little or no merit and which have not stood the test of time.



Last year Leeds Civic Trust admitted that it had been mistaken in supporting the Crown Street building's design and I noticed in the Yorkshire Evening Post that Councillor David Blackburn remains sceptical about it. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR AMANDA CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Well, Councillor Leadley, there is no accounting for taste, is there? I think there are a number of us there who were very sceptical about the building. However, somebody thinks it is a wonderful building. It was originally passed in 2002 so it has been there for quite a while now but it does not really fit in around the area. However, these things come to try us. There is not much we can do about it.

When the scaffolding comes down and you look at a building you sometimes think, "Did we really pass that?" I think that was one of them. It is very difficult sometimes when you are looking at the plans to see what the building is actually going to look like, because the artist's impression is quite different to what actually appears at the end. Thank you. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: I will pass, Lord Mayor, and deal with it in summing up.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: I have just had a message from Councillor Nash to say that she was an opponent of the Crown Street design. Well done, Councillor Nash.

So, where are we? My Lord Mayor, I wish to comment now on Item 11 of the Minutes of the meeting of Outer South Area Committee held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2006. That is the part to do with paying for a gas pipe to supply the West Ardsley Community Centre. This marks the end of a long story but in brief outline what happened was that in 2002 a new gas pipe was laid from Batley Road to supply the new Hill Top Primary School, which stands behind the community centre. At that time a blanked off T-junction was let into the pipe at

a point where it passed within a few feet of the community centre so that the centre might have a gas supply at some time in the future.

When that time came Transco would not use the T-junction and insisted on another new pipe parallel to the school supply being laid all the way from Batley Road, at a cost of more than £6,500. Attempted negotiations were without result so Outer South Area Committee ended up footing the bill.

We do need to be more robust in our dealing with the privatised utilities. Many of them have corners in which they have virtual monopolies and we should not allow them to exploit that. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR DUNN: I just wanted to comment on the same Minute as Councillor Leadley. The Ardsley and Robin Hood ward Councillors have been very much involved with this West Ardsley Community Centre. It is in our ward. We spent a lot of time chasing up Transco, which are the main culprits here and to no avail. We are left in a position where we have a community group, the children's community group, using this centre as a breakfast club and we have got toddlers there who had to go into that centre in winter with no heating on. To their great credit they have gone through last winter in severe conditions and the last report that we had is that Transco still had not made any move to supply this gas to the centre.

It would be naïve of us to think that any of us could make any moves to alter the situation. We are in a no man's land. We are in a position where if we refuse this money or did not support this extra funding, this centre would not get this heating and the centre is now occupied. We have to go forward and unfortunately we have to support this extra funding, although I do support Councillor Leadley's concern about it, we are in no man's land. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Finnigan to sum up.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Just to agree really with what both my colleagues have actually said. Transco's performance in this particular area has been abysmal. They are quite happy to leave kids freezing and pensioners freezing while they extract every last penny that they possibly can out of us. It was the correct decision to take to support the fitting of this particular gas pipe. It is entirely regrettable that Transco took another opportunity to pick on some of the more vulnerable people within our community and to squeeze, squeeze and squeeze again to maximise their profits.

I just mention the Morley Literature Festival again, Lord Mayor. 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, tickets available. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Members of Council, there are two further comments to make on North West Inner Area Committee and Appeals personnel Panel of which your whips are aware. Can I call Councillor Andrew Carter to comment?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I would like to refer to page 135, North-Western Area Committee Items 26 and 28. 26 is a Declaration of Interest, personal and prejudicial, by Councillor Illingworth at that particular meeting in connection with the Kirkstall Valley Park, which as Members will know is part now of the Greater West Leeds Country Park and Green Gateway.

Part of this area, of course, will be affected by whatever ultimately happens with Abbey Mills and St Ann's Mills and it is in that respect that I wanted to pass a further comment.

Councillor Illingworth had a question down to me earlier which, like a number of Councillor Illingworth's questions, have a habit of coming right and the end and is left hanging in the air with no answer. If you were as suspicious as Councillor Illingworth you would think that maybe it is deliberately placed there to leave it hanging in the air, which I really do not want to do.

This particular question related to the fact that on Abbey Mills and St Ann's Mills, when the report came to the Executive board I declared a personal and prejudicial interest and withdrew from the meeting.

What I would like to do in conjunction with this Minute is to give the answer to Councillor Illingworth's question, because I want it to be a matter of public record here in the Council chamber.

When on 5<sup>th</sup> July – and I am going to read this and I think Members will probably understand why. When on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2006 I withdrew from the debate to which Councillor Illingworth was referring, I disclosed to the meeting the nature of the personal interest which I had, which I considered to be prejudicial. That I was and am advised was all that I was required to do. Unfortunately Councillor Illingworth came into the meeting late – not for the first time at these things – and so missed what I said.

Being familiar, however with Councillor Illingworth's methods, I am really quite happy to share with colleagues today the reasons I gave for deciding to withdraw from the meeting. They were in fact, twofold. Councillor Illingworth is actually very well aware of these.

Firstly, I declared a prejudicial interest because of the support I had expressed for officer complaints in the Standards Board regarding Councillor Illingworth's conduct. I make it quite clear today that I shall continue with that role of support of the officers in the Development Department.

My second reason for declaring such an interest was, however, quite different. I decided to withdraw because, having been made aware of the range of uses to which the mill buildings might be put in the future, I apprehended that there could be firms with whom the company I currently work for did business and they might be interested in doing business with possible new users of the premises. I would like to make it plain, though, that when I made my disclosure I was not aware of any firms or undertakings with whom I had dealings that had

any knowledge whatsoever of the possible business opportunities to which I have referred. Nor to this day have I had any discussion with any such companies. I am not aware either of any company known to me that has expressed any interest or sought to do any business at all in connection with either St Ann's or Abbey Mills.

Accordingly, in responding to Councillor Illingworth's question, I do not intend to name any individuals or companies, being only too well aware of Councillor Illingworth's unquenchable thirst for disparate and irrelevant data which, in his characteristic fashion, he then sets about weaving into a fabulous complex of alleged intrigue.

When we met a little while ago, Councillor Illingworth informed me that he had never told an untruth, and I must believe him. He is an honourable man but what he is, in truth, is Mr Innuendo and Mr Insinuation. I have no doubt at all that Councillor Illingworth has put down this question today in the hope of securing some foundation upon which he might seek to allege hereafter that I have personally been pursuing a hidden agenda in respect of this matter.

Sadly, as colleagues will be aware, Councillor Illingworth has been very free in making such allegations against officers of the Local Authority who have had the misfortune of having to carry out their job in dealing with the Council's holdings in Kirkstall that do not necessarily have the support of Councillor Illingworth.

The truth of the matter, then, as I hope I have made clear to colleagues, is that I withdrew from the debate earlier this year by way of extra caution. Furthermore, I have been advised that the information I supplied at the time in support of my disclosure was fully in compliance with the requirement of the Members Code of Conduct.

Councillor Illingworth, do your worst. Councillor Illingworth, I am well used to the way you harry, harass, generally try and degrade the jobs that officers of this Authority do. You are now facing me in their defence. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: I would like to speak to Minute 28 on page 135, the North-Western Area Committee and to comment on the wellbeing spend.

Members will notice that we spend money and have allocated money on a number of different projects from policing through to neighbourhood wardens, Street Scene issues and the like. I do think that sometimes there is a tendency to spend money on lots of different things and not perhaps think through how best those things can be co-ordinated, so I am particularly pleased that one of the initiatives the Area Committee and Area Management launched earlier this year was to institute a working group to look at the specific problems that arise when the students return for the new term. Councillor Monaghan has been chairing a working party looking at the freshers' week issues in particular.

I think this group which involved the police we have seen, the universities and others, is hoping to co-ordinate a variety of activities over the coming week or so to try and ensure that when the students arrive back in Leeds they are welcomed but also that the residents who live in Headingley do not feel unwelcome as they return.

One particular initiative that I would like to flag up is the implementation of the flyering control zone. It is not coincidental that the Council, I think, has pursued this at this time because clearly during freshers' week we are inundated with flyers in Headingley town centre which get left on the road, which get trampled underfoot and which look at absolute mess. We have now introduced a licensing scheme so that the people who produce these flyers are responsible for making sure that litter does not remain on the floor for any period of time. I think that is a very positive measure and I think that is one of the things that the Freshers' Working Group have been able to co-ordinate. Obviously the

proof of the pudding is in the eating and we will see how successful the group has been, but I do think that Councillor Monaghan and the group deserve congratulations on the significant preparations that they have put in for this year's return of the students. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Lord Mayor, I was expecting to go through this Councillor Chamber to achieve a record of never having spoken but it always seems that one does speak at Council Chamber. It is only right because I think Andrew Carter has made another attack on John Illingworth. I just want to say as someone who claims to have the same integrity as you do – and I do not doubt your observing every proper observance in this particular case – but sharing the same sense of values as you, I would say that I trust John Illingworth very, very confidently. I have seen much of the work he has done. I have been horrified at some of the things he has revealed and the time will come when every Member of Council will have to accept that, whether the mistakes, deliberate or otherwise, have been made, they have been made and I can produce clearly, factually produce, reports which I have been provided with and which I show prove to be totally wrong.

Not one of us wishes to operate in a system like that. Over the years – and it has been many years, longer than most here – I have had the highest respect for officers. When we first started drafting – and Mr Rogerson may remember – the first protocol for this new, reformed, modernised Councillor which had made a mess of the whole system of local government, the thing I said to him was – and look at the notes on those days – that we must put in those protocols protection of officers from unjustifiable and unfair attack.

No-one will challenge my support of officers in the past. What I can say is, each one of us as a Member has the right and duty to put aside one's party political affiliation and say, "What is the truth in this circumstance?" When we do that, then we conduct ourselves with the correct kind of standards and when you charge my colleague with being the Prince of Innuendo, may I remind you, if he was the prince you were the King or the Jack of Knaves, I am not sure

what it is, because I got to the point where I got so fed up with your making innuendos about me in connection with the concerts - that, according to your friend Councillor Proctor never existed when we had people like Michael Jackson and Genesis and Madonna and so on – you made so many allegations that I had to write to every Member of Council saying your innuendoes, whatever they were, were inaccurate and if you wished to make them in public I would take him on in public. You at that stage stopped calling for my resignation. I have got that and if anyone doubts it, I can circulate it to you, just to prove that that was the position.

Do not take the high ground in these matters. Do not attack colleagues in order to shut them up because, quite frankly, if we as individuals respond to fears of being challenged in that way, we will cease to be able to carry out our duties.

This is said in a sense of great friendship to Andrew Carter, for whom I am the greatest admirer because who on earth but Carter could have managed to go on for so many years in the wilderness and still maintain his drive? Quite frankly, do not come that with us because we will not have it. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Monaghan, please, to sum up.

COUNCILLOR MONAGHAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In response to Councillor Carter's comments, thank you very much for taking an interest in our Area Committee Meeting. I am very glad that Councillor Hamilton raised the Freshers' Week issue and the fact that we have formed the Freshers' Week Multi-agency Taskgroup. This is the first time this type of group has been formed and it has had involvement from the police, both universities, the Councillors from both sides of this room, students and resident representatives. It has been a very positive discussion pulling all those separate institutions together.



What the result of this is going to be is that we are going to have the largest police presence in the area for the Freshers' Week. We are also going to have the largest enforcement presence in the area and we will also be seeing a huge increase in the Street Scene provision.

Helping back this up is the new power the area of flyering consent, which Councillor Hamilton mentioned, and I would just like to say a few words about this because I think it is a very, very positive thing that this city is one of the first Council's in the country to push this forward and I think it is very much worth looking at it in a bit more detail.

The measures include the distribution of flyers by putting them on display for collection, putting bundles in phone boxes and putting leaflets on vehicles and other items of street furniture. The zone that has been identified includes the main areas where there is a currently identified problem and this is the city centre, areas of Woodhouse Moor and Hyde Park and Headingley. Anyone who wishes to distribute flyers in this area will need a permit which binds them to conditions to ensure that the streets do not suffer from litter from their flyers. Distribution without consent can lead to a maximum penalty of £2,500.

The charge for these permits will cover the running costs of the scheme and range from £75 you £175 and will shift the burden of clearing the littering from flyering the Council tax payers in Leeds to those who promote and distribute these flyers.

Freshers' Week starts this weekend and I look forward to this period being both a fun and safe period for students and a time of minimum disruption for long-term residents of the area. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Under 2.1 I would like to move that Council Procedure Rule 3.1 is suspended to allow all comments on the receipt of minutes to be discussed.

COUNCILLOR : Seconded, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Those in favour? Any against? Any abstentions?

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Very briefly, my Lord Mayor, this is Minute 2, page 127. I would just like to congratulate the Councillors that were involved in this Personnel Panel hearing because you will know from the Minute Book that they attended something like twelve meetings during the course of more than a year to hear the appeal for one Member of staff. That must be something of a record and I think they deserve congratulations for their efforts, for their staying power, if nothing else. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Downes to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you for that, Councillor Hamilton. I would like to specifically thank Councillor Robinson over there attending the panel meetings which took place over the course of more than a year. It was a very difficult and extraordinary case to hear. Most of those hearing days were full days, so it took up a lot of time, in the middle of which Councillor Robinson had a very serious operation which he came back from, full of vigour.

In addition I would also like to thank the officers that helped both Councillor Robinson and myself through the hearing. As I say, it was a very difficult case but unfortunately, it is not all over yet. Whilst the hearing has ended, the matter is now going to an employment tribunal and I have been asked by the Council to appear as a witness at that hearing at a date to be advised. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR EWENS: I have to say almost as an apology that I would like to echo some of Councillor Minkin's sentiments that she expressed earlier on about planning, because that is what I want to do. I want to speak to Minute 25 on page 96 where we learn about the rejection of an application for more student built housing.

We like students, on the whole – most of them. I hope you do. I have been a student three times at 20 year intervals, so I am bound to like them! We are outfaced in many places by developer-led specific student development in cluster flats, which is not demand lead. I am assured by Unipol that the number of student is likely to flatten out and the demand is not likely to increase.

New housing mix policy has, I believe, been influential in the reject of this application along with the general thing that the local people should be considered and that housing mix should mean how are the residents spread about in relation to the students in this case? Certainly our residents have been very pleased that we have taken the trouble to oppose it and to consul them on the issue.

There is a new application which may affect my residents which only refers to cluster flats and I suspect that that is a euphemism for student flats, but I could be proved wrong.

What we want is not a lot of developer-led student buildings. We want more demand-led, family friendly, good quality applications for housing development which is what we need, highlighted this afternoon by one of our representative groups, the Right to Rent people. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

*(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I think that one of the areas that we were concerned about with the UDP final inspector's decision was the problem he flagged up about the Assure policy and about how it probably was not right for us to limit student accommodation in certain areas. He did flag up an alternative, I think, which has come into play in this particular application and that relates to the housing mix within an area.

Councillor Ewens has pointed out and spoken vociferously about this particular application, about the mix in the area and I think we as a panel did take cognisance of her views as we try to do with all of our Members, and did refuse the application.

I do, as Councillor Proctor said earlier, have to be careful because obviously there may be an appeal process that goes through. Can I just touch on a point that Councillor Fox raised, and I think it was raised by Councillor Leadley. It relates to building works that take place before the developer goes round to get planning permission. I remember speaking some twelve years ago in this Council Chamber about the same subject and saying at the time that it would be useful if the government - at that time a Conservative Government I have to say, Andrew, but I still think it is true for a Labour Government - introduced legislation to make it an offence to undertake works before you get planning permission rather than the system, as Councillor Fox outlined now, where basically a developer can undertake works and then we have to retrospectively decide whether there is a problem.

I think it was Councillor Finnigan who very kindly invited me and all my colleagues to the Morley Festival. Can I thank you very much for that and can I also say that as the Morley Festival appears to be at the end of this month, will I point out that it is the Otley Folk Festival this weekend and if he has a spare half hour we would be more than happy to see him.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Harris to exercise the right of final reply.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: This is not a criticism of Andrew Carter, before anyone tries to say it is, but I have thought in last ten minutes by suspending Standing Orders I am pleased to say it gave me chance to consider what I was going to say and whether I should as is customary for me, get my bayonet out and get stuck in or whether I should try and be a bit more circumspect.

I would say this. We, meeting after meeting, are starting to say some very robust things to each other in this Chamber and we are getting very close to the knuckle with lots of things. There was a time when we could have avoided this.

I understand Andrew's concern because I was put out to see that question from John because he and I had had a private discussion about those issues and I thought there was an understanding. I would say this, because after the last Council meeting I received an email from somebody in the public gallery who said, "An ASBO should be issued against all of you for the way you behave." That was the email I received. It is a fact. I use the word "we", the way "we" behave. I did not say "you". I used the word "you" because I was quoting the gentleman in case he meant "you", us, collectively. I include myself in that.

I make this appeal now. I make this appeal to the Leaders of the parties and to the whips. Let us sit down soon after this meeting and let us just see if we cannot try to restore order and get some sense of some semblance of control and return to the ways in which once we were able to conduct ourselves here. That is the request I make on that.

On issues raised under the Minutes, Councillor Grayson, the arena. I can assure you, the administration is absolutely committed to doing everything it can to getting an arena for this city. No stone is being left unturned in our efforts to attract private investors, operators, to do some of it. It is high on our list of priorities. There is consensus, I believe, across the parties, across the commercial sector – everybody wants one.

We are, of course, hamstrung by the fact that places like Sheffield, Birmingham, Newcastle have had huge amounts of European money to fund these things and we get diddly squat, but we are committed, we will do our best.

Ring fencing capital receipts, which brings me to an issue now that is a problem because the ring fencing of capital receipts for education was a policy agreed originally in camera between Andrew, myself and, I believe, Brian Walker, in the days when the Leaders could sit down together. We discussed it, we agreed it was appropriate in order to get investment into education and we are pursuing that policy - that policy established by yourselves that we have held to and there are other instances of this, of policies that you established which we have held to but which now you appear yourselves when it is opportune to be renegeing on and that is most unfortunate.

Councillor Driver in his usual pompous contribution about education.  
*(Interruption)* Pompous is my word but remember, I have invited myself to this meeting as well.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: What would it have been otherwise?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: All right, I will tell you what, quite right, I have made a mistake, I should not have done. Councillor Driver's considered contribution about South-East High School. You talked about the issue of schools not opening on time under the PFI process of which South Leeds is one, of which you are a governor, of which you are legally responsible for informing parents about when schools are due to open, so the responsibility lies with you and the Headteacher. It does not lie with us. The contract was signed over a year ago. The completion date was well known. If parents had not been informed that responsibility rests with you.

The ongoing aggravation that we have over PFI and the sports centres in particular. I just remind people what I said at the last Council meeting, that were we able to retain just half of the net contribution being made to the national business rate - just half, £25m - that would enable us to fund £300m of borrowing for capital projects in this city. Think what a position that would put us in and we would not be beholden to the problems that we face with PFI projects and the way in which the whole process of PFI is sometimes for

political reasons misused and the word 'privatised' is used to try and make constituents believe that something is happening that is not.

Imagine if we were allowed to keep the money we generate in this city in order to fund our own capital projects. I am pleased to say that representations have been made to the Lyons Investigation, or whatever it is, specifically along those lines, that we be able to retain more of that money that this city generates.

Now finally we come to the question of the Robbie Williams concert and the startling - and it is startling - fuss that the opposition have made over the schools closing.

Let me first of all say, all my experience in business tells me that when you run businesses things go wrong and when they go wrong, there is no point pretending something has not gone wrong. If a customer tells you they are unhappy, there is no point saying to the customer, "No customer, you are not unhappy, you do not know what you are talking about." You have to face what they are saying and try to deal with it. In running this place, things sometimes go wrong. It is an immense undertaking.

The big difference is that we at least are prepared to listen and concede whereas you in 24 years not once were prepared to concede that anything had ever gone wrong. Not once were you prepared to apologise publicly. Never once did we hear from you willingness to change a decision after having listened to constituents. Not once did you publicly say sorry to the people of Leeds about anything, and I will not be cowed into submission, not by you or anybody else, about the way in which I deal with these things.

I would just remind you about comparing what we have done and our record so far with yours and when our record is as bad as yours, then I will go, but I will remind you, Love Parade was a catastrophe; South-East Stadium 300% over budget; loss of control of education in this city; plummeting

education performance standards; Landmark Leeds a complete waste of £30m which cannot be maintained; a £60m road backlog; and a £60m sports centre repair backlog. What do you come up with? You come up with grass cutting and some school closures. That is a sign (*Interruption*) Lord Mayor – Councillor McKenna talked about people being allowed to be heard and not shouted down. I depend upon this microphone.

I would simply say that our record compares extremely favourably with yours. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call for a vote on the receipt of the Minutes, please? All in favour? Any against? Any abstentions? Thank you.

We will do one White Paper Motion, which is Item 8. Councillor Harris, please.

#### ITEM 8 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – NEW DEAL SERVICES IN LEEDS

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, in moving this White Paper I recognise that some water has gone under the bridge since the issue was absolutely uppermost in our minds after the loss of the New Deal contract earlier in the summer, but nevertheless we considered that this was an issue still important to debate and still important to discuss and that the matters pertinent to this be put in the public domain.

The first thing to say – and I know we will hear an amendment later on – is that we have to recognise that the service we were delivering was nationally recognised and applauded and was of Beacon Status, and so we should thank our Officers who for years and years delivered that service and assisted nearly 10,000 people into employment through that process. It was an excellent service that deserved better than its ultimate fate at the hands of central Government.



The second issue I wish to touch on is the process by which we were informed of the loss of the contract or, indeed, were not informed, and the way now in which London is trying to explain away the way in which it handled this.

We ourselves as an Authority were never directly told by London that we had lost the contract and, indeed, it was only through rumour and then checking websites that we were able to find out indeed that the contract had not been awarded to our private sector partners, a company called Pelcombe, but rather had been awarded to a consortium of a company called Bransholme and Bradford Council.

I absolutely and categorically assure Council that our attempts to speak to the relevant department in London and our attempts to speak to the supposed winners of the contract, Bradford Council and Bransholme fell completely on deaf ears and officers were unable until well down the road to be able to ascertain exactly what had happened.

Thereafter I must tell Council that the debriefing that we have received from London indicates that there was nothing whatsoever wrong with the bid that we tendered, nor with the service that we had been offering and, indeed, it has proved almost impossible for our private sector partner, Pelcombe, to be able to ascertain precisely what was wrong with their bid.

The upshot is that an award-winning service delivered locally with all the relevance of that local knowledge and the immediacy of it being local, that service is lost to us. The upshot was that our employees were put in an extremely difficult position as we struggled to work out the implications of TUPE and who should and should not be transferred out of the Council's employment under the new contract.

The final implication for us is this – and if you ever question our commitment to our employees and continuing service – the loss of that contract could have totally undermined the viability of our Family Learning Centres, some of them, the smaller ones. It certainly placed many, many jobs in jeopardy.

The response of this administration has been to fully fund the loss of that contract to the tune of £1.8m after there are certain discounts, so in the middle of the year, over and above budgets set, we have had to find and we have found a further £1.8m to be injected into this budget head to protect those employees and to protect what is left of that service and the protect the Family Learning Centres. That is our commitment on our part as an administration to what we consider to be a vital service.

I deeply regret this contract has been lost to this city. I see no evidence anywhere to suggest that anybody here in Leeds is culpable of what had happened. I believe this is part of a bigger agenda. If you look at the statistics nationally you can see that there is an agenda of regionalisation of services, taking them away from direct Local Authority delivery and that there is a central Government policy of actual privatisation on a large scale now.

I have nothing against the private sector. I will accept delivery delivered by whoever can do it best for the end user, but when you look at the statistics there can be no doubt with regard to this that somebody in London has decided that Local Government must no longer deliver these services and it must be placed in private hands. Those are the facts. It is that that we have fallen foul of. It is unfortunate, if I am being generous. It is certainly distressing and upsetting for our employees and for all those thousands of people who have had their New Deal disrupted and, in some cases, curtailed. It is not the right way to deal with this issue. It is not the right way to try and pursue a narrowing the gap agenda of which this is such an important part.

We will continue to do the best we can now in these difficult circumstances but there will be questions to be asked of Government, exactly what its agenda is and exactly what is its commitment to local delivery of local services for the benefit of local Leeds people. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I second and reserve the right to speak.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am pleased to see that we have some employees from the Department of Training and Skills in the gallery, because I think they do deserve a fair hearing and debate, given the comments that Mark has said about the record of this department in servicing sometimes the most needy and deprived communities. I am not going to put any rhetoric, I will take the spirit that Councillor Harris is trying to inject into the last ten minutes. There will be no rhetoric about the reasons why it was lost or not. I will try to deal with the facts because I think, (a), we owe it to the staff, some of whom have worked for 17, 18 years and, (b), we owe it to the trainees who will come from the most deprived backgrounds.

If I just run you through chronologically what the sequence of events was, then I would hope that Mark would withdraw that intemperate White Paper because he has not spoken on the White Paper because he has not spoken on the White Paper - he has actually spoken in a much more constructive way - and agree to an enquiry and an investigation into this matter, which is really, really important and serious for the city and for the Council's reputation.

It is absolutely true that in September 2005 the Government moved bids for the New Deal contract into sub-regions and in October BEST came to the Council - BEST became the winning contractor, waited three weeks and the Council finally got back and said we were partnering with Pelcombe, which is a training one based in the East Midlands. BEST is Leeds based.

That was in October. The significant dates are as following. On February 13th the Council were contacted by the Department of Works and Pensions and were told they could have an extension on their contract and to make preparations and contingency plans in case they did not win the bid. Hold that - February this year they were told they could have a roll out programme, an extension of three months to June - it was supposed to finish in March - in order to make contingency plans in case they lost the contract.

On April 25th the announcement of the winning contractor came out and it happened to be BEST and Bradford Council. Do not forget both Pelcombe, the Council on both occasions was sub-contractors. As I say, BEST won the contract and Pelcombe were informed on 25th April and it is the statutory duty of Pelcombe to have told the Council, which they did, and it was put on the website just after that announcement. In fact 3rd May is when the Council were told they had not won the contract. 3rd May.

47 employees on 14 June were given four days' notice they were to be TUPE-ed, without any criteria – and this is what the main White Paper is about, who picks up the blame and responsibility - without any justification and without any criteria shown.

In fact - I have to say I do not normally name officers – had it not been through the intervention of David Page, the Deputy Chief Executive, those 47 would have gone. In actual fact, BEST only wanted 13.

We had a period of time from April 25th, or 3rd May if you are generous, to 14th June when no employee was told. There was no justification. They were given four days' notice to really say, 'Do you want it or not?' As I say, had it not been through the intervention of David Page, those 47 employees would have been TUPE-ed out without anywhere to go.

I say to you this – and this is why we are calling for a proper investigation - I have not blamed anybody, named anybody – they are the sequence of events. Is that the way to treat employees who have worked here 17, 18 years of loyal service, building up the reputation, doing the work that we want to do in our communities? Above all the Council turned down a residual contract that would have allowed the 80 trainees to have stayed with the Council for the rest of the time. They also turned down work experience.

I say to you those 80 trainees were then left completely without advice to go and find BEST, wherever they were, and to continue their courses.

I say to colleagues here, something is very wrong when you are treating trainees who need those skills to get the jobs just like that and to deny them an opportunity to stay with the Council.

I think it is right and proper, Council, not to call names, if we are working in this new spirit of constructive, and I believe Mark is an honourable man. He would resign if anything happened to Roseville, he said that. I think it is right and proper he should stand up now and say to Council, accept the spirit I have used and say that he is prepared to have a look at this, to investigate it properly and give those employees a proper and full explanation of what happened and what went wrong and also to say to those trainees, again, what happened and what went wrong on behalf of the Council.

I move, Lord Mayor. Thank you. (*Applause*)

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

COUNCILLOR BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, I have got to say I think the whole thing regarding this contract is entirely perverse. Leeds and Bradford were the only Councils in the sub-region which delivered New Deal. In terms of scale, Bradford delivered 20% of what Leeds did, and we all know how good the service that was delivered by the Council was. The bid was robust. It set out delivery arrangements. It could have been in operation from Day 1. It was credible, it was inclusive, imaginative and based on a sustained track record.

What we see here – and we will be discussing it later and people were demonstrating outside – what we see effectively here is the real people who do the privatising, and I am not holding with this spirit of co-operation on this thing. I believe we have been done by Government for very good reasons, and I think we have been mistreated entirely. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Lord Mayor, I would just urge Councillor Harris to move on from the comments that David Blackburn has just made. I think that through Councillor Wakefield we have got the basis of a really rational, sensible way forward in a debate that we have to have on this subject.

Personally I represent an area in this city where New Deal and the work of Jobs and Skills Department has been responsible for transforming lives. The service has richly deserved its excellent reputation and Beacon Status and the integrity of the staff, the dedication, nobody can fault that at all. They have been working at the front line, delivering for some of the most vulnerable people in our city.

I have to take issue with Councillor Blackburn. The events of the past few months have been nothing less than shambolic and there has been a level of complacency and arrogance, I have to say, that even in your White Paper, Mark, I am really distressed that you do not actually make reference to the participants of the New Deal programme and the people in my patch that have really suffered as a result of the fact that you seem to have concentrated immediately on trying to cast blame about this rather than actually – which I would have hoped from things that you have said – that your first reaction would have been OK, the contract has been lost but in the short term, how do we protect those most at risk from its loss? Of course, the first response we did get was, who can we blame?

I say ‘complacency’ because one of the senior officers has actually expressed in a letter that the Council had absolutely no expectation of losing the contract. It has been acknowledged it was not prepared for and this led to a lot of confusion and uncertainty. I would have to say, what people in my patch want to know is why you turned down the offer of extending the contract for existing clients, why they were not allowed to finish their qualifications and secure placements as a result.

There is a real sense in the patch of people being abandoned, unsupported, without help and this has added to the enormous distress of the

staff who have had all the problems, considering their own position in this, but they have been continually in contact with the people they have been working with over many years.

The other thing – and this is why I really support the amendment in the name of Councillor Wakefield of why we need a proper enquiry and a way forward – is why have the Council not signed up to offer work placements to New Deal clients. Can you explain that? I am surprised that Councillor Blackburn did not mention this, that if ever there was an example of your commitment to narrowing the gap, this would surely be it.

The treatment of the staff has been nothing short of scandalous and the sense of abandonment I believe is unforgivable. The loss of the contract was indeed a blow and I cannot sign up to the conspiracy theories that have been mentioned earlier, but in no way does that excuse the treatment that the staff involved and the residents of our city have received.

There is now, I have to say, a massive loss of confidence across the sector. In my area we have been working overtime to convince people in the area that South-East Family Learning Centre indeed will continue to deliver important work in the community.

Lord Mayor, I second the amendment in the name of Councillor Wakefield. We want to hear what is being done to address these matters, to get really underneath what has happened and what you intend to do as a result of it. People in this city are still suffering as a result of the incompetence of this administration. A full enquiry is overdue, essential and urgent. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Can I say, Lord Mayor, how consistent you would be with your original words if you withdrew your resolution. That would cause the amendment to fall and you could promise then to do something which I think everyone would agree with. If there is doubt about the facts, let us clarify them.

To deny the call for a proper enquiry is in fact to say you have something to hide. You are saying there is nothing to hide, so then what is the problem with having an independent enquiry, the facts being produced and then if the case is to lead to a proper attack on the Government for doing what one of my colleagues over there says, then let us have it and make that attack, but let us know the facts first. We do not know the facts now and I feel sure that shoes of us who are not involved in this have heard today information we did not know which must make us wonder, did we get it right or not? Is there a lesson to be learned? Let us know the facts.

To say we do not want to know the facts because we are not going to have an enquiry does not seem to me in any way consistent with the obligations on ourselves as Councillors, much less the nice words you were saying at the beginning of your last speech.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Flattery will get you nowhere, Bernard. Thank you very much. This is a debate which we have initiated. The debate has been initiated so that the facts can be put in the public domain. I spoke to the White Paper in proposing, in my first speech. Interestingly, however, Keith Wakefield certainly did not speak to his amendment.

Let me remind everybody what the amendment says. The amendment does not deal with the aftermath of losing the contract at all. It talks about incompetence and mishandling of the bidding process which resulted in the Council losing the contract. That is what your amendment deals with. It does not talk about an enquiry about the way in which our employees have been treated. It talks about our incompetence, you allege, in the way in which the bidding process was handled.

Now, first of all let us try and put a bit more meat on the bone, because if you want facts you will get facts. My file is open to you. You are quite right in the chronology that you give, Keith. 13th February that our contract was extended, 25th April we were not informed so we had to find out via other



routes, but just let me put this to you. It is odd in the extreme that civil servants hide behind such a technicality that when we were speaking to them regularly they were unable to tell us that the contract had been lost and simply hide behind the technicality that they were only obliged to tell Pelcombe and BEST as the principal bidders. That really is semantics to the point of insanity.

You are quite right that on 13th June TUPE notices were issued. What you have not done is dealt with what happened between the beginning of May and 13th June and why indeed those notices were ultimately issued and if you want the facts these are the facts and I have got a chronology here.

Starting on 5th May, officers with senior managers were discussing the implications, senior managers in the department, of what it meant to have lost the contract and efforts were made at that juncture to engage BEST in dialogue to understand how many of our employees – it is no good looking up at the gallery to see if somebody can tell you otherwise, I have the chronology here.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I do not need to. Have an investigation.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: The facts are open for anybody to see. Those discussions began with senior officers, managers and through May – it is all here – a succession of discussions with the employees potentially affected. I have got a list of all the meetings – 22nd May, senior managers Jobs and Skills, departmental HR and all staff; 24th May Head of Services, departmental HP, trade unions. I have got it all here. Those meetings were taking place with staff. They were being told we were in an intolerable position. What was the intolerable position? The intolerable position was BEST were refusing to speak to us so we had no idea at all how many of our employees they may take from us under the TUPE transfer arrangements and it was impossible, therefore, for us to determine how many employees would stay with us and how many employees would move to BEST. It was nothing to do with incompetence of our managers whatsoever. It was BEST. Why? Because BEST have conceded they were staggered when they got the contract, they were completely ill-prepared to get the contract and why was that?

I will tell you why that was. All you have to do is look at the business employment services training report on BEST of June 2002 and you will know why they never expected to win the contract and you have got to ask how in God's name somebody in London issued it to them because this is the overall commentary on BEST. This is independent. Don't shake your head, it is here. It is public knowledge. It is a public document. This is the overall judgment on BEST by the department on the services they delivered in this field. The quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the quality of work-based training in retailing plus the series of transportation, business, admin and management is unsatisfactory. Business Employment Services Training Ltd management is unsatisfactory. The quality assurance of the organisation is unsatisfactory.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, I think...

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: It had better be a good point.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It is a good point. I think you are straining to a 2002 report. There was an open, fair competition, the points were allocated to each – I am sorry. It is an unfair accusation on a 2002 report.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: No, Lord Mayor, I will not give way to this.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You are misleading the Council because I can read out the Pelcombe report.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I will not give way to this, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: We will put it on the internet.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Don't give way to the truth, Mark. Don't.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: That is less honest than we expected. Less honest than we expected.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we be quiet please for Councillor Harris.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: There is a public report on the company that won the contract. It is in the public domain. They did not expect to win the contract, they were ill-prepared for it. It is staggering...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: In 2002?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: In 2002. Yes, actually, 2002. It is only four years ago, you know. It is not 500 years ago.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Desperation.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Desperation? It is illustrative of your entire group's mentality.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Have an investigation.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Would you just let me finish? Let me remind you of what Jim McKenna said earlier about people being allowed to speak and let me be allowed to speak. You asked me the facts and I have put them on the floor of this Chamber. I have told you what was wrong with the company that won the contract. There is financial information which is in the public domain which is even more terrifying but we will not go there, but you go check the companies out about the financial performance of Pelcombe and BEST and then ask who assessed each company for its ability to deliver services and it becomes alarming.

You accuse us of having incompetently handled the bidding process. We delivered a Beacon Status. We chose a partner that was robust financially and

had a track record of delivery. We submitted our bid, contrary to some of the rumours put about by your side, in advance of BEST. Our bid went in before theirs, not as was suggested by some people late and that counted against us. It was in time and before anybody else. We did everything possible to retain that contract and we have been given no coherent reason why it was lost other than somebody in London said they did not like Pelcombe's part of it.

Now, those are the facts. That is the situation which we found ourselves in and you have asked what we have done and I reiterate, we have injected almost £2m into the budget to cover the shortfall that there was on that contract from your caring government – a caring Labour government. We have found the money from our resources to protect those jobs and to protect those Family Learning Centres. That tells you what our intentions are. It is impossible to understand what your intentions are at any time whatsoever. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Members, we have been asked to have a recorded vote, if you could return to your allocated seats, please.

*A recorded vote was taken on the amendment*

THE LORD MAYOR: 91 Members present. 36 in favour, three abstentions and 52 against. Therefore the amendment is LOST.

*A recorded vote was taken on the substantive motion*

THE LORD MAYOR: 91 Members present, 52 Members in favour, four abstentions and 35 against. Therefore the motion is CARRIED.

*Council adjourned for a short time*

THE LORD MAYOR: Welcome back, Members. Can we start with Item 9, White Paper Motion. Councillor Brett.

ITEM 9 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – ADULT FURTHER EDUCATION  
CLASSES

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can you hear me, Jim? Councillor McKenna, can you hear me? Good. I will continue. I am moving the motion in my name because Park Lane College tell me that 2,000 adult education students in Leeds are about to have their courses stopped. The Learning and Skills Council at the government's request, have reconfigured their budgets to put more money into the 16-1 budgets and cut adult education.

In Leeds Park Lane College, who are bearing the brunt of this problem, are having a £15m budget each year for adult education slashed by £2m, to about £13m. They are only getting £700,000 more for 16-19 students.

I do not deny that the budget for 16-19 year olds are important – indeed with my portfolio I welcome spending more on education and training for this age group, but the political question is, where do you get this cash from?

Let us just look at the effects of Park Lane's £2m cut. Osmondthorpe One Stop Shop has had, until a few months ago, a small but very effective Park Lane Centre. It offered a range of what in the trade are called soft courses – creative writing; introduction to ICT; pre-basic skills literacy and numeracy courses; courses appealing to the long-term unemployed and retired people who had missed out on education earlier in their lives.

Students come to this centre from a surprisingly wide area. You might think they come from Osmondthorpe and Holton Moor, but you would be wrong. Not only have students in the past travelled from Lincoln Green and Richmond Hill but as far afield as Pudsey – I think that is still in Leeds – and Moortown. This is a testament to the excellent teaching and supportive atmosphere created by Park Lane's caring staff.

It is not easy to coax people who have missed out on education back into learning. I have met one student who is in her mid-20s who in her teens was on heroin and had chaotic lifestyle. She got pregnant and in her 20s realised that she wanted more from life than state benefits were giving her and her child.

Osmondthorpe One Stop Shop was not the first educational establishment that she tried, but it was the one that gave her a life line. This young, single mum lives in my ward and, until recently, was one of the individuals making up the statistic I least like about Burmantofts and Richmond Hill ward. It has the highest unemployment rate in Leeds at 8.3% and, sadly, still rising.

Osmondthorpe One Stop Shop Park Lane Centre has given her and many others a vital boost, but what has now happened? It has closed its doors as a Park Lane Centre last July, a victim of this reconfiguration.

Let us be quite clear about this. The Labour Government has robbed Peter to pay Paul. I know the students who cared passionately about the Osmondthorpe One Stop Shop Park Lane Centre have lobbied their Labour MP with increasing ferocity on this issue.

Hilary Benn MP at first said, amazingly, there were no cuts, but after three visits there are still no public signs of his concern. I know he is a government minister, but the silence from Leeds Labour MPs is deafening and you can only conclude they support the government cuts.

At this point I must pay tribute to Councillor Harris and Councillor Carter, who have taken a keen interest in this issue. They have met Park Lane College, they have done their best to find other partners to offer a variety of educational courses as Osmondthorpe One Stop Shop.

Tomorrow there will be a Feel Good Day at Osmondthorpe One Stop, where adults will be encouraged to look at a range of courses in this pamphlet, a variety of starter courses to tempt the long-term unemployed.

This administration had done its best to fill the gap left by the Labour Government cuts, but the fact remains that this month, as new registrations are under way, Park Lane estimate that 2,000 people will find their courses no more and many, many others will find they have to pay much more.

The motion is quite clear and I hope you will all support it. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

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

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: When you read Councillor's Brett's White Paper, of course, it was sent some months ago and in it is the closure of Swarthmore Centre – almost a threat that it is the end of courses. So, I picked up a brochure, thanks to one of my colleagues, and I have got a nice set of courses for Richard.

On the Monday he can do a pilates, Bernard.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Very good.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Is it very good? On Tuesday, with a whole range, he can do a salsa dance or, indeed, he can do lindy hop dance, whatever that means. Later on you can do flower arranging. In fact there is also a course called Finding a Voice and I think for Richard it ought to be called Finding an Excuse, because the fact of life is that Swarthmore is still thriving, still courses, here is the programme, not closed down and no-one would pretend that it has not got difficulties, like Park Lane, and no-one would deny that in fact adult and community education, an area that I have worked in for many years, is something of enormous benefit, not just for people's education but for their social and health wellbeing.

I am very committed to see them and I think many of them who see them taking place in our communities do value and support them for the role they play, but there is a real debate out there and Richard touched upon it in a very contradictory way.

The money, which has actually gone up 60%, Richard, since 1997 but you did not mention that, I do not know why, in adult education, has to be allocated – it is a difficult debate, I will be quite honest, it is not something you should just say in a knee-jerk way, it should all go to community or it should all go to adult, but LSC took a decision and the LSC, which is the funding agency, took a decision that by 2010 95% of our jobs would require Level 2 and above. Now, Richard also mentioned that in his ward that he represents he has got probably the highest level of unemployment and probably within that are people who have not got Level 2. So, the funding subsidy – that is what it is about, Richard, it is not about cuts it is about subsidy – went from one form into skills.

When you think that Richard represents a ward with the highest level of unemployment, you must say something about the priority groups, i.e. the 16-18 unemployed, the long-term unemployed and people on income benefits. You never quite got round to that, Richard, I do not know why. That is where the money is going.

If you genuinely want people to start sharing in that economic success, in that regional economic strategy, it is a difficult decision and, as I said, I love community education but I recognise if you are going to do anything for those people you have just mentioned, you have to give them a chance of getting into employment and that is why the money has gone to there. That is why Park Lane have to realign their education provision so it fits in with the overall training and skills agenda of the Yorkshire regional economy.

You might say that is a difficult debate, perhaps we should have a real discussion here about priorities, but actually Councillor Brett is starting to use it as a smokescreen, because what he did not mention - he must have amnesia –



is that Park Lane were actually sent a letter by the Council last March to say they were reviewing tenancy of the One Stop Shop and on that basis, because it costs Park lane £37,000 a year, they took a decision that they would have to withdraw.

Now you would have to say – he did not thank myself, I am surprised, he thanked Councillor Carter and thanked Councillor Harris and that is right, but I also did some work on behalf of the community. I have to say people like Jack in the gallery and one or two others around did an enormous amount of work trying to generate political support across the party, and I think in many ways Jack has done more to keep the course there than actually Councillor Brett. That is a shame, because there are two questions I will ask Councillor Brett. One, why did he not ask the Council to relinquish the £37,000 rent? There is an opportunity. All of us can use Wellbeing money to subsidise courses that take place in our community and I think, Keith, we are considering doing it for a community in Micklefield. We can do that.

I checked. He never once used Wellbeing money. He never once tried to say to the Council can we not subsidise these courses. I will tell you what it is all about. People think it is about adult education versus training skills. It is not. It is about the future of the One Stop Shop in Osmondthorpe. What I would really like to say is, given that there is slowly a decline in the agencies using Osmondthorpe, I hope Richard when he is summing up can reassure all of us here about the future of the long-term future of Osmondthorpe, because that place, the One Stop Shop, was put in by this administration. The reasons why are very simple. It is because it serves one of the most deprived communities in the city and it put inside that as well as education benefits advice, health – which is now withdrawn – and other agencies which help those people.

I think what Councillor Brett has tried to do is wriggle away from a statement about the long-term security of Osmondthorpe. If we really care about the people he has talked about, then we ought to say here and now that

Osmondthorpe One Stop Shop as a long-term security will be there and available for local people. That would impress me more than actually talking – and I am happy to debate philosophy with you about education but that would reassure me more about those people because Park Lane never threatened to withdraw the course at all. They were going to move it. They were going to move it to Crossgates, they were going to move it elsewhere, and to their credit Park Lane have carried on and committed themselves to a skeleton course.

I would say congratulations to the community, because I met them on a couple of occasions and they worked extremely hard, assiduous, lobbying everybody in the city – congratulations to Park Lane for providing that but I have to say to really convince me, Richard, that you are not just using this as a smokescreen about funding and cuts and so on. We live in the real world here and well you know it. Let us talk about the future of Osmondthorpe One Stop Shop. Thanks, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: Lord Mayor, I rise to second and reserve the right to non-pompously speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Finnigan, if you could allow Councillor Harris to speak before you, if you do not mind, because he has to leave for seven o'clock. Councillor Harris.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Thank you. Keith has asked some questions of Richard Brett that would be appropriate for me to answer, because at that juncture it fell within my portfolio, the One Stop Shop aspect of it, so it is appropriate for me to deal with it.

The first thing is that, as far as we can see Osmondthorpe has a long-term future. In this business what long-term means but I gave the assurance...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I say that is a threat.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: It is ridiculous. What do you want me to say? I will tell you what, Osmondthorpe will be there in a thousand years' time. Is that what you want me to say?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: That is an exaggeration.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: What do you want me to say? There is no immediate – is everybody listening? – there are no plans to close Osmondthorpe, there is no immediate threat to Osmondthorpe. Osmondthorpe, for the foreseeable future, has a secure future.

No, I am sorry, if you want to twist my words, twist them. I will never say – it is ridiculous, it is impossible. I try to be straight and reasonable and you just will not have it, will you? It is absolutely pathetic. Nobody – you could not, Brian Walker could not, nobody can say never. Can you not for once just take the words at face value and bloody stand up and be counted?

Now, I told you, you asked the question about Osmondthorpe. There are no plans to close it, there is no immediate threat to it, it is staying open. It has a future as far as we can see. That is how it is. Do not twist or distort my words.

With regard to Park Lane we offered them it rent free and they said it went nowhere near touching the deficit they had and that it was completely unsustainable for them.

What they explained to us was the to keep the courses going at Osmondthorpe would use 50% of their contingency and he could not do it, so we offered the rent free facility in order to keep those classes as they were intact at Osmondthorpe. The reason in the end that they stepped back, I believe, is because we got them in, we had a real session with them and looked at what the options were and then in fairness to Park Lane they said “OK, we will try and do X, Y, Z” and that is what they are doing.

Does that give you the assurances that you want? Now that we have dealt with that we can return to the White Paper, which Richard will deal with because the White Paper is all about the fact that your Labour Government has axed money from adult education in Leeds. That is what the debate is about, not Osmondthorpe, not the rent at Osmondthorpe. It is the Labour Government that said education, education, education is taking £2m away from park lane and stopping them delivery education. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR EWENS: Briefly, Lord Mayor, to put in one or two little things. The thing that I find depressing about Swarthmore is that it is taking away education for vulnerable youngsters, challenged youngsters between 19 and 25, which adds considerably, if they are going there, to the quality of their lives, as it does for other people.

The other thing that I find is that last year, I think Councillor Grahame will remember, when we were looking at the transformation scrutiny and we were talking about the future of the skill force, one of the things that we were told, certainly by the university, was that one of the things we have always led with in this country is because we have brought people up to use their imagination and this is part of what we are doing.

The other thing we had to recognise last year was that we do not know exactly what the workforce is going to be in the future. There are skills that may be needed in the future, so we have got to keep up in the process of doing things, of working, of studying, of going out in to a new area, because that may be what we want to say as educational leaders in the country. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR BALE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, when the history of New Labour is written I think it will be seen as a saga of unintended consequences. Shiny initiatives that were intended to help people and ended up helping no-one, costing a lot of money and leaving people worse off.

Members opposite, Lord Mayor, like to talk about cuts and the imposition of charges, so let me tell you a story about cuts and the imposition of charges. It is a true story. It is also a personal story, Lord Mayor, for which reason I need to declare a personal interest because I want to talk about a course which my wife and daughter attend at Park Lane College at Yeadon, an art class. My wife is a retired woman, my daughter is an adult with a learning disability.

The fees for that course last year, which is a course of 30 weeks, two hours a week, the fees last year for the course for my wife were £45 for the year and for my daughter a nominal £6 registration fee, which has to be good value. The fee this year for the same course, 30 weeks, two hours a week, will be £186 for each of them. So, for someone with a learning disability previously benefiting from the fee waiver scheme, the fee has gone up from £6 to £186. This is not a unique case.

My daughter will continue with the course. Many others will not because parents and others cannot afford those fees. Many courses will close because of those increased fees. My concern obviously is wider than that of my family. I have been approached by a lady who has a son with Downs' Syndrome at Park Lane College, attending a performing arts course. He might never tread the boards as a professional actor or singer but his course was giving him a great deal in terms of a growth of confidence and self-esteem. The course has closed because it is not sufficiently work-related.

Yesterday I spoke to someone at Park Lane College and I have her permission to use her name. I spoke to Anne Buckley, the Director of Adult and Community Education. I asked her who was to blame for this situation. Government. Government policy. "We have traffic lights", she said. "The Fee Remission Policy faced a red light. If the college fails to implement the policy, its funding will be reduced."

Government at the moment is emphasising work-related skills in the narrowest Gradgrind-ish way. It ignores the confidence which all adults can obtain from education and achievement and in a European city with the second highest employment in the creative industries – second I am told, to Milan – it discriminates actively against the arts.

Those with learning disabilities are increasingly marginalised and excluded. Those words are not mine, they are the words of someone working in the field who told me what she believe was happening. Those with learning disabilities are increasingly marginalised and discriminated against.

This does not just discriminate against people like that. We talked earlier about 50% achievement in five A\* to C. It is the 50% that do not get that, the 50% that do not get that carry on through life, need achievement, need challenge, need an opportunity not just need to learn useful skills, but need access to education. This is actively discriminating against that. It is for those people that the fees have gone up. Leave aside the learning disability situation with someone on severe disablement allowance. Take my wife's change of fees as the norm - £45 to £180 plus the £6 registration fee. That is the difference in fee this year and other courses have closed. Some will close because of lack of numbers, some are closing anyway.

The charge against this government, Lord Mayor, is not that it fails to spend money – it sprays money around like a feral tomcat and like a feral tomcat it moves on from one initiative to another without any regard for the consequences of its actions. (*Applause*)

I urge Members opposite just for once, stand up for Leeds, recognise that this White Paper is right and withdraw your amendment. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HYDE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. You will find, if you have not found already, because it is traditional, the Lord Mayor visits Swarthmore and Park Lane and various institutions. You will see the excellent work which is

being done for the groups of people just described so clearly by Councillor Bale a few moment ago and you cannot fail to be impressed by the result which this work has on the standard of life of the people who are benefiting from it.

I have to say that I am somewhat surprised at Councillor Wakefield's attempted red herring. Good try, Councillor Wakefield, but really, you know, it is not about Osmondthorpe One Stop Shop entirely. It is a lot more about the £2m. It is a long time ago now since this Council lost control of the further education colleges. We have not had it as part of our education brief for more than ten years. Yes, we can put some money into community education, we can enhance provision, we can tinker round the edges. We cannot, I suggest to you, find £2m at the drop of a hat. This is, as already been said, Learning and Skills Council determined money. It is not Leeds City Council's money and therefore we come back to the original argument, that this sort of service, the pyramid of arts people and the work that is being done on the fringe of my ward down at Osmondthorpe is vital to the lives of many of these people who really need all the help we can give them.

To quote "Education, education, education", it seems to me that the deprivation that Park Lane are suffering is an astonishing decision for any government to make. I think it is an unfair decision for any government to make and I think it is a disgraceful decision for any government to make and I hope that, as has just been suggested, Councillor Wakefield will withdraw his amendment and support what is a very sensible proposal. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: I would like to take up Councillor Bale's challenge and argue the case from the point of view of how important vocational education is to this country, to this city and, indeed, to the communities of LS9 and LS10, which Richard Brett and I happen to represent.

Anybody who looks at the economies of the world ad the moment will readily recognise that we are in for a challenge in the years ahead. Given the

skills that are being developed, the new technologies that are being developed and, indeed, non-pompously Councillor Harris is probably an expert on these matters, but I think that anybody who looks at that realises that the country is in for that kind of challenge. This city is in for that kind of challenge and I am proud to say that I have been part of a team which over many years has been concerned about that and has recognised that the way we run education in Leeds has not always been of the best and for the best.

For example, Councillor Bale, if you think of the choices that were made in terms of funding college courses, they were made on the assumption that the people who wanted education most would have access to it and those who did not know and understand what they were missing, or felt that they had had a bad time in school and that was what they wanted to get out of, just walked away from it.

One of the great things about the recent policies of the government has been how much it has focused on the needs of those people who themselves have failed to understand the importance of education and training to their own lives.

If you look at the number of young people in this city – and we are not one of the best performers, I agree, in terms of A-Cs, but we leave the people who fail to get those to struggle on their own. They have to find their own way through the next stage of their training, their educational opportunities. What we are seeing now is guidance and support to those very young people who are in some parts of the city more than half the student population, more than half the age group.

It is quite clear that if we are going to help and support those young people we have got to provide the resources targeted at them, not at people who perhaps have got other priorities - who are older, whose reasons for education are very different.



If you look at the recent STAR report – the Strategic Area Review – that has come out from the LSC in West Yorkshire, you will see quite clearly that not only have we no option about this challenge but the way the LSC is going to fund post-16 education is going to make it essential that we respond positively to their challenged.

It is not that I would be wanting to oppose educational opportunities, liberal education for anybody – I agree with Councillor Wakefield – but what we must recognise is that it is not our priority at the moment as a city and as a community. If we do not create those skilled people who have Level 3 instead of Level 1 – Level 1 is fine for general education but what we are being asked for by employers coming to the Aire Valley is not even Level 2, it is Level 3. To get level 3 we have to train people very effectively for two three years, from 16 to 19, if we are ever going to achieve that. We are not going to be able to do that with other people whose agendas - social, personal and cultural – maybe of a different kind.

What we are saying is not that we disagree with the need to offer liberal education, but that our priorities need to be, in a city which is talking about going up a league, dealing with disadvantage and all those things, it is a hypocrisy then to turn around and mis-spend the money that is available for vocational education.

Lord Mayor, I second Councillor Wakefield's amendment.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am going to really test the water because I am sure I am going to be boring to Councillor Wakefield. I am going to remind you, Councillor Wakefield, about your budget amendment.

I seem to remember that you put forward a budget amendment of an increase of 4.25% when the wisdom of the administration was to put forward a budget amendment forward of 4.5%. That quarter of a per cent is actually half

a million pounds and the reason we did not go for 4.25%, as Councillor Harris tried to talk the rest of us into – and I am looking at the Conservative benches for agreement on that – he put forward that and we pointed out that there was a risk that if we did not get a certain amount of money from the government we would be short of half a million pounds.

Can I remind you, Councillor Wakefield, at last Council you spent that half a million when you put forward your proposals about the clothing vouchers. How many more Councils are you going to come forward where you are going to continually spend this money as you are here?

Your government – your government – your government – it works best in threes, doesn't it? – has taken away the money from this Council, from this city, from the very people that Councillor Bale has spoken about, from the very people that we all know and now you are saying we should take more money from other citizens in the city to make up for what your government – your government – your government – has taken away from us.

You cannot go on spending the money. Either you accept your government has got priorities – lie Afghanistan and Iraq where they are going to be wasting our money for many, many more years – or are they going to apply it sensibly for the benefit of the people of Britain and, as a consequence of that, for the benefit of the people of this world? Thank you, Lord Mayor.

*(Applause).*

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I want to start by thanking Jack Goren and other community campaigners. If I suggested in my introductory remarks that somehow I personally was responsible I apologise, because clearly the future of community education depends on communities and I would strongly suggest that we could find agreement, Keith, on that.

The first foot on the ladder is what we are talking about – a ladder which, several rungs up in my view, gets to level 2. The first step is the most difficult

step and it has been interesting. I saw a card at the weekend which was meant to make old fogeys like me smile, because it said, "Ageing is compulsory – growing up is not." I would suggest that Councillor Wakefield needs to grow up because he has not talked about his amendment. He has not even mentioned the £2m shortfall and how it was supposed to be found from creative thinking, from Area Committee budgets which are only £2.2m in total. To fund the gap there we really would be struggling.

It is interesting that the difference between Councillor Driver and Councillor Wakefield is quite significant, because Councillor Wakefield pretended that somehow we did want to do adult education, it was just that maybe we had not quite got around to it. I welcome the honest comments from Councillor Driver, who was quite clear, education in the past has not always run for the best. We agree. We can agree on that and thank you for that honesty.

I also welcome his remarks adult education, I take him to mean, is not our Labour government's priority. That again is very clear. It makes it quite clear to people in Leeds that if they want the sort of community courses that they have been used to, they ain't going to get it from this government.

We are in a situation where I hope this debate has created some clearer understanding of the position. I want just to finish by considering some of the reasons why people miss out on a good education first time around. Some young people have to care for sick parents. Some have to cope with one or more parents with an addiction problem. Some, through no fault of their own, end up as looked-after children in an Authority's care. Sadly in the past, many looked-after children switch schools for reasons that I do not want to go into now but we can easily explain, far more often than the wider population. It is no surprise, therefore, that looked-after children have not always done well at school

While I am mentioning looked-after children, I want to thank an increasing number of Members who have responded positively and promised to give some

of their MICE money to do some extra things for our looked-after children in the coming months. I hope those who have not yet responded positively will consider doing so.

The problem this white paper is about is a £2m shortfall. It is not going to be sold by the Labour amendment. Tinkering with Area Committee budgets is not getting there and the work that we have done and the work that I am happy to admit Councillor Wakefield and others have done and are continuing to do, will not solve this problem. We can at best put a sticking plaster on this.

We have heard that, as well as the 2,000 whose courses may cease this year, there are many, many more who are going to have to pay increased fees. Many adult education courses at the moment are about 20% funded by student fees. If the government's plans come to full fruition, by 2010 many students will have to pay – thank you for correcting me, adult education, many adult education students will have to pay – 50% of the full cost of fees. This, as Councillor Bale has illustrated, is a very steep increase for many people. It will lead to many courses ceasing to run because far too few students can afford them.

Finally, I return to the Labour Government's own empty rhetoric. What happened to education, education, education? Please support this motion.

*(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call for the vote on the amendment in the name of Councillor Wakefield? All those in favour? Those against? Any abstentions? That is LOST.

Therefore, a vote on the motion. All those in favour of the motion in the name of Councillor Brett. Those against? Any abstentions? It is CARRIED.

ITEM 10 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – LEEDS TEACHING HOSPITALS  
NHS TRUST CAR PARKING CHARGES

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 10, White Paper Motion by Councillor Pryke.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Lord Mayor, just before our last meeting the House of Commons Health Select Committee published its report on NHS charges. It was exceptionally good planning by them to contribute to the White Paper debate, slightly postponed. Most of the coverage in the media was about hospitals ripping patients and visitors off by charging a lot for parking and patient telephones. More recently coverage has moved to show how the various Trusts are reducing their deficits, usually by sacking staff as we see in today's morning and evening papers with our Trust here.

Our criticism of the local quango, which is the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, is not that they charge for parking but of the amount by which they are increasing charges, or have increased charges, and the inevitable knock-on effect on communities near their hospitals.

People in Lincoln Green, the Shakespeares and Harehills, already know what it is like to have bumper to bumper hospital parking all day outside their homes and their businesses. It does not help that they were lied to by the Trust.

The developers of the oncology unit at Jimmy's directly misled local people at meetings held in 2003 by saying that new building would not displace any staff, visitor or construction traffic parking, because they had made adequate alternative arrangements. Well, they have not.

The trouble was that the extra space would not be ready until after the new building was opened, meaning residents will have had four years of extreme nuisance by then. Now the higher charges will affect a wider area.

Local residents and Councillors know what PFI developments like the oncology wing are really about. They are about profits before people. Indeed, the consortium building the oncology wing is by no coincidence the same one that re-financed its PFI deal in the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital earlier this year, itself smaller than our unit. They refinanced it last year and they made a nice £80m profit for themselves – not the hospital, for themselves.

So, how can we honestly describe an increase in charges from £2.40 to £6 for two hours, or £4.50 to £12 for five hours? It is 250%. Two-and-a-half times as much. Or you could say this – the people who will be hit by this move are once again the most vulnerable in our city, and go on to suggest they reverse this decision as soon as possible.

The words “once again” and “most vulnerable” are the clues here. They are the essential ingredients in the New Labour book of spin for anyone who is truly on message. In fact, that was a quote from Councillor Wakefield slamming the administration’s Beckett Street car park’s rise just five months ago. So how much was this dreadful increase, I hear you ask – or not? It was 20p an hour. That is a 40% increase, not 250%. It is a bit of a contrast, is it not?

The amendments that we will hear about in a moment will no doubt remind us of all of the supposedly massive 20p increase, but Councillor Lewis might like to reflect on the Beckett Street car park increase when his group last controlled the Council in 2003. It was not just 20p. They doubled the charge. They put it up by 100%.

Still, I always look forward to Councillor Mini-Me’s unremitting New Labour speeches because his political points have all the flavour of rice paper and absolutely none of its strength. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: I second, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Wounded as I am by Councillor Pryke's cutting, intelligent and mature comments, I will, however, plough on with my speech and it is clear that this administration is lost in a world of its own when it thinks that it can talk about the most vulnerable people in terms of hospital parking having put up the charges itself, having put the charges up itself, it then turns round and tries and blames the hospital for something that it has done itself.

To use terms like "most vulnerable" and to use terms like that, it is nice political rhetoric. I also notice that Councillor Pryke used the phrase "profit before people" and when we come on to Andrea Harrison's white paper about the home care service, I am sure we will be hearing a lot about that again.

I have looked a bit more closely into this administration's policy on car parking and this administration's approach to its St James's Hospital car parks. I have to say, it astonished me to find out that in terms of enforcement - that is the number of tickets that are issued - the Beckett Street car park are way above the average of those in the city centre shopping car parks; way above the average number of tickets per space are issued in the Council's, in this administration's St James's car park.

Is this not an attack on the most vulnerable in society? I think it is. We all know if people do stay over the limit it needs enforcement, but why - I come back to this point - why is it way above average at Beckett Street compared to some of the city centre's shoppers car parks? Maybe we can have a look at that later.

Finally - I am going to be brief on this point but finally - Councillor Pryke did refer to his own administration's massive rise in car parking charges and one thing that came up there was that a Council spokesman - his named as a Council spokesman - says, "We are committed to continue raising our car parking prices along the lines of those at St James's Hospital."

I hope that this policy will now stop. I hope that there will be a U-turn from this administration and they will not follow the increased charges from St James's with their own charges as they have stated they would do previously. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would second and reserve my right to speak.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: I will be quick. Unfortunately, there is I think a loss of memory somewhere in the Labour Group here. 25 April 2005, the Scrutiny Board I was chairing, we agreed – we, all of us collectively, Conservatives, Labour, Liberal and at that time Councillor Beavers who, unfortunately, is not here any more – agreed that we would put the prices up. We said – and I quote from the letter that we all agreed, nobody dissented, “Members of the Scrutiny Board would be agreeable to raising the charges for three hours and under a small amount, for example 40-50p for one hour, 80p-£1.

Your group agreed, the Scrutiny Board did it and you are sitting there today pretending that it did not happen.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Who is on your Board? Who were they?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You can mention my name, Barry.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Actually, believe it or not, that day, I think that was one of the days you were not substituting that day. Naming names is just... (*Interruption*). OK, Pauline Grahame and Councillor Lowe were the ones who were present that day. In fairness to Councillor Lyons I think that was one day that he was not present. I think that was one of the ones because he has been blamed about this. He has been blamed in the past but it was not him today.



The point I am trying to make is that by all means, we all enjoy knock-about but the point is, the NHS have vastly increased their charges and it has made it very difficult for your constituents. You have actually sat there and not condemned them for making conditions worse for your constituents. That is in fact typical of you – not you personally but your group – since I got on to Council in 1999. You have continued not to argue to improve for your own constituents. You look away from the problems that your government caused time and time and time again. We could go on all night. I enjoy hammering your government. It is quite an easy thing to do, to be quite honest, because they give us an open goal in everything they do. It is either Blair or is it Brown – who are you all backing today? Alan Johnston? Ed Balls?

What I would suggest to you is you actually get the quality of advisers and researchers we have got in our group and they make sure that this information is always given to us so that we do act accordingly. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Thank you very much. At one of the Councils I happened to say something about the Leader of Council, that he was not telling the truth. I still think he is an honourable man, but you are twisting the facts.

Let me explain. I am on my feet so I can explain and I will not get shouted down. There are two people who went to the Scrutiny Board, Councillor Rachel Proctor and myself. What we were talking about at that meeting was not raising the charges for the park there; we were talking about the length of time it was allowed to park there. It was two hours. I personally (*Interruption*) – just a minute, I listened to you speaking without saying owt, so shut up! Shut up! Let me go on and explain. If they tell the truth they will not have any reason to come back.

Let me explain again. It was brought, and you know damned well it was brought, it was fact that people were going to see specialists at St James's and they were only allowed two hours. They were having to dash out to put money in the machines. It is the truth. It is dead true and anyone in Leeds that has

had the sad things of having to go to St James's Hospital will know, and you should know because I explained them at that meeting. (*Interruption*)

I am not in debate. I am speaking, Lord Mayor. I am not in debate. What I am saying is that both Rachel Proctor and myself, what we had said was that we should lengthen the time you would allow to park at that car park and then some bright officer said, would that mean extra money? I said, if you are parking four hours versus two hours, it would increase, but not increase in the prices. This was brought in.

By the way, I was not present at that meeting but it was said (*Interruption*). Lord Mayor, it is difficult, isn't it? They have argued all afternoon, he has had his say, he has been given his feet and he is still yelping on. I hope you will allow more time for me.

THE LORD MAYOR: Members of Council, please. I was worried about Councillor Lyons since I left that place next to him. He has not spoken and it is the first time he has spoken. Please give him the chance to speak. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Thank you very much. Now, let me go on to explain. Everyone in that meeting agreed that it was ridiculous that people that were going to see consultants, etc, only had two hours, so we asked the officers to go away – and it was by full agreement with everybody. Then, the meeting that I did not go to, they sneaked one in and he put the charges up.

So, today, I welcome your White Paper because I do not agree that the NHS should put the prices up. I certainly do not agree that me as a Councillor get clogged along with this lot to say that they have put their charges up to the sick in this city. That is what they have done.

You have brought a White Paper. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. You ought to be saying – and while you are at that vicarage you say a prayer

for me an' all (*Laughter*) – to say as far as we are concerned, they are wrong, of course they are wrong in putting the charges up, but Leeds City Council is wrong as well, so how in heaven's name do you expect me (*Interruption*) – you shut up an' all! I am not listening to you.

As far as things are concerned here, it is quite straightforward. It is not a political point I am making. Start telling the truth and, if you are like me and tell the truth, you have nowt to fear. You can call anyone what you like because what I usually call them is true.

Think on what you are voting on. You are voting on a one-sided issue. Make it that we condemn all the lot, including Leeds City Council and I will go along with you. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Lord Mayor, it is always difficult to follow the quiet, cogent, well-thought out speeches of Councillor Lyons.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: You ought to try it!

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I will do my best, Councillor Atha, I will do my best.

Councillor Lyons and Councillor Lewis have done what I think is quite a good job, really. They have diverted the discussion. They have done an absolutely fantastic job on it. Councillor Lewis, when I listened to him, never mentioned their amendment at all. It was all about Beckett Street, isn't it? It is all about Beckett Street car park.

Councillor Lyons spoke at some length about the Scrutiny Board and put forward to the Scrutiny Board, I have to say, a very well reasoned argument. I do not think anybody at that Scrutiny Board disagreed with anything he said with regard to parking at St James's in particular and the problems people were having who had to be there for longer than an hour or two hours and, in fact,

he mentioned himself that when you go in there in the morning you have not got the faintest idea when you are coming out, if you are coming out. If you are lucky you come out, anyway.

So we took on board that comment and I think there was general discussion about that. I have to say, we are not just talking about St James's when we are talking about car parking charges. So, for example, in Otley we have got a nice new hospital, paid for by the government, thank you very much - not complaining - surrounded by a huge car park. It is a huge car park as well, quite the biggest car park in all of the Otley area, but it is a charge car park, so the staff who in the past have had the opportunity to go to work - because it is a large site, it has not got the constraints of St James's, it is not like in the old days when the hospitals used to claim Crown immunity and said they did not need to provide car parking spaces and build all over sites. This is a large site with a large area where staff and visitors could park quite happily.

Yet, what happens is we have a car park, we introduce charges. That means that the people who work in this hospital pay to go to work, which I think is slightly iniquitous. So obviously parking leaks out on to nearby residential streets causing no end of problems - road safety problems, irritation to neighbours. Plus the fact, which is surprising to me because we went to a hospital forum meeting in Otley and the Trust were complaining they were losing money on the car park at Otley Hospital. How can you lose money on a car park? The National Health Service can.

That leads me to the question: are we expected to run a health service that can only be funded by people paying to park cars, or are we expected to run a health service that is funding our taxation? At the moment we appear to be saying - I would admit to the Labour Members, the government, I feel sorry for Tony Blair for more than one reason. He has had a bad week! I can well see his frustration because the amount of money that has got thrown at the National Health Service is tremendous. There is a big increase in the funding of

the National Health Service. Nobody would deny that, but it just does not produce results. Where has it all gone? It just disappears into the system.

So what we are saying in places like Otley is, because there is a shortfall on the car parking charges, we cannot do stuff. That is funding the health service out of car parking charges. That cannot be right. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR KIRKLAND: Lord Mayor, can you hear me over there? The question is, why does the National Health Service have to put up parking charges by so much? They are doubling or more. The question is, who is pulling the strings? It is fairly obvious that it is the government who are pulling the strings. They are making promises that they cannot pay for.

The funding of the Health Service is strange in that nobody doubts that they have put thousands of millions of pounds extra in, but where is it going and how is it getting there? The answer to how it is getting there is by injection. Every time you pick the paper up some hospital or other is going to get a cash injection, so instead of long-term funding that will guarantee a regular, reliable treatment for patients, they wait until a crisis happens and then they come along and give it an injection of money.

The poor old motorist – and in this case motorists who are mostly at least under the weather and some quite ill – are being screwed down and used as the cash cow.

If we do not stand up, what will happen next? The simple answer to that is they could double again next year, quite easily. How long will it then be before they start charging at doctor's surgeries? I know it is primary care but it is still National Health Service. There is one surgery in my ward where they already have to pay for parking in the GP's surgery. It was not the one I worked at. Just in case anybody is in any doubt about whether I have got a prejudicial interest, it is eight-and-a-half years since I retired and my interest in the Health Service is purely as a patient.

I think that National Health Service managers locally and nationally need to show much more respect for patients and do not rush out and put astronomical increases, because it is pure greed and in the long term it will be counter productive. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: I think I have heard it all now. The last speaker, car parks are somehow being used as a cash cow to fund treatments in an NHS hospital. When you think of how much an operation, and indeed a bed day costs – I am not even going to comment on it, it is just incredible.

I have used the car park in St James's with my good friend here, Richard, when we both came back to some post-operative treatment from the little boy problems that we had. I did pay the money on it but really what I should have done was, should I not, used public transport. There is never, ever, ever, ever going to be enough car parking spaces at St James's Hospital to accommodate the many, many thousands of people that come there every day.

The sad part, Councillor Pryke, is that this administration has no real transport policy. I have never been in favour of the Supertram so do not point the finger at me. We have never had (*Interruption*) I am sure the Lord Mayor will allow me a little extra to say we have never had a proper transport policy. For instance, they shy away from all the difficult decisions such as road charging and instead of that they charge us through the car parks. Instead of charging us for driving they charge us through the car parks.

The other thing I heard which was very amusing was from Barry. Barry told us that three of our Members were responsible for putting up the charges. Two, sorry, two.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Mick had nothing to do with it.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: OK, Barry, you saved my life, thank you. Two of our Members had put up the car parking charges at St James's Hospital. Have I got something wrong, Mr Rogerson, but I thought that Scrutiny was not a policy-making body and did not have the power to put up charges. What I hear from my colleague is that they were presented with a number of options that were going to increase it even more, Councillor Pryke, than you say – even more – but that this was the least worst option. This was the least worst option. They recommended to the Executive Board – it probably was Andrew – a very small increase.

Regarding your community who are suffering for car parking, many communities have this. We have around the university, we have around Burley and what happens is that the local Councillors come up with a car parking scheme and only local residents can come into it and we have greater enforcement. That is the answer to it, because putting up the charges is not going to make any difference. If you have to take a disabled, sick relative to the hospital they have to either go there by taxi, which costs us much more, depending on what part of the city you live in, or they have to take a car and pay the car charges.

I agree with my friend James that this is hypocrisy. Isn't the answer to it, it is a competitive market? We have got a Council car park, we have got NHS car parks. You are competing with each other. They put it up so you think, well, it is safe to put it up a bit more but not as much as them and we can criticise them. Why don't you move a resolution that we will bring it down and shame them and force them – if we reduce it by 100% instead of putting it up by 40%. Reduce it by 200% and then let us see and shame them. Get a campaign going. While we are just following suit a step behind, we are not really doing anything for the situation.

The situation clearly is that the transport systems to our main hospital at Leeds are very poor and you are not addressing that. People are forced to use the car, they are forced to pay the charges. You should have a policy on

people getting about in Leeds. It affects the sick and the disabled most and I would recommend that you reduce the charges and then challenge the NHS to do the same. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR SCHOFIELD: I think Councillor McKenna will remember there is another place in the city where transport matters are debated, being a previous Member of the Transport Authority. Those of us who are still Members of the Authority, if I could just remind you, the tram network did include direct links not only to St James's hospital but to the LGI, so our transport plan agreed between the parties here and the authority in Wellington Street did try to cater for the pent up demand at St James's. It is not our fault that the tram is not going to run there in the immediate future. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Thank you, Councillor Lewis, for your comments and thank you Councillor Lyons as well for complimenting me on where I choose to live.

The NHS is supposed to be free to everyone at the point of delivery - that was a founding principle – and it is not. It is fundamentally not free when transport costs so much to get to our hospitals, or to park anywhere nearby in car parks, especially NHS car parks.

Public transport for Jimmy's in particular is absolute rubbish in this city. We know full well that First Bus which has a virtual monopoly in services in East Leeds refuses to re-route any of its services from Seacroft, Whinmoor and Crossgates to the hospital. People from that area, if they have to take public transport, have to change buses at least once and sometimes twice. The only service that comes from that area to the hospital is the 88, which is very infrequent. It is an hourly service but for part of the day only and it is just not good enough, I am sorry. In some of the other parts of the city Jimmy's is almost as badly served unless you happen to live in Pudsey or Armley.



On transport, when I think your party was in control of the Council for 20-odd years, you had no plan B to Supertram, so for you to say we have no transport policy is a little bit rich when we are working on things now, as Councillor Schofield mentioned.

The NHS when it put up its charges put out an information sheet which I think it sent to all Councillors and talked about the average increase of around 50%, but they also said some categories have been increased by more for specific reasons, eg long stay charges at LGI and St James's in order to discourage all day parking by people not visiting patients or attending clinics.

We have ensured that these charges are comparable to off-site parking in the vicinity of both main and peripheral sites. That is absolute rubbish and the experience of people in Lincoln Green and Harehills bears that out.

I would like to ask people about the cutbacks to the NHS, because how many patients waiting for operations are sent home time and time again due to other emergencies having paid for their parking places already? (*Interruption*) It has a major effect on parking and you know it, so you cannot wriggle out of it, I am afraid.

The diversionary examples chosen by Councillor Lyons and Councillor Lewis when they first spoke do not detract from the fact that the hospital has put up its charges by 250% this year and it will probably put them up by more next year. It is obviously driving people to park away from the hospital, blocking our residents' driveways, blocking pavements, stopping people with buggies getting to and from their homes and it will get worse.

Residents' parking schemes, Councillor McKenna – a very good suggestion. Your former colleagues, university ward Councillors, all three of them who are no longer with us, were arguing with you, I believe for this for several years and you never did anything about it. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Can we call for a vote on the amendment in the name of Councillor James Lewis? All those in favour? Any against? Any abstentions? Therefore it is LOST.

Therefore vote on the motion. All those in favour? Any against? Any abstentions? That is CARRIED. Thank you.

#### ITEM 11 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – RIGHT TO RENT CAMPAIGN

THE LORD MAYOR: we will move on to Item 11, White Paper Motion, but can I just mention, Members that Councillor Vonnie Morgan will be making her maiden speech after the motion by Richard Lewis and please extend the usual courtesy. Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR LEWIS: Lord Mayor, I will not rehearse what was said by the Tenants' Federation in their deputation earlier on. I think they touched on most of the key points about the need for affordable rented housing in this city. There are just one or two things I would like us to perhaps concentrate on when we are thinking about this.

If any of us look at the free sheet that we get every week, it tells us a huge amount for demand for Council properties and housing association properties in the city. I have just picked up one at random, just to give people a flavour of what is going on. Roughly 140, 150 properties come up per week. There are about 7,500 lets in the city that come through the system. You might think 150 properties per week, that is not bad, but then you look again, only 40 of those are family housing, only 40 of those are houses of two, three, four bedrooms. Not a huge number. Nearly all of those houses go to people in the priority and priority extra categories. The same can actually be said about flats. A surprising number of multi storey and other flats to go people in priority categories. You can see issues of demand.

Look at houses again and there is a real imbalance between where there is the largest number of properties for rent that are on offer in any one week in other parts of the city. Your normal week will see, as this one does, about half the properties – roughly 20 – are in that big concentration of Council housing in the east and south-east of the city, going across from Holton Moor, across to Gipton, across to Seacroft.

Other parts of the city are not so well endowed. I just look, obviously out of my own interest, at West and in this particular one we have three houses in West for rent. You have a similar pattern in other parts of the city, whether it is North-West or wherever. Your problem tends to be one, even within Leeds East or Leeds South-East, that there are very few properties for rent in the smaller communities, the outer communities, where there is a real feeling that you just cannot get social rented housing.

Again, if you want to confirm what I am saying just look at the expressions of interest. Average income, expressions of interest for properties – not the most desirable properties necessarily you will see that huge degree of interest for.

Again, if you look at mine this time, two properties in Armley, one in Bramley. One of those is a maisonette. Nothing at all in Pudsey, Calverley, Farnley, Wortley in that week.

I was talking to our local Housing Manager and I said I was trying to get some people moved out of a bedsit scheme because one of the other problems we suffer from is we have a lot of bedsits that are increasingly becoming unlettable. Nobody wants to move into bedsits these days. I said could we move people out in to other sheltered accommodation? He said, “Yes, we will be able to shift them” – I think there were about eight people we were wanting to move out. He says, “We do get vacancies in sheltered housing through nature, but it is the only housing we are getting vacancies in.”

I think we all are well aware from our case work of people who come to us who are in absolutely dire straits. I can think of a couple of cases that I am dealing with currently. One is a woman in a sheltered block with her daughter and grandson in a one-bedroom flat. I can think of another one where we have got a young family in an upstairs one-bedroom flat – desperately unsuitable, desperately need to get out.

Another phenomena I have noticed coming on recently is the number of people who are in private rented accommodation who are wanting to get out and get into Council accommodation because of the uncertainties about how long their tenancies will last.

While we have got a problem with houses of very few people moving out, a picture of kind of static tenancies, people are happy once they get into a property, they are not moving quickly, that is not the picture for flats and bedsits where you continue to have an above average turnover and I think that reflects other issues and other concerns.

We have even got the issue of estates that we had previously thought of as being terminally unpopular or would always have a residue of unpopularity, where those are filling up with people. So, of all our housing stock, of all our family housing, you are seeing very few that are easily available for people. I think the void rate is about 1.5% across the stock as a whole, obviously much smaller for houses.

The Tenants' Federation summed up the issue about the reducing number of family homes in Leeds City Council ownership. We have been losing Council housing stock at the rate of about 2,000 a year up until recently. I have to say that the government's rules to change the rules on right to buy have actually been, in my view, really positive; they have reduced the number of properties that we are selling down to about 700 but that is a cumulative process. We are still losing a considerable number of properties each year, there are still a considerable number of properties that we are not replacing.

The argument was always used when right to buy came in that you do not have to worry about it because the people who are buying would not have moved anyway, they are just staying in that property, they will be there for the next 20, 30 years. Actually, those 20 years have moved on. Those people are doing something else. Often they are selling their properties and I think one of the obscenities you do see these days is that the private 'To Let' sign on Council estates where properties are for renting at about twice the rents that would be charged if they were Local Authority properties.

The same picture is happening on housing association properties. It is just replicating the picture that we are getting with Leeds City Council properties.

The private sector, unfortunately, has never coped well with providing affordable family housing. Our Homelessness Service and our Housing Advice Service has become increasingly good at pointing people in the directly of the private sector to live in, which is fine if it were not for several factors, the most important of which is the assured short-hold tenancy. The assured short-hold tenancy is, in effect, a six month tenancy that is then renewed at will, or at the whim of the landlord. It is a kind of inertia tenancy. It may be in the landlord's interest to leave someone in a property; on the other hand it may not be and they may choose to move someone on.

In terms of sustainable communities, that is not a positive thing for people to see. I have got a property, I have got a home, I have been appointed here by Leeds City Council, but how long is it mine? How long have I got a certainty that I am going to live here? That is not good news. It is not good news in terms of schools, it is not good news in terms of any of the things that we would appreciate in terms of our lives. There is a huge amount of uncertainty and concern that goes with that.

As I said, the private sector, while it is very good at building student housing, has never seen itself as a provider of new, affordable housing for families.

We have increasing pressures which I think you are probably only now becoming aware of people coming from the accession states, who will equally have a right to access social housing before too long. They will be competing with local residents for the few resources that we have in terms of social housing.

I am not knocking any of the administration's initiatives on this issue. I am purely wanting to raise this as an issue of huge concern about the scale of the problem that we are facing. It is not just an issue of numbers. It is about the quality of homes and it is about where you are building them or where you are hoping to provide them, because there is not a housing market for affordable rented housing any more than there is a housing market for luxury housing.

People want to live in their communities. We currently are not in a position to satisfy even a small proportion of the needs that are coming from our communities.

I will not say any more other than to say this is not just a social issue. This is not just about neighbourhoods and communities. It is very damaging potentially to the city's interests and to the city's continuing success if we have got this booming private business sector, jobs coming into the city and we are not matching those in terms of providing homes for people to live in, in terms of communities that people want to live in. All we are potentially doing is creating a market for places like Wakefield, for Huddersfield, where property prices and renting is cheaper than it is in Leeds. For the benefit of the city as a whole we do not want a two-speed economy in terms of what is being offered in business and what is being offered in the housing sector.

Let us address this problem, let us realise how serious it is as a problem, how it is not going to go away – in fact it is going to grow in the coming few years – and let us start talking about how we are going to address it. We will certainly support anything positive that comes out of the administration in that respect. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR MORGAN: Lord Mayor, in making my maiden speech I would like to second the White Paper on the right to rent tabled in the name of my colleague, Councillor Richard Lewis.

Quite simply, Lord Mayor, I want to see local homes for local people. I represent an area where the average income levels are very low and families tend to be larger than average and many of the residents are single parent families.

The total stock of Council housing in Leeds is just over 60,000 with only 4,518 of those in the Killingbeck and Seacroft area and 98 of those are void. There are currently 1,897 people waiting to be housed or re-housed in these areas.

The last Council homes to be built were on the Farmhill Estate in Meanwood back in 1991 and since then no attempts to replenish Council housing stock have been made, despite the implementation of the right to buy in 1980, which has seen 28,593 properties being bought by tenants.

Lord Mayor, affordable homes for purchase or shared ownership are becoming more and more available through schemes such as Home Buy, which target keyworkers such as nurses, teachers and police officers. However, average wages for these professions and for those who are low earners means that most house prices, whether affordable or not, are not within reach of first time buyers, single people or those with a family to support.

Rentable affordable housing is in rapid decline and residents are being priced out of the market. Those who cannot afford to buy often cannot afford to rent unless they approach housing associations or local Councils. People who have suffered from serious debt in the past are unable to rent through conventional methods due to credit checks carried out by agencies and are then vulnerable to unscrupulous private landlords who charge overblown fees for

inadequate and often squalid premises. People are living in cramped conditions with houses suitable for their needs rarely becoming available.

Most families want to stay near their relatives, who can offer child and care support, yet they are being forced to move out of the area due to the lack of properties available. Young people are now looking elsewhere with areas such as Bradford and Kirklees being considerably cheaper to both rent and to buy.

Lord Mayor, Members who do surgeries will know of cases of people trying to get homes. Let me give you just one example from my own ward. A young lady lives in a tiny upstairs flat with her partner and child in Seacroft. Her priority has been removed due to the lack of suitable properties available for her to bid on. This means she has to wait until she is assessed again before she can even consider bidding on properties that can accommodate her and her family. Lord Mayor, there are many, many more.

Colleagues, you may have heard on the radio this morning that the Citizens' Advice Bureau has published a new report. This report reveals that home owners are getting into serious debt. Apparently 770,000 people in Great Britain have missed mortgage payments within the last twelve months, with 13% of those being 21-24 year olds. According to the Citizens' Advice Bureau, many people do want to get on to the property ladder but just cannot afford to do so. Figures reveal that 19% of people who rent say they would like to own their own homes but do not ever anticipate being able to afford it.

In Leeds there are over 17,000 children living in overcrowded homes. In Seacroft alone there are around 600 families waiting for two-bed accommodation. According to Shelter, children who are subject to unfit and/or overcrowded housing experience a variety of healthcare problems such as disturbed sleep, poor diet, hyperactivity and bed wetting.

I am sure you will agree that the case for making more affordable rented accommodation in Leeds is undeniable. Leeds is a vibrant, prosperous city and



we need to ensure that this prosperity is reflected in the way we treat all the people of Leeds. We need local houses for local people, so let us put people first and pledge to make affordable rented properties available to all.

*(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR FINNEGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Clearly we are moving an amendment on that because we do not disagree with the analysis Richard has put down. We disagree with the solution to the problems that we all face at this particular point. We fully support the Right to Rent Campaign – we do not think it quite goes far enough and that is why we have tabled this particular amendment.

I am just revisiting some of the figures that we were given this afternoon from the Right to Rent Group who came in to put their comments across. 36,000 Council houses have gone since 1995, a net loss of 27,000. The figures are quite mind boggling, of that there is no doubt. We all, in our own wards, have particular horror stories of people who cannot get anywhere. Try and get people from general needs up to priority up to priority extra and still find that they are waiting months and sometimes years for an appropriate, suitable property. We do not think that we are on our own entirely in terms of calling for not only the action that has been suggested but also an abandonment of the right to buy.

A lot of you will have read the Yorkshire Post this morning. It has got a headline that over 100,000 children in the region are living in squalor, which says:

“Thousands of children are living in unfit and overcrowded homes in Yorkshire putting their health at serious risk, campaigners warned today. The charity Shelter suggests 110,000 children in the region and one million nationwide are being failed by the government because they are being housed in squalid conditions.”

Clearly that fits in with what I experience in Morley, I am sure it fits in with what a lot of colleagues experience across the board. We do not have enough family homes to be able to accommodate the people who are in need.

We looked again for a bit of inspiration from the Home Leeds, the magazine for tenants. We have all had this. Go to the Norman Harding column, which I am sure people will have read with interest. Norman Harding is not, to the best of my knowledge, a Morley Borough Independent. I understand he is a Trotskyite or Workers Revolutionary Party or whatever. He says – and I do not disagree with him:

“The right to buy your Council home must be stopped. If we do not stop it then young couples and the more vulnerable sections of society will have no chance of getting an affordable home. This will be a terrible step backwards and an insult to those who fought hard for Council housing.”

He goes on:

“I think it is time for harsh words. The principle of Council housing was developed in the 1920s for people who could not afford to pay high rents to private landlords or buy their own home. There was at that time a very large section of society who were desperately in need of social housing.”

I look around at this particular point and it is very, very difficult to say that things have changed fundamentally from that particular point. Private rents are excessive. We have heard evidence this afternoon which is absolutely conclusive that those who are on the lower incomes cannot afford to buy their own homes. What shall we do about it? To be honest the previous

administration and this administration have all worked very hard to try and resolve the problems that we actually face and, to be honest, we have not any real problems with supporting this or the further amendment that is coming along later on.

At this particular point we have an amputation and everybody is offering to stick a plaster on it. What this means is a substantial change in central government approach if it is going to tackle this particular problem. I do not think running White Paper resolutions that talk about the administration coming forward with practical – they are already doing that and to be honest there is a limit to what they can actually achieve. They are working hard, you are working hard, you have done previously. The fact is, the people who are opting out of providing the help and support that we need is central government. Part and parcel of that change must be to scrap the right to buy. We must get to a point where we say this far and no further. We cannot drop below this particular threshold.

If, as the residents were suggesting yesterday, we get down to something like 5,000, it will be utterly pointless. It will be a very short newspaper that goes out every week because there will be one property and a million bids. It does not make any sense. We are doing all we can as a Local authority to try and resolve this particular problem. What this needs is fundamental central government change, scrap the right to buy and start rebuilding and building Council houses in the same way that Norman Harding suggested we were doing in the 1920s. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J M PROCTOR: Lord Mayor, Under Council Procedure Rule 22.1 can I move that procedure rule 3.2 be suspended to allow this White Paper motion to be decided?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Procedurally can I under the same rule suggest that that be extended to allow us to complete the whole agenda? That will be an amendment.

THE LORD MAYOR: OK, Members, can we have a vote on the amendment in the name of Councillor Bernard Atha – not the amendment, so we will try that and then vote on the motion. Have we got somebody to second?

The amendment first, Members, to deal with all White Paper motions. That is the amendment by Councillor Bernard Atha. If I could have a vote on all those in favour of completing all the White Paper motions. Those against? Any abstentions? It is LOST.

Now those in favour of the proposal by Councillor Proctor to just finish this item? A show of hands, please? Those against? Any abstentions? Therefore Councillor Proctor's proposal is CARRIED. We will continue.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Councillor Leadley is not here. I will second and reserve the right to speak if I may, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I think actually there is a lot of agreement between all of us about the problems. I was very disappointed, I have to say, with what Richard said, because whilst we all agree with most of his analysis about the problem, he did not actually come up with any solutions.

You have got a short memory, Richard, like all your colleagues. As you used to say to us, "What are the solutions?" I am saying it to you now, because actually we have come up with some.

There is no doubt whatever that one of the biggest crises facing us in the city is to make sure we have sufficient affordable housing, whether it is for rent or purchase. I have to say that when we took over two-and-a-half years ago, there was a lot of fine ideas but very, very little action. I will tell you why there was very little action – because you set up a new system of governance of officer departments and you fractured, in the process, discussions between

departments, you made it more difficult. So you have got, split up between Planning, Development and Neighbourhoods and Housing the function of pulling together an affordable housing strategy and it just was not working.

For the first twelve months that we were in office Councillor J L Carter and I were tearing our hair out trying to get to the bottom it. You can see the one who was working harder, Bernard! It was ever thus. What we did in that first twelve months I think was to get almost to the bottom of what was delaying progress.

I do not want to sound too critical of officers because there is a capacity issue here as well. There are many, many ways, innovative ways, of creating more affordable housing but, quite frankly, you started this and we have continued it. We have run a fairly lean officer machine in this authority and a lot of the work that needs to be undertaken requires extra capacity unless you are going to bring in some support from outside.

I am going to go through the initiatives that we have got under way, many of them through Councillor J L Carter and then I am going to mention a couple of others which we have not yet started but we are going to do very soon.

Let me say something else as well. One of the first major housing sites that we discussed in this Council Chamber when we took over was the infamous Killingbeck development, where your administration had signed up a deal with the developer which allowed for no affordable housing of any sort at all – not for rent and not for purchase. It was only when we as an administration really said this is not acceptable, we are not going to conclude the deal and we got our officers in Development to talk to the developer and just lay on the line how disappointed we were, that we managed to get the very miserly number of units – I think it was 22. There should have been a lot more affordable units on that site. It undermined the whole strategy.

A lot of things have gone on in the past few years that have really not helped to drive this strategy forward. Making it worse, of course, is the fact that the government – and you have made it very clear you do not like talking about the government today, you have tried to palm the blame off for all sorts of things – cutting educational spending, you name it – on everybody else bar your government – but your government cut the money to the West Yorkshire Housing Partnership this year by 25%. That is not helpful. That has to be said. You might not like it but that is a fact.

So, what are we doing? We are working with the housing corporation and Yorkshire housing association, as you know – work you began. We are trying to encourage the innovative use of commuted sums and the planners are not going to thank me for this but I turn to the planning Members and say, it is not always the best way to use the money on site. It is not always the best way to just settle for flats. Plans panels can insist that the affordable housing commitment is for family housing. They do not just have to hoist the white flag and take flats. There is a big role to be played there by planning Members.

We have got the EASEL scheme moving ahead now. I have to tell you, it has been pushed with some vigour and determination by my colleague and others of us as well, that is going to bring a lot of better housing quality in a particular area of the city, and it is not all for purchase. It is not helpful for Members of Council to go round calling it WEASEL. Let me say, actually it was invented by your lot, so a bit of help and support from you would not come amiss either.

We have got the Gipton low cost housing scheme now up and on the way, we have got new PFI schemes in Beeston and Holbeck which we are bidding for, turned down by your government two weeks before the tragedy of last year and now we hope back on the top of the agenda.

Perhaps most important of all we have set up a cross-departmental task group between Neighbourhoods and Housing and Development to drive forward

the low cost housing agenda. Yes, it is directed in many ways at low cost purchase, getting people on the ladder for the first time, but also for rent and I am perfectly happy to accept that we do need to support those people who will always want to rent property. Nothing wrong with that whatever. We have seen the stock denuded over the years but the status quo is not an option.

Your own government has done nothing to encourage us. We made it very clear, this administration, that we did not support wholesale stock transfer of houses. You all know that that is just what your government wanted. They would have loved for Leeds to be one of the first major authorities to go for wholesale stock transfer and we steadfastly refused.

I will tell you something else. Your government would have preferred our tenants a fortnight ago to vote for the one ALMO option, because you know what is in the back of their minds. They have not given up what their real housing policy was, that Local Authorities would not be housing authorities any more. Why have they not done what John Prescott hinted he would do five years ago – allow Local Authorities to continue managing housing themselves? They never have and they ain't going to do it, whether it is Brown or whether it Blair – neither of them will do it.

I think one of the most interesting things to find out today is which of this lot are for Brown and which are for Blair. There cannot be anybody left for Prescott, surely!

My Lord Mayor, I am not going to be diverted, even by Councillor Hanley, as tempting as it is. It is a serious agenda. It is one we have to address together. We have to ensure – it is all right laughing, Keith, but it is a serious agenda. You are laughing about Blair and Brown! You must be the only people in the country who are! Certainly the poor servicemen in Afghanistan and Iraq will not be laughing about the government falling apart at the seams back home.

Anyway, to get back to housing. I can promise you we will be bringing forward initiatives. One will be coming, I hope, in October to the Executive Board – actually a report coming next week to the Executive Board is for a low cost housing scheme wholly for rent which is being subsidised by the Council's 106 commuted sums.

I should say this as well, that when we took over two years ago there was £2.5m with another £1.5m promised of money in commuted sums for affordable housing, with not a single scheme earmarked against it. We are busily making sure that money is invested in low cost housing both for rent and to buy and my commitment is that we will drive this agenda forward with vigour. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, I think a lot of what has been said over there is really what is coming from the heart and in some ways not from the head. I do not mean that facetiously and I do not mean it nastily.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: That is why we are socialists.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: All right. Let me just tell you why. Lord Mayor, just coming back, I think Councillor Morgan did very well with her maiden speech and I think she came from the heart and what she was asking for she wanted to ask for.

You know, this fellow over here hit the nail on the head and that was, hang on, how do you get it? How can you pay for it? How can you go to the administration and say they must pay for these things?

Let me just tell you a little bit about what the campaign is, and I hope you have read what the campaign is saying. The campaign wants to build 1,500 socially rented housing, affordable housing, each year. Fantastic. Let us just look at it. One of the things they are suggesting is that we go back to



something like the Leeds Partnership Homes that were successful some years ago.

Let us say for a minute that we could provide the land on an annual basis to an RSL. Somebody would have to find £100m to build those 1,500 houses. RSLs are not in the position to get that £100m. They would have to go, if they wanted to – where would they go? They would go to the Housing Corporation. The Housing Corporation gives an average of £5m a year so the answer would be, “No, sorry, we cannot give you that.” So they go into the open market, the financial market, and borrow £100m. I do not think the RSLs want to get involved in that.

It was interesting to listen to Richard, because I listened to Richard very carefully. Richard did not even talk about RSLs. Richard was really talking about more Council houses. Richard, all your speech – and you can read it again later – referred to the lack of Council houses. You are probably right. I remember you sold 25,000, Richard, under your administration, but I am not going to go into that.

All I am saying is, the 1,500 are impractical without massive government interjection, so we have got to look at other ways of doing it. There are other things which are quite interesting, actually. At this moment in time there are 16,000 empty properties in Leeds. 8,500 of those have been empty for over six months. If you take out the city centre part you might take out another 2,500, 3,000, so you are left with 5,000, 6,000 houses which I think a lot of them would be in the rentable section which you could rent.

Then you come into your benefits. Could your benefits cover them? We think the benefits possibly could. Let me just tell you what has happened. The will of the government is that benefits have to be paid to the individual, not direct to the landlord. I now know of two organisations – the Residential Landlords’ Association and Leeds Property Association – who are saying they are going to be unwilling to let properties to people claiming benefits. I think that

is an enormous shame but it is as a result of not being able to receive the money direct and all the trouble of doing it. There is a huge area there which the government are no longer helping us with.

Andrew has gone through all the various initiatives that we are trying and we will try more and more and more and we will use everything we can. I can assure you, I will drive forward on anything that I think is going to assist and help people. If you want the 60s building, the 60s buildings can only come from government.

Just one final point on this ability to stop people selling their homes. I will just tell you this. Under our administration – and it is not one that I am proud of – the sale of Council homes has dropped quite considerably and the reason it has dropped is that you now have further restrictions placed on by Her Majesty's Government about when you can purchase a home and they are getting quite severe, so it is eating in to it. As I have said before, even if you stop them buying their own home, unless you have wholesale moving them out, they are not there for people to rent. They are there. You are talking about more property.

At the end of the day, yes, I listened very carefully to you, Richard, and I have a lot of respect for you because I know you know a lot about housing, but I agree with Andrew - no solutions were put on the table. I was pleased you said you will work with us and we look forward to working in the future doing more work in this area. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: A couple of very quick points. It is very interesting to notice the Labour Party have stopped calling for scrapping the right to buy. Congratulations, Councillor Finnegan, for actually saying that.

If Council houses are still being sold to their tenants, that will contribute to the problem of more and more people needing fewer and fewer houses. It has

to be solved other ways and I welcome everything that Councillor A Carter said the administration is working on.

Affordability is the real point of Richards White Paper and it was looked at in some detail by Scrutiny last year. 'Affordability' is a rather elastic term. It is rather like 'poverty'. The government claims to have abolished child poverty but 100,000 children in the region are living in squalor. Oh dear, some divergence there.

Affordability – defined by the government such that the level of discount or subsidy to make something affordable will be based on the relationship of local income levels to local house prices as expressed through the Housing Corporation Total Cost Indicators.

Obviously it means that affordability is related to local wages, not the wages of the lowest levels in the city, so inevitably on the government's own definition, some people will still not be able to afford things which the government says are affordable - whether that is places to buy or places to rent.

Everybody knows that housing association rents are generally quite a lot higher than the ALMO rents. I was shocked when I found the discrepancy when I first moved to Leeds between the rent charged by Unity, Leeds Fed and the others compared to the ALMOs. In some cases they are almost twice as much and many people who come to our surgeries in Burmantofts and Richmond Hill tell us that they cannot afford to take housing association premises because they would have to be on state benefits to do so and they have got a job, so they have go to queue up for a Council house.

We have got rent divergence in Leeds between the social housing providers. We are supposed to have rent convergence. There is suppose to be a ten year programme of moving the rents into alignment for the same sort of properties, yet the rents, our ALMO rents, are controlled by the Department of

Communities Local Government and the housing association rents are controlled by the Housing Corporation, all controlled by the government, and they are working on different quite separate programmes which can never converge. They are working on a system which will mean they always diverge, so some joined-up government is needed there.

I am glad Councillor L Carter mentioned the empty properties. We have got thousands in Burmantofts, Richmond Hill and Harehills in particular. Many of them are owned by companies who are letting them just stand there doing nothing. I can think of the Edgwares, the Gledhows, the East Parks where we have lots and lots of these things and, of course, we now have Empty Dwelling Management Orders – EDMOs – which means that when a place has been empty for over six months, it is possible, if we have designated the area as a Council, for the Council to take over the properties. There is a process to be followed and it costs money. Of course, the government has not given us any money to do it anyway, so if we want to do it, we have got to find the money from somewhere else.

I very much hope we will do so because these houses are a blight on our areas. The sooner we can do something about it the better but in the meantime I welcome all moves to have affordable housing, whether to purchase or to rent. Thank you. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR ANDREW: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I want to speak in favour of the amendment. Others have spoken in great detail about the rented side, so I just want to concentrate for a short time on those people who actually want to buy their properties but cannot.

The initiatives listed in the amendment are excellent and I think that the administration needs to be congratulated for those. I am particularly pleased to see the achievements in creating more affordable housing through the planning process. It is good that we are now looking for 25% affordable housing in the

outer areas and 15% in the inner areas and it is always good to see that at the Plans Panel I sit on we do discuss this in detail.

There are lots of people who live currently in rented accommodation who would like to buy. In fact, the Citizen's Advice Bureau have today announced that many people, young people in particular, are borrowing far too much just because they want their chance to get on the property ladder. I have to say that I have many friends amongst them. Some are in debt because they cannot afford the mortgage payments they taken on and some simply cannot get on the property ladder at all.

I have to say that I was extremely fortunate that I bought my house before Leeds went through its boom, but I would struggle to try and find the deposit to buy one now. Nurses at work who want to buy simply cannot. At Martin House the nurses there are often saying they want to live close to where the hospice is but they simply cannot afford the property and all want to live in the area in which they grew up, where their families are so that they can have the support that they need. The parents are doing all they can to try and help them.

That is why I think it is great that this administration is helping to achieve more affordable housing in our city. In my ward the High Royds Development is about to see 90 affordable houses to buy and ten affordable houses to rent. This is great news, particularly for those people who come to my surgery and ask how it is that they are going to get on the property ladder. At the same time as helping these people to buy their properties, it will help us to release more rented accommodation and in that way I think we can then help more people.

I would like to support the amendment and beg people to support it.  
*(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR AMANDA CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Richard, my surgery is also full of the very people that you described, but I would like to

assure you that as an administration we are serious about tackling the problem of affordable housing. It is not an easy problem to solve and whatever we do it will not be enough. Again, I would like to highlight what we are doing through the planning process to improve the situation.

We have set up, as Councillor Carter has alluded to, an Affordable Housing Task which is in the process of delivering an affordable housing plan. We put in the place the procedure that housing officers are working with planning offers at the pre-application stage to ensure that a proper amount of affordable housing is brought forward. We have implemented a policy that ensures that more affordable housing is delivered through this planning system.

How has our record improved? Look at the figures. When did this administration come to power? Was it May 2004? No, I think it was June because we had to wrestle them out of power, didn't we? (*Interruption*) That is enough, children.

2004. What did we deliver through the planning process? 37 houses, dwellings. 2005 - 85 - getting better, because we were in power then, weren't we? 2006 - 210 dwellings. (*Applause*)

Just recently we passed an application in city centre where we had a £1.5m off site commuted sum which will provide 23 affordable homes just outside the city centre. I am not saying that any of this is going to be enough - of course it is not. The situation is acute here, but we are a successful city. People want to live here and, let us face it, they have got a great administration.

House builders are also taking on board the situation. We have got house builders approaching us who want to build properties for £60,000, two bedroomed affordable homes. None of this is ever going to be enough but it is a start and it is an improvement. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: I think everybody has got their cases and I am going to give one. A mother and partner living in a two bedroom bungalow. Because one of their daughters had had a marriage breakdown they are now four adults and two children living in a two bedroom bungalow in Cherwell.

In 2004 there were 29,000 people seeking houses of some sort of another. In 2006 that is now 31,000 – that has gone up 4,000 in two years. 27,000 homes lost, 31,000 on the waiting list. It is not rocket science. What we need is more housing and I would dearly, dearly love for us all to have thousands more Council houses. That is not going to happen without central government intervention. I see the measures being taken by the administration here in attempting to mitigate that and I sincerely hope it is monitored and we can hopefully take it from there. Definitely we need more houses in this city and what we do not want is for local people, as Councillor Morgan alluded to, having to move away, be dispersed from the places they really want to live in their own communities with their own families. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

*(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. One of my anorak colleagues did remind me when you were talking about Blair and Brown that tomorrow is the fifth anniversary of the election of Iain Duncan-Smith as leader of the Tory Party, so we all go there, don't we?

The intention of the White Paper was not to knock what has been done, what is being done by the administration. It was seriously to raise the concern about the scale of the problem. Les, as you know, I met Hilary Benn with you the other day to talk about the Holbeck PFI because we think that that is a good idea in terms of what it delivers in rented accommodation. We are more than happy to be cross party on the issues where we agree to deliver what we want to deliver.

I think it is not about a single solution that is going to do everything for the city, is it? We know that. PFI will be part of it, but I think my concern is today to raise the issue of what are the other solutions?

Kirklees has a PFI using garage sites, or it is trying to get one for garage sites, and that is one of those areas we really need to look at is our vacant land. Leeds Partnership did use a lot of what was in the Housing Committee, HRA land to develop housing and that was a huge achievement at the time. We talk about short memories – that was a big achievement, 4,000 properties. John Trickett gets a lot of stick in this Chamber over various things but that was John's initiative and I think it has stood the test of time.

Andrew, you are very crafty, government commitments to Council housing, £400m to Council housing investment. If we had seen anything like that I do not think we would have seen the kind of successive crises that we have had over the past 20 years, so a bit naughty.

I have to say, Ruth Kelly - I have been increasingly impressed by somebody who is breaking through some of the logjams that there were in what was then the LDPM, now the DCLG, and I quite look forward to some positive thinking coming from here.

I think you are right that we did not sort out planning and housing. We all make mistakes and housing is littered with the mistakes that architects made and that we probably agreed at the time. I think there is a huge problem in your culture in that department. I am just thinking, I will give you a couple of examples.

Plans East regularly votes against any affordable housing scheme more or less and it does it on a party basis and let us not pretend otherwise. It is quite out of kilter with Leeds West plans and with the Centre plans, so there is an issue there.



Within your own department, I only recently had a meeting with some officers over Waterloo School playing fields. What was their solution? "What we could do, Councillor, is we could reduce the number of affordable properties there are in the area to sort this problem out." The first casualty that there should be of anything is to chop your affordable housing. Let the officers consider those issues and let you come back with answers on those.

I welcome very much the city centre stuff but I come back to the issue of the outer areas in particular, the concerns about what we need to do in those communities where there just is not any housing left or where houses come available only very occasionally. It is an issue of quality. Amanda mentioned the £60,000 houses. I have seen the road show on that and I have to say it is probably not suitable as social housing because social housing is a different ball game for what you are doing for the private sector. It has to be more robust, it has to be better designed because you do not just sell it on. You live with the consequences of what you build for year after year after year. The worse you do it the more you live with the consequences because you do not have any right to buy on those.

Yes, there are initiatives going on that we welcome that will deliver, I think, a considerable number of properties. I am concerned that the rented side is not getting the consideration it needs. We need really to say there are thousands of people in this city who need rented accommodation, who will never be able to access anything else. We might have aspirations for something else but in practical terms those will not be met by us or perhaps any government, given the kind of projections to house prices over the coming few years.

Let us look very seriously at what we can do in terms of rented accommodation for this city. We need a huge aspiration. Andrew, when you were Chair of Housing all those years ago you had a task of 2 000 properties to build in a year. Short memory? Yes. Kevin Gould has 3,000. Leeds Partnership Homes had an aspiration to delivery 3,000 which they went well above. You have got to start off with an aspiration, you have got to start with an aim, even if you do not meet it you have to say that is what we are going for.

So, I say this White Paper says there is a huge problem that we have to address. Any method that is constructive, that is sensible, we will support on this side but there needs to be a lot more positive thinking, new ideas coming out and I think there are plenty of opportunities, given what the government is doing – and I just think about the affordable housing issue in terms of the threshold, that is a positive move. There are positive things coming out of the government that we need to grab hold of. Let us grab hold of any opportunity to build more homes for people in this city. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR FINNEGAN: Recorded vote please, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Seconded.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. OK.

*(A recorded vote was taken on the amendment in the name of Councillor Finnegan)*

THE LORD MAYOR: 87 Members present, three in favour, one abstention, 83 against. Therefore the amendment by Councillor Finnegan is LOST.

*(A recorded vote was taken on the amendment in the name of Councillor A Carter)*

THE LORD MAYOR: 87 Members present, 52 Members in favour, one abstention and 34 against. Therefore that is CARRIED.

*(A recorded vote was taken on the substantive motion)*

THE LORD MAYOR: 87 Members present, 52 in favour, one abstention, 33 'No'. Therefore that means the substantive motion is CARRIED. Thank you.

That concludes today's Council meeting. Thank you, Members.

*The meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.*

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