

DEPUTATION THREE  
LOCAL RESIDENTS OF HYDE PARK

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your deputation.

MS T CLEVELAND: My Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, I am a resident of Hyde Park and my name is Tara Cleveland. I am here today with Yasmin Adiva, Wayne Beckford, the Reverend David Calder and Sharon Coleman.

Hyde Park is suffering. It has been suffering for years. In his book *Dark Heart: The shocking truth about hidden Britain*, Nick Davies described Hyde Park shortly after the riots when the Newlands pub was burned down. He wrote:

“It is, indeed, as if some powerful explosion has swept through Hyde Park, laying waste everything in its path, and all the fragments that have been left behind form one clear, overwhelming pattern. This community has collapsed... why... There is poverty in Hyde Park.”

A major factor in Hyde Park's suffering is its high level of population density. Hyde Park is the most crowded area in Leeds. Hyde Park has more than 1.5 times the population density as the next area down on the list. Hyde Park has a higher population density than the poorest areas of Moss Side (49 people per square hectare) or Tower Hamlets (99 people per square hectare). There are an average of 186 people per square hectare living in Hyde Park. The average per hectare in Leeds overall is twelve people - twelve people as compared to 186.

Hyde Park is full of tiny terraced houses that have been converted from family homes into HMOs crammed with as many people as possible. Many houses have been carved up with tiny bedrooms, no common rooms and no yards. This sub-standard housing is rife in our community.

The people living in Hyde Park come from wildly different population groups. There are long-term (mainly British) residents, a strong community of South Asians (some newly immigrated and some who have been in the area for generations) and a very large and growing student population. These groups have very different customs, needs and living styles and this can provoke high levels of tension in the area.

The number of students and young people has been growing each year for the last ten years and the rest of the population has been declining. Over 80% of the population in Hyde Park is aged 16-29. A quarter of the population leaves the area every year – to be replaced with newcomers. This indicates a very weak level of commitment to the neighbourhood by a large portion of the population. Such low levels of commitment can be evidenced by the lack of care for houses and gardens, rubbish and rubbish bins strewn on the streets and the detritus and debris left after a weekend spent partying.

Instead of thriving small businesses, exciting retailers and restaurants with delicious wholesome food, our main streets are lined with cheap and unhealthy take-aways, letting agencies and boarded –up shop fronts.

Hyde Park also has a hidden layer of poverty. Although it is not one of the very lowest Super Output Areas (as per the last census), the transitory population of students skews the characteristics of the neighbourhood. Once people ages 18-24 are removed from the equation, Hyde Park may compare with some of the most impoverished areas of Leeds. The jobless rate of 25 to 49 year olds is 1.5 times the average in Leeds and for our neighbours aged 50-65 the jobless rate is more than twice the Leeds average. In fact only 21% of the population in Hyde Park is counted as beings economically active. What the statistics do not tell us is the level of deprivation when students are not counted.

Crime as well, especially burglary and theft from vehicles, is a problem in Hyde Park. Where crime in Leeds overall has been reduced by over, 9% in Hyde Park, it has grown by 11% in the last year. Theft from vehicles has increased by 90% in the last year. In month by month comparison, during the ten months of this year crime had increased over past year. As well, the amount of anti-social behaviour has also risen this year. While Hyde Park is not the most violent, crime-ridden area of Leeds, the growth in crime is worrying and may indicate deeper social malaise.

There are underlying and unacknowledged levels of poverty and deprivation in the Hyde Park area – levels that are not easily discovered by reading traditional census statistics or comparing Hyde Park directly with other areas. Our community is terribly overcrowded. The diversity in Hyde Park also masks problems of social cohesion and conflict between population groups.

We ask the Council not to ignore our community and it needs. We ask the Council to look carefully at our area and help us to determine solutions to our problems and rejuvenate our deteriorating neighbourhood. Hyde Park should never again be ‘laid waste’ by the ‘powerful explosion’ of deprivation and a lack of social cohesion.

Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I move that the contents of the deputation be referred to Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: I second, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call for the vote, please? *(A vote was taken)*

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 thank you for coming to the Council today. *(Applause)*