

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday 17th January 2007

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC HALL, LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(Councillor M Iqbal)

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17th JANUARY 2007

THE LORD MAYOR: Members of the Council, ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. We will begin with the usual announcements – the request is to switch the mobile phones off or any other electrical equipment unless you want to contribute to the Lord Mayor's Charity.

We have a few announcements to make. Most of them are good news. First of all I have to announce that Councillor Brian Cleasby has been nominated as the Lord Mayor Elect for 2007/08. Congratulations, Councillor Cleasby. *(Applause)*

Secondly, congratulations to the Chief Executive, Paul Rogerson, on being appointed Commander of the British Empire in the New Year's Honours list. *(Applause)*

On 8th January the Deputy Lord Mayor, councillor Dunn, visited Honorary Alderman Joe Kitchen and former Councillor Len Hodgson in Wharfedale General Hospital, both of whom are making good progress. Joe is now staying in the Victoria Residential Home in Belle Isle. Thank you, Councillor Dunn, for visiting them on my behalf because I had other engagements. Thank you.

Another announcement. You are probably aware from the report in the Yorkshire Evening Post last week that a young serviceman, Corporal Simon Brown, whose family is from West Ardsley, suffered dreadful facial injuries while attempting to rescue colleagues on the outskirts of Basra in Iraq. On behalf of the Council and the citizens of Leeds I have sent Corporal Brown a message of brave for his brave action and best wishes for his recovery. *(Applause)*

Finally, I regret to announce the death of Honorary Alderman Doreen Hamilton, who served on Council from May 1971 until May 1987. If I could invite you all to stand in silent tribute for a minute, please.

(Silent tribute)

THE LORD MAYOR: It is nice to see so many members of the public and I welcome you all to join us in the Council's meeting today.

We will start off with the business now. Item 1, Councillor Hamilton.

ITEM 1 - MINUTES OF THE MEETING

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Yes, Lord Mayor, could I move that the Minutes be received.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Lord Mayor, I have noticed looking at the Minutes that I am not down on the Group Declaration of Interest as an ALMO Board director at the last meeting. I think it is because I arrived late and was not there when the declarations were made. I thought we had all been put down as a group by the group but it does not seem to be the case. We did not reach the business anyway but obviously to put the record straight.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. All those in favour? Show of hands, please. Any against? Any abstentions? (AGREED)

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I announce that the list of written declarations submitted by Members is on display in the anteroom, on deposit in public galleries and has been circulated to each Member's place in the Chamber.

Can I invite any further individual declarations or corrections to those notified on the list?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, in a somewhat unusual turn of events, for the avoidance of all doubt, I am declaring a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 4(2), which is the second of the Deputations today, and in what will be the last two White Papers of the day – that is White Paper 12 and White Paper 9. Then I will vacate the Chamber for both of those debates.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Harris. Anybody else? OK. Can I just say that I need to declare a personal and prejudicial interest on Item 10 and therefore I will be leaving the Chair and I will be requesting to the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Jack Dunn, to take over the meeting for that item and then I will resume back. Can I have a show of hands to confirm that you have read the list as amended and agree its contents insofar as they relate to your own interests? Show of hands, please? (AGREED)

ITEM 3 – COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 3, Communications. Chief Executive.

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

ITEM 4 – DEPUTATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 4, Deputations. Chief Executive.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: There are two deputations, Lord Mayor, as in the Order Paper. The first one is from Garforth Community College and the second one from the Muslim Cultural Society.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, could I move that both deputations be received.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. All in favour? Any against? Any abstentions? Thank you. (AGREED)

DEPUTATION ONE

GARFORTH COMMUNITY COLLEGE – MAYOR FOR THE DAY

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which must not be longer than five minutes. Please begin by introducing yourself and those with you.

ELEANOR WATLING: Thank you. May I start to introduce myself and the rest of my delegation? We are from Garforth Community College. My name is Eleanor Watling and I am in Year 9 and in October last year I was elected to be Mayor for a Day.

With me today I have Hannah Solly, Year 7; Joshua Kennedy, year 8; Edward Addison – who you may remember from last year from Mayor for a Day – and Tom Nicholls, Year 10. Unfortunately we could not bring any older students with us because of exams.

I have lived in Leeds for most of my life. For a young person, this is an exciting city with plenty of opportunities. I can shop in Harvey Nichols (if I had the money!) (*Laughter*) I can see the latest films. I can even go bowling. I can even go and watch Countdown being recorded, (*Laughter*) but I can only do these things easily because I have full mobility.

I can move in and out of shops easily. I can use escalators with out any problem. At 5'7" I can easily be seen when I am standing at a counter. This is not the case for disabled people.

I know Leeds City Council follows the Equal Opportunities Law for disabled access. The law only goes so far. I cannot legislate for people's manners.

A young person in a wheelchair might want to buy sporting goods, but how many assistants in shops know how to deal with this? Would they be embarrassed by someone in a wheelchair wanting to try on a pair of, say, safety gear for basketball?

Some young people in wheelchairs are parents or carers of young children and it is difficult enough managing a baby in a city like Leeds without the added problem of being in a wheelchair.

Do young parents and carers feel welcome in parent and carers' baby rooms? Is the room big enough for wheelchairs? Is someone available and trained to help?

The needs of older people in wheelchairs are just as important. They need to be able to get in and out of shops just like us.

What links all these generations together is the response they get from able-bodied people.

I myself do not know what it is like to be disabled and in a wheelchair, so I spoke to people who are. I heard a story of a girl in a wheelchair who wanted to buy a pair of trainers. The trainers were upstairs and the shop had no lift. The assistant said, "We are sorry", but does sorry put things right?

Another comment – "Shops are overcrowded with displays. They are too close together, especially at Christmas time. There just is not room for wheelchairs." "I do not care what you say, people are treated different in wheelchairs." "People might not do it on purpose but it does happen. I have been in shops with a friend and an assistant has asked my friend what I wanted. One even gave my change to my friend."

A last one – "I love Leeds but I never go into Leeds. It is such a trauma. I might get parked, then I have to fight my way through the market and the Headrow is dreadful. The kerbs are up and down. Everything is just cobbles. Cobbles might look pretty but they are no good for wheelchairs."

So what can we do as able-bodied people and you, as Councillors, do to help?

Firstly, I would like to see all Councillors given training to help people who are disabled, especially young people. This should not just be training out of books but should include meeting with young people and talking with them to find out how they feel.

My second idea is to you, the Council. I challenge each and every one of you to spend a day in a wheelchair. If you cannot do it for one day, try it for one hour. See what it is really like to be disabled.

Do not forget, at the end of your challenge you simply get up and walk away, back to every day life. You do not have to deal with the pain my friend puts up with. Being disabled is no fun.

Leeds is a great city. Let us make it great for everyone.

Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Could I ask that the Deputation is referred to Leader of Council for consideration?

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

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

DEPUTATION TWO

THE MUSLIM CULTURAL SOCIETY

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which must not be longer than five minutes. Please begin by introducing yourself and those with you.

SHABIR KHAN: My Lord Mayor and Members of the Council, good afternoon. We are here to present our petition and with me we have got representation throughout Leeds. My name is Shabir Khan and I am from the Kashmir Muslim Welfare Association, Leeds 11. With me is Mohamed Rafiq Fayed, UK Islamic Mission of Leeds 17; on my right inside Abud Hussain, Leeds Islamic Centre; Kurban Hussain, Makkah Masjid al-Madina, Leeds Muslim Council, Mohamed Sidiq, Bilal Mosque, Leeds 8.

We are here before you today as representatives of the Muslim community from Beeston to Hyde park, from Armley to Harehills. The community is represented by appropriate voluntary organisation. We are here regarding our one issue and that of burial of the dead.

We are not much interested with those who are treading the corridor of the power and dilly-dally in making the decisions. The pledge to members of all political parties is simple – the community is united and the request is simple. Solution should be simple.

We have been requesting an additional place of burial over the last ten years. A site in Whinmoor was identified and certain work was done. In July 2004, after the change of administration, we heard the Council had changed its mind. Whinmoor site was abandoned and Harehills to be extended. The rumours are now that Killingbeck site has been identified instead of that.

We do not want to particularly dwell on the issue too much. Members will no doubt be aware what has gone. Over the last few months organisations have consulted their members and the wishes of the Muslim community is unanimous. Whinmoor site to be developed. The reason for this choice is well documented and members are well aware of this as well.

Our community is treated as second class citizens in many quarters and please do not treat our dead in similar manners and dump them wherever it suits certain people.

Can I remind you a historical value regarding the dead and British values full of history. Even the fight in the war after defeating they have treated their enemies, their death, with respect and this is full of history. These are the British values, so I want to add that along with that, that the dead should not be dumped wherever it suits. We should be taking the wishes of those people who are still alive. No matter what religion, background is, all dead people deserve respect.

We ask no more. We request to develop Whinmoor site which is suitable, it is wishful, it suits with all our community. It is the solution to the whole of Leeds burial because looking at the next 75 years, that is the best one and there has been some work to be done on that.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can you finish your last sentence, please? The red light is there. Can you just wind up?

SHABIR KHAN: I will just wind up regarding the Harehills site which is not suitable for so many reasons because economically, the time scale, it is only for the twelve years and it is not suitable because there are a lot of damp and everything else, water when digging the graveyards and that upsets people not only because they are burying their loved one but they know where they are burying them.

Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Could I ask that the Deputation be referred to the Executive Board for consideration?

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

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

ITEM 5 – REPORT

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 5, Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. In moving the item in the terms of the Notice, can I be the first to congratulate Councillor Cleasby on becoming Lord Mayor Elect and wish him and his wife an extremely happy year in the forthcoming municipal year.

Can I also pass the new Chief Executive my congratulations and those of, I hope, the whole of the Council, but certainly all the administration on your very well-deserved honour. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Can I second, Lord Mayor?

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call for a vote? All those in favour? Any against? Any abstentions? (AGREED)

Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Could I move that the report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services on member appointments be approved.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? Any against? Any abstentions? (AGREED) Thank you.

ITEM 6 – QUESTIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item number 6, Questions. Councillor Illingworth.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Yes, Lord Mayor. What was discussed at the lunch with Tom Stokes on board ship that Councillor Carter attended with Jean Dent on 12th March 2004? Who did the yacht belong to? Who else was present for the meal and where was the yacht located at the time? What other meetings have taken place to progress the matters raised on this occasion, Lord Mayor?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I am afraid this is going to bore Members of Council considerably. What I can tell you, Councillor Illingworth has asked what I was doing and with whom I was doing it on 12th March 2004, so I, like so many officers – I now know how officers feel because I had to go rooting around to find my diary and here it is.

We will have a look at the date in question, which is 12th March 2004. At eleven o'clock in the morning on 2004, 12th March, I chaired a Health and Safety meeting at the offices of my employment in Wath-on-Deane. At three o'clock I visited a school and at 4.30 I visited a constituent.

I have no idea what I had for lunch but I suspect it was an Ainsley's Cornish pasty. (*Laughter*) I have always been partial to Ainsley's Cornish pasties and would recommend them to anybody. Am I allowed to advertise in this most blatant fashion?

For tea there is a blank. Now, I look round and I see absolutely no help so I guess it was baked beans as usual. (*Laughter*) The following day, the 13th – you

might be more interested in this – I met with Conservative colleagues and campaigners in the car park of the Crusader pub, Garforth, where we were attempting to take seats and, of course, we were successful, as were colleagues in turfing out the previous administration.

My Lord Mayor, in an attempt to be helpful to Councillor Illingworth, he would have better been advised to address this question – and I am sorry about this, Liz – to Councillor Minkin, who was that week leading the Council's delegation at the International Property Conference in Cannes. This is the conference that Councillor Wakefield, during his leadership, agreed to part-finance with 18 of our private sector partners and Councillor Minkin attended.

My Lord Mayor, I certainly was not at sea on 12th March 2004 but I suspect Councillor Illingworth is all at sea right now. (*Laughter and applause*)

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: I wonder in view of Councillor Carter's answer if he has any comments on the following letter, which was sent by Tom Stokes to Jean Dent on 15th March 2004:

"Dear Jean,

Easyspace and Leeds City Council.

I was very pleased that both you and Councillor Carter were able to join Michael, John and the other guests on the yacht last Friday. I hope you enjoyed the lunch and the experience of being on board.

Councillor Carter did ask a question about how the discussions are getting on between the Council and Easyspace and I was not sure whether I should have replied in detail. I know that you are currently carrying out a review of your portfolio and one of the considerations is your requirement to achieve best value. Because of the importance of this subject, we obtained an opinion from Walker Morris on whether it was within your powers to proceed on a JB(?) basis and I enclose a copy of their advice letter for your information. As you will see from the letter, it is possible to enter into a JB arrangement and satisfy the requirement at the same time. "

My question, Lord Mayor, is that it appears that Mr Stokes has some difficulty in distinguishing between Councillor Carter and Councillor Minkin. However, my colleague, Councillor Minkin, says that she was not there either and that she was on a plane going home to England, so what was happening on this yacht and how does Councillor Carter explain the fact that he is referred to in this letter and he apparently was not there?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I am going to have to bore Council even more here with a whole load of dates.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: We are used to it!

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I do not know. Councillor Illingworth, your party was in control of this council until the elections of June 2004. Can we just get that completely clear? Councillor Minkin led the delegation to MIPIM in 2004 and indeed,

let me just tell you – thank goodness some people keep accurate records – at three o'clock on 19 July 2004 Councillor Minkin came to see me.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: I did? I do not keep a diary like he does!

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You are finding out why I need to now! My Lord Mayor, Councillor Minkin came to see me over a number of matters. I am sorry to embarrass you, Liz, but I think in view of the connotations of Councillor Illingworth's question it clearly has to be said.

You came to thank me for not stopping the trip to Canada that you were making when we took over control of the Council. Secondly, you very kindly gave me various papers on things going on in the development department and then you told me all about your trip to MIPIM, which you say was a great success and how it was very important that the City Council was seen to be there at political level.

Actually, Councillor Illingworth, to help you, you are referring to March 2005, not March 2004, when I did attend MIPIM, as had my predecessor, having been assured by – and I remember her words when she came to see me. She implied that I had a reputation for being against these sorts of visits but I should not let that prejudice my view of this very important visit and I said I was pleased to have the opposition's support and I would certainly consider it and duly went.

Indeed, Jean and I were invited to have lunch with Evans and we discussed a variety of things. I have to say I have no knowledge of that letter that you were referring to but I would not be surprised if they had written. The people that we met – I have told you the people that Jean met the year before at our exhibition and there has been no further meeting since with any of the people mentioned there and certainly there were no specific projects discussed. It would not have been proper and it did not happen.

I should tell you, however, my Lord Mayor, Members of Council, that the company that Councillor Illingworth is seeking to implicate – I do not know what he is trying to do, really – had been visited by the previous Leader of the City Council when he attended a lunch at their invitation to hear a presentation on all the things they were doing in the city. The year before the previous Leader was invited and had a similar presentation. I have had no such invitation or presentation. I have not been invited but if I was I would probably attend, as it would be quite right to do.

In May of last year, after some of your members decided to make political capital out of the International Property Conference, I had a meeting with your Leader, Councillor Wakefield - and I will not tell you the exact date but I have it in my 2005 diary – at which I pointed out to him what had happened, despite previous assurances. I was told by him it was not his doing, he believed in these things. I withdrew the invitation which he had accepted to visit China and I made it quite clear as far as I was concerned any member – if it was going to be a political matter – in future going on a trip abroad would have to pay for themselves. That is a view I hold to and, as far as I am concerned, under my Leadership that is what will now happen. It is, I am afraid, very sad for the reputation of the city.

I made it clear in May of last year to Councillor Wakefield that in view of the comments passed by some of his colleagues which he indicated he was totally unable to control, that we will not be attending the International Property Conference this year and that was made clear in May of last year to our partners.

The sort of insinuations that are contained in this question, and in particular in the supplementary, and being, I have to say, propagated by members of the Labour

Group, are quite unacceptable. I have no doubt, unfortunately for this city, that Sir Richard Leese, the Leader of Manchester, the Leader of Birmingham, the Leader of Liverpool, the Leader of Sheffield, the Leader of Bradford, the Leader of Hull and the Leader of Heaven-knows-where as well, will all be leading their delegations at MIPIIM. We shall not and our partners have been informed why not and the blame for that has been placed firmly at the door of the Leader of the Opposition, who has shown no leadership whatever in this matter.

In putting down questions of this sort, Councillor Illingworth is seeking to imply impropriety which does not exist. Councillor Illingworth demeans all of us with this sort of question and I would invite colleagues to re-read carefully the terms of Councillor Illingworth's question and ask themselves this – whether as Councillor Atha claimed on Councillor Illingworth's behalf just two months ago these really are the actions of a man of principle, a man of integrity, a man whose motives are of the highest? I really do not think so.

The biggest message it gives to this Council of all is that the Leader of the Opposition is no leader of anything. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Could the Executive Board member with responsibility for 'Narrowing the Gap' give an update regarding any new initiatives taking place in this area?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Yes, Lord Mayor. Council, I hope, knows that at the end of the last municipal year the administration took the decision to apportion responsibility for the two principal objectives of the Council of Going up a League and Narrowing the Gap to give these two overriding responsibilities to myself and to Andrew Carter – Andrew focusing on Going up a League, which is pertinent to his portfolio, and Narrowing the Gap for myself pertinent to the portfolios that I hold.

We established, I have to say, a non-constitutional body – it has no legal standing in the Council – called the Narrowing the Gap Group, which was made up of representatives of the administration but of late – and I have to say in my experience in this place quite unheard of – we invited a member of the Opposition to sit with us in what was effectively a closed meeting, Councillor Driver in his capacity as Chair of OSC, because he was chairing an investigation into Narrowing the Gap. We thought it appropriate that he participated in a completely apolitical way on this group and at all times the Narrowing the Gap Group has conducted its activities in a apolitical manner with no attempt whatever to score any political points against the opposition. I am pleased to say that today Geoff, despite our previous history, has conducted himself in an exemplary manner, behaving in a completely non-political way when it comes to the activities of Narrowing the Gap.

What have we been doing? The first thing we looked at, because it was so obvious to us that there was a disaster in the making, was to look at the issue of fuel poverty because of the then highest prices, domestic fuel prices, in Europe with the recent hikes in price unmanageable levels of domestic fuel prices in this country. We felt that what the Council could do had to be put in better order and brought forward before the onset of winter and, with the co-operation of Les Carter's department in Neighbourhoods, we were able to up the ante on the whole fuel poverty agenda, which we are sure, albeit it to date, we have not had a particularly cold winter but which we are sure, because of the unparalleled numbers of people now in the category of fuel poverty, will help those as the onset of the winter fuel bills arrive on people's doorsteps.

We decided to apportion activity between Councillor Golton, myself, Councillor Blackburn and Councillor Anderson – the four Councillors from the administration to apportion our responsibilities thematically rather than departmentally so that we would have a cross-cutting approach to Narrowing the Gap and began to turn our attention to other areas where we felt there was a need for greater co-ordination and sharing of best practice. The areas we have looked at are the way in which the ALMOs were co-operating with each other, the way in which different departments communicated with each other and that we have been trying to, as I say, improve communication so that there is better delivery on Narrowing the Gap.

For my own part I have taken responsibility for engaging the private sector. It is, to say the least, unfortunate that a Council of our size must go cap in hand to the private sector in order to deliver programmes for the most unfortunate and deprived people in our community, but because of the appalling budgetary pressures placed on this Council we have little option if we are to significantly improve delivery of Narrowing the Gap but to engage the private sector to use their financial and manpower resources to assist us.

I am pleased to be able to say this morning we launched a groundbreaking initiative in which some very big hitters from the private sector in Leeds – YTB, Bruntwood, our landlords of the call centre, Land Securities, the Chamber of Commerce, the Leeds Co-op, with promises of help from several of our large private sector companies – attended a launch of our initiative where using Leeds Ahead and Leeds Community Foundation, using £100,000 of cornseed money from the Council, the private sector is indicating to us that they will match that with at least £400,000 of money or payments in kind to deliver new programmes across the city through the district partnerships so that we will be able to address areas of deprivation which for so long have been neglected by this Council.

These are some of the areas in which the Narrowing the Gap Group have been working. This is the beginning of far more substantial things to come, which is proof positive that this administration is not prepared to sit on its hands as you did and we will leave every stone unturned in an effort to make sure that the people most deserving of our help in this city receive it. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary?

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: No, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Shelbrooke.

COUNCILLOR SHEL BROOKE: The Leader of Council will recall that it was drawn to his attention some eight months ago the fact that the Labour Group office appeared to be using agency staff and Council staff at a weekend to produce political material. Have the Legal and Democratic Services Department finished their investigation and, if so, what was the outcome?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. In reply to Councillor Shelbrooke, indeed not only have Legal and Democratic Services finished their enquiry but KPMG also investigated the allegations that were brought to me by Councillors both in the Conservative Group and the Liberal Democrat Group about activities they had seen taking place in the Civic Hall on a particular weekend.

The result of all this has been that an invoice has been submitted to the Labour Group in the sum of £1,389 for producing party-political material and I understand that on 14 February of this year the Standards Committee are going to

receive some recommendations to formalise the guidelines more appropriate to the Local Authority.

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

COUNCILLOR SHEL BROOKE: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I wonder whether the Leader of Council can tell us whether the bill has been paid and if there are any other bills that may have to be paid?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, as Leader of the Council I seem to have the same difficulty as other members have in sometimes getting answer to questions. It took me a while to discover that the invoice had even been sent, but certainly I have heard that it has as yet been paid. Presumably the person to whom the invoice was sent, Councillor Hanley, is better able to answer that.

Unfortunately another situation has now arisen which has been brought to Councillor Harris's attention and mine, and I understand that Legal and Democratic Services have interviewed Councillor Wakefield about this and no doubt there will be more news later.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Lowe.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: Can the Executive Member with responsibility for Training and Education confirm that the £880,000 NRF moneys that are available to spend under the "worthlessness" strand of the Leeds Initiative Economic Development portfolio will be shared equally across all Super Output Areas in Leeds?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harris?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: No.

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary?

COUNCILLOR LOWE: By way of supplementary, would the Member like to explain then why that is so and why in particular West Leeds, which as you know suffered most terribly last year when we lost the contract to BEST, will be seeing no money under NRF, and also why other areas of Leeds, particularly Little London, which is asking for money, will also receive nothing out of this pot of money?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Council should now be worried because I am removing my glasses, which means I am going to read something, because I cannot read with my specs on. Are you all sitting comfortably?

The £800,000 NRF moneys that are available to spend under the "worklessness" strand of the Leeds Initiative Economic Development portfolio will not be shared equally across all Super Output Areas in Leeds. Activity will be targeted towards the worst 5% SOAs for employment deprivation in East, North East and South Leeds. Applications submitted against the commissioning specification will be scored against quality criteria to determine which activities receive funding.

The £800,000 NRF referred to relates to activity which is being commissioned under the economic development and enterprise block as part of the development of the 2007/08 NRF programme. Priorities for new activity were informed by the LLAA mid-term review and the traffic light assessment of the progress made against the mandatory PSA targets.

We are a third of the way through.

The commissioning specification outlines that these areas have been selected as they fall within the Government's priority Wards for worklessness in Leeds. Activity will be focused on addressing the Mandatory Worklessness PSA target, 'For those living in the Wards with the worst labour market position, to significantly improve their overall employment rate and reduce the difference between their employment rate and the overall employment rate for England. '

Under Jobcentre Plus leadership, partnership working has already started in the three district partnership areas where the priority Wards are located. Project proposals will need to demonstrate how they will, during the year of funding available, assist people in receipt of Job Seekers' Allowance, people on Incapacity Benefit and lone parents on Income Support, to overcome barriers to work, access training and skills development and to achieve job outcomes.

It was judged that given the existing NRF investment through projects such as Jobstart, priority should be given to the areas where at a Ward level the Government determines the need is greatest. The £800,000 available is in addition to the public money already invested by partners in addressing worklessness. This includes Leeds City Council Jobs and Skills service, Jobcentre Plus services such as advisers and the New Deals, European funding, and Yorkshire Forward.

In addition to the commissioned activity, a number of NRF projects which contribute to addressing the worklessness targets in the Economic Development and Enterprise Theme are rolling forward to 2008. These projects will continue their activity in Wards where 50% or more of the SOAs are in the 20% most deprived nationally. The projects represent an investment in the region of £1.3m NRF. For example, the Jobstart project which provides support to individuals to access work, Local People into Construction which helps local residents to access work in the construction industry, and Leeds Welcome project which provides support to refugees to obtain work.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lancaster.

COUNCILLOR LANCASTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Will the Executive Member for City Services provide an update on the Council's recent recycling performance?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. At the end of November the combined recycling and composting rate was 21.85%. December saw the highest ever level of kerbside recycling with over 2,400 tonnes collected. *(Applause)*

There has been a marked and steady increase in kerbside recycling since September when the Council launched its Recycle Me campaign.

Nationally – national performance data has been released for 2005/06. Leeds has the highest recycling performance of the core cities for the third year running at 17.26% and is ranked third against all the Metropolitan Councils, although we do recycle the greatest tonnage.

The composting, we are ranked fifth amongst the core cities and eighth amongst the Metropolitan Councils and I would expect that to improve since we introduced our garden recycling scheme across five areas of the city on a trial basis. *(Applause)*

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

COUNCILLOR LANCASTER: No.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Barry Anderson.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Will the Leader of Council please tell us the total cost of John Trickett's disastrous 'Landmark Leeds Pedestrianisation Project'? Will Councillor Carter break down the cost into the original cost, the final cost and the Council's legal costs?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I am not delighted to give you these figures but I think much as the Labour Group would like the whole issue of Landmark Leeds to go away it will not because it is a visible carbuncle in the middle of our city that is costing millions of pounds and which they allowed to happen during their tenure of office.

The tenders received were based and left on the basis of the Landmark Leeds Project costing £3,651,000. The actual cost incurred was £5,336,000 because claims, not all of them thankfully agreed to, of more than £2,500,000, were made against the Council. The legal costs incurred in defending these claims and taking action against the managing contractor and the designers, was £1,908,000. So, a scheme that was budgeted to cost £3,651,000 cost double that - £7,244,000.

We all know whose idea it was. The great problem is that surcharge has now gone, otherwise the Member of Parliament for Hemsworth should be called to account for this fiasco that was the responsibility of no department of this Council because he shunned the advice of the Highways Department.

My Lord Mayor, what makes this worse is that we are now having to carry out patchwork repairs in the middle of our city centre and I have been told only today that an estimate of the cost now required and investment from the city to put the rest of Landmark Leeds right, is in the order of £5m. We have been very successful in getting Yorkshire Forward funding to help us with the pedestrianisation of Briggate and they are helping us now in this financial year with works on part of Albion Street.

The fact is that we cannot duck away from the fact that Landmark Leeds is a disaster, it is now in parts dangerous, it is having to be repaired and this administration is going to have to find another £5m to bail out another of your administration's disasters. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Colleagues, the time is up now so that is the end of questions. Sorry, Barry, no time left for the supplementary. For any questions that are not answered, a written response will be sent out to all Members.

Now we will move on. Councillor Rafique wants to say something.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Lord Mayor, can I move that under provisions of Council Procedure Rule 22.1, I move that Procedure Rule 2.2 be suspended and that precedence be given to Item 12? I therefore move that the White Paper motion on the Whinmoor Grange site be moved.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we have a seconder? *(Seconded)* We will have to call for a vote, Members, thank you. We have a call for a recorded vote.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Might I have the advice that the Chief Legal Officer whether – I should not refer to her as "my sister and I" – whether Councillor Chapman and I, having already declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the

substantive matter, can vote on whether the matter is brought forward or not, or whether we should abstain from voting?

THE CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER: My advice is that you can take part in this because it is just a procedural thing, as to whether or not the motion should be discussed now or later. You are not actually talking about the merits of the motion.

(A recorded vote was taken)

THE LORD MAYOR: We have 93 Members present; 36 in favour of bringing the motion forward, Item 12, zero abstentions, 57 against. Therefore it is LOST.

ITEM 7 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

THE LORD MAYOR: We will move on to Item 7 now, Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I move Item 7 in the terms of the Notice.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I second, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to speak on Agenda Item 7 on page 61, which is a report of Recommendations of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee held on 29th November, at which amendment to the Constitution were agreed to take in the Gambling Act of 2005.

Our group accepts that the amendments must be in place by the end of this month. However, I must state again that this does not mean that we are in favour of having more or larger casinos in Leeds.

All of you on Scrutiny looked at various reports from Legal and Democratic Services on the incoming Act and at one of our pre-meetings Councillor Driver told us that he had skippered a boat in a North Sea race last summer. I am sure that you would agree that yachting is far less politically dangerous than croquet. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Lord Mayor, I wish to speak on Agenda Item 7 Appendix 1 page 66, 3.4 It is the Fees for Gambling. I just hope that the Department of Culture, Media and Sport come up with some reasonable and appropriate figures so that the Council is not left out of pocked at in the licensing fiasco. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I hope we are not out of pocket, Councillor McArdle, as well, but with so much Government legislation that they tell us will be self-financing or they will reimburse us for, we always seem to be short-changed, but then that is common to the other 50m people who live in this country with this Government.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we call for the vote? All those in favour? Any against? Any abstentions? (CARRIED)

ITEM 8 – MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 8, Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I move Item 8 in the terms of the Notice.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I invite comments now? Councillor Illingworth.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I rise to move reference back of Minute 136 on page 112 for further consideration by the Executive Board.

Although Labour supports the overall objectives behind Minute 136, the present version of the guidance is warm, woolly and imprecise. It does not emphasise vital policies required for successful community engagement and it would greatly benefit from further debate.

The Executive Board should remember the primary purpose of public consultation is not to show the administration in a good light, it is not to shift the blame for necessary but unpopular decisions. It is to get fundamentally better decisions. It will be a better decision when more independent thinkers are involved. Each will bring their own individual insights to the debate. Their combined output will be better than any individual participant including those with the acknowledged expertise.

There is a remarkable book which describes this phenomenon called *The Wisdom of Crowds* by an American columnist, James Surowiecki. I approached this book expecting the rapid outpourings of another market capitalist, like Milton Friedman, only to discover a deep insight into human nature and the complex ways in which real decisions are taken.

Using a variety of famous and trivial decisions, Surowiecki shows that public opinion almost always gets it right providing that certain conditions are satisfied. One of those conditions is that people form their views independently without any form of collective discipline. Another requirement is reasonable access to the facts.

He spends some time analysing really bad decisions, when groups of experts got things spectacularly wrong. He methodically dissects their decision-making processes. He made me cringe because he put me in mind of our central Government and also of Leeds City Council.

Lord Mayor, our community engagement policies pay no attention to the flow of information or to factual accuracy. These are just not seen as issues, yet they are central to the public debate.

There are two aspects to this. First of all we must ensure that the Council's own information is as accurate as we can make it and, secondly, we must publish all we know and allow sufficient time for the news to spread through the community and for people to make an independent check.

This means routinely insisting on the full twelve weeks for public consultation as recommended by national Government and agreed with the voluntary sector in the Compact for Leeds. It also means the full twelve weeks right from the start – not some of the stunts that Leeds has pulled in the past like launching education debates on the start of school holidays or extending the period part way through.

Lord Mayor, it is almost impossible for people to take good decisions without reasonable access to the facts. This much might seem obvious – childish almost – until one reviews the efforts that this Council expends to deny people access to the facts.

Next Monday myself and four senior Councillors are going to spend an hour of our own time and our senior officers' time debating whether or not the public will be allowed to see a range of documents, which nobody pretends are sensitive or confidential, merely because somebody feels that it might reflect badly on their colleagues if the public knew what lunacy had taken place.

I have one of them here. It is an architect's feasibility study on St Ann's Mills in Kirkstall. Actually, Members have already seen these figures because they

appeared in the Executive Board Report 5 July 2006. They show the scheme is £3m over budget. It was supposed to cost £2m but it actually cost £5m.

The key information is the date when officers were first aware of this. This council had this report on 28 September 2005 but it suppressed this vital information throughout the entire public consultation claiming that this highly professional study was only a draft. Lord Mayor, does it look like a draft? Lord Mayor, would Members of Council not agree that the fact that the scheme is 250% over budget is somewhat relevant to the public debate?

There is more. Not only was this scheme massively over budget but the architect concluded it was impractical from a protection point of view. Was that not just a tiny bit relevant as well? Should not that have been disclosed to the Executive Board?

It is particularly absurd when there has always been a financially viable solution in Kirkstall that has never been put to the public or, indeed, to the Executive Board.

The bulk of this Kirkstall consultation was completed in two weeks and the secretive manner in which it was done prevented anybody else from expressing an alternative view. It cost the Council over £14,000 yet the Council's blatant manipulation of the public has made the result almost entirely worthless. Money down the drain.

Lord Mayor, Kirkstall might seem water under the bridge. We have another flawed consultation in progress as we speak. Only four weeks have been allowed for the public consultation on the Holt Park regeneration, a hugely complex issue where the Council once again has got its facts all wrong. Once again none of the so-called alternatives actually solve the problems that we face. Just as we saw in Kirkstall, the Development Department seems to have something up its sleeve that it will produce at the last possible moment when its straw men have been discredited.

Why is the consultation so brief? Why are there no public meetings? Why is the department so anxious to suppress debate?

A member of the public put these points to a senior planning officer at one of the few opportunities. He replied that public meetings allowed a few loud voices to dominate. "This guarantees" she replied, "that the only loud voice will be yours."

One of the issues at Holt Park is the loss of public sports facilities and playing fields. This is a serious problem in Leeds which apparently has the worst sports provision of any major city and almost the worst in our entire region. How many Members are aware of this?

The reason for the confusion is traceable to the Development Department. Way back in 1992 when the Council prepared statistics for Leeds UDP, a planning officer made an arithmetical mistake. Before the days of personal computers the land use statistics were added up by hand. It was a big job involving thousands of sites and hundreds of sheets of paper. Officers maintained running column totals at the top and bottom of each page. They also added up the row totals as an independent check.

Unfortunately at an early point in these calculations, the separate figures for golf courses and playing fields were accidentally transposed. Both figures were correct but they were entered into the wrong columns. The effect was to massively inflate our playing field total whilst scarcely affecting the much larger figure for golf.

The mistake was only detected years after the event because the row and column totals all added up correctly.

This meant that the entire public debate on recreation policies in the Unitary Development Plan was conducted using figures that were massively in error. Far from being the greenest city in western Europe, as people were told, Leeds has very nearly the worst – the very worst – sports and recreation provision in the entire country. It is still affecting planning policy. The various playing fields that are associated with the Boys' and Girls' Grammar Schools are currently a case in point.

Lord Mayor, we need to get our facts right. None of the issues I have mentioned are party-political issues. They are simple issue of fact. They could easily have been detected by putting all our cards on the table and leaving adequate time for a genuine public debate. Not everybody wants the full details, but enough people will be prepared to check and this will vastly improve the quality of our decision-making process.

There is another issue that is coming to the fore where it is desperately important to get it right. The public consultation on the EASEL development, which is among the largest urban regeneration projects in the country and has the potential to either blight or benefit the lives of hundreds of thousands of our citizens. If Members read the consultations to date on the Leeds City Council website, you can see the potential to get this wrong in exactly the way the Council has got it wrong before.

It is not that EASEL is a bad scheme – it is just that it will be an infinitely better scheme if the public are fully engaged. We need a sea change in attitude for this to happen, sharing all our information, taking our time, being willing to accommodate a diversity of views.

Lord Mayor, we welcome public debate. The intention here is good but we could do it enormously better than we do it at the moment. That is why I want the Executive Board to take these documents back and to revise them. They should incorporate in particular freedom of information, extended consultation times and the overwhelming need for public scrutiny and debate. Lord Mayor, I move the reference back. *(Applause)*

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

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. If I can just take this from a slightly different angle and while one hundred per cent supporting the comments of my colleague, Councillor John Illingworth, I want to comment on the role of members.

I think you will find that in the approved document the role of members, i.e. our role, is slightly less peripheral than it was in the draft and thanks to the debate we had at Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, our website does now have a "How to contact your Councillor" box in an obvious and an easily-seen place. I think it would be very interesting to know how the figures of how many times it has been clicked are now shaping up and whether in fact it might not get into the top five score anyway.

I do think that what is necessary is a fundamental change in the minds of our officers. It is us, the elected members of Council, who are directly accountable to the residents of Leeds, all the people of Leeds, and we cannot be an afterthought or maybe even a slight nuisance to fit in somehow in the scheme of things.

I think that we must ensure that we are informed, that our advice is sought and listened to because one of the good reasons is that we are the ones who are very well practised in seeking out residents' views. Of course, the Labour Group is the best but even all the other parties across the Chamber, I have to say, are pretty good – that is fundamentally what we are about and we know how to do it. I think we do it better than any officer – certainly better than any consultant – and let us hope that this rather weighty document really does help to get us in the frame and make sure that our residents and their views are central to how we conduct ourselves in the Council. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR HYDE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am going to actually speak about people, because this is what we are here for. I have been involved with EASEL, as Les will know, for a very long time now and one of the disappointments I have had is about public consultation on EASEL in the first phase. The Planning Development Framework document that went out and the actual confusion that caused, particularly in the communities in East Leeds - and our Liberal colleagues will remember the debates that we have had with the communities who we have had to try and rectify on all parties.

I am just saying to the administration that to get it right in terms of public engagement because we have got it wrong as far on EASEL. EASEL is the single largest regeneration package in England and in Europe and it is in your gift – not our gift, your gift, although we started it but you have actually implemented it – to actually get the people engaged in this debate, because it is a once in a lifetime opportunity for people in East Leeds and in the city to be engaged in the single largest regeneration.

My experience so far is that is not happening. Even through the East Leeds Homes Board it is not happening in the way that the East Leeds Homes Board envisaged and Alan is looking at me at the moment and we have our view about it. Clearly we need to be engaged with the people – not as a Council but with the people – to get regeneration right in East Leeds. They only have one chance and I am just imploring the administration to do that.

Look at this document again, because I think it is not strong enough, as John said, but I think we need really to engage with the communities and I hope you will do that. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, let me deal with the last comment first with reference to EASEL. As my colleague has pointed out to me, the contract for the massive regeneration project that is EASEL has not even been signed yet. We are a long way from what will have to be – and I completely accept – thorough consultation.

I do not propose to deal with the document that was actually the subject of the reference back, but the comments certainly that are of a more detailed nature made by Councillor Illingworth. Councillor Harris will deal with issues relating to the document itself. It was him who chaired the meeting in question.

I think what I have to say as regards the continued insinuations from Councillor Illingworth about the Development Department – it is up to officers now to decide whether, I think, they want to take matters up outside of this Chamber, as it is equally for elected members, in particular myself – and I shall take these matters up now outside this chamber because I am not prepared, quite frankly, to have the sort of comments made that are being made and Councillor Illingworth does not have the protection he thinks he has inside this Chamber to make such insinuations.

More importantly perhaps in terms of a strategic nature, I find it incredible that Councillor Illingworth can launch such an attack on the Councillor in general and the Development Department in particular going back the best part of 15 years, 13 of which he was a member of the controlling party. I have to say it borders, it seems to me to border on the irrational.

Let me just pick up the point because he actually got a question tabled which I would have love to have answered about the loss of playing fields. I will give you the details about the loss of playing fields. Eight of the playing fields confirmed as lost pre-2004, a total of eleven pitches. In other words, under you control eleven playing pitches were lost. Since we took over three playing fields have been lost, one pitch completely and three new ones have been created and we have plans in place, presented by Parks and Countryside, for a further 36 pitches.

We know and you know there is a shortage of playing pitches. We have a robust playing pitch strategy which your members endorsed at the Executive Board. It was an update from a report that you had brought when you were in control.

I just cannot understand what is going on over there. It beggars belief. This man is ranting on about things that happened years ago – years ago – on which we have no influence other than as members of the Opposition, and making accusations - particularly on the playing field thing just beggars belief, because actually we are all agreed. We know we have not got enough and we are doing something about it. We are actually doing more about it than you did and you lost more in your term of office than we have. We do not intend, if we can help it, to lose playing pitches, but I will tell you something, as with so much else that you keep on saying, you would be better off giving the message to your Members of Parliament and your Government because their record on building on laying pitches is the worst of any Government in living memory. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harris to sum up.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I briefly consulted Councillor Hamilton in his capacity as Chief Whip to see whether in fact it was correct that a vote even be taken on this reference back and whether in fact Standing Orders, there is some way of invoking Standing Orders, because there has not been a debate on the reference back itself. No speeches have referred to the document. We have had no justification about what is wrong with the policy or the document. In fact the contributors have spoken on separate issues. This is just sad. That is the first point to be made.

I would be interested, without eating into my time, if I could just seek guidance from Miss Jackson on that particular matter; whether in fact a debate has taken place on a reference back on this particular item on the agenda.

THE CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER: It has. Certainly comments made by Councillor Minkin were pertinent to the reference back.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: OK. Let us just quickly deal with this issue. Although Andrew has spoken about John Illingworth's contributions – and I know a few meetings ago I talked about the way in which we talk to each other and sometimes that gets out of hand, but all right, we are fair game in this place because that is what we are doing here. I cannot remember in 24 years at every meeting insinuation and accusation being hurled against senior officers of this Council. We have had it again today, an accusation that officers have deliberately covered up or withheld information. It is meeting after meeting and this is wholly inappropriate and

wrong and must not continue. Even though it is unpalatable the way we speak to each other, that cannot continue as concerns the matter.

There has not really been a debate about the reference back. John Illingworth wanted to refer to some of his obsessions of Kirkstall and now Holt Park – watch this space, Holt Park, we are probably going to have years of that now. EASEL – that has got nothing to do with the item on the agenda whatsoever.

Liz made a very pertinent comment about the discussion we had at Audit and whatever that committee is and the point was well made there and we took it on board. She had made reference to the way in which the website works. That is a comment to make. It is not an argument about a reference back on the tool kit and the policy itself.

Above all else, if you look at the book of Minutes, Judith Blake and Keith Wakefield were present at Exec Board. I have no recollection of them questioning, querying, saying this was not acceptable. If you look at the record, “not acceptable”, the policy of the tool kit – Keith Wakefield voted for it as Leader of the Opposition. On what basis is the opposition now asking for this to be referred back?

There has been no argument put forward today as to why it should be referred back and your leadership supported it and the sole issue where a member of your group raised a concern in a different forum was taken on board and acted upon and this is absurd. It is no way to conduct anything.

I am going to ask for a recorded vote on this matter because I want to know what your leadership are doing on this – why they are can vote in Executive Board to support something and I will be interested now to see if they are going to attempt to refer it back.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harris, are you asking for a recorded vote?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Yes.

THE LORD MAYOR: Is it seconded?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Seconded.

(A recorded vote was taken)

THE LORD MAYOR: 95 Members present. 37 in favour of the motion in the name of Councillor John Illingworth, four abstentions and 54 against. Therefore that is LOST.

Can I invite comments now, Councillor Keith Parker.

COUNCILLOR PARKER: On page 102, item 110, Financial Health Monitoring. I am taking advantage of this Minute to raise a matter but this clearly says that the state of the Authority is in good hands, apart from the opinion of Councillor Wakefield, who duly abstained from supporting this.

I am raising this point. I am now informed it is in place, it is a done deal, restructuring of the Area Management Teams, reducing them from five down to three. That means that an Area Manager at the moment until it is implemented would be looking at, say, 150 residents in the city of Leeds. If this is implemented – as I am sure it will be – the Area Manager will be looking after 250,000 people. There has been no consultation whatsoever. I stumbled across this some days ago,

accompanied by Councillor Wakefield because at Garforth we were implied that officers had been called to a meeting to be briefed on this matter. I challenged Councillor Wakefield if he knew anything about it and he did not.

The Leader of the Labour Group, the biggest group on the Authority, has not been informed about this mammoth restructuring exercise.

It is probably unfair to Mark that he is down to answer – it probably should be Councillor Les Carter. It seems that this restructuring has emanated from your department, Les. I found out days ago. I have spoken to an officer in another management team who tells me he knew about it well before Christmas.

Andrew has just used the words “full consultation” and I would ask for a response as to why Area Committee Chairs were not consulted prior to this decision being taken. I think it is diabolical. Les may well masterminded the ALMO switchover. Full consultation on that. Tenants have a ballot. Restructuring of the police. We were consulted on that, asked for comments. Restructuring in our own department we are not even consulted one iota, not even told about it. I got to know from officers across in my management team.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. This is Item 133 on page 112 on the Strong and Prosperous Communities White Paper. No-one would disagree that the Exec Board needs more detail of the proposals in the Government's White Paper to see how it will impact on the lives of local people. It is curious that part of the double devolution and extension to the possible community call to action outlined in the White Paper envisages Local Authority scrutiny being extended to, amongst others, the Learning and Skills Council, Job Centre Plus, the Health and Safety Executive, fire and police authorities, the Chief Constable, METRO, the Highways Agency and the Environment Agency.

This is how the community call to action is supposed to work. Citizens will be able to ask Councillors to raise matters as a call for action. Sounds like case work to me. Councillors act as gatekeepers and resolve the issue in the first instance – more case work – and if unresolved, it can escalate to the Scrutiny Committees.

I am not sure why the Government thinks this is blue sky thinking as this is what has been happening in Leeds and elsewhere for years, ever since Local Government was reorganised. All that is new is that we might be able to scrutinise some parts of some Government agencies, but none of it is of any use if scrutiny does not have any sanctions. Just ask how the health services laugh at Scrutiny now as being totally ineffectual. They do not like being answerable but they do not need to change anything at all, no matter what Scrutiny says.

On the subject of devolving power downwards, the elephant in the room is housing. We may not have a command and control economy but we definitely have a command and control Government – the most centralised in Europe.

On housing it says it wants cities to get a more powerful role but at the same time wants to hand decisions on housing to the regions. Note that it never says people, residents or tenants should get a more powerful role, just the regions.

One theme running through the White Paper is a concern for the usefulness or otherwise of local Councillors. The LGA has also been worried about whether people value and respect their Councils and their Councillors. In the end it comes down to a question of trust. For us it is something to do with integrity. For Labour, it is something offshore you put your money in.

Colleagues will remember the Council meeting last November 1 when Councillor Harington sought to defend his contradictory statements on the future of Fernhall Leisure Centre and the then PFI Leisure Centre proposals. He admitted in Council – it is in the transcript – that he had been wrong to claim that the proposed centre would be a private centre. That was very gracious of him at the time, although Labour had also claimed that Fernhall Leisure Centre itself would be closed which was also wrong.

I wanted to believe him. We all wanted to believe him. Imagine my disappointment that he is now delivering another leaflet saying the Liberals plan to destroy an ancient meadow by building a private sports centre on it. There are only so many times he can be economic with the actuality and have any credibility at all.
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COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Can I preface my comments firstly, in case there is any doubt of our support and compliments to Paul Rogerson on receiving his award. It is something that we should all share on the Council and I think his comments on receiving it reflect the nature of the person's commitment to public services, so on behalf of the Labour Group. (*Applause*)

I found it ironic that Rod Stewart should also receive, given they are both interesting in singing, and some time later on I expect to see or hear a rendering of "Do you think I'm sexy?" by Paul Rogerson, and the answer is "No"!

I use this opportunity to try and come back at Councillor Harris, because I will try and refresh his memory and give reasons why I think it was a relevant reference back, before I move on to another issue.

Firstly, I did raise something at Executive Board about the need to involve elected members, and I think Councillor Minkin has actually developed that point today. I did not vote against it. The truth is that one or two elected members cannot speak on every aspect of community engagement. I do not assume, unless you do or others do, I know everything about websites. In fact, I am catching up and I cannot profess to sit here, unless others can, and say I know everything about websites. In fact, I think the point that Councillor Illingworth – a lot of his points were very relevant about that and I notice that we did not do so well in awards nationally on websites. I think we came something like 443 out of 466, if my memory serves me correctly. That is a valid point and I would not expect me to be making that because I am not an anorak, I am not a website person. I leave that to others and I am looking at a colleague over there who has probably got his own website. That is the reason. I think the points made by Councillor Minkin are very, very appropriate and I think they were well argued.

What I did want to talk about is the point that Councillor Parker raised. We all keep saying here how important elected members are to the role of democracy. We say that week in, week out and I think we believe it. I think it has been difficult under reorganisation. There are many backbenchers from all parties who feel disenfranchised. I think the role of the Area Management was to provide that link between the centre and the communities. I think it needs more work – we have discussed that, we have agreed that on an all-party basis that we need to review Area Management to make it work, to make it connect.

When you get officers telling Councillor Parker – and I understand other Chairs as well – that they have just restructured without any comment to the elected member, I think that is a very sad and retrograde day for this Council. I think it is wrong, unless other people here – I do not know whether you, Alan, got to hear before the decision, before officers came back to the office and told you but I think it

is wrong and inappropriate. If we are talking about enhancing the role of elected members in Area Management in our community – and that is what the legislation is now in the White Paper saying – is this not a bad example?

I have never seen anything as bad as this. I think it is wholly wrong, wholly retrograde and totally unacceptable that we should get to hear from officers the day after the decision was made about fundamental changes to area committees and that is why I think Councillor Parker is absolutely right to oppose that decision. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Speaking really on the same issue as well. We found out – or I found out, our group found out – about what was suggested was a proposal rather than a done deal at this particular point, about the Area Managers going from five to three.

I think we do share concerns that at this particular point giving Area Managers that sort of area to cover, a quarter of a million people, really is far too great a burden to place upon them.

I think we all agree that Area Committee working has been very productive. It has been a very constructive way of approaching localising decision-making, but we do not believe that reducing from five to three Area Managers will actually help and contribute towards that localisation agenda that a lot of us are very passionate about.

I am concerned if the decision has been taken, because clearly at this particular point our role is that we have been told about it. I understood that it is a proposal that is doing the rounds at this particular point. We ought to have a full discussion and debate before any decision is made. It would clearly help us all, I think, if we had some clarification on where exactly we are with this matter.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Councillor Pryke, what words of wisdom. I cannot comment any further on what he said. A marvellous contribution.

Before we come to this discussion over Area Management, because Keith has raised the question of the consultation policy and the toolkit and the previous reference back it gives me the opportunity once more to make this point, because you focused principally on Liz Minkin's contribution with regard to the website and we took that on board. The whole point is that comments were made and we acted on them. It was acted on before it got to Executive Board.

It was a relevant point to make. We took it on board, we were grateful for the comment, something has been done about it. That is not the basis on which you can then refer back the policy. It was a relevant comment to make in Council. We all make comments under the Minutes – we have done in opposition; you are entitled to. It is not the basis of a reference back. There was no substantive argument made about a reference back.

You ask, and I will say quite clearly, if I vote for something I vote in my capacity as a portfolio holder and when I commit my group I commit my group, and if I find myself in a situation where my group says, "We are not having it", then I will have to stand up and say, "My group will not have it." I will not make half excuses about I cannot do everything and I am not the fount of all knowledge. I will say it and accept it and take it on the chin. Otherwise, it is my responsibility as a group leader to command the discipline of my group and to get them to stay in line.

As concerns Area Management, let us be clear. No decision has been made about Area Management. No vote or decision has been taken anywhere. In budget discussions we discussed all manner of things about how to balance the budget. Let me tell you, for instance, there was considerable feeling in the budget discussion that we should scrap the Lord Mayor's teas, but we are not going to do it, I can tell you that. I have let that one slip. We discuss all sorts of things. Let me tell you, we discussed whether it was possible to send you lot out to grass and put you out of your misery.

Area management. If officers are telling you that a decision has been made, that is incorrect. No decision has been made. We are discussing a whole range of issues with regard to the budget, as did you when you were preparing your budget. It will come forward, if it comes forward, in the budget debate but were something as substantial as the reorganisation of Area Management to be proposed as part of a budget proposal, then consultation would follow. It would be necessary to have consultation. That would be the position.

No decision has been taken. Officers, if they are telling you decisions have been taken, are wrong and we need to look into that because it is wholly inappropriate that that should be said to you. That is where we are. Do not let the hare start running until it is genuinely out of the trap and if it comes out of the trap, there will be consultation on an issue of that substance. That is the situation.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: A comment on Development, Councillor Minkin.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: I would like to comment, please, on Minutes 101 and 102 on page 98. I am sorry that I did not make it clear that it is Minute 101 as well. Firstly, on the Advertising Design Guide, I would firstly like to congratulate everybody on getting this guide through. It took long enough, I would say that – it did – but I say it is not bad at all either. It is not brilliant but it is not bad.

For example, where it expresses the desire for innovative, interesting advertising, I say yes, but the text is mostly about boring rectangles and I think we have got enough boring rectangles around the place. For example, that advert – how many of you have come in from North Yorkshire recently and you come in through the beautiful Wharfe Valley, you are looking forward to coming back home to Leeds and you have got the beautiful Harewood Bank in front of you and then there is this 'Welcome to Leeds' sign, Harewood, and there as big as 'Harewood' is this advertising slogan. You wonder – I do not know if the Ward members had any chance to comment on this but I have to say if I was Ward member for Harewood I would say is this really the way I would want to be welcomed into Leeds – or into my bit of Leeds, into Harewood – by having an advert stuck on the sign? I really do not think it is good enough.

I am pleased that my idea of an Advertising Initiative Manager has been seen through and there is somebody now in place. Let me say at this point that there are some members of the parties opposite who like to portray me – this one in particular – as not liking any adverts at all anywhere and this is just not true – it is not true. It was my idea to have that post. She is now in place and I am immensely pleased to note her initiative. I think she is doing really good work.

Councillor McKenna noted that there was a great big hoarding on a lovely little patch of green land in Armley surrounding by housing – a real blatant eyesore. I do not know if anybody would have doubted that. He raised it with her and she has replied like this:

"We have longer term plans following from the Advertising Design Guide, to encourage more modern advertising units sited in the right locations in Leeds and hope in exchange that the advertising contractors will start to voluntarily remove displays in locations that are no longer appropriate. This process will take some time but we are planning to set up a working group with the advertising contractors to monitor progress on this initiative."

Well done. I think then we really will start to see a reduction in some of those advertising panels. However fond we are of the income that might be coming in, we really can say, "Oh God, doesn't it look dreadful?"

As regards Minute 102, I hope we will assume here how things are going on with the lamppost advertising scheme. It occurred to me, should not Plans West be getting a report back on some of those that we did give temporary planning permission to and how will Ward members – going back to the theme of this debate about keeping us informed and ability to influence things – be kept informed about plans for more in our Wards?

For example, there are ten or twelve, I think, that are appearing or being given approval in the city centre that I do not think City Centre Plan Panel Members were informed of in our usual information system. I do not know whether the Ward Members had any chance to hear about them.

Finally, I would like to really support the comments that Councillor Carter made to the Exec Board. For once I will say I one hundred per cent agree that adverts should be where they add vitality and vigour, where all adverts must be tasteful and stylish and they will add and not subtract from our environment.

Finally, let us also make sure and check that actually the money that comes in really is worth all the effort that goes in organising them. On the whole, I think we are really making some progress on getting some fine consideration about the right place for adverts in our city. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor I thank Councillor Minkin for praising the Development Department, for once, although having listened to the rest of what she said, it became completely unrelated to the original praise.

I should tell Members that actually there was widespread consultation with elected Members in particular, and Councillor Minkin was assiduous in writing in her comments. I think virtually every one of Councillor Minkin's comments were added in and suggestions taken on the Advertising Guide.

I do want to remind Councillor Minkin of those huge yellow metal signs that there administration erected all round the city that said, "Welcome to Leeds" and then in little letters underneath, "Morley", which people repeatedly sprayed out the Leeds and then you had to struggle to see the "Morley", or "Boston Spa". Talking of Harewood, Boston Spa apparently, John tells me, that abomination is still there and still regularly graffiti-ed.

I hope you would accept, Councillor Minkin, that we have come a long way from those abominations of signs that your administration put up all over the city at vast expense.

What you have got to remember is, advertising and advertising hoardings, boards, whatever, are very subjective. What Councillor Minkin likes Councillor

McKenna might not like and vice versa. We have to try – and I entirely accept that we have to try – to make sure that first of all the right things are advertised and not the wrong things; secondly, that the advertising is tasteful and does not cause any damage in terms of pedestrian safety or motorist safety, but at the end of the day there will be differences of view about what is nice and what is not. I would caution Councillor Minkin on trying to impose on the rest of us her particular likes and dislikes. You really did.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Never. Never.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You know the old saying – methinks she protests too much! We are all well aware of Councillor Minkin's true views about advertising, which she did very well to disguise but the longer she spoke the more obvious, I am afraid, it became.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis on Neighbourhood and Housing.

COUNCILLOR LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I notice Ralph was enjoying a copy of the Labour Rose. I have been reading *this*, which is equally good – Kirkstall and Burley leader, which I think Les would want to read because it has several bits about when the Liberal Democrats took control of Leeds City Council and there is a big chunk about what they have done. There is a lovely bit about Burley Lodge that you need to read and you will see that they are doing an excellent job in Burley Lodge. Perhaps you would like to comment on the role and that is the reason I was involved myself on that one, Les.

On more serious matters, I am sorry I have got to put a number of issues on the minutes but they seem to make a piece to me which is about what is happening about housing within the city and almost how we are unable to keep up with what is going on.

We have got a problem that has emerged fairly quickly of new properties empty within the city, particularly the city centre, student accommodation purpose built and student accommodation old. This has almost come upon us when we were not aware of it. We almost got a Leeds version of Centre Point, which some people may remember from the seventies, where it was worth keeping a property empty because the property increased in value more than any money you might get from renting it, so you were just better off not bothering with tenants, just leave it as it is.

You have had the rise of the buy-to-let market and speculative involvement in housing in the city centre, which is quite a worrying development because I do not think it serves the people if the city well.

Our empty property strategy, which is full of warm words but a kind of well-meaning document, is not able to actually really get to grips with the problems we are facing as a city today.

I was just thinking back. I think about five years ago we had a study done by Sheffield Hallam University on housing markets in Leeds, where it was going. I think if you were to look back at that document now, you would discount it completely. All the assumptions that were made five years ago about where people were wanting to live, how people were living, have changed. I am very concerned that things are moving very quickly and we are not. It is very difficult for us as a city Council to try and keep pace and to act in the way that we should do.

It is perhaps easy to predict what housing will be built; it is very difficult to work out how that housing will be occupied, what housing will be left unoccupied,

quite what is happening within the housing market, and that is a huge concern to us. The key bit to us is what is happening in terms of affordability. I would like to concentrate on that whole issue that is in the Affordable Housing Plan and making the housing ladder work.

One thing that we are very aware of is that there is a lack of affordable housing. When it says I think there are four post codes out of 102 in the city affordable by people on average earnings – in effect that is no areas of the city. The whole city is out of bounds to somebody who has not got income from parents or somewhere else to help them get on the housing ladder. That is a huge concern.

The other huge concern is obviously the lack of social housing. It is not just about the number of people on the housing list, which is about 30,000 and it has not changed a huge degree. What matters is the number of people who are actually actively bidding for property. There are 20,000 people actively bidding for property in this city.

What is happening at the other end, the supply end, is that we have far fewer properties to offer people. Void levels are down, turnover within family housing is down. We have got a major problem there that we need to start talking about and we welcome very much what is happening in terms of the special purpose vehicle. That is something we very much support. All of us on this side will be putting in our bids for new social housing within our Wards. I am not so sure about everybody on that side but on this side we certainly will do.

Why should that particular vehicle just be talking about housing revenue account land? That may not always be appropriate or the best land to talk about. As a city Council we have to start saying, how important is the shortage of social housing and affordable housing within the city to us? Are we prepared to look beyond housing revenue account land? Are we prepared really to put our money where our mouth is? Every decision we make about vacant land is about a choice – it is about a priority and we have got to decide which way to go.

My other concern is about the lack of targets within that affordable housing strategy. There are not any. That is something that we had back in 1990 when we came up with Leeds Partnership Homes. We need to have a clear target. John Trickett's achievement – let us be fair – John Trickett was the guy who came up with that. We achieved it and went beyond it. You have not even got a target. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Speaking to Minute 104 page 99 on the Empty Property Strategy. As Councillor Lewis has said, I would also like to start by welcoming the strategy. I think all of us recognise that empty properties of all tenures blight our communities and those communities are already under immense stress from a whole range of factors.

I want to be quite specific in what I am saying here. In my Ward in Middleton Park we have a small housing estate where four per cent of the stock is void and the particular issue, although this is a Council estate, as was, many of the problems we have now are with privately owned ex-Council stock.

I just want to make reference to this one community where one street alone has twelve empty properties and these, it is no surprise I am sure to many of you, have become the magnet for anti-social behaviour, vandalism, constantly being broken into and bringing enormous grief to neighbours and the fear of crime, victimisation, threats of fires and much worse is endemic. This situation from this

one street blights the whole of the estate and efforts that everyone is making coming together to improve the services on all fronts.

Referring to the strategy, it is aspirational. I do not think any of us could argue with the desire – and I quote – “to address problems of long-term empty homes wherever they are situated and wherever they blight neighbourhoods.” My concern, Lord Mayor, lies in what exactly the strategy is actually going to do to achieve results with the particular problems on estates like the Manor Farms in Middleton Park. More importantly, when will they be achieved? There are no time scales for how decisions are going to be made other than the desire to hit the aspirational targets by 2010.

We already have a situation in our Ward where different departments are not quite clear from the strategy who is actually going to take responsibility and if we have privately owned houses, some of the landlords have actually disappeared and they can be boarded up for months, if not years, and within the strategy the aspiration is to move towards CPO-ing these properties but I cannot find within the strategy what the intention there would be; if we ever manage to achieve this which is in itself an issue are they then going to be sold back into private ownership or will they be kept in the social rented housing sector or, indeed, can they be taken over by the ALMOs? Indeed, I think there is a massive issue of resource here and how this is going to be achieved.

We have at this time increasing and massive need in the city for affordable housing and I would like to know why there is no explicit link between this property and the affordable home strategy. If the problems of this one estate in my Ward are resolved, then over a dozen families just on one street, housing can be provided. We can then look across the city to the area where hundreds of properties are now lying empty as a result of the choice of students not to live in those properties. We are talking about the possibility of providing for a significant number of people trapped with no chance at all of getting on to the housing ladder.

Then we can work on this strategy, bringing literally thousands of empty houses back into use for those in greatest need without having to resort to new bills in more and more inaccessible locations.

Lord Mayor, the Empty Property Strategy does have to have targets and I am pleased to say that the South Leeds ALMO is working towards achieving the targets and bringing their voids back into use, but I have to just emphasise that I believe it is still woefully short on the detail of how it is going to be delivered and particularly with reference to the blight of private sector voids on our estates.

The need to deal with these empty properties is immediate and urgent and the need to link them explicitly to the affordable housing strategy is immediate and urgent. I would ask for urgent clarification of how this Empty Property Strategy is going to help to deal immediately with the private voids that are blighting our communities. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on the same Minutes as Councillor Blake. It struck me while Councillor Blake was speaking that at least we do have a strategy for dealing with empty properties in Leeds now and I am wondering what your administration managed to do in the 24 years when large numbers of privately owned buildings, houses, in East End Park and Cross Green were allowed to run into dereliction and I think the strategy that Councillor Carter's department has put forward addresses that.

As has been mentioned before, particularly in the evening paper, the number of empty homes in Leeds has been inflated by the number of new flats available to rent in the city centre. People have seen the enormous growth of the buy-to-rent market over the last few years and it is little wonder that saturation point is being reached. It is not just the city centre. There are scores of empty houses in Burmantofts and Harehills, for example, often bought as investments and often barely lettable. When they are on the market they are for rent for, say, £150 a week for a two-bedroom back-to-back. That is not affordable.

Empty Dwelling Management Orders brought forward by John Prescott when he still had some sort of control over housing would probably not be a solution for getting the people on Leeds housing register into such apartments – those in the city centre – because the owners will be able to show that they are taking active steps to market their properties. In other words, they can appear to not be deliberately leaving them empty to rise in price, as was referred to by Richard, although they apparently are doing so.

The other problem with EDMOs is that there is an inefficient mechanism for their management – for houses, that is, or for flats – and the Government does not seem to have thought about this. If anyone thinks management agents will run them on behalf of the city, just talk to Council officers in Neighbourhoods and Housing who will explain that such agents are not interested because they will not make anything out of it and if anyone thinks the Council or the ALMOs should manage them, it is incumbent on them to say where they will find the money to do so – probably by cutting another service.

Above all, it is ironic that in a study of the economy published by the OECD last year, more than 96% of the growth in the British economy since the turn of the century has been in the service sector and three-quarters of that has been from buying and selling property and associated services. Only in Chancellor Brown's fantasy economics could renting a house out or increasing interest rates count as growth as manufacturing industry continues to decline.

One of the fastest growing employment opportunities in Leeds is that of the insolvency practitioner. Hardly an option open to someone sacked by Pittards last year in East Leeds. That is probably Labour's secret plan for Leeds – attract thousands of insolvency practitioners to rent those empty city centre flats. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Page 100, Minute 106. Can we pass on our congratulations to the Chief Executive and to Councillor Cleasby – not Councillor Slingsby - I might like to pass on a lot to Councillor Slingsby but it would not be my congratulations - Councillor Cleasby, on his elevation next year.

We are looking again at the affordable homes issue and really it is just to make a few observations on where we are at this particular point. In Morley we will take any of the options that are available to us, whether that is by the planning process, whether it is by negotiations about the special purpose vehicle that we hope will roll into Morley in the not-too-distant future. We will be contacting you about it, Les.

Fundamentally we believe that we are just scratching the surface with all of the options that are available to us at this particular time. There is no doubt – and you all look at the same paper that I do each week that comes out from the ALMOs about the number of properties about who has been and how many bids you have had for particular properties in your own area.

For some family homes in Morley you are getting 250 bids on one particular property. That is not unusual for Morley, I am sure it happens across the actual city. We do have a fundamental supply problem. 30,000 people on the waiting list – even if you argue that two-thirds or even half of that are active, whatever we have got at this particular point is scratching the surface. It is putting a plaster on a gaping wound and we need to do something more and central Government needs to do something more.

We have a view and we consistently promote this particular view, that we would abandon the right to buy. We are in a situation where at the point where the number of houses that we have got is decreasing and the number of people bidding remains the same, we have this worry that in another ten, 15 years there are going to be 20,000 people bidding for one property and God knows where that might actually be. We have got to do something about that.

We do think that we also need to look and apply pressure to central Government about compulsory purchase and make sure that that particular process is one that is available to the Council so that we can adopt that towards resolving some of the housing problems that we have got and that needs to be made quicker and we do not need to be in a situation where we get hammered for compensation claims in the way that we do. That needs central Government to be sensible about that side of things.

We would also look about returning back to the days when you could have a registered fair rent and get to a situation where in the private sector, instead of paying £150 for grot, you have an opportunity to go along and make sure that you are paying a fair rent for the service that you are actually getting at this particular point. We think that that is a central Government issue. They need to reflect about that. We can batter each other across the Chamber from now until doomsday but until something fundamentally changes with central Government we are not going to resolve this problem. Thank you, Lord Mayor (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HUSSAIN: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I wish to comment on Minutes 107 and 122 under the Neighbourhoods and Housing portfolio. These Minutes both concern substantial investment in my Ward in terms of housing renewal within the Hyde Park and Woodhouse Ward in the north-west of Leeds.

Firstly I would like to touch on the Little London Housing PFI which has now been approved by central Government and will result in nearly £100m of vital and much-needed investment in a community which has been neglected for far too long. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate officers for their hard work in seeing the scheme through to this stage and also thank this administration for the political commitment and will it has to show to Little London over the last two-and-a-half years.

The second Minute concerns the Burley Lodge Group Repair Scheme. While a much smaller scheme in terms of money and the number of houses, it still represents a commitment to tackle some of the major housing problems in my Ward. Some 50 properties will be updated with their life extended by 30 years. I and my colleagues, Councillor Ewans and Linda Rhodes-Clayton, believe this will make a major contribution to improving the lives of residents in this community and we welcome this wholeheartedly. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to comment on Minute 120, page 107, which relates to a report about the Home Energy Conservation Act and in particular on fuel poverty, which has risen rather dramatically in recent years.

Over all fuel poverty in 2006 is reported at 36.7%, increasing from 22% in the last reporting period. I hear with interest Councillor Harris's earlier comments and still await what action actually happens.

What I would actually like to talk about is the issue of climate change which is going up the political agenda very quickly. It was an item that I raised at the last Council meeting when I asked Councillor Carter if he could tell us what the current carbon emission levels were and when he envisaged the city would be carbon neutral.

Councillor Carter could not answer the question – or would not answer the question. Possibly one of the reasons he could not answer the question was because at that point no measurements had actually been taken on carbon emissions since 2003 when we were in – it is Andrew I am talking about, not you, Les. I will let you off for now.

Lord Mayor, I would like to say there was a recent survey done on action on climate change of Local Authorities up and down the country looking at best practice. Just a few examples of what other places are doing. In London, for example, the first city in Britain to set statutory CO2 emission reduction targets. In Kirklees they have won an award for sustainable energy, fitting solar panels to many properties in the area. In Aberdeen they slashed CO2 emissions on its own estate by over 31%. There are lots of examples of action around the country. Unfortunately Leeds was nowhere to be seen on this survey. It was not even mentioned.

One of the extraordinary things is when you actually have a Green Party as part of the administration, you would think that climate change would be further up the agenda. When you actually talk to Green Party people from around the country, they are embarrassed by the lack of green action in this city and rather embarrassed by their own colleagues.

Lord Mayor, after nearly three years of this administration it is time that colleagues over there stopped blaming the Government or stopped blaming the last administration. It is time to actually take responsibility. You are running this city now. Tackling climate change is actually part and parcel of the same agenda as tackling inequality, improving our neighbourhoods and improving the quality of life of all our people and it is time that we actually lead on this instead of simply following and doing the bare minimum. Perhaps Councillor Les Carter can tell us when he does his comments how his administration intends to tackle this crucial agenda. Thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I was not going to speak on the item, page 99 Minute 104, but since Councillor Blake alluded to the issue of empty properties in the north-west, student properties, I thought it was important just to set the record straight. Yes, there are an awful lot of empty properties now in that part of Leeds. The reason for that is – there are a number of reasons but one of the major reasons is the increase in the provision of purpose-built student accommodation in other parts of Leeds.

I have to say that this is not a problem that has just come immediately. It has been a problem that has been building up for several years and you do have to ask what the previous administration has been doing on a number of issues surrounding students, because the fact is that these are not new issues and it is hardly surprising that as a result of these purpose-build student blocks, we do now have some empty properties.

What are we doing about it? I can tell you what we are doing about it. We have a group called the Shared Housing Group, which I chair. We commissioned some research to look at the whole issue of empty properties in the north-west, to look at the issues around purpose-built accommodation and some of the drivers in terms of why students choose particular areas of Leeds, with a view then to saying OK, we have got these empty properties, what do we do about it?

I am pleased to say that through the work of Hugh Jones and Renew, we now have a draft report which is almost ready to be published. That report is, in fact, a student housing strategy and one of the key things it looks at is what we do about those empty properties. There are a number of things we can do, there are a number of options that the paper goes into and the next stage is, once the paper is published, will be to set up a group to rapidly produce some recommendations about what we should do to reduce the number of empty properties.

I have to say on this particular issue – and I agree with Ralph – what have they been doing about empty properties for the last 20 years? We are doing something very concrete on this particular issue. We have a report, we have a document now that sets out a strategy which will enable us to tackle this very real problem. Where was Councillor Blake ten years ago when these things were being flagged up? *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I hope nobody jumps into me but I would just like to pay tribute to one of the Members of Council, Denise Atkinson. Where is Denise? Denise, the work that you did as far as the antisocial behaviour in your Ward and the threats that you received, I just want to pay tribute to the work you have done there and thank you very much indeed. *(Applause)*

Unfortunately I cannot pay tribute to many other people, actually. I will start with the last first. First of all let us talk about fuel poverty. You refer to fuel poverty going up this year and last year. I am afraid it did not. It actually went down last year. It is this year it has gone up and I will tell you why.

First of all, how is it defined? It is defined that if you spend ten per cent or more of your household income, that puts you into fuel poverty.

Two years ago the average family paid £460 on gas and electricity. They are currently paying £660. That is an enormous increase. Is there any doubt of the massive increase in fuel poverty in this city?

What is the city doing? There are two things. What is the city doing and what is the Government doing? I do not see the Government doing a lot, to be quite honest, but I will tell you what the city has done. They have run campaigns in several Wards most affected by fuel poverty to raise awareness. They have mailed out 1,000 residents and offered advice and support on fuel issues. They have had additional front line staff who have been trained to identify those houses or homes which are vulnerable to fuel poverty. 3,300 private sector low income households were provided with heating insulation grants. Mains gas has been rolled out to 1,200 all-electricity properties. Over 32,000 reports were issued to Leeds' householders identifying grant support or improvements. These were real meaning and purposeful things and the people working on this – and it is not me and, as Mark said earlier it is Barry and it is David – are doing a super job and we should not decry them, but we do need more from Government.

Why give me – I am not being funny – 200 quid a year for fuel? I do not even notice if it has gone in the bank or not and I am not being stupid but there are many

people could do with £400 or £500 and it is time somebody looked into that in greater depth.

I am not going to banter with you so just stop it for a second. Can I come to Councillor Blake for a second? Councillor Blake, to be fair I am not attacking her too much on what she said because a lot of what she said is right because she identified what properties are right for the Government's business of whether we can take property over. She is absolutely right.

What the Government proposed was a situation whereby Councils should take property over where you had absent landlords; where you had people in certain areas where the actual property was being allowed to go into disrepair and somebody should go in. I totally support that. Indeed, a paper will be coming to you to talk about that in the not too distant future. I have no argument with that.

Where I fall out with you is when you suddenly start bleating about a 31,000 housing problem, 31,000 on a so-called housing waiting list – which is not a waiting list, as Richard knows, Richard said it in the newspapers. Forget I said it. Then you get Councillor Atha standing up and playing pop that 400 people applied for a house in his Ward and this is now a crisis and that we must take over all the empty property in Leeds, 15,000 empty properties.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Point of order. I have never heard such poppycock. I have got the figure here. It is a bit rich.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Lord Mayor, let me just carry on.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Lies, lies, lies.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Lord Mayor, if you want to come in, come in. Bernard, you are an expert on lies, lies, lies.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: That is unfair.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Lord Mayor, is this man going to sit down? Am I going to be allowed to speak? He is out of order, Lord Mayor. Please put him back in order.

Let me just tell you that when Bernard starts stressing that this is a major problem, what he did not tell you was there were 31,000 on the same list when they were last in power. What he did not tell the newspaper was that there were 300-odd applications for houses in that same period of time. Did Councillor Atha go in the newspaper and say, "This is outrageous We ought to do something"? Did he billy-o. He said nothing. He kept his head down and his mouth shut.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I wish he would do that now.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: I wish he would do it now. You are quite right.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I have never kept my mouth shut.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Let me just go on. When the Thatcher and Major years came to an end, Mr Blair took over. When Mr Blair took over this so-called waiting list in this city was 19,000. Years later, to the time when they left power, it increased to 31,000. If anyone wants to know where the problem of housing rests, it rests in Westminster and it rests very firmly with a Labour

Government who have now decided not to put huge sums of money in houses. We are having to use all sorts of different methods to get new houses for this city.

Our affordable housing delivery plan will deliver – deliver more than they delivered. Let me just tell you, these people who are spouting and telling us what we are not doing. Councillor Lewis to put a target in 2000 of 300 homes per year every year he was in. He achieved 200. 200.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: You achieved about 130, Les.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: You think it is 130, do you? I have got a figure of 200. We are going forward to achieve 1,000 a year. That is the target we are putting on – 1,000 a year. When we came to power there was no scheme, there was no strategy. There was a strategy for empty properties. It was out of date and it had to be updated. There was no strategy for affordable housing, there was no scheme gathering dust on the shelf. They have nothing to crow about. They have just suddenly started coming.

Let us tell you the work we are doing. We are working with the Housing Corporation and the Yorkshire Housing Association. We will use the planning system which will put about 300 affordable homes into Bernard's Ward. We have pushed forward with great enthusiasm the East and South Leeds Regeneration Scheme, which will be the biggest regeneration scheme in the country. We have got the new PFI scheme for London, we dealt with Swarcliffe and we are hoping we will follow on with Beeston.

These are things that are going to go forward. They were not there. There was nothing there when I came in, nothing at all. All we had was a person who was actually running this, called Councillor Lewis, and Councillor Lewis – who I think is one of the nicest people in Council and is known as one of the most ineffective people in Council – totally ineffective. Nothing was delivered, nothing was on the stop to deliver. In two years we are supposed to have cured it all. They had 24 years and, quite honestly, they crow about 4,000 houses in 1990. They have said nothing, they planned nothing since then, they sat back and did nothing.

The driving force of this Council now will ensure that many, many affordable houses are provided in this city and it is this administration will do it because they had not a clue how to do it.

Lord Mayor, it is shouted that we have not got there. No we have not Geoff, I accept that, but we have not had 24 years in which to do it. I will tell you what, if we had had 24 years we certainly would not have had what you have done because you have done absolutely nothing. You did nothing over 24 years. Bernard, do not start, you know as well as I do what you did was nothing. You had no plans to do anything, there are plans now in force. (*Interruption*)

I will tell you what we have done. OK. Let us have a look at Swarcliffe. For five years they tried to get Swarcliffe. They could not get it. They did not know how to get it. That fellow there Gruen – “I am trying to get Swarcliffe.” It took me a year – one year – and I got Swarcliffe. (*Applause*)

That is something for a start and next month, all being well, we are going to sign a contract for the biggest contract in this city for EASEL. This is what we are doing and what we have done, so go back to sleep and leave us in peace. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen, Children's Services.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: One of the saddest things of this Councillor is listening to some of the Members opposite continually – it started with Councillor Pryke, who believes that strategies actually matter and that they change life. They do not. Then it goes round one by one and they all say when they come to their portfolios, “We have done nothing but you did less. We were 24 years and we have had two years.” You have had nearly three years. The sign of being poor, of being a poor administration, is if you constantly have to refer back to the previous administration. You have had three years and I am going to come to Tweedledee and Tweedledum over there.

Talking of the Minutes, the first is the review of residential children’s homes. You have to dig very deep into this report, Lord Mayor. If you looked at the Executive Summary, rosy tinted as ever, you thought everything was wonderful. When you actually go into the report itself, into the findings of the review, you find that the most underprivileged children in care are the ones suffering most. 23 of 71 children in care had not received even 24 hours’ education in a week. The service experiences problems with low staffing and high sickness levels. This has led to an over-reliance on agency staff. Staff morale is low and there is not adequate time for training and development.

Six improvement priorities are forecast. None of them are timed, none of them are actioned by who is the Lead, none of them are costed.

Some of the recommendations, Lord Mayor, are exactly the same as three years ago when you came to power and it says in the report none have been actioned. So much for children’s champions.

I would like to believe, Councillor Harker and Councillor Brett. I would like to, but I also have a leaflet here and this is the one that they have just put out in Moortown. Would you believe it or not, Tom, do you know that the Liberal Democrats, they won control of Leeds City Council all by themselves? That is what they did, two-and-a-half years ago. Would you believe, who invested, Tom, in our schools? Where has the money come from? What do you say to Labour Government? Yes. It is the Labour Government where the money comes from. Who actually designed and thought about and build the secondary stock for high schools? Labour Government and the Labour Council. Of course it is. Not according to this. Since 2004 the Liberal Democrats, all by themselves, they have built eleven new primary schools. (*Laughter and applause*) These people over there all by themselves have built eleven new primary schools. Listen to it – they have built four new high schools as well. No wonder Councillor Harker is never in here looking after children – he is too busy being a brickie!

It is nothing to do with Carters and it is nothing to do with Proctors. It is all the Lib Dems who are running the Council all by themselves and building schools and then they have the audacity to say when Labour was in power schools were starved of investment. Anything like that is absolutely ludicrous.

This is a lie. This is a total lie and the total lie is because you are worried that the next Councillor for Moortown will be Jerry Harper. That is why you are worried and that is why you lying. (*Interruption*) There we are.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Not as worried as you are!

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I actually want to see – I say it at every Council meeting – I want to see Councillor Brett and Councillor Harker stand up and be the children’s champion. I want you to reach into other departments and stop

some of the bad practices that are happening there which are disadvantaging children, because that is your job. Stand up and do it. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR DOWSON: I would like to speak on page 108, Minute 124. It is a strange feeling of déjà vu because it is the same subject that I always seem to speak on, which is Miles Hill primary School. To follow on from what Councillor Gruen said a minute ago, I also remember last year when Liberal Councillors were stood outside having their picture taken outside Miles Hill primary announcing in their leaflets that they had saved Miles Hill primary school. In a different way let us now see them put their money where their mouths are.

I would hope after at least two previous speeches, especially if you have been listening, you would know all about the many issues surrounding the Beckhill area. You will, I hope, remember me talking about the high levels of crime on the estate, the ASBOs – children as young as ten have ASBOs – low academic achievement and the great number of households that are on benefit. It is in fact one of the five most deprived areas in the country. I am sure you all have the picture by now so I will not go any further into that.

The decision to close the school will now have to go to the Schools Organisation Committee and we as local Councillors still hope the decision can be reversed, but we do actually hold out very little hope of that happening.

If it is to close, the residents need it to remain as a community facility. Education Leeds has already commissioned a report from the north-east Area Management Team and they consulted – they consulted Sure Start, the Intensive Family Support Group, the police, the ALMOs, the Wardens, the local church, the residents' groups – but believe it or not they never consulted the local Councillors, which in view of what Councillor Illingworth was saying is quite interesting.

The recommendation that the school building, play zone and the facilities remain open to the community. At a recent meeting of youth service providers, they also decided *en masse* that they were going to instigate a letter to Councillor Carter saying that they too wanted the facilities to remain for community use.

We now ask you to stand up and be counted, to stand up to Education Leeds and to refuse to sell Miles Hill. The residents are already voicing their suspicions that there is a plan to link the sale of the school with a proposal to demolish and clear a large area of ALMO property that is adjacent. That will allow the land to be sold and wouldn't that land be worth an awful lot more together than sold separately?

One of the best and the most worthwhile things I feel we as Councillors can do is to stand up for those who feel that their voice is never heard, who feel ignored and are totally demoralised by life and the area that they live in. Remember, please, those who shout loudest and have the most influence are not always right and, in my experience, they are in fact usually wrong.

Think of this as an opportunity. It is an opportunity to engage the residents, to invest in the future, to do something that is actually going to be life-changing for those people - in fact, closing the gap. Retain the school buildings for public use. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR MONAGHAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Speaking on Minute 113 on page 103. I think, in response to Councillor Gruen, I am a bit more glass half full and I would actually like to congratulate the Children's Services department on achieving a Rank 3 of 'Good' at their annual performance assessment. These findings should be welcomed and thanks given to everyone working within Children's

Services across Leeds for their contribution to maintaining and improving services for children and young people in this city. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: A bit of an argument there, me and Dicky. Because mention has been made of Narrowing the Gap and because reference has been made to the capital budget which falls under my portfolio, I thought it appropriate that I say something.

First of all what we have again had today a Councillor from the Labour Group setting a hare running that is completely without foundation. You do this week after week after week. There is no known plan or conspiracy between Education Leeds and the ALMOs to join together the Miles Hill site with other land in the area for some sort of disposal for housing development. That is complete fiction. Nobody here knows anything about that whatsoever and you just throw these things out every week we all know the game – there will be a leaflet very quickly saying that this is what we are proposing to do. It is completely without foundation.

You asked somebody to stand up and be counted on the question of Miles Hill. I will happily go and stand outside Miles Hill and tell the parents that I was one of those who agreed that the school had to close and I will repeat what I said in Exec Board and I will now repeat it to the whole city. On what basis would anybody in their right minds take the abuse that we take in the papers if there was an alternative? If it was within our power to keep everything open, to provide the blank cheque for everything, don't you think we would do it, because then instead of being that 'B' Harris, that mean-minded, tight-fisted, etc, etc, I would be absolutely – and Andrew and the rest of us – the people's champion because we can give everybody anything they want. That is not the world that your Government has placed us in. It is not the world in fairness that I can see now that your Government placed you in when you were struggling with the situation. In fairness it is not the world that they placed us in at all.

We would love to keep everything open, keep every community facility, every school open everywhere in the city, but somebody has to pay for it and the people who fund us are central Government.

Richard Harker I am sure will make reference to this. You talk about people who point the finger at central Government. I suggest you have a chat with your old mate George Moody and ask him what he said in Parliament last week about the Labour Government and ask him about the catalogue of failures he laid at the door of your Government – failures on the way in which asylum seekers are being dealt with; failure on the way education is being dealt with; failures on the way worklessness is being dealt with. He actually, to quote one of the things he said, he said, "If the inner city still exists after ten years of a Labour Government we should tell the Social Exclusion Unit to revisit the issue as the policy is not working." That was what he said about your Government and it is your Government that is giving us the problem to grapple with.

We are making some awful, awful tough decisions but at least we are prepared to make them. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Could I very briefly ask Councillor Harris, you denied there was any plot, campaign, plan, conspiracy to achieve what Councillor Dowson referred to as a possibility and in people's minds. Will you give an assurance now that it is your party's view that such a development would not take place? Even if there is no plan now will you say that you will not agree and your party will not agree to the development the kind of which was indicated by that statement? If you cannot say then when you say there is no plan now, there is no conspiracy now, that gives

no assurance for the future. When you hear other people say, "This school will not close. Over my dead body it will not close" and then a year later it is closing.

When we talk about our good friend – a generally respected gentleman - the Executive Chairman for Education, his legacy will be known as the person who closed the schools. Where did these schools close? The Executive Board Member. It was in fact and has been in the poorer areas of the city. What is happening is a doughnut effect where there is a big gap in the middle.

I am reminded of this because the other morning it was pouring down with rain. I was riding down or driving down Queenswood Drive and I saw a woman pushing a buggy with two small children in it and one larger child in her hand. That person used to go to a very good school which was closed, Beckett Park School, which was closed by the administration opposite not on educational grounds at all – not on any grounds at all because it had very good Ofsted's, it had got Investors in People, it had got all kinds of accolades from the private sector and it was closed. Why? Because of numbers.

If you are closing schools on numbers alone and not educational grounds, you are not discharging, in my view, the real duty that you have, so let us look at it objectively. I would not be unkind about this because they have been talking about closing schools for years and reducing over numbers. I have said in this Councillor Chamber before when I was Chairman, was privy to closing schools, but I have to admit I have done them

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Which Minute is he commenting on?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I am speaking to Neighbourhoods and Housing on this Minute now and the issues raised by your colleague. (*Interruption*) Don't slam your fist at me, my chap, because I am not impressed in any way by your histrionics. Minute 124, if I can help you.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: We will be out of time in a minute and I cannot reply.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Either we follow the constitution or we do not.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I did not now I was breaking any rule at all. I am not breaking any rule. All I want to do, really two things, is just to encourage my friend to be more liberal in his educational attitude and not close schools for numbers, and Councillor Harris to give the clear assurance we need, otherwise we know his words are weasel words. There is no plan now, there is no conspiracy now. Will he say what will happen in the future, because if he does not say that we shall not believe him. We might not even believe him if he said it but I think most of us would.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Point of order. This debate has now strayed very much into SOC territory which we did not know it would do, so I think I should declare an interest and leave the Chamber while the debate goes on about this particular subject.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I will deal with the references to Miles Hill first and then perhaps Councillor Gruen could come back in, Lord Mayor, because I would like to address some of my comments to him.

Nobody can give assurances yet because we have not decided in Education that the school will be declared surplus to requirements. Education has not decided yet that it has not got a use for the school buildings.

If and when we make that decision in Education, it will then be passed over as a surplus building to the Development Department. I have to say that at the present moment we do need to talk to many of our partners, stakeholder partners in Education about Miles Hill School and those conversations are ongoing at the moment.

A lot has been said about social exclusion and life chances in this debate. I am going to read something. About life chances and social exclusions:

“We are so unambitious and perhaps complacent, or perhaps afraid to fall out with the leader that we do not revisit our policies on unemployment or education. We need to consider again. We must swallow our pride because youngsters are having their futures severely damaged and we cannot blame the Conservative Party for that, or the opposition. It was nice to do that a few years ago but we have now had ten years in Government and I would have expected a far better position. Certainly I would not have expected us to be satisfied with three high schools in one constituency in a major city such as Leeds.”

George was very honest and I hope about the failures of the Labour Government and I hope that in leaflets that are put out in East Leeds that East Leeds Councillors are equally honest about the failures of the Labour Government.

To answer directly Peter, who has left the room, about the building things, who made the money available, OK, the PFI was made available and probably in ten or 15 years' time we will probably have to have a debate on whether PFI worked. Yes, this city will take those credits and it will build schools and those schools were built under this administration. We will take what may be effective Government policy and turn it to the benefit of this city and the children of this city. *(Applause)*

THE CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER: The time is up for comments on Minutes and therefore we go straight into the wind up provisions.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, can we deal with a number of the issues that have been raised today? I do not intend to go through all of them in the ten minutes available to me but there are a number which I think do need commenting on.

The first one is the debate about Area Management. Can I repeat what Councillor Harris said? We are having discussions in the administration, of which you are not part, about a whole range of issues concerned with the budget. If any Area Officers have told any elected member the decision has been taken, they are wrong. We are nowhere near completing our discussions on a range of issues around the budget and the structure of this Council.

Having said that I am sure that you are all aware that Area Management has been reviewed and I am sure all of you would agree that we need to go a lot further in terms of our Area Management set up than we have hitherto done and, of course, we are also looking at the funding of Area Management on the revenue and capital side, which you would expect us to do. As you know, Councillor Harris and I are great supporters of Areas Management. I hope that you will ultimately be not disappointed by what comes forward for discussion - and I say 'discussion'.

If I can turn to housing. Les is absolutely right, Richard – ineffective is the word for the time you were at housing. When Councillor J L Carter took over the portfolio two-and-a-half years ago he quickly discovered, as I did, that the two departments - who are interlinked, whether you like it or not in terms of delivering a housing agenda, particularly an affordable housing agenda – were not meeting together – I suspect hardly talking together. We had people pursuing a housing agenda that was 30 years out of date, which I suspect is where Councillor Lewis was, and we were not trying to link together the use of all our resources like land, like Section 106 agreements, like looking at special purpose vehicles, like looking at innovative ways of actually doing something about the problem we all know is there.

I met with the Housing Corporation shortly after taking over and their view of our performance as a city, Richard, is not worth repeating because it was not very good. I will tell you what the view is now – a lot better than it was when you were sitting there twiddling your thumbs. I can tell you that both the Government office for Yorkshire and the Humber and the Housing Corporation are much encouraged by what we are now bringing forward.

Let me sound a note of caution, because somebody talked about the land holdings of the Council. Our assets are there to support a huge capital programme, to deliver improvements across the piece. If somebody thinks that we can use all our assets just to move forward on affordable housing, then they are peddling the same nonsense that you peddled for years that resulted, for example, in no funding going to repairing the roads, leaving us where we are now, having to fight off a backlog of £60m. The simple fact is, we have to use our resources and try and address more than one agenda at a time. That is why it is essential that the departments work together to come forward with innovative ways of getting more for our money, get more low cost home ownership units and more low cost subsidised rented units. We know what needs to be done. It is a problem right across the country.

How you have the nerve to talk about fuel poverty is beyond me. It has been estimated that real inflation for elderly people is running not at the 15 year whatever it is high of 3%, which was announced yesterday, but 8%. Every penny of the miserly increase given to elderly people in their state pension has gone two times over in coping with the massive increase in fuel costs. You should hand your heads in shame. (*Interruption*) Lord Mayor, are you going to be impartial and stop this or not?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Carter, can you proceed, please?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. My Lord Mayor I repeat, you should hang your head in shame. £200 and £300 one-off handouts do not make up for increases of 50%, 60% and 70% in heating and lighting bills. Your Government are responsible for this country having the highest energy costs in western Europe. You cannot get away from it. It is a fact.

My Lord Mayor, finally let us go back to George Moody, the man who may in years to come be regarded as the man who wrote the epitaph for this Labour Government. What did he say?

“After ten years of education, education, education, out of 43 schools listed in Leeds”

– the Minister then started heckling him, by the way –

“out of 43 schools listed in Leeds the four in my constituency are placed 19th, 37th, 40th and 41st. Clearly something is not working. Year after year we have had

educational legislation and we have been told that we must vote for this or that legislation because it is the way forward and it will deliver. It is therefore saddening to see such figures.”

He then goes on to talk about the fact that just before Christmas the Home Office turfed 450 failed asylum seekers out on to the streets of Leeds without any money, without any food. Last year – you may well look sullen – 450 people, their Section 4 money cut off by a Government not prepared to send them home although they have failed as asylum seekers, but prepared to put them on the streets of Leeds with no money and no food. That is your Government. That is your Government. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

I will tell you what George says. Instead of signing up to say that they will go back, they disappeared. Where are they now? How are they living? How are they feeding themselves?

Do you know who the man is who does this? He has done it before. Tony McNulty is the Minister, the transport man. The man who would not let us have Supertram. Tony McNulty, one of the most incompetent Ministers in your ever-increasingly incompetent Government, turning people on to the streets. I wrote to him twelve months ago and said, “I hold you personally responsible if you start to destroy community cohesion in this city.” Do you know what he did then? Put a halt to it but he has started it again now. It is inhumane by anybody’s standards, it is morally wrong, it is inept.

Then, my Lord Mayor, to add insult to injury we have Councillor Gruen, the children’s champion of the Lord Mayor group. That perhaps is a debate for another day which will surely come. My Lord Mayor, for that man who was part of the dreaded Ofsted fiasco to lecture anybody on educational standards in this city and the wellbeing of children beggars belief and it proves the paucity of ability that sits on your ragged benches. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call for a vote on the motion to receive the Minutes? All those in favour? Those against? Any abstentions? CARRIED.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, under 2.3 can I move to vary the order of business to exchange agenda item 11, Post office Closures, for Item 9, Private Bus Companies.

COUNCILLOR R PROCTER: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

THE CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER: Councillor Hamilton is moving that the Post Office Closures White Paper be dealt with first and the Bus Company White Paper then goes third on the order of business.

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

ITEM 11 – WHITE PAPER MOTION POST OFFICE CLOSURES

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we start to debate the motion now. Councillor Harris.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, it is appropriate that I move this White Paper because the future of the Post office network in the country as a whole is right

at the heart of any organisation's attempts to deal and grapple with the issue of Narrowing the Gap. Before I move on – because this is so important to certainly the elderly of our city – I think it would be appropriate for me to congratulate Councillor Cleasby on his election to be Lord Mayor Elect for next year and, of course, to the elderly white haired gentleman to the left of the Lord Mayor who has received his honour recently.

We have had this debate so many times in this Chamber. From recollection I think we have usually managed some type of all-party agreement on the way forward. It is pitiful and shameful that although 100% of us in this Chamber are usually able to agree on this matter and have consistently sent a message on behalf of our 800,000 residents to central Government that this is damaging to the wellbeing of the people of this city, the Government pays no attention to us whatsoever, so we are yet again on the brink of another major round of cuts in the sub-post office network.

This affects every constituency in this city. If you look at the closures that have taken place since 1999 – I do not have the figure for prior to that but there were closures well prior to 1999 – I do not seek to make a particular party-political point in that respect, but if you look at what happened since 1999 every constituency in this city has faced some post office closures. We have lost 50 out of 183 – that is some 30% so far that have closed. We are told now that nationwide a further 3,500 post officers are to close.

I cannot extrapolate that into the consequences for Leeds, but bearing in mind we are such a large Authority, it must follow that of our remaining 133 post offices, if there are to be 3,500 closures nationwide, then we are about to face the slaughter of what is left of our post offices.

What is the issue at hand here? The issue at hand is a matter on which we are all agreed, that those most vulnerable in our society – the poor, the elderly, those who for whatever reason have not had a particularly good education, those who cannot afford or do not have access to the Internet – those people are absolutely vulnerable to the closure of the post offices. It is those people who need the post office service to access financial support at the very least, for many, particularly the elderly.

I remember my grandfather, my mother's father, the big outing of his week was taking him to the post office, part of his remaining independence in his old age, and although we used to have to take him up three in the car because he was infirm, once on the parade we left him for an hour to go to the post office, in and out of the other shops and the whole reason for going was because the post office was there for him to collect his pension, etc, etc., that is the point. The post office service is not simply the means by which people access service. It is a most a social service and a social service has a price attached to it and you know – we know – the problems of grappling with the cost of delivering social service. There is a need here for us all to speak with a single voice once more to say to central Government to stand back from this, and not fatally, I do not believe fatally undermine efforts to deal with Narrowing the Gap because to say fatally undermine would mean that we could never do anything to address the problem. It is certainly the efforts made in this city to help all those people who are not as well off, not as well heeled, not as fortunate as perhaps we are and the hundreds of thousands of people in this city who fall into that category.

The Whips that have these discussions about my White Paper and the opposition amendment, at the eleventh hour I hope that we have a compromise which I trust Keith will deal in due course with whereby he will seek leave of Council

to alter his amendment so that rather than delete the paragraph we have added to the entire White Paper motion that is on the order paper. In that way we will combine your amendment with a need for an all-party approach with what we have said in my proposal. If that is possible – and I am sure it is – to have these discussions – then all 99 – I say all 99, I cannot speak for the independents and I have no intention of speaking for the BNP – but we will see in due course what the other parties have to say, but I think the administration parties and the main opposition will now be able to speak with a single voice to send a clear message to London, to Westminster, to our MPs, to argue on our behalf to stop these closures before any more damage is done. I move, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

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

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I will try to maintain the tone that I think Councillor Harris has tried to keep. I am bit unsure about whether Councillor Andrew Carter can, given that most of the afternoon he has spent spreading out personal abuse, and that is unfortunate because I am reminded of a Neil Kinnock quote about, “Of macho men I do not think mucho”. I think in this way we have got somebody who actually - the last dictator we had in this country was Margaret Thatcher and I am pretty sure you know the damage. I think it is a very unwise tone to adopt in the city and in this chamber, to personally abuse people around this room.

The truth is that Lord Mayor Councillors have already started – I am reminded that the Whinmoor and Crossgate Councillors have already gone down last year to lobby about the closure of the post office. I think it is worth reminding ourselves, I have never heard George Moody quoted as often as today. George is a man of great vision and it is true to say that in January 2002 on this issue he did criticise the potential of the closure of a third of the post offices. In January 2006 and in February 2006 he also raised the issue of closures in parliament. I think it is right, Councillor Harris is right, this is one I think we should debate and show a clear distinction between the local Government perspective and a national perspective whoever is in Government. I am pleased you have accepted the amendment.

The Government will probably turn round and say look, we have put £2b in, we have put £150m in and we have not closed a rural post office since 2000 but, frankly, I do not think it is enough for this city and it is not enough for many of our urban inner city areas.

I would say this. Representing a Ward that is already, along with Keith and James, has already seen a closure of one post office and the threat to the closure of another, they are absolutely vital social networks for our community. If we are talking about sustainability we need those local shops. In places like Middlefield there is only one decent shop and that is the post office trying to survive.

I also would say this. We should not let the banks off the hook either. The greedy corporate profits they have made and at the same time turning their backs on our communities is an absolutely disgrace, because they have made billions of pounds, they have walked away, they have left in our villages one ATM and no banks in the whole of our Ward. That is not acceptable and it compounds the practices of the post offices.

One thing I think we could actually do, to make positive and constructive comments, we can say three things to the Government.

One, continue the post office card account and make it more flexible. Take in housing benefits - because they are not allowed at the moment - and occupational pensions and look at it. Two – and this, I think, is where George is right. The Government have let a contract to a company to provide passports on the high street. That is wrong. It is actually a major source of income for many of our post offices in their attempt to survive. I think it is wrong to let a contract out privately. They should have used the post office. The other thing they should encourage is the BBC to use the post offices for TV licences.

I will say one thing, because we have debated this on many occasions. In 2003 we actually started in this Authority – and I am not making any major political point but it was 2003 – where we encouraged people to pay their rents at the post office and that was an attempt to keep post offices alive and open in our communities. I think we could do that locally. I think we should look again to see whether there are any other businesses that we can put into the way of the post office service.

The reason why we loosely worded “all party”, was, frankly, this. I have looked at the Liberal Party’s policy and I was aware of the attempt - not by people in this room because I know how many people felt on that side – by the leadership to privatise the post offices at their last conference. I know it was defeated but it was an attempt. I have looked at the Tory Party policy and, frankly, that has not change since they said privatisation. I have also looked at ours, which says it will keep it in public hands, but quite honestly, unless they extend the subsidies, unless they do the things that I have just asked for, they will close.

I say to all of us this Chamber – and I am not trying to score any party points here – let us put this motion all together – I do not know whether we need all of the speakers because some of us are part of a team but let us try to work. It is a very constructive debate. Let us pass this all together and send a strong message down to Government – we need our post offices and our communities, they are the social network of our communities, the only time people meet and exchange ideas. Let us keep our post office sustainability argument and let us send a message to them that we have our own voice, our own say and we want our post offices kept in our own communities. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I formally second, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In the spirit of unity that seems to be breaking out at this particular point, we are happy to support words that all of us can actually sign up to. We could go on and on about the Government should not have cancelled order books and should not have cancelled giro and the post office card account and all the rest of it.

I think we do need to be unified in pointing out that they do not want to go down the path of creating policies that take business away from post offices, such as being able to renew your road tax on line that is still at the post offices, such as the TV licence.

I do have to smile about banks and greedy corporate profits. The whole thrust of this is down to the fact that post offices were sustainable at the point that you shifted from order books and giro through to pushing that benefits and pensions should be paid directly to bank accounts.

We do need to be united on this and we do need to put whatever pressure we can as a Council on the Government not to come up with better ideas why people should not use post offices. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Before I begin my discussion on post office closures may I thank you for sending the letter to Corporal Simon Brown. I know from a conversation that I have had with his mother that he is extremely grateful for the letters of support and telephone calls that he has received. I am grateful to you for sending the letter.

The make-up of local town centres and villages has changed quite dramatically over recent years. People's shopping habits have changed. More now use superstores and out of town centres. Gone is the Electricity Showroom on the High Street, the Gas Board and now we see more and more the loss of post offices in the city, town and village centres. It cannot be right that a much needed facility is constantly being eroded at the whim of central Government.

The post office is an essential component of any shopping area and is a central part of any community. The post office is a unique institute in that it is used by young and old, business people and others. The post office generates footfall into areas and by doing so it support other business in the surrounding areas.

For some in more remote areas it is a virtual lifeline. The closure of post offices should be reversed and instead of withdrawing services Government should be looking at ways to encourage better use of services via this unique facility.

Could I just mention some comments that Councillor Wakefield has mentioned with regard to banks? I should declare an interest as an employee of the Royal Bank of Scotland Group. I would suggest to Councillor Wakefield that he looks at the bank's website – I know that you are not very good with these things, Keith, it appears that not many people in the Labour group are seeing as how your own website needs updating from 2004 the last time I looked – but have a look at the bank's policy on corporate social responsibility and you will see that I am sure other banks as well as the Royal Bank of Scotland Group do contribute considerably to charitable and other organisations throughout the United Kingdom.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I shall not comment on Councillor Wakefield's opening remarks. There will be opportunity later for that. We would be very happy to see suspension of Standing Orders to allow us to accept as an addition to the White Paper the amendment from the Labour group. The reason I say that is because actually, from what Keith Wakefield said, everybody actually agrees with the initial wording.

I do think this is the third or fourth time in the last ten years we have debated post office closures. It is the fourth time that we have been on to the Government about it and every time there has been another wave of post office closures. I do think we have actually reached end game, because if we do not send an extremely firm message this time that is wholly uncompromising in its language but is on an all-party basis, in three years' time there will not be a sub-post office network left worthy of the name. If you represent a Ward like I do and like many other people do in this region comprised still of individual communities who rely on the post office in many ways almost as a lifeline, if we do not do something now and that does not exist any more it will be too late and it will never in our lifetime be reinvented.

I have to say I feel very strongly that yes, we should speak together in a united way on this but the message to the Government has got to be extremely firm

and uncompromising, because what they are proposing is wholly and absolutely wrong and will devastate what is left of the network.

We cannot hide away. There have been occasions in this Council Chamber when we have passed resolutions under a previous Government that we have signed up and have been very critical of that Government and I have to say I would expect you now to be big enough to accept the beginning of the resolution because what is proposed currently by the Government is deplorable, it will damage job prospects, it will lead to a loss of jobs but most of all it will be another nail in the coffin of community cohesion in the villages, small towns, urban areas around this city and as elected members we cannot allow that to happen.

I would like to move, Lord Mayor, that we suspend Standing Orders in order that we can accept the amendment from Councillor Wakefield as an addition to the White Paper.

COUNCILLOR BEVERLEY: Lord Mayor, I am not sure whether this will please my colleague Councillor Mark Harris or not but I actually wish to speak in favour of this motion today. As we all know, the Labour Government likes to make lots of noises about helping the most vulnerable people in society and yet the closure of these post offices, these are precisely the people that it will affect most of all and I speak specifically about our pensioners. These are the people we should be looking after.

A recent survey by Age Concern has found that 99% of those asked felt that the local post offices were a lifeline – not just places where they would rather go than somewhere else but a lifeline. I think that says a lot.

The arguments for closing them are purely economic and yet the Government has actually made these economic arguments, the economic conditions imposed on the post office, even worse by withdrawing services from the post office. We have heard the example previously about being able to buy your tax on line. In actual fact we have seen a reduction in transactions in our post offices by about £170m over the last year, which is more than the subsidies which our post offices currently get.

Even aside from the economic arguments the social value of our post offices cannot be measured in financial terms as far as I am concerned. Post offices are at the heart of our local communities and to lose the post offices in the towns and villages right across Leeds and right across the country is an absolute disaster. It seems to me that the Government, although using the term 'community', obviously there is no such thing as communities. I disagree and I believe we should be doing all we can to support our local communities right across this city and across the country as a whole by supporting our post offices and that is why I wish to support this motion. Thank you. Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR SHELBOOKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. First of all I would like to start by supporting the comments made by Councillor Carter. I would say I would be amazed if anybody in this Chamber would agree with shutting 2,500 post offices. However, it is important that it has added to the original motion rather than as an amendment because I think it is important for the Leeds MPs who represent us. I am slightly confused by Councillor Wakefield when he says tell his Government. It is the Government which is represented by his own Labour MPs. It is encouraging to see way back in February 2006 that the MP for Elmet said to avoid the situation we will know the cost of everything but the value of nothing. I would be happy to sit down with a group of MPs (*inaudible*)

He also signed a rebel amendment in the house with the Labour MPs to oppose these proposals further to reduce the post office network. So it is slightly disappointing when on Wednesday of last week, 7th January, the opposition amendment basically said that the Government's short-sighted plans to close 2,500 sub-post offices and urged the Government to allow the sub-post offices greater freedom to run their businesses was opposed and he voted for the Government amendment that said that it was unsustainable in its present size.

What I am saying is that we all in this Chamber, every Councillor in this Chamber wants to support their local post offices. We need to keep the first part of the amendment in because we do need to encourage all our MPs to go out there and work to keep the local post offices. There are seven local post offices in my Ward. As everybody here knows, my Ward is made up of several different villages. They provide a vital service to people. I have got plenty of people talking about the fact that you cannot get television licences of the counter any more and that has had its knock-on effect. I have spoken many times in this Chamber about the effect of the bus service being reduced and it is getting harder for pensioners and people to get in. I support the motion from Councillor Harris and I think that Councillor Carter made some very valid points and that we all need to support this, that it is cross-party, everybody agrees and really we must make sure that our MPs go down to the House and represent us. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would just like to make a couple of comments and also to support what Councillor Shelbrooke has just said. At the end of the day we will be giving £150m a year roughly to support this network. In comparison with some of the other things that the Government is spending money on, like the ID cards which is probably about £18b, this really does pale into insignificance, particularly when you take into account the amount of benefits it has for the residents in all of our Wards.

I would like to just point out the last part of the original motion – “This Council calls on all Leeds MPs to oppose the Government's plans in the upcoming consultation period and support our local post offices.” Absolutely right and Councillor Shelbrooke was rightly pointing out how important this is.

It is great that we all get together, we all agree that this is the right thing to do. When we look at some of the behaviour of some of our MPs, they are just not supporting us on it. If we look at Leeds North-East, at Fabian Hamilton, in 2004, January, he voted against the motion which condemned the 3,000 post office closures, therefore condoning it. Later on, in March 2004, he delivered a petition to the closure of the Sandhills and Woodley Park post offices. In January 2006 (*interruption*) I am trying to make a point here. In January 2006 Fabian Hamilton signed an Early Day Motion against the phasing out of post office accounts but then in January 2007 we see that he has voted for something which says that the present size of the post office is unsustainable. I am worried because I want to know which post offices in north-east Leeds are unsustainable.

That is the point I want to make. We all support it. I am really pleased about that but we have to get our MPs on board because we need to know where they stand. Thank you. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor, could you ask the Leader, Councillor Carter, ask what we should do is all get together. Are we going to go through the next ten speakers who will all agree with what is happening? I understand the Leaders have been talking. I think what we should do is accept what has been asked and let us get on with it.

THE LORD MAYOR: It is up to individuals, really, or the Leaders to speak to their colleagues. Whoever wants to speak can contribute.

COUNCILLOR MILLARD: Lord Mayor because time is pressing – I am sure tea is almost ready and there is a general consensus around the Chamber, I will keep this brief. What I will say is that we must not forget the problem is at the heart of Government and not only do Councillors but our Members of Parliament for this city need to make sure that they do stand up against the Government, because of course it was in the year 2005 that they cost the post office £168m in lost revenue due to services that they have withdrawn. They have recently withdrawn other services and are encouraging road tax to be bought on-line and 98% of pensions are now actually paid into bank accounts.

Remember that it was Tony Blair who said – and I quote – it has become because people have made an individual choice to transact their businesses differently, it is a consequence of change.” Who has made that change? It is the Government that has made that change and therefore we in this Chamber and the MPs and we all agree this, stand up against the Government.

There was actually on 10 January only one Leeds MP who stood up against the Government and that was Greg Mulholland, the Member of Parliament for Leeds North-West. Let us hope that the other seven do so and support this Council. Thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: I would like to move the question now be put and then we can vote on it.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? Those against? Abstentions?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In the spirit of talking about what is going on I will be as brief as I can. My Ward has had difficulties with post offices, like many others. The view that the inner city is all one and does not have discrete communities is quite wrong. Cross Green has lost its post office. There is a lack of vision because Ministers are thinking of post offices as financial institutions. Their own actions are making it harder for post officers to survive and having talked to my remaining six post offices, I have a lot of concern for whether they will have sufficient funds to keep going. The loss of the sale of the TV licence stamps last year caused a major problem. No-one has mentioned that. The doubt about the ability to pay gas bills long terms causes more doubts. The Government is trying to get six post offices remaining in my Ward to sell financial services to local people. *(Applause)*.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we have some silence, please, on all sides. Your behaviour on all sides is appalling and I am going to start sending people off. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. If the Government think that post offices in Richmond Hill are going to sell car insurance, they really do not know anything about our Ward, where 4,000 homes – I repeat, 4,000 homes – depend on state benefits. They struggle to survive. They do not own cars.

If you analyse the type of customer who habitually uses post offices, the biggest component will be older people collecting pensions. Was it only last week that we had a national story of concern about how we are going to help older people to keep living in their own homes. It is obvious to me that post offices are a major social resource. Instead of trying to keep them as financial institutions we should recognise their social value. You cannot put a monetary value on helping an older

person to fill in a form. You cannot put a monetary value on giving advice to a young man. You cannot put a monetary value on signposting a vulnerable person to a service they need, but all of these, as I think we all accept, are things that post offices do.

They are a major part of the social glue which holds our society together and we must all fight to keep them. We must have a vision to develop them. Imagine a ten-year old child coming to a post office shop to buy sweets. It ought to be possible for a savings account for that child to be easily opened so that post office staff could encourage that child to save and do their bit to tackle childhood obesity and tooth decay, but I am told that such a savings account is difficult to open because of red tape and bureaucracy. We all must agree, save our post offices, support this wider motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: I am not going to do a long speech *(Applause)* but since 1999 there has been about 3,300 post office shut. That is related to Councillor Harris earlier. There has been 49 shut in Leeds and if you go up, Elmet constituency has had three shut, Leeds Central nine, Leeds East 6, Leeds North-East four, Leeds North-West six, Leeds West five, Morley and Rothwell seven and Pudsey nine.

Just to highlight that, just take Leeds East. The figure we are talking about over the next few years is a similar figure since 1999, so if we take Leeds East, in 1999 Leeds East had 16 post offices. It now has ten. What happens if we lost another six? We have no network.

The same thing can be said, it is the same in Leeds North-West. They have lost a third of their post offices. Losing another third would be disastrous. I think we have all got to work together. I tried, they were closing in my Ward some two years ago and with the assistance of the Area Management Team we got the people through the post office along and we tried to debate the issues about the closure and I will tell you, we might as well be talking to that wall because you got no sense from them at all. It is no good fighting it when it happens, we have got to fight it now and we have got to do that together. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Lord Mayor, I really wanted to get up and say I support this resolution and amendment as an independent. I fully support it. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, this illustrates the various contributions, what a hot issue this is and how keen so many people are to have themselves heard on this matter and quite rightly so.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Hear, hear.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: It is understandable if sometimes some intemperate words are spoken but that should not detract from the will of all of us to speak with a single voice on this matter.

As I look round the chamber, I cannot imagine any Ward that is not affected. My own Ward, Moortown, Gipton and Harehills, Rothwell, Yeadon and Otley, Horsforth – we have had contributions about Roundhay, Wetherby – we have got a Councillor representing that Ward as well, Seacroft. It is every single Ward in this city and it is for that reason that we have to speak with a single voice. We have heard from the Morley representatives. It is everywhere.

Before I move to the final procedural issue, comments were made about the role of the banks in this. I would just like to reassure Council on that matter without being partial because one view was expressed by Keith and another view was expressed by Terry. The Narrowing the Gap Group that I chair has already determined that we will ask the major banks in to see us to speak to them specifically about what they can do to assist with the whole programme of Narrowing the Gap and if, as Terry says, they do have this social conscience, then this is all part of engaging the private sector and I would be hopeful that the banks will step up to the mark and help us in any event, but notwithstanding that, that must not be used by the detractors of the post offices system. We must not give those people an excuse to say others would step into the breach to save the day. That is not what must be allowed to happen. That must not be the message that is sent from this Chamber on this debate. The message that must be sent out - is now going to be sent – is that all 99 of us are saying to our MPs that on behalf of all Leeds citizens we are saying with that single voice to central Government, we will not accept this. We will not accept this.

Now, procedurally, if I can find the bit of paper, to conclude with this, under Rule 14.10 I seek the consent of Councillor and my seconder to alter my motion to add the words in Councillor Wakefield's amendment at the end of my motion, add in prior to that amendment the words, "Furthermore Council...". The effect of that will be to put a motion to Council that reads that:

"This Council deplores the Government's latest plans to close a further 2,500 post offices by 2009. This Council believes the Government is showing a lack of long term vision regarding the post office network restructure that has already resulted in the closure of over 2000 urban post offices. Further closures will result in the loss of jobs, vital services and resources in Leeds, with businesses and vulnerable communities being hit the hardest.

This Council calls on all Leeds MPs to oppose the Government's plans in the upcoming consultation period and support our local post offices.

Further more, Council calls for an all-party campaign to oppose the current plans to close 2000 urban post offices and to support the local post offices by any means appropriate and available."

I so move. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Does Council consent to that alteration? (AGREED)

I will call for the vote on the motion in the name of Councillor Harris as altered. All those in favour. Any against? Any abstentions? Unity at last! (CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY)

We will adjourn for tea, ladies and gentlemen, now.

(*Short adjournment*)

The Deputy Lord Mayor took the Chair

THE DEPUTY LORD MAYOR: Good evening, Members of Council. You are aware that the Lord Mayor cannot take part in this next White Paper but could I pass on just a message from him, that there is no dispensation from the mobile phone penalty. Also I am sure that you will not take advantage and jump any red lights.

ITEM 10 – WHITE PAPER MOTION
REGISTRATION OF HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION

THE DEPUTY LORD MAYOR: With that we move on to Item 10, which is the White Paper in the name of Councillor Richard Lewis in Housing with Multiple Occupation.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Lord Mayor, I suppose the first thing I need to apologise for is that the Labour administration in all its 24 years did not introduce mandatory licensing of HMOs. You might realise why that is and it might be that for 19 years and it might be that for 19 years of our time in power we had a Conservative Government, which some of you may remember, and a Government which did absolutely nothing – nothing – to address the problems of houses in multiple occupation which has been a continuing problem for this city as long as I have been a councillor and probably far longer than that. Equally I am sure when we get on to the debate about bus deregulation we will kindly forge that the Tories introduced that and it will be Labour's fault for not getting rid of it, but we will save that for later on.

As a Council we have struggled with houses in multiple occupation because it has always been a big problem for this city. We have always had a large number of these properties, they have always been of huge concern and conditions in some parts of the city have almost all been the problems of houses in multiple occupation.

We have not only been hamstrung by the lack of effective legislation but we have always been hamstrung by legal judgments that have told us that we cannot take action in various circumstances and so we have struggled on for many years trying to deal with the problem of HMOs through different routes and you have seen within the city a strategy evolve of dealing with them through accreditation of working with landlords and trying to persuade and generally that has worked up to a point. It was as far as we could go without any legislation.

The problem with HMOs, of course, is that they are often the most dangerous of properties. Internally they often have the most unsatisfactory arrangements in terms of where stairs are, in terms of where facilities are and I do not think it is that unusual to have fires in HMOs, often occupied by some of the most vulnerable people in society and they are often in Leeds, I think, concentrated in areas of deprivation. That is not to say every area of deprivation contains HMOs but there is often a correlation there.

It was incredibly pleasing when we got a piece of legislation through – and again I am sure you will criticise the Labour Government on the first day back in the summer of 1997 we did not do something about it but back in 2002 something started to be done to address the whole complicated area of licensing for HMOs.

This was an incredibly positive piece of legislation. Not only did we start talking about mandatory licensing of high risk HMOs - the ones which are three storeys high, five or more people in them – but we also started talking about selective licensing whereby you could license properties within an area and it also talks about discretionary licensing. You have that kind of triple whammy of being able to talk about dealing with – having to deal with – the high risk HMOs but also having the option of dealing with the ones that were not quite so bad but were probably a problem and are a problem in Leeds and of being able to act as part of all the activity we are doing in other areas of deprivation in the city – places like Cross Green, places like the Harehills triangle – to address landlords who do not own up to their responsibilities, contribute actually to the problems of antisocial behaviour and low demand. All those ingredients were there in the legislation.

There has always been a caution about Leeds City Council and probably Environmental Health Officers are more prone to that than other people because it has been an area where there has not been a huge amount of funding, so the recommendation initially was not to tackle what I call the low risk HMOs, to look at selective licensing in certain areas, but the main thrust was to take on our responsibilities under mandatory licensing.

Mandatory licensing is not a cost to the authority, or should not be if you do it properly. It is licensing where you in effect get the landlords to pay. Obviously the landlords pass that charge on to the people who occupy their premises, but it meant that you could be proactive about the process, you could start driving on something – you could actually contribute to a whole lot of other strategies we have probably been talking about – Narrowing the Gap, Community Cohesion and whatever – because you could be working in concert with all those other parts of the Council who are actually in areas where we have problems. So a real opportunity was there for the Council to take.

So, plenty of notice; legislation went through in 2004 to be introduced April 2006. What did we see? We saw an acceptance that we need to set up things, we saw movement to do something. Yes, we were taking our responsibilities but it did not happen. April 2006 came and went, no licences were issued and as we speak now we are just about to issue licences – and I use the phrase carefully.

Other Local Authorities which do not have such a huge problem as us have done better on this issue. There is a huge potential here that I think that we are missing for this city in being able to use this mandatory licensing for the benefit of citizens of this city. We have let them down because we have not done it as effectively as we should have done, we have not been as proactive as we should have been and we should really grab this opportunity. We have had plenty of time to do it, we have had ample advance warning of what was coming. There have been problems and I do not think anybody would say there have not been in terms of Government guidelines, Government instructions and what have you as to how you can make the system work better and there have been glitches with it, but that has not prevented some other Local Authorities from being far more active than we have, being able to achieve are more than we have by this date.

I am very pleased to be able to say that we should have done it. I have to say that the administration has, after all its criticism of us for the things that we theoretically did not do, has not been able to grasp this opportunity. It was there for all of them to take. It is not too late. There is a huge amount of funding that is still available, can still be got by this Local Authority and can be used to the benefit of the city as a whole and can drive up conditions for many of our most vulnerable members.

I trust that everyone in this Chamber is thinking yes, we should be doing it, how can we make this happen, it is not too late, let us get on with it, but so far this has been an abject failure by this administration. Let us do something for the people who live in some of our worst housing. Let us get on with our licensing system and make it happen. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY LORD MAYOR: Councillor Atha to second.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I am seconding this with the greatest of pleasure. First of all I want to say this. I think Les is going to respond. He is only a few years older than I am and I do not want to excite him too much so I am going to be terribly non-controversial, because quite frankly I think we should all share the same aim for the same objectives.

I do not think this resolution goes far enough. I am much more revolutionary than that. I would like to do something rather more than that. I also want to make it quite clear that I personally am not anti-landlord. I am very much anti-bad landlord and of those we have a very considerable abundance in certain parts of our city. They are the ones that need dealing with.

The problem with this arising now in our Ward has been referred to earlier and I will refer to it very briefly. Houses are coming on the market - or will come on the market – because houses converted for students are now being empty because they are actually going into purpose-built facilities and that is likely to increase. There is a shortage – I understand we have powers and that we should be looking at those houses and taking them back into some form of public ownership to ensure that people have the right to have one of the basic essentials of life, which we are told was food, was drink and was shelter. There are lots of people in our country without that third necessary benefit or right.

The Evening Post was very good in repeating a fact which was quite staggering, that 463 people had applied for just one house. Not in Bardsey, not in Collingham, not in the plush area of Leeds where all the Council houses have been sold long ago, but in fact for a very ordinary, very nice working class estate Beckett Park. It is very nice. One house – 463 bidding for that one house.

That would appear to be a statistic which has an aberration but, of course, it is not an aberration because it is not unlike many other statistics I will quote to you very briefly. What appalled me was the response of the Council officer – and I almost wish you had said it, Les, so I could have a go at you! No, I would not dream of that. We have just shared a muffin in there together and it left me with a warm feeling, apart from that dagger in my back. The officer said of these 462 people bidding, only 216 of them would be qualified for Foxcroft Road homes, so he did not give a damn that the other 216 or more were. It seemed a most bizarre kind of response and possibly the wrong mental attitude to the issue.

As I say, we are all in the same boat, we all want the same effort and it seems a bit silly when we are agreed on what we want to do that we would try to fight or make political points, and I do not propose to do that. I just want to give some facts to illustrate just how bad it is, and I think it is bad. I can say honestly in my view, that the situation now in housing and homelessness, people wanting homes – not homeless on the streets but actually wanting homes and living in all kinds of difficult situations – marriages breaking up because of it, kids going wrong because of it – it is now worse than when I came on the Council nearly 50 years ago. It is not an exaggeration, it is an honest belief, because at least people living there were living in slums and were able to live in a community and have a decent kind of existence outside the housing they were in.

What is the position today? In Seacroft – not a desirable area, we would say – it was actually Gipton, Seacroft and Burmantofts – six houses alone in that one week – the week was 10.10.07 (and these are all statistics from the published version) there were 828 people bidding for just six houses – an average of 138 people per house. In Meanwood and Chapeltown there were ten homes advertised and ten out of ten, there were 1,975 people bidding for those ten houses. That is an average per house of 197.5 – nearly 200 people for every house. In Kirkstall there was a back-to-back in the same week. There were 296 bidders for that one back-to-back house in the borders of Burley and Kirkstall.

In Sheepscote there was a multi-storey flat, 114 people bidding for it. Garforth and Allerton Bywater, 218 and 243. I could go on and go on with these

statistics. They all illustrate that there are many people who will never get affordable housing through the Council because it will take them so long. What we must do is we must insist the Government change its mind and allows Councils to build to rent. We also should be requiring all licensing for all HMOs, not just a small number but all of them because that will force landlords to adopt decent standards and would bring some more houses back on to the market.

We must pursue the empty homes and with the present powers we have and ask the Government for more power than we do. I do not mind challenging the Government on that. I would go down in an all-party group to London.

I will close now and I will invite Councillor Carter to go with me to 10, Downing Street to make our point.

THE DEPUTY LORD MAYOR: We now have Councillor J L Carter to move an amendment.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: I am not certain which resolution Councillor Atha was speaking to, because he certainly was not speaking to the resolution that was put down by Councillor Lewis. He went back to the affordable housing debate. He went back to the homes which were not occupied. I repeat to Councillor Atha, when he starts on about it is the worse thing in a hundred years – which he will remember – it is the worst thing we have ever had and it is this, it is that. What did he say? What did he say? What did he say two years ago when those same number of multiple applications for one property, 314 in my Ward – it was my Ward, it is in Weetwood Ward now – 314 for one property. I did not hear him scream. The same number of people on this so-called housing list. Did I hear him scream about that? No.

Then I got earlier today Councillor Lewis saying “What have you done? You have only built 136 houses.” I went out and checked. Can I tell you how many they built or were involved with through planning – they built no Council houses, let us be absolutely frank, they have not been built for donkey’s years. We have got plans next year in the PFI to build them. Let us go back – what have they done through planning and through that grant? I will tell you how many they built. In 1901/1902...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: 2002/2002.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: No, Andrew, in 1901/1902 not a lot, but if I go to 2002/2002 (*laughter*) 59. 59. It is all right laughing. This is the former Leader of Council laughing. That is what they contributed towards this problem.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Ineffective, Les.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Ineffective? Worse than ineffective. You have got some very intelligent people here – what is worse then ineffective? Useless, probably, or something like that. 59. That is what they did. Last year, by the way – I am not saying we are the best since sliced bread – we did 342. I think that is a fair increase over what Councillor Lewis – and I am not taking that from Councillor Atha, standing there bleating, whining, crying, telling us how awful it is and not even talking about the subject that is under debate.

Now I will go to the subject under debate. My Lord Mayor, I am very concerned about Councillor Lewis because Councillor Lewis in his private life has a lot to do with housing – an awful lot to do with housing. I think that Councillor Lewis has missed the obvious point about the legislation. First of all, read his White Paper.

He is talking about using this money, this money could have been used to drive up standards in the sector and letting down many vulnerable residents.

We can only use the funding from this for administering the scheme and monitoring the scheme – no more than that. Indeed, the officer said if we try to use it elsewhere – and I will be honest, I tried – we will be shot, totally shot. Let us not talk about it could be used elsewhere. It could not be used elsewhere.

He also in his White Paper talked about the obligation to register high risk houses. It is on the computer. Every one is on the computer. Every application is on the computer. I do not know if people have looked at it – it is all there. Do you want me to print you a hard copy off, Richard, if you do not know how to use the computer Council list, because I will do. It is there, so his resolution is wrong, wrong.

Now, the one thing that annoys me – this does annoy me – I do not mind you having a go at me, I am here for a knock-about and I am happy to give it and take it. It is officers. The officers of this Authority have worked very, very hard on this scheme. First of all, also he failed to tell us that the Government itself delayed this scheme. We were putting it in, they delayed it for three months themselves. Let me give you a figure. Of the 20 university cities up and down the country, they had received 5,000 applications. Do you know how many from Leeds? Two-and-a-half thousand. These are the officers who he claims are no good are useless.

Let me give you some figures. Nottingham City Council. Who runs Nottingham City Council? Labour. Can I tell you how many applications they have had in? 200. It is really good stuff. Manchester City Council (Labour), 750. Liverpool City Council (Liberal) (*Laughter*) Twice as many as Nottingham City Council. (*Laughter and applause*)

Lord Mayor, all that Richard said is right. This legislation is good legislation. We are going to push it, we are going to push it hard. Our officers have pushed it hard. The numbers that they have got in. The only criticism that can be levelled at them is an estimate was made which was far higher but the world has changed and I think Councillor Atha said it has changed. In Headingley alone we have 2,500 student bed lets, which a lot of work is going on and if he wants to join with Councillor Hamilton he will find out what is going on to try and help them. In the city centre we have over 2,000 empty properties.

There are a lot of empty properties as far homes of multiple occupation. The effect of that has been this – not only is it those people who are missing but landlords have been happy to take a lower number of people into places which suddenly stops them having to come in as requiring licences – in other words they are dropping below five, they are dropping to four, three and in fact we know of one where they have just taken on person in because they were desperate to get somebody in.

The numbers have changed and the estimate can be argued on but I will not take any flak against our officers. I am not bloke who gets up and argues for officers all the time but really, Richard, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, you really should, because your reputation is going down like a lead zeppelin all over the place with what you are saying.

These officers have done a wonderful job – an absolutely wonderful job. Lord Mayor, I put a congratulatory note down not to the administration but to the officers. I am hoping this Council support it. First of all Councillor Lewis is out of date, as usual – completely out of date. There is a list upon the computer, you can all see it, you can all get it. Secondly licences are, by the way, being issued.

On the point of licences and one of the delays of licences, remember these can all be challenged. I am one of the few in the country who have taken advice and Counsel's opinion as far as our licence that we are going to issue. We have also talked very carefully to the owners. What we do not want is to issue licences which are challenged all over the place. OK, we could have been a bit faster issuing the licences, we have not bothered doing that, but I will tell you one run – we will have to take some of these people to court and there will be no messing about and we will go hard at them, at the people who have the licences if they are not looking after their property in the way that they should be.

The other point is that even though Her Majesty's Government said as far as pushing hard – and I will try and find this quote here:

“When considering or pursuing enforcement Authorities must ensure that they explore all the avenues of engagement before any prosecution is taken.”

I am sorry, that is the Government's view, take a softly softly approach. He is going mad because it has not been done. My view is that I am not prepared to take a softly softly approach. If we now find people who have not got licences I say to them – and I hope the paper will print it – beware because we will find you and when we find you, you will be prosecuted. If you have to have a licence, you are going to have a licence. No ifs, no buts, no why or anything on that, I am going to do that.

So, Lord Mayor, I would ask everybody just to think very carefully. A Council which does 25% of what is being done in the whole country is a failure, according to Councillor Lewis. A Council which – Councillor Atha - a few years ago were putting 59 houses up a year and thinking it is wonderful, doing a marvellous job, but now we are doing 364 we are rubbish. Unbelievable.

I would ask you to support this and I would ask you to support the officers who, in my opinion, anybody who is being reasonable – I am amazed at you, Richard – talks to those officers – in fact I am amazed you have not withdrawn this – goes and talks to the officers, finds out the hard work that is going on in that department and what they are doing. There is no question of holding back resources, let me just clear that with you, because we have more money at this stage than we need because it is a five-year pay – we have got enough money to cope with it, no problem whatsoever.

I would ask them to go to and talk to the officers, get the true story and I would ask all members to. In the meantime can I ask you to support this amendment? Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Could I second and reserve the right to speak.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Thank you, Deputy Lord Mayor. Council will probably be pleased to hear that we will take Les aside quietly next week and introduce him to Led Zeppelin!

When he was speculating about being taken aside by the officers and shot for misusing HMO fees, it set me off on a train of thought thinking about who we would like to put up against the wall when the revolution comes. Never mind!

I am not sure the Government really knew what it wanted when the HMO legislation was passed. The limitation on storeys of licensable premises and the number of occupants clearly reduces the number of HMOs that can be licensed and I doubt if anyone in this Chamber disagrees with the principle of licensing itself,

because it is aimed at dealing with bad landlords, as we have heard. It has been suggested quite often that the real intention of Government was to force landlords to reduce the occupants of their properties and as a possible by-product reduce their profits as well. I will not speculate too much about that. As it is, we are left far less able as a Council to deal with a large proportion of what Bernard calls bad landlords. The reality of the limitation on HMOs is that when people have a choice between living in an HMO or applying for a Council property under choice-based lettings, it is far easier to live in an HMO because you do not have to wait anywhere near as long and if Bernard or anybody else in this Council wants to know what the true picture is in Leeds of how long people have to wait, whatever their priority rating under the choice-based letting system, all they need to do is ask the department for a briefing. I know Councillor Carter, Councillor Chapman as his Lead Member and I as Scrutiny Chair have had briefings on the times that people do have to wait if they are bidding actively for properties under CBL.

The fact is until the Government changes its own legislation we cannot help the residents in the other HMOs, the unlicensable ones. I would like to ask all parties in this Chamber to support any moves to make all HMOs licensable because then better standards can be brought to everyone and the bad landlords who we do not want to see will stop getting away with it. Thank you, Deputy Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR MONAGHAN: Thank you, Deputy Lord Mayor. Again I would like to join with Councillor Carter in congratulating the HMO licensing team for doing an excellent job at signing up so many landlords licensed. In my area of the city in the north-west of Leeds the majority of these are student properties and I really do think that it is going to have a huge, marked improvement on the quality of accommodation for students in north-west Leeds.

I would also like to thank the Labour Government for bringing in this Act in the first place. Again, I think it will improve the quality of life for a number of people across the city. However, there are a few fundamental flaws that you have cocked up on the Act.

One is that such basic issues as the definition of an HMO is not clear in the Act, let alone the definition of a licensable HMO. With the issue of the Regulatory Reform Order in respect of fire safety which came in on 1 October, it actually flatly contradicts a number of items in the Landlord Licensing Act. So I really appreciate the efforts but I think your Government has got a bit of a way to go on producing clear legislation.

I think the effect of the Landlord Licensing is going to be seen on the community in Headingley has been combined with a number of city centre developments for students and other developments around the city, and I think this is going to have a marked impact in Headingley. I would like to publicly thank Councillor Hamilton for taking the lead on the shared housing plan group, looking at how the city is going to deal with the amount of free houses we are now seeing in Headingley.

I think it is worth noting that whatever Bernard says about Martin, at least Martin has taken a lead on this and we have pairing to deal with the problem and not simply playing politics with it as you were doing, Bernard, at the last Area Committee.

This is going to lead to a potential change of Headingley and I think positively.

I think I join with everyone in saying that we will look at additional licensing which Bernard eventually mentioned at the end of his seconding of the motion and we will look at it and we will discuss it. I am yet to be convinced by the additional

licensing. Firstly, we are looking at one area of Hyde Park, my colleague's Ward, where there were several three-bedroom houses that were in student occupation and the market changed and these houses have now gone over to home owner occupation. If additional licensing had gone through changes would have been made to those properties, dramatic changes, and those properties would have probably been locked in student accommodation for many, many years to come, so I think dealing with additional licences is something we have to be very careful with.

(Applause)

COUNCILLOR BALE: I was not going to speak on this motion but what I say will be very brief indeed. It does seem to me that whilst we oppose one another quite vigorously at times, we also have a duty to support one another when we can prevent someone making a fool of themselves.

In view of the evidence which Les Carter has provided, it is absolutely patently clear that to talk of abject failure is complete and utter nonsense. I really would invite the Labour group to support the amendment and to rescue for themselves some shred of credibility from this debate. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

(Applause)

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I must say, I am a bit puzzled as to why Councillor Atha's original motion is not being presented to us today. At the last Council meeting you will recall we ran out of time and there were a couple of motions on this issue, one in the name of Councillor Lewis and one in the name of Councillor Atha. The Councillor Lewis motion survives but the Councillor Atha motion has disappeared.

It is interesting, as Councillor Monaghan said, that Bernard did raise the issue of additional licensing at our Area Committee and, in fact, he invited the Area Committee Members to support a resolution that we should introduce licensing across the board. I think we all knew the elephant trap he was trying to set, so we declined to support that and, of course, now we do not actually have a motion in front of us on the issue from Bernard.

It seems to me that what the Labour group have actually done is, they have looked at what the possibilities are and have said as this administration is currently saying that the priority is to get this compulsory scheme up and running properly and then we will consider some other schemes. That is the priority and I absolutely agree, if that is the reason why Bernard's motion was quietly dropped, I think that is the priority.

In terms of what the Council has actually done in terms of implementing this scheme, Councillor Monaghan is absolutely right. There are deficiencies in this legislation - we often find that with legislation coming out of this Government – which has made it much more difficult for officers to implement the scheme as smoothly as they would like, but nevertheless I think they have done an absolutely superb job. Councillor Bale is absolutely right, it is ludicrous to say that we are failing on this. The figures in fact in August was something like 40% of all the applications issued were from Leeds and we have kept up an extremely impressive rate. We are streets ahead of other Councils in terms of the number of applications that have gone in.

You might say OK, applications have gone in but licences have not been issued, but actually it is the applications that generate the improvements. The licensing, if you like, is the rubber stamp that says you have actually achieved this. What generates the improvements to the properties is the process of applying for a scheme and hoping that you will get a licence. There is no doubt that certainly the shared housing group that I chair, landlords are represented on that and they talk

about the thousands of pounds they are having to spend to improve their properties in order to be able to obtain licences. That is a really positive thing. The fact they do not actually have a licence at the moment does not detract from the fact that improvements have actually already been made and in some cases this means that there is more space in these houses for people.

The knock-on effect of that, it is absolutely true, is that we are finding that some landlords are deciding that the costs of making these improvements is too great, that they do not want to do that and so what they are doing is selling the properties on. That is creating a situation where we have a number of properties in my area that are empty, that are up for sale. Some of them are coming back into family use, which is great because we do need to try and rebalance the community in the north-west. As I referred to earlier on in the meeting, there have also been some other drivers which have resulted in these various empty properties in our area – not Geoff Drivers, no, just drivers! There are a number of reasons for these empty properties and we are now looking at a strategy to try and fill these properties in a way that benefits the area as a whole.

I think in conclusion, Lord Mayor, this administration has nothing to be ashamed of in the way that it has approached this issue. In fact I think it would be fair to say that we are a leading light in the way that we have implemented this legislation. I think it is going to bring huge improvements to tenants. I think the landlords actually – the good landlords – welcome the opportunity to say to the potential tenants in the community that we are good landlords, we have applied for these licenses and if you get the licence we have got quality property to offer.

The landlords that do not play ball, we have got to come down hard on them and a register has been published so we can look quite easily at that register and we are getting help from communities and other people saying, “Hang on a minute, there is a property down my road with ten people in it. It is clearly an HMO, they have not applied.” We have got to come down hard on those people but let us not pretend that this Council has a poor record on this. We have an excellent record and I think officers are to be commended on what they have done so far. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY LORD MAYOR: I now call upon Councillor Richard Lewis to sum up. Councillor Atha?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I just want to say briefly on this – this is under Standing Order 14...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Lord Mayor, that is completely out of order. He cannot speak twice.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Oh you are wrong.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: We have taken them both, as we normally do, the amendment and the White Paper resolution. If Councillor Atha then does that, then he invites the whole of Council to speak again. I will speak again after Councillor Atha, if he is allowed to do it. It is always the Whips who have taken it this way and if the Whips are changing the procedure, then we should have agreed this some time ago.

THE DEPUTY LORD MAYOR: Bear with me, Councillor, while I take some advice on this.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I think you must do what you think is right. I am operating under paragraph 14.6. That is where a Member may speak to if a motion has been amended, to move a further amendment.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Put it to the vote, my Lord Mayor.

THE CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER: Can I just clarify what the Council Procedure rules say? It is Council Procedure Rule 14.6 which is entitled:

“When a member may speak again.

A member who has spoken on any motion shall not speak again whilst it is the subject of debate except to speak once on an amendment moved by another member.”

That is what Councillor Atha is seeking to do.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I move that the motion now be put.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Seconded.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: If you are prepared to exercise that kind of dictatorial approach then you are denying the right of people to debate and there are enough decent people over there at some point to say enough is enough.

THE CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER: We now move to the vote on the question be now put.

THE DEPUTY LORD MAYOR: We are now going to move to the vote as to whether the question should be put. All members in favour of the question being put? Against? Any abstentions?

I call upon Councillor Lewis to sum up.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you. A few points. Councillor Hamilton mentioned why did we not have Bernard's debate last time round. I think we ran out of time and nobody chose to suggest that we – we could have debated it last time. I am glad we did not.

Can I just get back to who lives in the private rented sector? Actually if you go back to the report and focus on this issue, the level of unfitness in the private rented sector is 21% compared to 5% for the rest of city stock as a whole. Non-decent homes, 67%. We have a huge problem within our HMOs and that is reflected in who is occupying them. 35% are described as economically vulnerable and in terms of those properties we have a duty to do something.

Les has come up with some statistics. I have also gone and done my homework and got some statistics which suggest that other people are doing better than us. Manchester says they have processed 80% of their applications. It was far smaller than ours – 80% of 1000. It is a smaller city and has a different problem. York reckons it is three-quarters of the way through. Again, a much smaller city but these were places that were not at the forefront of dealing with the issue of HMOs. Our track record in this city has been incredibly good about actually proactive involvement with the sector, engaging with them, which is why we have got a good accreditation scheme, why we have got as far as we have. We have been doing that work for years and years and years. We should be in a position where almost all those landlords who we have been dealing with should have been straight on to the

scheme. As it is I think about half of the ones who have gone through the system are ones that we were dealing with anyway. They were the usual suspects. So actually our impact has not been as big as you would like to suggest it is.

If we are talking about 8,000 properties – suddenly the figure has gone down to 5,000. It is interesting, is it not, that? The officers all talk when you look at recent reports about 8,000 properties. We have only gone through 2,500. There is still a huge number left to deal with. Other Local Authorities are saying they are doing better.

I think all I can say is we should be ahead of the game. We should be the most effective Local Authority in this. We have a huge number of these properties. This is not just a Headingley problem, and I think we often have an issue where everybody focuses on Headingley. There are other parts of the city that are perhaps more affected by this because the problem as it affects them is of landlords who are not regulated in any way. The market in Headingley is quite well organised. It is a market where people know where to go. You cannot say that quite so much about places like Beeston, about Cross Green and these are areas where I want to see us acting.

The whole purpose of the mandatory system – get the mandatory in place, then you can do the other. That is wrong. You have got the powers for other licensing but it is discretionary, it is selective. You cannot and you would be unwise – and I think the officers have been very clear about this and I agree with them – you do not do that until you have got the mandatory right.

Yes, the powers are there to act but you have got to get that base right first which is why I believe so firmly that we have got to get it right in terms of making sure as many landlords as we can are in the system, that we are out there now and I was very disappointed, almost, the last time this was due for debate to see a press release that had clearly come from the City Council almost begging these people to come on board. We should not be begging them. We should be out there knocking on the doors.

I am not saying that this is money that you can passport into some other purpose. It is not. It is money that is used to administer the system but by administering the system you are putting pressure on the worst landlords. It is not designed, I do not think, to take landlords out of the system. It will inevitably but if you look at the economics of it, if you have got an HMO with five different people in it, you are going to take a damn sight more money than if you have got one family in it and it is the economics of it that will drive that on.

I think there is a bit of confusion here about what is happening within the housing market in certain parts of the city and what is happening as a result of licensing. The licensing is an incredibly strong tool. We are not using it as effectively as some Local Authorities. We should be doing more. I move, Lord Mayor.

THE DEPUTY LORD MAYOR: Thank you. We now move to the vote. First of all the vote in favour of the amendment in the name of Councillor J L Carter. All those in favour? All those against? Any abstentions? That is CARRIED. That now becomes the substantive motion.

Could we now have a vote on the substantive motion, please? All those in favour? All those against? Abstentions? The motion is CARRIED.

Could I vacate the Chair and invite the Lord Mayor to take his rightful position. Thank you.

(The Lord Mayor took the Chair)

ITEM 9 – WHITE PAPER MOTION
PRIVATE BUS COMPANIES

THE LORD MAYOR: Members of Council, we will go on to the White paper Motion on private bus companies. Councillor Downes.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Lord Mayor, in bringing this White Paper to Council I realise from the amendment that Councillor Lyons has put down that it needs a little bit more clarity and, with leave of Council, after the second occurrence of the word “Council” I would like to add into the White Paper the words, “through the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority.”

I am accepting the part of the Labour amendment into my White Paper that adds the words, after the second occurrence of the word “Council”, to say, “through the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority”. The rest of my White Paper would stand, though, because I do think it important that we get the powers afforded to the London Mayor.

THE CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER: So you are seeking the consent of Council to alter your motion to incorporate Councillor Lyons’s words?

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: No, to include the words, “through the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority.”

THE CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER: Does Council consent? (AGREED)

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: I originally wrote the White Paper for the previous Council meeting prior to the Queen’s Speech in November in response to the promising comments made by Douglas Alexander relating to greater controls for Local Authorities. He said that he would act to empower local communities and give local transport authorities that need them real powers to make a real difference. I sincerely hope that this will not be another of the Government’s hollow promises which they seem to be good at – for example, Governmental reform, no student top-up fees and, of course, Supertram.

I also trust that he will see our area as one that needs these powers and not ignore us as other Ministers have. The Government White Paper does not clearly explain what these powers will be and there is to be a draft transport bill in spring 2007 and we need to ensure that our views are heard, hence the need for the White Paper so that we can convey those views of this Council.

I was amazed to note recently, before Christmas, that the Government have approve the extension of two routes for the Nottingham Supertram. The Nottingham extension will cost £437m, which is over £80m more than it would have cost to deliver the complete Leeds Supertram programme with trams on three lines. I also see in this week’s paper that the Government gave millions to fund rival Supertram where they extended Manchester’s line as well and where the cost benefit of that was £2.50 per £1 of public money spent, whereas for Supertram it is £2.40, so it was neither here nor there, so they chose to ignore us to extend other routes.

I think this is yet more proof that the Government has it in for Leeds and that the Labour MPs that represent much of our city are ineffective when it comes to securing public transport for Leeds. Whilst I am pleased for the people in Nottingham, this makes a decision to pull the Supertram scheme even more

incredible. An enquiry is under way as to when the decision was made as £39m of money may have been used unnecessarily. I notice the date for that enquiry keeps getting pushed back and pushed back and pushed back and we are still waiting to hear.

The failure of the Supertram project could cost up to £2.5b-worth of investment in Leeds and over 34,000 jobs. Whitehall has far too tight a grip on local transport issues, or at least including the way that we deal with our bus services. We need local control over our destiny for public services such as buses. Bus operators can all too quickly remove or change services as has happened recently in my own Ward with the temporary cutting short of the journey of the services 33, 33A and 757 during the afternoon rush hour and the 927 night rider. We have also seen reduced services to the Prince Henry estate in Otley. Many people feel that such decisions over public transport should rest with the Local Authority and not a private company

I was pleased that Councillor Lyons withdrew his original amendment to my original White Paper which congratulated the Government on free bus travel for the elderly and disabled, since I believe we have discussed this issue before in this Chamber. I too welcome free local concession travel after 9.30 a.m. However, as I have stated before, I have two serious concerns over the Government's handling of the financial implications of them.

Firstly, the way the money was made available in that the fixed sum of £16.9m was given to West Yorkshire via the PTA in such a way that the criteria would penalise Leeds by several million pounds. This was only resolved at local level thanks to some clever work by our officers and those at the PTA. It seems that this Government is hell bent on short-changing Leeds. Look at the criminal imbalance of business rates that sees Leeds lose out to the tune of many millions each year.

Secondly, whilst the first quarter figures in West Yorkshire indicate that the passenger numbers a 20% increase for concessionary fares are in line with the Government forecasts and consistent with the £16.9m given, it is still early days. Other areas such as Bristol have already seen increases of up to 80%, which is consistent with figures in Scotland and Wales that introduced free concessionary transport first.

There is a third concern and that is that the bus companies that have challenged the settlement have been offered by Local Authorities and if the ruling goes in favour of the bus companies who have challenged the way that the figures are calculated, then the £16.9m settlement will be woefully short.

Originally we were expecting a decision in October but this has been put back several times and is now not expected until February. If the bus companies win the appeal, it has very serious consequences for public transport in West Yorkshire and I will be interested in where the Government think the money should be taken from to settle the claim – the Tendered Services budget, children's concessions? The delay in a ruling from the department also makes things worse as we are coming up to budget setting time and this leave us guessing as to how we will stand financially.

I know that local free concessionary travel is being extended to include national free concessionary travel and, again, I welcome this but I just hope that the Government will get the funding right, otherwise we could have some major headaches. I would liken it to the Government giving the bus companies a blank cheque from our account but failing to put the money into our account to cover it.

With the exception of the guided bus lanes in Leeds, bus patronage continues to fall. This is typical of almost everywhere in this country, with the notable exception of London. From my short time on Metro I have been continually frustrated at the lack of accountability bus companies have. I have no problem with private companies making a profit but it is all about accountability for what is, after all, a public service that many people rely on for their livelihood, be it getting to and from work or shopping, etc.

It is interesting to note that the subsidy to the industry this year has nearly doubled in the last five years to nearly £2b a year. At Metro we tender for bus services but well over 90% of the tenders have only one bidder. This is hardly competition. When tenders are awarded there is no accountability. If the service is not delivered reliably, there is no come-back, no financial penalties for poor performance.

Outside of London and Northern Ireland bus services are deregulated and Local Authorities are only allowed to fill in the gaps where services are not commercially viable. This equates to around 13% in this area. I accept that in some areas deregulation has been a success but it is not a one-size fits all solution.

I am not looking for a return to the days of Corporation buses – just a system that can deliver a reliable, accountable service that the people of Leeds and West Yorkshire can have faith in. We need the power to decide locally what is the best system for our region and we are the best placed people to know what that is, especially since the Government claim that a bus rapid transport system is the best solution for Leeds. Apart from not believing that for one minute, we have our hands tied and are forced to make the best of a bad job. We need public control of public services. At present Local Authorities have their hands tied and do not have the necessary powers to oversee this. We need more control and more options to help deliver the service that the people of Leeds want and deserve.

Despite our best efforts to make the existing voluntary agreements work, there are only the big main operators who monopolise service in local areas. The custom system is giving us little more than a managed decline in buses. A recent report by economists NERA predicts that PTA area fares will rise by 20% in real terms and that they have already increased by nearly 90% in real terms since deregulation. Service levels will fall by 20% and patronage by 20% unless something is done now to change how the system works.

The White Paper simply asks that the Government do the right thing and give us the local power and the reason why I do not quite support the deletion of the bit, Lord Mayor, is because my concern is that we would end up being given the scraps and they would not fully give us the powers that we want. That is why I think we should go and say London is working, we want that same option here. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR SHELBRIDGE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Second and reserve the right to speak.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Lord Mayor, it reminds me of when I used to go to Sunday School and Saul on the way to Damascus, the scales were lifted from their eyes. It is rather puzzling to me - what comes round goes around. They are arguing what we have been arguing for years.

Nevertheless I will just go through it. As far as I can see, why I put down this amendment is because as the officers know and everyone else should know, it did not mean a thing, did not that White Paper. Leeds has got no powers over the bus

companies, never has had and never will have. Their powers lie within the PTA who they send delegates down to and the delegates vote in accordance of how they are told to vote or whatever in the best tradition of transport.

The Chief Officer knows this, everybody knows this, so as far as I am concerned I accept what has been put down, that the amendment will be taken and all what we are saying is the powers, we should be getting in touch with the Government to say that the powers should be given to the PTAs.

When you have all got the scales lifted from your eyes, in 1986 we had what was called a deregulation. I do not know who was in Parliament then and I do not know what most of you were doing then but what it meant – if you do not understand it I will take you through it like you have been taking us through it all afternoon – is that as far as I can see they privatised the bus companies and all this said, “You can make millions and billions of pounds, mate. Go out there and do as you like.” It was not as simple as that because it was in lawyer’s speak and it was done just meaning that, but it was done in lawyer’s speak.

What they did do, they went out to Barnsley scrap yard and bought a bus, gave 42 days’ notice and put a service in. I can assure you this is true and I can prove it. They put the services in, so what have they done since then? They have made billions of pounds buying and selling bus companies. Round your particular areas, one of the first jobs they did at Wetherby is they sold the bus company and the bus station and the bus station – nowhere else to go – they put all the buses on the road. The good people of Wetherby got in touch with me and Mike Simmons and all our people and said what am I going to do about it, because the Government certainly would not do owt about it on the day. They privatised it. We out of public money built the bus station at Wetherby. I hope they are all still grateful – if I ever stand at Wetherby I will remind them all! (*Laughter*)

Each year, what do you think these bus companies are up to and what are they doing? I will tell you what they are up to. It is not running bus services. It is making money. If I told you – and my figures are right, Leslie, if you want to challenge my figures, I will put money on them. £100m a year is given to bus companies from the PTEs - £100m in excess. If you want to know my figures, concessionary fares is £37,640,000, tendered services £23m - somebody will be reckoning up – passenger services £8m – a few hundred thousand does not matter to me – pre-paid tickets £26m. As well there are capital schemes that we put into the bus companies that are given by this Labour Government. We will not count those millions of pounds that are going in.

I can assure you that there is £100m plus going into bus companies in West Yorkshire. That is not bad, we have just said, it is hard to make a profit. What do we get for it? When I go knocking at doors and say, “Will you vote for me and will you vote Labour?” they say “Yes, mate, but will you tell us what we are getting for this £100m?” I have got to be honest because I always have been honest. We get a very poor service – we get a very, very poor service - we get complaints that buses are not turning up, we get buses that are running late. People do not trust them, so what do they do? They get into their car and the join the other load of cars that is on the road and you are all swearing because you are looking at a number plate in front instead of having a proper bus service that we are paying £100m a year for. It is absolutely – it is getting down to crazy position.

I am asking for more powers. I will tell you what more powers we want. Ken Livingstone can go and put quality bus contracts in. What these quality bus contracts are, they are not draconian and there are not left wing because would I be left wing? I ask you. What they are is simply this. It is bringing the bus companies to order and

getting value for money for the people of Leeds and West Yorkshire. That is what it is about. Anyone that is running a bus service, that is running it properly, will not have to bother their heads because it will just carry on being run this way, but anyone that is not, we can bring the quality bus contract in. The difference is that Ken Livingstone can bring his in immediately. He can go into an office and say to two or three of his colleagues, "We are going to bring a quality bus contract in so is it all right?" They say "Yes, that is all right."

The new powers that we have got, although they are a long way from what we had, we have got to jump through a number of hoops before we get to any quality bus contracts. We have got to go through the Senior Traffic Commissioner, we have got to go through a hell of a lot of hoops before we get to what they are get in London. What is good enough for them in London – and I have nowt against people that come other side of Doncaster, because you are foreign if you live at Wetherby to me from East Leeds.

It is simple, to me. Do you want value for money? You have been telling us all afternoon about this money that we or a Labour Government has been wasting. We are paying for a service that we are not getting. We should all be saying we are not having it and the private bus companies should not make us roll over and we should be demanding of our Government – and it is their Government as well, I bet you are pleased you have got a good Government like ours – I will not mention £200 for heating bill and stuff like that. I remember being lectured and lectured and lectured about the Government that was in power in those days. What they did, they had to get through this privatisation bill, same as the railway privatisation bill, at all costs – at all costs – and by, is it costing.

What are we going to do about it? I am arguing and I will always argue – I will die a socialist, I was born a socialist so I will die a socialist but it does not me being fair and honest. (*Interruption*) You laugh there. You invited people for tea – you never even seen them. I invited the people for tea and I am talking now. Councillor, sit down. You look better sat down!

As far as I am concerned, Lord Mayor, we must go and if he is not interested in buses, the people in his Ward are because they have told me that they want a proper bus service and they want it so that it can be paid for. The elderly people of this city have got the access bus, which is a credit to everyone in this city for supporting it. We have also got a free bus service that goes round the city. We are trying to extend this to other areas like Wetherby and like Otley and like other places that should be brought in. That is after it has been brought in at Temple Newsome and Old Moor, of course.

I am asking in all honesty – and as I see, I am getting the red light but I am quite used to red light because I have followed red flag long enough – listen when some sense is being spoken in this Chamber. Listen. You are going to be Lord Mayor, you should be sat at back of him and learning Nellie's elbow, you should be!

Please, he has accepted it, it should all go through and I am glad the scales have been lifted from your eyes. Thank you all very much. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Every time we debate buses in here I always have to follow a speech by Mick Lyons, but here we go. We have all had problems in our own Wards. We have had problems in our Ward with the 174 and 175 service which has been withdrawn from large parts of Kippax and also many of our constituents have seen a 31% increase in off-peak fares coming into Leeds from Allerton Bywater and Kippax.

In the light of the problems we all have, the London model for running buses seems very attractive. They have had a 25% increase in route miles, 32% increase in passengers and also a very critical thing as well is almost 100% of buses in London are accessible to wheelchair users.

Also the London system means that we can all get value for money for the public investment that goes into the bus services. Like Mick said, it is over £100m in West Yorkshire. The private bus companies operate in a really deformed market here they have the market freedom to put up their own profits by constraining supply and increasing prices, but they do not have the market discipline of competition where you quite often seen one bus company will operate all the buses in one area and another bus company will operate all the buses in another area. If you live in Kippax or Methley or Micklefield and the Arriva bus does not turn up, the only alternative you have got is to wait for the next Arriva bus.

The model that operates in London provides the competition. No bus company has more than 20% of the market share in London and for every tender that goes out there are three bids at least compared to the ones that Councillor Downes mentioned earlier.

I think it is important to have all these benefits in West Yorkshire and I do appreciate that Councillor Downes and his colleagues are fully committed to it. I have never known a spending commitment that Lib Dems will not sign up for. They never tell you where the taxes are going to come from, they never tell you where the savings are going to come from to pay for it, but if there is a spending commitment to be made, the Lib Dems are there.

However, I will be interested in the attitude of the Conservative because the Conservatives in London have not shown the support that myself, Mick and Rick have shown to this programme. They have attacked the Mayor for the way he runs buses. They have attacked the frequency of buses. They say there are too many buses running. They have attacked the level of investment, that there is too much investment in buses and they have attacked the fact that Transport for London, a public accountable body, can run buses on the routes and choose its routes the buses run from and have demanded that the costs of the scheme are cut back to the halcyon days that hark back to the days before franchising when buses in London cost less, so the Conservative Party's attitude to buses seems to puzzle me.

They had regulation in the 1980s and then they scrapped it and then when it went, they want it back again. Then when they have got it back in London, they do not want it any more. I sometimes think that their party's policy, their guru on this policy is Andy from Little Britain rather than any serious attempt at bus policy, so I look forward to hearing their contribution to the debate and I hope that everybody in this Council Chamber can support this motion. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, for once I have to agree with Councillor Lyons. It is a bit like waiting for a 153, Mick – you have to wait a long time and you do not know when it is going to turn up but it will get there eventually!

I must confess to being baffled by the logic of Councillor Downes's original motion. In fact I think that the cobbled wording is not entirely clear, so I think really we would be better off accepting Councillor Lyons's amendment as it was put in because at least that has been set out and we have been able to see what it actually says.

Metro is the public transport authority to West Yorkshire, not just to Leeds. Having separate transport powers for each of the West Yorkshire authorities would

be a backward step and that would put an end to all hope of integrating county-wide public transport.

Two bus operators dominate West Yorkshire as well, Arriva – who are more or less successors to the historic bus companies – and First – who are more or less successors to the municipal transport undertakings. Competition between the two is fairly small.

For some years before reorganisation in 2005, the Arriva services had become so unreliable that their buses were almost unusable, especially for those trying to get to work. Oddly enough, Metro seemed oblivious to this and actually published figures which claimed that 98% of all advertised journeys actually ran. It is in their 2003/2004 Best Value Plan. It has got Councillor Lyons's picture in the front! It actually claims that 98% of all the advertised journeys actually ran. Both the major operators had very serious problems, so it is definitely not true.

We have had increased reliability, certainly on Arriva, since January 2005 when they had a big reorganisation because I think they could see that their service really was on the point of collapse and they would have been reliant entirely on pensioners and school children if they had gone on much longer as they were.

That reliability has come at a cost. The fares have risen well above inflation, they have recently abolished the off-peak cheap fares for ordinary passengers and the challenge is to get public transport which caters for passengers. Private operators seem to be driven by profit but public intervention often seems to be driven by anoraks who would spend millions on tram cars and probably on steam engines if they had half a chance. Of the choices before Councillor Lyons's amendment is the closest to reality, therefore I urge members to support it. I was glad to hear Councillor Downes admit that 90% of all the tendered services only have one company coming forward to tender them. When I was on Metro I said exactly that, I was shouted down at a meeting by Members who said that it was not true. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Lord Mayor, I am pleased to be able to support Councillor Downes on this issue because, as we both know, the bus service in Richmond Hill and Cross Green has become very poor. There is a myth, I think, that many people in the leafy suburbs believe that the worst bus services are in rural villages and that if you live in the middle of a big city like Leeds, that there will be a good bus service. Sadly, that is not the case.

The best way to shop for food if you live in Richmond Hill and you are a pensioner without access to a car is to get on the number 61 bus and go to Morrisons in Hunslet. I am told only a few years ago this service was every 15 minutes during the day. Sadly, it did not make enough money for First Bus and they reduced the service to every 30 minutes, discouraging people from waiting. Then last year it was reduced during the day to once an hour.

We now have a situation where a pensioner can wait in the rain and cold for a bus which, if it misses, there is an hour to wait. Lord Mayor, this in my view is not a service, it is a scandal.

We have had a public meeting with Metro and with First Bus and 60 or more angry, forthright people from my area have spoken and used their democratic right to complain, I am afraid to say with no discernible improvement in the buses at all. They are still dirty, unreliable and, for many, difficult to access.

An unregulated service makes profits where it can and that is not in the areas of greatest deprivation or greatest unemployment. We get new buses last in my Ward. We get the accessible buses last. We get buses knocking the most. I repeat, Lord Mayor, it is a scandal not a service. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR R BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, I think as probably one of the few people in this Chamber who actually uses buses all the time – apart from when I get a lift from Councillor Carter that is (I have to say that before he says something!) – I have colleagues who use public transport quite a lot, we are quite clear that what we have got is far from perfect – in fact it is absolutely terrible. A lot of this is caused by the two monopolies that is Arriva in the south of the county and first more or less in the north of the county with no competition at all. To have an unregulated service like we do without any competition is just plain barmy.

I have got to say, I agree with a lot of what you say but why have you not been telling your Ministers to do something about it? You have been in power ten years now.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Right of reply, Lord Mayor. It is fantasy.

COUNCILLOR R BLACKBURN: We still have not. I met one of your Secretaries of State – very nice to your face. He goes back to London and goes off to another job.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: He said he had never met Mick Lyons.

COUNCILLOR R BLACKBURN: Yes, that is true. He keeps changing, does Alistair Darling, actually.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: He said, “I have heard about him though”.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: If I am out of order I will sit down, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR R BLACKBURN: As I say, as a user the service we have got is terrible. In my Ward and in one or two other people’s Wards this new FT bus coming on stream, the sort of purple slug. This Council has spent millions of pounds on putting in infrastructure for it.

All we have got, the only guarantee we have got with this service is a letter that Councillor Carter got from First Bus, an assurance that they were going to run this service, but if we are going to put infrastructure in like that, we want some guarantees and the only way we can get guarantees is by regulation. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: First, Council, Lord Mayor, could I think everyone for their good wishes and what I hope is support when we get to May 24 and I am finally installed. Thank you all for those good wishes.

Now if I could address the motion. One of the things I shall be looking forward to during my year, Lord Mayor, will be the departure from office of two people who have done a lot of harm to transport in this city - a very lame Prime Minister and an even lamer Deputy Prime Minister, both of whom, Michael, have had twelve years to do something about it. In that twelve years they have spent their time destroying the infrastructure of other countries instead of enhancing ours. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Lord Mayor, can I move under Provisions of Council Procedure rule 22.1 that procedure rule 3.2 be suspended to allow all White Paper motions to be debated.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. *(Request for recorded vote)*

(A recorded vote was taken)

THE LORD MAYOR: In favour of the motion to suspend Council Procedure Rule 4 to allow all White Papers to be met.

89 Members present. 40 in favour of the motion in the name of Councillor Hanley, zero abstention and 49 against. LOST.

Councillor Downes, can you continue, please?

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: My Lord Mayor, I would like to move my White Paper.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Can I at least make a point? This is absolutely appalling. This is the stifling of democracy.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: If we get on with the business we will hear it.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: My Lord Mayor, I would like to move my White Paper.

THE LORD MAYOR: We are going to call for the vote for the amendment in the name of Councillor Lyons. Councillor Lyons? I am asking for the vote for you amendment.

THE CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER: If I can assist, Councillor Downes in moving his motion altered his motion to include three or four words. Councillor Lyons then moved his amendment but he did not at any time seek to withdraw his amendment, so at this stage what you have to do is to vote on the amendment in the name of Councillor Lyons.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Can I withdraw my amendment now then?

THE CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER: With the consent of Councillor and the seconder. (AGREED) Now what we are doing is you need to vote on Councillor Downes's motion as altered. Those in favour? Anybody against? Any abstentions? That is CARRIED.

ITEM 12 – WHITE PAPER MOTION REQUEST FOR MUSLIM CEMETERY

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we move on to the final item of business? Councillor Rafique, White Paper motion on the request for a Muslim cemetery.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, the Cemeteries and Crematoria Strategy were first considered by the Executive Board in February 2001. The strategy includes a large cemetery to replace Harehills another to replace Cottingley and an extension of Rawdon cemetery or another large cemetery in the area. It was resolved that smaller cemeteries across Leeds would

also be extended wherever possible. The CITs were also consulted on the strategy and it was approved in January 2002.

In February 2002 the planning application for Whinmoor cemetery was approved. There was a deputation by residents and a Scrutiny Board report into the 50 Year Strategy. I will come back to the recommendations of the Board.

In March 2003 the Exec Board decided to go ahead with the Whinmoor cemetery plans and the 50 Year Strategy. In April 2003 highways works on the site, which had previously been put on hold, began to go ahead. In March 2004 the highways contract was put out to tender and, in May 2004, the contract was let.

Lord Mayor, in July 2004 the Executive Board member for Leisure, Councillor Procter, requested that the Executive Board reconsidered the Scrutiny Board recommendations from 2002. Lord Mayor, at this point £204,616 had already been spent on the Whinmoor site and the highways contract, worth £337,000 had already begun by then.

The Exec Board resolved that the 50 Year Strategy be reviewed, the extension to the Rawdon cemetery was the best option for that part of the city and to allow the highways works at Whinmoor site to continue as there was a possibility of having a smaller site at Whinmoor.

In one of the very first Council meetings I attended in July 2004, Lord Mayor, when you were sat in this seat *here*, in response to the Executive Board Report you commented that a lot of time, money and hard work had gone into Whinmoor site and that it was the Council's duty to provide a cemetery for the citizens of Leeds. You also said that it should not be turned in to a political issue by further reviews and consultations.

In response Councillor Procter said that there are approximately 86 Muslim grave spaces left in Harehills cemetery and that should last us approximately two years. That was two-and-a-half years ago, Councillor Procter – two-and-a-half years ago. We are still not sure where we are with this very important and sensitive issue.

What is the current position? In March 2006, Lord Mayor, can I stress that after nearly two years of time wasting and internal wrangling between that administration, there was still no clear movement on this issue. The Executive Board looked at the review of the 50 Year Strategy and, in light of the previous Scrutiny Board report, decided that the option for small cemeteries in north-east Leeds - and surprisingly not other areas – warranted further investigation. It was resolved that without any further consultation with the community that Brander Mount site – now known as Green View Mount - be considered as an extension to the Harehills cemetery for Muslim burials.

There were some comments made at the following April full meeting of the Council. Councillor Hussain, who is sat over there, said:

“I am delighted to see that this current administration has taken steps to address the very pressing issue of creating an additional Muslim cemetery in East Leeds. Council Officers are currently looking at the feasibility of developing a site at Brander Mount adjacent to Harehills cemetery. This site has already been identified as having the potential to serve the Muslim community in that area for several decades to come.”

Councillor Akhtar, in typical fashion in echoing the sentiments of Councillor Hussain and, speaking in a tone as if this was the biggest triumph of his political career, added, "What a scheme it is." He added, "What a scheme it is", referring to the Brander Mount site and that, "It has taken a change of administration to see the needs of Leeds Muslim community to be addressed."

This administration decided to review the Council Cemetery Strategy way back in July 2004 and brought this issue of an additional Muslim cemetery right back on to the top of the agenda. What hypocrisy.

My Lord Mayor, I said in my comments then that we had just about run out of space in Harehills cemetery. There has been no consultation with the local community to come up with the proposals they did. There is nowhere to go for the people of north-east Leeds, including the Muslim community. With the increasing aging population and bearing in mind the contentious issue of re-use of graves on expiry of burial rights, I know the Muslim community wants something that will last at least 100 years. We have got some prominent members of the Muslim community actually at present in the gallery up there. There were many here earlier on when we discussed this issue at three o'clock.

I must stress that Whinmoor could be ready within six months – within six months – and that is what the report said in April of last year - that is what the report of the Executive Board said in March of last year, sorry. We are talking about sometimes we go for other small sites and in the case of Killingbeck site A and with the ownership and green space implications, it could take at least three to five years, bearing in mind that this Council only owns 30% of the land.

My Lord Mayor, there is a pressing need for burials in North Leeds, as Councillor Procter stated in July 2004, that Harehills has been full for over six months now. There are all kinds of issues with Harehills and Killingbeck sites, including the most pressing issue of all time, suitability for burials, size of the plot, locality, access and extra resources.

Since the March 2006 report, which was over ten months ago, I am appalled that we have still failed to consult the people of this city apart from the so-called major debate when those guys over there tried to manipulate the true facts about the Whinmoor time line, the approval in 2002, and the resulting pounding Councillors Harris, Hussain and Akhtar took from the citizens of Leeds live on radio mid-October last year with regard to establishing a working group to examine the feasibility study of setting up a trust to run the new part of the cemetery, I think it is a step in the right direction.

Such arrangements would only be viable if it included and consulted representatives from major organisations in the city such as those you saw earlier today doing the deputation. It is obvious from today's deputation that Councillor Harris, Hussain and Akhtar, that you are out of touch. You are not listening, you do not have the backing of the community on this issue. *(Applause)*

That is why, although the deputation forgot to mention – but I can say this because the person who presented the deputation is sat in the gallery there – that 5,000 people have actually signed our petition within a few days of the radio debate opposing the so-called proposal and demanding the reinstatement of the Whinmoor site.

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

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: I would like to ask for the suspension of Council procedure rules to allow the amendment to be moved and put. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we have a seconder?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Seconded.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: It is traditional before we vote in this place to know what we are voting for. I have no idea, it was done so quickly. I could not hear Councillor Hamilton. Could he explain to us again exactly what he is doing and maybe we will be able to support him on it?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Lord Mayor, this a gross abuse of procedure and you know it. First of all that they can get away with it – and I hope you people up there are listening because these are really dirty politics. It makes me sick.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: For the benefit of Councillor Atha I will repeat what I said. To suspend Council procedure rules to allow the amendment to be moved and put.

THE LEGAL OFFICER: If I can clarify, Councillor Hamilton had put his motion to suspend before the wind up time at 7.56. Therefore, if I can just explain what the proposal is – the proposal that you need to vote on at this stage is whether or not you wish to suspend the time limit to allow Councillor Procter's amendment to be put and that would also allow Councillor Procter to speak to that amendment. It could then be seconded. Councillor Harington also would still have the right to speak, to second Councillor Rafique's motion and also Councillor Rafique would have the ability to sum up.

If members agree to the suspension as requested by Councillor Hamilton, that is what the process would be.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: It is still an abuse of procedure. You know it and I know it.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: If he can speak, I can speak and nobody ruled him out of order. He is not quoting any standing order, he is not quoting the Constitution. He is just getting up and making a pronouncement.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, everybody.

THE LEGAL OFFICER: Can we please have the vote on Councillor Hamilton's motion to suspend? Those in favour? Those against? Any abstentions? That is CARRIED.

If we can now have Councillor Harington to second Councillor Rafique's motion and then we will go over to Councillor Procter.

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

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I hear a hush coming over the benches opposite. I am not quite sure why!

Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like first of all to take the unusual step of addressing some of the members in the gallery and to make it perfectly clear, despite some of the things that you heard, the unfortunate things you heard from Councillor Atha today...

COUNCILLOR NASH: Lord Mayor, could you ask Councillor Procter to speak to his microphone please?

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, I have to say that no-one has ever complained in this Chamber of not being able to hear me, but there we are. As I was saying a moment ago, I would like to address my comments to some of the people in the public gallery. There is no attempt and no move to side-step this issue in any way, shape or form. The order in which the White Paper motions were put in and brought in is a matter for members opposite as much as a matter for anybody over here. The deputation that you brought earlier today will be responded to in the normal way and I can assure you that it will have due consideration and everything that you have said today will be taken into account.

What I will say, however, is that certain members opposite seem to be obsessed with one part of the community of this city. I have to say that is not – that is not – the Muslim community. What certain members opposite today have sought to do is to portray a very important but nevertheless a section of the Muslim community as speaking on behalf of all the Muslim community. Indeed, Councillor Rafique, that is what you said. You said you were claiming to speak yourself on behalf of the Muslim community and the view of the Muslim community is clear. Indeed, the view of the Muslim community is not – you are saying “over there” – as I said already, with a great deal of respect, that is not the length and breadth of the Muslim community in this city. It does not represent an important part of the community, namely the Bangladeshi community.

It is my intention – and I might say this element, I certainly thought, was agreed by the Leader of the Labour Group at Executive Board, that an all-party working group actually be established to look at the specific requirements of the Muslim community to factor that into the debate and to see, for once, if it could be provided for.

Let me just tell members, our guests here, a little bit about the last administration. This is something that they will not want you to know. What they will not want you to know – but the correspondence I have here is that I know now – I did not know before – that you had made certain specific requests of the last administration in terms of the facilities that you required for a Muslim burial ground. I might say they kept that information from me and from my colleagues when we sat on the Scrutiny Enquiry. That was not made known to us. The requirement is for washing facilities and the like which was something which were simply not factored in.

The requirement or a request for you to actually purchase a section of land to bury your dead in again was something which simply just was not communicated to us and it has only come to light during the course of this last week when officers of the Authority – in my office, actually – have trawled through the relevant paperwork to draw it to my attention.

It is for all of those reasons, because if we are to provide – and we are committed to provide – a dedicated Muslim burial area in this city, that is a pledge that this administration has given. I might say it is not one that *that* administration ever gave, but it is a pledge that we have readily and freely given. If we are to do that we need to make sure that it is a facility that the whole community is happy with

and it is because of those reasons that I invited Councillor Akhtar and Councillor Hussain to lead this grouping to draw all of those elements together, so for once – for once – the Executive Board can be informed of the actual requirements.

Let us just talk about sites now, shall we, and areas and provision? There was a golden opportunity to provide a Muslim burial ground – a golden opportunity to provide it near to the Muslim community, which is something that the community itself has wanted for a long time – a golden opportunity to provide something in the Killingbeck area. However, due to the intervention of one particular person, a former Leader of this Council – a certain George Moody MP – that seems to have been prevented, where instead his influence was brought to bear on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church in dealings that he seems to have been heavily involved with in this legal document. It is something called a 299 Agreement. This was actually dated 2001 under the last administration. For those who do not know what a 299 Agreement is, that is a legal document that is drawn up between the City Council and Crown land – Government land, effectively - to influence its way forward – what members would know as the 106 Agreement but for Crown land.

George Moody's influence is clear and, indeed, he is quoted heavily within this first draft of this 299 Agreement that ultimately led to the awarding of this particularly substantial area of land to the Roman Catholic Church to bury their dead in. I stand corrected but I think George Moody is himself a Roman Catholic.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: That is not true.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Is he not? I withdraw it. Moving on though, Lord Mayor, what we then see is once again, having missed that opportunity, we see former Councillor Moody then intervening once again in terms of trying now to secure a burial facility for the Muslim community at Whinmoor Grange Farm. Having made sure that the community, a substantial amount of which he represents, would not be laid to rest within his own Ward, he sought to make sure they could be laid to rest in someone else's Ward at the very extreme edge of our city. As members know, it is a view which I have not shared. I did not believe that Whinmoor Grange Farm was the right place for a 50 acre cemetery. I still do not believe that. I might add, nor did members opposite.

Councillor Gruen did not believe it was the right place for a 50 acre cemetery site because he voted against it in Planning Panel. Indeed, it was a tied vote only obtained by the casting vote of the then Chair, Councillor Congreve, that that site would even get planning permission.

Councillor Blake had severe reservations and deferred the matter twice when she was Chair of Plans East also. Councillor Roger Harington did not believe the 50 acre cemetery strategy and, indeed, the 50 acre cemetery site at Whinmoor Grange Farm was right either. Councillor Atha did not believe the 50 acre cemetery site at Whinmoor Grange Farm was right either – nor, I might add, did Councillor Jennings, Councillor Souper, who used to be with us, Councillor Bruce who used to be with us, Councillor McGee who used to be with us, Councillor Langham who used to be with us, or myself, all of whom were members of a Leisure Scrutiny Board who had an extensive investigation into that particular matter.

The recommendations of that were simple – that we should abandon the 50 Year Strategy, we should abandon the 50 acre cemetery site and we should look to make a more positive provision for communities – all communities – with the city across the city. Indeed, it is that, it is precisely that, something that was an all-party agreement, that we have been moving forward with over the last two years.

I might say, Lord Mayor, if we had had a little more constructive imagination and if the then Executive Board had actually listened to the all-party grouping, we would not be in the position we are in now. We would be far further down this particular road and we would, indeed, have cemetery provision for the Muslim community.

What this administration is determined to do is to provide a facility that is required, that is wanted and that is truly equitable with all sections – all sections – of our community, whether Muslim or not.

You will note in the amendment that is in my name that we talk about this matter being non-party political. I think it is an absolute disgrace that Labour members opposite cheapen this important issue, cheapen the issue for the sake of a few headlines in the Labour Rose. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hamilton, do you formally second the motion?

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Rafique, you have a right to reply now before we move on to the vote.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Before I come to deal with some of the so-called lies and allegations of Councillor Procter, let me just give you some of the key issues in fact about the various sites.

First of all is the issue about space, pressures and time scales. Given the time it takes to plan and develop cemetery sites, it is essential that you listen to the people of Leeds and a decision is taken to proceed with Whinmoor. Harehills extension could take up to two years and Killingbeck between three to five years. This is what the officers actually said, at least three years but I envisage about three to five years for approval as its availability is uncertain.

On the other hand, Whinmoor could be ready for burials within six months and that is in paragraph 5.1 of March report 2006 to the Executive Board.

Let us look at the resource implications. Resources totalling £80,000 would be based on two feasibility studies for Brander Mount and Killingbeck A site. The development of the Killingbeck site, if successfully negotiated with the Secretary of State for Health, would require new capital provision in excess of £550,000 subject to site investigations, plus any amount to acquire the land and the highways costs for access. Brander Mount would cost in excess of £1m.

Going back to the Whinmoor site, all approvals are in place. Are you listening, Councillors Hussain, Akhtar and Harris? All approvals in place. Highways and planning works are completed at a cost of £541,000. That is again in paragraph 2.6 of the March 2006 report. I am not making this up. You can check it if you want to check the facts.

Size of plot – now, listen to me. Size of plot. Brander Mount is too small and will last less than 20 years. Killingbeck A site could be anywhere between five to nine acres - because in the original report it said five acres and now we are saying nine acres - depending on acquisition and would last between 20 to 50 years. The total size area of Whinmoor is 105 acres. 105 acres. Even after allocating 46 acres for the cemetery provision it will not hinder the relocation of recreation facilities from Red Hall playing fields. It would last for at least 50 years, as desired by the Muslim community.

I must point out that the issue surrounding re-used graves is very sensitive and not at all favoured by the Muslim community and I think we should talk to other major cities such as Bradford about this issue and the actual 50 Year Strategy. Bradford have a 100 Year Strategy.

Let us look at the locality and suitability for burials. Brander Mount is not suitable due to being in the middle of the residential area and resultant antisocial behaviour. There is an issue of gradient and flooding and landfill.

Killingbeck A, which is another one of your preferred sites. According to the March 2006 report, because of its gradient it is not considered suitable for burial use. This is the professional advice from our officers – officers from this Authority. Access will be required from Foundry Lane but again gradients would make it difficult and it needs to be evaluated for other difficulties along with Wyke Beck land.

None of the other sites identified are considered to approach the overall advantages of Whinmoor in suitability, time scales and costs. Again, it is in appendix 2 of the March 2006 report given by our officers.

It is my view that a large cemetery with sections for different communities – not just the Muslim community, different sections for different communities – could be a suitable approach.

Your reference to the representative of the Muslim community, actually by saying that the majority of the Muslim community was not represented today, you are insulting the people in that gallery. You are insulting the people in that gallery. Let me tell you the five – are you listening, Councillor Procter? Don't look that way, look in my direction.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: You really know how to win friends and influence people, don't you!

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Representatives of the Muslim community came from five main mosques and community centre organisations, including the main Bilal mosque on Harehills Lane, the Islamic Centre, the oldest organisation and Beeston and Holbeck, the Hardy Street Community Centre. In Leeds 6 we had the main mosque in the community centre, if you have been in that area, and the centre in Leeds 17. So all round the city, not just north-east Leeds.

When was the last time this Council, this Chamber, had a petition – it is here if you want to see it, if you want to scrutinise it. I will be giving it to our Chief Executive, Paul Rogerson. When was the last time you had a petition signed by 5,000 people? It is about time you started listening. *(Applause)*

I agree with your point for having a cemetery for all sections of the community. I think you hit the nail's head there. Only Whinmoor could actually fulfil that potential – only Whinmoor could fulfil that potential.

With regard to Scrutiny Board recommendation, paragraph 4.8 of the report stated that:

“We are not convinced that Whinmoor would be the most viable location in the context of only using small sites. I also believe that the deputation received by the Scrutiny Board were not content with a cemetery of the size of Whinmoor for various reasons.”

Such is the hypocrisy of this administration, one of them saying we cannot have anybody there and on the other hand we are going to have a small cemetery. Why not have a large cemetery?

I think you are hell bent on extending Harehills, which no-one wants. On the other hand, you are still proceeding with a smaller site at Whinmoor. Councillor Procter, I do not think you simply care as to where the cemetery goes as long as it is not in your back yard. You do not want it anywhere near Thorner. That is the truth. *(Applause)*

I just want to use the phrase which Councillor Carter used earlier on...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Rafique, just one minute. Is there a point of order, Councillor Procter?

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: There is. There is a point of personal explanation, Lord Mayor. I would like Councillor Rafique to withdraw the allegation he has made about my back yard. I am not quite sure what he means by that.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: You do not want it in Thorner.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, further accusations are being made about where I live.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter, that is not a point of explanation.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: It is, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Lord Mayor... *(Interruption)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Rafique, just a second.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I would just ask members just to quieten down a moment because I have never heard in this Chamber a member imply what I have just heard Councillor Rafique imply about Councillor Procter. I would strongly advise that Councillor Rafique withdraws the comment.

THE LORD MAYOR: Carry on.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: The way you mess about the citizens of Leeds and I just want to use some of the words that...

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: If the member carries on I will move the amendment and sit down, because he is going on and on.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: The way he has messed about the citizens over the past two-and-a-half years I think it is immoral, it is inept and it is irresponsible. *(hear hear. Applause)* It is patently clear from today's message from the community and the debate we have had that the proposals are not welcome in any shape or form and the only way forward would be to reinstate the Whinmoor Grange as a leading large cemetery quickly and proficiently and simply. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Recorded vote, please.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Seconded.

THE LORD MAYOR: Members of Council, there has been a request for a recorded vote and it has been seconded, so I will hand over to the Chief Executive, Mr Rogerson.

(A recorded vote was taken on the amendment)

THE LORD MAYOR: 90 members present. 49 in favour of the motion in the name of Councillor Procter, the amendment. Zero abstentions. 40 against. That is CARRIED.

(A recorded vote was taken on the substantive motion)

THE LORD MAYOR: 90 members present again. 49 members in favour of the substantive motion. One abstention. 40 against. Therefore the substantive motion is CARRIED.

That concludes today's Council meeting.

(The meeting closed at 8.23 p.m.)
