

## DEPUTATION ONE – LEEDS DANCE COMMUNITY

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. I know you have already started performing in the Banqueting Hall, I think those who saw, wonderful, it was an enjoyable start to this afternoon. Please make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the Members of your Deputation.

MR M SKIPPER: Lord Mayor, Leader of the Council and Councillors of Leeds, my name is Mark Skipper, I am Chief Executive of Northern Ballet. I am accompanied today by Wieke Eringa, who is the Chief Executive and Artistic Director of Yorkshire Dance; Sharon Watson, who is the Artistic Director of Phoenix Dance Theatre; Balbir Singh, who is the Artistic Director of Balbir Singh Dance Company, and Janet Smith, who is Principal of the Northern School of Contemporary Dance.

Thank you very much for giving us this opportunity to ask Members for their recognition and endorsement of the Leeds dance community and to share with you our collective ambition to make Leeds the UK's top city for Dance.

As you have seen, today we are launching the Leeds City of Dance map and we wanted to show how Leeds is a city of dance and how the city is connected to the rest of the UK, and to the rest of the world, through dance.

Leeds has the UK's richest dance ecology outside of London. Last year, dance generated an income of more than £11.5m and 300,000 people were an audience for dance in Leeds or dance from Leeds. There are three dedicated dance buildings with a total of 20 dance studios and three theatres, two international touring companies, one of the first national dance agencies, the only Government-funded dance conservatoire north of London, six theatres that programme dance and scores of dance companies, independent artists and commercial dance schools.

Dance is important in education, health, social cohesion and regeneration. People dance for fun, for fitness, to meet others or to express their creativity. Research tells us that dance is a popular activity for five million participants, or close to 10% of the UK population. Dance is second only to football as the most popular activity for school children.

There is a rich mix of diverse dance flourishing in Leeds, representing a wide variety of cultural traditions. Thousands of people are dancing everywhere from dance gymnastics led by RJC to Kathak dances led by Balbir Singh Dance Company and professional classes at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance.

Leeds is a brilliant place for young people to develop their talent and make dance part of their lives. Young people from diverse social and economic and cultural backgrounds have a breadth of opportunity from grassroots participation in a wide range of dance styles to quality pre-vocational training.

Our touring companies are proud ambassadors for Leeds, a rich mix of international dance artists and students regularly visit and live in Leeds, adding a vibrant dimension to its cultural life. We support exceptional talent and future

leadership through world-class training, education and employment. Art form development is driven from Leeds through nurturing new creative talent within companies but also through other opportunities, such as Yorkshire Dance's unique Juncture Festival.

In some of the city's showcase events dance regularly takes centre stage: the BBC's Frankenstein's Wedding at Kirkstall Abbey; Phoenix's Ghost Peloton in the Yorkshire Festival; the 2012 Cultural Olympiad Project, Leeds Canvas, and the Olympic Torch procession.

The city attracts world class talent. Northern Ballet's premier dancer Martha Leebolt won the National Dance Award for Outstanding Classical Female Performance and Tobias Batley has since been nominated twice for Outstanding Classical Male Performance. Recently, over a thousand professional dancers applied for positions with Phoenix and Northern Ballet.

Long term investment in dance in Leeds is a success story. Several iconic organisations have led three decades of learning in schools and communities and given performances which have developed audiences who feel that access to dance and attending a dance performance is a vital part of their lives.

We want to let the world know that Leeds is united in its ambitions to make the city the UK's top city for dance. A number of the dance companies in Leeds are supported financially directly and indirectly by the City Council, for which we are all very grateful. You will be pleased to know that we are not coming here today asking for money, although... *(laughter)* However, what we would like is for you to consider what promotional and marketing support you could give to promote Leeds as a brilliant city for dance. Perhaps this is through the work of your Marketing teams or through the work of Leeds and Partners.

Finally, should Leeds bid for the European Capital of Culture 2023, the dance community will 100% back the bid and work with you to make the campaign a success. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Mark. Councillor Harper.

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

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? *(A vote was taken)* That is certainly CARRIED.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon and enjoy the rest of the day. Thank you. *(Applause)*