

DEPUTATION FOUR – ACCESS COMMITTEE FOR LEEDS

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Could you please make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and could you please begin by introducing yourself and then the members of your Deputation.

MR T McSHARRY: Thank you, Lord Mayor, and elected Members, and good afternoon. My name is Tim McSharry and supporting this Deputation is Mary Naylor MBE, Linda Watson, Phil Gleeson, David Cuthbert.

This Deputation is dedicated to the memory of our Big Dave Littlewood and the title is Celebrating Volunteers of Leeds.

Could I begin with a really difficult challenge for everyone in this Chamber today, by asking you to imagine, just for a moment, what our great city of Leeds would be without its volunteers? Who would notice? What would be missing? What would be lost? What would stop? Who would suffer? Who would pay the price?

The simple truth is, we all would pay and the cost would have an enormous impact at every level across the whole city. Every aspect of the Vision for Leeds, our future success, inclusion, equality, our communities, neighbourhoods and social cohesion would suffer, changing all Council priorities, strategies, partnerships and services. I think we had better stop there – it is quite a scary thought.

Happily and very thankfully we are blessed in our great city of Leeds with more than our fair share of dedicated, caring, expert and highly professional volunteers from across all communities, who share their time, energy, skills and understanding 24 hours a day, seven days a week, often not seen or recognised or really valued, which is incredible when you consider that volunteers' and carers' time is valued at around £137b a year to the UK economy. It also highlights the hidden savings that we all benefit from and possibly take a little for granted, although it does beg one question. As a Local Authority can Leeds truly say that we have done everything possible to underpin and support all that volunteers and carers contribute to the health, wellbeing, equality and success of our city, or could we do more to recognise and develop such an important and precious community resource?

I hope you have guessed the answer.

Against the backdrop of devastating Government cuts to our Local Authority Funding and the dismantling of welfare support and public services, the need to engage and utilise the Third Sector of Leeds has never been needed more and in support, this Council and its officers can take great pride in developing a close partnership with the Third Sector in an effort to negate the worst of the Government cuts hitting those individuals, families and communities in greatest need.

However, there is still more that can be done. In this European Year of Volunteering, as a city there is an opportunity to leave a meaningful legacy that will positively boost local volunteer capacity and innovation and promote Leeds as a beacon of best practice through development of a procurement and tendering framework that truly values and embraces the often hidden benefits and advantages of volunteer-led bids as exemplified in a recent bid that

was led by Leeds Involving People which, sadly, was unsuccessful because the tendering process could not comprehend or value the additional benefits which have been offered through expert volunteers, partnership and the critical application of local knowledge.

In a climate where well resourced national organisations are ready to seize any opportunity for funding, as a city it is essential we do everything possible to support our own Third Sector and enable their incredible energy, diversity and exemplar knowledge to be expressed and valued in any procurement process.

May I finish by saying, do not ever question the importance of volunteers. Noah's Ark was built by volunteers; the Titanic was built by professionals. Thank you. *((Applause))*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: I second, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

Tim, thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Thank you very much indeed. *(Applause)*