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COUNCIL VERBATIM 13TH SEPTEMBER 2017

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LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday, 13th September, 2017

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC HALL,
LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(COUNCILLOR J DOWSON)

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 13th SEPTEMBER 2017

THE LORD MAYOR: Right everyone, well done, Councillor Hussain, that was a fine neatly avoided (*mobile phone ringing*) and also a prompt for me to remind you all to make sure you do actually turn your mobile phones to silent, please, before we begin. Just to remind you that we are actually being filmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: If we can start, please, with Announcements and it is very nice for me to make some nice announcements around the success of Leeds and the villages, towns and communities around our area with regard to Yorkshire in Bloom. I was lucky enough to attend the awards yesterday and I thought you might just like to hear some of the highlights.

In the Green Spaces category bronze was Churwell Park; Rodley Park got silver gilt; Calverley park gold; Churwell Urban Woodland, Cross Flatts Park, Horsforth Hall Park and The Hollies all received the highest accolade, the platinum, which is really good. Please feel free to cheer! (*Applause*)

The In Your Neighbourhood entries, Cottingley received an Improving award; Churwell Environmental Volunteers, Rawdon in Bloom, Shadwell in Bloom all received Outstanding awards; East Ardsley and Woodkirk in Bloom received Establishing awards and Killingbeck Garden Group received an Advancing award; then Kirkstall in Bloom and Tempest Road in Beeston received a Thriving award. (*Applause*)

There are a few more to go but it just shows you how our communities have taken this to their hearts.

In the Town category Garforth won a silver gilt; Pudsey and gold and Horsforth also won gold and were overall category winners.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: I am sorry, I didn't hear that, Lord Mayor. (*laughter*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Pudsey a gold and Horsforth also won gold and were the overall category winners, you will be pleased to hear. In the Urban Communities Awards, Halton won a silver award; Beeston and Swillington won silver gilt; Holbeck, Bramhope, Kippax, Calverley, Allerton Bywater and Woodlesford all won golds. (*Applause*) Yes, well done. In addition, Kippax were the overall category winners and Allerton Bywater also had the best spring displays.

In the Small Village category Ledston won silver. In the Large Village category Great and Little Preston won silver gilt; Bramham, Scholes and Barwick-in-Elmet all won gold; and Barwick were the overall category winners.

In the City Town Centre categories Morley won silver gilt and Leeds won gold, and were overall category winners. *(Applause)*

Last but not least, Leeds won gold in the Large City Award as well. Really good. *(Applause)*

I would also like to announce that going forward I think we would all like to wish Otley in Bloom every success with their entry into the National Britain in Bloom Competition, the results of which will be announced in Wales in October, so good luck Otley.

There is only one more announcement and this is of interest to all of you seconding and reserving the right to speak.

Whips have considered the method by which Members who have previously reserved their right to speak in debate then subsequently wish to exercise that right. Whips have agreed that it should continue to be the responsibility of the Member concerned to indicate to the Lord Mayor that they wish to exercise their right to speak and, once the Lord Mayor has recognised that Member wishes to exercise that right to speak, the Member will be invited by the Lord Mayor to speak next in the debate, so be careful when you put your hand up, if somebody is speaking you will be next in line to speak and if we run out of time before you speak, then we have run out of time. I hope that is clear.

ITEM 1 - MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD 12th JULY 2017

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to move on to Item 1, Minutes of the meetings held on 12th July. Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I move that the Minutes be approved, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: If I can move that to the vote. *(A vote was taken)*
That is CARRIED.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Declarations of Interest. Do any Members have a disclosable pecuniary interest they would like to declare now? *(No response)*

ITEM 3 - COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Excellent, we will move on to 3, Communications.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Two communications to report to Council. Robert Goodwill MP, Minister of State for Children and Families, in respect of the White Paper on the Children and Families Budget considered by Council in July; and from the Right Honourable Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, in respect of the White Paper on Housing, also considered by Council in July, and these responses have been circulated to all Members of Council.

ITEM 4 - DEPUTATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: I understand we have got three Deputations today.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Yes. The first is Kirkstall Valley Development Trust; the second is a group regarding bus services in the Cross Green, East End Park, Saxton Gardens and Richmond Hill areas; and the third is Aire Street Workshops Committee regarding a multi-tenancy building owned by the Council.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I move that all Deputations be received.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I will call for the vote on that please. *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED. Thank you. Can we call for our first Deputation, please.

DEPUTATION ONE – KIRKSTALL VALLEY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should be no longer than five minutes, and begin, please by introducing the people in your Deputation.

MR C HILL: Lord Mayor, Lady Members, Council Members. We are Kirkstall Valley Development Trust. I am Chris Hill.

MS A RAE: I am Adele Rae.

MR S HARRIS: Steve Harris.

MR J LIVERSEDGE: Joe Liversedge.

MR C HILL: This is our speech, thank you very much.

We are asking the Council to work with the Trust to develop Abbey Mill and St Ann's Mill and give us a lease on part of Abbey Mills.

The listed mills are one of the greatest assets remaining in Council hands. They need to be part of a vision that promotes the city and supports the local community, not be sold off for a small amount of money as the simplest solution.

The mills have been owned by the Council for 50 years and been largely empty for the last twelve. They are of low value because of flooding and site restraints and are deteriorating fast. In the Trust we now have a focused development team getting on with the job. In less than one year we have recruited 150 members and 400 supporters. We have accessed three sets of grant, raised £40,000 in community shares, mobilised support from major companies and both largest universities and are in the first stages of a large Heritage Enterprise Lottery bid.

Abbey Mills is being marketed to potential investors. We welcome a development partnership, but one that allows us to create community facilities in the mill and launch the Leeds Centre for Sustainable Cities.

The Trust does not come empty handed. With partner support we have the potential of £2m coming in from the Lottery. We are appealing to the Council to support us, not by giving us the mill without a business plan, but giving us the time and support to develop the partnerships and financial plan. In practice this means telling funders you will give us a lease on part of Abbey Mills while we promote the rest of the mill to sympathetic users and developers.

Examples of developing mills from small beginnings are common. Good development is more than circulating a brief. The Council has a chance here to work with the community at no risk to themselves. By early 2018 the Trust will have completed an options appraisal for the whole site and detailed refurbishment proposals for the Abbey Road wing.

We will furnish our part of the mill with small grants. Being on site we can promote the rest of the site to potential users. If we fail the Council can sell the mill to any taker, having given the community a chance.

At the same time we are asking the Council to give us three years to produce a leisure and education scheme for St Ann's Mill. This is the time it would take for the flood defences to be built.

MS A RAE: The Kirkstall Valley is an area of diverse communities and an area without any community facilities. What we do have is an army of activists who are committed to improving both the area and the lives of its people. We have a volunteer run festival attracting in excess of 25,000 people each year, an Art Trail, Kirkstall in Bloom and community groups which are growing in number daily.

We would love to have a nursery because we have got many plans for the site – well, actually we would like to have two nurseries, one for plants and one for children, being careful not to mix them up of course! With a kitchen we could do meals on wheels and give older people some regular human contact. Our current Lunch Club could be expanded, giving older folk the friendships they crave. A gardening group would allow us to grow fruit and vegetables, teaching people how to

be more sustainable whilst it could also support Kirkstall in Bloom who continue to improve the area around Abbey Mills and beyond.

There is so much more that we would love to do but we are limited by space. Abbey Mills could be that space. Is it a risk? Perhaps, but a measured risk. Worse would be to fail to respond to the needs of our community, to leave isolated people to become depressed, to allow young people to be disenfranchised from the area that they live in making them more likely to resort to anti-social behaviour, to leave families without resources and support so they fall further into debt and despair.

I implore you to give us a chance, the opportunity to work alongside the Council and help address the needs created by swingeing cuts we know that have been made to your budget and also to support our bid for the 2023 City of Culture and contribute to the work of the Leeds Climate Commission. Together we can change lives. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I move that the matter be referred to the Director of City Development for Consideration in consultation with the relevant Executive Member.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to call for the vote to refer this Deputation. *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

I would like to thank you for coming to today's meeting and Officers from the relevant department will be in contact with you in due course. Thank you. *(Applause)*

DEPUTATION TWO – BUS SERVICES

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. If you could please now make your speech to Council, which should be no longer than five minutes, and if you would like to please begin by introducing the people in your Deputation.

MS M BRENNAN: Lord Mayor and Members of the Council, I am Mary Brennan and I live in Cross Green. We have come here today to ask for your help to improve the bus services which serve the community. The people with me today live in Cross Green, Richmond Hill, East End Park, Saxton Gardens and are of the Richmond Hill ward.

We are not an affluent community, a lot of people in our area do not have much money and do not have access to a car so a reliable bus service is a vital lifeline to us.

The Council has invested £10m in Cross Green under the Group Repair Scheme. This has made a positive difference in the area. We live in nicer, warmer homes and the area looks much better than it did a few years ago. However the bus service is really letting the area down.

Our neighbourhoods are served by the 15 and the 61 bus route run by the First Bus. We are supposed to have a half-hourly service but this is rarely the case. More often than not we have to wait an hour and it is not uncommon to wait two hours or even longer. A lady in her eighties waited over two hours at the Corn Exchange to get the bus back to Cross Green – by this time she was freezing and had seized up. A Hungarian family have recently moved away from the area as the dad could not reliably get to and from work. My granddaughter is often late home from school, the four minutes past seven (*sic*) bus from the market hardly ever materialises. People are missing doctor's appointments, hospital appointments because of the buses and this is causing a lot of isolation in our area.

The knock-on effect of the missing busses is that when they do come they are often full and people with pushchairs struggle for spaces even though they have been standing there for an hour.

The bus service is particularly important to our community as we do not have services located within the immediate area. The nearest Council Hub is the Compton Centre or Great George Street in town. We have only one medical practice in the area which is currently closed to new patients, the nearest alternative GPs are in Osmondthorpe or Lincoln Green. The nearest supermarket is Morrison's in town or in Hunslet, where we only have the 61 bus, which is an hourly service, and this service that is only hourly covers the St James's Hospital route and in our area we call this bus the Ghost Bus. (*laughter*)

We have a very good relationship with our local Councillors Asghar Khan, Denise Ragan and Councillor Ron Grahame and they have worked with us to set up meetings with First Group. This has led to short term improvements in reliability of the buses; unfortunately this lasts for a two weeks then soon deteriorates again. They have the same problem at each Tenants and Residents meetings that they go to in our area.

I know this sounds like we are whingeing but all we are asking for is the buses to run as advertised – every 30 minutes.

Our community already feels like an island surrounded by major trunk roads and railway lines. We need the bus service to make sure we are connected with the rest of Leeds and can benefit and contribute to all this great city has to offer us.

Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to address your Full Council.

(Standing ovation)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I move that the matter be referred to the Director of City Developments for consideration in consultation with the relevant Executive Member.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to call for the vote to refer this Deputation. (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

Well done and thank you for coming to today's meeting. Officers from the relevant department will be in contact with you in due course. Good afternoon and thank you for coming. (*Applause*)

DEPUTATION THREE – AIRE STREET WORKSHOPS COMMITTEE

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. If you could please now make your speech to Council, which should be no longer than five minutes, and if you would like to please begin by introducing us to the people in your Deputation.

MS A MAXWELL-STEWART: Good afternoon Mayor and Members of the Council. My name is Aimee Maxwell-Stewart, owner of Aim Studios, a graphic design agency. This is Melody Griffiths, owner of This Is Interiors, an interior design agency; Tom Pitts, owner at Hand Drawn Pixels, a digital agency; and this is Gary Bamford, owner of DJs, a bespoke clothing company and manager of our building. We are tenants at Aire Street Workshops here in Leeds City Centre.

Aire Street Workshops is a multi-tenancy building owned by the Council and set up 30 years ago as the first working model of this nature in Leeds, to nurture SMEs. Run by LCVS, a not-for-profit company set up in 1981 with finance from the Department of the Environment and Leeds City Council to provide some small low cost office and manufacturing units, Aire Street Workshops comprises of 31 businesses, 11 female led, providing employment for over 150 people, 60% under the age of 25. We are a hotbed of small, new businesses nurtured within our own, mainly younger, community. Aire Street Workshops is now unfortunately on the Asset Disposal List of Leeds City Council, which in turn does threaten the existence of these very businesses.

With this in mind we would like the Council to consider the following three points.

Number one, we would like to emphasise the value of the small businesses that operate from Aire Street Workshops, their contribution to the local economy, employment and creative and manufacturing industries. Over the last 30 years Aire Street Workshops has served as a catalyst for new businesses who have flourished, utilising the support and opportunity our work space provides. An example of one such business would be Blueberry Marketing who have just relocated to larger offices in Leeds City Centre having been tenants since their business first started. Now they

employ over 70 people and credit Aire Street as a big part of their success. We feel it is fundamentally important to the fabric and diversity of our city to have a Council-led working community such as ours.

Aire Street Workshops has a fast growing population of makers in the manufacturing industry. There is a huge lack of affordable alternative space for these types of businesses, especially where they boost a more diverse and interesting mix to the City Centre economy. By providing the outlet through Aire Street Workshops, LCC shows a great vision of forward thinking not seen in many other cities.

We are different to other working communities already in Leeds. We house a plethora of businesses not just in one sector, but across multiple. Tenants favour the Aire Street community because of the diversity and mix of business and the co-working opportunities that it does provide. There is no other working community in Leeds like it. We cannot be pigeon-holed as a just a tech hub or a creative only working space. We offer something more.

We are a mini powerhouse. The tenants of Aire Street Workshops are working together to raise awareness of this small but dynamic alternative business centre and its contribution to Leeds. We have a self-elected committee in place, consisting of visionaries and thinkers who, with LCC's backing, would like the opportunity to enhance the building's stature in the city and to creatively help maximise the building's potential to both the tenants and to the Council. A creative, innovative, community-led approach to business support.

We would like to be able to open our street-facing studios to the public, allowing a cross-pollination of business ideas and inviting the public into the space for pop-up events, business workshops, industry conferences. The venue could also house cultural events during the Leeds 2023 City of Culture bid. Our tenants are already thinking of ideas to support that cause.

We would like to stress that the building is leased on the basis that LCVS, our not-for-profit management company, are responsible for all care and repair of the building and so there is absolutely no commitment of monetary outlay by LCC.

Since announcing the fate of the building to us and after a meeting with LCC, a feasibility study for the building has been carried out by Group Ginger, a Leeds-based architectural practice. We are still yet to hear the outcome of this proposal but we do hope that with your support we can continue to work towards a positive future for our workspace to help enable to growth and success of the businesses within it.

Thank you for your time today and, again, we are Aire Street Workshops, a multi-tenancy building owned by the Council set up to support and nurture SMEs. Unfortunately, our building is now on the Asset Disposal List. Thanks.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I move that the matter be referred to the Director of City Development for consideration, in consultation with the relevant Executive Member.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to call for the vote to refer this Deputation to the Officers. *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

I would like to thank you for coming today. Officers from the relevant department will be in contact with you in due course. Thank you for coming, bye bye. *(Applause)*

ITEM 5 – COMMUNITY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

THE LORD MAYOR: We are now moving to Item 5, Community Committee Annual Report. Councillor Coupar.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am delighted to move the Annual Report for Community Committees in Council today. It gives a brief overview, really, of the work that goes on in Community Committees, with Chairs, with Champions and every Member throughout the city and I really look forward to the contributions that are going to be made today by people on the Annual Report.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lay.

COUNCILLOR LAY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It is as a critical friend that I rise to speak on the report of the Community Committee, so whilst all my erstwhile colleagues and Chairs stand up and tell you how wonderful Community Committees are, I find myself standing here and feeling the need to outline improvements. They are not meant as a criticism but are stated in the spirit of working together to improve our meetings.

In the five years that I have been a Councillor I, and I suspect many Members, have watched as they have become a shadow of their former selves. I have a number of concerns but with the exception of the Wellbeing funding none of them require significant amounts of money.

Very few residents seem to know that Community Committees exist and those who do seem to care even less. This cannot be good for openness, transparency or trust. Cuts to Area Offices have hit Community Committees. Because there is no central funding pot for venue hire we are now unable to take Community Committees to the people. Sitting in our free venue in Yeadon means that no-one sees us in Adel or Horsforth or Rawdon or even Otley. It is rubbish, if truth be known.

Our Wellbeing funds have been slashed to the extent that in my ward the only thing we can effectively afford to pay for is the CCTV and, let's be honest, that is something the centre should pay for. Senior officers no longer attend Community Committees. When once we had Jason Singh, Inspector Caldwell, Parks and Countryside, Housing etc – now we get bugger all attend. Sorry! Even they know how ineffectual Community Committees have become. I find their non-attendance disrespectful, not so much to elected Members but to the committees they, we, all serve.

So what can be done? Most Members seem to want locally only what this Council wants nationally, i.e. devolution. We want devolved moneys, decision making and real influence, a chance to genuinely interact, inter-relate and interfere in our communities. After all, what is good for the goose is good for the gander. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Bentley.

COUNCILLOR S BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking about the North West Community Committee. I would like to thank Members of our Community Committee in supporting OPAL that has raised £308,000 to transform the former Bedford Arms pub into the Welcome In, a much needed community centre in our area. More funding is needed to bring this building up to scratch and the short lease granted by the Council is hampering bids to the larger funding pots. Councillor Coupar, could you please review this lease as promised? Alternatively the community, the Welcome In, would be ideal for a community asset transfer and I would welcome Council support for this.

I also want to highlight the fact that Weetwood Councillors have tried to get the Wellbeing Fund split equally between wards like the other Community Committees. When raised at our last meeting we were outvoted by the Labour Councillors. The Wellbeing budget for the committee is £96,720 and if shared equally between the three wards it would be £32,240 per ward. In March we agreed to spend £75,995 of our budget with £20,000 plus remaining for the rest of the year. I am sure Members will be shocked when you hear the analysis of this spend across the wards, which identified Weetwood as having £12,215, or 16% of the budget; Headingley £16,772, or 22%, Hyde Park and Woodhouse £47,007, or 62% of the budget.

I have no problem in supporting any deprived community as many of you will know, but I do wish that other Members of Council would understand that Weetwood does have a high concentration of deprivation despite being classed as a leafy suburb.

It is clearly unfair that Leeds, in striving to be compassionate and the best city, allows residents who pay their Council Tax to be short-changed in allocation of funds for their wellbeing due to the political make-up of Community Committee.

The fairest allocation split to the individual wards should be like the Wellbeing Fund, on population and deprivation, and I would ask Members of the committee to think again. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Cleasby.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Council, Lord Mayor, if I may, Lord Mayor, reprise your words of praise to the In Bloom organisations and particularly Rawdon and Horsforth and therefore pay tribute to my ward colleague, Councillor Collins, who is not here, who has been for many years heavily involved with both, particularly in Horsforth, and she deserves praise for that.

Going back to the item in the report, Councillor Latty deserves praise. It was his sub-committee and his initiative that brought that to us and it is an amazing app. We have not written it up as well as we might in the report because of the limitations of space but the opportunities for protecting our vulnerable in their homes and protecting them from themselves, for a start, but protecting them from the bad people of this world, like when they fall into difficulties and cannot cut the grass, cannot decorate the house, cannot do those things, there are those who pass the door like the milkman and the police and so on who can do something about it – like ourselves when we are out canvassing if eventually that is extended to us. Graham, you take praise from that. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Yes, our Community Committees. They are no doubt staffed by people who are dedicated to their roles. They are no doubt attended by Local Councillors that put the first interests of their communities forward. However, both of those cohorts are held back by a Council that has no vision of what the term “devolution” actually means.

Not so long back we were all told that we would have our Environmental Services devolved down to local areas because those are the services that affect people the most in the most direct fashion and we should be able to shape them so that they fitted the communities that we all represented.

The Council has now taken all that back because it did not suit them to have all these devolved teams who wanted a restructure and, as per usual, the tendency is to re-centralise. When it comes to Community Hubs they do not talk to communities about how they would like their own assets used or to suggest to them how could you better use them. They instead say, like the people who were up here earlier for the workshops on Aire Street, well, you have got a building that is quite valuable so we are going to sell it off and we will actually stuff you into an alternative building next door which is not fit for purpose and actually used to be a library and now it is half a library. That is what happened to us in Rothwell and now we have got a building next door which is completely vacant and is due to get sold for half a million quid, of which the local residents will not see any benefit whatsoever.

Next we come to the Community Infrastructure Levy. This is supposed to be the money which goes back to local communities to benefit the effect of development upon their areas. The Community Infrastructure Levy at the moment, the Section 106, I beg your pardon, at the moment is sorted out between local Councillors who talk to their local communities and directly with the Planning Department. Now we are told that the Community Infrastructure Levy will come under Community

Committees and we heard earlier about how easy it is for funding to be squeezed in a certain direction according to the political make-up of these Area Committees. I for one am not going to stand by while, for instance, in Outer South we see development money which has been earned by communities who are having to put up with development in Rothwell being taken to fund developments elsewhere in, for instance, Ardsley and Robin Hood, and I would urge other Members as well to ensure that they make sure that the Community Infrastructure Levy funds which at the moment are up for consultation do not end up being centralised into Area Committee funding pots which can then be sent to the areas which are politically sensitive as opposed to the communities which are actually affected. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Akhtar.

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. It gives me absolutely a pleasure talking about the Inner North West Community Committee. Community Committee plays absolutely an important role within our communities and one way that we assist our community is by funding some of the projects.

Let me talk about a few of the things that we have delivered in Inner North West. For example, as we all know, we have a very large young population in Hyde Park and in Headingley. With the young population it brings some challenges and some problems. One of the challenges that we were facing and our local residents were facing, loud music and the late night parties. We have delivered *(interruption)* my Lord Mayor, we have delivered a scheme where we were promoting our Noise Nuisance project and by the fact the local residents absolutely welcomed our move.

With regard to some of the major events in the area, one that I am proud to say there was a one day event within Little London which was again supported by the Inner North West Community Committee. The other project where all year long the Community Unity Day which has been going on for years and years and we are proud to say that we have supported that project as well in our communities.

With regards to the youth we have done skateboarding in Beckett Park within Councillor Bentley's area and also some of the other activities in the areas of our remit.

Let me just talk about – I was not going to talk about the old pub which Councillor Bentley referred to and I am sure Councillor Coupar will respond to it. We supported this particular project back in 2015 by our community, Inner, and also the Outer community when there was a lease issue which was raised in this very Chamber, if you all remember. Since then we have been supporting this particular project in this pub. We had one of our meetings there, the venue has been changed and that particular project catered for the sixties and above, and those communities are absolutely loving it and we are so pleased from the North West Inner community that we have supported that project and now your people are enjoying.

With regarding to dividing the communities, the way it was put by the Opposition, what we agreed was in the Community Committee, Councillor Coupar, that we believe in a united forum. We want to cater for all the communities of North West Inner, we do not want to see division between Weetwood, Headingley, Hyde

Park or anywhere else in our neck of the woods and it goes the same for the city wide as well. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Taylor.

COUNCILLOR TAYLOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I also want to comment on some positive work that has been happening in my patch.

Over the past twelve months the report has shown the good work that the Community Committee has played such a crucial role in our community and importantly shows that a real difference can be made when the whole residents get involved and discuss issues in the ward, not just one-sided residents. If a Labour Chair and the other parties, feel free to come in and say your bit and ask for what you want. That is what Community Committee is for, we share.

As the Chair of the Inner North East Community Committee over the last years we have discussed and focused on a range of issues related to environment, community safety, health and employment. Indeed, we have also had opportunity in supporting a range of projects through the Wellbeing and Youth Activity funds, which is all about supporting and transforming our local area which ultimately strengthens the city as a whole.

Our community in Chapel Allerton, Moortown and Roundhay can make a positive difference on the Inner North East Community Committee. We will be seeking to continue to engage with residents as we look ahead.

People must feel like they have a stake in the local area and the city and I believe our Community Committee provides a platform and a forum to have the important community conversation that we can better understand what matters to the people we represent.

In fact, in January of this year we hosted the Inner North East Youth Summit to engage and consult with young people on how they would like to see the youth activity funding spent in our area in the Inner North East. Following the successful summit, the result after engagement with the young people from the areas have been used to share the Youth Activity funding allocation for 2017 summer activity funds round.

Lord Mayor, I would like to mention the important work of the Community Committee Champion where Members play such a crucial role in focusing on areas such as Adult Social Care, Health, Employment and Skills and Children's Services.

Our Champions have played an important role in bringing important developments to the community's attention. Personally as the committee Health and Wellbeing Champion I was very pleased to see that the conversation about key strategy plans with Leeds health and care plans have been discussed with other local residents through the community and I know that this will continue.

Moreover, the Annual Report highlights the key example of Beckhills. They came to us as a community and we worked with each other. Beckhill has formed a

group together which brings in local stakeholders, Stainbeck Church, Mill Field Primary School and local residents to address some of the generational anti-social behaviour and employment challenges on the Beckhill estate.

THE LORD MAYOR: That is fine, thank you, Councillor Taylor. You are well over the red, sorry. *(Applause)* Councillor Khan.

COUNCILLOR KHAN: Lord Mayor, fellow Councillors, like the other nine Community Committees we in the Inner East Community Committee have been extremely busy over the past year. We have focused strongly on community cohesion, reducing poverty, getting more residents into work and promoting regeneration across wards. Alongside the invaluable contribution from members of the public and ward Members, we have a dynamic input of our community partners. One excellent example is our friend at Fever FM. With their support we have seen the Harehills Hour flourish since it began in July 2016. So far 20 shows have taken place. On these shows partners, community members, can showcase their services, projects or organisations. Fever FM has also greatly assisted our work and supported the Eastern European Engagement sub-group. They have created signposting videos that can be used city wide to provide information on employment, education, housing, transport, finance and healthcare.

Across our city there is a strong commitment to tackling unemployment and poverty. This is a top priority for our Community Committee. We are supporting providers to come together to establish an employment network. This enables them to support each other and to ensure local residents are matched with the provision most relevant to their needs. This network has grown considerably. It started off in Burmantofts and Richmond Hill and has now extended to the whole of Inner East with good links to the Inner East Employment Skills Board.

The Community Committee has identified a number of future priorities to improve Inner East still further. We are still determined to reduce health inequality and promote a healthy lifestyle, therefore reducing social isolation.

We will continue to support innovation and community enterprise to provide greater employment opportunities for local people. Like all Community Committees we regularly work to improve the local environment. We also want to tackle language barriers that the new community in our area experiences. By following these priorities we intend to develop a strong, resilient and inclusive community across our wards.

Lord Mayor, the value of the Community Committee is clear. I genuinely look forward to working closely with my colleagues and local residents to create the best area possible for every single citizen. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harland.

COUNCILLOR HARLAND: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I welcome the chance to speak on the Community Committee Annual Report as Chair of the Outer East Community Committee. We are all well aware of how important the ten Community Committees are for residents right across the city, providing opportunities for local

people to discuss matters of concern directly with ourselves as elected Members. Of course it is also a critical platform that allows local residents to influence decision-making directly and provide a steer on developments of local interest.

Children and young people are always high on our annual priorities and the past year was no different. The Outer East Community Committee ran a consultation with young people in order to better shape the programme of events and activities available to them during their school holidays. We are as a committee and as an administration committed to making Leeds a child friendly city and part of that entails giving them a voice.

As part of the consultation we held an event at Temple Moor High School attracting over one hundred young people and their parents and carers respectively. The children took part in a number of taster sessions throughout the day and kept a number of our more senior colleagues on their toes. *(laughter)* Overall the day was a great success and will be repeated going forward, and we continue to ensure local engagement from people of all ages.

What really pleases me as Chair is seeing such a vast number of varied local events and projects take place in our committees as a result of Wellbeing and Youth Activity funding, projects that would otherwise not have taken place without the input of the committee. It is absolutely fantastic to see that Community Committees have funded and supported nearly 500 projects across the city. Only yesterday we had an update from the Rhino's Foundation who had 430 kids at their events in our Community Committee area held over the summer. Feedback from the children and their parents was fantastic.

Going forward, the Outer East Community Committee will ensure that our city wide priorities, including the very important subjects of health and transport, are discussed and influenced locally and we will hold further Youth Summits to ensure young people's voices are also heard. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Venner.

COUNCILLOR VENNER: My Lord Mayor, it is a great pleasure to be making my first speech as the new Chair of the Inner West Community Committee *(Applause)* after taking over from Councillor Kevin Ritchie in May. I would like to thank Councillor Ritchie for his dedication and hard work as the Chair. *(Applause)* I have warned out committee that they will find my Chairing very boring because I do not have the repertoire of terrible jokes that Councillor Ritchie treated us to at each meeting!

Community Committees have an invaluable role in bringing politics right down to the local level where people can get involved and have real influence over decisions that affect them locally.

In the Inner West Community Committee we have taken the decision to formalise community involvement by having co-optees to the committee. We have nine co-optees, three from each ward represented, and their role is to contribute to discussions and provide a level of challenge. They come from across the area and are

involved in different community groups within each ward including the now officially thriving Kirkstall in Bloom from my own ward, and they bring a level of expertise and experience from the communities they represent and their contributions are invaluable as they bring forward the issues and concerns that really matter to local people.

I really believe this is a positive step for Community Committees because it brings a new level of accountability to meetings and people are able to get involved and take real ownership of issues and solutions. It enables even greater community involvement and helps us to engage with some of the harder to reach sections of our communities, including people from minority groups in the Inner West.

I strongly dispute Councillor Lay's account of Community Committees. I do not recognise his negative portrayal from the Inner West. We have vibrant community involvement and senior officer attendance and if Councillor Lay's committee is not getting public attendance, then he should be getting out there to promote it. (*hear, hear*)

Within the Inner West we have also contributed to some very worthwhile events and groups throughout the year. This includes a community exercise project for 250 older people living in Leeds 12, a programme of gentle exercise delivered in a sheltered housing complex, residential nursing homes, GP practices and community centres across Armley and New Wortley with the aim of increasing physical activity and reducing social isolation.

Also, an eight week cookery course for people with learning disabilities and dancing, music and movement sessions for toddlers. We have supported festivals in all three wards, Christmas light switch-ons and my personal favourite, the Hawksworth Wood Annual Dog Show, which is part of our anti-dog fouling campaign.

In the next few months we have got a Youth Summit in the Banqueting Suite in November and our meeting after that will be focusing on the aspirations of young people in the Inner West and helping to move their ideas forward.

My Lord Mayor, in Inner West we are proud of what we have achieved over the last year and we very much look forward to continuing the good work moving forward. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Coulson.

COUNCILLOR COULSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am always happy to talk about the Outer West Community Committee. Politically, three Conservatives, three Greens and three Labour. Never a wrong word, we do not worry about allocating money. We are there to look after the community. They allocate the money to the community that needs it, whatever ward. I seem to remember Councillor Wakefield saying something to me last year when I criticised the Lib Dem Group for moaning. I am not going to criticise them this year because it obviously did no good. (*laughter*)

What I would like to say is, we have got the cuts, we have a target area. We have targeted for four years now, £18,000 a dedicated officer, agreed by young Woody and young Blackburn because we are a sub-group and we do the nitty gritty and then take it to the full group.

This year we have had to come up with a completely new way of working. We have a strong partnership working group, used to discuss the problems, go away and the Council officers used to pick them up and follow them. This year we had a friendly talking to them, told them they had to do something else besides talk. The partners now have taken on their own workstreams and are working on those workstreams. They all come together and discuss it as a group, what each officer has done. It has given us a lot of free time for our Council officers and fortunately we have overcome the shortfall of £18,000 that we could not put a dedicated officer in. We have not moaned, we have got on and done the job.

The other thing is, I have not a lot of time so I would like to mention Pudsey in Bloom, although it is not part – it is part of the Pudsey ward. I had an email this morning from Pudsey in Bloom thanking the Pudsey Councillors for their backing with money (we paid for most of it) and we are going to have a celebration about it.

The other one is the Swinnow Community Centre, fully run by volunteers, no Council employees whatsoever, five years about to close. Now fully booked and looking to put another floor on.

This today, the 12th, which I am very proud about, a new course has started on maths and English over 19s, free, and that is not just for the community. That is for anybody who wants to use it. I will stop at that, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Gabriel.

COUNCILLOR GABRIEL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. As one of the longest standing Community Committee Chairs I think I am becoming the matriarch of the Community Committees (*laughter*) because I was a CIT Chair as well – Ma Gabriel, yes!

I need to say that Community Committees, when I hear other people talking about them I really do not understand why they do not function well. Councillor Lay, we hold our Community Committees all over the community. We have them in the Civic Hall because it is part of our area but the other wards go out into their areas and we pay for it, it comes out of our Communications Budget. You must have the same sort of thing. We also have our money divided up so, Councillor Bentley, I think your group needs to come up with more ideas on how to spend your money. In our area we have no issues. All our Councillors are constantly coming up with ideas so we spend our money and we share it all out equally.

I would like to remind everybody that when we had the Boundary Commission come, one of the reasons why we as a city managed to keep 99 Councillors was because of the Community Committees, the Community Committee Champions, so please remember all that.

COUNCILLOR LAY: No it was not.

COUNCILLOR GABRIEL: No it was not rubbish, it was true. Can I also welcome the new ways of working. I know that we have had our briefings and I am really pleased that we are going to concentrate on the most deprived areas in the city and Beeston and Holbeck are lucky to have the Recreations, which has been a deprived area for years. I know there is one in Middleton and I think there is at least one if not two in City and Hunslet.

We are also future working, now Leeds United have suddenly become best friends of Beeston and Holbeck ward and I cannot understand why (*laughter*) we are going to have a Young People's summit in the Pavilion free of charge. I would also like to thank all the officers who work really hard to make the Community Committees work, they work really hard in the background – a bit like swans, when they come to the meeting they are all calm and collected but they do a lot of work.

Also, I would like to thank all my Councillors who also put in a lot of hard work but in particular, on a personal note, I would like to thank my colleague, David Congreve, without him I would not be standing here (let's not go there) and also my dear friend Adam Ogilvie has been a support for me for the last 20 years. I am going to miss you both deeply.

On a good note, Holbeck got gold, Cross Flatts Park got platinum and I could mention all the other groups that were there because yesterday In Bloom Leeds were up and down like yo-yos. If it was not for us Yorkshire would not flourish, so thank you all very much. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Bruce.

COUNCILLOR BRUCE: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I am proud to stand here and tell you about the fantastic work that goes on in our Community Committees and especially the Outer South which I chair. I am proud of everything that has been achieved for the residents of our area. There is too much to mention here, especially as I have got to come back to my ward colleague Stewart. I do not recognise much of what you say, Stewart. Maybe if you attended the Community Committees a bit more you might know what goes on. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Give me an agenda worth coming for.

COUNCILLOR BRUCE: Basically most of what you are talking about was just a load of rubbish. I know some of your colleagues have got problems in their areas with the Wellbeing Fund. We do not have that problem in Outer South, I do not want you to give the false impression that we do. Our money, Wellbeing Funds, are distributed fairly and evenly. As you know we have got a mixed committee, not just yourselves but we have got MBIs on as well and there is no question that anybody is trying to take money from somebody else's ward and there is no reason for you to think that that will happen with CIL either. I expect that to be conducted in a fair way as well. If you have not noticed, I represent Rothwell as well and as Chair there is no way that money that is meant for our ward or anybody else's is going to another ward.

Just to tell you a bit about a workshop that we had in March to support and advise unpaid carers. One of the best things about that workshop was a young carer who came and looks after her mum. She was there, she shared her experience, which was quite moving. She has obviously got a massive burden on her shoulders and it was a relief to her to be able to talk about that with the people there and get to know what support is there and get the help that she desperately needs. That was really useful on a lot of fronts but that particularly made an impression on me.

We had a successful workshop about increasing recycling rates as well recently, to try and get our rates even higher in our area, although we are doing pretty well, I have to say. We had some valuable discussion and I think everybody there has learned something how they can recycle better. As I mentioned, we have got some fantastic rates because Rothwell is currently fourth in the city for recycling and I am pleased to say our colleagues in another Outer South area are at the top of the leader board in Ardsley and Robin Hood, so well done. I think we are all doing pretty well, the wards in Outer South, but we can do even better and everywhere else in the city, of course.

If everyone supports us we will do well. All of our sub-groups have also been incredibly busy. The Children and Families, for example, we are looking at the practicalities of delivering CSE and Cyber Safety to all our young people in our area.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much, Councillor Bruce, that was a really good description of what happens in your ward. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR BRUCE: Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wilkinson.

COUNCILLOR WILKINSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I just wish to make a couple of comments. Firstly, in the Agenda paper, the first line says “Community Committees were set up in June 2014.” At the risk of being accused of being pedantic, they were actually set up in 1999, albeit under a different name. That was the Community Involvement Teams, which was followed up a few years later by a change of name to Area Committees. As the old saying goes, a rose by any other name is still a rose.

The second point I wish to make is that the first time that I saw this brochure when it came out was when it landed through my letterbox last week. Although I am not concerned about the content of our page, it is just that it would have been nice to have been consulted on before. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wadsworth.

COUNCILLOR WADSWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I have pleasure in commenting on the Outer North West Community Committee Report. To share Councillor Wilkinson’s comments about the report, I did not see it until it landed on my doorstep and the other thing is it was only designed to have one item in and I think a report on a whole year could have more than one item. However, the item that is chosen for Outer North West is an extremely good one and Councillor Graham Latty

does need our thanks for that because the app is succeeding and has been successful in getting what is £70,000 worth of funding from the NHS and £2,000 from Mediplex Innovations. Clearly as that develops that will be a very useful app and we do have to thank both Councillor Latty and the Health sub-group for their important involvement in that.

I also have to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the Outer North West Community Committee team. They do work exceptionally hard, particularly with servicing the sub-groups. We have four sub-groups – Children and Family Health, Environment and Community Safety, Health and Adult Social Care and Highways and Transport. I would like to thank Councillor Pat Latty for chairing the Children's one, Councillor Barry Anderson for chairing the Environment one, Councillor Graham Latty for chairing the Health one and Councillor Ryk Downes for taking on Transport.

All of these are challenging but they are very big priorities in Outer North West and they do an awful lot of work. They do the basic day-to-day legwork of the committee in getting outside officers in, getting members of the public in and doing the work and they do need to be thanked.

We also run a Parish and Town Council Forum, we meet regularly with Town and Parish Councils. That was slow to start but it has improved both on Members' attendance and Parish Council attendance. I think the next one we have got almost every Parish Council a Member or the Clerk attending, which is very good.

We have had a successful year. One thing about venues, because I do agree with what my colleagues have said, both Councillor Lay and Councillor Cleasby, it is very good to move around the ward if you have lots of Council venues, but in Outer North West we only have one, Yeadon Town Hall, which is the only venue we can go to that is free. Somebody spoke earlier about the Community Engagement Budget. That comes out of the Wellbeing and the Wellbeing is reducing and actually in the New World, which Councillor Coupar brings on line, the Locality Review, of course that funding will review and Councillor Bruce, I think you are beyond the curve because the funding structure is going to be completely different next year and you might have a different view when you come here next year as to how the funding has taken place.

Not only the funding but the staffing has been reviewed. Somebody mentioned the priority areas. Staff are now being diverted to priority areas and I think that really this report next year will be very different because I think the servicing of the sub-groups will be different. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: I would now like to invite Councillor Coupar to sum up.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to thank contributors for being mostly positive, I have to say, apart from the Lib Dems in Opposition, even the Tories were slightly fairer this year, which is good and goes some way to say how off the mark the Lib Dems are this year.

I do just have to take to task some of the things that the Lib Dems did talk about. Councillor Sue Bentley knows very well that I have worked with officers and ward Members around the old pub site and the lease around that issue, so I find that quite unfounded really to bring it to Council in the way that you have.

I think that the Lib Dems also need to move forward with the way that our modernisation of Community Committees is going because we do not sit in old cigar-smoke filled rooms any more talking to ourselves and taking minutes and notes. We go out to our communities and that is where we do the best work. I am really pleased to hear that most of our Chairs and our Members recognise that fact, I have to say.

Councillor Golton, it is saddening to hear that you still feel so negatively about Rothwell Hub but hey ho, I am sure we will get you on side one day.

Councillor Akhtar, you were quite right to mention that actually Community Committees work for all wards that that committee represents and not always is it an equal split of money. There might be a larger need in one ward than there is another for that money, so quite rightly the committee decide where that money should go but also I have heard that Headingley Councillors have already said to Weetwood Members they would support you in any projects that you brought forward, but you have not done so to date, so that is sad to hear as well.

Councillor Taylor, you mentioned the Champions' role was vital and it really is. For me as an Exec Board Member it is about a two-way street, I have got to say, so that Champions can actually keep committees informed and actually Exec Board Members can find out what is occurring at Community Committees and if we can help in any way, so it is a vital role is the Community Champions, I have to say.

As for all the other contributions from Chairs, and as I always say, as Exec Board Member my door is always open. Many of the Opposition have been through it to talk to me about a lot of issues but I am always willing to talk to you about your Community Committee and how we can help you make it work better because you do not seem to be doing that well yourselves. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Now I would like to call for the vote to receive and to vote the Community Committees Annual Report. *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED, thank you.

ITEM 6 – REPORT ON APPOINTMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: We would now like to move to Item 6, Report on Appointments. Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I move in terms of the Notice, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Again I would like to call for the vote on the Appointments. *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

ITEM 7 – QUESTIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: We are now moving on to Item 7, Questions. We have got a period of 30 minutes for Members of the Council to ask questions of the Executive. Councillor Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Will the Executive Member for Resources and Strategy now confirm that the £4.8m loan given by the LEP and held by Leeds City Council for the Arena Hotel Scheme (former Hilton Hotel Scheme) has now been lost?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Richard Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. As Members may be aware, the Administrator for the development has marketed the site on Portland Crescent for sale through Lambert Smith Hampton. I am advised that they have accepted an offer. Subject to this offer progressing through due diligence and the sale being completed, it will lead to construction recommencing on the site but it will also result in the loan entered into by the Local Enterprise Partnership being written off.

THE LORD MAYOR: Supplementary?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Yes, Lord Mayor. By way of supplementary, and again the question was originally addressed to Councillor James Lewis but I appreciate there has now been an opting out, as it were, so why did Councillor James Lewis advise this Council on 14th September that the scheme was in effect nothing to do with Leeds City Council?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Obviously I am not James and I cannot read his mind.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: That is why we asked him the question.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: However, I think the reason being this was a decision taken by the LEP, it was not taken by elected Councillors it was taken by business people in the main. Whilst Leeds City Council had a role in that it was acting as the administrative body for the LEP and Leeds City Council officers did provide due diligence in this case and gave clear advice to the LEP, it was not a decision of Leeds City Council, hence Councillor James Lewis's comments.

THE LORD MAYOR: Jonathan Bentley.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Would the Executive Member inform Council of the extent of its exposure to the commercial

property sector and what independent advice has been taken to assess the risk of these investments?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Historically Leeds City Council has been the largest land and property owner in the city and therefore has been exposed to fluctuations in the property market. Long-standing commercial properties that the Council has owned include St George's House, Enterprise House, Bartson House as well as small industrial unit portfolios we had two deputations about earlier.

For any new investment and acquisition the Council undertakes the following due diligence: an independent valuation report; an independent building, mechanical and services survey; a check on the financial standing covenant of the tenants and the properties through external credit data bases or by independent property advisers; and in the case of a vacant or part-vacant property prior to purchase we have obtained property agent advice on the current marketing conditions including letting prospects, market demands, rental levels, incentive packages and competition for the vacant units.

Legal advice and due diligence from either Legal Services or externally appointed solicitors for the new build properties such as Units D, E, F Logic Leeds, we have appointed external project monitoring surveyors to ensure that the premises are constructed to the specification and to advise on practical completion including payments to the development for each unit.

As part of the Asset Management Strategy for each recently purchase property we have put in place the following ongoing due diligence: close monitoring of rental payments and the financial standing of the property tenants; regular inspections of the property to ensure lease covenant compliance; for any vacant premises monthly meetings are held with the appointed marketing agents to ensure that the premises are properly marketed. During these meetings letting prospects, market demands, rental levels, incentive packages and competition for vacant units are discussed. Through external contexts and databases we monitoring the ongoing strength of the Leeds property market and all tenant leases are monitored to check for lease events such as rent reviews, lease breaks and lease expires.

It is the case that any commercial property investment carries risks. That is why the Council's Commercial Property Strategy is to only invest in Leeds, capture the value of our economic development and regeneration work where appropriate, and invest in lower risk properties often on long leases to tenants with external covenant strength.

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

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: I do, Lord Mayor. Thank you. I would like to thank Councillor Lewis for that very comprehensive answer and for all the assurances that he gives in terms of management risk.

Whilst I support the need to make these prudent income-generating investments, would he agree with me that the Government is guilty of some double standards by allowing Councils unlimited borrowing to invest in commercial buildings whilst insisting on a very restricted cap on borrowing to invest in new social housing, and if he does agree could he tell me what steps the administration is taking to lobby and persuade the Government to remove the cap on Housing Revenue Account borrowing so that ordinary Leeds citizens as well as big business can get the benefits of historically low interest rates?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: First question the answer is yes. Second part of the question, well, quite clearly it is in the Labour Party Manifesto to lift the borrowing on the Social Housing Cap and that is probably why Leeds North West now has a Labour MP not a LIB Dem MP. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Selby.

COUNCILLOR SELBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Please could the Leader of Council update Members on the city's bid to be European Capital of Culture in 2023?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Councillor Selby. It is good timing to ask the question in terms of the amount of media coverage that there has been about the stages of the bid and, of course, there has been enormous activity over the whole of the summer. Many of you will be aware of the Make Leeds 2023 Campaign on the 19th July and I am delighted to say that we have had people from all walks of life, all backgrounds, stars and celebrities, sports stars such as James Buchanan, pop stars (is that the right expression?) Ricky Wilson has signed up, the Kaiser Chiefs very much involved and supportive of the bid, just to give some examples.

The launch of the individual pledges from around the city has already achieved its target and a second tranche will be opened up so everyone can get involved.

Fifty days to the submission of the bid happened last week on 8th September, so the clock is really ticking and many of you will have seen the commission film put together by Studio 12 reflecting the range of different communities and activities that are already happening in the city.

I have to say it has been picked up by most of the media channels and I would like to say thank you to our media in the city and the wider region for their support and ongoing interest in the bid.

We have been promised letters of support from all of the Local Authorities in Yorkshire and across the North. This is being seen as a real Northern bid. Both the directly elected Mayors of Liverpool and Greater Manchester, for example, and several other Leaders have signed up. Several of us got the opportunity to go over to

Hull which has City of Culture – not capital of culture – but I would urge everyone who gets the opportunity to go over and see what is happening in Hull. Many of us have been to Hull over the years and I have to say we were absolutely blown away. The transformation of that city with the City of Culture bid is phenomenal and it is obviously ongoing.

So, for Members to keep involved there is a seminar has been organised for October 3rd, I hope as many of you as possible will get along to that. A paper will go to Executive Board to outline the content and the process and we will be submitting the bid on 27th October.

There will be intensive interviews from judges throughout November and looking to a short list of the successful cities that have gone through into the next round some time in December. As far as we are aware the competition we are facing is coming from Dundee, Belfast and Derry, Nottingham and Milton Keynes. I do not think we should underestimate any of those cities, this is an enormous prize for anyone who gets it and thank you all of you for your input and support and let us make sure we go forward to be successful. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Supplementary? No. Councillor David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Does the Chair of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Transport Committee agree that the only way the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy will be successful is for the operators here in Leeds and throughout West Yorkshire to actually deliver improvements, rather than just making promises?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. When Councillor Blackburn was not here at one o'clock I thought you were going to blame the buses, David, but you came just after!

I think this afternoon we saw one of the most passionate delegations that have echoed actually 30 years of failure of the deregulation of buses. I think there is nobody in this room that disagrees with the need to bring back franchising and regulations to elected bodies.

I am more optimistic than you are, David, at the moment because I think there are three good reasons why the mood is beginning to change. The first thing is the continual decline of buses nationally and locally outside London. They have halved nationally and in the end bus companies are beginning to affect their financial viability. They themselves have set a hundred per cent growth of bus patronage in this city alone – not us, they set it. That is an enormous challenge to face.

The other reason is, of course, the Bus Act which will bring back powers and unfortunately it is conditional on a Mayor. I think that is wrong, I think they should be unconditional throughout the country. We all have buses, I do not see just why Mayoral Authorities should get it but that is changing the mood music.

Thirdly, of course, we have the partnership in this city of £174m and believe you me they are interested as Councillor Blake will tell you at some time in the future in negotiating improvements. We have seen improvements in reliability, already making change we have seen improvements in stability and we should not forget communities are giving us a real positive feedback about the park and rides at Elland Road and Temple Green.

Here is one for the Council that I was not aware of until quite recently. It is a new measure being introduced and it might be worth passing on. That is the bus companies have introduced a no quibble offer. That is, if you are unhappy with the bus journey you have got, you will be given a bus voucher and for those drinkers, David, who often catch the last bus home – I think that is my ward colleague as well, James – if your bus comes 20 minutes late they will pay the taxi home for you, so marginally – there you are, James, you have no need to stay out all night! *(laughter)* He is 40 this week, by the way, he is allowed to stay out!

All I would say is, it is a start, it is an incremental move and we have got a big task ahead of us but I am really optimistic that if we work together as we are doing cross party we will see a change and hopefully an improvement in the bus service in this city and across West Yorkshire. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Supplementary, Councillor Blackburn?

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Does Councillor Wakefield agree with me that the operators should make a start right now by making sure their services that currently operate run to schedule and do not have significant numbers of bus cancellations as we have now?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Yes, I do.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Towler.

COUNCILLOR TOWLER: Would the Executive Member for Children and Families like to comment on the impact of under resourcing of schools in Leeds?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Mulherin.

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Thank you, Lord Mayor and thank you, Councillor Towler, for your question.

Members will be well aware of the impact of Government cuts on individual school budgets which attracted considerable attention during the General Election campaign. The Secretary of State has since announced additional funding for school budgets but it seems that is not new money; that money has been found through raiding other parts of the DfE budgets, not least, of course, the Free School Programme and School Capital Funding to Local Authorities.

I have spoken at length in this Chamber in the past about difficulties we face as a Council with regard to school place provision and the deficit that we face. I can tell you today that that forecast deficit has now reached £88m over the next three years in Leeds alone. That gap is the gap between the amount of money we need to provide new school places and the money we actually receive from Central Government. This chronic underfunding is going to start to bite this financial year.

We are not alone in this situation. The Local Government Association reports that 49% of Councils across the country are at risk of not being able to deliver the number of school places they need over the next five years. This is an immediate crisis and one that the Government needs to take full responsibility for. Councils have been warning for years that this crisis was coming and the Government has chosen to ignore those warnings and simply state that it is the responsibility of Local Authorities to deliver those places while at the same time removing our powers to open new schools and failing to provide adequate funding.

However, it is not just delivering new school places that we are struggling with. Money is also a huge issue when it comes to maintaining our existing schools. This is down to the way that the Capital Allocation is calculated, which is based on a combination of the number of pupils and Government surveys of the condition of our school buildings. These surveys are politely described as being “light touch”. What they mean by being light touch is that they are conducted without actually entering a school building. I question how it is possible to accurately assess the state of a building without actually going inside to look at it.

These surveys have given us an allocation of around £6.8m to cover the maintenance of all of our schools in Leeds including the 149 schools which those surveys allocate as being Priority 1 and Priority 2 work outstanding. For some of these schools the most appropriate action would be to knock them down and completely rebuild them at a cost of at least £4m to £5m for a small primary and £25m for a new secondary school, so that £6.8m will not go very far, especially when you consider that the estimated total cost of the repairs necessary in our schools in Leeds is now just over £48m.

To summarise, we do not have enough money to provide the number of school places that we know that we need, we do not have the power to open a new school ourselves or to force an academy to expand in an area of need. We do not have enough to carry out repairs at schools who are in desperate need of them. We cannot rely on the Government to either undertake fit for purpose surveys to assess need properly or even to progress work in a timely manner. I will be writing to the Secretary of State to ask for adequate funding for the maintenance of our schools and I hope that Members across this Chamber will support me in doing so.

I think we all want to see our schools in all of our communities being fit for purpose and providing an environment in which we can deliver good quality education for all the children in this city and one that actually enables them to fulfil their aspirations. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Supplementary? No. The next question has been withdrawn. Councillor Downes.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Given the Metro and then subsequently WYCA have been testing a YORCARD for approximately ten years, what is the start date for its introduction across the whole of the public transport system in West Yorkshire?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am rather worried about Councillor Downes. I know he has lost a lot of weight and I know he is very busy but if it helps, Councillor Downes, the MCard has been in place for three years and, because it is now a million transactions a week, the biggest smart card outside of London.

Ryk, if you want to relive and wind the clock back, because you left in 2010, you can now buy a daily, weekly, monthly or annual smart card to use buses and rails anywhere in West Yorkshire.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Downes, supplementary?

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am talking about the YORCARD that I was trying to develop was one where it was similar to the card in London – there is a question at the end of this – so that you can have contactless on all the buses and seamless transport interchange between buses, trains etc within the public transport network. Perhaps it has been around for three years, I have not seen it. I have not seen the announcements, I do not see it advertised on the buses that I can just go in contactless. Is contactless available across all the bus network in West Yorkshire?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I will just show, people, *this* is your card, this is contactless card, you can use it on buses and trains so, Ryk, if you would like to see me after I will tell you where to go. (*laughter*) Everybody knows in our group that I am the cutting edge of new technology (*laughter*) and I was listening and waiting for the Apple yesterday, what it is, £999, thinking this is the future.

Just to show you how much I know about new technology, buses are now trialling contactless, mobile phones linked to your bank account on buses now and they will start to introduce that now. They are right ahead now. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Groves.

COUNCILLOR GROVES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Would the Executive Member like to comment on the number of taxis operating in Leeds who hold registered licences in other Authorities?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor, Councillor Groves. There has been an increase in vehicles licensed under other Authorities working in Leeds. We have 4,941 vehicles licensed to the Leeds Council for Taxi and Private Hire in Leeds and worked by a taxi enforcement use of automatic number plate recognition cameras and what not. We reckon there are about 500 vehicles licensed to other Authorities working in the city. Many of those are licensed to our neighbouring Authorities but we have seen vehicles from as far away places as Lancashire and London working in Leeds.

As the Licensing Committee has discussed on many occasions, we feel that the Deregulation Act of 2015, along with the rise of ride hailing apps has led to this increase in operators from outside Leeds.

In terms of a comment on that I think it is concerning for us. Leeds Council has some of the most stringent tests for taxi and private hire drivers and things around customer care legislation, DBS checks, safeguarding and not all Authorities ask for such a high standard and it is concerning that drivers with a lower standard are operating in Leeds. We are also very proud of our purple flag for the quality of the night-time economy and clearly taxi and private hire in having a high standard of that is important. We may not have drivers working to that high standard.

I think finally the main concern as well is that our Enforcement Officers, our dedicated Enforcement Team that are working out, often working all night and into the early hours of the morning to make sure our taxi and private hire is operating safely, cannot deal effectively with vehicles licensed to other Authorities.

What we would like to see is we are working with our neighbouring Authorities across West Yorkshire and York to look at can we pool our enforcement powers so we are able to effectively enforce out of town vehicles, but we are also lobbying for the mistakes of the 2015 Deregulation Act to be corrected in terms of safeguarding and in terms of enforcement powers so we have a national database of taxi and private hire drivers and we are also able to enforce vehicles from any other Authority that are working in Leeds.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Groves has indicated there is no supplementary, so Councillor Venner.

COUNCILLOR VENNER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can the Executive Member please provide an update on Linton Bridge? Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Richard Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Linton Bridge was closed at Christmas 2015 when the flooding caused by Storm Ava damaged the bridge's foundations and caused the bridge itself to drop by approximately eight inches.

Following an extensive and complex repair project I was pleased to attend the reopening of the bridge on Saturday 2nd September in time for the new school year, in conjunction with the Lord Mayor and representatives of the communities of Linton

and Collingham. The event was an enthusiastic celebration of the reunited communities and it has been estimated that over 300 people attended.

The work to repair the bridge had three distinct phases – perhaps four with the basic one of coming up with a solution to such a complex problem. Firstly it was to stabilise the damaged foundation, so special concrete had to be used under water and was pumped in to fill the voids in the arches. Because of the potential collapse at this stage contractors had to operate an exclusion zone around the bridge and this work was done at arm’s length.

Secondly, we had to design and build a massive support system to facilitate safe access to the bridge for permanent repairs. The arch needed to be supported, and again this was constructed at arm’s length.

Finally we had to build a bridge within the Grade II listed bridge. Once the bridge was supported concrete piles were installed from road level into the rock beneath the river bed. This was followed by a new concrete slab to support traffic loads. The parapet walls and carriageway were reconstructed and this historic bridge now looks as good as it did before the flood. Effectively a concrete bridge has been built within an existing stone arch bridge.

Work continues to remove construction material require to facilitate the works, effectively the site compound and the private land adjacent, and this is expected to be completed by the end of September and the area completely remediated. Scheme cost was just under £5m, entirely funded by the Department for Transport, and I just have to say that the relationships with the local community were excellent pretty much throughout and we even had a letter of appreciation from Councillor Ryan Stephenson, so high praise indeed, I have to say.

COUNCILLOR STEPHENSON: Point of order, Lord Mayor, actually it was a thank you to the officers not the Executive. *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: I do realise that. Councillor Stephenson, if ever you were to thank me personally I think I would have a heart attack!

I would like to express my thanks to the Highways and Transportation staff involved in this complex project, contractors and also the local communities for their patience and also to Wycar their support for a community bus service during the period that the bridge was out of action. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Supplementary, Councillor Venner? Councillor Ryan Stephenson.

COUNCILLOR STEPHENSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Reflecting on reports of drug-related deaths at Leeds and Reading Festivals, does the Executive Member for Communities regret failing to give the support required for drug testing charities at this year’s festivals?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Coupar.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: First of all I would like to say that our thoughts are with the families of the two young men who died during Reading Festival this year and during Leeds Festival in 2016, and I would like to make it clear that there were no deaths at Leeds Festival this year.

Leeds City Council continues to work closely with partners including emergency services, event promoters and third sector experts to seek to reduce the risk of harm from substance abuse. It is important that we continually remind people of the risks associated with drugs and we do hope festival goers will heed these warnings.

As a Council we and our partners have to find a balance between pressures to support drug testing which could be interpreted as endorsing illegal activity and ensuring prevention and prohibition. This is done in conjunction with partners across the city, taking into account national Government policy and legislation as well as other evidence. We and our partners do our very best to make events safe and we hope individuals will play their part by doing their best to be safe too.

There was an approach by Festival Republic to establish facilities for drugs testing at Leeds Festival this year. The idea was discussed with Festival Republic by a group that advises on safety at public events, comprising of the Council, police and other partners such as third sector agencies. Everyone, including Festival Republic, had a chance to speak and a wide range of views were expressed.

This is not a decision-making body and festival republic said they would take into account what had been said before deciding on whether to submit a formal application. A decision was subsequently taken by Festival Republic to not move ahead with the plan for this year's festival. However, the group did resolve to revisit the issue taking into account possible consultation in plenty of time for next year and future years. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Supplementary, Councillor Stephenson?

COUNCILLOR STEPHENSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Thank you for the reply there. I think the Council spokesman at the time said that the lack of support stemmed from the fact that Leeds City Council received no formal application, which is what you have just repeated there. Some might argue it is very much a "Not our problem gov" response, so could you give an assurance that next year you will put pressure on Festival Republic to submit that application so it can make sure that we have to accept that it is going to happen but we are doing everything we can to limit the damage of drug taking at Leeds Festival?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Coupar.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Just to reassure Members of Council, I will not be putting pressure on any organisation to submit an application to Leeds City Council or anything and that, as I have already said earlier, we were working with our partner agencies and organisations to ensure that everyone who attends Leeds Festival will remain safe. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.6, any unanswered questions will receive a written response. Thank you for those questions.

ITEM 8 – MINUTES OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD
AND THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

THE LORD MAYOR: We are now moving on to the item to receive and comment upon the Minutes of the Executive Board as there are no Health and Wellbeing Board Minutes at this meeting. Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Can I move in terms of the Notice.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Consideration of comments on Executive Board Minutes will be heard until ten minutes past four, at which point the relevant Executive Member will sum up for five or six minutes – I will clarify that later – followed by the Leader of the Council.

Executive Board

(i) Environment and Sustainability

THE LORD MAYOR: We will start with Environment and Sustainability, Councillor Jonathan Bentley.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on Minute 32, page 29, the Development of a District Heating Scheme. This scheme, obtaining energy from waste to produce low cost heat, is a real justification for the decision to have an incinerator or Energy from Waste Plant, or whatever you want to call it. Although Labour Members when in Opposition were very much against the introduction of this plant, the fact that it is now a central fact in their environmental policies is very much welcomed.

As well as providing low cost heat the District Heating Scheme will make a significant contribution to the decarbonisation of energy provision in the city, reducing our contribution to the causes of climate change.

As the report suggests, the District Heating Scheme is a very big, ambitious project, there is still a lot to do such as getting a viable business case, conducting due diligence as the investment and risks are significant.

Another way of getting carbon free energy from waste which would probably need less investment and more straightforward investment appraisal would be to invest in food waste recycling across the city. Possibly in conjunction with a partner

we could collect domestic and commercial food waste for processing in an anaerobic digester producing green energy.

Our group has suggested this on numerous occasions in debates and in budget amendments and we really cannot understand the reluctance of the administration to take this on but, like so many things that we suggest, one day you will do it.

Just to return to the District Heating Scheme, it is a big, ambitious project but to deal with climate change we need big, ambitious projects. We need to take some risks because the consequence of doing nothing will be catastrophic.

This brings me to the Leeds Climate Change Commission which was launched last week by Councillor Blake and other Members of the Commission from business, the public sector, academia, churches and voluntary organisations. I would like to finish by congratulating everybody on this initiative that really has the potential to ensure that Leeds is playing a significant role in reducing our reliance on carbon based energy. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. As one of those that opposed the incinerator on a number of occasions, I have got to say now it is here we have to do something with that energy and I welcome what the Council is doing with this District Heating Scheme network. I think it is a way forward and we must maximise what we can get out of the incinerator. I think it was the wrong technology but if it is here let us do something with it. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Garthwaite.

COUNCILLOR GARTHWAITE: Hello my Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors. I first have to say that I had a tooth out this morning so if I look or sound a bit weird, that is the reason! *(laughter)*

Along with Councillors Bentley and Blackburn I welcome this report in to the development of a District Heating Network. It is an ambitious scheme. It demonstrates the Council's firm commitment to developing a green infrastructure in Leeds.

The Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility (the RERF), offers the opportunity for the Council to supply low cost, low carbon heat in the form of hot water to households and business in Leeds through a network of super insulated underground pipework. There is the potential for the RERF to generate enough electricity to power over 22,000 homes. The construction of the network can provide the city with a flagship green infrastructure asset that will not only maximise the efficiency and environmental benefits of the RERF, but also support future sustainable developments in the city.

The network will bring several benefits to the city, such as improving air quality, tackling fuel poverty, reducing CO₂ emissions and supporting the expansion of superfast broadband across the city.

A contract has already been awarded to Vital Energi. With the Housing team they will engage residents and put supply chain partners in place. As well as that officers are having positive discussions with significant public and private sector organisations and businesses in the city centre and elsewhere to encourage take-up. As the report notes, £4m has been secured from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and with a grant from the European Regional Development Fund, this will allow for houses and homes to be converted so residents can live both more economically and more comfortably.

The plans are exciting and ambitious. They will help to improve the health and lives of some of our most vulnerable residents. Soon all that lovely energy from the RERF will be put to excellent use instead of just going up in smoke. Thank you.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Illingworth.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I rise to speak on Minute 32 on page 29 of the Council Summons, development of the District Heating Network.

This is a very ambitious project and the Council is right to be cautious. Before I was elected in Kirkstall ward I stood as a Labour Party candidate in Cookridge and Weetwood where I campaigned for the closure of the notorious and inefficient Holt Park District Heating Scheme. Poor insulation and faulty meters meant that some unfortunate tenants received enormous, completely unbelievable bills. Let us all agree, Lord Mayor, that Holt Park was not the best way to do these things.

The Council is right to be ambitious. Global warming is more than a minor inconvenience – it is an existential threat to the human race, it could see the world's best agricultural land flooded or rendered useless. The resulting starvation, mass migration, warfare and disease do not bear contemplation. It could easily result in a total breakdown of society and a return to medieval conditions, if not the Stone Age. We are bound to act.

Lord Mayor, we should recycle all we can but there is a waste stream that is beyond recycling where the energy costs of recycling outweigh the energy saved. It makes sense to burn such waste to generate electricity and recover the heat for our buildings.

The waste, furnace and boiler are efficient and cost-effective, generating less pollution than traditional heating methods. The problem, Lord Mayor, is the heat distribution network, where the costs of unpicking a century's growth of entangled underground pipe work can easily run out of control.

This is something we must tackle and overcome. Whatever energy policies we follow there will always be a need for networks who must share gas, heat and electricity between consumers in order to optimise supply and demand. It makes sense to develop this technology and to ensure that Leeds has the skilled and experienced workforce able to tackle this type of work.

I hope that this will be the first of many District Heating Networks that the Council sponsors. In Kirkstall we are looking closely at a scheme for combined heat and power with water-source heat pumps that exploits low carbon heat from the River Aire. This could cut our CO₂ emissions by 50% and end the problem of fuel poverty in high rise flats. It must pass the same test for financial viability and we will be properly cautious and realistic.

We will also be ambitious because we must confront the serious problems that we all face. Doing nothing, Lord Mayor, is not an option which is why I welcome the current scheme. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Nagle.

COUNCILLOR NAGLE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. My Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, I am speaking on Minute 32 page 29. I want to take this opportunity to discuss the significant real life benefits the District Heating Network can bring for residents and communities in Leeds, focusing on the issues of fuel poverty.

Tackling fuel poverty by reducing fuel bills for vulnerable residents is an essential part of our Best Council Plan 2015. As part of the first objective of supporting communities and tackling poverty, our plan sets out reducing the number of households in fuel poverty as a key indicator. We expect up to 1,983 Council flats to connect to the District Heating Network. Of these, 1,440 currently have their heating supplied through outdated electrical heating systems. The aims of the District Heating Network are to improve comfort levels for these flats by having more efficient and controllable heating and to reduce heating bills for tenants.

In Leeds 42% of the 1,440 households with electric heating systems are in fuel poverty with an average fuel poverty gap of £325 per annum. Installation of the District Heating Network should reduce fuel poverty levels to just six per cent of households and, most importantly, reduce the fuel poverty gap to just £63.

I also want to talk about some of the other measures which exist in Leeds to tackle fuel poverty. The Warmth for Wellbeing Scheme which is managed by Groundwork Leeds and Care and Repair and encompasses the Green Doctor scheme, assisted 940 vulnerable and low income households with face-to-face energy and fuel bill advice in the year 2015/16. The Green Doctor Scheme is to help people to take control and to reduce their environmental impact at the same time. The service provides home visits and one-on-one advice. For those who are eligible the service is free of charge. There is also our work with Better Homes Yorkshire which has allowed residents to take advantage of heavily discounted improvement work to their homes, such as insulation and boiler replacements. Between 2015 and 2017 we used grant funding to install gas central heating in 105 private sector properties which were not formerly connected to the gas network. Many of these households had relied on expensive difficult to control heating systems that were installed at a time when electricity was expected to be far cheaper than it turned out.

The work carried out through Better Homes Yorkshire has enabled the Authority to focus work in areas where there is a high proportion of low income households, mainly in private rented accommodation, who would not be in a position to improve the properties themselves.

Leeds has an Affordable Warmth Strategy for 2017 to 2030 which aims to increase the overall energy efficiency of the housing stock and also to ensure that residents' health and wellbeing is not put at risk due to being unable to heat their own homes.

THE LORD MAYOR: That is lovely, thank you very much, Councillor Nagle. Thank you. (*Applause*) I would now like to invite Councillor Yeadon to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR YEADON: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. Well, thank you for everybody's contributions. It is very nice to be able to sum up on a Minute where nearly everybody agrees and it is very unusual, so I will take advantage.

Councillor Bentley, without wanting to (and excuse the pun) reignite the pros and cons of the incinerator, as Councillor Bentley rightly says it is here and it is right that we make use of it as best we can. It is an ambitious project. I think everybody has said that throughout their speeches, and it is ambitious. We recognise that and I do not think we should be apologetic for it. As everybody has said, the issue that we have with climate change in this city, in this world, is present and we only have to switch on the television at the moment to see it in action. Decarbonising heat is key to us meeting our ambition to reduce our carbon emissions as a city. It is right and I thank you for your support and I thank Councillor Blackburn as well for the support.

In regards to food waste, I think you might remember that as an administration several years ago we did put in a bid to Government which was rejected around food waste, and I think it is something that if we lived in another world where Council budgets had not been slashed in the way they have, this would be something we would want to take forward like many other projects, but we do not live in that world and we have to deal with what we can. At the moment what we have is a great deal of heat that is being, as Councillor Garthwaite said, going up in smoke and we can harness that for the greatness of the city, so we are very pleased that we are able to move forward with that.

Councillor Garthwaite, can I first of all commend you for your commitment for the cause for tackling through your lack of tooth and your contribution. As you have said, we do have a real commitment to tackling climate change and to do what we can to reduce our emissions and decarbonising heat is key to that. It is important that we look at it in a very holistic way. The project around hydrogen adds to part of that commitment and looking at other District Heating Networks which Councillor Illingworth has described is something that we need to move forward with.

It is important that we learn from the past and I think the Holt Park District Heating Network was something that existed before I was alive so I will not make any apologies for it, but we have to learn from those lessons and look to the future.

As a city we are not alone, in fact some can say that in the UK we have overlooked the use of district heating to our detriment and I think over 63% of Danish households are actually heated through District Heating Network. We are right to be ambitious and we need to look at some of our colleagues abroad and how they have done it. I think the heat that is wasted in London alone could meet 70% of that city's heating needs. We need to be imaginative and we need to look forward and it is not just about climate change, it is, as Councillor Nagle outlined, about fuel poverty. We have made great strides in the city to deal with fuel poverty but this is an imaginative way of using something which is currently going to waste to heat some of the poorest households in our city.

It ticks many boxes and I think as we saw from the launch that Councillor Bentley mentioned, the launch of the Climate Commission last week, we do have a great coalition of people across the city, across all sectors, who are wanting to work together to deal with the issue of climate change and decarbonising heat is a significant part of doing that.

Again, I thank the support of everyone across the Chamber. One of the concerns that was brought to Exec Board was the ambition and was it overly ambitious and we are working very clearly on the business plan. We had independent due diligence done and we are expecting a report on that on Friday which is going to be shared not only with the administration but with Leaders of Opposition parties, because it is a very long term investment and we need to make sure that we get it right. I am committed to doing what we can to deal with the issue of carbon in the city as well as bringing down the fuel bills of some of our poorest households. Thank you for your support. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

(ii) Communities

THE LORD MAYOR: We are now moving to Communities. Councillor Jonathan Bentley.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on Minute 44 page 37, the Grenfell Tower update. It is appropriate that we are talking about this today because tomorrow sees the start of the Public Inquiry into the tragedy and this morning you may have heard that the BBC has estimated following a freedom of information request that only two per cent of Council and Housing Association owned tower blocks are fitted with sprinklers. London's fire chief has called for retro fitting of all tower blocks with sprinkler systems.

The Grenfell Tower fire will become one of those landmark events like Aberfan, for those who can remember, the Herald of Free Enterprise, like Hillsborough, that highlighted such a failing in authority's attitude to public safety that it has led to fundamental changes in policies and practices.

In Leeds I think Members and officers have dealt extremely well with the impact of Grenfell Tower and demonstrated that there are the mechanisms for good

communication with tenants and procedures to ensure that tenants are listened to, the very things that it seems in Kensington and Chelsea were not there.

However good we think we are, we are not going to be immune from the consequences of this tragedy and I am pleased that the Scrutiny Board that I sit on will be looking at housing stock safety, resident engagement and investment decisions.

We have heard a number of updates from officers that techniques like fire stopping, containing a fire in a flat and stay-put policies mean that sprinklers are not a high priority and we do have examples of fires in tower blocks in Leeds where these practices have clearly worked well. That argument may work in the quiet of a committee room or in the dry paragraphs of a Board paper, but in the face of multiple deaths and hundreds made homeless, it is hard to resist the call to do everything possible to prevent it happening again, and I do expect at some point, Lord Mayor, that we will be required to retrofit sprinkler systems. If we are to invest in such a programme we must do all we can to ensure that our current housing investment is not compromised and we should be seeking Government support either with additional money or a change in the borrowing rules. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. My colleague Councillor Bentley has covered most of the issues around the issue of sprinklers which came up today. I did note that the statement the Council had made as it was reported through Radio Leeds, it did sound like the Council was waiting for the Government to make a decision as to whether or not sprinklers were a good idea in their buildings. I hope that Councillor Coupar will reassure us on that one because if one of the lessons learned from Grenfell, as Councillor Bentley said, is that you should do what you think is right by your tenants not just deliver that what you think you have to, and I hope to get that reassurance from Councillor Coupar.

The other item I was going to be discussing today, Lord Mayor, is extra care housing. You will recall at the Budget meeting which was in February there was a £30m fund which was announced which was supposedly to enable and progress the delivery of extra care housing within the city, as the Council had decided that extra care housing was its alternative favoured model for the future housing needs of our elderly population rather than through residential care homes.

Lord Mayor, I am yet to find anybody who is actually in charge of this project. I am hoping because it has come under the Communities Portfolio here that Councillor Coupar will once again be able to reassure me and say that she is in charge of that project because so far when I have been trying to get a progress report on how far we have got with spending with this £30m on an area which is of intense interest for us because of that demographic pressure and the needs that we have in our elderly population, that nobody seems to be progressing it. I do not hear of any private sector or independent sector operator who has been engaged and has indeed agreed with the model of provision that the Council has been putting forward. Indeed, there are already two developments which are in place in Weetwood where the public housing quota is for extra care housing and that developer has yet to find an extra care housing

provider willing to provide it. I really do think we could do with an update on how far we have got with this £30m supposed priority. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I speak to Minute 44, page 37. First of all I would like to say on behalf of my constituents who are tenants of tower blocks, from their reaction to the events at Grenfell Towers and what the Council officers did at the time to reassure them, they were very happy that that reassurance was there and I think we have done a really, really good job in delivering on that, but as colleagues said there, I do not think we need to be complacent. Our flats may well be OK but we have got to make them as safe as practically possible and I hope we will continue to review things over and over again. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Blackburn. Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I have got a lot here: Minute 44, 45, 46, and 47 but I will not cover them all, I can assure you. Run out of time.

In terms of the extra care housing, can I welcome the initiative about trying to get Holt Park going, but when you look at what has been happening there and in other parts of the city, maybe the Council needs to look at some innovative ways of moving the land on in terms of the land values that are quite extensive, certainly in the Holt Park area, to find a way of maybe releasing the land value or collecting the land value after the properties have been built, because maybe that could be the hold up. In other words, if we can get the land argument out of the way we might be able to get them coming forward, because we need the extra care housing.

In terms of migration, can I just thank my colleague, Councillor Robinson, for suggesting that we look at this in Scrutiny last year because as a result of that in my personal view – and you may say it was my Scrutiny Board that did it – I think it showed Scrutiny in an excellent light and showed what we can do when we take a serious subject and do not use it as a political football to kick around all over the place. Can I also thank the other Scrutiny Members and the same time as well because everybody contributed to it and it was a good quality debate and we have come up with some good ways forward on it.

One thing I will say, and this is not the Council's fault, this is aimed at Her Majesty's Government. We did ask that some lobbying took place with the Immigration Minister to come up with a longer term national strategy and that is not on the horizon at the moment, and I do think we need to look at what more we can do as a Council to try and put pressure on the Government to do so. That is probably the one recommendation that really is outstanding in terms of what we have said.

Finally on Grenfell, to reiterate the majority of the comments made by Councillor Bentley and Councillor Golton who have already said what I was going to do, but I would like to pay tribute to the proactive way that the Council did, and also

Councillor Coupar, keeping us all fully informed and advised at a very, very stressful time for a number of people. The Council has shown leadership but we do need – and again this is probably pointing more at the Government – to look at building control and the role that that is playing in the private sector ones that we have picked up that are not quite complying with what we would like to do at the moment. I was also going to mention about the Scrutiny Inquiry as well but maybe we should look into what is going to happen with the sprinkler systems because you have been proactive in a number of areas in putting sprinklers in. Is it far enough? How long is a piece of string? Thank you, Lord Mayor. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Nash.

COUNCILLOR NASH: My Lord Mayor, the same minute, 44 on page 37.

Fires in high rise flats are not new. Over the years we have had several in Council high rise flats and, in fact, only three to four weeks after Grenfell there was a fire in a flat in my ward at Marlborough Towers. For those who do not know, that is a Council tower block opposite Park Lane College. It was on the fifteenth floor and it occurred in the early evening time when the tenant was out. The Fire and Rescue Service pumped water up to the fifteenth floor - there are hydrants on each floor – and the fire was extinguished. No other flat was affected.

I visited the next morning and on the fifteenth floor landing you could not tell that there had been a fire in a flat on that floor. The flat door where the fire had occurred was absolutely in pristine condition. However, the flat itself was an absolute write off and it will cost quite a bit of money to bring it back into habitable use. Certainly, sprinkler systems would have perhaps contained the fire into the room where it occurred rather than the whole flat. I am confident that Council tower blocks were originally designed in such a manner that there is no risk to any tenant's life.

In the city centre, of course, we have got innumerable high rise flats which are privately owned. There are five blocks, one is a hotel block and four are high rise residential blocks. They do have the high risk cladding. I do appreciate the efforts of the officers of this Authority by removing any flammable material such as garden furniture and motor vehicles parked round the base of these flats.

The Council, together with the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, has written to the owners of these premises and advised them that action does need to be taken because there is a risk there.

I would just finally like to echo what the report to the Executive Board said that we should all thank the officers for the extensive work that they have done in reassuring tenants everywhere that they are safe. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Renshaw.

COUNCILLOR RENSHAW: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak also on Minute 44, page 37. I would like to comment on concerns which have arisen since the Grenfell Tower incident. I sit on the Board of the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service and I want to talk about some of the joint work that is being carried

out between the Local Authority and the Fire Service to investigate and reassure after the Grenfell Tower incident.

The Council works very closely with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service to deal with fire safety measures to develop improvements on fire safety and to ensure that good advice is offered. Leeds City Council signed a contract with the fire service in 2011 and have been working collaboratively in partnership since then. This allows both parties to agree on a hierarchy of risk mitigation measures for the whole Council housing stock.

Following the Grenfell Tower a Strategic Test Group has been established which includes all the relevant Council Leads and representatives of the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The Authority and the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service met within days of the fire at Grenfell Tower and has agreed that there is no intention to change the current fire safety policy regarding staying put.

The West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service has issued fire safety advice to people living in high rise buildings since the fire. It suggests the need for tenants to know their escape plan and reiterated the stay put policy for if a fire breaks out. They have also reminded private landlords of high rise buildings of the steps they should be taking to check the cladding on high rise buildings.

The Council and West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service have written to all owners, landlords and managers of high rise buildings in the city to urge them to take the necessary measures to test cladding and update fire risk assessments, and to communicate with their tenants and occupiers.

Fire crews deserve all our thanks. The brave actions of the fire fighters at Grenfell and the actions of fire fighters across the country in working to save lives is something that we all highly commend. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Walshaw.

COUNCILLOR WALSHAW: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I rise to speak on the same Minute and I welcome the report and add to the calls from across the Chamber commending Councillor Coupar and her team of elected Members and officers.

I just want to make a few brief observations about culture, about political culture and how that impacts on public policy. Really the tragedy at Grenfell has forced us as a nation once again to confront what looks really like decades of neglect of social housing and neglect of the tenants by what we can only describe as a flagship Tory Authority. I think it really highlights the difference between Leeds and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

This is a phenomenally wealthy Local Authority with over £250m of unrestricted reserves available to it, yet I think we would all in this Chamber accept, there is a litany of inadequacy from this Authority. Housing investment done on the cheap – let us not forget that Grenfell Tower was clad badly and turned into a building candlestick to improve the views of wealthy local residents. It was not done with a duty of care to the residents in that tower because if it was it would have been done

properly and the kitchens would have been done, the bathrooms would have been done but it was done, as you can see, on the cheap, outsourcing and subcontracting to the Nth degree and overall everything shot through with a political culture that was just not adequate to the situation.

If politics is the language of priorities I think we can all agree in this Chamber that Kensington and Chelsea's were completely the wrong way round. I would, colleagues, compare and contrast that response to what we achieved in Leeds both in our response, as I said, to the Grenfell disaster but also in the way that officers and Members of this Council rose to the challenge of the floods at the end of 2015 and 2016. We have shown as a Council, despite all this austerity, that we have got strength and resilience in depth – I think that is for all to see – and I think we should talk about that a lot. I think we should make it clear that this northern city's culture is very different from that Borough. That might be irrespective of political control but I think this is a city that can take an enormous pride in how it has conducted itself and its resilience and its robustness.

Very briefly then, how does this culture translate into national policy? We can all spend hours talking about areas of policy we disagree or agree on but let us look at how a culture of neglect has affected building control and building regulations, as Councillor Anderson has mentioned.

The Building Regs have not been updated since 2008. Technological change is changing how buildings are constructed almost on a month by month basis – use of materials, use of composites, changing techniques, different approaches. All the time the State sits and does not do anything so what we have is a culture where regulation is light touch or it is absent or it is written so blandly and so ineffectively that there are so many ways to circumvent it, and that is exactly what has happened at Grenfell and there was no overall political leadership, as I have mentioned at national level and I think that is, let's be honest, colleagues, that's not great, is it? It is costing lives.

I would just say to Government, technological change – and this cuts across so many spheres of public life – requires an active State so I think the Government has got to learn to relearn that regulation is important for all our futures. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ragan.

COUNCILLOR RAGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would also like to speak on Minute 44, page 37. Following the tragic incident at Grenfell Tower in Kensington on 14th June, our thoughts turn to those in our own high rise blocks in Leeds. The ward that I represent, Burmantofts and Richmond Hill, has 30 high rise flats, the highest in any ward of the city. Myself and my ward colleagues were really keen to reassure high rise tenants and ourselves about fire safety in our high rise blocks.

As the Executive Board report sets out, urgent fire safety tests were conducted on all of the city's tower blocks in the immediate aftermath of June's fire. Of the 23 Council owned blocks in Leeds, it was found that none of them had the aluminium composite material type of cladding systems that were used in Grenfell. In order to

deal with the concerns of tenants, a series of drop-in sessions were held where fire safety experts and senior officers from Housing Leeds visited our high rise blocks and fielded residents' questions of concern.

Residents of high rise blocks were kept up to date on the tests that were carried out through letters. I think that the response of the Council has been exemplary in providing reassurance to both tenants and ward Members where people had concerns. We know that the tragic events at Grenfell have also brought into focus wider concerns about poverty and inequality in the UK and in Leeds. This Authority is determined to tackle the worst effects of poverty. However, we would also call on Central Government to do more to tackle these issues. It is noticeable that Central Government has been quick to demand that Local Government do more to add fire safety measures in our high risk blocks. However, offers of funding from this Government for such works have not been so forthcoming. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Buckley.

COUNCILLOR BUCKLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It is the same Minute, Minute 44 page 37.

The events at Grenfell Tower were appalling, we all agree on that, and must not be allowed to happen again. We all agree that the human suffering was absolutely shocking and the fact that we have not had the same cladding system here in Leeds is something to be truly thankful for.

In the construction of buildings, including old buildings, there is always a chain of responsibility. There is a client, there is an architect, there is a main contractor, there are subcontractors and there are manufacturers and also building control and regulations. Whoever was negligent in the whole Grenfell Tower situation – or worse – will come to light when the various inquiries conclude but I want to look forward to the future, Lord Mayor, thinking about tower blocks and what we can do about them.

We can guarantee that there are no future tragedies by replacing them. A medium to long-term policy, let us replace the tower blocks and let us in their place put houses and bungalows and let us create what I would call garden villages. In Moor Allerton there are three blocks of this sort of type and there are 60 flats per block and 180 flats in total. The surrounding grounds are huge and under-used so let us create our garden villages. High density, yes. Terraces, cottages which people like, individual gardens, privacy and private space, allotments, cycle paths, bus shelters, solar technology. Let us go for it; let us harness the private sector and challenge them to build what people like and want.

When we have done all this, let us allow the rents to be converted into equity and create a cherished community with ownership and that way we can actually create a legacy of our own here in Leeds, a fitting legacy following the horror of Grenfell. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Robinson.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I rise to speak to Minute 45 page 38, which was a report around migration. Firstly, I join with Councillor Anderson in thanking the Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Committee for firstly accepting my request for a Scrutiny inquiry into this and secondly for having such – sorry, Councillor Grahame?

COUNCILLOR P GRAHAME: All three Scrutiny Boards are doing this.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: Apologies, I apologise. It went through three Scrutiny Boards and I think the discussion among all of them was very, very positive and was very constructive and I thank all Members for that discussion and I thank the officers for supplying information to that discussion as well.

What the reports highlighted was that we have a great many challenges and a great many opportunities around migration into this city, and for so many people migration is a large catch-all term that the words are used and abused in far too many ways. We need to have a far better understanding about what migration means and the different forms of migration that come not just into this city but into this country.

I think when we looked at the recommendations that came out of all the Scrutiny Committees you were talking about the access to services, building resilience and capacity in communities but importantly building partnerships and building useful partnerships that communicated and had a great dialogue with each other.

It was fascinating to see that there are 190 languages spoken in the city of Leeds, that people are coming from all over the world and working in all sorts of different industries coming to this city and succeeding coming into this city and working in these different industries as well. I found the report, particularly highlighting the section around migration research, looking at what we need to do around housing, welfare, languages, healthcare and access to services particularly enlightening and particularly useful for Members for their consideration and discussions.

Additionally, the Leeds Migration Strategy was a very, very positive element to these discussions and increasing our knowledge as Members and our support is going to be incredibly useful.

I would finally touch on one item that was in there which is Brexit. Far too often we are seeing rumours, myth and some disgusting lies that are circulating around Brexit and what this might mean. People saying that if you are from another country, if you are from an EU state you are going to be rounded up and forced to leave. This is completely untrue and what we need to do is accept the negotiations and understand and help support people who have migrated to this city and help make sure that they find this a welcoming place to stay. At the same time I would also say there are disgusting comments out there from those who are saying if people leave who is going to pick the fruit, who is going to clean the toilets, who is going to serve the lattes? By that I mean the coffees, not Graham and Pat! *(laughter)* Those comments are absolutely scurrilous and what they do is they speak to the lowest possible common denominator which suggests that migrants to this city only do low

paid work. They make a fantastic contribution, Lord Mayor, and we should absolutely welcome it. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lowe.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: My Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, I would like to speak on Minute 45 page 38. This Authority has a vision for Leeds to be a compassionate city with a strong economy to which migrant communities are valuable contributors. Leeds also has a long-held commitment to support asylum seekers and refugees and is dedicated to being a city of sanctuary. There are strong structures in place for co-ordinating migration in Leeds, with the Leeds Strategic Migration Board being supported by the Council's Communities Team and the Leeds Migration Partnership, led by the Third Sector, providing a forum for those working directly with migrant communities such as Meeting Point in Armley, or PAFRAS which I was lucky enough to chair for many years until recently.

We know that the situation regarding Brexit is uncertain. Last week we saw a leaked document from the Home Office detailing the Government's immigration plans post-Brexit. These plans would see an end to the right to settle in Britain for most European migrants and would place tough new restrictions on their rights to bring family members, which could potentially lead to thousands of families being split up. The role of the European Court of Justice in family migration will also be ended. These are plans that I find very concerning.

The Executive Board Report notes that the greater the restrictions on immigration the greater the potential risk that skill shortages may emerge in Leeds in important sectors such as digital, construction and manufacturing as well as public services such as the NHS and the Council.

Leeds is a great city built on the labours of people from across the globe, like those of my own father. Let us hope this city continues to benefit from all that the world has to give and let us work together to make this a reality. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ann Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak on Minute 46, page 39, on the Council House Growth Programme delivery of extra care housing.

I welcome the fact that resources have been identified as part of the Council House Growth Programme to enable the Council to invest £30m in the development of extra care housing across the city and that the combination of funding and sites should support the delivery of up to 200 Council-owned extra care apartments. However, there is currently a shortfall of 700 of these units in the city and it is forecast that by 2028 the shortfall will rise to an under supply of 1,100 units.

I note that the Leeds vision for extra care housing is to work with partner organisations to construct more than 1,000 units of extra care housing to 2028 to meet the growing demand for this type of accommodation. However, in Wortley there was

land in Thornhill Road that had previously been a Council old people's home that was suitable for this type of housing but no private developer showed interest, preferring to offer to buy the land to build private family housing.

Bearing in mind that this project will enable direct investment by the Council in areas where the market cannot deliver, I hope that the site of the former Wortley High School, which is currently available and designated as suitable for extra care housing, will be considered for this scheme, so I ask for it to be so. Thank you.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, Councillors. I would also like to speak on Minute 46, page 39. Most of what I was going to say Councillor Blackburn has said. I have spoken in Council before about the Council's ambition for Housing Growth Programme. Today with this Executive Board paper I want to focus on our plans around extra care housing.

The Leeds vision for extra care housing is to work with partner organisations to construct more than a thousand units of extra care housing by 2028 to meet the growing demands for this population type and to meet population forecasts. There is currently a shortfall, as has been said, of 700 units of extra care in the city and by 2028 this is projected to rise to another shortfall of 1,100 units. In order to address this growing need resources have been allocated through the Council Growth Programme for the Authority to invest the £30m in the development of extra care housing in Leeds. This will enable the delivery of 200 Council-owned extra care units spread across a number of schemes. In turn, the aim is that the delivery will kick-start the market to deliver the additional extra care units required across Leeds.

Through this programme we have already seen the development of flagship extra care scheme at Wharfedale View in Yeadon which contained 45 extra care apartments. Extra care provision has been shown to result in savings for individuals and the Council as it costs significantly less to deliver than residential care, even when recipients have medium to high care and support needs.

Other potential benefits of extra care include enabling older people to stay together, helping people to maintain independence and reduce the need for entry to residential care. Over the years it has been shown that if this is left to the market, then the required volume of provision will not be created, which is why it is really encouraging that the Council is progressing with this work and demonstrates further our key values of strong economy, compassionate city. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Taylor.

COUNCILLOR TAYLOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on Minute 46, page 39. Members in this Chamber will be familiar with the challenge in health and social care and as we begin to see an increase in older people living longer with health conditions, it is important that we as a Council respond to this by imposing individual choice as to how people access care and support.

The aspirations and expectations of older people are changing, which is why the Council's vision for extra housing is important. Our vision for extra care is to work with the partner organisation to construct more than 1,000 units of extra care housing by 2028 to meet the growing demand for this type of care accommodation. The Council has committed £30m worth of investment in extra care housing and the Executive Member recently heard about the initial shortages of suitable Council-owned sites for delivery of this type of care across the city. The site identifies that Rothwell, Armley, Seacroft, Holt Park and Middleton form part of the Council's commitment and will hopefully kick start the market to deliver the additional extra care units required across the city.

We know that people want this type of community based housing with support. This also allows people to remain living independently. The Council thought the Better Lives Programme has also responded to this and must be seen as part of this approach which seeks to modernise our care and support to deliver to meet the older and disabled people's aspirations.

A more recent example of what extra care scheme can offer for people in the city is seen with Wharfedale View in Yeadon. This extra care scheme continues 45 extra care apartments and is opened by Housing Leeds with the care service commissioned by Adults and Health this means to provide homes over to mixed tenants with 35 apartments for Council rented and ten apartments for shared owners.

The success of Wharfedale View is important and it is also right that we build this to meet the demands of the city. Extra care housing is more than just a place to live; it is also the security, the shared facilities and the activities to alleviate isolation. A lot of people use personal budgets to make their own arrangement for planned care or for accommodation that can be adapted to support the delivery of personal health and social care service.

We also know that recent studies suggest that extra care housing can have a positive impact on people's lives, to their health, happiness, confidence, social life, relations with their families and general wellbeing.

THE LORD MAYOR: That is lovely, Councillor Taylor. Thank you.
(*Applause*) Councillor Akhtar.

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I would like to speak on Minute 47, page 40. I am speaking on Exec Board papers which covers community led local development. The plan outlined in the reports are very encouraging. Directing funding to areas of the city where they need them, this funding is for areas which fall into the top ten per cent of the most disadvantaged, low super output areas in England. This demonstrates our commitment to supporting resilient communities and our aim to raise hope locally, supporting strong and cohesive communities. The report sets out the work for local action groups which have been formed in the Inner East, Inner South, Inner West of the city. These action groups have been successful in agreeing local development strategies.

I want to talk about some of the other works that the Authority is doing to empower local communities. We heard earlier about the Council Community Committee's Annual Report. Community Committee provides an excellent forum for local people to have their say about what happens in their own communities. The development for our Community Hubs Programme has been hugely important, putting accessible services where they are most needed, right at the heart of the communities.

Leeds City Council will continue to work to ensure that the Community Hubs become part within local communities, address local need and are seen to be local communities' assets to use and engage with. There is also a range of partnership work under way which we are rightly proud of.

The Council continues to support the Leeds Food Aid Network which helps to deliver a joint approach to emergency food provision at the local level. The excess for the Food Aid Network is a partnership the Council has with Fare Share Leeds. Fare Share Yorkshire launched Fare Share in Leeds in August 2014 in partnership with Leeds City Council, Leeds Food Aid Network and St George's Crypt. They support food aid and providers in the city which are engaged in feeding vulnerable people along with providing support to our local people and help to resolve the crisis.

The importance of the strong communities with a powerful voice has been recognised in the creation of our newest breakthrough programmes, stronger communities benefiting from the strong city. Similarly, we want to be the best city in the United Kingdom. We need to have the strongest communities in the United Kingdom. Communities are what makes the city. We all know that our communities in Leeds are strong and if given the right tools they can help drive Leeds forward. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I would now like to invite Councillor Coupar to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor. I will start by thanking all contributors, really, to the last debate on the Minutes for Communities for the previous Executive Board, all mostly positive, again apart from you, Councillor Golton. You are getting a little grumpy, aren't you, I have got to say! I really would like to thank and pay tribute to people across the Authority and to West Yorkshire Fire Service and all of their employees in their role in providing a quick response in terms of fire safety checks and swift communication to reassure all our high rise tenants, and I hope that all Council will join me in thanking all of those that spared no time at all in making sure that was done very swiftly. *(Applause)*

Of course, Grenfell still remains a source of great shock and horror to us all and, as Councillor Bentley mentioned, the inquiry is due to start tomorrow, the Public Inquiry into Grenfell, so we kind of await some of the recommendations from that inquiry and we do have great expectations from that inquiry to forward us some help in regulation, some help in support and some help in finance around what may be needed for us to do as a Local Authority going forward, I have to say.

I too saw the report on the BBC today around the sprinklers issue and I hope that Scrutiny are going to pick that up as we go forward. I would like to thank Scrutiny, Barry as the Chair and all the Members of Scrutiny Board actually, because they have been heavily involved in a lot of the reports, my reports, that go to Executive Board, not just the Grenfell Tower but on a number of other reports and it is great to have their views and opinions before we actually make decisions. It is the way Scrutiny should work well and I thank the Chair and all the Members for the work that they do on that.

On Grenfell alone I have to say that there are three Scrutiny Boards carrying out the work on Grenfell Tower, the aftermath of that, and for us any consequences and further action to go forward, so we await with bated breath all of those inquiries, I have to say.

Councillor Golton, I do have to say that we do stand tall as an Authority in Leeds, which Councillor Walshaw did say. We do do the right things by our tenants as in we went out straightaway to reassure our tenants. I myself and a number of other politicians, including those on Opposition benches, have been out to speak to tenants in high rise to reassure them, to make sure that they realise that the fire safety regulations and checks that are done in their building means that they are as safe as they possibly can be under current regulation.

There is an issue around sprinklers on a national basis which your colleague Councillor Bentley highlighted, and we also have 4,000 blocks in the country that need retrofitting with sprinklers. That is quite a bit of a job and we do need some direction from Government as to how we might be able to achieve that.

Having said that, we are not waiting for Government to retrofit sprinklers here in Leeds. We are actually doing that ourselves already; before even the event of Grenfell took place we were already retrofitting some of our blocks and we will continue to do so as we go along until we get further regulation.

I am glad that building regulation was brought up as well because that is an issue that has had a great deal of impact across the country because without Local Authorities having control of building regulation with high rise buildings, it has been very difficult to find out the status of each building in the city, I have got to say.

Can I thank a number of contributors for telling us how it is from a local experience, so Councillor Nash and Councillor Taylor and Councillor Ragan, what it is actually like in your wards with as many high rise buildings as you have and how you have had to deal with that issue. Thank you for all of those experiences.

I have got to say, Councillor Buckley, I do not know whether you are in step with your own group on planning and building and housing policy, because you certainly came left field from wanting to knock down tower blocks and build garden villages and bungalows, I have to say!

I was really pleased to hear Councillor Lowe mention the migration report, I have to say, as well as Councillor Robinson over there. We are a welcoming city in Leeds and we do want to be a city of sanctuary and welcome migrant communities

and we know what a crucial role they play, so thank you for outlining all of those things.

As for extra care, I would like to say actually that it is a joint piece of work between three Exec Board Members. Actually we have said that at Executive Board that perhaps you did not pin your lugs back to listen, but actually it is between Councillor Richard Lewis for Regeneration, myself for Housing and also Councillor Rebecca Charlwood for Health. Also all the Directorates that are involved in that as well.

THE LORD MAYOR: That is wonderful, Councillor Coupar.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: We are looking to bring a cross party Group to keep you more informed on that one. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

(iii) Children and Families

THE LORD MAYOR: We are now moving to Children and Families. Councillor Downes.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Speaking on Minute 29, page 26.

I would like to welcome and congratulate the achievements of Leeds in fostering and adoption. It is a very important role of the Council to ensure all young people have the opportunity to be brought up in a loving and caring family environment and benefit from the support that this can offer, but I also know the massive overspend that has been needed to achieve this and this is at a time of great pressures on local finances. £6.2m for external residential placements and £1.3m for independent fostering agencies.

As well as this, other departments have had to mid-year reduce their spending which, whilst commendable, was not highlighted in the budget. We really need to be more accurate with our budgeting to give all officers and departments a fair chance to manage their budgets. If we need more money for fostering and adoption I am very happy to support this but it needs to be identified before, not after, it is spent.

The new Director of Resources has talked about taking a more proactive and imaginative approach to how certain care packages are delivered. Whilst this is to be welcomed is it not also an implied criticism of the administration's approach up until this point, that they have not considered such measures before now? I hope this will mean that next year's budget is fairer and more accurate and one that we can work with. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Cohen.,

COUNCILLOR COHEN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. May I welcome Councillor Downes's last comments which saved me some of the points I was going

to make and, indeed, were widely reminiscent of my last paper at the last Council meeting. It is good to know that somebody at least was paying good attention because clearly colleagues opposite were not.

I am speaking on Minutes 29, 30 and 31 although I think I have just covered 29, so turning to Minute 30, which is Transport Assistance for post-16 students with special education needs and disabilities. I know that colleagues right across the Chamber will always keep in mind that this is going to be always one of our most vulnerable groups of learners and I was really pleased that the consultation that we ran on this issue was well listened to by officers and a number of alterations were indeed made to the proposals. I still think it is important to bear in mind that it was a very limited number of people who responded to the consultation and, indeed, of that limited number that responded to the consultation, nearly a third of those respondents did not have access to a car.

That is really significant because what is quite clear, I think many would agree with this particularly those who are going to be impacted by this policy that is now implemented, is that if you do not have access to a car it is going to be incredibly difficult, given the £1 or £1.50 a mile allowance, it is going to be incredibly difficult to actually get your child to school, to rely on a taxi for £1, £1.50. Buses, as we have heard earlier on with the Deputation we had, can be incredibly unreliable and indeed quite inaccessible for some young people, even post-16, with SEND.

Will these proposed costs really work without putting the families concerned in increased financial difficulty? Our worry with this policy is that we did not scope out – and officers accepted this in the Scrutiny Working Group, officers did not scope out what the impact, the actual impact of this policy was going to be on those most likely to be affected. That was what officers told us. It is a shame therefore that this policy was introduced without that really important scoping exercise being worked out.

It is worrying, I think, that the application has been we will adopt the policy and hope for the best. Hopefully this policy will work and we will avoid the £1.3m overspend that we saw last year. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hayden.

COUNCILLOR HAYDEN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on page 26 Minute 29, the Annual Fostering and Adoption Reports.

I would firstly like to comment on the success of the Mockingbird Family Model Approach for which Leeds won Innovation Funding in 2015. It originates in the USA and has seen 67 children and 43 families supported in Leeds. The model essentially operates like an extended family with a hub carer supporting eight to ten other foster carers and their foster children. In fact, when I had the briefing about it I found it very much like my own family. I have texted my hub carers to make sure that they pick the children up – I have not had a phone call so I am assuming that has happened. I have just had a text message from my brother asking for a lift to school tomorrow, so it is exactly the same way and they are the reason that I can be here today and you have the joy of listening to me this afternoon.

Families taking part in the model benefit from the same support. They can call on each other for help and support. This leads to improved outcomes for children in terms of their wellbeing, school attendance and placement stability and is particularly successful in supporting Kinship Carers.

I am delighted that Leeds has been chosen to develop a second phase of Mockingbird which will include a focus on post-adoption support and supporting young people from residential care successfully moving through to foster care. Leeds is leading the way in innovative practice with our partner in practice status and is playing a key role in the new Regional Adoption Agency as we are the host Authority for the Region. Again, this is something new for us, an excellent opportunity to develop practice and another area where we are leading the way nationally with our other partners in West Yorkshire.

It is true to say that Government performance thresholds are still a problem but they are a problem for every Local Authority. For example, we were 49 days above the threshold for the number of days between a child entering care and moving in with their adopted family. However, our figure was 57 days less than the average for England, and although we would not want it to be above the threshold, we are performing better than most other Local Authorities.

Nationally set thresholds are all well and good but they need to be realistic and achievable; these clearly are not, leaving Local Authorities feeling as though they have been set up to fail.

Another success is the Staying Put Programme where young people can stay with their carers past the age of 18. Again, we are the victim of our own success as we are under-funded by £1m by Government but continue grow the Staying Put Programme along with our Supporting Lodging Schemes because it is the right thing to do for our vulnerable young people and I have a stack of leaflets if anybody is interested in the Supporting Lodging service.

I am proud of Leeds and the good practice that we have here. We will continue to improve and innovate as we strive towards the best possible outcomes for all our children and young people in this great city. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Bruce.

COUNCILLOR BRUCE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am also commenting on the Annual Report for the Fostering and Adoption Services. I would like to thank Lisa and Helen for putting on a Members' fostering event just before we came in here which luckily I got chance to call into quickly.

I would like to take the chance to thank those people who adopt children and our foster carers for the very real difference they make every day to the lives of extremely vulnerable children and young people. In an ideal world children would never need to be removed from their birth parents but unfortunately we do not live in

an ideal world and it is a sad fact that some children will always need to be placed away from their birth family for their own safety and wellbeing.

We are extremely lucky to have so many people who are ready, willing and able to offer safe, stable and loving homes to foster children. They embody the best of human nature and as a city they have to be one of our greatest assets.

In addition to providing support to our children our foster carers also provide support to one another. We have a network of Fostering Ambassadors who are experienced carers who co-lead the quarterly information evenings held across the city. These Ambassadors also host coffee mornings for new carers and offer continual support. I do not know how many of you have heard the adverts on TV and radio encouraging people to become foster carers or the adverts online, but the faces you see there and the voices you hear are actually real foster carers because they are a much better advert to encourage people to become foster carers than actors, obviously.

We have seen a net gain of 20 carers up to March this year and this includes ten carers who have come across from independent fostering agencies. We have said it before but it remains true that Leeds is a great place to foster. We know that we can always improve and we are facing challenges, in particular finding placements for teenagers which is an issue all across the country, but I believe we are more than capable of rising to that challenge and we have a fantastic team behind us.

At a time when the financial challenges continue to grow, I think it is important that we recognise the amount of work that is being done in this city to keep our children safe, the way our frontline services have continued to be protected and the fact that in Leeds our restorative approach to children's social care, combined with the continued investment in early intervention, has enabled us to keep our numbers of children who are looked after on a downward trend.

For those children who are placed in foster homes I am reassured that the love and support they receive there helps them move on in a positive way from whatever caused them to be removed from their birth family.

THE LORD MAYOR: That is great, thank you so much, Councillor Bruce.
(*Applause*) Councillor Pryor.

COUNCILLOR PRYOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to speak on
Minute 30 page 27 .

The review of Transport Assistance for post-16 students with SEND was necessary for a number of reasons. First and foremost, we have a duty to ensure that all of our children and young people are equipped with the skills they will need to enable them to live the most independent adult life they can. This fits with our restorative approach within Children's Services where we work with people to affect change. The policy as it stood was not working as well as it should have been. A taxi to and from school each day is not necessarily in the best interests of all of our post-16 SEND learners and was simply unsustainable. The new policy will give families

increased flexibility as they have more control over the method of transport and the timing of that transport.

These changes have been made for the right reasons as we remain committed to helping all young people reach their potential and be the best they can be. We work with families to promote independence and prepare young people for adulthood. We are, of course, facing undeniable budget pressures. We have seen a funding reduction of £239m since 2010 and are facing a funding gap of £44m by 2021. As a whole the Council has lost just over 2,500 full-time equivalent posts, and services need to be reshaped. Transport provision for post-16 SEND learners was costing us around £1.6m a year and is not a statutory requirement. It is discretionary spend and the amount of money we have to use at our discretion has rapidly dwindled. As well as promoting independence and helping with the transition into adulthood, the changes will generate savings of £800,000, half of this discretionary spend.

It is worth noting that the majority of Local Authorities have either recently changed their own policies or are consulting on doing so with a clear national trend towards removing discretionary assistance.

Following an extensive and detailed consultation exercise, the proposal was for a combination of two levels of personal transport allowance, independent travel training and free bus pass with each solution matching the individual needs of the young person. Those with more severe levels of need will continue to receive bespoke transport.

Even with these savings we are still facing an enormous struggle to continue to provide the services people expect within a budget that simply cannot keep pace with demand. Councillor Cohen of course reminded us that there is a need for Councils to have discretionary activity and discretionary spending and it is a shame that the Conservative Party are whittling down Local Government to just the statutory requirements.

It has been seven years of austerity and it is showing no sign of stopping. We are doing everything we can to continue vital services but as we continue to lose staff and their valuable knowledge and expertise, those who are left are spread thinner. Just like taxis for each learner, this situation is simply not sustainable. The Government needs to act now to properly fund Local Authorities so that they continue to effectively do their jobs. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dawson.

COUNCILLOR DAWSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am also speaking on page 27, Minute 30 on the consultation on transport assistance for post-16 students with special educational needs and disability needs.

I am sure everyone here will be aware that any changes to this form of transport needs to be handled carefully and sensitively which is why I am pleased with how this particular consultation has been completed. It was essential that service users and their families were involved from the very beginning and that the feedback they provided was actively considered and had real influence on the final proposals.

With that in mind, the final paper and the introduction of changes was postponed by a year when it became apparent from the feedback that more work was needed. More engagement was necessary to ensure that final recommendations had taken into account everything that had been said and were a true reflection of the way forward that would work towards better outcomes for everyone.

The consultation was extensive, questionnaires were sent to all families with children in Year 7 and above who are receiving transport, everything was made available online. Telephone calls were made to every family with children in Years 9, 10, 11 as they would be the ones who were affected the soonest and there were also face-to-face sessions at a number of drop in events. All of this meant that 41% - not really a limited number, Councillor Cohen – within the consultation group meaningfully engaged with the consultation at least once.

Although the delaying of new policy will have reduced the savings that have been made, I can imagine it is not great fun going back to the Exec Board but in this case it was exactly the right thing to do.

I contrast our approach on consultations to that of the Tory Government's approach on consultations. A couple this year, one on business rates appeals. They received 300 responses from companies, trade groups and organisations, not one supporting the Government's position but the Government went ahead anyway with their proposals. Consultation on Local Government pension schemes to give Central Government the power to overrule Local Government making decisions based on community values. 23,516 responses were received, absolutely unprecedented for Local Government pension consultations. 98% rejected the Government proposal. What did they do? They went ahead anyway. There are a number of examples of this. There is another one, fracking. 40,647 responses on the Government's plans to allow companies to frack under your house. 99% of people responded negatively; the Government ignored it and went ahead anyway.

The Government following the election manifesto debacle are now going to consult on improving the provision of social care. My hope is this is a genuine consultation as we have just witnessed in Leeds on post-16 transport, and not one where the Government has already determined the policy and are going through the motions with a token consultation. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Caroline Gruen.

COUNCILLOR C GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I am speaking on the same Minute, page 27 Minute 30. I speak from the perspective of a Member of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board which, despite what we heard earlier from Councillor Cohen, had a notable influence on this policy through several examples of excellent Scrutiny practice.

As has already been referred to, this is a key change from the provision of transport itself for students to the provision of a personal travel allowance, to be used as the student and family feel best and in the best interests of the student becoming more independent.

Each year it will affect about 60 new students entering post-16 learning, and currently there are about 280 young people in this cohort at a cost, as has already been said, of £1.6m a year on their transport needs. This is a very small proportion of all the young people in our learning provision but it represents a huge and potentially life-changing step for each of them.

Following a call-in of this issue in 2013 which found a number of gaps and risks in the consultation process, Scrutiny was then able to take a proactive role in ensuring the best possible outcome for young people. The Scrutiny Board had a number of values and principles. It wanted all families to be given a voice and an opportunity to be listened to; it wanted a more bespoke approach to the needs of the most vulnerable families and not an assumption that one size fits all; it wanted a transitional approach to the introduction of this policy so that those children and families currently being supported would not be faced with an unmanageable change; and it wanted allowance rates to be reviewed annually to take account of inflation.

It also crucially wanted the impact of the new arrangements for transport to be monitored to ensure that as a result of this change none of the young people became NEET.

At the end of the day a workable balance has to be struck between the need to make savings, the quality of the service we provide and the care and respect shown to the customers receiving it. Initially it was the ambition to improve efficiency savings of a million as a result of this change and at the end of the day there is a potential saving of £830,000, no doubt so reduced through accommodating some of the recommendations of Scrutiny but nevertheless worth it, in my view.

All of these things were taken into account as the new policy began to take shape and I think it is right to say there was a fair and consistent challenging support throughout the process from Scrutiny which definitely had a positive impact on transport provision. This is a really good example of Executive Board and Scrutiny working to improve services pre-decision rather than post-decision when it is so much more difficult to reshape and adjust services. We should work in this way more often across the Leeds Scrutiny landscape.

I fully support this policy, Lord Mayor, and continue to promote a robust and constructive use of our Scrutiny process. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Arif.

COUNCILLOR ARIF: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, I am delighted to be speaking on page 28 Minute 31, the paper that celebrates the fifth birthday of Child Friendly Leeds and outlines the next steps.

Lord Mayor, I recently became the Lead Member for Child Friendly Leeds. When I was asked to take on the role I jumped at the opportunity as it is not often we all get to have a bit of fun. Usually I am chasing the bin men in Harehills or asking Highways to fill the potholes in Gipton.

We all know that today's children are tomorrow's future and it is vital that children from across the city have the best start to life. Becoming a child friendly city is an ambition to make Leeds the best city for children to grow up in and involves constantly asking the question, what is it like to grow up in Leeds and how can we make it better?

The key to this is putting children and young people at the heart of decision-making across the city. I am pleased to note young people are involved with the Children and Families Trust Board represented by the Youth Council and Youth Parliament. Children have been involved in senior appointments, interviewing candidates for the role of Director of Children's Services. The Children and Young People's Plan focuses on five outcomes and three obsessions and we have seen very real progress.

The numbers of children looked after have bucked national trends and have steadily reduced. We have vastly improved attendance levels at school and our NEET number have fallen. One of the outcomes is to have fun whilst growing up. To reflect this a number of events have taken place in the last five years. CBBC Leeds Live came to Leeds in July 2013 providing not only three days of fun for children and young people but also bringing an estimated £1.25m of spend to the city.

In 2013 young people became reporters at the BBC Sports Personality of the Year awards, giving them the opportunity to walk the red carpet alongside their sporting heroes. We now have an Annual Child Friendly Leeds Awards evening completely planned, designed and delivered by young people. We have over 700 child friendly Leeds ambassadors from organisations such as Trinity Leeds, Marks & Spencer and British Gas. Child Friendly Leeds is central to the Council's ambition to be the best city, a compassionate city with a strong economy. Child Friendly Leeds is helping to make this a reality for more children, young people and their families across Leeds, particularly the most vulnerable.

Over the last five years the Child Friendly Leeds brand and ethos have gone from strength to strength, enabling the Council to develop a city-wide network of supporters who are also committed to carrying forward the child friendly Leeds brand and message. Going forward I am excited by just how much more we can continue to achieve. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: I would now like to invite Councillor Mulherin to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I thank all of the Members who have contributed to the discussion on this subject.

Firstly, I would like to comment on Councillor Downes and Councillor Cohen. I am delighted that Councillor Downes would support better resourcing of our Children's Services as he notes the areas where we are significantly overspend are those demand-led elements of the budget, so when children need, for a variety of circumstances, to be brought into Local Authority care, we cannot say we have spent up and were closing the door. We have to ensure that those children's needs are met.

Children's Services is a demand-led service, we do not have that option of reducing the demand in that way. We have been very successful over the last six years in reducing the overall number of looked after children. Children who need to become looked after become looked after for a variety of reasons and we are working hard to bring that number down and we have made fantastic progress towards achieving that by working with children and families as colleagues have said this afternoon.

However, it is worth noting that the Local Government Association predicted that children's social care across the country will be facing a £2bn funding gap by 2020, so that is just over two years away and the Government really does need to act now and ensure that children's services across the country are being properly funded, properly resourced, before it is too late.

Councillor Hayden was absolutely right when she said that there was much to comment on in that annual report for fostering and adoption. We have a lot to be proud of in Leeds and our foster carers and adopters are one of the things that we should be most proud of, and I wholeheartedly echo Councillor Bruce's thanks to them all.

One of the greatest things that any of us could do in life is to offer a stable and loving home to a child who otherwise might not experience that and I would also like to thank all of the Members across the Chamber who took the opportunity just before the Council meeting today to hear directly from our fostering team and from foster carers about the work that they do across the city to ensure that those children who need it are getting that loving and supportive home environment.

We ensure that every foster or adoptive family have a network of support that they can access and the Mockingbird model referenced by Councillor Hayden is a fantastic example of that. It is great that we have national recognition for the great strides that we have made, taken with our restorative approach and outcomes based accountability by working with families, helping them to ensure the best possible outcomes for children.

As always there is much more we can do but again, as always, we need the funding to be able to do it. Having to make up the £1m shortfall for the Staying Put Initiative enabling those children who are up to their 25th birthday able to stay with foster families obviously has had a knock-on effect as well on the rest of our Children's Service budget and it is incredibly difficult to continue to deliver that vital service on a shoestring but we are doing it because it is the right thing to do for those children and young people.

When Councillor Pryor spoke about the post-16 SEND Transport Review he touched on the financial difficulties we face. Each area of our budget is being squeezed and there is simply no more to give. With regard to the SEND transport budget, the national charity Contact said that the Council funded system across the country was in crisis. At a time when the numbers of children with SEND are increasing, the high needs block is being cut, the money being made available by Government simply does not keep up with demand and let's not forget that funding for post-16 SILC students has also been hit by cuts. In 2013 the Coalition

Government introduced changes that meant that all post-16 students with SEND were being funded for three days' education a week rather than five.

We have a duty to ensure that every penny we spend provides best value and also provides a service that meets the needs of the people of Leeds. The review into post-16 SEND transport is an example of where those two needs were balanced and further budgetary savings were foregone to make sure that the service which was provided was the right one for the vulnerable group of young people supporting them and their families to prepare for adulthood.

Councillors Dawson and Gruen both spoke about the consultation and outlined the importance of the engagement of children and families and also the vital role that Scrutiny plays in challenging what we do. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Councillor Bentley and the Children's Services Scrutiny Board, all of the Members in this room, for the work that they undertook and the rigour with which they examined the proposals for our post-16 SEND transport policy change and for their ultimate support and challenge for the policy that is now being adopted.

Finally, Councillor Arif, I would just like to say again I find it hard to believe that Child Friendly Leeds is already five years old, but the amount that has been achieved within that time is truly remarkable. The sheer number and breadth of ambassadors shows just how the whole city has got behind our vision and given a commitment across the board to make Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I would like to call now upon the Leader of Leeds City Council, Councillor Blake, to sum up on the Exec Board Minutes.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Incredibly comprehensive set of papers and thank you to everyone who has contributed. The summing up has been so thorough that I am not sure that I will get to my full ten minutes, which is a great shame because I think you have developed a whole new style in actually telling people that they have got to the red light, Lord Mayor, in actually an incredibly effective way by being very nice to us all. Thank you, we are not used to it, so thank you for that!

Some really incredibly serious discussions this afternoon and I think there has been a very good response from everyone to all of the issues that we have discussed. Running through the papers have been some of the main themes that we are taking on board as a Council and one is around innovation and how, as Jonathan highlighted, others have highlighted, with so much less money how can we actually work across departments, between departments, with all of our partners in the city to make sure that we can still focus on getting the best outcomes for the citizens that we represent in Leeds.

Councillor Yeadon gave a very comprehensive response to all of the items on District Heating and I just want to say thank you, Jonathan, for highlighting the Leeds Climate Commission launch last week and I hope all of you are aware of this Commission. It is actually being led by the universities with us as very much equal partners and I do not think I have ever been to an event where they had to actually set

up a waiting list, there were so many people from around the city who wanted to come to the launch event and there were over 250 people who did actually go. I think it is a real sign at the moment of just how seriously now everyone is beginning to take climate change.

Councillor Truswell, my ward colleague, will not forgive me if I do not talk about how he set up the Leeds Green Strategy back in the early 1990s or whenever it was. Leeds does have a reputation for taking these challenges on, for stepping up to the plate and from the Green Strategy came the Leeds Environment City Initiative and it is that understanding that we are only going to make the difference we need by working in partnership across the city.

What I really tried to emphasise when I was speaking at the event is that we cannot just talk about climate, it is about the impact that climate has on people in this city and how we can actually work together to make sure that our people save massively on the amount that they spend on heating at the moment and highlighting fuel poverty, absolutely key. How they can actually feel warm and secure in their homes but also how we can, through the innovation that the Climate agenda brings to the city, create jobs and how we can actually invest money up front to actually save money.

I think we have said before, the work that went into uncovering the scandal of VW and their emissions has actually done us a huge favour in a bizarre way of making everyone focus on what we need to do to change lifestyles. We have to get people to change the way that they move about, the way that they live, to bring in the carbon reductions that we know we need to do.

The extra care housing, I found, Stewart, your comments a bit strange really, actually. I do not think you handled it very well, actually. The whole point of the extra care programme is that it is cross directorate. There has to be buy-in from all the different parties and I do not actually get what you are saying about no leadership. We are making dramatic steps forward but the real issue is, actually, you cannot leave these issues up to the market all the time, otherwise you do not end up with the provision in the places that you need them and that is where the intervention that we are bringing in actually will make the difference.

The other theme that we pick up on all the time in the city is how we can make sure that everything we do is to benefit the people that live in the city and I think I have to pay tribute to officers and to Debbie as the Exec Member and her team for the response – ongoing response – to Grenfell. It is not just the extraordinary job that they did going around all of the high rises, speaking to all of the residents. This is an ongoing issue, people feel insecure, quite rightly, as a result of what has happened.

I was at the Local Government Association yesterday. There is an enormous amount of work going on into this issue. There is a Leaders' Board been set up all cross-party in the LGA taking forward every single aspect of this, and the Building Regulations Review that they are undertaking is going to be absolutely essential for us as Local Authorities going forward.

The sprinklers issue highlighted by the Chief of the Fire Authority in London today and actually talking to Fire Authorities around the country is something we need to embrace but – and I have to say cross-party pressure from the Local Government Association - the Government has to get off the fence on this issue, talk about how it is going to fund it and make sure that every Authority that has high rise blocks that need work in whatever shape or form it is actually gets the funding and the support they need to do it. The work we are already doing in Leeds, we know what a big job it is to undertake, but I believe in Leeds we have so much to offer and I know that we will be contributing to the review that they are bringing in. We have an incredible story to tell going forward.

Linked to this and, of course, the awful truth about Grenfell is that horrendous link to some of the most vulnerable people in our society, linked to the people who had only recently come into the country who were living there. I think the debate today on migration has really reflected the incredible work that we do in this city, a city of sanctuary, welcoming people to come in. Of course, that is in the context of the Brexit debate. I think the Brexit debate has actually been running through all of the discussions that we have had this afternoon.

I am pleased to tell you, we did have some debate in here I think either the last meeting or the meeting before, and we promised that we would set up a cross-party Working Group of the Council into the implications of Brexit in the city. We had our first meeting last week, Councillor Robinson, Councillor Golton and ourselves were at the meeting. I am sorry, Jonathan, how could I mistake you for Councillor Golton! Apologies.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: To which one!

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: A complete error on my part. Actually, a real recognition of just how serious the impact on this city is going to be, particularly if we do not manage it correctly.

We have got a work programme lined up and if I am not careful I am going to get the Lord Mayor's intervention coming in in a moment, but there is a really serious point about Brexit and Councillor Akhtar really nailed it in terms of how do we make sure that the incredible amount of money that we get coming into this city from Europe at the moment targeting need, targeting deprivation, actually comes back to us after we have left the EU. I have to say, through the LGA there is a Working Group on Brexit but as Core Cities we actually asked to have a seat at the table for Brexit in negotiations with the Government. The impact of leaving Europe on our cities is going to be immense, as are the opportunities that could well come from it.

We have not had a satisfactory response from Government in terms of a dialogue with us so as Core Cities we wrote to Michel Barnier ourselves and I am delighted to inform Council that he has agreed to meet with us as representatives of the main cities in the country so that we can take our concerns, our offer of help and support to the country. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, it now just falls on me to call for the vote on the motion to receive the minutes, if you are all ready. *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

Now, I was accused of causing lots of indigestion last Council meeting because I rushed you through very quickly, but I would like to invite all our guests in the balcony and Council officers to join us and if we could be back here, please, for 4.55 for a five o'clock start, please. *(Applause)*

(Short break)

ITEM 9 – REPORT ON DEVOLVED MATTERS

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, ladies and gentlemen. We are now moving on to the Report on Devolved Matters for a period of up to 30 minutes. Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I thought I would spend my introduction giving an update on different activities that has happened across the region over the summer, just to make sure that everyone in Council is up to speed with what has been happening.

We called a meeting at the end of July for all the Leaders of the Councils across Yorkshire. From that meeting 17 Councils from across Yorkshire agreed to join what we are calling the Coalition of the Willing and expressed their desire to proceed with talks on devolution to Yorkshire at a regional level. This actually followed on from a visit of the Minister for the Northern Powerhouse, Jake Berry, who came to West Yorkshire and his clear instructions to us all was that first of all they wanted a devolution with Leeds as part of it, the actual geography and the make-up of it was down to us locally to come up with, so that is what we have done, I have to say. Having 17 Authorities signing up and going public on it, of course on Yorkshire Day, which meant that it really did get quite a lot of coverage.

I have to say since then there has been a lot of consultation through different organisations, through different business organisations and some of you will have seen in the press letters coming in from the CBI, from the Federation of Small Business, from the TUC supporting the proposals to move forward for a one Yorkshire deal.

The difference that has happened, and part of that 17, is that two of the South Yorkshire Authorities have decided to explore with us the possibility of moving forward on a Yorkshire footprint. It has always been said before that South Yorkshire was sorted, it was going to hold even though the actual Sheffield City Region aspect of it had fallen apart some months ago.

We had another meeting and we have all reaffirmed signing up, including Doncaster and Barnsley. We have written to the Secretary of State for Local Government, Sajid Javid, requesting an urgent meeting so that we can actually explore the opportunities that this presents us

I am sure some of you will have already seen on social media and in the press today that there will be a crunch meeting of the South Yorkshire Authorities next Monday to really finally talk about their situation and they have come out very strongly today. The article written by James Reed in the Yorkshire Post starts by saying:

“Pursuing a single devolution deal for Yorkshire remains the clear priority of Barnsley and Doncaster ahead of the crunch meeting on Monday.”

We are waiting for a meeting with Government to help us move this forward. We believe it is the best way to make sure that we get a devolution deal that gives us the powers and resource that we need. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor James Lewis.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Stewart Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. That last announcement from Councillor Blake is very welcome from this Group because, of course, you will recall in previous debates on the subject we have always said that devolution should not just be about business models and travel to work area; it should reflect what people desire and the cultural resonance of a Yorkshire identity is something which enables us to coalesce around and one thing that is important in any political institution is that it has decent cohesion. The development has been long awaited by us but is no less welcome.

One thing that was missed out, though, is I seem to recall there was an issue with Wakefield as well. I am not sure if they are one of the signatories now but it did seem that they were a little – what’s the word? – a little vacuum in the middle, a little bit like Switzerland. Coming from Rothwell I do appreciate that Wakefield does feel very special! I hope that Councillor Blake in her leadership role is coaxing them to come on board.

The actual papers that are to do with devolution cover quite a few important areas, one of which I am just putting a warning out, is the pothole fund. This is the money that the Government sends out in the expectation that Councils need a little bit of extra help to deal with highways and it is supposed to be distributed fairly, and it is becoming a regular theme now, you will understand. Of course, the Combined Authority is the one that needs to decide how it is distributed between the Local Authorities before this Local Authority decides how it is fairly distributed within our communities. I am just letting you know that we will be having a close look at that over the next few months as that division becomes more apparent.

Then there is also a very important area which is around inclusive growth. I had a challenge from somebody from one of the unions and they were trying to

persuade me that having dynamic cities is not the best way for delivering good economic growth for an indigenous population. Our recent announcements in terms of new jobs for this city have centred around things like Burberry and the recent one about Whitehall jobs moving up North. The point of those is that those are people who are moving here so they might be new jobs but they are also new people and one of our primary objectives as a Combined Authority as well as a Council is to deliver inclusive growth. I think the new Inclusive Growth Group, which is on the Combined Authority – I know Councillor Groves is on that with me – we will be trying to make sure that whatever is delivered it is not just about inward investment delivering jobs for people who do not live here yet; it is also about delivering good quality jobs for people who live here right now. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor David Blackburn

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I share some of Councillor Golton's views there on the announcement the Leader just made. I think it is very, very encouraging and where we are on this because it is Yorkshire that needs the devolution, not just part of Yorkshire.

My main issue I am talking about is, I set the theme this morning, earlier today, with the question on Bus Strategy. It is about the Bus Strategy. Clearly, as Councillor Wakefield said earlier, the Bus Bill falls short of what we expected it to do in that it gives those Authorities that have got elected Mayors powers that it is not giving us so far, so I hope we can get this devolution going, that we can persuade Government to change its view so that we can franchise bus services because with all the best will in the world – and I know Councillor Wakefield thinks I am a sceptic here; well, I am! I have used First Bus or what was there before First Bus for most of my life and the fact is, every so many years they will say “Oh, we are going to improve” and then they do for about two months and then it gets back to normal again. It just does not work. We need some form of regulation.

As I say, I wish we can move forward with that but regarding the Bus Strategy, we have got to have some power, we have got to have some way so we can direct the operators because if they are left to their own devices, all it will be is about making profit for them and not serving our community.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lay.

COUNCILLOR LAY: Thanks David, you stole my thunder! Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would just like to comment really on the adoption of the Bus Strategy as well. I would like to reiterate and support what David in his question earlier and what Keith said in his answer about the buses.

Our goal is to create the best bus system in Europe – so says the forward of the West Yorkshire Bus Strategy 2040 document. Can I just ask that in the first instance we make it the best bus system in Yorkshire?

I have just two further points to make today. First, our buses are shocking. The cost to passengers is expensive, their reliability and punctuality poor and there is no joined up thinking. I have a huge amount of sympathy with the residents of

Richmond Hill who came earlier to raise their concerns about the service they receive. In my own ward we cannot even travel north to south in this city on a single ticket. If I get a Day Rider in Otley from First, it will not get me to Rothwell because I am required to get on an Arriva bus. Yes, there is the MCard but, Keith, you were unfair to Ryk, its use is geared towards regular travellers and not those undertaking single or *ad hoc* journeys. Neither would visitors or travellers be able to use it or access it simply. There is still a lot of work to be done around ticketing.

Secondly, like David I worry that it is what appears to be an over-reliance on buses. We have £173m as a starter and we have decided to spend £120m on buses - spending on buses and companies we have no control over. Four out of five journeys are undertaken by bus and yet we seem to want to work in a one-sided – not our side – partnership. We must have control of routes, ticketing, fares and for that I have come to the conclusion that franchising, when the time is right, is the only way to take back control of our bus services. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Cleasby.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Council, I was fortunate enough to be the Chair in Scrutiny as and when these City Regions started. I am appalled that we have not got there yet, after all these years, which is some considerable time.

The then Chief Executive, Paul Rogerson, when I went to be briefed by him, suggested to me that, “Perhaps the first two things you could look at, Brian, are jobs and transport”, which we did and we got people from all over the country – from Birmingham. Birmingham came to us with a brilliant idea. We could have an Executive Board just like Birmingham, the people in the Birmingham City Region, each Leader of the Council is going to have an Executive position. We do not know yet but one of them will be responsible for transport, one will be responsible for jobs and so that was important. We have not done anything like that.

We are still stuck in the silos of Councils, just like we used to be stuck in the silos here within the Council of departments that thankfully our call centre has helped to break down massively and Scrutiny has helped to break down massively.

It is important that we think about moving forward and we are not moving forward. Surely what we should be doing is trying to get ourselves totally detached from the area. Look, what if Climate Change is going to be forced upon us? What if Brexit is going to be forced upon us? I would have thought what those two things are going to demand of us as a security is access to the Humber ports and access to the Merseyside ports. Isn't that a sensible strategy, then, to have high speed electrification of that line? We should be moving down that and we are not because we are still working as Councils.

I think it is wonderful that the Leader of Bradford Council, who I have a lot of time for, has taken the position that she has - better than perhaps the previous one who was there far too long, totally dominating us and Wakefield. That is one thing.

The other thing I really am concerned that what is being forced as a change upon us is an airport road in my area, for instance, that is being forced upon us by the four Authorities, because when it was our collective airport, they could not get access to their airport and they are the ones through this Combined Authority that are driving the airport road and I think it is wrong.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: You sold it off, Brian. You sold it off.

COUNCILLOR TRUSWELL: You sold it off.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Have you forgotten?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: You built the arena with it.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: No, I did not. I put my vote to the A65. Richard will tell you that. *(interruption)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: No wonder Ryk has disappeared! *(laughter)* I want to talk a little bit more and switch it to something that the Leader mentioned earlier about Brexit. I really get the answer of the communities, of the Councillors, of the MPs in the North and I really get why there is over 100,000 people signed a petition asking Grayling to stop the Government's backsliding on the commitment to electrify the Trans Pennine way. *(hear, hear)*

I have to say, I applaud our Leader's effort only a few weeks ago to organise a summit on the transport, bringing the Mayors and the MPs to Leeds to highlight the real danger of our economy in the north if we do not get the investment we want and need. Here we have an economy in the north that is the tenth biggest in Europe if it stood alone, or the 32nd in the world. We have a GDP of £320bn, we have exports £50bn and we actually have five million jobs, and yet we are watching a Government oversee the biggest inequality of transport investment in Europe.

All of you have heard how London gets ten times per person transport investment than Yorkshire. If you look at it another way, 54% of transport money is spent in London; 3% spent in Yorkshire. That is not justifiable if you are really talking about post-Brexit and a strong national economy. A strong national economy needs a strong northern economy.

I really worry about our Secretary Grayling undermining Network Rail by giving instructions on holding the Sheffield Midland line, holding the Western line and talking about bimodal. I think for those at bimodal, their clients will tell you, it has been around since the 1960s and isn't it hypocritical to talk about diesel when he is telling Local Authorities to clean up the air? Yet he is now introducing the idea that we should have diesels on our railways across.

If we have got a Transport for the North, a statutory body, then give it powers and resources. They are not involved in the review, they have been marginalised.

The North now speaks with one voice and Yorkshire speaks with one voice. We want full electrification of the Trans Pennine way, we want the Northern power railway, we want the proper east-west new road and we want to see our fair share of investment. Frankly, if we are really serious about post-Brexit northern economy, we need that investment now. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. That was quite interesting and almost entertaining, a whole series of different views, but I think it highlights, particularly after listening to Councillor Wakefield's contribution, why there is no deal and why there is no agreement even on a geographical area of where a potential devolved deal will cover, because on the one hand it is not particularly useful or helpful to bash the Ministers who will be making the decisions at the end of the day. I know it is very entertaining, I know it gets a cheap laugh in here, but actually, do you think it does an awful lot of good? Of course it doesn't and you would think, wouldn't you, that you would look across the Pennines and you would take a bit of an example from an area that has got a deal, a huge deal, and what did they do? I will tell you what they did not do – they did not go around beating up the Chancellor of the day. He was one of their Parliamentary constituency Members.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: The Secretary of State is Grayling, John.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I listened to you, Keith – I listened to you. They actually worked with him, persuaded him of their arguments, got the money they wanted, got the deal they wanted and worked collaboratively together. What have we seen here of any of that?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: That's what we have done.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: No, Michael, we have not. We have not. We have just seen it again in here. Frankly, you will get nowhere if you carry on like that, no matter how many different Authorities you bring together and eventually they may agree a geographical area, who knows when that will ever be.

What I do know is a week last Monday the Chancellor of the Exchequer was in Leeds and he was in this building as well, and he came to see *this* group to find out what our thoughts were on the current position in terms of devolution and a potential deal, and we were very frank. We were very frank with him in terms of our view and what we wanted to see.

We do want to be helpful and we do want to play our full part, but that means actually that you have to communicate and co-operate with us because, whether you like it or not, it is a Conservative Government that is in power at the moment and for that matter, when there was a Labour Government in power I did not see an awful lot of progress along this agenda then either, Lord Mayor.

I am intrigued that Councillor Blake and some of her colleagues are going I presume somewhere into Europe to see Michel Barnier. I am not quite sure what she hopes to achieve in that end. Again, bizarre, isn't it, wouldn't you think that a Leader

of a major Council would be seeking to influence the UK Government, the UK negotiators, to get a great deal for the UK because believe you me – believe you me – just because Councillor Judith Blake is going Barnier is not going to roll over and say, “Do you know what, I am going to give Great Britain a fantastic deal now because I have seen the Leader of Leeds City Council.” (*Applause*)

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

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I think that sums up that you have been spending too much time over the sea, John. (*laughter*) If you have a coalition of 17 Councils in Yorkshire, even you could work out that there are Tory Leaders of those Councils that we are working with and negotiating with and I refer you to the article that Jim O’Neil put in the press, who absolutely categorically said that the reason that Leeds City Region had not got a deal was because the Conservative MPs of West and North Yorkshire went to him and George Osborn and said, “Over our dead bodies.”

Things have moved on since then, thankfully, and we are working together, and we will communicate with whoever. The biggest ask we have is for Government to come and talk to us.

Do not compare us with Manchester. Greater Manchester has been working on this model for 30 years. The biggest mistake that George Osborn actually made was to think that the Greater Manchester model could be lifted as one and dropped in other places around the country. That is why deals around the country have fallen apart and we have taken the initiative, working with colleagues across Yorkshire, to come up with a way that, without having to get new legislation, we can actually move forward.

Of course, Andrew would confirm to you that he has been involved in conversations with the other Tory Leaders of the groups around Yorkshire talking about all the proposals that we are bringing forward.

It was remiss of me, I should have mentioned that Susan Hinchcliffe, Leader of Bradford, has now become Chair of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Peter has only been Chair for three years, actually – that is as long as it has been in existence (it might seem a lot longer). You ask about Wakefield and he has been open and in the press. He has argued for Leeds City Region but he has said if that is not going to happen then he will work with us on Yorkshire and that is where we are.

The bus situation that several of you have raised is probably one of the most frustrating elements about devolution. We lost the argument that said you had to have an elected Mayor to get franchising, but we are still on with that. Obviously if we move forward on a devolution deal then we will talk about the powers that that will bring forward.

We are going on to talk about infrastructure, investment, but I just want to make it clear – and it is clear on our consultation on our Growth Strategy at the moment – inclusive growth is what it is all about. It is all about making sure that what we deliver in this city benefits people in this city - young people, old people, whether it is new skills for younger people, retraining for people who have to change

their jobs. That is our commitment. We do not want people to be left behind. They are being left behind at the moment and that is why we need a devolution deal as soon as we can possibly deliver it. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I would now like to call for the report to receive the Report on Devolution. *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED. Excellent.

WHITE PAPERS

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move to White Papers, the final segment of the meeting. We have three White Papers this evening for debate. Each debate will last for no more than 45 minutes and will conclude with votes on the motion and any amendments. To introduce White Paper One, Councillor Procter.

ITEM 10 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – CORE STRATEGY HOUSING TARGET

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: “To introduce White Paper One” – it sounds like some sort of performance! I will try my best.

Lord Mayor, we have put down, me and my Group, yet another White Paper in relation to housing and housing growth, and in particular the element of the housing numbers, and the total housing numbers that are needed in this city. Everyone is aware that the Labour administration developed a figure which was at the top of a range.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: No it was not.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Oh, this just shows you, Lord Mayor, why people do not understand the issue. Yes it was. 70,000 houses – Councillor Gruen can help you out on this, he understands it if the rest of you don’t – 70,000 was at the top of a range – the top of a range. I look to colleagues who understand these matters, everyone is nodding – yes, it was at the top of the range. The top of the range.

There was a series of choices and that was what was decided and endorsed by the Labour administration and which was opposed by every other group that was on this Council, because what we recognised and understood was that to set a figure of 70,000 was unachievable, the target was unnecessary and the volume house builders could not build to that target, and so for ever and a day we would have under-achievement of house building which would lead to the very problems that we now have, being a plus 20% Authority, which is difficult to say the least and is the reason why we do not now have a five year land supply. We would have a five year land supply if we had a housing target which was reasonable, achievable and that was needed, in actual fact, and so for some of us we have been pressing relentlessly for those figures to be reviewed, to be driven down to a realistic level and for us to have sensible development that can be controlled and also, more importantly, can deliver the housing that the people of Leeds actually desire and need.

We were pleased after all of our pressuring a Scrutiny Board Report, the Scrutiny Board that I chaired at the time and successive motions here, that you agreed

to re-run the piece of work, restart the SHMA process and get that under way and, thanks to Richard Lewis that happened and we are grateful to him for making it happen, in actual fact.

What the numbers have revealed so far is that your requirement is likely to be, you say, 55,000. That is in the middle of the range, is 55,000. We say that that is still too high. We say that 55,000 is still not what is needed. We believe it is a lower figure, around about the 45,000 mark, which I might say is something that we have always said at Public Inquiry, in this place, at Scrutiny Boards and elsewhere as well.

We recognise however, Lord Mayor, that we are on a journey in terms of the SHMA process and ultimately the acceptance of figures. I think what there is no doubt about though is that the developing community is slowly but surely understanding that that is where we are at. I do not think they have particularly come forward with any convincing arguments that the figures are not within the new revised range actually, and I have to say I have been impressed with the data that has been produced thus far and the quality of the evidence coming forward.

All that said, a word of warning. I know full well that there are some in this place who will say well, notwithstanding the evidence, notwithstanding all of the issues around not being able to deliver 70,000 houses anywhere near in the plan period, notwithstanding any of those things we should keep the targets we have got. I cannot understand why anyone would think that but I know there are a number, certainly within the Planning Department and the wider Development Department who think that is a good idea. Maybe it is to save them time because they cannot be bothered redrawing or redrafting or going through the process again. That will do none of us any good whatsoever.

If we keep that – and again, this is the word of warning to all Members who have got any form of Green Belt or white land in their area – beware, because the developers will come to that land next and that is already happening in this city, Lord Mayor. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: I second and reserve the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. As John said, this is not the first time we have discussed this and it probably will not be the last, I have to say. I am slightly bemused, though, both by John's White Paper and the amendment and so we put down a relatively simple amendment to indicate what was something I thought we could all agree on. I think the initial findings from the review are encouraging, I think is the best way to describe it.

I say that because I seem to recall standing here when we discussed the Core Strategy and I seem to recall that there were one, two, three groups when we discussed the Core Strategy who expressed their reservations in no uncertain terms. I think it is fair to say they certainly expressed their reservations about the numbers and

asked, actually, for much more work to be done and that was one of Tom's reference backs.

At the time, I have to say to you, a couple of the groups on this Council – the Labour Group – were adamant that 70,000 plus was the bare minimum we could get by with. Well, we did not believe that then and we are probably not convinced that the 55,000 is the minimum we could get by with now. What is disappointing, I think, is that the Conservative Group supported that.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: We argued against the numbers.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: There are a couple of interesting quotes. I am sorry Andrew is not here because he did his usual trick to me because I happened to be standing up at the time, saying “We must have a robust LDF, support it.” I think it is fair to say that John said (let me just quote him properly) “In relation to the numbers, do we need the numbers that are outlined in the document? Well, yes we do”, it says here. *(laughter)*

I have listened to everything you have said and in many ways I agree with everything you say. Are the numbers unnecessary? Were they undesirable? Were they unachievable? Yes. Unfortunately you did not agree with us at the time but never mind. 45,000 is probably not a figure that we can really get behind because there is not the evidence base, in my opinion, for that figure because we are going back, as you said, to the range. I think it is fair to say that the range was an issue for us because we were not all told about it, were we? That is the whole point. Some people knew about the range but some people did not.

Just on to the Labour one. “Council welcomes the Labour administration decision to instigate a review.” The Labour Group were dragged screaming and kicking to do that and it is not just you, it is the rest of us plus just about every other community group within the city who have done that.

I just go down to the final paragraph where it says: “Council therefore calls on all political groups to put the clear interests of the city and residents first.” What they are saying, what you are actually saying in that resolution is, we should get behind you on the existing figures because there is no reference in here to the new figures. It says here, “Council recognises the milestone made in submitting the Site Allocation Plan.” The Site Allocation Plan is for 70,000-plus. If you agree this you are signing up yet again to 70,000-plus.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Campbell. Thank you. *(Applause)* Councillor Golton.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Excellent. Councillor Richard Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I honestly wonder why we are having this debate. We have had it every year and Councillor Charlwood said

to me, “You were talking about this when I first came on Council.” I know you do not want to hear it again but I am afraid you will have to hear it all again.

We have not just had the annual White Paper, we have had discussions at Budget meetings, we have had discussions when the Core Strategy has been adopted. What is the point, as we are moving towards a lower figure what is the point of going back and having an argument that we have had so many times before, other than that you think it is electorally to your advantage.

Sadly, the problem with planning has been how it has been used and misused by politicians over the years, not to enlighten the public, not to put them in a position where they have some kind of understanding what is going on, but purely in a cynical way to garner people for support for a political candidate in this, that or the other ward and even within the Conservative Party itself there is not an agreement about the Core Strategy.

I very much welcomed, actually, Colin’s amendment and if ours had not been so good I would have supported it, because it was so short. For once the Liberals put forward an amendment that is absolutely succinct and you cannot misunderstand what it says. What it is really saying is, we do actually need to work together on a lower figure and have a robust figure because we can all see this Authority and its residents being crucified on the current figure that we have. That figure is not a mistake of Councillor Gruen – I am sure Councillor Gruen will talk about it – but that was the product of the time and the information that was there then.

I remember back in 2010 when Planning was part of my portfolio all the officers coming to see me with the early drafts of the figures that were potentially going to be put forward, and I have to say they gave me sleepless nights and I was more than happy when Councillor Gruen actually came in and took that part of my portfolio, it was a great relief because I could see that it was a figure that was not going to be one that would be easily accepted across the Council or accepted out there.

I look at that Planning Policy nationally. I do not know whether Members opposite would accept but the NPPF is not fit for purpose, in my take. I think John has said it many times, and I am glad you are nodding. We do have to work together and your colleague Andrew always says we are better when we work together. I really want, actually, to have that co-operation with us going forward because there is no point in these endless kind of brush fires and us letting MPs off the hook, if I am honest. We have MPs putting out leaflets saying “I am fighting for the Green Belt” and these MPs are the ones who went in and voted for the NPPF in the first place. That is not acceptable. We have to stand up for what this city wants and I just feel that the whole system is almost intentionally designed to leave people out of it. We have thousands upon thousands of people signing petitions which we know do not fit into a Planning framework. There should be some way that we can engage properly with people instead of this horrible process that we currently have.

I think it is good to see people nodding. I think we have the potential to go forward together but I think we should be lobbying very hard and we need to talk about quite how we take forward a Leeds position to get a figure that does not put us

in the invidious position we are in now where we have got the developers crawling all over us and doing exactly as they please. I hope that everyone can support our amendment, which is not intended as a cover for any previous figure; it is for us to go forward with something that will benefit the city. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR C GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I am pleased to be able to second this amendment to the original motion by Councillor Procter and I do so for four reasons.

First, the entire focus of the motion is looking backwards and this is not the time to do so. It is easy to look back and criticise, blaming what has happened in the past for being unable to move forward, but we cannot allow such inertia to undermine the crucial progress we need to make on building the right houses in the right places at the right time in the here and now. We need to take decisive action now to move forward to achieve a solution in the interests of the communities of Leeds.

Secondly, I have experienced, as many of you have, the backlash of not having a five year land supply, at every Plans Panel meeting. Some of the volume house builders show only regard for their shareholders, wherever they might reside, and very little empathy with the local communities where they want to build their four or five national prototypes, whatever the feelings of that community.

Members are placed in the impossible position of approving a scheme they do not approve of for very good reasons, or rightly refusing it knowing that it will be upheld at appeal. We need to break that stranglehold. The way to do this is to now move swiftly and confidently to persuade the two Government appointed Inspectors next month after the examination in public to sign off our Site Allocations Plan. This will allow us to give real weight to the SAP and to the policies on size, space and design standards that we have worked so hard to achieve in individual planning applications, and to counter prematurity, unsuitability and the oft-abused viability tests.

My fourth reason for opposing the Councillor Procter motion is that he deliberately ignores the many new barriers and hurdles that his Government has imposed on the planning system. Never before have the cards been stacked so deliberately in favour of some of the key Tory Party donors at the expense of ordinary communities who want to have a greater say and input into planning discussions. To blame the local planning process is not only misleading and unfair but plays further into the hands of the few and the powerful over the many.

It is time the Tory Opposition backed our determination to see the SAP approved as quickly as possible. I therefore urge all Members to support this amendment. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Barry Anderson.

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In supporting Councillor Procter's motion I would just make one or two points.

What are you playing at with your wriggling and the comments that you have made in the press release? It has caused utter confusion out there. I am sorry, Peter, but you mentioned this figure of 55,000; you then have got your officers briefing us and saying oh, it is actually wrong, it is not 55,000 because you have got to do this, that and the next thing.

The public do not understand what is going on because they are being confused with arguments over 55, 45, 70 because they think they are going to be going into this SAP fighting against 70, but you muddied the waters by mentioning 55, and then as a result of that the Inspector then comes back, asks your officers and asks you to clarify things and your answers to those question are complacent at best.

There are problems ahead when it comes to the Site Allocation discussions because you are leaving so many holes. Do you believe in 55? Do you believe in 70? Do you believe in 45? Do you want to add it on? Do you want to take it off? You do not know what you are wanting to do. You are confusing the residents that Councillor Lewis in the final part of his amendment says he is trying to help. How are you helping communities by destroying them? Do you really want to go down in history as the party that destroyed the green fields, destroyed the Green Belt and destroyed the environment of this great city? Do you really want that legacy? I do not think honestly there is one of you who really wants that to be your legacy but that is the way that history will portray the way that you looked at housing numbers over this period of time.

Why do we keep going back again, Councillor Lewis asked. Well, because you got it wrong. You have never apologised to the public for getting it wrong. You have never apologised for not making all of the information available so that the political parties could understand what was happening and, more importantly, residents could understand. We found out on I think it was about day one or day two of the Core Strategy that you were working off a different set of figures and there was an adjournment while everybody was given the figures to go and try and do your own thing. Sorry but you got it wrong.

Yes, the NPPF is not very helpful and something needs to be done about it. Yes, we need to work with you so if you can come forward with constructive proposals, I certainly, as long as I am sitting on the Development Plans Panel, will debate about it. To be quite frank on the Development Plans Panel we have some great debates and sometimes not so great debates depending on the way you go about it. The last one proved that there is actually a lot that we agree on cross party, to be quite frank.

Councillor Caroline Gruen asks we want the right houses at the right time in the right places. You are not getting the right houses correct because your mix is all wrong; you are not building them at the right time because you do not even know what the right time is; and they are certainly not being in the right places because where housing need is greatest is not where they are being built by the developers, so you are getting it wrong.

I support the motion in the name of Councillor Procter. Thank you.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Just going back on a few things, the 70,000 target, Councillor Lewis talked about how it was a product of time and information at the time.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Absolutely right.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Do you know, this lot said it was not – I think it was but unfortunately the cynicism which is pointing at other parties is actually something that he himself was practising at the time or rather maybe Councillor Gruen.

At the time that this target was set there was a great incentive from the Conservative Government, which was New Homes Bonus, so for every house you built you not only got the extra Council Tax income that came with it, you also got a bribe as well from Central Government.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: It was yours as well, it was the Coalition.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: I am not surprised that the Tory Group were complicit in enabling that 70,000 target but I think you need to be a little bit more honest about why you were taking it to its limits in terms of the targets that you got.

At the end of this as well, what does this mean to the person on the ground? I have to follow Councillor Anderson's point. What does it mean to people? It means at the end of the day that actually because we went for the wrong target we did not get any protection from all those votes that the Tories added on to the Labour majority that was there already, we did not get any extra protection because it did not actually enable any house builders to build any quicker. The backlog still ended up being maintained, and even if we reduce the target that we have got at the moment of 70,000 and bring it down to 55,000 or even down to something less, we would still have a backlog which means that the developers would still have the upper hand.

Then out of those developers that are building housing, what kind of housing are they building? Councillor Anderson mentioned it before. Because we have enabled Green Belt to be released and the new target does not reduce all the sites that were made available to achieve the 70,000 target, then all that we are going to get is more executive homes of four and five bedrooms which give you a nice big Council Tax receipt and you will still get a bit of New Homes Bonus but that might be a reflection of why you are revising back again now, because the Government has decided to top slice New Homes Bonus so often you do not get very much back any more, do you? Our communities just end up getting more and more executive homes for those people who have got enough already.

What are we doing about that in this city? How are we actually trying to manage our housing market to make sure that we are not reliant on the big developers because they are the ones that think “I will just sit on my land until I can make a bigger profit.” Where are our small and medium sized Leeds-based housing developer businesses? How are we enabling them as a city to say we are going to try and get you to do the development that we want where we want and hopefully try and get some affordable housing. The biggest bit of affordable housing that has been delivered recently was something that was negotiated by the Coalition that we had years ago, through a PFI. PFI – that is almost history now. What are you actually doing to deliver the housing that you want as a Labour administration, instead of just delivering the housing targets that Central Government are pushing you for and the housing developers want to build? *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Cleasby.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, I am not prepared to allow anybody to rewrite history. The problem for us was when the SHLA came to our city. Remember, Barry, when in secret Councillor Andrew Carter asked you to form a committee of developers, officers and you, the only Councillor. Do you remember Councillor Gruen, the looks on all of our faces when we stumbled upon that fact in Development Plans Panel?

That is where it went wrong because all we were looking for was housing land. If it did not flood, great, tick it, go for housing. The rush to get their land in housing, top bucks, great. Then the problems started. We lost control of the Council you, the Labour Party, took control – I am not allowed to mention the name of the Councillor that you put in charge of it but his attitude was, if it is good enough for you lot it is good enough for the way we run, and that is where it went wrong in this city. We were getting the project together and missing many of the good reasons that were needed. All the land for school – and those who are on Plans Panel now know exactly where I am coming from because we are asking people when planning applications are being agreed, “Where is the land for the school?” and at the last one Tim Hill said (are you here Tim? No.) “When we get there the Council will provide the land or the Council will have to buy the land.”

What a barmy situation. I have sat in the last month on all three panels so I know that it is a city wide thing. It is stupid and Councillor Anderson sat there and had to face up, very red-faced, at the anger we felt at the way the SHLA was being handled. We could have started it properly and we could have had a handle and a grip on the situation to make absolutely sure we got the infrastructure that was necessary.

What happened was, the people are coming forward, the developers, taking advantage of our communities that we have created and disadvantage us as a consequence by putting housing into areas where now there is an overload on our schools, putting houses into areas where there is a lack of dentistry, putting houses into areas where there is a lack of doctors’ surgeries. It goes on.

I am not prepared to allow anybody to rewrite history. That is where we have been and we need to then start, if you are serious, let us work together seriously. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Leadley.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, while supporting Councillor Procter's White Paper as far as it goes, it must be said that it glosses over the history of Leeds's inflated housing target which is doing so much harm to communities across the city at large. For all practical purposes the City Council has lost control of its housing land supply and is pouring planning permissions into a bottomless pit in a futile attempt to fill unachievable and un-needed targets, and the long foreseen snowballing of a target-derived housing delivery shortfall.

None of this has helped anyone to get a house. As I forecast some years ago, the Core Strategy target is falling into disrepute. No-one is trying to get anywhere near it. We are drifting with no effective targets, reducing not increasing the number of dwellings being built to the detriment of those who need them to live in. Planning Inspectorate Housing Appeal decision in Leeds reflect with harsh logic the inevitable mathematical consequences of the inflated LDF Housing Target, actually 74,000 rather than 70,000.

If the Inspectors had ignored NPPF and its many flaws, or if it had not existed the appeal outcomes would have been much the same for local rather than a mixture of local and national reasons, unless the City Council had had the courage and clear sight to argue its appeal against its own adopted housing targets.

It may be that one or more Opposition parties have given many warnings about this over the past five years. Others have done much better than that. I have been giving warnings about essentially the same target and predicting its ill effects since it was put forward in the Regional Spatial Strategy Consultation ten years ago before its adoption in May 2008. It may be recalled that the Conservative Group failed to support my attempt to hold back the LDF Core Strategy by a single Council cycle to allow it to be adjusted to take in newly published and irrefutable data from the 2011 census.

If some will not listen, others will be obliged to rehearse the same arguments time and time again until something sinks in. The sheer obstinacy of some of our Members and officers who cling to the impossible is quite remarkable. I am not sure what lies at the heart of this – do we have officers who cannot do their jobs, or do we have a culture in which officers who wish to progress must always be on message and careful to toe what they see to be the corporate line, even if privately doubting the work which they are doing?

Reducing the harmful housing targets through the Core Strategy Review is likely to be too little and too late. Some of the new numbers which have been suggested are far too high, they do not stack up and would not stand testing by scribbling on a piece of paper or fiddling with a pocket calculator for half an hour. About looking to the future – well, I seem to be about the only Member who made a reasonably comprehensive response to the recent Core Strategy Review Consultation so certainly I am looking forward and trying to suggest something that we should do for the future. One of the things we have got to do is try and find a mechanism for

wiping out the vastly accumulated deficit, because if we do not wipe out the deficit, no new figure will have any effect at all. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Councillor Lewis says that it seems we have an annual thing or a bi-annual debate on this, but the fact is, it is going to continue to happen because even if you adopt a smaller figure, a lot of the damage has already been done. We have opened the stable door, the horse has bolted and now we are shutting it and it is a bit late.

While I accept, I do not support the Tory motion, I accept the Liberal Democrat one because it is about moving forward. The fact is, somebody has got to take the blame for it and certainly it is not these three parties there. As has been said, I can remember at a Council meeting the Conservatives supporting the Core Strategy when it was first put forward. I do remember some of them having quibbles about numbers but they supported it, but the fact is the three parties here have said it all along, the figure is too high.

The Regional Spatial Strategy figures – we knew they were nowhere near when we started this process. It was only simple. If you looked at the figures, what the population of Leeds was supposed to have grown to at the time we were doing this, it was obvious it was miles off, it was wrong, so why do we continue to use flawed figures over and over again when the administration have been told by everybody – not only in this Chamber but people outside – that their figures were wrong?

As I say, I welcome the change but I think we are a bit late. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: We were not wrong about schools as well.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Neil Walshaw.

COUNCILLOR WALSHAW: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Once again it is time to do the Planning and the Housing number dance in this Chamber, isn't it?

In my first speech I talked about political culture and let us talk about that as it applies to houses. When we consider housing, what is your starting point as an elected Member in this city? Is it, I am going to get lobbied by a loud and vociferous but small number of people about a particular site or a cluster of sites? Is it, or is your starting point...

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Is it your fan club?

COUNCILLOR WALSHAW: I am sure I have many fan clubs, Councillor Cleasby. Is your starting point, is everyone safe and warm tonight? Once you understand that that is where the administration comes from, that is our starting point, I think you understand where this administration's housing policy flows from. Sometimes, perhaps when I am retired, I will write a book about hyperbole in planning discussions and leaflets, Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: No-one will buy it!

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: We are not putting the infrastructure in.

COUNCILLOR WALSHAW: Language like “destroying environment and communities” is not helpful. When we are building houses we are creating communities and our starting point is that we have to house everyone in this city.

We all know the housing sites to put forward, we all know the seas of housing sites that this administration rejected and they genuinely would have destroyed communities, and perhaps the Conservative Group can look to its golfing partner landowning buddies about what they were willing to give up for this community.

COUNCILLOR: I do not believe this.

COUNCILLOR WALSHAW: In all seriousness, let us talk about how we approach housing. Change is difficult for our communities and we absolutely need to provide the housing our citizens need and we have to manage that change as best we can, so why are we at this point? We have talked about all sorts of issues all intersecting. What is the motherload here, what is the huge problem? We all know it, and you all nod – it is the NPPF. What is at the core of the NPPF? The only effective legal determinant about what housing happens really when you get down to it is the five year land supply. Everything coalesces on that one expression. We cannot have as the sixth largest economy on earth, as a super-advanced nation state, our residential housing policy determined by just a few words. It is ridiculous. It is not fit for purpose, as Councillor Lewis has pointed out, and we all in this Chamber agree about that. We all agree about that.

Just for those people watching at home - there might be 12, maybe 14 – in all seriousness, the NPPF rewards failure. Its incentives are exactly the wrong way round, aren't they? If volume house builders do not build their permissions and they have plenty of permissions, they get rewarded because the city is determined to fail to deliver its housing. It is not us. If we were building these houses, these houses would be built by now, these communities would exist – but it is not, it is the private sector. They are not delivering yet, if they do not deliver the Government wades in and says “You have not got a five year land supply, you have got to open up more sites” so yet more sites are opened up for our communities, yet more discomfort, yet more vocal pressure groups, yet more uncomfortable evenings and days. It is not acceptable, is it, colleagues? It really is not.

Look, the incentive is the wrong way round. It is not working, we all know it is not working. The NPPF is easily changed. It is. Let not anyone tell you any different. NPPF is easily changed, it does not even need primary legislation to change it.

I would say to Members in this room, particularly Members of a group that has a direct line into Government MPs, lobby about the NPPF. Its time has passed. It needs a comprehensive review.

I will be supporting the Labour amendment because the best way as we stand right now looking forward, the best way to get surety for our communities is to have an SAP in place because then we regain a five year land supply and a measure of control. Long-term, colleagues, in this Chamber we all know that the NPPF has to go. There has to be a new Town and Country Planning Act in this country or things are going to continue to arrive.

Of course, Councillor Gruen rightly pointed out, what do we want? All that we ask – all that we ask, ultimately – is the right houses of the right type in the right places and that they are affordable, and that no-one is cold tonight. Thank you.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Graham Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor I would like to look at this really from a slightly different angle. Just recently, following Councillor Procter's elevation to Europe, we had a vacancy on the Development Plans Panel and I took that place. It is not only a steep learning curve but one which I think I have fallen off because the language spoken there was not taught at school when I was at school.

As a result, thinking of this in terms of the man in the street, it has been referred to two or three times in the course of this afternoon, he looks at this situation with 70,000 houses, 55,000 houses, 40,000 and he hears that we are saying that 70,000 is too many, that really and truly we do not need them and we cannot build them, so he cheers up because he thinks well, right, whatever figure they are going to end up with – let's say 50,000 – there are 15,000 less houses going to be built in Leeds. If there are 15,000 less houses going to be built, that might mean that in my part of the world there will be less houses built.

I raised this point at Development Plans Panel and they completely foxed me with the reasons why a reduction of 15,000 houses does not mean you can build any less in any particular housing characteristic area. I do hope – and I am putting out a plea – that there should be a nice clear some language description of what the answer to that conundrum is, because those of us who only have Green Belt to build on just cannot understand why we have to lose all that Green Belt to build houses that we do not need and that the developers probably cannot build anyway.

I do support this Conservative White Paper because, whatever, it is going to give me the chance perhaps of a few less houses in Aireborough. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Peter Gruen.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, my old boss was a canny operator. When he looked at a paper he used to say, "It is important what is not said as well as what is said" and when you look at Councillor Procter's resolution, and I urge you colleagues, force yourselves to look on page 15 and read it and you will see it is important what is said – because nothing is said in it – but what is not said.

As colleagues have said, his resolution is a backward look saying we were right and you were wrong, exclamation mark, end of message. That is his resolution.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Yes, is that right?

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: The resolution is amended wisely by Councillor Richard Lewis and it is not about what is not said but about what is said. What is said is that we are within a few weeks of an examination in public on our Site Allocation Plan. The 70,000 – the top of the range, by the way, I recall it being 90,000 that the house builders put forward.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: No, your range.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: You will come back – you will come back. The house builders put forward 90,000, OK.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Yes, they did.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: At that stage we were one of the very few Councils who were able to get our process first time round through the Site Allocations inquiry.

Barry Anderson, we will never satisfy you because you shift your ground from meeting to meeting and actually by the end of the meeting you do not know what he said at the start of the meeting. *(laughter)* We will never satisfy you.

The interesting thing is this, some of you who were not here between 2004 and 2010, I spent the weekend going through the Council meetings – saddo, I know – and in almost 36 Council meetings in those six years there was not one single reference about the SHMA. Who was in control? The Tories. The SHMA was not invented by us. It was a process that has always been there. Who was the one person who went to every single SHMA meeting, who took decisions on behalf of the Council, who never reported back into the Council and made all those decisions? Who was that person? Councillor Barry Anderson was that person.

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: It is all my fault!

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Councillor Barry Anderson.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Stand up, Barry.

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: I do not know why you think I had this power because I can assure you I didn't.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: I am not going to take lessons from Barry Anderson. I think Barry Anderson should apologise to the people of Leeds for being so secretive and so powerful and never coming clean on anything.

I do not think we have anything to apologise for. Colleagues, what we need to do, exactly as Rebecca Charlwood and earlier on the Leader were talking about,

working together. This debate is a redundant debate. David Davis would be proud of this debate. It is a redundant debate. We face an examination in public in a few weeks' time. If we do not get our land supply sorted there and then, the avaricious house builders who Councillor Procter despises as much as the rest of us will continue their land grab, will continue their power play, will continue to give money out to the Tory Party and they will reward them by more and more planning gain.

We need to oppose this, we need to stick to what we have got. We will amend the figure in due course, as Richard has rightly outlined. You know all this, you have been to Development Plans, you know what the plan is. Do not come back here and pretend all this is news and you have been kept in the dark. You are not, you are playing games. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, my apologies to Councillor McKenna, we have now run out of time for comment so I would like to move to Councillor Procter to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, first of all let us deal yet again, shall we, with Councillor Campbell and his recollection (and also for that matter Councillor Blackburn) of our position when we were moving to the Core Strategy. We had opposed the numbers all the way through – all the way through. You can shake your head all you like, that is the fact. I chaired a Scrutiny Board that opposed the numbers all the way through.

However, when it came to adopting a Core Strategy we had a choice. We had a choice. Take a figure which you do not like, you do not agree with, you know is wrong but still have a Core Strategy, or have no Core Strategy at all. If you have no Core Strategy at all we would be in a ten times worse position than we are now and that was what we said then, that is what Andrew Carter said then and that is our position now.

The reason why this is not a redundant debate – and I appreciate this is a technical issue and if planning is your thing and development and site allocations is your thing you know all about it. If it is not, it is not your thing and it is difficult to get a grip of and a grasp of. Councillor Walshaw, though, should know better. It is not the fault of the NPPF. Councillor Lewis, as ever, was measured in what he said. The NPPF is a problem but it is not the problem solely responsible for this. There was the Regional Spatial Strategy previously, the Regional Spatial Strategy set the number in exactly the same way as the numbers are set out. Nothing to do with the NPPF. Nothing whatsoever to do with the NPPF. The mechanism that we have now is the same mechanism that was around under a Government, yes, your Government and that is what it says in the motion, because that is actually the fact, that is the case.

The reason why this debate is not redundant is actually because of the press release that Councillor Gruen put out that said 55 is the new number, let us rejoice and then his officers started back pedalling to say, “Well, we may have got it wrong and we certainly did not support that press release” is what they said to us.

The fact of the matter is that because of that the Inspector, the Inspector who is going to look at sites, actually wrote to the Council. Did you know that? He wrote

the other week and said, “Oh, well, actually, I understand that you are looking at your numbers again, so is the allocation of sites completely redundant then? Shall we not have this inquiry?” That is what he said. That is what he asked you. He said, “Well, because of your new numbers what is the point of our allocating 70,000? Let us just park it all and get your new numbers sorted out and then we will come back and allocate to the new number. That is what he said, didn’t he? What was your reply? You realised again, oh God, we have got it wrong again, we will have to allocate the 70,000 after all, won’t we? So that was your reply to the Inspector that went last Friday that said, “Oh well actually, Inspector, we know the number is wrong, we know it is a much lesser number, we think it is probably about 55,000 but actually we are going to allocate 70,000 anyway” and that is what this amendment says.

Let us all get together, let us all work on this together but actually let us all allocate 70,000 houses. That is what it says and that is what Councillor Caroline Gruen said, allocate 70,000 houses. That is what you said. We are at the crucial point, we have got to allocate, we have got to get on and allocate 70,000 houses.

That is the whole point. We have a chance of not doing that, of not allocating 70,000 houses.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Is that what Opposition does to you?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: It is not needed, we should not be doing this. Green Belt will be taken and allocated for housing for ever...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: You are better than that, John.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: ... and once it is allocated you can never get it back again – the advice of your officers.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: We do not need another Barry Anderson, one is enough.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: It is a once in a lifetime opportunity is this, right here, right now, to halt this process and allocate the right number of houses that is needed and it is not 70,000. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I hope you are all ready. We would now like to call for the vote. The first vote we are going to have is for the amendment in the name of Councillor Campbell. We have been asked for recorded votes.

*(A recorded vote was held on the amendment
in the name of Councillor Campbell)*

THE LORD MAYOR: We have 84 present, “Yes” 11, abstentions 0, “no” 73, so that is defeated. LOST.

We are now going to call for a vote on the second amendment in the name of Councillor Richard Lewis. Again, we have been called for a recorded vote.

*(A recorded vote was held on the amendment
in the name of Councillor Richard Lewis)*

THE LORD MAYOR: We have 84 present, “Yes” 55, abstentions 4, “No” 25, so that is actually CARRIED and becomes the substantive motion.

Can I call for votes on the substantive motion, please. Again, a recorded vote.

*(A recorded vote was held on the substantive motion
in the name of Councillor Richard Lewis)*

THE LORD MAYOR: 84 present, “Yes” 55, abstentions 4, “No” 25 so that is CARRIED.

ITEM 11 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move on to White Paper two, Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Many of us as Members go into August expecting...

THE LORD MAYOR: Excuse me, sorry, Councillor Blake, to stop you. If you could just be a little quieter when you are leaving. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Was it something I said! *(laughter)*

THE LORD MAYOR: We will give you extra time, Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor, you are very kind. We expect to go into August with a slightly less intense pace. The Secretary of State Chris Grayling meant that this was not the case for anyone with any connection with transport across the country but especially in the North. To cast doubt on policies that have been promised to us on electrification not by coming to talk to us about it but through the press, I have to say, caused complete outcry across the North. The result of it, as Councillor Wakefield said, the Leaders across the North got together, we organised a summit at the end of August and I have to say, although it was August, holiday time, over 100 businesses came to the summit, Leaders from across the North, many more represented in the room through organisations with a determination to speak with one voice for the north.

Why is this so important, this moving back away from investment? Because we know that the North is under-performing, more than 25% below average for the rest of England and it is still struggling. The North would be the 21st largest economy in the world: 15 million people, 33 universities – the scale of what we have in the North is phenomenal. We need to unleash our voice to make sure that we are heard.

What are the implications of under-performance? This is the crucial thing, whether it is in unemployment or, as we have heard today, increasingly low pay

economy, increased deprivation, building resentment. The outcome of the vote on the EU, people feeling excluded from the opportunities of this country. Life chances being reduced.

Why is the North under-performing? The Transport for the North Economic Review says that it is because of lower productivity, so why is productivity lower in the North? It is not only because of poorer transport links, it is also because of other lower levels of investment. Think about schools, we have heard (and we will hear more) about housing, about investment in broadband, skills, about the gap in life expectancy in our communities. I heard yesterday in parts of Sheffield a 25 year difference in life expectancy, and none of us can forget how the Tories since 2010 have deliberated moved money away from Northern Authorities to those in the South to benefit the people that support them.

We know we get lower levels of Government investment and the IPPR reckoned over the last ten years because of the gap in spending the North has received £59bn less in investment to put into infrastructure than we should have had. This is reflected in the terrible links for transport.

The benefits. We know that a 20 minute reduction in train time between Leeds and Manchester would be worth £6.7bn across the North of the economy. The journey times really do matter.

We have had promises about electrification that look as though they are being broken and we know that if we did actually get increased investment, we would also not only improve the life chances of people in the North but also improve the economy of the country as a whole. Halving unemployment in Leeds City Region would create a £408m gain to Government. Halving the number of people in in-work poverty will save the taxpayer £60m. I am really so disappointed by Grayling's intervention, by Hammond saying that it is up to the North to sort out itself, but even the Prime Minister herself has recognised how damaging this is to the prospects of the Government and she came up to Tees Valley on the day of the Transport Summit and actually said that she needs to make a commitment into putting more resource into the North. Well, we are waiting.

We will not go away. We are planning a re-sitting of the Summit as soon as we can and I really believe that finally the North has woken up. We are speaking with one voice and we will, with determination, achieve the additional investment that we need for our communities. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Pryor.

COUNCILLOR PRYOR: Second and reserve the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It is fair to say if we talked about annual debates about housing, I think we have had an annual debate about the lack of investment by Central Government of all colours in Leeds and the North, again as an annual event for well nigh 30-plus years. Those of us who are

slightly longer in the tooth will remember previous Governments who have made commitments – and I am looking at Councillor Lyons now.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: What have I done now?

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I am rubbing this in, Mick. I remember him and Councillor Les Carter and I went down to London to talk to the then Transport Secretary whose name I cannot remember in relation to High Speed 1, because when High Speed 1 was first proposed, it included a spur up into the North of England and Scotland and we went along to lobby the Minister to make sure it went through Leeds and we received quite a reasonable response, I think, from the Minister. We came back and reported back to the Council and everybody was quite cheerful and then the usual happened which was, “Well, er, yeah, um” and the money went, disappeared down into the South-East. That has been the history of the relationship between Central Government and the North of England for, as I say, 30, 40 years.

Unfortunately – I suppose it is not unfortunate – I did think, and it pains me to say this, that George Osborn had got the right idea. I did think that George Osborn had got it. You may be slightly cynical and I am as cynical as the rest of us, but he did seem to understand that to get a return or to improve the lot of the North of England – the whole of the North of England – there had to be investment. I think he genuinely made a commitment to invest.

Unfortunately we have got in effect a rudderless Government at the moment which does not seem to know what it is doing and certainly seems to have no coherent policy about anything, and so we have fallen back into the old trap of basically saying to the North – not just the North but the South, the South-West in particular – you are on your own, basically. As Judith says, it is a fatuous comment to say you should sort yourself out. Having said that, Leeds has not got that good a record on sorting itself out on transport infrastructure spending. We are linking ourselves to the bus company with the worst record of reliability, but never mind that, that is by the bye.

I think it is fair to say that we have won the moral argument on more than one occasion but the basics of this is that investment works. We rail against the South-East of England getting the most money but actually that is a good example of how investment has worked. If you go down to the South-East there is a tremendous input of finance towards the public sector, towards the infrastructure network and it produces results. Why is the economy of the South-East so buoyant, why is it expanding so much? Because of the investment successive Governments have put in there.

We are not greedy; just a fraction of that coming up here would produce, as Judith says, a dramatic return on that investment. It would be a benefit not just to those of us sitting round this table but for our children and our grandchildren. It is beholden on us to keep arguing and it is, I am depressed in some ways because I do not feel the current Government even if it lasts five years has the willpower to see the bigger picture, which is to provide benefits for everyone they have to make an investment and we need to invest.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Campbell. *(Applause)*
Councillor Lay.

COUNCILLOR LAY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am happy to second our amendment inasmuch as it is essentially the White Paper but it does broaden it out slightly to be more inclusive to include all our citizens. As important as children and young people are, it is important that we see our city for all our citizens.

I also wanted to speak, once I saw the Conservative amendment, it paints a complacent picture of a thriving city, a city doing well, a city on the up. What it, of course, ignores are those left behind. I would just like to say to them really, just imagine how great this city could be if a Tory Government actually helped it.

Alan, as a candidate in my constituency in June's election, I know that the election did not pass you by but you would not know it from your amendment. Your amendment and Chris Grayling's ludicrous statement proves what most of us already know, that the one nation Tory is dead. Most of us in this Chamber want to see inclusive growth, not the old, tired, divisive thinking of the Tories.

People want change, they want something different and they want a Government for all. They want investment in the North and not just in the South. They want connected cities, connected communities, connected neighbourhoods. With Brexit now more than ever the time has come for Government to invest in roads, railways, houses, schools, hospitals and, sadly perhaps, if successive Governments had done that then maybe the left behind – the working classes, older people – would not have swallowed the lies and rubbish that a small but vocal group of Tory MPs, nationalists and the right-wing press used to blame migrants for their lot rather than where the blame lies with the failure of Government to invest in the infrastructure and those Governments would have no desire to create well paid and valued jobs in those communities. *(Applause)*

What we now need is a little Keynesian economics of invest to grow for the benefit of all our citizens. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lamb.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Why don't we just for once start talking up our city instead of talking it down, as Councillor Lay has just done. Why don't we celebrate the successes of our great city in the North of England? On the very day that unemployment has fallen to its lowest level in 40 years in this country, thanks to a Conservative Government, I might add.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: In spite of a Conservative Government, Alan.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Perhaps we should stop talking the city down and start talking it up.

When I first read Councillor Blake's paper actually as I went through it, I thought I can agree with all of this and there are lots of things you put in it until, as

ever, you have to politicise it and draw dividing lines and make things difficult and make it impossible for people to support you.

There was a mantra when both of us were involved in the Children's Services agenda, and I am sure it is still there, that we should do things with people, not to them and for them. You do not seem to have taken that approach with you into Leadership of the Council. You now seem to expect the Government to do everything for you and blame them for everything that goes wrong. As always, the things that are going well in the city you would like to take all the credit for; the things that are not going so well, it is always the Government's fault. The solution on every occasion when you go back through all the White Papers that have been submitted since Councillor Blake became Leader, the solution nearly every time is to write a letter. Write a letter and shout at the Government and tell them how awful it is and they should give us some more money, that it is all their fault, and it is the same again here.

We do not disagree. We need HS2, we can sign up to that. We should be starting at both ends and getting on with it as quickly as possible. Councillor Wakefield was right earlier, we should be getting on with HS3. There are so many things that we can do more and we could be working together, but the approach is all wrong.

As Councillor Procter pointed out earlier, if all you ever do is shout hysterically, all shrill, at the Government demanding more, blaming them for everything, is it a huge surprise when you do not get a great response?

This Government more than any other has devolved power, is desperate to devolve power to this Region. They have given more money, you look at the Growth Deal, you look at the money they have given for transport, you look at the £173m. Let us remember what the last Labour Government did. They put £10bn into Cross Rail and took all the money away from Supertram and all of the projects that we were looking to do that could have grown things in the North of England.

If you genuinely – genuinely, Lord Mayor – want to see a collegiate approach and you genuinely want all party support, why on earth when you put a paper like this do you not come and talk to the other groups and look for a form of words that they might feel comfortable to support? The reason you do not is because you do not want all party support, you want to play politics, you want to make things difficult.

If we had taken a different approach we would have had a devolution deal by now. We have fallen behind because you and your Labour colleagues in this Region, in West Yorkshire and beyond, have failed the people of Leeds and the people of Yorkshire. We should have our devolution by now. The Government has given devolution to the North-East, to Manchester, to Liverpool, to Birmingham. It has shown its commitment to devolution, it has shown its commitment to give more power, more autonomy to local communities.

The question is, why have we not managed it here. You look to blame everybody else again. The blame sits fairly and squarely in that chair over there. It is time Leeds led on this issue. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Buckley.

COUNCILLOR BUCKLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I was going to reserve my right to speak but I do not trust my own arithmetic under the new rule, so I am going to speak now.

In seconding this amendment, I have to say just reference Councillor Lay's remarks, he goes on about the Tories. He told me two years ago he liked Tories. He said, "Oh, I like Tories", so he keeps changing his mind. (*interruption*)

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: He likes you, Neil.

COUNCILLOR BUCKLEY: As Councillor Lamb said, what we are going to get now, as Councillor Lamb has just said, is another letter and the letter is going to be sent down. I have to say, in Whitehall there is a file, it is a big, thick file and it contains all the letters sent from Leeds to Whitehall in the last five years and it has got a label on it. It says "Letters from Leeds moaning, groaning, whingeing", all from Leeds yet again.

Lord Mayor, Councillor Blake talks about a North-South divide. This has been around for decades. It is not a new problem that has just arisen, it has been around under all Governments and it is a problem. We all recognise that. At the moment there is only a North-South divide on this side of the Pennines because Manchester have forged ahead, they have got the Mayor, they have got the devolved funding and they have got the responsibilities whilst this administration in this city is still dithering and still arguing instead of grasping the nettle.

This is not leadership. All this negativity and dithering is making Leeds sound very provincial and parochial and people out there have noticed, they have noticed this.

The Labour White Paper complains about lack of investment in crucial infrastructure such as transport. Clearly it has just slipped their minds that they have been given £174m. Mind you, at present they seem to be relying on some slightly dubious plans on the transport proposals.

First Bus – we have heard about First Bus and the various problems today and part diesel buses which are promoted as the all-singing, all-dancing new thing which they are not. Stuck in traffic whilst cyclists cruise by. A proposal to have half width bus lay-bys just because the bus drivers like them whilst the drivers have to wait. We are going to have park and rides but we are not sure quite where they are all going to be or what market we need to attract – is it the locals or some further afield?

A new improved ring road is proposed with a cycle lane but no bus lane. A target to double bus passengers in ten years, which the administration are in great danger of claiming for their own invention. This ten year target was announced last year, so they have only got nine years left to do it. It is completely unrealistic.

They ought to give this a working title, this whole transport proposals - how to spend £250m and not impress anybody. It is muddled, it is middling and it is mediocre.

Now, Councillor Blake complains that low pay is endemic. This is a problem. It is not just a problem in the United Kingdom, it is right across parts of the Western world and economists have been puzzling as to whether it is immigration or quantitative easing. Quantitative easing, of course, has created an asset bubble which inflates the prices of all their houses and they own lots of them, I realise that, and had the other effect of suppressing wages. This is a fact. It is a problem.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could you just finish your last point, please.

COUNCILLOR BUCKLEY: What we need now, Lord Mayor, is some more leadership on this matter and no more dithering. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Councillor Pryor.

COUNCILLOR PRYOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am very happy to be seconding this White Paper as I believe it seeks to remedy the very real disadvantages suffered by children and young people in the North of the country. I am glad that the White Paper does focus on children and young people, I think while the Lib Dems did make some valuable points I can understand why they would want to keep a White Paper away from the subject of children and young people given they trebled tuition fees and abolished EMA. I think they absolutely should be the focus of what happens in the North as they are the future.

As much as I enjoyed Alan Lamb's traditional speech now to every Council, I think it is absolutely right that we continue to point out how much the money has been cut in the North. Are you saying we should just doff our cap and get on with it? Some of these inequalities are ridiculous.

A report late last year by the Institute for Public Policy Research highlighted that children in the North of England have already fallen behind their southern peers by the age of five, meaning that efforts to tackle education inequality need to start before children even reach school age, and that is exactly why this White Paper does need to focus on children and young people.

With the gap already in existence before children start school, those schools have an uphill struggle, made so much worse by what the IPPR call unfair school funding. The IPPR has called on Government to distribute funds more evenly to help bridge the gap in academic achievement. They went on to say that this gap could lead to the Northern regions losing up to £29bn-worth of productivity. It is not just the IPPE that have voiced concerns about this gap and its potential wider impact. The former Chief Inspector of Schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw, warned that regions are already less prosperous than the south and are in danger of adding a learning deficit to their economic one. He went on to say about people living in the North and Midlands saying:

“If they sense that their children and young people are being denied the opportunities that exist elsewhere, that will feed into the general sense that they are being neglected.”

It is this feeling of neglect of a Government that simply does not care about anyone outside of the Home Counties that is being felt right across the North.

The LGA’s Growing Places report gives stark warnings when it comes to education. It says that 49% of Councils across the country are at risk of being unable to meet demand for secondary school places within the next five years. In Leeds we are faced with a gap of around £88m between the money we need to deliver sufficient school places and the money we actually receive from Government. That shortfall is going to start to bite this financial year.

As we have repeatedly stated, we fully support the call by the LGA to give Councils back the powers to open new maintained schools as well as being able to force academies and free schools to expand if needed. Additionally we are also fully behind calls, again by the cross party LGA, to review the system for allocating Schools Capital and to allow schools and Councils to work together to join up fragmented funding streams locally in a single local capital pot to meet the demands for new places, repair and rebuilding of dilapidated schools and provide best value for money.

We know we have schools in desperate need of repair but we simply do not have the necessary funds to carry these repairs out. Government maintains that money they allocate is based on Local Authorities’ own predictions for numbers but the point is that the basic formula is wrong. If the amount per pupil is inadequate there will never be enough funding to meet demand. It is really very basic stuff.

If children and young people in the North are getting a raw deal from Government and are not being given equality of opportunity with their southern peers, how can they go on to compete on an equal footing in the world of work? If they are not gaining the correct skills how can they help drive the North forward? Then even if they do achieve the same level they will be let down by our under-funded infrastructure that continues to limit their possibilities.

How can it be right that one half of the country can be treated so differently from the other half? It only serves to reinforce the view that this country is being led by a Government whose only concern is bolstering the Tory South at the expense of everyone else. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Pryor. Councillor Groves.

COUNCILLOR GROVES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am delighted to speak in support of this White Paper motion. The North absolutely does not meet its full potential economically, quite simply because we have been abandoned by this Central Government whilst our friends in the South receive back-handed deals and money from vaults that are closed to decision makers in the North like Councillor Blake.

Think about our potential and what the North could bring to the country's economy. It could be real growth for people on the ground and just not for shareholders. We want growth that is inclusive for all.

Northern productivity is a real issue and one which we are working hard to tackle with very limited resources. With Brexit looming we know that we will be challenged and things will be more difficult for us because European funding has connected people to employment and training and once this is lost we absolutely need reassurance from the Government that funding programmes linked to raising skills and providing employment opportunities is repatriated to Local Government at the earliest opportunity. If not, the North-South divide will get even wider and that is not good for the people of Leeds. We must fight for a better deal for the North.

Local Government is and must continue to be the anchor on partnership approaches that forge strong economies and bonds locally and internationally. We are also at the forefront of tackling the skills crisis burdening local economic growth and once again this administration calls on the Government to realise strength-based approaches to raising productivity and closing skills gaps.

It is clear that Local Authorities across the country are having to produce a balancing act when it comes to regeneration programmes, ensuring that any physical transformations are met with improved skills. What greatly hinders this balancing act is a lack of significant investment in transport particularly, which prevents employers recruiting qualified staff and dissuades talented individuals from moving, remaining or returning to the North to take up those high skilled, high paid employment opportunities.

Across the entire Northern Region of the UK transport infrastructure is nothing short of a joke. I was going to talk about the bus services but I think today the Deputation clearly brought home the message of how people struggle on a daily basis and what effect it has on their lives. A bus missing can mean that that person does not get paid for an hour's work and that is really, really disappointing in the 21st Century.

The fact that it can take anything between two and two-and-a-half hours to get from Hull to Manchester is quite simply farcical. You can get from Leeds to London King's Cross – how on earth are we expected to remove the skills gap and raise productivity and tackle low pay in our city when we cannot even provide fast and efficient infrastructure that will help our residents get to work on their own doorstep?

To say I am disappointed in Mr Grayling's comments regarding transport investment in the North would be an under-statement. I am absolutely furious. Mr Grayling is probably sitting in Whitehall having used the extensive Tube service to get to work while we struggle on.

This Government has hampered us, it has failed us. We need the investment and we need it now. We know that leadership is one of the few ways we can get out of this suffocating dark hole those Tories in the South have dug for us. I am, however, pleased to see the early development of a comprehensive talent and skills

plan for Leeds which I hope will go hand in hand with Leeds City Region's Strategic Economic Plan going forward.

THE LORD MAYOR: That is fantastic, thank you so much, Councillor Groves. Thank you. (*Applause*) Councillor Leadley.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, this White Paper understandably links Brexit, regional investment and transport. Brexit looms larger every day. I still believe that its oddest outcome in Leeds is that not many Members of this Council have spoken or warned against it before, even though Leeds had a "Remain" majority in the referendum and it is clear that Brexit will be especially harmful to a city with many European links in trade, finance and professional services.

Leeds lies on a west to east flow of goods, services, ideas and people from Ireland through Dublin then Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Hull and across the North Sea to Holland, north Germany, Scandinavia and the Baltic to St Petersburg and beyond. Movement of all kinds along that access was obstructed for much of the time from 1914 until recent years. One of the reasons behind Leeds's increased prosperity over the past 20 years or so must have been the bringing down of barriers which had blocked that natural flow. Brexit Britain will have fewer links with Europe and be more centred on London and the South-East. If major public sector investment continued, it will be less likely to be made after looking at the needs of the outer regions, and less likely to be moved to ease movement along the west to east access to which I have referred.

Brexit or no Brexit, the west to east link across Northern England is far more important than that between North and South and much more is needed to improve journey times and increase capacity. If there had to be a choice between the two, HS3 from Liverpool to Hull would be better than HS2 to London by way of Birmingham and would help those cities along the HS2 or M62 corridor to build their prosperity standing apart from London and the South-East.

Whatever is left of the British economy after Brexit will be likely to be more concentrated into London than the South-East, so it would become harder to attract major private investment into the regions beyond. Public sector investment will be less likely to look to the outer regions and may be severely curtailed if the national economy becomes less productive overall.

Farage, Brexit, Trump and American isolationism are parts of a process in which two leading English speaking nations are beginning to give up their shares of the leadership of the world. Others such as North Korea stand in the wings. As for Europe, it will carry on without us.

The White Paper highlights major and important changes and problems. The Lib Dem amendment is small but it does try to be more inclusive of our entire population. Thank you, Lord Mayor. I understand that Donald Trump believes that the previous speaker is actually a member of the North Korean oligarchy because of her first name, but there we are!

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Richard Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: I was very interested by Councillor Buckley's comments about transport. I had to smile because we have this cross-party meeting because we are inclusive, Councillor Wakefield and myself, to talk about spending the £174m and a couple of meetings ago we got this real scowl from Councillor Buckley who said, "You have decided where you want to put park and ride in North Leeds, haven't you? I know you have" and Councillor Wakefield, "Well, no, we have not. We absolutely are not bothered, to be honest." We are quite happy to put it in a number of locations that would suit me for it to be. I just want one to be somewhere in North Leeds.

Now he comes here and he is saying well, they have come up with all these ideas. No, there are ideas which we have asked you about because we want to share ownership of them and have your participation in them. Do you not understand that idea, the kind of idea of a big tent because what we could easily have done is just bugger off and make a whole lot of decisions ourselves and just said we were getting on with it. No, we did not but it seems like that is exactly what you wanted.

You do come up with some weird ones. There was the one about you are not putting a bus lane on the ring road. Well, is that not a disgrace! How many buses run up and down the ring road? Sadly, none of them run all the way round and why is that? Why don't we do some work on a road where there are buses running, wouldn't that be a shocker? It is quite amazing.

I am sorry, Councillor Buckley, that I missed your comments on the future of tower blocks because I have to say, there are certainly a lot of residents in my ward who are very happy living in tower blocks and the idea of living in a garden village or something like that might actually be quite offensive to them. Have you ever thought about the cost of that? Have you ever thought how much it would cost to demolish 120 tower blocks across this city and then re-house them, because the other problem you would have is that your housing target would have to go up to meet it. Well, it would. I am sorry, Neil, you cannot shake your head at me, it would. It is desperate, the stuff we are getting from the Tories.

Alan made his lovely speech, "Let us celebrate what we do". I will happily celebrate some of the things we have done like the Flood Alleviation Scheme Phase 1, the Scheme Part 2 which we will be putting our bid into Government for soon, Trinity, Victoria Gate, plans for HS2, what we have done on the EZ, getting the HS2 depot to go there – fantastic things that we are doing...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: What else have the Romans done for us?

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: ...but it is actually about the scale of Government investment. We do get Government investment, I am not going to pretend we do not, but it is the scale compared to what you see in London and that is the problem. We are missing out.

I do not want to go into ancient history, particularly with Councillor Buckley's strange comments about housing which clearly follow the kind of Rees Mogg model

of politics. We have had our housing investment, we could have built many, many Council houses in this city if it had not been for successive Tory Governments, and particularly Osborn's rent cut, because that at a stroke meant that we were not able to deliver a lot of new homes for people who desperately need them.

Do you know, it is sad that you have no concept of actually what is going on in this city and, sadly, that extends to a number of other Members of your group.

I absolutely support what Judith has said today; let us vote for this motion. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Yes, our amendment, it was put in for a particular purpose and I am interested that Councillor Pryor, we knew you were going to say something about a child friendly city, "I am the new Lead Member for Children," but this debate is about the city so you just need to widen your perception a little bit.

Actually, through the wider investment in transport, for instance, we are actually encouraging a lot of our young people to leave the city. We want them to have the opportunity to be able to work in Manchester, for instance, if they live in Leeds, or if they want to work in Leeds they might want to live in Manchester. It is that fluidity which actually enables our economy to grow and then if we have some really good jobs for our young people to go to, whether that job is in Bradford or it is in Hull or whatever, they might be able to actually spend a bit more in their community and it generates good will.

The infrastructure as well is not just about transport. When you are talking about housing we are getting back to the point we made earlier about the extra care housing and how it needs leadership to actually make it go forward, because until you actually build stuff like extra care housing, then those older citizens in this city who we also have a commitment to because we are also supposed to be age friendly as well as child friendly but no-one ever talks about age friendly. If we do not enable our older citizens to make more decisions for themselves and to actually have choice as to where they wish to live, then we will not enable our housing market to be that much more flexible to allow those younger people also to have better options to move into.

That kind of investment is something that this Council can do and unfortunately it is the debate about, "Oh, we have given you loads of money" and then you are going, "Oh, you have not given us enough." Well, it never will be enough. There are always great ideas that need funding and Central Government always holds on to the money that it does not want to spend so, for instance, it was a little bit unfair of you to say that the Labour Government did not invest as much as the Tories have since 2010. Well, there was a whole lot of hospitals built, I seem to remember, under Tony Blair; there was a whole load of schools that got rebuilt under Building Schools for the Future. Yes, they were all paid for through PFI and the problem is that Central Government just is not honest about what good public services or good public infrastructure costs and they all have their different versions of saying

it. Labour says we can have it and we will pay later – or you will pay later – and you lot just say well, actually, you do not need it as much as our friends in the South-East because you are not as productive as our friends in the South-East, so we will put more investment where we get better outcomes. Those algorithms are made by civil servants that live in the South-East, so it is a continuum.

We do need to make that pressure that Councillor Blake is talking about, we do need to show some leadership and if it means going to see Mr Barnier, it is usually because David Davis is not interested. How many seats around that negotiating table are available for Leaders from the North? None, as far as I am concerned, none, so we do not get a voice at that negotiating table. Sometimes you have got to make your own weather.

I am quite happy that Councillor Blake has chosen to do that but what I will say is, make your own weather at home as well and do not just wait for a new Government to turn up that is going to be nicer to you with money because you will have wasted five years of opportunity of making your own weather. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Stephenson.

COUNCILLOR STEPHENSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Following on from that, I think Councillor Procter had a very fine point earlier on and I am sure Michel Barnier will be wondering indeed who the Leader of Leeds City Council is and why she is badgering his door. Perhaps he might want to ask, well, you are moaning about the UK Government at present, what did you do when you were in power? I think it was alluded to earlier on. The picture was not quite as rosy as you would like to point out, was it? Where was all this money coming into the North? Where was all the transport investment into the North which we have seen record levels of under this Government?

The point still stands, and the reason I am happy to support the amendment put forward by my Group, is because yet again you are talking down the achievements of this great city. You are talking down the achievements that businesses in this city have achieved thanks to the Conservative Government's long term economic plan, as it were *(interruption)* – I am not going to say the rest, I am not going to go down strong and stable and all the rest of it!

Let us just look at some of the achievements that this great city has achieved because of that plan. The UK's largest Growth Deal agreed for the Leeds City Region; we have the fastest private sector jobs growth of any UK city; we have the largest city concentration of financial and professional services and digital jobs outside of London; recording the highest level of productivity; and in the Leader of Council's own words, a strong economy that has enabled the city to recover well from recession. A strong economy thanks to the Conservatives in Government.

Coming back to the issue, though, about investment and comparing to other cities, it is this rhetoric that we always hear and it focuses on pitting one group against the other. It was originally the Scots versus the English; now it is Northerners versus Southerners. It is always us against them. It is the prime example of the politics of envy espoused by Members sat opposite.

If we dig a little deeper in what they mean about the South, they actually mean London and the problem there is, if you look at any major growing economy across the world, look, for example, at the end of the second quarter this year, the top five countries to deliver the biggest year-on-year economic growth were Bhutan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire and India. If you look deeper within that economic structure, where is growth happening in those cities? I am not going to attempt to pronounce all the capital cities but if you go and look them up you will find that it is the capital cities where the major growth is occurring.

If the Anglo Saxons had decided to make Leeds the capital, you would not be sat here today complaining that the capital cities get more than other cities, because capital cities are naturally an attraction – an attraction for commerce and business and investment. When London wins UK plc wins, and when UK plc wins, Leeds wins too and we are seeing that first hand from a record amount of investment that city is receiving in transport and in investment under this Conservative Government which is stark – stark, colleagues – in contrast to what happened under the last Labour Government and some Members opposite ought to remember - indeed, some Members opposite who were in that governing party at the time – ought to remember how you let down (yes, you let down) this city. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Apologies, Councillor Robinson, the guillotine has come down on your this time, I am afraid. Councillor Blake, if you would like to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I knew there had been something missing in my life over the last couple of years and that is being mauled by the Lamb of the Conservative Party over there. I am delighted that you chose to make your speech in such a disparaging way with even more women in the audience to listen to you. I do not think that hurts, that more women in this city hear what you have to say.

You just really give the impression of being in complete denial about what is actually happening in the North of this country, and that is why we are so frustrated by your arguments. What we are talking about is rebalancing the economy, giving the North what it is due, looking at the figures, the investment that has gone into the South-East and saying actually, do you know what, for the whole country it would be better if we got what is due. As I said, £59bn over the last ten years that should have come into this country.

You know, I really do wish that you would read Transport for the North's Economic Review and then you would understand what we are talking about. We are talking about raising our game, raising our ambition. We know in our cities across the North that we have incredible successes but we know that too many people are missing out from the success that we create, and in that Economic Review what we are talking about if we rebalanced the economy in this country, is that the North would see a boost to the economic growth by £97bn a year by 2050 and create 850,000 jobs. Isn't that a prize worth arguing for?

Actually, you know, this idea that the streets of Manchester and Liverpool are paved with gold, I will you, at the forefront of the argument from the North to rebalance the economy to get more investment into the North, are the Leaders and Mayors of Manchester and Liverpool. Don't you think that the changes to electrification on the line between Leeds and Manchester is going to have an equally detrimental effect on Manchester? Just get your arguments sorted out.

I want to just say, Jonathan, actually I understand what you are saying about the broader picture but for the purpose of this we were talking about infrastructure investment, particularly the £88m that this city is short in terms of the school places that we have to build. That was the focus of what we are doing.

Complacency – that figure that came out about employment today, the report, have you actually read it? OK, unemployment has fallen but average earnings only rose 2.1 to 2.9, meaning the cost of living has been squeezed, in real terms wages have fallen by 0.4% because of inflation, a real term cut. The Resolution Foundation has calculated that average earnings are £16 per week below their peak in 2007 meaning workers are around £830 per year worse off. In the public sector it is even worse. Look at the people living in poverty. Look at in-work poverty, the number of children in the North in this city that are living in poverty and their parents are in work. We are not just demanding money from Government, we want powers, we want devolution and we want it now. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, I would like to call for the vote firstly on the amendment in the name of Councillor Campbell. *(A vote was taken)* Actually that is LOST.

Second amendment in the name of Councillor Lamb, if I could call for votes. *(A vote was taken)* that also is LOST.

If I could now finally call for votes on the motion in the name of Councillor Blake. *(A vote was taken)* That is actually CARRIED. Thank you.

ITEM 12 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality)

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move on to the third and final White Paper of the day and I must admit, purple being my favourite colour I did actually notice that we have some guests, new guests up in the gallery here, I perceive specifically to listen to this debate. *(Applause)*

If I can start by calling on Councillor Field.

COUNCILLOR FIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor and that you all *(to the public gallery)* for coming today.

In moving this White Paper we are fully committed to the WASPI cause. We were first contacted at the beginning of the year by our resident Elaine Ackroyd, who

is up there, who inspired us and continues to inspire us with her dedication to fighting the injustice affecting some 2.6 million women in the UK.

The 1995 Pension Act included plans to increase women's state pension age to 65, the same as men's. WASPI agreed with the equalisation but not the unfair way the changes were implemented with little or no personal notice, faster than promised and no time to make alternative plans.

What the WASPI women are asking for is quite simple – a bridging pension to provide an income until State pension age, not means tested and with compensation for losses for those women who have already reached their State pension age. They are not asking for the pension age to revert to age 60 and I think that is very important.

With no other source of income, until the 1990s many women were not allowed to join company pension schemes. Many are carers or in poor health and securing work is proving impossible and zero hours contracts or Job Seekers' Allowance are the only alternative.

1950s women have been singled out for unfair and unequal treatment because of the way the increases to their State pension age have been introduced. Recommendations to give fair notice were ignored. Many women report receiving little or no notice. They were not appropriately or personally notified of the first changes in 1995 and a significant number have been stricken for a second time when in 2011 further increases to the State pension age were brought in faster than promised.

Women of similar age have had to wait disproportionately longer for their pension. A one year difference in birthday can make an almost three year difference to the State pension age. Letters were sent out to women born between 6th April 1951 and 5th April 1953 14 years after the 1995 Pensions Act. A large percentage of these women only received a letter advising them of significant increases to their State pension age within one year of their expected State pension. That is as little as one year's notice of up to a six year increase to their State pension age, compared to men who received six years' notice of a one year rise to their State pension age. This is shameful. Many women report receiving no letter ever, or letters sent to the wrong address despite notifying the DWP.

This is quite simply a national disgrace and as a Council on behalf of the women we represent we should call upon the Government to act. Thank you.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell, please.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Could I second and reserve my right to speak, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Coupar.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor. I am really pleased to have the opportunity to move this amendment and give further support for the WASPI campaign and I too would like to welcome the women from WASPI who are in the public gallery today, including members from my own ward too.

Those who have been paying attention will know that I have long championed this cause. Indeed, this time last year I gave my support for this campaign in full Council in response to a question from my colleague Councillor Harland. I am also really pleased that this campaign has been supported by the Labour Party nationally. Page 54 of the Labour Party manifesto, For the Many, Not the Few, states that over 2.5 million women born in the 1950s have had their State pension aged changed without fair notification. These women deserve both recognition for the injustice they have suffered and some kind of compensation for their losses. This issue is unfortunately not mentioned in the Conservative Party manifesto or even, Councillor Campbell, in the Liberal Democrat manifesto.

This is unfortunate as it is clear that changes are needed and a recent report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies found that today's increase in State pension age has boosted Government coffers by £5.1bn per year whilst at the same time leaving 1.1 million women in their sixties worse off by an average of £32 per week. This will undoubtedly have a bigger impact on lower income households.

The Institute of Fiscal Studies has further estimated a knock-on effect of a 6.4 percentage point increase in the absolute income poverty rate of women aged between 60 and 62. A six year loss of income has resulted in some women losing as much as £40,000 in total.

As others have stated, the principle of pension equality is a reasonable one. However, we have a situation where women in their sixties are being effectively punished based on an accident of when they were born. Therefore, what is required is some kind of transitional arrangement.

I understand that the Government continues to rule this out because it will cost money, and we all know that there is no magic money tree. It is true that £1.5bn can be found for the DUP so that Theresa May can hold on to her position but for something like this, oh no, it is not possible. The truth is Central Government does have the resources to find money for such a scheme. They choose not to because beyond token words about those who are just about managing, they will always choose to do nothing for those who are struggling in Britain today.

To be fair, we have had one suggestion from the Government about how best to move forward. Guy Opperman, who is Parliamentary Under Secretary to the DWP and, I would hazard a guess, a direct descendant of Marie Antoinette, has suggested that all the people affected by the changes to the State pension age should take up apprenticeships as a route to re-employment, so I suppose that's all right then.

I look forward to hearing what Councillor Latty has to say, but we moved this amendment because we believe that the blame lays fairly and squarely on this Conservative Government. You are letting people down and you are wrong.
(Applause and cheers)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Heselwood, please.

COUNCILLOR HESELWOOD: Lord Mayor, comrades (this lot are) and I would like to thank Leeds WASPI women for coming along today, you have all our support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

I am very pleased to be seconding the amendment to this White Paper on behalf of the Labour Group. This amendment that we put forward refers to the hardship that women affected by the changes to State pensions are suffering. What I would like to do, a little bit different to the other speeches, is share with you some real experience that women are suffering from with this hardship.

The majority of the women who are affected by this have worked since the early 1970s, often taking time out to raise children and other caring responsibilities that they have taken on, and although they have paid National Insurance for all of that time, they now find the goalposts have changed and been told that they have not actually paid enough National Insurance to claim their State pension, and are having to work later and later to pay that National Insurance.

So, Anita. Just before she was 60 she was told that she would not receive a State pension until she was 62, but not long afterwards was told that this was now going to be moved to age 65, basically losing out on five years of income. Sue, her pension has been delayed by six years now from 2014 to 2020, and that equates to £36,000 in lost pension payments for her.

Carole. Carole is diagnosed with complex medical needs and just before she was due to draw her pension at 60 was told that she would have to wait until she was 65. She now fears that she will not actually live long enough to start drawing that pension. This is huge inequality.

Some women I know who are affected by this are having to sell their houses to make ends meet until they qualify for their State pension to be paid, which is an absolute disgrace.

As Councillor Coupar has said, Labour are the only political party to place support for our WASPI women in our recent General Election manifesto, which means that the Tories and the Lib Dems completely ignored 3.5 million women when you put your manifestos together. How do you feel about that? Also the SNP did support it – I do not want a legal challenge – they are on board. *(laughter)*

Despite this there are quite a lot of Tory MPs who support the WASPI campaign so I am slightly confused as to why the Tories want to cut this motion and cut the real substance out of it as they are doing with their amendment, and we wait to hear.

As we all know, WASPI stands for Women Against State Pension Inequality, “inequality” being the most important word in that statement and, Council, this is blatant discrimination against women and it needs dealing with and tackling, so please support. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Pat Latty.

COUNCILLOR P LATTY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to welcome the ladies in the gallery, thank you. In moving this amendment on behalf of the Conservative Group I would like to say that we do recognise the concerns of the WASPI women campaigning on behalf of those born in the 1950s, now reaching retirement age. It is true that the State pension rules have been changed and the timetable has been accelerated and as a result some women are having to alter their retirement plans. There are a few points that I think are worth making.

The first thing to say is that we strongly support equalisation of the State pension age. The Government is seeking to address inequality in pensions law and I think we all agree – indeed the WASPI women themselves agree – that in this modern world men and women should receive their State pension at the same age.

The question then becomes how we achieve this in a fair way. Now the Government says that they did write to the women affected to let them know about the changes, though a number of them have disputed this. It is worth noting that the all party Work and Pensions Select Committee said in March 2016 that more should have been done to communicate the planned changes, especially between 1995 and 2009. Looking at those dates, I think we can probably agree that there may be faults on the part of successive Governments in respect of communicating the changes. The important thing is what we do now.

The Government has listened to concerns and has already taken action to mitigate some of the impact of the changes. It initially intended for the equalised State pension age to rise to 66 by April 2020. However, because of concerns expressed at the short notice of significant increases for some women, the maximum increase has now been limited. This concession alone cost the Exchequer £1.1bn. This does show the huge cost of making changes to the arrangements and we should not pretend that making further modifications would be straightforward or inexpensive.

I think it is also worth noting that the new State pension will be more generous for many women who have historically done less well under the current two-tier system, largely as a result of lower average earnings and part-time working. The average woman reaching State pension age in the first 40 years of the new State pension is estimated to receive ten per cent more State pension over her lifetime than the average man.

Having said all that, the changes will affect a number of women in Leeds and across the country who are planning for their retirement and there are still concerns about the implementation of the new State pension arrangements. We should be sensitive to those concerns and see what we can do to address them. I therefore see no issue in asking the Government to again review the situation to make sure it is offering all the support and assistance it can to the women affected. A number of proposals including from WASPI have been on the table suggesting different ways that the concerns might be addressed. If some compromise can be reached between

the Government and the women affected which provides workable transitional arrangements, then that is something we would support.

THE LORD MAYOR: That is lovely, thank you, Councillor Latty.
(*Applause*) Thank you. Councillor Robinson.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: I second and support the right to speak, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ann Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. First of all I have to say that our MP, Caroline Lucas, did actually support WASPI and continues to support WASPI. She has during the last session of Parliament tried to keep the issue on the agenda and she was the co-chair of a group of MPs giving cross party support to the WASPI campaign in Parliament.

Now, we go back to how all this started was that the plan was to raise the qualifying age for women to receive the State pension to 65. We Greens agree that the pension age should be equal for both men and women. The Government was to phase in the change from 2010 to 2020 but the Coalition Government in 2010 decided to acceleration that timetable, arguing that the State pension was becoming increasingly unaffordable.

Under the 2011 Pensions Act, the new qualifying age of 65 for women was brought forward to 2018. Also the qualifying age for men and women would be raised to 66 by October 2020. Those changes were expected to save £30bn. In total, around 2.6 million women were affected by the 2011 changes. While some of them had time to adapt to a longer working life, for others the change came as a shock. In particular, around 300,000 women born between December 1953 and October 1954 and getting close to their pension age were made to wait an extra 18 months.

They complained they had not been given time to adjust to the new retirement age and also that then changes in 2011 and 1995 had not been clearly communicated.

We Greens, as I have said with our MP but all of us support WASPI and we believe that they should continue campaigning but we also believe that the Government should look at this again and take the cases that they are bringing with them seriously and do something about it, so we will be supporting the Independents' motion that has been put forward asking for the Government to review it. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I also welcome our guests this evening from WASPI. I think it has probably been an experience for you because the debate today has unfortunately, in my opinion, fallen into that usual trap that we have where we end up with a political knock-about. One of the reasons that we agreed to support the Garforth and Swillington Independents' White Paper was that we believe that this is an anomaly, we all recognise that this is an anomaly and we all believe that something should be done about it and so we felt that it was a

fairly simple, straightforward White Paper resolution that would gather broad support across the entire Council Chamber and was something we could go forward together with and again lobby Government to do something about this particular anomaly.

Unfortunately, and this is where we have trouble with supporting the Labour amendment, is that the Labour Party have used this as a reason to in effect hijack a White Paper resolution and so we have ended up in a situation where the speakers from the Labour Group have proceeded to harangue and in some ways abuse Members of the Opposition party. That is no way to get a consensus view to move forward.

We strongly believe there is a great anomaly in relation to women's pensions, particularly for your particular age group, and I can say that because I was born in 1950, but the way forward is not to have a slanging match across the Council. It is actually to have a consensus view about where we go forward and how we lobby Government to move. At the moment the debate has degenerated into a slanging match and it is unfortunate.

As I said, I am more than happy to do that and I suppose actually Councillor Coupar was attempting to put forward a helpful amendment. It is just unfortunate it was in a rather unhelpful manner. I think we are all attempting to sing off the same song sheet and it seems to me that the original resolution encompasses everything we would like to do and therefore that should be the one we support. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on behalf of what I think is Councillor Coupar's very helpful amendment to a White Paper which I think very much keeps the spirit of the original White Paper but I think it goes into a little bit more detail on some of the issues. We come to Leeds Council Chamber to debate and I think debates they are, and I think there are a couple of things I have already heard that I think need raising.

I think this has been spoken about by some people, as Councillor Campbell just said, as an anomaly. It is not an anomaly, it is an injustice and it is an injustice that has been caused by a change to people's pension rights that they thought they were accruing and they thought they were putting into. Councillor Coupar's incredibly helpful and constructive amendment does have that suggestion that clearly the actions of the Government suggests that the law needs changing. Where people accrue pension rights it should be written into legislation that those rights are protected until they claim them as pensions. I do not think that is a controversial thing, I think that is incredibly helpful and constructive.

It brings me on to my second point about these accrued pension rights. Councillor Latty referred to them as dealing with it as "not inexpensive". Again, the women that are affected by this have paid in through tax and National Insurance expecting a pension on their retirement date and the goalposts were very much moved right at the end on what that retirement date is. It might cost money to fix but it is justice for what people have paid into.

I think again, it is one of those debates and again, as Councillor Heselwood mentioned, we need to reflect on the impact on the people affected by this. We are talking about people now who are still working, who may have entered the labour market full-time work, left school at 15 in the 1960s and are still working today. Jobs that back in the day, if not right through to today, are still maybe menial, still maybe manual, still maybe involve heavy work that people have been doing for decades and decades expecting a decent retirement at the end and people have had their pension rights taken away from them.

We know, I am looking at some of the facts here, only six in ten women have a private pension or a pension outside the State pension where for men that is closer to eight or nine in ten. Even where people do work in jobs with pensions and obviously the Council as the biggest employer in the city offers all our staff a final salary pension, still women are likely to have earned 60% less than men. There is a massive injustice here. I think nobody is arguing about that, nobody is arguing that we need to represent the possibly 30,000 to 35,000 women. I think all the comments that have been made are mostly helpful. Our amendment is certainly intended to be helpful and I support Councillor Coupar's amendment. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Robinson.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Welcome also to the visitors this evening and thank you for coming along and listening to tonight's debate. I declare a slight interest as my mother would fall into the WASPI category but I am not going to ask Members in this Chamber to declare if they would fall into the WASPI category either. That would be unbecoming of me and my mother taught me better than that. Hands are popping up now of their own volition – and the Lord Mayor herself. There we go.

There are lessons to be learned from tonight's debate and there are lessons to be learned for the Government from this debate and for the debate that has gone on in other places as well. Some of those lessons are about how you treat people who have paid into the system and are expecting certain things when they reach retirement and the lessons that you also leave for the next generation.

Some of the things which the Government has done, which are things like mandating those in work to join pension schemes, are very, very positive steps. Schemes such as looking to try and make sure we teach more people in school, more young students, about signing up for pensions and financial management. These are positive steps. People may turn round and say how does that relate to the State pension scheme. It relates to the State pension scheme because I think that for a person of my generation you have got to start to think slightly differently about your State pension.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Stole the money off them. Pay it back.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: Thank you, because the State pension age is going to start to go up and for somebody of my generation it might mean that you never actually see the State pension age. It is going up to 66, 68, 70 perhaps in the

future and beyond, and we actually need to think a little more laterally about how we look at pension schemes as a younger generation and think about how we save for the future.

The Labour amendment is not helpful because it is just a chance to kick the Government, it is just a chance to have another pop and make something political.

COUNCILLOR: Tell that to Pickles.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: You say tell that to Pickles – I would have a little bit more respect for you talking about WASPI if you had changed something in the 13 years you were in Government rather than talking about it. The 1995 Act and the 2011 Act there was a great big chunk of 13 years when you were in Government and had a chance to change things.

COUNCILLOR: It was 2011.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: A very good politician in this Chamber, Councillor Gruen, said earlier tonight sometimes you have to look at what is said and sometimes you have to look at what is not said, and what is not said is how you would pay for this scheme as well. You have not mentioned this, it has not been mentioned at all. *(interruption)*

I would also have a little bit more respect for the Labour amendment if it contained a capital “C” and a capital “G” in terms of Conservative Government.

Lord Mayor, there is a lot of vocal noise and I can understand.

THE LORD MAYOR: There is a lot of muttering, so if we can just keep it down, please.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: I can understand why that is, thank you, Lord Mayor, it is an emotive issue and I can understand that they would like to see a change. What I would say is that I will not be voting against the Garforth Independents’ motion that has been put forward. I will be voting for the amendment that Councillor Latty has put forward. I think it is right that we ask the Government to look at something again, I think it is right that we ask them to review things where you see something that you feel is an inequality.

I cannot say tonight personally that I am going to be able to commit to there being an absolute change but for the Government to look again at something and to have a rethink about something I do not think is a completely inappropriate ask. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Field, if you would like to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR FIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Thank you for everyone’s comments. I am not going to make any political points or comment on them.

In March this year I accompanied women from my ward and neighbouring wards to the WASPI demonstration in Westminster. Over 6,000 women attended in peaceful and frankly inspirational solidarity. I heard many accounts of women being forced to take zero hours, temporary and low paid contracts which offered no financial security; of women being forced to accept jobs which adversely affect their health; of women enduring humiliating tests or face sanctions from the DWP; of single, divorced or widowed women who have no other source of income and women who have lost their independence, relying on husbands, partners or other family members to support them; of women who are unable to work as they care for elderly or ill parents or are in ill health themselves.

As things currently stand a lack of adequate personal notification, a job market unreceptive to women in their sixties, ongoing caring responsibilities and further increases to the State pension age in 2011 have left many women struggling and fraught with worry. That is more these older women are disadvantaged not only by their present low status but by the repercussions of a lifetime of both explicit and hidden discrimination.

If I could give an example, a woman born in 1951 may have been 15 when she left school to start work, 24 when the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Act came into force, 32 when the Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value amendment was added, 43 when every working woman won the right to take maternity leave. She will have been subjected to direct and indirect sexism both in the workplace and perhaps at home. She will have had the bare minimum, if any, State support in caring for her children.

Female domestic labour and care work have benefited the economy, often to the detriment of older women's freedom, health and happiness. That many women are facing poverty in old age because they supposedly did not work and are now deemed unemployable only compounds the unfairness they have withstood for years.

This is nothing less than systematic oppression of women as a class and I would like to conclude by thanking Elaine and Pam and every other WASPI who has come here today to carry on the fight against it. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I would now like to call for the vote. If we can start, please, with a vote on the amendment in the name of Councillor Coupar. *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

If we can now call on the votes for the amendment in the name of Councillor Pat Latty, please. *(A vote was taken)* I am afraid that is LOST.

Now we have the substantive motion, which is in the name of Councillor Coupar. *(A vote was taken)* Therefore I declare that Councillor Coupar's substantive motion is CARRIED. Thank you. *(Applause)*

(Councillors gave a standing ovation to the WASPI members in the public gallery)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, everybody. Now for those of you who do not know I have actually accepted another Civic engagement this evening so I need to be out of that car park quite quickly, so anybody blocking me in is in big trouble! Thank you all for attending and we will see you here again at 1.00pm on 8th November. Thank you.

(The meeting closed at 7.33pm)

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