

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday 16th January 2008

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC HALL, LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(Councillor B Cleasby)

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16th JANUARY 2008

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you and good afternoon, everyone. Could I welcome you all to the Council meeting on 16th January. My first instruction is please turn off all mobile phones and other electrical equipment that might be disturbing. Remember, the penalty for failure is £50 to the Lord Mayor's Charity and I can assure you – it has been £50 all this year and last year – it is really good value for money. Thank you, everyone.

Could I pass some information to Council before we start? Whips have learned that Councillor Atkinson will not be with us because she is still poorly and similarly Councillor Latty. I am really pleased to see Councillor Harper – I was told yesterday that you were ill and so I am pleased to see you today. Council, I would like, with your blessing, to send our good wishes to both those Councillors. Thank you. I have no further announcements.

ITEM 1 - MINUTES
of the Extraordinary and ordinary meetings held on 31st October 2007
and the four Extraordinary meetings held on
12th December 2007

THE LORD MAYOR: We move on to agenda item 1 and I call upon Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: I move the Minutes be received.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: That was proposed and seconded. Can I call for the vote on that? (*A vote was taken*) That, then, is CARRIED. Thank you.

ITEM 2 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: We move on to Item 2, Declarations of Interest. Councillor Kirkland.

COUNCILLOR KIRKLAND: Minute 50, page 178, by reason of my membership of Otley Town Council. I apologise for the fact that I have not declared on the form that was provided but it was due to what is at the moment known as an administrative slip up.

THE LORD MAYOR: Declaration accepted. Yes, Councillor?

COUNCILLOR MURRAY: Item number 11, personal and prejudicial interest.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: Lord Mayor, I would like to declare an interest in the White Paper relating to the Contact Centre which I believe is item number 12, as an employee of British Telecom. I think it is just a personal interest.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Personal he said, Councillor. Any further?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: White Paper 13, Lord Mayor, by virtue of being a Trustee of the Todd Westmoreland Trust that supports the Westmoreland Outpatients' Unit at the new cancer hospital.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Any more? Under that same item having invited further individual declarations, can I invite Members by a show of hands to confirm that they have read the list, or the list now as amended, and agreed its contents? A show of hands, please. *(A vote was taken)* Thank you, Council.

ITEM 3 - COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Moving on to page 2, Communications. Chief Executive.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: There are no communications.

ITEM 4 - DEPUTATIONS

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

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: To report that there are five deputations. The first one is pupils of Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School on matters referred to in the Mayor for the Day Manifesto, Improving the Environment; Deputation Two, representatives of the charity Relate, regarding its funding; Deputation Three, Tinshill Recreation De-Fence Group, regarding the use of permitted development to fence off green space including Tinshill Recreation Ground; Deputation four, local residents requesting the Council to purchase sports facilities at Leeds Girls' High School for use by primary schools and the local community; and Deputation Five, Headingley Network regarding the future use of the Elinor Lupton Centre.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Hamilton?

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, can I move that all deputations be received.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I call for the vote. *(A vote was taken)* That is accepted. Thank you, Council. Could I then ask the first deputation to be admitted?

DEPUTATION ONE

Pupils of Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School on matters referred to in the 'Mayor for a Day' manifesto - Improving the Environment

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, and please begin by introducing your deputation.

CONNOR PRIOR: My Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, my name is Connor Prior and I come from Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School. I am here to read my deputation.

If I were given the role of Mayor for the Day I would concentrate on our local environment. Long term we could have all cars powered by electricity as if we continue to use fossil fuels we will eventually run out of this source. Using fossil fuels damages the environment and also increased global warming. People today are

thoughtless about our environment and forget about the beautiful world we live on today. We are not thinking about our future generations.

If I was the Mayor I would encourage all families to cut their carbon footprint by at least 25% as it is already growing at a rapid rate. Simple steps like recycling our rubbish would be a good place to start. If we do not stop within years we would be as cold as Moscow as the polar ice caps will melt and cool the Gulf Stream, which brings hot water from the south up to the north where we are. The winters in Moscow can reach temperatures of -20C. How will that affect our families today and tomorrow?

Imagine if we made changes how it would affect our environment. Think about how trout used to stream throughout our rivers in Britain, but as a result of pollution they have gone. If we do not stop we are going to break up the food chain.

If I were the Mayor I would triple the fines today for littering as people are a disgrace to our nation and to each other. You do not have to look very far to see litter. This is very important in schools which are our own local environment. Look around all you can see in our playground is litter, litter and more litter from break and lunchtimes. We need to have a good school policy in place for our local environment and within that policy we could have the action taken against those who continue to offend.

We need to work together and this could be possible done through our school council, teamwork and good organisation.

If I were the Mayor this dream would come true and litter would become a thing of the past in our schools. This would be the first step for educating us and helping our future generations and making changes which are necessary. Why do you not help with our local environment by joining my campaign?

Since becoming Mayor for the Day I have:

- Become a member of the Leeds Youth Council and raised the issues of litter and the environment.
- The Environment will be the next issue for the Young People's Scrutiny Panel.
- I have also met with the Chief Executive of Education Leeds and his team on Takeover Day and shared my views on how to reduce litter and the tackle environment issues.

Thank you for listening and please take into consideration the points that I have mentioned. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Connor. Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think that sets a high standard for the next four to follow. Can I move that the matter be referred to the Leader of Council for consideration?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Pleasure in seconding.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Could I call for the vote? (*A vote was taken*) I think that unanimous, Connor. 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. Good afternoon Connor and it was a pleasure spending the day with you. (*Applause*)

DEPUTATION TWO

Representatives of the charity 'Relate' regarding its funding.

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, and please begin by introducing your deputation.

MR A BUNDOCK: My Lord Mayor, fellow Councillors, I am Tony Bundock, Rector of Leeds. With me from Relate Leeds I have Kathryn Ashworth, the centre manager, Judith Whitehead, company secretary, Robert Dyson, Trustee, Karen Mitchell, counsellor.

I think we are well aware that there has been an increase in the number of single parent households in modern times and in relationship breakdown in our city and in society in general. We do realise that we need to be very wary indeed of stereotyping individuals and family groups; that a wide variety of entirely functional family patterns has been established in the modern world; and that the term "single parent household" covers a very wide range of circumstances. I can tell you, for example, that during my eleven years as Rector of Seacroft that I have conducted a funeral for a grandmother of just 31 years of age.

At the same time, I have known a number of professional people who as lone parents are doing a great job in balancing career and family responsibilities, but it is widely accepted that the kind of help which Relate is able to offer does enable people in a variety of circumstances to make wise and informed choices in their relationships and the kind of quality of family life they wish to enjoy.

You will also no doubt be aware of all the associated costs to relevant Council support services and individual families consequent on family and relationship breakdown. It does not take much effort for us to make a connection between the cost of family breakdown in human misery and the financial cost of providing care and support for those who do not enjoy what I think we would regard as the birthright of a loving, stable home.

Kay Mellor is the president of Relate Leeds, and hoped to have been here today to front this deputation but because of a prior engagement she is not able to be here. She has however sent a personal testimony of her strong feeling about the issue of low income families being able to access relationship support.

She says:

"I speak as a daughter of Leeds and appeal to you that funds should be made available in line with the needs of families to access Relate's work. There are ever-growing numbers of fractured families in our society today and children left bewildered as a consequence of their family break-down.

I realise that Relate is neither hip or fashionable nor a charity 'of the moment'. It quietly goes about its own invaluable work, touching lives and improving family relationships. In order to continue to do so, it deserves the recognition and support of Leeds City Council.

On a personal level, my husband and I recently celebrated our ruby wedding anniversary. We celebrated by throwing a huge party at 3, Albion Place. People came from all over the UK to share in our celebrations, but I think it only fair to say that without the services of Relate there would have been no party and no celebration. In fact, my daughters would probably have been brought up in a single parent household.

Anthony and myself, like many couples, went through a difficult stage in our relationship. Fortunately, Relate Leeds was there to support us through this traumatic time. We visited a counsellor by the name of Stella Zimmerman over a period of months. She helped stabilise our marriage and enabled both of us to flourish as individuals.

We were on a low income at that time and certainly would not have been able to afford to pay for counselling sessions. Instead, each week we made a small donation even though the support we received was huge. I am just one of thousands of fortunate people in the Leeds area that Relate has helped."

I am privileged - that is me now, not Kay Mellor - to speak to you today, because from my time as a Parish priest in Seacroft prior to becoming Rector of Leeds, I do continue to have a passion for supporting efforts to meet the needs of those who are least able to help themselves. It is families in low income households who are far less able to access help from Relate because of the requirement to charge a minimum fee for sessions with a counsellor. Relate is the only specialised relationship counselling agency in the city so I am asking Leeds City Council Members to consider subsidising sessions at Relate for those on low incomes.

According to the information I have been given, Leeds City Council used to subsidise the cost of relationship counselling for those on low incomes by giving a grant of £23000. This meant 10% of appointments at Relate could be offered totally free of charge.

The Leeds City Council mission statement as set out on the Council's website, has the aim "to bring the benefits of a prosperous, vibrant and attractive city to all the people of Leeds."

So on behalf of Relate and those least able to access the tried and tested services which Relate is able to provide, I do ask you to live up to these very worthy aims by providing the means of access to relationship support for those who cannot afford to pay for it themselves. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Hamilton?

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, can I move the matter be referred to Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call for the vote? (*A vote was taken*) That, therefore, is CARRIED.

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. Good afternoon.

DEPUTATION THREE

Tinshill Recreation De-Fence Group regarding the use of permitted development to fence off green space including Tinshill Recreation Ground

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, and please begin by introducing your deputation.

MR A PROCTER: Lord Mayor, fellow Councillors, I am from the Tinshill Recreation De-Fence Group and this is our speech to Council. My name is Alan Procter and my colleague here is Brian Drakes. Unfortunately our other members are down with a virus that is circulating in Leeds North West.

We are concerned about a plan to turn our recreation ground into pitches built to Sport England Standards, and fence off at least two of them, against the wishes of our community. These are the issues.

1) Community Engagement. The Council have not listened to the view of local people; only six people are known to have supported this project. The Plans Panel were against it; so were many elected representatives.

2) Equality Monitoring. The Council are building pitches that will be mainly used by men to the exclusion of women, pre-school children, the elderly and the disabled.

3) We have seen no evidence of a Playing Field Risk Assessment as could be provided by RoSPA, playing field for school safety assessments. Under 'Safety' we have got three basic problems. The first one is that fences are dangerous. Only this weekend a boy was impaled on a 1.8m fence in Stoke-on-Trent and he was seriously injured.

The second safety issue is regarding Ralph Thorseby High School. The High School in fact has stopped children going out of its front door because it reckons that the road is so unsafe it is not safe for them to proceed. They are going out the back door until the basic provisions can be put round the front side of it.

The third problem with safety is people driving on to Tinshill recreation ground. Perhaps it could be that maybe a basic thing like on Woodhouse Moor might stop people driving on it and burning cars and doing all the things they are doing.

The fourth issue is the Sports Pitch Strategy? There seems to be no proper plan for fields in Weetwood. There are other proposals to destroy pitches at Boddington, Lawnswood and Otley Old Road.

We have some question that we would like to have answered about this project and ask the Council to consider them and put them to its officers.

1) Permitted Development. We would like to know if a planning rule called an Article 4 Direction could be used to stop the fence if the Council so wished?

2) Sport England. We would like to know if Sport England were consulted before the new school was built on the sport pitches or during the planning process for the fence.

3) Scrutiny - which is to me very important. We were told that Councillors were to refer the matter to a Scrutiny Board. We would like to know if this matter has been referred for Scrutiny and if not, how we can apply.

Our group is opposed to the fencing of our recreation ground. We won the planning application and were told that the fence was to be built anyway. There has been a lot of debate and the result is the same. We understand that the fence will be built in February.

We ask the Council to reconsider its decision to build the fence. If they cannot, maybe its erection could be deferred until after the election in May, because this seems to be a political decision now and the people might have an answer.

Please sign our petition to Gordon Brown. It can be found on our website at tinshillrecreation.com.

Finally regarding the fence, please decide about the erection after the election in May and maybe we might get some community involvement. Thank you.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Hamilton?

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor, can I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call for the vote? *(A vote was taken)* That, therefore, is CARRIED.

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. Good afternoon and good wishes to the rest of your group to get over their virus.

DEPUTATION FOUR

Local residents requesting the Council to purchase sports facilities at Leeds Girls' High School for use by primary schools and the local community

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, and please begin by introducing your deputation.

MS S BUCKLE: My Lord Mayor, fellow Councillors, may I introduce Andrew Milne Beresford, Rukhsana Hussain, Gay Bennett and I am Sue Buckle

We are residents from Hyde Park concerned about the lack of sports and recreational facilities in our area, especially for young people.

Hyde Park, Woodhouse and Burley are comprised mainly of streets of terraced houses, mainly without gardens - in some cases even yards - for children to play in.

None of the three primary schools, Quarry Mount, Brundenell or Rosebank, has a grassy area let alone a field for sports activities. Spring Bank and Shire Oak have some green space but no sports field.

To swim, children must travel to Kirkstall, Armley or further. A school swimming lesson lasts only 30 minutes to allow transport time. Local schools can afford to send only one or two classes a week due to transport costs. For a parent, to take a child swimming involves transport by bus or car, which increases traffic pollution, yet within walking distance of all these schools, in the heart of our area, is a purpose built swimming pool, sports hall, two grass playing fields and netball and tennis courts.

For decades local children have seen the fee-paying pupils of Leeds Girls' High School using these facilities but have had virtually no access to them – unless their parents have been able to afford the fees for the sport camps in school holidays.

It has been especially frustrating to see the playing field between Ash Grove and Chestnut Avenue unused and empty most of the time. Before the sports hall was built local families could at least access this field before the big metal fence went up and the gates controlled by Leeds Girls' High School.

Now this school is moving from our area and there is a unique opportunity to give our community the much needed sports and recreational facilities which we feel is a moral right.

The UDP identified Headingley as the second worst area in Leeds for open space provision, hence policy N3. Recent medical research shows a lack of vigorous physical exercise is the major factor leading to obesity in children and adults, with the increased risk of heart attacks, diabetes and the like.

Many families in our area are in the low income bracket and thus more than average at risk. There is also a larger south east Asian community a community that is particularly vulnerable to diabetes.

There is no sports centre in this densely populated area, where the number of families is increasing.

At the Executive Board meeting where the Leeds Girls' High School draft plan was rejected (partly because of the proposals such as the one to build on the Chestnut Avenue field) it was said, that increased recreational facilities for the community could come out of the High School moving site.

We have here a petition here, collected outside the local schools and on the streets of our area, asking you, the Council, to buy the sport facilities now owned by Leeds Girls' High School for our local schools and community.

If the playing fields were brought at green space rate the cost could be met out of public funds, since not long ago the Kirkstall members brought the Archie Gordon field out of MICE and RATS money.

The sports hall and swimming pool would obviously cost, but when we are talking about the health and well being of children and adults, especially those in the deprived areas of society, surely the money could be found.

If we are serious about narrowing the gap between rich and poor in our city this is a once in a lifetime chance to redress past inequalities in our community.

We ask you to accept our petition and accede to its request. Who knows how many potential Olympic Champions we may have in our midst, who without somewhere to practise or perform can only dream?

Please let the sale of Leeds Girls' High School have real and lasting benefits for our community. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Hamilton?

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, can I move the matter be referred to Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call for the vote? (*A vote was taken*) That, therefore, is CARRIED. Thank you, Council.

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. Good afternoon.

DEPUTATION FIVE

Headingley Network regarding the future use of the Elinor Lupton Centre

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, and please begin by introducing your deputation.

MR T BAVAGE: My name is Trevor Bavage and I am speaking on behalf of Headingley Network, which brings together residents and community associations with the aim of supporting and promoting a long-term sustainable community in Headingley. My colleagues are Nick Salmon, Linda Robbins and Pat Bowman.

My Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about our concerns for the sale of the Elinor Lupton Centre in Headingley by its owners, Leeds Girls' High School.

As you will know, the whole of the Leeds Girls' High School site is currently under consideration for re-development, and at present there is no news from the school as to how any of this will be taken forward. This includes the Elinor Lupton Centre, which is the subject of my deputation to you today.

Though the school currently denies that there has been any specific intention to sell it as a pub, there has nevertheless been some evidence that Wetherspoons and other pub proprietors were considering it as a possibility and could still do so.

The Elinor Lupton Centre has been the music teaching centre for Leeds Girls' High School for some years. The building is Grade II listed and offers a particular kind of opportunity because of its internal layout, which consists of approximately 20 individual small workrooms, a 60-seater seminar or recital room and a 450-seater auditorium.

Headingley has been under pressure as a sustainable community for a number of years and is in need of re-balancing in terms of population and commercial provision. The Elinor Lupton Centre provides the chance to make a significant difference, but there are currently risks associated with the school's explicit refusal to commit themselves to not selling it to a pub chain or other alcohol-led users.

Headingley suffers from a well-documented binge drinking culture and all the recent public consultations have confirmed that local residents consider this to be a significant barrier to building a long-term community. These consultations include the renewal of the Community Impact Policy, the amendments of the licensing guidance and Headingley Development Trust consultations on the future of a local school.

The Elinor Lupton Centre is sited at the top of Headingley Hill, on the A660, which is the most congested main route out of the city and is documented to have one of the highest accident rates in the city, many of these being associated with alcohol. Junctions close to the Elinor Lupton Centre are amongst the highest areas of concern and a pub at this point would increase the chances of more traffic accidents occurring.

There is not doubt at all that such a large building would become a temple to binge drinking in this context. The Otley Run is a well-known pub crawl route which new students are initiated into and which currently starts at Far Headingley and ends at the University campus. It attracts huge groups, which often wander into the road where the pavements are the narrowest, right opposite the Elinor Lupton Centre. A new stopping off point here would provide a huge venue with room for hundreds of drinkers right in the centre of a residential area and way outside the designated town centre.

In addition to the local student residents, Headingley's recent development of large vertical drinking establishments has expanded the city centre's binge drinking capacity into the suburban areas. The levels of anti-social behaviour and persistent crime currently suffered by local residents would be aggravated considerably by a development of this size and in this situation.

Residents are concerned not only for their own peaceful enjoyment of their property as enshrined in the European Human Rights Act, but are also dismayed to see young people around them being encouraged by developments that would result in further damage their health through the effects of excessive consumption of alcohol.

We have had support from Greg Mulholland MP, Leeds Girls' Action Group including seven affiliated community groups and Headingley Development Trust. We welcome the support received from the Chief Superintendent Divisional Commander of the North West Leeds Division of Police, Howard J Crowther who wrote to the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Grammar School and Leeds Girls' High to make it clear that they had supported the Community Impact Policy and would put forward strong objections to the Elinor Lupton Centre being converted to licensed premises. The Primary Care Trust has also written indicating major concern about the health consequences.

Headingley has unique and intractable issues which arise from studentification over recent decades and this demands urgent action. Now that less than 50% of the populations is made up of long-term residents. We need to use all the opportunities like the Elinor Lupton Centre to help turn around the area.

- We need the Elinor Lupton Centre to be put to a purpose that respects and retains the residential nature of the area.
- We need the school to agree to this aim and state publicly that it will not sell the Elinor Lupton Centre for licensed premises. To date it has not done so.
- We need the Council to help deliver these aims by working proactively with the community and the school.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I ask you to bring your words to a close, please?

MR T BAVAGE: I will. Thank you for your kind attention. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Hamilton?

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, can I move the matter be referred to Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call for the vote? (*A vote was taken*) That is acceded to.

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. Good afternoon.

ITEM 5 - REPORTS

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I move us on to Agenda Item 5, Reports. Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, I move in terms of the notice.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call for the vote? (*A vote was taken*) Those in favour? That, I think, is CARRIED.

Can I now call on Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I move, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I call for the vote. (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED. Thank you.

ITEM 6 - QUESTIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: I move on to Agenda Item 6, Questions. Question 1, Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can the new Executive Board Member for Resources confirm that he is still committed to providing Council services for all parts of the city?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Yes.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you for that full and frank answer. Let us see if you can expand a little bit more in that very honest way. I have got a quote and following it I will ask you a question. Councillor Brett said:

“It is one of the country’s best kept secrets that there is a crisis in social housing. All parties, including my own, have been guilty of not talking about this problem because it mainly affects safe Labour seats and not areas that are likely to swing an election.”

Yorkshire Evening Post, 6th December.

Would you like to tell the Council and tell the people of Leeds who you hold responsible for that particular attitude of putting electoral considerations before housing needs?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: The first thing I wanted to say on this is that the attitude of this side to housing has been consistent since 2004. We have done our best with the resources at our disposal to improve the ALMOs and to provide the best service possible. It is a fact that I think your side would agree with me that the numbers of houses coming in the flyer each week are not sufficient to meet demand. That is something that I regret and that is something that led me to make the statement that I did.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: He is not answering the question.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Lord Mayor, I am answering the question in my way.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Brett, just sit down a moment, please. It is my understanding over the years in this Council that when an Executive Board member speaks, they do not have to be explicit in relation to any question or relationship that they are called upon by others who think they should speak. *(Interruption)* I am sorry, Members if you disagree with that, but you may agree with this. I had to sit for twelve years on the benches in this Council Chamber so I think you will find if you check the record that that is absolutely gospel. Councillor Brett, continue.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Lord Mayor, please may we have the advice of the Chief Legal Officer? My understanding is that any Executive Board Member of Council, no matter what their role is...

THE LORD MAYOR: All right, Councillor Minkin, I accede to your request. In that case the Chief Legal Officer is on this side.

CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER: It is for the Executive Member to answer the question in any way that he or she feels fit and that has been the practice of the Council since I have been advising the Council at this table.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Lord Mayor, on that advice *(interruption)* you may not like this but the Chief Legal Officer has given that answer, and the answer was he answers or she answers...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Atha, sit, please. The present Chief Executive sitting on my right, who is normally the Chief Legal Officer, has given you

exactly the same advice that your Lord Mayor gave you. You are going to accept it. *(Applause)* If you are not, there is an easy way for me to sort that out and if you want to continue and have a debate today, I think you had better be listening to your Lord Mayor. Councillor Brett.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: So the situation we have is that in social housing we do not have enough houses each week advertised in the flyer to meet demand. It is also not within this Council's power to immediately do everything we would wish to about that. If Councillor Wakefield had wanted to have the question answered from the Exec Board Member responsible, he should and could have asked that question to Councillor Les Carter. I am sure if Councillor Carter is asked that question, he will give you the answer that you want.

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

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Lord Mayor, would the Leader of Council care to comment on the impact of the financial settlement from Central Government on the Council's budget for 2008/9?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Can I say that thankfully at the moment it remains a provisional settlement but I hold out no great prospect of this government adjusting the settlement to our benefit. Contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition believes, Councillor Anderson, this settlement in totality is the worst the city has ever had. It is the first time that we will go into a new financial year with £8m less of government money than we had in the year before. I have never known that happen before and I know of nobody else that has either.

We have made representations and I am happy to say that it was an all-party letter, all Group Leaders signed it and it was a three major party delegation to the Parliamentary Under Secretary when we made what he described as a very strong case. Having said that, we have heard it all before. The simple fact is that this Council is facing a very, very difficult financial settlement indeed and nobody in this Council Chamber should underestimate that. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR TOWNSLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Would the Executive Board Member responsible for Environmental Health care to comment on the situation regarding fuel poverty in Leeds?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Fuel poverty in Leeds is measured annually as part of the reporting procedure for the Home Energy Conservation Act. The eleventh report is covering the period 2006/07 and showed that fuel poverty for all households in the city was down from 37% to 30% from the previous year. For vulnerable fuel poor – and that is those households containing pensioners, the disabled, young families and the long-term ill – fuel poverty is down from 28% to 22%, so we are making good progress in the right direction.

This form of poverty is a problem nationally, regionally and also in our city. It is at the top of our agenda and we have been working hard on a number of different fronts to bring families out of fuel poverty for some time.

I would like to thank my colleagues Councillor Mark Harris, who has overseen the progress made in addressing the problem through the Narrowing the Gap Group, and Councillor Barry Anderson, who has chaired the cross-sector public and private sector partnership group seeking to tackle the issue through the Fuel Savers Board with a range of initiatives which have recently been identified in the Affordable Warmth Strategy.

Progress in 2006/07 was considerable. Grant take-up for heating and insulation measures in the private sector under Warm Front showed a near doubling of take up to 3,297 homes, the second highest regional grant take-up recorded. Our colleagues in the ALMOs also deserve praise. They have carried out some sterling work with 3,300 households brought to new, high efficiency gas central heating and over 3,500 homes receiving double glazing and a further 3,800 insulation measures applied to public sector housing.

At the spearhead of our initiatives are the Council's Fuel Savers team and they are facilitating grant take-up in the city as well as raising awareness to the benefits of energy efficiency. Targeting is primarily to low income households. Over the last two years they have taken over 9,000 telephone calls for advice and issued over 42,000 household specific reports containing grant information. In this financial year alone over 8,500 pensioner households have been supported.

I am also pleased to report that our new private sector efficiency scheme, Community Warmth, is now under way in those wards reported as containing the highest number of fuel poor homes – that is Gipton and Harehills - and we are moving shortly into Hyde Park and Woodhouse. Starting in late November last year the team has made contact with over 1,200 residents on the doorstep. The work programme will roll out to a further fuel poor wards in the next financial year – that is Killingbeck and Seacroft, Middleton Park and Burmantofts and Richmond Hill. In turn we will make contact with up to 33,000 households. Once that is completed we intend to extend the initiative to all wards across the city over the next three years.

Finally, whilst substantive work and effort has been made to address fuel poverty in the city, the recent gas and electricity cost increases announced a few weeks ago are likely to push up the number of Leeds residents placed into fuel poverty over the coming year by an estimated 20,000. That would take us to a total of around 80,000. We must, therefore, continue to do more and others external to this Authority must also take some responsibility for this continuing slippery slope to unaffordable warmth, bringing cold homes and misery to many. First of all it could be provided with assistance being made available to a far greater number of people in fuel poor households through the national grant system or by capping fuel cost increases to those vulnerable members of our community. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR RHODES-CLAYTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. What plans does Leeds City Council have to minimise the carbon footprint of their crematoria and would they go along the lines of Tameside Council?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. For Members who may not be aware of the actions of Tameside Council, Tameside Council proposed that heat from the burning of bodies could be recaptured and used to power the boilers and the Chapel lighting system.

Leeds City Council will need to install mercury abatement equipment at its crematoria before 30 December 2012 to comply with new legislative requirements. Officers are currently looking at all options and their report is expected in due course. Speaking purely personally, however, I would not be in favour of the actions taken by Tameside Council. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Lord Mayor, could the new Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party in Leeds please confirm that helping those most in need will be one of his topmost priorities.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Yes, indeed. It is one of the major reasons why I came into local government politics. *(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Thank you for your reassurance, Councillor Brett, although my colleagues on this side of the Chamber may have begun to doubt your intentions from your comments in the Evening Post on 6 December which seem to suggest that your administration only acts in areas where electoral advantage may be gained.

By way of supplementary can I ask, if all parts of the city are to be treated equally, why under the new system of funding for the Youth Service, your administration introduced an area like Harewood, with 122 children in families who are receiving benefits, received around half the funding that your ward, Burmantofts and Richmond Hill, which has over 15 times as many children in families who are in receipt of benefits?

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Shame, Richard.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I am aware of your interest in this area but I am not able to answer the detail. What I would say to you is that it is very difficult for me to accept strictures from the other side *(interruption)* on understanding those in the greatest need.

I represent a ward in the middle of Leeds with the second highest deprivation in the city, so it is rather difficult to understand people saying to me that I do not understand the problems of those in the greatest need or those who need extra help. I am only too well aware that this administration has, on a number of different issues, on a number of different fronts, done its best to help those in the greatest need and will continue to do so. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR CASTLE: Would the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing care to comment on the government withdrawal of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund at the end of this financial year and the failure of the government to include Leeds on the list of Local Authorities eligible for the Working Neighbourhoods Fund?

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: My Lord Mayor, the removal of NRF, Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, is extremely serious in this city. I think it has got to be accepted – it is all right pulling faces, Peter, but it is going to affect some of the poorest and weakest people in this city.

Let me give you a flavour of what we have used NRF for. Looked-after children. That, Peter, you might laugh about, but we think it is important. Job Start, that is in our NRF scheme.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Support our resolution then.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Chapeltown Job Shop – will that have to go? I hope not. Signpost Projects. The Signpost Project is recognised throughout the country as helping some of the most deprived families in this city. The Antisocial Behaviour Unit is under threat; Neighbourhood Warm is under threat; the Burglary Reduction Funding is under threat and, indeed, the CCTV is also under threat. The Drugs Intervention Project is another area which is under threat from this particular withdrawal of funds. That is just a flavour of the number of schemes. There are something like 68 schemes which it has been withdrawn from. We cannot accept that this is fair or just.

Lord Mayor, last year we received – or this year we are in now - £14.9m in Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. That was fully used for various items, various policies. What we have been given now, my Lord Mayor, is a transitional two year funding. This year it is going down to £8.9m. That is a 40% cut in services to some of the most vulnerable people in this city. The year after it is going down to £3.5m, which is a 76% cut over what is happening this year and the year after it is going down to nil, which is obviously a 100% fall. My Lord Mayor, nobody in this city or in this Council Chamber can support that in any way, shape or form.

Lord Mayor, what it has been replaced with by government is a thing called Working Neighbourhoods Funding and Leeds City Council is not qualified, according to the government, for this funding. Let me give you a comparison of people who are allowed to have this fund. Blackpool, which has a population of 143,000 people, has something like 44,000 people in a most deprived area of this country. They are going to receive £14.5m. Middlesbrough, which has a population of 138,000 and deprived people of 64,281, are going to receive £24.7m. Sedgefield – and God knows how Sedgefield has got into this – has a population of 87,900. It has a figure of 4,884 people who would be classed as deprived for these purposes. They are receiving £7.8m.

Leeds, with a population of 740,000 but with a deprived population of 149,000, is receiving zero. Nothing at all.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You justify that.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: It is all right having a go at Councillor Brett. Somebody over there, try to justify that. It is unbelievably wrong. We do a lot of knocking about in this Council Chamber but this is not knock-about stuff, this is really serious stuff as far as this Council Chamber is concerned.

I have got to ask myself, Lord Mayor, would this have happened when we had MPs like Denis Healey, Merlyn Rees, Keith Joseph, Giles Shaw? I do not think any government would have dared to do this to Leeds. Our MPs now have got to get stuck into their government. They have got to get stuck in and they have got to demand this money back.

This Council, as you have heard from Andrew Carter, has lobbied government, we have been down to see central government and lobbied them. A letter has gone off also to the Minister, a very powerful letter, giving more facts and figures than I have given you today, which supports the case itself. I have spoken to police and other services to ask, "Will you support us in our fight to get these funds back?" and all the MPs received Andrew's letter.

None of us can sit here and accept the situation, otherwise your question was the most feeble question you could have ever asked to Councillor Brett, because if we do not fight for this, if we do not get this, your government are attacking the very poorest people in our city. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Last week the inquest into the deadly scalding of Rhianna Hardie revealed that the failure of a hot water tank thermostat was responsible for that incident. It is estimated that there are at least 3.5 million similar cheap thermostats still in use in England and Wales, with no requirement on Councils to fit new thermostats with automatic cut-outs. Would the Executive Board member for Neighbourhoods and Housing tell Council what discussions he and the Director are having or will have with the three ALMOs on this potential threat to our tenants?

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Thank you for asking the question, Councillor Pryke. It is a very serious matter and obviously people are taking it very seriously. It is thought to affect houses which were built between 1945 and 1975. These thermostats failed but in addition to that I understand the cold water tank that water went into was (a) incorrectly fitted and, in addition to that, should have been able to hold water, boiling water, for a period a lot longer than it did. Obviously that poor child is something we all deeply regret.

Let me just say what we are trying to do, Lord Mayor. First of all, we have got to identify all the houses which may be affected by this and that work has already been started and is going on by the ALMOs. Once they have been identified, obviously action will be taken to see whether the thermostats, or whatever it is, will require changing and that will take place.

In the meantime the appeal I make to our tenants is this. If they have excessively hot water coming out of the hot water taps, turn the thermostat off and ring the ALMO. If they have excessive noise or bubbling of water in the cylinders, turn the thermostat off and ring the ALMO. Hot water coming out of certain cold water taps is another sign. Again, turn the thermostat off and go to the ALMO.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: I hope you are telling the tenants. It is no good telling us.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER? I am answering the question. I am answering the question what the Council should be telling its tenants. Finally, my Lord Mayor, if there is steam or moisture in the loft, in the room, that is another reason to turn the ALMO off... *(Laughter)* I honestly find giggles over there today are ridiculous. A child, a baby, has skin pulled off it and died from this. It is very serious, it is a very serious matter; treat it as a serious matter.

The situation is we have got to advise our tenants, we are advising our tenants of what to do, we are taking action. That action is important and we will continue until it is right. That is my answer, thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: I am grateful to Councillor Carter for giving that information to Council, which I understand is going to be given to our tenants as well. At the inquest the Coroner found that the government was warned about this potential tragedy four years earlier when a lady in Cornwall was similarly scalded to death. Would Councillor Carter like to comment on whether the government could have usefully done anything, given that the Local Government Association has now passed on this warning to all Councils?

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Lord Mayor, two things. The first thing is I always accept our responsibility to see that our tenants are safe. I do not need government to tell me that. We should take that.

The second point is that it is a disgrace that that information was not passed on. If that had been passed on it costs – the thermostats, I think they are pennies, 50p or £1, nothing, virtually. We could have done those within Decency because it just happens to fall within the start of Decency and we would not have had our tenants under threat.

I think it is a disgrace that it was not passed on. I just hope that none of our tenants are going to suffer in the same way as that family who lost that child. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, can the Leader of the Council please tell me how many staff the Council currently employs?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: 14,128 full-time equivalents.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: By way of supplementary, can the Leader of Council explain then why, when regularly the refuse collection service wins every single award for being the best service in the city, his administration picks on those very people through the single agreement and seeks to punish them for the good work that they do by withdrawing up to 6,000 from their wage packets? Does he apologise to our employees for his crass behaviour?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, as Councillor Gruen and Councillor Wakefield should be well aware, the Council is going through an extremely difficult and tortuous operation at the moment in terms of equal pay negotiations and we all should regret that that is the position that we, along with every other Local Authority in the country, are in.

What I have to say is that I congratulate the staff in the City Council who are conducting the negotiations because we have got such a large degree of agreement so far. It is pitiful, my Lord Mayor, that Councillor Gruen should seek to harp on about this when he knows that Authorities under every shade of political control he can think of, including government departments, are all going through very similar processes at the moment.

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: Would the Executive member for Development reaffirm this administration's commitment to investing in the continued prosperity of Kirkgate Market?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I thank Councillor Anderson for this question because what I am able to tell you, contrary to what you may too often read, not necessarily the text of what is written but sometimes the headline that precedes it, Leeds City Markets remain extremely successful. Indeed, even as we move into this period of deep economic uncertainty, over the Christmas period the footfall in the market maintained a very healthy level indeed. To cut the technical jargon, footfall quite simply means people out there ready to shop, customers for the market traders.

I would just refer all Members of the Council to the public consultation document which is currently being consulted upon. It in particular refers to, of course, the bottom end of the market which should have been replaced years ago. It was a temporary building but, like so many temporary things that were constructed, they went on for ever and ever and we are now trying to sort them out.

The Council guarantees that any new development will preserve the market as the dominant feature. The market will remain in its present location and will be on the same scale as the current market. The Council will continue to operate the market after any redevelopment. That is a cast iron guarantee to the people of Leeds, to the market traders and I think it is doubly important because it guarantees a variety of shopping facility for the very diverse community in Leeds. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call on Councillor Lyons.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Could the Executive Board member for Environmental Services please tell me where this administration plans to site their proposed incinerator?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: In your mouth. *(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR SMITH: A strong feeling of déjà vu, Lord Mayor, but there we go. The Council has not selected the technology for its residual treatment solution and intends to commence a procurement this summer which is neutral on technology. Solutions will be evaluated against a range of criteria intended to ensure the Council gets the best solution in terms of environmental impact and value for money. The Council has completed a comprehensive and fully transparent site selection exercise which has been made available to Members, Councillor Lyons included.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: You read that without moving Randall's lips!

COUNCILLOR SMITH: This identified four potential sites in the lower Aire Valley which are considered suitable for a waste treatment facility. However, the Council has not identified a preferred option and is taking a neutral approach on sites providing a full opportunity for other suitable sites to come forward in addition to those identified in the site selection study.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Good answer, Randall.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor, thank you, Councillor Smith. One question I am going to ask you, is the fact that they are building a rail head on Red Road for goods altered your opinion of where you should site the incinerator because what is happening is that other major cities are now enquiring about this rail head that will be at Neville Hill, Red Road, Osmanthorpe Lane, etc, where major cities can send their rubbish to be burned...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lyons, you are not asking a question, you are making a statement. Would you complete the question, please?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Yes, I will ask. I am asking, does the fact that this can happen, that this thing can happen, building a rail head there where rubbish can be sent from major cities, I am asking his opinion. That is not making a speech, that is a question, Lord Mayor and I would say this, that...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lyons, you have asked your question.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I have not.

THE LORD MAYOR: You have asked your question. Councillor Lyons, you have asked your question. *(Interruption)*

COUNCILLOR LYONS: If it is embarrassing you that is your particular problem.

THE LORD MAYOR: It is not embarrassing me in the least.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I am asking also...

THE LORD MAYOR: No, you have asked the question.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I would say that as far as we are concerned then the people...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lyons.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I will sit down. I am not allowed to ask.

THE LORD MAYOR: You have asked the question.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Will you please record it, I was not being allowed to ask.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Smith, would you be kind enough to answer Councillor Lyons's question?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: What was the question, Lord Mayor? *(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Can I remind him, Lord Mayor? If he does not remember the question who is going to tell him?

THE LORD MAYOR: Bernard...

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It is interesting, is it not, that Councillor Lyons is taking a very long term interest in facilities in the south east because he was part of that infamous Plans Panel...

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I was not.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: ...that nobody seems to support that actually passed the incinerator that is currently in South Leeds. It is interesting also that he mentions other major cities. I think it was Councillor Wakefield at the last Council meeting who said of course in those days there was not an alternative. Actually I think there was an alternative, Keith, because the licence for the current incinerator in South Leeds allows the import of waste from Liverpool.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: What you agreed to – you.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: I think the alternative was to say to Liverpool, you deal with your waste.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Why don't you answer the question?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: I am going to answer the question in a moment.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Yet another one who cannot answer questions.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: It is a very simple question. I am just reminding of you a little bit of the history of South Leeds. The current one is processing rubbish for Liverpool. My friend and colleague over there, Councillor Lyons, tells me that other cities are making enquiries about the rail head. I would be very delighted if you would pass that on to me.

There is a very good principle involved here and it is called the proximity principle. It is one which you disregarded all those years ago. The proximity principle says that you deal with rubbish where it arises. We will deal with Leeds' rubbish where it arises, in Leeds. Do we want rubbish from anywhere else? No, we do not and that is a firm part of our policy, the proximity principle.

Does the proposal rail head make any difference to our site selection? In my opinion, Councillor Lyons, no it does not. We will deal with Leeds' rubbish in Leeds. We do not want anybody else's. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lyons, sit, please.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Procedure Rule.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Which one?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: 14.16.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: That does not say that, Michael. *(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I was quoted as saying that I was part of the voting that took place on the incinerator. I was not, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: You were present.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I did not vote.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: How do we know you did not?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lyons, on Rule 14.17 I am asking you to sit because I am ruling that questions are now finished and complete. Any that are left...

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Thanking you very much for your independence, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I thank you for your constant insults. You will find later, Councillor Lyons, that this Lord Mayor is being very generous. Council, that is the time wasted for the rest of the questions. They will, as is the usual procedure, be delivered as written answers by the Chief Executive.

ITEM 7 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

(a)

THE LORD MAYOR: I move us now on to page 7, item 7 and call upon Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I move in the terms of the notice, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I second, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I call for the vote. All those in favour? I think that is CARRIED.

(b)

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I then call upon Councillor Carter again, which is Item (b) under 7.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I move, my Lord Mayor, in the terms of the notice.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call upon the vote? Those in favour? That, then, is CARRIED, thank you.

ITEM 8 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY BOARD (Health and Adult Social Care)

THE LORD MAYOR: I turn quickly to page 8, agenda item 8. Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, in moving in the terms of the notice I want to pass a comment on this and that is that I take an extremely dim view in being presented with something to move in my name upon which I have no briefing. Furthermore, I want to assure members of this particular Scrutiny Panel that it in no way reflects upon that Scrutiny Board that this has to be withdrawn at this time. It is a procedural matter which I should have been made aware of previously. It is perfectly within their remit to revisit the issue and bring the appropriate resolution to the Council. Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move it.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I therefore seek consent of Council for that to be withdrawn? Is that agreed, Council? AGREED. Thank you, then that is withdrawn.

ITEM 9 – MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: We move on to agenda item 9, the Minutes. Councillor Andrew Carter again.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I move Item 9 in the terms of the notice.

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

- (a) Executive Board
- (i) Central & Corporate

THE LORD MAYOR: May I invite comments now on the Minutes? Executive Board, Central & Corporate. Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In moving the reference back I am hoping that the administration have time to reflect on a decision to remove £6.5m from one of the most deprived communities in this city, in East Leeds. Indeed, we have heard a lot today from Les Carter about our attitude towards Neighbourhood Renewal Funds and it is already in an amendment that we put. We do care about this and we do care about narrowing the gap. If anybody has seen the statistics that are associated with East Leeds, you would have to ask the question why have you pulled £6.5m from the Family Learning Centre which was to address poverty?

We are talking about in Seacroft one in three houses on benefits. In Gipton and Harehills it is up to 40% and if there were ever a case to say let us do something on behalf of this Council, Les – not the government, us – this is it, because those statistics are about people who are unemployed, disabled, single parents and low paid.

In fact, it comes at a very topical moment, because this week we have heard from the Tory Party about how they will treat the sick and disabled by cutting and punishing those people who are claiming benefits if they have not got a job. I have to say, Richard, I agree with your spokesperson, Danny McGuire, I think it is, who said, "The Tories have lost it. They have missed the point. If you really want to do

something about people who are disabled, sick and unemployed”, he said, “you have to give them a chance to train, get the skills and qualifications” and I am sure, Richard, you will say that as well. If you believe that, then you will put back in place the £6m so you can provide something for those adults; you can provide an opportunity.

I know that we have a nursery, childcare, with £1.5m that the Labour Government has given. I know that we also have a LEGL contract which I welcome that opportunity for partnership with the construction and EASEL, but actually what we want back for that part of Leeds is a vision that says we will have a learning campus – a learning campus that takes on people, children, from the age they are born right the way through to adults. Frankly, if you are really serious about putting coercion in place to put people off benefits, you have to provide the opportunities, you have to give the encouragement, you have to give them the advice and you have to build their confidence and only when you do that do you start making real inroads into this.

Richard, I am asking you, I know you to be a decent fellow – this is just not saying anything about the purpose or anything but it is asking you to think about putting back £6.5m so you can give that community a sign that this Council is serious about narrowing the gap and I move the reference back, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR G HYDE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In seconding the reference back I just thought I would like to give a bit of history to the Council as I was originally involved in the concept of the East Leeds Family Learning Centre and subsequently five other learning centres that this Council collectively supported.

Just a bit of history itself. East Leeds Learning Centre was part of or planning to be part of a learning campus and the £6.5 was to have built a part contribution to a new centre to be attached to the Academy High School and then Education Leeds at the time was also considering building a new primary school, so there would be actually a learning campus and there would actually be life-long learning for all people.

The interesting thing is, just a little bit of history about how this centre worked to reduce unemployment, to reduce deprivation and to raise standards in education. Over 2000 people, many long-term unemployed, got jobs and got training through East Leeds Family Learning Centre and through this Council collectively. 75% of a raise of standards in primary school education by using Sure Start and its programmes in East Leeds Family Learning Centre improved educational standards for our primary school children in Seacroft and in East Leeds - Harehills included.

Many of the residents had great concern in my patch and in East Leeds my colleagues and I and the Member of Parliament have received petitions, because there is a huge rumour running round the learning centre at the moment and within Thomas Danby College that this Council is going to close it. This is a serious matter. People are really concerned and I would like this Council to stand up and scotch that rumour because that is what is being said by the public – not by ward members but by the public and it is a strong rumour that is going round.

If you go in the learning centre at this moment in time your administration has taken out the job centre, it has taken out the canteen and I have to tell you there are over 1000 students still using that, all from East Leeds, and I have just had a petition from a lady from Harehills who is complaining to the manager of the Thomas Danby that there is no canteen. I have just received it. Many of them are elderly and they are on a life-long learning course. They are actually doing things that you and I would want to do, many attaining their A and O-levels at 60 years old, believe it or

not, and older than that. They are doing it. The main thing is when you go in that centre it is desolated. That is why the rumours are going round.

I would like you as an Executive to scotch that rumour because this centre has done so much, a have all the other centres and the principals in Leeds have done so much for the people who are deprived.

I have to tell you, I was talking to a guy who is still working at Tesco, Richard – and we had a little spat at Area Committee about it – this guy was three generations unemployed. He is still working at Tesco plc because of the Job Guarantee Programme. I was also talking to another lady who is now the manager at Tesco in Seacroft Green, also long-term unemployed for three generations. That is what the centre has done. That is what the principal has done. He has actually got people who are long-term unemployed back to work. It is so important that we do something about these issues and taking £6.5m out, what does it say to my community? What does it say to other communities in East Leeds and other communities in the city?

I urge you to accept our reference back and put that money back and work with other agencies to help. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, in 2004 when we left the administration, we left a legacy on East Leeds Family Learning Centre and on the site of £6.8m in the capital programme. We also left a legacy of early discussions with the LSC and the then Director of Training which looked likely to yield another £4m, so £10.8m – up to, let us say up to £10.8m available for investment in a learning campus.

The idea of a learning campus was fully embraced by the outgoing administration and picked up by the incoming administration in Minutes from the Executive Board when in fact Councillor Harker spoke and said that both Carr Manor and East Leeds Family Learning Centre would be the first sites in the city to encompass and embrace the learning village, learning campus, call it what you want.

We also left in place planning permission on the East Leeds Family Learning Centre and the Academy site for a primary school and a newly rebuilt, fashioned, tailored to the needs of the time of a new Family Learning Centre.

Sadly, half-heartedly you picked up this concept of a learning centre. I do not know, Richard Harker, whether you spoke in favour of it and got overruled or whether you did not believe in it but now, four years later, of what I call deliberate –not benign but deliberate – neglect, you see that the learning centre is dilapidated, falling into disrepute, falling into disrepute certainly as a building. It is wilful neglect.

Now we find the most cruel of cuts of all, this new brave philosophy that I think earlier on in the Council meeting perhaps we ought to have christened the Brettism, the new Brettism of taking money away from Labour wards and those people who actually have for years and years and years suffered in that sense...

COUNCILLOR J C CARTER: Yes, 24 years they suffered. You know they suffered for 24 years, Peter.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: ...from not being pulled up in front of Education, not being pulled up in terms of – I am making the point now that four years into this administration you have had ample opportunity, you have had the funding, you have had the planning permission in place to actually act and you have not acted.

It is absolutely clear that the best interests of adult learners, children, etc in that vicinity are not being served well.

I think if Councillor Bale was still the Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Board that would have been a matter he would actually have wanted to examine and call in, because I actually think Councillor Bale would have thought here is something that is important. Why is seven million quid being removed, and actually we have not even been told what it is going to be spent on? What is this money, this £7m you have pulled, what are you spending it on? Are you just putting it into the coffers to sit there and say, "Well, shove off, East Leeds, we are not giving you the money", or have you actually got some plans for the £7m? What are you doing with it?

Of course, Bill Hyde would never think of calling anything in that might be not to the liking of his Leader, so here we are, this is a situation of absolute neglect and regret. I can understand the Tories, who are on their last one or two seats in East Leeds and those are going this time, but the Lib Dems still pretend to have some seats in East Leeds – where some of them are going as well – some of them are going as well. I tell you, if you continue to treat the East Leeds people like that, then the rest of them are going to go too. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HOLLINGSWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. 1.30.32

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Brett to sum up.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am going to start with the remarks about Lib Dem Councillors in East Leeds and clearly Councillor Gruen needs to talk to Councillor Dobson who, on Monday of this week – and I quote – said, "Councillor Brett, very soon you will be Leader of the City Council." Clearly Councillor Dobson disagreed with Councillor Gruen. *(Laughter and applause)* Somebody on that side expects that we will do well in May.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: You will not be Leader; it will be Golton.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: The situation dates back to February 2004 and a scheme at that time, Peter is quite right, was drawn up by Labour and agreed provisionally for the learning facilities on the site and at that time I think we felt that the buildings were then of poor quality, so I do not think it is any good trying to say to us that we have let them rot. They were not very good then.

At that time a scheme in excess of £12m was envisaged with half of the money coming from the Learning and Skills Council. Since February 2004 there have been a number of changes which means that we need to review the requirements of this site. In July 2006 the loss of the New Deal funding to private and voluntary sectors had a considerable impact on the East Leeds Family Learning Centres operations and, more importantly, the extent to which its facilities would be used. In October 2006 the commencement of the 14-19 review across the city also had a major impact. During this review the LSC were not in a position to agree any capital spending decisions, nor would it have been sensible for them to do so until the landscape in Leeds had been settled with regard to college provision.

The effect of these changes meant that the learning facilities originally envisaged needed to be reviewed but also that the capital provision available was reduced to that provided by the City Council, around £6m - certainly not enough to do all of the original proposals. Another major change since the first scheme was envisaged was that progress had been made on the significant regeneration of the whole area through the EASEL project and it is clearly very sensible to make sure that the development of the site fits with the wider regeneration.

In comparing the capital programme update in November 2007, all the schemes were reviewed – not just this one. This was not just a scheme, it was at that stage just a budget without firm proposals as to how it would be spent. This is a site of major significance in East Leeds and we therefore need to get it right. That is why, very sensibly, the way forward is to carry out a proper review of what is required on the site and officers are currently looking at what facilities need to be re-provided by the school.

In an area where we have recently closed schools, building a new school is not sensible.

COUNCILLOR: It is not a school, family learning centre.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Talking to existing users about what will be required on this site is also something that we are currently doing, and establishing the costs of re-providing the nursery facility on site and to this end a feasibility study has been commissioned and is due to report in the next couple of months. When we have got some answers we can clearly move forward.

I want to say that the money that we are told we have removed, it is just not true. In conclusion, the funding is still there. No money has been taken out of the capital programme. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Apologise.

(Call for a recorded vote)

THE LORD MAYOR: Surprise, surprise! Is that seconded? Thank you, Councillor Parker seconding. Recorded vote. I call upon the Chief Executive.

(A recorded vote was taken)

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I, on behalf of the Council, welcome you back, Councillor Ewens? I understand you have had quite a serious operation. *(Applause)*

Present 92 Councillors; "Yes" 41; Abstain zero; "No" 49 plus 2, so that is 51. The amendment falls.

Can I then take us on to those wishing to comment on the Minutes and call Councillor Renshaw?

COUNCILLOR RENSHAW: My Lord Mayor, I am commenting on page 102 Minute 111. This Minute refers to the proposals put in place to ensure the Council achieves a balanced budget at year end. I am just sorry that in order to achieve this balanced budget Aire Valley Homes have seen fit to announce plans to close a sheltered housing complex in Tingley. Just before Christmas I was contacted by a constituent who was absolutely distraught after she had been told by Aire Valley Homes that East Leigh sheltered housing complex, where her mother has lived for the past 15 years, is to close.

I am not saying that East Leigh is perfect - I know full well that it is not - but I feel that the residents, their families and myself have all been misled by Aire Valley Homes over their intentions with this site.

Aire Valley Homes told me the complex was to be modernised and work was started on one room. I waited and waited for work to begin on the rest of the

complex but it never did. No work has been undertaken to bring the building into line with the new disability discrimination legislation and, to the best of my knowledge, no further lets have been given.

It appears that plans for modernisation were dropped and no-one was told. Instead, the place was forgotten about. Now, because Aire Valley Homes has stopped letting the rooms, it is like a ghost town. The funny thing is, though, that by leaving it and letting it become more and more empty, all they have succeeded in doing is pulling those remaining residents closer together and they are determined to fight to save their home with the support of the wider community.

My constituent was appalled at the way her mother and the other residents have been treated and feels that she has just been dumped on the streets and left to fend for herself. I am urging Aire Valley Homes to reconsider their position and spend the time and money they need to bring East Leigh up to scratch. We are struggling in Leeds for sheltered housing places for the elderly and I hope that by drawing Council's attention to the plight these people find themselves in, we can persuade Aire Valley Homes to think again. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: On the same Minute but a rather different subject matter. I return, despite Councillor Andrew Carter's strictures earlier on, to what I admit is a very difficult pay and grading issue and the fact that there have to be lengthy negotiations and funding available. I accept all of that.

What I do not think Councillor Carter accepts is how much disharmony and disaffection the length of time this has taken has had in schools up and down the city, the lack of proper and timely advice given to the city's schools.

If I just tell him that it is only last week as Chair of the Governors of a school, I was asked to go in by the Headteacher because he had received an urgent missive from the Council saying that by X date the governing body had to sign up to the present agreement, even though it might not be the agreement, but if it was not the agreement they would come back to the school and tell us what would be the agreement, but to sign up to the present agreement and if you have not done so by X date we would jeopardise the whole of the deal.

I do not know if that is a proper way of conducting business. No time for a governors' meeting; no time for a sub-committee meeting or finance and staffing. People are affected in the schools and yet when you must have known when these critical dates appear, you then send out fairly sloppy letters like that with no further advice or guidance or any officer attending. It is simply not acceptable and not good enough.

People on the lowest wages in this Council 18 months on still are not entirely certain whether they are winners or whether they are losers. The schools I have talked with and the heads and governors I have talked with have all said, "We will make matters right irrespective of the Council." They are giving up on the Council. We will job redesign for those people who are now down as losers because actually there is enough work in schools going on to be able to redesign the jobs and make certain nobody, none of the valued staff in schools are turning out to be losers.

That is just an example on the side of schools and how they are not being properly consulted and appreciated for what they have to do at arm's length from the Council.

Equally I agree with Councillor Carter that there are lots of people who we can call winners – what a terrible phrase that is – but people who do not lose out who, at the end of all of this are at least as well off or whatever.

I think and this Group thinks that no deal is worth doing if there are some people who are not just losers, frankly, but they lose so massively – massively – when all they have done year in, year out for years and years and years is give the best service they can and they have been rewarded year in and year out by the best customer satisfaction rating from people throughout all of Leeds. That is really not acceptable that those very people suffer the largest potential losses and then it appears the Council says, “Oh dear, the GMB have walked away and they will not agree. Oh dear, what do we do now?” Actually, you can do better than that. You have to do better than that because these are people who have mortgages, who have bills to pay and who are doing a fantastic job in the public sector. I know for those of you who are only worried about the private sector but in the public sector we are proud of the work they do and the jobs that they do and how they do them. You cannot possibly contemplate leaving them with that kind of disparity in their wages. It is not on, it is not fair and you should have nothing to do with it.

COUNCILLOR S HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, I would like to speak on Minute 111 on page 102, the mid-year update on the council’s revenue position. I specifically would like to talk about the impact on the Council’s revenue of the millions of pounds that the new pay and grading structure will cost this Council.

I would like to echo some of the comments already made by my colleague Councillor Gruen and I would like to make some further comments based on my experience both as a Councillor and as a trade unionist.

Firstly, I want to say that it is not right that this saga has dragged on for so long. It is not right that our employees have been left dangling, not knowing what the final outcome will be. Now we must not forget that the employees affected are not the chief officers or the directors with the large pay rises and bonuses, but they are the lowest paid member of our workforce. I doubt if we were dealing with the chief officers and directors we would have had to wait this long for the situation to be sorted out, but maybe I am too cynical. We need a solution to this and we must keep working to achieve one. We must continue supporting the union as they look to help ordinary working people.

With all the talks of bills for this and that, I think it is easy to forget what equal pay is all about. We must not forget, we must not lose sight of the fact that equal pay is about making sure that people are paid equally and properly for the work that they do and that everybody’s contribution is equal, recognised and rewarded. The scandal of unequal pay has gone on for far too long and I commend the government for bringing about this change. However, in supporting the government we must also urge them not to leave local government out on a limb and facing the real prospect of serious financial crisis as a result of equal pay. The government must support local government and help us to finance the additional revenue costs that we will face.

That said, it is up to you over there to solve this problem. You must find the money to pay people properly and not penalise the bin men who do a great job. Finally, you must not use this as an excuse for cuts front line services. These are tough choices you face and it is up to you to resolve them and resolve them quickly. Lord Mayor, thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. This is also Minute 111 page 102. This minute refers to a report that sets out the Council’s financial health for 2007/08. A decision was made recently that might have helped the

financial health of the city but would have damaged the physical health. I refer, of course, to the decision about the half marathon. It is good to see that this will now take place.

I can sympathise with Councillor Procter's view and perhaps others that you do not want a running programme for the year that is too cluttered; it is good to spread these events around and, as many runners who have written in their e-mails had made the same point, it is good that there should be a balanced running calendar – I think that is Councillor Procter's phrase. It is also good to know that they are going to be working closely with the Jane Tomlinson appeal.

However, there are one or two other questions that remain, in particular about the actual decision-making process. I understand that the decision was made by officers, it was not initially made by Councillor Procter. Up to a point that is perfectly understandable – he is a busy fellow and he has got lots of things to attend to.

On the other hand, this is an event we are talking about here, there were 3,800 adult runners, 1,100 fun runners and also 150 corporate groups of six each, which means around 6,000 people being involved altogether, so I am intrigued that a decision of this nature, which obviously affected the prestige of the city, should not demand Councillor Procter's attention, especially when I see in the delegated decision notification it says here about who has been consulted and against the Executive Member there is a tick. It may be that the tick is in the wrong place but nevertheless the date, 22 December, implied that Councillor Procter knew about it on that date.

I would like some clarification as to whether or not John was not told because he did not expect to be told because it did not need his attention, a matter of this kind, even though it involves so many people, or whether he was told about it but did not think that it was worth in any way contradicting the decision made by the officers. Some clarification would be helpful.

Members will be aware that many e-mails were sent to the Yorkshire Evening Post – around 100 of them, 33 pages full. There are some very eloquent criticisms of the decision that was made, some very unflattering comments about the people who made the decision, whoever they were.

It may be, of course, that now they have had a chance, these people, to read Councillor Procter's letter in the paper yesterday to the effect that the race was never going to be simply cancelled, there was always going to be an opportunity to consult people, they may change their minds. However, as the Editor of the Yorkshire Evening Post has pointed out, it is a bit late now to say that you are going to consult. This should have happened before – before the decision was made in the first place, not least when, as writer after writer in the e-mails point out, Leeds has got perhaps the best supported running clubs in the city. There are hundreds of people out there to consult and they were not.

It is also made clear in those e-mails it is not just a question of putting out a bit more information. Writer after writer complains that this is exactly what they expect of the City Council. They do not expect to be consulted; they expect decisions to be made without the people most concerned, namely the runners, knowing anything about it at all.

You have got quite a task here to try and combat that. The impression has been given that an understanding of middle distance running is simply absent. You cannot say that a 10k, six miles, can simply be the same as or imply that it can be done instead of a half marathon. 10k is six miles and that half marathon is obviously

13. The training is completely different, what you have to apply yourself to do it is completely different and the sense of achievement is completely different, so to think that you could do one instead of the other is obviously absurd.

The impression has also been given – rightly or wrongly – that because there was no consultation, that the city is not serious about involving people in sport in general, not serious about combating obesity, not serious about increasing participation. How can it be if it cancels an event of this nature?

More serious, the suspicion is, the impression is that the city is not able – not able – to run a half marathon. This is the accusation made. You may say it is undeserved but because of what has been said, that is how it is.

Not only do other cities do it but small towns, York (or smaller towns), Selby and even Liversedge. As somebody put it in one of their letters, we have become a minnow city status. It may be a title for an autobiography – How I Moved from Leeds to Liversedge to Get to My Own Level.

Finally and most serious of all, abuse has been made, the letter writers say, of Jane Tomlinson's name. If ever there was a competitor it was she. To do something in her name when she would most of all have liked to be involved in the half marathon, support the half marathon, is absurd.

Finally---

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor, you have already had one "Finally".

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: Have I? All right, thank you very much. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GRAHAME: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on page 102 Minute 111 as well.

This week Tuesday 15 January, the YEP printed an article expressing concerns at the loss of the Leeds Half Marathon. The article stated the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had called in the decision made by Council officers to cancel this year's challenge. On 16 January Councillor Procter announced – or U-turned, as the YEP reported – that the Leeds Half Marathon would be run in September of this year. Due to this announcement the call-in, which should have been next Wednesday, will now be cancelled.

I would like to add that I welcome Councillor Procter's U-turn – do not be smiling – as the main issue here is about how and why the decision was taken and who knew about it and who was consulted. We want to know how this decision came about in the first place. The Overview and Scrutiny Board will be discussing this at our February Board meeting. We will be inviting groups affected and members of the public. Most of all, we want to know that the half marathon's future is secure not just for this year but for the future. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR A McKENNA: Lord Mayor, before I make my comment, may I ask the Council to send their congratulations, like last night's Yorkshire Evening Post, to the Leeds' band the Kaiser Chiefs for being nominated for three Brit Awards – best band, best live act and best single with 'Ruby'. *(Applause)*

Lord Mayor, I am also commenting on page 102, Minute 111. Proposals to help the Authority achieve financial balance by year end are all well and good but I

want to ask at what cost? My Lord Mayor, I make no apologies for the fact that I am here again and plead for the case of Relate. I hope that everybody remembers the background but if not, I will remind you. You withdraw their funding and, as a result, they have had to withdraw reduced rates for the people on low incomes. This had had a terrible effect on people who really need Relate's help – people who can no longer afford to access the help that they may need to keep their families together.

I am not going to speak for long on this as I have raised this issue before, but I hope now you have heard from the deputation from Relate that perhaps you fully understand the consequence of your action and will look harder at funding alternatives.

Councillor Harris, you were the one that responded when I last brought up the issue to Council and then you said that you understood and that you had tried very hard to find other ways of funding the gap. I know that you understand and I am sure that everyone in this Chamber can appreciate the good work that Relate does.

I ask now that the administration looks again and looks a little bit harder. We are talking about £23,000, that is all. £23,000, which is what we really need to help the people in every corner of Leeds. This must fit into your Narrowing the Gap agenda. All I am asking you to do is allow everyone across the city to be able to access this organisation in a time of need. Surely everyone deserves the chance of a happy family. Surely every child, no matter what their parents' financial situation, deserves a chance for those parents to stay together.

They are not asking for a lot but the difference it would make would be huge and so I want to ask again for your help. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I stand to speak in relation to page 102 Minute 111 and to respond to the comments made about the half marathon.

It is interesting to hear the comments of Members opposite and I am sure when they read the evening paper today they were absolutely gutted – absolutely gutted – that we had taken the courageous decision to re-introduce the event. *(Applause)* I am quite sure my fellow administration Whip and I were scratching our heads wondering what weighty issues were going to be brought up on page 102 item 111. We spent some time deliberating why the varying people were speaking and concluded that most of those speaking were actually facing re-election and so wanted to get their name on the blocks.

I have to say, if those who contributed in relation to the half marathon think that will get them in the column of the EP I think they are woefully mistaken. I can also understand Councillor Grahame's dismay because she thought she would have a field day with it at OSC as well, and sadly that is not to be either, is it?

The fact of the matter is that we issued a press statement. Yes, I was consulted, I was aware of the issues. The issues are far greater and far deeper than those that have thus far been publicised. Our intention all along was to support – to support – the 10k Jane Tomlinson run and to assist in making that a critical run for the city of Leeds. It was my belief that one of the best ways to do that was to not have a half marathon for one year and thereby effectively achieve a transfer of runners from one event to the other. I take on board what Roger said about clearly they are two different events. Indeed, they are. That said, when the announcement was made that the half marathon was not going to take place, 1,000 people registered for the 10k race. I am delighted that the 10k is now on target to achieve its goal and, indeed, our goal, of having 10,000 people compete in it this year.

Those who know about such matters will know that by achieving that important milestone, it then makes the 10k an attractive proposition to some of the major media operators and it is my hope that the 10k will be covered live on one of the media channels.

That said, I was invited at Scrutiny, albeit in a slightly unorthodox way as the Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Board does sometimes operate in a rather unorthodox way without any agenda item, I nevertheless was invited whilst I was there to talk about another matter, Monday just gone. I was invited to reconsider the decision that had been made, invited by my friend – there we are, he is sure to have no further political career - Councillor Atha, to reconsider that decision.

I was happy to do so. This administration – indeed it was Councillor Harris while he was Leader repeatedly said, Councillor Carter also, that if we make a decision and it is a decision that subsequently turns out to be a wrong decision, we will be the first people to admit that and we will be the first people to put those matters right. That is what we have done. I am pleased for those people who will take part. I hope I will see Councillor Grahame's name registered as a runner to take part in the half marathon; also Councillor Harington and anyone else who intends to speak on this matter, I shall look out for your names also because what members should bear in mind is, despite the efforts of sport and many people there are still only 1,900 people from this city who take part in that event. I have to say that is not a well-supported event by the people from Leeds. I hope it will grow to be so and that is why we are seeking some assistance from the Tomlinson 10k Run for All People to assist us in that aim. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I was not going to speak but in the interests of accuracy and integrity I feel I must. On Monday we had a Scrutiny Board meeting as Councillor Procter said and when this matter was raised with us, he said this was an officer's decision, he had no part in it and – and this is recorded word for word on the verbatim – "I cannot change it." That is what he said. Now he was not telling the truth then or he is not telling the truth now, one or the other.

I would compliment him. If the 10k reaches the number you expect and I think can guarantee, that will be a great achievement for Leeds and we should say congratulations, well done. When you do not do something like that, when you do something that is not right, then we are entitled to say you did not tell us the truth, you said you could not change that decision – those were your words in front of the Committee and recorded – and yet you are able to do just that afterwards.

You remember, Councillor Procter, that I moved that we in fact ask you to change that decision and that was carried by a majority of one, the one being the casting vote of the Chair. All your minions on that side – whatever that side is – voted against. They were against having that...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: That is untrue again.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: They voted against because the poor souls do not know which way to go and that is because the coalition are falling out left, right and centre amongst themselves. I also think, Councillor Procter – and I do not wish to make it in any way personal---

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: But he will.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: ...but I do think it is wrong to force the name of Jane Tomlinson in connection with the decision not to run the half marathon. I think it

demeans the memory of someone for whom we have the greatest respect. I would like to say we welcome the changed decision, we welcome the fact that I would like to think that it was not just the Evening Post's remarkable campaign showing how many people are in favour of it, but it was possibly the vote at our Scrutiny Committee taken without a report which enabled us to move that you change your mind.

We are delighted that you have changed your mind but we do really say at this moment that if we are discussing these matters there has to be integrity and honesty. You will remember, Councillor Procter, that you said precisely those words, "I cannot change the decision" There are people across the way there who were present too, they know I am telling the truth, but will they be courageous enough to support and say, "Yes, I heard him say that too"? No, they will not.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, point of personal explanation.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter, can I just check first of all that your point of personal explanation you wish to make is that you have been misunderstood on something that you have said.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Indeed.

THE LORD MAYOR: Today?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Indeed.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, then speak.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, as so often happens with Councillor Atha's contribution he starts with one tack and then reverts to another at the end and throughout Councillor Atha's comments he has alleged that I have told an untruth – told an untruth at the Scrutiny Board and, indeed, Bernard is nodding in agreement. That is what he is alleging. That is a very serious allegation, Lord Mayor, to make in this Chamber, to be accused of being a liar.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter, you are supposed to make a personal explanation of something that you have been misunderstood about in this Chamber.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: That is what I am doing.

THE LORD MAYOR: What you are saying is the split between you and Councillor Atha is that he says you said something in Scrutiny board that you are now challenging and I am sorry, that is not for this Chamber. Do you think that something you have said in this Chamber today has been misunderstood?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Yes, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: In that case would you get to that explanation?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Indeed, that is just what I am doing, Lord Mayor. I would have concluded it if you had allowed me to finish.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: When you are in a hole, stop digging!

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Who shouted that out? You are joking!

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: The words that Bernard has used today clearly do misunderstand what I said a moment ago, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, he has inferred today that on another occasion I suggested that I had not been informed and that was not the case, Lord Mayor.

Lord Mayor, Councillor Atha is wrong in his assertions and he will be proved to be wrong as well, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Procter. As Andrea is not in the Chamber I am going to have to call you, Jim. Councillor McKenna.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Members of Council, I am still puzzled about that explanation that went on for nearly ten minutes and said nothing. I think it definitely comes into the Denis Healey rule of holes – when you are in one the sooner you stop digging the better, John. Maybe it is something for you to consider.

The other thing it seems to me that your lines are in total chaos now. Mark Harris has only resigned five minutes and they are falling out in lumps. Clearly, Richard, you are letting them pull your strings and you are rowing back from it. Get a grip on them, take some lessons from Mark.

Certainly, John, I can say as an experienced runner - a little on the tubby side but I still go out and I do four or five miles – can I inform you that your decision, three of the people who went to the Jane Tomlinson Run for Life was nothing to do with you. Myself, Andrea McKenna and Mark Dobson did indeed put our membership in the last week but it had nothing to do with your announcement, we are running for Relate.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: All right, 997.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: I hope you will give some serious consideration to that. John, I have been a Chair and a front bench spokesperson for 14 years and I have never, ever blamed my officers – never.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Nor have I.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: You have, in the paper you have. John, you know what, your officers...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Untrue.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: ...are going to lose respect for you in the same way that people around this city---

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: What did he say?

THE LORD MAYOR: Let us get this together. He is speaking on the Minutes.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: You have not answered a single question that you were asked.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: This is not question time.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: I am glad to know that Pauleen will be attempting to put those questions to you at Scrutiny and we may get some answers.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: She does not chair the Scrutiny Board. She does not even chair the relevant Scrutiny Board.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: It has been said already, John, you put the challenge down to others to run the 6k and many on this side are and there are quite a lot of experienced runners in this Council – good runners; Keith Wakefield, some very, very fine marathon times; myself; Mark Harris; David Blackburn; many, many more. Let us see what your credentials are as a runner, John. When we have this half marathon in September, John, when it is run – and we will make sure it is run – why don't you take part in it? Take part with running shoes and short. Not with a little gun, firing the starting pistol and waving to everybody and looking pretty but getting out there in the rain and talking to people and getting mucky, because I will do it with you, John. I will do it when you want. Let us see your name in there. I am sure Mark will put his boots on again and do it and then you will appreciate the difference between a fun run and a race, a half marathon 13 miles.

Let us see you do that, John, and I am looking forward that we will have these answers and maybe some of the arrogance and the gloss will wear off, although somehow or other I doubt it. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR M HARRIS: It is so lovely sat here on the back benches with a bird's eye view of what is going on.

Firstly I would like to thank the opposition Councillors for the way they speak about me in such glowing terms that it would appear now that when I was Leader of Council I could do no wrong. It is such a shame you could not bring yourself to say so at the time! *(Laughter and applause)*

However, before I get to the point I wanted to make with regard to Jim McKenna's comments on the half marathon and Keith Wakefield who somewhat previously gave the game away, although I accept I have got a long way to go yet but it is true that I am getting back into training again.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: The front bench!

COUNCILLOR M HARRIS: No, no, believe me, nothing will get me back on the front benches! So if Jim wants to do it in September, I will do it with him. I wouldn't quite like to say it is going to be racing but I will be happy to get round, and I will do it with you now.

The points I wanted to make were in relation to the comments made on the half marathon and what has happened and the comments that were made earlier about Relate.

First of all on the half marathon – and this applies to the tactic on both issues. You cannot have it both ways. You cannot on the one hand ask that we put our hands up and accept a mistake has been made and change our minds and, in the same breath, castigate us for doing that. It is intellectually dishonest in the extreme.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Hear, hear.

COUNCILLOR M HARRIS: You either castigate us, which you are entitled to do, or have the decency to say thank you for changing your mind and having the courage to change your minds and I would just remind you again – and I defy anybody on that side to bring to me evidence to the contrary – in my 21 years on that

side of the Chamber I never remember anybody on the Labour benches on this side then admitting a mistake.

COUNCILLOR: We did not make any.

COUNCILLOR M HARRIS: I rest my case on that matter.

With regard to Relate and what was said about £23,000, it is correct in the context of this Council's budget £23,000 is a paltry sum, quite honestly, and you can quote me on that if you want – no doubt you will, out of context. However – and this is again what is so intellectually dishonest of you – if something is an exceptional case, it is an exceptional case. Everything cannot be an exceptional case and that is what you have indulged in for four years. Every single issue has been an exceptional case – every school closure, every change of the use of building, every requirement not to sell something for a capital receipt, every use of capital receipt, every change in the revenue spend. You stand up there and you lead the public to believe that on that item, that item alone, it is an exceptional matter on which we should change our minds.

What is so dishonest is that you are misleading the public in that respect because when you add up your wish list of exceptional cases, it comes to a completely unaffordable bill. You know that because once upon a time you had to do this job too. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I thank the next speaker for her patience? I notice that she has sat and listened to all the other speakers through this debate, even though she is down on the Order Paper to have come much higher. Could I call Councillor Bentley next, please?

COUNCILLOR BENTLEY: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. I am speaking to Minute page 103 Minute 112. I would like to congratulate the Director of Resources and the Treasury Management Team on their successful management strategy. The team is probably one of the smallest teams in the Council with just four members of staff, yet it certainly punches above its weight in what it delivers.

What has it delivered? To date a net borrowing £16m lower than forecast in February 2007 and £9.4m savings have been made through rescheduling of loans.

The Scrutiny Board Resources was fortunate to have a presentation from this team as it wanted to look at the Treasury Management Team's strategy and see if the Council was investing and borrowing in an ethical manner. Unfortunately, because of government regulations, there is no ethical funding institutions on the government's approved list of lenders and borrowers and this list, the government's list, has to be adhered to.

The investment priorities for the Council are security of capital, liquidity of investments whilst trying to achieve optimum returns, so this strategy is bound by many constraints – not only government regulations but also Council ones. Council has to approve the level and type of borrowing before each financial year and in any year revisions that are made at the twice yearly reports to this body. The projected results are that by the end of this financial year the net borrowing will be £1,381m, and net borrowing will be £16 lower than forecast in February 2007. This is due to slippage in schemes in 2006 and 2007 and the need for additional borrowing to fund equal pay claims.

This is against a backdrop of a very turbulent economic time, with the sharp rise in energy prices, the rise in the inflation rate, increases in interest rates, the

knock-on effect of the American sub-prime crisis which continues to affect the UK money markets, and shortfalls in the equity markets.

I am pleased to say that things should be better next year to the prediction of the falling interest rates in the first half of 2008. It is the constant vigilance of this team in watching the interest rate movements that enable them to reschedule loans at the right time to benefit the Council. I would like to say thank you and congratulations to the Director of Resources and the Treasury Management Team for this work, which has both reduced our borrowing and saved us £9.4m to date this year. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I rise to sum up on the minutes of the half marathon and the corporate central.

The whole point about the half marathon debate, I just want to stress that everything that has happened and been done in recent weeks and months has been done with Mike Tomlinson's support and consent. It is interesting, Lord Mayor, that the official Leisure minutes are fairly well down the agenda, which is probably why most of the speakers have been talking about something which is on next year's financial budget, not this year's, which is actually what the minute they were supposed to be talking to was about.

I would like to thank Councillor Bentley for her welcome remarks and support for our staff in doing the excellent job they have done. I would like to say to Councillor Hamilton, who was talking about negotiations dragging on so long, we have some very detailed negotiations which have been going on on equal pay for 18 months with the unions, some very positive talks and the GMB for reasons that they understand, recommended a vote against the deal that was offered. We are still committed to implementing a new pay and grading structure.

If Labour had questions about it taking so long, I would ask why it is that when this Council was advised in 1997 that this Council had to negotiate a new agreement, I would just ask them, what happened in the first seven years? What progress was made in these negotiations? Very little.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: None. Head in the sand. None at all.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I would like to say to Councillor Renshaw that if you have concerns about Aire Valley Homes, I hope you have already addressed them to the chair of the ALMO and I am sure you would get a detailed response from Councillor Gruen about your concerns.

I welcome in a sense your remarks because it reinforces what this administration has decided to do, which is to build new Council houses. In particular it is our intention – and I am very happy to repeat this – to build as soon as we can some units for elderly people which is precisely that area that she was concerned about.

I would like to, finally, come to Ruby, Ruby, Ruby, the Kaiser Chiefs, and agree with the remarks on that and to say to Councillor Andrea McKenna, as she already knows, I have promised that I will look to see whether we can find the £23,000 for Relate because I do feel that this is something that should be looked at again. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Council, could I assure you that a letter will go from my office to all those nominated, win, lose or draw, to congratulate them on the esteem they are bringing to our city.

(ii) Development and Regeneration

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I then move us on now to the next part of our agenda and call upon Councillor Atha.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I wish to speak on page 103, 115 and note a comment that Councillor Harris said, quite rightly. You do not need to defer going because it is a complimentary thing. He said two things. We should be prepared to criticise but we should also be prepared to pay tribute where it is appropriate and I think that is right.

This is a case where we can simply say the decision was made which was the correct one. The point I would make, however, following that, is to point out just how different the treatment of that school is with the Royal Park School. Quite different indeed and anyone who has been aware of the long saga of Royal Park will know how unfairly that area has been treated and why it is quite interesting to note – and I warned Councillor Carter of this because Councillor Carter is in the coalition with people of a totally different political party or one would assume – at least that is what they were pretending previously – and Councillor Carter is the subject of a lot of obloquy about these issues from his good friend Mr Mulholland, MP. He in fact said, “...Councillor Carter to reconsider his position and asked him to hand over to someone in touch with local communities and someone who understands that. Leading Council is about serving and listening to people in the area.”

He also gets terribly agitated, does Mr Mulholland, at the fact that you, in fact, refused to attend a meeting which you thought he was going to take over to do a bit of grandstanding. I am sure no-one needs to learn more about grandstanding than by watching Greg Mulholland. I felt that Councillor Carter ought to be aware of this animus which exists which may well be hidden amongst his colleagues over there because he is a Liberal MP and the Liberal Councillors of North-West Leeds are a very supine group and they go along with whatever their master's voice tells them to. If you wish to see what their master's voice is, watch the leading Councillor over there who has just spoken. When he speaks, he addresses his Leader, Councillor Carter. You will see the body language, he is over here all the time. He does not speak to his own party and you lot, you are completely ignoring him when he speaks. Watch him next time he gets up. Councillor Brett, I am talking about.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Did he start off with “Once upon a time...”?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: No nursery terms for you, which would possibly suit you best.

What is going on? When you first told – this is Councillor Morton, very concerned indeed about some of the decisions relating to the Leeds Girls' High School and Mulholland goes on to say this is blatant political grandstanding. David Morton added to this, “This decision is undemocratic, dictatorial and disastrous. Councillor Carter is behaving like a playground bully.” Is it any wonder...

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Can I ask what Minute the Member is speaking on, my Lord Mayor?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Yes I am...

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Lord Mayor, can he address the Minute that he is supposed to speaking on?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I will answer the Lord Mayor. I am referring to Minute 115 page 103.

THE LORD MAYOR: That is the former Headingley Primary School?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Yes and I am making a contrast with the splendid way in which that man has been treated and the very poor way in which Royal Park has been ignored. I am pointing out the political...

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Which school are you talking about, Bernard?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: ...fissures which exist. Councillor Morton, do you deny you said this decision is undemocratic and totally bizarre? He is going to speak next, it gives you the chance to (*interruption*). The mere fact you are barracking now and trying to upset the balance of my flow is because you do not want to hear what is being said.

What I would say is there is a disparity of treatment by the Lib Dems in this area and it is all right them going along with the Conservative leadership, and quite frankly if they follow them they will do better than following their own. I would say to them, look out or what you are doing because quite frankly what you are doing in the poorer areas of Leeds is not right and the people will show that in the next elections. People like you who keep quiet, who will say, did in fact I say an untruth when Councillor Procter – and you were there – was I wrong when I said “I cannot alter it” – you were there at that meeting. You know you can say yes, it was true or untrue and I can go and ask for the tape to be played just to make sure that I have not actually misread or misheard what was said.

It is time that you Lib Dems lived up to the history of the Liberal Party which was the prior of the Lib Dems, because in fact the Liberal Party has some integrity and some soul.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: You did not say that to Michael Meadowcroft, Bernard. You never said that to him.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much, Councillor Atha. I do respect in fact that when you addressed me you looked towards me, just like you accused everybody else of doing. Thank you very much.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: That is Standing Orders. You have got to address the Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I now call Councillor Martin Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I hope you will give me the same latitude as Bernard just got because I think I may just want to refer to a number of schools across the city that I think is worth referring to.

Relating to this particular Minute, I think what I would like to do is just to welcome the decision of the Executive board to move forward with the disposal of Headingley Primary School to the Headingley Development Trust. I think it is a really excellent decision. I think the reason that we have come to this decision after a long period of time and after lots of lobbying, I have to say, from local ward members – so yes, Bernard, we do lobby very, very hard for our wards – that in the end the reason we got to this point in time is that an extremely talented and persistent group of people at Headingley Development Trust have really pushed forward with this exciting scheme for an arts centre and an enterprise centre and also excellent

community facilities in the former Headingley Primary School, so well done to the Executive Board for giving us the extensions in time to be able to pull the scheme together.

It is worth contrasting what has happened at Headingley Primary School with, for example, Royal Park, because anyone would think that the two situations are the same. They are not at all the same and I think it is important to say the following, that the scheme we now have in place for Headingley Primary School does not come at no cost. It is not a zero cost situation. What we have actually got is a situation where the Headingley Development Trust themselves have raised substantial amounts of money by subscription, so local residents have actually put money in in a shareholding basis to part fund the costs of bringing the scheme alive, so money has been raised locally to achieve that.

They have also applied for several grants and we are hoping that one will come through later on this year to help the scheme come off the ground. I suppose most importantly of all what we are actually now seeing if everything goes to plan, is that we will actually dispose of the Headingley Community Centre, so the money raised from that will enable us to do something with the Headingley Primary, so we are actually losing one building to gain hopefully a better facility in another place.

I have never heard any proposals from the Labour Party to do something similar with Royal Park School because actually that is the way that we will be able to get this off the ground. It is not just a case of, "There is the building get on with it", we have actually had to find the money.

COUNCILLOR: Begging bowl politics.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: It is begging bowl politics, you are absolutely right.

I think it is worth just referring to the situation with Royal Park School since Bernard mentioned it and his suggestion that there has been a disparity in the way that it has been looked at. In terms of Headingley Primary School, we hear all the time, particularly from Councillor Hussain that there was no consultation relating to Royal Park Primary and this was really terrible. Actually there was no consultation *per se* in relation to Headingley Primary School either. There were no surveys sent out, there were no public meetings. What actually happened is that the grass roots, an organisation appeared that really wanted to do something. They convinced us over a period of time that what they wanted to do was actually practical and feasible.

Unfortunately that has never really happened in the case of Royal Park School. There have been lots of ideas but nothing has ever come to fruition and so what we then did, once the decision was taken in terms of how we would go forward with Royal Park, that we would consult by sending out surveys, that we would speak to local community groups etc.

No-one is saying that the way it was dealt with is perhaps ideal. I do not think there ever is an ideal way of dealing with public consultation in relation to buildings because there is always a clamour to retain buildings no matter what, so people will always be a little bit unhappy with the outcome, but I think in terms of formal consultation we have actually done more with Royal Park than with Headingley Primary but the two situations are entirely different.

I would like to finish off by just reminding Members of a couple of points of history because let us remember that Royal Park Primary School was closed by the Labour Council when they were in charge. Let us be absolutely clear about that, they

closed the school. Let us also be clear that the first proposal that came when Labour were in power in terms of what should happen to that school building was substantially to use it for Council offices – not for a community building, but Council offices. That in the end did not come to pass.

I would say compared with the scheme that they had on the books, Council offices, a bit of community space and a library, compared with what we now have proposed, which is flats for the elderly, community space and a library, I think you could argue that what we are proposing is significantly superior to what they were proposing when they were in power in 2003.

Lord Mayor, the two schemes are different but each in their own way, I think, both schemes will come to be seen as excellent projects which will benefit both wards. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR MORTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It is the same minute, page 103 115. The Headingley Primary School scheme is absolutely brilliant. We also recognise that lots of people, and particularly me, do not say very positive things in the Council Chamber. This is without a doubt the best thing that has happened to Headingley for 20 years or so.

I just wanted to think about why that is because I think it is for rather different reasons than we usually associate with success. We can, even on this side of the Chamber, adopt a sort of crypto socialist approach to regeneration where we hand out state cash that we have taxed from somebody in the first place, we give it to either a community or groups, if that is not ongoing then we are accused of putting things (*inaudible*) to generate dependency

What impresses me about this scheme is that it is not, “Here is a dollop of capital, go away”. It is that we have transferred ownership of an enormous asset to a locally run co-operative made up almost entirely of local residents.

Using your cliché about teaching somebody to fish and you feed them for life but when you teach them to teach you feed them for a day, what interests me is not that you have got a nice new building at Headingley, which is nice enough. What is brilliant is what it will allow them to do in the future.

I want to speculate in two ways. Firstly, this site comes with an enormous playground which links almost immediately to the commercial heart of Headingley. Headingley is mentioned in the Domesday Book, it has no public square or any other than the war memorial, which is tiny. I think the capacity for this group over the next ten, 20 or 30 years, as others have done on the south bank of the Thames in London, you can see what community land like this can do in terms of public space. I think what might happen with this is enormous, we will be talking about this in decades.

Secondly now that they have an enormous asset borrowing requirement, it may allow this trust to intervene in the housing market - and there have been debates on many occasions for a more rebalanced community in Leeds 6 - the question is now if we have empty properties coming up, who on earth is going to buy some of these up. The answer might be this trust, so this is a housing solution, I am confident, in the long term, not just the building.

It is, however, not a done deal. I think the way that some of the press coverage is done and the debate has been done assumes that it is automatically going to happen. Unfortunately, as often in life, it is a bit more complicated and I would like before I finish to bring up one or two issues and how we might get round it.

There is what is known as a drop dead date put into this deal. The trust has to raise still a significant sum of money by June 30th. The Minutes are quite clear, if that is not achieved the whole scheme falls and we will go back to Plan B, which is to flog the building and keep the community centre.

The good news is that in terms of apply for government asset transfer funding, the trust has got past the first stage and that is brilliant. My feeling is that a lot of eggs have been put in one basket. We have not got lots of money, we have debated on many occasions why Headingley does not and should not get regeneration funding, as I say. We have rattled the tin quite a bit locally and got a bit in but I do not think we are going to raise the very significant six figure sums that we need.

What happens if we do get asset transfer funding? Thinking creatively and (*inaudible*) putting down one marker and this is very much Plan C, or even Plan B. Headingley - and it is good news - has finally got Town and District Centre Regeneration Funding. The history of that project is rather a troubled one but we will not bother with that now because we have got £500,000. There are (*inaudible*) to that scheme. Half of it is to provide a new public space around the war memorial and I do not think anybody would want to lose that. The other half is what, frankly, you can say is basic maintenance around street furniture and the Rose Garden next to the Ark pub. I can see it would be less desirable.

The debate that we will have if we do not get asset transfer funding is whether or not we really want to go ahead with replacing street benches and doing flower beds if we are selling Headingley Primary and I think on the parallel of the Otley Civic Centre, we ought to be thinking of using Town and District Centre Funding in a more imaginative way if we have to and I hope people have open minds about that nearer the time if we have to cross that bridge. Thank you. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Lord Mayor, I had not expected to speak on Headingley Primary School but Councillor Atha's intervention made it necessary. As usual, Councillor Atha tries to suggest that the Lib Dems – or the Liberals, as he likes to call us – are irrevocably split and so on, but we tend to put up with that and ignore him because he is irrelevant on that.

On the primary school, the City Development Scrutiny Board has been keeping an eye on what has been going on and I know and other members of Council ought to be aware that the Executive Board, Development Department and the Inner North-West Area Management, are to be congratulated on this support and their work in helping the Development Trust both come into being and get hold of the asset in this way.

Members of the Council will also know that there is other good work going on around the Council, particularly in Neighbourhoods and Environment where Councillor Carter is working very closely with the movers and shakers to do with the Pakistani Centre and the Bangladeshi Centre in Harehills to help their communities in a similar fashion.

Councillor Atha I believe mentioned fairly early on in his schpiel something about the disgraceful way the Royal Park building was dealt with. Of course, as Councillor Hamilton has pointed out, it was the Labour administration that closed Royal Park and came up with a scheme for offices. Does that not ring a bell? It sounds a bit like the Mansion in Roundhay, doesn't it? Is there a sort of theme developing here? Labour want offices in closed buildings. Great. This

administration wants a better use and the people of Headingley and Hyde Park and Harehills, of course, are going to get better uses.

I know that Scrutiny City Development kept an eye on these things before I became Chair last year but there is a working group at the moment that will report to the Scrutiny Board in due course about the consultation that is taking place in both the area around the Royal Park School and Miles Hill School. Everybody is welcome to read the documents available to us and I will invite Councillor Atha to come to our meeting and hear what is said because he might educate himself about the consultation that is taking place. It is a shame that Councillor Hussain, who alleged quite untruthfully that there had been no consultation about Royal Park's future, with his – *his* - local community, has been proved completely wrong because Area Management and Environment have now come back with the evidence that refutes those claims. Scrutiny will look at the consultation, is looking at the consultation around those two former school buildings and we will report in due course. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. On the same Minute, I had not intended to say anything but something that Councillor Martin Hamilton said just made me prick up my ears. It was that description of Royal Park as our proposals being for Council offices. My memory is never the best but I will happily go back over the papers, like with Councillor Ralph Pryke, and we will look at what were the proposals first put forward under our administration and I think that you will find that to describe those as Council offices including as it did a library, keeping the hall, youth provision and a whole lot of other things I just cannot remember at the moment, to describe those as Council offices is somewhat misleading. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: He misheard what I said.

THE LORD MAYOR: I do not think it is fair – he is not challenging the sense of what you said.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: He said I said offices. I did not say that.

THE LORD MAYOR: I do not think a personal explanation is necessary, unless you can provide the proof that he says he has not got at this moment.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: I can say what I said.

THE LORD MAYOR: Where have you been misunderstood?

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Because he said it was a building for offices and that was not what I said. I said offices, community space and a library. That is what I said.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: That is what he said, yes.

THE LORD MAYOR: Remember, Council, these are verbatim minutes. Can we move on please? Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. On the same minute, since we have a free for all, I have been lucky enough in my own time on the Council to be associated with quite a lot of these schemes and I have to say that in terms of the Headingley Primary solution, I concur with the comments which have been made by Councillor Hamilton. It completely suits the community where this building lies.

I have to say that this administration's approach to the future use of our empty school buildings has been very, very progressive in terms of the fact that each solution is different, is flexible and should reflect the needs of the community in question.

I have to say it contrasts markedly with the previous situation with the previous administration because I can think of several schools where the ideas were either unimaginative or they did not have any ideas at all. As has been pointed out, the Royal Park School site – unimaginative. One site I am particularly pleased about – because it was, of course, my childhood home and I have seen a building which was left to rot and was effectively mothballed by the previous administration, turned into a shining example and a place where a poor community will now have an opportunity to learn skills and enterprise and that is the Shine proposal that is there for Harehills School, so thank you very much as an ex-resident of Harehills.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again I thank the next speaker for his patience.
Councillor Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking to Minute 132 on page 112, deputation to Council concerning Britannia Quarry.

Colleagues may have – Steve Smith is already laughing – a bit of a déjà vu feeling about this particular matter because this is a deputation that does the rounds. I will try and give a little bit of background and a little bit more information about it.

The character – and I suspect you can call him a character (we call him something slightly different in Morley but you can call him a character) – is an ex-Town Councillor who was booted off the Town Council this year primarily because of his inability to do anything about anything other than moan and whinge. Since that particular point he has decided that his best way forward is to associate himself with the disintegrating extremist elements that operate in Morley that we are hard on and look forward to removing, hopefully, in 2010.

It is an interesting approach that has been adopted with this particular one because in Morley we basically have two quarries. One of them is run by Marshalls on Quarry Lane in Woodkirk; the other one is run on Rein Road. The quarry run by Marshalls on Quarry Lane is one that we worked with the community for a long time to try and resolve and to try and make sure that we deal with the concerns that they have actually raised. Working with the firm, working with the local community we have been able to achieve with a lot of support from Council officers a set of conditions that have improved the lives of that particular community to such an extent that they accept themselves that things have moved in a very positive way.

When we get to Rein Road quarry it is a slightly different process but it is a similar process that we are going through. At this particular stage we are working hard again with Council officers to make sure that we have a new set of conditions that are due to come on stream this year.

It is a question of working closely with residents and I pay particular tribute to Councillor Judith Elliott who has worked exceptionally hard and lives and breathes Rein Road quarry in terms of its problems and in terms of trying to resolve it.

We are grateful for the help and support that we have had. We do expect that when we do get these new conditions in place we will be in a situation where the problems that the local residents have will ultimately be solved permanently.

We have done a lot of work in this particular area. We have made sure that we have cracked down on problems like mud on the road, but we are in a situation where we do believe that we are coming to a conclusion on this.

We have had a lot of help and support from other Councillors and, indeed, we will be discussing very soon the opportunity to take the quarry traffic off Rein Road and through Howley Park. That will be a goal that, if we achieve it, working with Council officers, it will be something that will relieve a lot of problems and the difficulties that the local community actually has.

What we are really trying to conclude with this particular matter is that at the point where we do resolve this problem, our good friend will be back about some other problem, there is no doubt – whether that is ragwort or some other such issue – so you will look forward to welcoming him in your usual way in the future. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR JAROSZ: My Lord Mayor, I was waiting for my apology but it did not seem to happen! Never mind. I want to speak on page 114 Minute 140. It is about the Leeds Bradford corridor and the proposals for joint working and partnership between Leeds and Bradford.

A cast of thousands seem to be involved as stakeholders in his project and there is nothing in the concept with which to argue. It would be like arguing against motherhood and apple pie - both concepts that I embraced enthusiastically throughout my life, so I cannot really comment on that.

Why was this report slipped in via the Leeds Initiative Sub Group? As I have just intimated, the report is largely non-controversial, who why not more open? Where is the democratic involvement in these proposals? The Executive Board reports on 19 December states, and I quote, that: "The project will be overseen by senior elected members of both Authorities," who both happen to be Tories.

In Leeds the wards affected – and you know which are the wards affected – Calverley and Farsley - yes, Tory. Farnley and Wortley – Greens. Pudsey – Labour. Armley – Labour. Bramley – Labour. The Bradford wards as well have only one ward that has any Tory representatives and there are only two there, so we have had minimal input into this £100,000 process.

The Executive summary highlights that this project has a significant potential for stronger and more structured collaboration between Leeds and Bradford. How can there be a stronger, structured collaboration with only one party involvement? We must have robust governance from Leeds and Bradford Tories, not just senior members, if this project is to work in any way. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I am not sure which way to face when I start commenting because, unlike Councillor Atha, I am not an expert at facing seven different ways at once. Nevertheless, my Lord Mayor, you are a very well read gentleman and I am sure you will remember a book entitled "She" written by H Rider Haggard. It was about, essentially, an empress of huge intellectual powers and great beauty and this empress, Queen Whatever, lived for very many years and the secret of this longevity was to keep walking in and out of the Eternal Flame. This empress, this master of speech and intellect, went into the flame once too often, came out extremely confused, unable to link two coherent arguments together, very short and very wizened. In truth, very much like Councillor Atha! *(Laughter)*

So, my Lord Mayor, let us get on to the major issues. Let me deal first of all with Rein Road quarry. Judith is doing a great job for the residents there, notwithstanding the gentleman whose name you have not mentioned and I will not mention but we have all seen him in here. All I can say to you is that the officers will work closely with you. If we can establish the re-routing of traffic through Howley Park I think it will be a massive benefit to the local residents in the area.

The Leeds-Bradford corridor. Leeds-Bradford corridor is a physical feature. It has been there for all my life. I have never heard Councillor Jarosz mention it before until today. She has been a Councillor for far too long in some people's views. It is a bit like the West Leeds Gateway – it was the area that I debated with Councillor Lewis in here a few years ago when we were in opposition and he pooh-poohed my arguments that the West Leeds Gateway areas of Armley, Bramley were showing the same signs of deprivation as some of the other super output areas and that we could not just be fire-fighters, you could not turn your back on a deteriorating area because you were so busily trying to put out fires elsewhere. You have to have a more comprehensive approach.

It has been this administration who have piloted the West Leeds Gateway proposals which will come to Executive Board in the next cycle, and it is this administration that has piloted the work with Bradford on the West Leeds corridor and, yes, there will be members of all parties from this Authority involved but, Councillor Jarosz, do not come that nonsense. You had years to do anything in Pudsey and in West Leeds and you know you did not, your colleagues know you did not, but we welcome your input now, we are very forgiving.

My Lord Mayor, let us get on to Headingley and Royal Park. The Headingley Primary School proposals have my one hundred per cent support. I have a particular view about Headingley as a geographic area and, although I on occasions do not agree with Councillor Morton, I think his view and my view in this respect entirely coincide.

Headingley is an area because of the demographics that does not qualify for all sorts of other support that other areas get. It has shown signs of social stress, can I say, over many years. It is going through a time now of rapid change - change that I think is going to accelerate and change that, if we do not do our bit to try and input into and manage properly, will result in us not getting the improvements in Headingley all of us want to see.

There are not many of us who were born in Leeds who have not had relatives, very close relatives, live at Headingley – indeed, some of us still have – and so more of us than maybe immediately identifiable know quite a lot about that area and, indeed, get all sorts of information back from various residents' groups' meetings which make extremely interesting reading.

I think Headingley Primary School could be the catalyst of some major beneficial changes and officers do not necessarily one hundred per cent agree with elected members but then that is not a problem. We have healthy debates about it but I think there is a real opportunity with Headingley Primary School to do something unique. My message to the Trust is, they do need to focus. It is a big undertaking, a lot of hurdles to cross and the politicians I hope on all sides have indicated their readiness to support them.

They have also indicated their readiness to be very flexible in terms of other Council assets being disposed of in the area to finance our share of what needs to be done. That is the partnership that we should be looking for, that we flexibly look at what we can achieve in a community and at the same time not jeopardising a capital

programme in which everybody in this Chamber, everybody in Leeds, will have some benefit from. That is why we have been so keen to work with the Headingley Trust on this particular project and I hope that continues.

Royal Park. It is a completely different situation and I have to remind Councillor Lewis, it was your administration who closed it down. I do not think you had really much of an idea what you were going to do with it. There was a lot of pressure in the community then, as there is now.

I have to say that there were some proposals which included a Sure Start Centre, which a lot of us would have liked to have actually seen in there. Councillor Kabeer Hussain was one of the Councillors – in fact the Councillor in my view – who was so against those proposals that it actually lost us the Sure Start Centre and that was a great pity, but the proposals that are now on the table provide more community space than was in the original proposals drawn up by you; it has a library more conveniently situated for the users than the current Cardigan Road site; it includes housing for the elderly which will help to create a more balanced community and a more mixed community and surely that has to be a good thing and the building is retained and its architecture enhanced.

On the subject of consultation, we have undertaken to consult with 4,000 households in the area and the Royal Park Community Consortium and that is, I think, now under way. It will be the result of that consultation that will inform what is finally decided but, at the end of the day, I go back to the point about working in partnership.

I will give you an example, actually, and I hope I do not embarrass Councillors Driver and Blake here, but we have a capital receipt that we need to realise in South Leeds. They have an ambition for a youth service. They have persuaded officers of the importance of that project and, indeed, they have persuaded me of the importance of that project and the administration, so together we are going to generate a capital to support the capital programme because they have been realistic about the need to dispose of the land around it, but the community there is going to get a new asset which will contribute hugely to the social fabric of the area.

These are not party political issues. Unfortunately too few of you over there seem to realise that a lot of these issues we can actually work together and achieve something and you just do not do it. I will be commenting later on the reference back that Councillor Wakefield and Councillor Gruen moved and the nonsense of that, but really there is an opportunity here to balance the capital programme which any administration is going to have to do if it wants to achieve the sort of investment that we have got outlined and, at the same time, get some real benefits in all our communities. The offer is there. It is up to you. You can throw it back in our faces or you can take it. *(Applause)*

(iii) Environmental Services

COUNCILLOR MONAGHAN: Lord Mayor, it is so far through the Minutes that I am able to speak. I speak to Minute 145 on page 116 regarding the Leeds Climate Change strategy. Last week I was at a Local Government Association Conference down in London and the first half an hour of that conference was spent telling us what the effects of climate change might be. I do not think I would be wrong in saying that pretty much every member of the delegation, the participants there, were looking at each other saying, "Why are they telling us this?" because I think it is so ingrained now amongst all of us that we know what the dangers of climate change are and we need to act.

By comparison I was at a conference around twelve years ago in the Netherlands and I heard one of the foremost world experts on climate change speaking then about what we must do to tackle climate change and he suggested, he was saying that nuclear power is the way we must be going. Without going into the wrongs and rights of that, it is twelve years since then that the government have actually announced that and it is going to be a number of years before that is actually implemented. It is just too long. We need to be acting much quicker about this.

I think I congratulate Councillor Smith, his officers, in the fact that we have actually implemented a Leeds City Climate Change Strategy so quickly, especially after we had such a short turn around after signing the Nottingham Declaration and especially when there are over 100 Councils still in this country who have not signed the Nottingham Declaration, which I think is appalling. I do not know what administrations they are – I think it is a cross-party-political issue and I hope to see everyone in this Chamber doing their bit towards the climate change agenda in this Council and in this city and thinking not just of the government business, the Council itself will address this, what can we do, what can we as individuals do, what can we in our ward do, what can we in our own committees do to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions.

I hope everyone will do that and again to congratulate officers and my colleague Councillor Smith for getting this strategy drawn up so quickly. Whilst I am up here, I would also like to congratulate Shire Oak Primary School in Headingley which has just won the national award, along with two other schools in the city which I am afraid I cannot remember the names of. I would like the Council Chamber to join me in congratulating Shire Oak Primary School and the others schools which won this national award and some extra funding for the work they have been doing on sustainability in their schools. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Smith to sum up.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Lord Mayor, I thank my colleague Councillor Monaghan for his comments. The environment is taking an increasingly high profile. It has come out of its silo and its cross-cutting affects everything that the Council does and we have to recognise that, moving forward. I think it is interesting also that Councillor Monaghan referred to the primary schools who have just won an award.

My thoughts are drawn back to earlier today when we had the deputations to Council and we had the Cardinal Heenan Catholic High School, we had the Mayor for the Day telling us about what he would do were he made Mayor for the Day and he spoke about the environment, the environment and the environment. It is pleasing to see that the next generation is fully on board with that.

On a more light hearted note, I note that we are currently coming to the budget round. It will be a tight budget and, if you recall, the young man said he would like to see a tripling of the penalties for littering so if that is in the budget, remember where you heard it first!

Yes, we are working hard on the climate change strategy. It needs to be adopted not just by the Council but across the city. The Council has a small but significant impact on environmental matters but we do need our partners in the business sector, the educational sector and also in the residential sector – in fact in all aspects of our community – to get involved with what is happening with climate change. It is likely to have a significant impact on all our lives. I drove across the river bridge this morning and it was still well short of the banks but nevertheless it was a lot higher than I remember seeing it for a long time there – a typical example of some of the things which climate change is affecting.

There is a lot of work to be done. As I say, it affects everybody and every business across Leeds needs to do a lot of work. I am delighted that officers have put in a large amount of work, I am very pleased to see that and very shortly we will be bringing the completed strategy to the Executive Board. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

(iv) Neighbourhoods and Housing

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call upon Councillor Richard Lewis

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor, speaking on page 107 Minute 122 and page 111 Minute 131.

Firstly, on the Area Committee Report. Can I welcome the report that went to Exec Board? I actually think there were a lot of good ideas in there. I particularly welcome the ideas about district partnerships where I think across the Chamber there have been concerns about the role of stakeholders who know more than we as elected members do. I am not sure that it comes to a solution but I think it is clearly flagged up, the problem that we were facing, and that does concern us all.

In terms of the Area Committee's responsibilities, I think there is a huge challenge still there. There are people who will come willing to Area Committees and take part willingly – I am thinking of the police as a good example, being driven by neighbourhood policing and how that drives them to want to communicate. There are departments within this Council – not to say that they are anti working locally but their traditions are not about working locally, they are about working centrally and we have a lot of officers who are very good at high-flown concepts and how you drag those down to communicate - you know who I am talking about – drag those down to talk to people about services at ground level. I think that is a real challenge and could be really beneficial to us all because there are a lot of services that I have to say I do not know enough about because of the way they operate in the Council and there is huge potential there. There are people who pay lip service and I think that is another struggle, the people who will just not want to take part. That is a big challenge, particularly when we have got to slim down the structure there and I am concerned that that slimmed down structure, we are putting a lot of pressure on it to deliver there.

Overall, I very much welcome what the report says. I think all of us find that the Area Committee, to me it is the kind of shining light of post-modernisation. It is the one place where I feel I can get information that I want and I am not facing a huge amount of information that is very difficult for me to extract. It is about Council officers coming and giving it to local members and communicating with us.

The other concern is obviously the one of funding and, I think, in the past you have seen it where funding has come and it has been a bit smoke and mirrors where responsibilities have come – Leslie, again you know what I am talking about. Responsibilities come and the funding comes rather than being a chunk of funding that enables you to do what you want.

I really feel that Area Committees offer us a huge opportunity to do things outside the box and there are things that do not always figure in our agendas which are huge concerns to local people. The biggest concern to me where I have used Area Management over the past couple of years has probably been about our local supermarket and getting that back on its feet. I think we all have different concerns that we can use Area Management and we need to exploit that.

The other Minute is about Council housing. Again, it was another sensible report although I have to say that the publicity was not sensible and I am sorry Richard Brett has gone – I will not quote him again – but I think a report that says, “Target is 1000 a year as city builds its first rental homes for 30 years”, I do not blame you for that but it was not helpful, I do not think, in terms of raising expectations and again this is an issue that ought to give hope to a huge number of Leeds’ residents. Yes, but – and there are a few ‘buts’ and it is about when, how, where. We still have issues where I think this touches again on what Richard Brett was saying where there are not sites in wards that are not Labour wards. Again, why that comment was so important to us was, was what was being said that there should only be Council housing in Labour ward? I do not know, was that what he intended? What was the concern because there are sites in Labour wards and I want to see them build some but I am concerned about the rest of the city.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: We want them in our wards.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Can I just say one thing, that I would like to support...

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: It is misinterpretation, Richard.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: I would like to support Les and the administration in any initiatives they take with the government in terms of the funding for Council housing and for housing finance. It is far too important to be an issue of party wrangling. We all need to take a message down to Westminster to get those things right because when we have got that right, we can achieve far more. At the moment we are in a position where the government has done a huge amount to put us in the position where we are now where there has been huge investment in our Council properties. To go that bit further, we do need more and we need more commitment from the government and on this side we are prepared to assist you in that. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak on Minute 129, page 111. This Minute relates to the deputation from the Queenswood Heights Tenants’ and Residents’ Association.

This was an interesting discussion which raised many interesting issues. A lot of us probably on both sides of the Chamber would tend to agree that for many reasons local letting policies are not the best idea in every case. There are some real issues and problems with Council properties being let to people who are, for one reason or another, unsuitable for many reasons. Some examples were highlighted by the deputation, age perhaps being the most obvious.

I have got some further recent examples. My colleagues in Garforth have told me about a flat which has been let to a young lady in mostly a block of elderly people. This has a number of problems with noise. Can I just stress that I do not want to demonise young people because I do not think in this case it is the fault of the young lady who has been moved in, but it is an insensitive and unhelpful thing nonetheless.

In Mickley Councillor Wakefield has told me of problems they have had with problems families moved into the area. This is an estate with considerable problems and one which the local community and their Councillors have been working hard to sort out. Areas like this are so finely balanced between order and mayhem and need a more sensitive approach.

In my own ward, in Potternewton Heights, the residents have raised concerns about several tenancies within the block. They have given me examples of antisocial behaviour that have taken place recently as a result. The complaints have been investigated by East North East Homes, the police and the ASB units. Visits have been made to the victims and perpetrators of antisocial behaviour and intensive work is actually under way. As a result of some of these problems with the tenancies, residents also reported that drug dealing and drug abuse was also taking place outside the block during the night. The Council's needle picking team have searched the grounds and indeed cleared the area of needles.

There has also been an ongoing dialogue about allocation of properties within the block and in particular the issue of sub-tenancies. The residents have told us that they believe that a covenant existed which restricted allocations of applicants to over 50 years of age to this block of flats. They believe that because of this not being followed some recent tenancies were causing problems in the block.

Les, if you are listening, the point I am trying to make is that you cannot hide and say there is nothing we can do to because it is choice-based lettings. CBL has been in operation for something like five years now. It is about time we had a periodic review and consultation in order that we find a proper answer to this problem. We need to be able to help both those who need a house and those who are already living in an area.

These issues need a sensitive solution and we must be able to exercise some sort of quality control. You are not listening, as ever. If you did you would learn something and do something positive for the people of Leeds, Les.

We must allow the managed situation to work with local communities to make the right decisions for those communities and the people who want housing, bearing in mind that community safety we must take a holistic approach in the view of these matters. We must think about the knock-on effect and the cause of crime and antisocial behaviour.

We must take into account the issues of local communities when these decisions are being made, hence the need for review and consultation on this very compelling issue, I believe. A problem tenant in a multi-occupancy building can put all of the tenants and their visitors, such as friends and relatives, at constant risk. If someone is antisocial it could have a very damaging effect on their quality of life. Such behaviour adversely affects all the residents living within a building or an area. Particularly if you are already infirm you will be in constant fear of crossing paths with such persons.

Les, a decision to have one person in one property can have a massive impact on the area and we need to think about the consequences before we take such a decision. Surely this is better than having to use ASBOs or the police or whatever else once the problems happen. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: There is just time for one more and that is Councillor Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am sure you are all pleased to hear that. I am speaking on page 111, Minute 131, Options for Building Council Houses.

I am really talking about the approach that the Morley Borough Independents have adopted for the site where the Glendale House used to be on Glen Road in

Morley, and to try and contrast that approach, perhaps, to the approach of other groups.

I am a little surprised to hear earlier from Councillor Renshaw that she was unaware that the East Leigh Units were going to be emptied and demolished, because certainly we were aware that her Labour colleagues, Councillor Bradley and Councillor North – remember them...?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Only just.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: ...were discussing the demise of East Leigh back in 2002 and 2003, certainly at the same time they were discussing the demise of Glendale House. Really, we are a little surprised that perhaps they did not let into that particular secret and then she could have adopted a different approach than whingeing at the end of the day when there is very little that you can do about the matter. We would recommend a more constructive approach to try to resolve these particular problems.

We do not have an alternative approach that could be adopted. We could adopt the same approach as the extremist Councillor for Morley South had blamed foreigners for everything and say that the housing problems are all to do with foreigners but, again, we do not think that is particularly constructive.

What we have done with the Glendale House site is to look at ways of making sure that we resolve the problems that are faced by a lot of families in Morley that are looking for affordable homes. The way that we have actually done that is to talk and lobby hard to try and get a balance there; to try and look at properties down there that are for rent, that can be rented by those Morley families that are on the waiting list and also look at giving opportunities to people to look at joint ownership down there. We are certainly looking forward to work starting on that particular site, we are hopeful and we are optimistic that it should be starting later this year.

We also think that it is important to look at providing alternative accommodation for older residents. Many older residents are in Council properties that are too large to them. They want to move to other properties, appropriate properties – not like East Leigh, not like Glendale but like Chartist Court in Morley, like Queen's Court in Morley, all of which have significant waiting lists.

What we need to do is to look at imaginative ways of providing them the opportunity to move into high quality sheltered housing. Certainly we have talked to Les about Corporation Street in Morley. We continue to talk to Strategic Housing to see how we can move that particular project forward. It is a question of adopting a constructive approach. It is a question of talking to housing associations. It is a question of lobbying hard and not pointing the finger of blame, to look for real alternatives because those older residents really are very keen on moving on; that liberates Council houses for local families and that is really what it is about, trying to get the housing movement that we need, certainly in the rented sector, to make sure that we do help to secure decent, high quality homes for older folk, for younger folk for those who are starting with families.

We will conclude by reconfirming the fact that we are the only group, including our extremist member, who are engaged in the sale of Council houses. We reconfirm that particular position. We think there is little point having a massive Council house building programme if ultimately you end up selling those high quality, good quality homes. We want to make sure that there is a mass of homes that are going to be available in the social housing market to make sure that we can provide

homes for those families who are going to find it difficult in the future. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Council Procedure Rule 4 comes into play, so now we go straight to Councillor Andrew Carter to have his final right of reply.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Can I deal with the items that have been brought up on Les's portfolio first? Councillor Rafique, I think that over the years that we have had choice-based lettings, which we did not bring in – I am not sure you actually brought it in, I think it was forced upon us all again. There has been quite a lot of complaints and comments about it. I think, Barry, you have got it at Scrutiny now so perhaps we should wait and let Scrutiny do its work and report back, but I would just encourage Members to write to Scrutiny to make sure their views of what is rolling out at the moment, what their views of that are.

The building of Council houses. I thank Councillor Lewis for his support because it will be important because whatever you might want to think over there, the restraints that are currently still in place from this government will make it very difficult for us to do what we might want to do. What it does not stop us doing is what we have already indicated we are going to do, which is to begin in small sites the building of particularly specialist housing on the basis that hopefully it will free up family houses and help everybody on the Council waiting list.

I am not going to pretend that it is a magic wand because it is not. I am not going to pretend that thousands of houses are going to be built, because we would not be allowed to do it, we have not got the wherewithal to do it. What I am going to say is that this administration decided to move ahead with it. We could have done it a good few number of years ago and nobody did on the scale that we are talking about.

What I would caution against to all Members is looking at bits of land and saying, "Oh, we can use that for Council housing" because we go back to the Council's financial position in totality. At the moment we are looking at housing revenue land. If we use a bit of sense – and I am looking at all ward members here – you can look at housing revenue land and say hang on, we do not actually want to build Council houses there because we have actually got, if you can have enough, enough in that area. We could perhaps have some private housing, low cost home ownership there, maybe sell it on the open market and do a land swap and get a piece of land that is currently in the general programme and swap it. Thereby we could start to get some small Council dwelling schemes in wards that currently are having difficulty in identifying any pieces of land.

When we get jibes occasionally from over there, "You only talk about Labour wards", actually we do not but one of the reasons that it often is Labour wards because you did a damn good job flogging off Council assets over 24 years in places like Calverley and Farsley, Guiseley and Rawdon, Farnley and Wortley, both Morley wards – my goodness, you ain't left a lot of stuff there so what have we got left? We have got the land that you would not sell in wards that you now represent, so do not try and turn that round the other way because it is absolutely true.

I will tell you, I for one want to see some elderly people's Council accommodation build in my ward and I hope that you all do, so there we are, yet again, the opportunity is there. It ain't going to be massive numbers of sites but it is a damn sight more than was done before and this administration is the administration that has decided it is time to do it.

My Lord Mayor, there was a comment earlier on about the Youth Service and what was implied was that areas of deprivation – and I think Burmantofts and Richmond Hill were singled out which is, incidentally, the ward that gets the highest amount of money from the Youth Service and quite rightly so – and Harewood. I will tell you what happened with the Youth Service budget. I actually got very involved with this because a number of my members said that we have virtually no youth service in our ward at all. We had a meeting with the head of the Youth Service, with Rosemary Archer, and I asked a straightforward question. I said, “If you are spending £45,000, £46,000 in a ward on the youth service, what can you provide?” What was the answer? “We cannot even provide a base service.” Right? “We cannot even provide a base service” so you, ladies and gentlemen, for year in, year out, failed to provide even a base youth service in Harewood. More than that, I asked what was the minimum to provide a decent sort of service and I was told £70,000. So in Garforth and Swillington, Councillor Dobson, for year in, year out, you were not providing enough for a base youth service and the same in Guiseley and Rawdon and the same in Wetherby.

This is actually what differentiates all of us, and I dare say from *there* right round *here* from you *there*. Actually we believe that you have to provide a base service in key areas like the youth service in every ward in this city and you do not do it, whatever you might insinuate, by cutting from the ones who need it most like Burmantofts and Harehills. You find additional resources, which is precisely what we did and we said, Councillor Harris and I together said we are going to provide sufficient money to provide at least the base youth service in every ward in this city and we are doing it without taking a penny piece off the wards that need a larger youth service for perfectly obvious reasons.

I will tell you what, I am proud of that and you should be proud of it and you should be ashamed of the fact that for year in, year out, you failed to do it. I point deliberately at you, Peter, because you seem to be expert on almost everything in your group at the moment.

Which brings me to the East Leeds Learning Centre. At the last Council meeting there were some interesting remarks about the pantomime that you lot over there created and I think we were witness to the back end of the pantomime horse talking about the capital programme.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Who are you talking about?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You. At that meeting, the Leader of the Opposition kept an astute distance – never said a dickey bird. Who briefed him to get up and play the front end of the pantomime horse today I do not know but I am going to say this to the pair of you, will you go tomorrow and see Mr Gay and will you ask him whether the £6m-odd for the East Leeds Learning Centre is still in the capital programme? The answer you will get, I can tell you now, is “Yes.”

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Yes, against what?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Hang on. Against what? My Lord Mayor, I am not going to bandy words with him. It is in the capital programme. One of you at least insinuated it was not in the capital programme. It is. It is in the capital programme, it has not been cut, the money is there to spend as the scheme is developed. Councillor Brett has made it quite clear that work is going on in that direction.

Once again the ignorance or deliberate wilful misleading of this Council you display is unbelievable.

Let me just remind Members here as well that it is only a month ago since Councillor Gruen spent another 50 million quid in the capital programme. Well he did not because we all know that he cut out the arena, the road surfacing programme, everything else as well to finance the extra £50m. It simply will not do.

Now, can I close on the half marathon? A mistake was made. We admit a mistake was made. Councillor Brett, Councillor Procter, Councillor J L Carter et al and myself all said, "A mistake has been made. Can this be rectified? Can we in fact get a half marathon in some time during the financial year?" Answer, "Yes". "Right, let us do it." Nobody was blaming officers. Councillor McKenna, I have been here for 30 years. You lot have blamed officers for every mortal thing that ever went wrong in this Council, even when your own Members were up to their necks in the decision-making process. Do not ever say such a stupid thing again. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: On a point of personal explanation, I have been – my words have been misled by Councillor Carter. I wish to quote the....

THE LORD MAYOR: No, the point of personal explanation is words that you said in Council today.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Yes, indeed, today and just now when he said I misled Council wilfully. I would ask Council to look at the extract from the Minutes of the last Executive Board, Minute 110 item E, "That approval be given to the transfer of £6,350,000 from the East Leeds Family Learning Centre Scheme to the capital contingency." Thank you very much.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: It is still there.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Not for that scheme.

THE LORD MAYOR: It has now reached five o'clock, our tea is probably stewing. Can I bring this part of Council to a close and invite – I am sorry, I forgot the vote! You are so keen to get out, aren't you!

Could I have those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) Thank you, that is CARRIED, the Minutes. Thank you, Council.

(The Council adjourned for a short time)

ITEM 10 - WHITE PAPER MOTION
"CONTACT LEEDS" CALL NUMBERS

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Council. We move to page 12 Item 10 White Paper Motion, "Contact Leeds" Call Numbers. I call upon Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I notice the masses are coming back in full of enthusiasm. You are obviously too generous in your tea and perhaps I should suggest...

THE LORD MAYOR: I am not usually accused of being too generous!

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Far too generous. I will start because I imagine the clock is ticking away. There is no doubt that the call centre industry is important to Leeds and I understand there is something like over 100,000 people who work in call centre jobs in Leeds, so in my view it is an everyday life, it is an important service and I do think that the Leeds economy is actually built around call centre jobs.

I would apply that to the analysis of the Leeds Contact Centre - our call centre down by the Headrow. If you consider that about 300 people work there dealing with about a million calls a year, you realise how important that service is to the life of this Council.

Richard, I did say in the White Paper that whatever comments I come out with now are absolutely nothing to do with the workers who work there. I am delighted they have got the awards; I am delighted they have got the accolades. I am actually very supportive of the academy idea. I think you could build on it. Whatever I say in the next five minutes or so is mainly about the political decisions that this administration has taken about the call centre arrangements.

Frankly, I have to say that a lot of people here are saying the Lib Dems are run by the Tories. Actually, the call centre, to be fair to them, is their one big idea. I know Barry Anderson actually supported it a lot during 2004 but I think the call centre is something you can call your project, your big idea and something that I have heard Mark and Councillor Golton - who is not around - actually talk about for a long time.

I could do with just reminding - it is a shame Councillor Golton is not here, I understand he has been buying a car, and that is a very appropriate political metaphor. If I can quote not so much Mark Harris because it is unfair, he has quit and gone so we have to treat Mark as somebody who went to get out at the right time. I would like to quote Councillor Golton - who has just come in - and this is in 2004, Stewart, when you were at your peak! *(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Long after you then!

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Yes, I have gone. My running days are through as well.

“Lord Mayor, we should be making ourselves available when our customers, the people of Leeds, want to get in touch with us. The Lib Dems are serious about services and serious about making those services more accountable to the people who pay for them. A single number 24 hours, seven days a week, handling calls on a multi-departmental basis is central to us achieving this.”

It was even put in the manifesto in 2004.

“Most importantly, we would commit the Council to providing a single number call centre operation 24 hours, seven days a week, to ensure that Council services are delivered in a more responsive, efficient way.”

They went to the elections on that basis and finally, because there is a point to make about this, Councillor Golton in a very long speech - we used to get very long speeches from Councillor Golton and Councillor Harris about this, they used to grind us down until in the end we were waving white flags and that is why we supported it - but he did say in 2004:

“Given the pressure on our citizens’ pockets the Council taxpayers of the city deserve a Council that are serious about delivering value for money for their services.”

There are two points there. One, golden number, 24/7 and deliver that to the people. On that basis we all know that has not been achieved. In fact, what we have is a number of silver numbers dealing with the environment, social services, benefits advice and, indeed, emergencies, amongst others.

I will come back to that because the other point that was made during these promises was that we have value for money. That is very interesting, because following 2004 when we had the big opportunity, they produced an 0845 number and that 0845 number needs to be explained. If you are on BT you get a local rate, so if you are on BT lines you can use an 0845 number and be charged locally. If you are not on BT, if you are on Virgin or if you are on mobile phones, you can pay up to 50p a minute for a call.

Imagine this scenario, that you have an old person who uses a mobile phone and uses an 0845 to contact social services. They are being charged up to 50p a minute. Imagine, as we have had in this city, people phoning emergency services during the floods, an 0845 number being phoned and being charged up to 50p a minute. The shame of this is that there was no need to do that. An 0845 number is a profit-sharing one and the Council made a decision to keep profits from people’s calls, so people in Leeds, people who need services, are now being ripped off by using an 0845 number from this Council.

What makes it even worse than this, what makes this a bigger scandal, is that OFCOM in February 2007 did an investigation into the 08 number well before people talked about the BBC’s use of numbers. OFCOM said, “Hang on, people are losing confidence in 08s, they are not sure whether they are being charged at full rate or whether it is given free” and there was a lot of confusion about this. What OFCOM said, in February 2007, so nearly twelve months ago, they said, “What you need to do for non-profit organisations and public sector organisations, is use an 03 number because (a), it will charge all phones at local rate and, (b), it will be clear to the customer.”

This Council has never moved to it yet and still even last week when we tested the numbers, was still telling people 0845 and still people are paying above premium rates - thousands and thousands and thousands of pounds have been ripped off from the people of Leeds who probably do not even understand about the 0845 number. Here is an opportunity by OFCOM to actually say there has been a lot of mischief with 08 numbers, move simply to an 03 and do it. Some Authorities have done it - Tameside, Wirral, to name a couple.

What the White Paper is trying to say to you is this. Firstly, I do think if the BBC can apologise so can this Council. Mark Harris used to apologise even if he tripped over in this Chamber and I am pretty sure that an apology to the people of Leeds would not go amiss.

The second thing I think they have to do is actually move as quickly as possible to an 03 number to restore public confidence in our call centre because at the moment if they knew about this, I think they would be extremely angry.

The third thing I think the White Paper is asking is that you investigate why there are 25% of calls doing follow-up calls. It means this, that the person who is phoning up the call centre and saying, “My bin has not been emptied”, is not getting

the service and they are having to follow it up again using the 0845 number. I really think this is a real shame on this Council that they are actually exploiting people when they have the opportunity - OFCOM gave you the opportunity - to actually change.

I would say this to you, Richard, in a constructive way - agree with our White Paper. Some of the stuff you have put in your amendment is froth, if you do not mind me saying, and let us restore confidence into this Council for providing a public service to our people. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR A McKENNA: Lord Mayor, it is my great pleasure to second this White Paper. I want to talk about both the breathtaking inability of the Contact Centre to cope in a time of crisis and the fact that next to nobody even knows about it.

I will start by talking briefly on the floods of last year. I have spoken on this subject before but it is really worth mentioning again. The disaster highlighted a complete lack of co-ordination from the Contact Centre, with no-one knowing who to call or what to do. People who were desperate and in need of help were left high and dry but failed in a major test of the system.

The staff there had no idea where to direct people or what advice to give them and this is not the first time there has been flooding in Leeds and, unfortunately, it will not be the last.

Why were the staff at the Contact Centre so unprepared? It is no wonder that so many people ended up calling their local Councillors for assistance after they had encountered nothing but confusion when they tried to call the one place set up to make it easier for people to get help. Was this really the way to treat people who were panicking about the safety of their homes and families?

I know that my colleagues will go on to speak about the cost of these calls so I will move on to my second point. This is the regrettable fact that the existence of the Contact Centre remains a mystery to most people. This is not an empty statement but based on facts. I went out and about in Leeds last week to find out just how many people knew about our shiny, award winning Contact Centre. Would you be surprised that of the people I spoke to 64% had no idea how to contact the Council at all and a staggering but not surprising 84% had not even heard of Contact Leeds?

I say "not surprising" because I tried to find Contact Leeds on the Leeds City Council website and, let me tell you, it is not easy. There is no direct link that I could find when I clicked on the "Contact Us" section and it just was not there either. It is hardly user friendly and, to be quite honest, I am surprised that we get any calls at all.

Anyway, back to my street survey. I went on to ask people if they knew how much it cost to dial an 0845 number. 84% had no idea. In fact quite a few thought it was free. If only it were.

What really upset people is when they found out the Council takes a share of the profit from these calls. Do you know how many of these people thought this was acceptable? I will tell you. Not one. Not one single person I spoke to thought it was right to make money out of people's misery. Some questioned why they should pay to chase the Council up for a job they have not done. "Why should I pay to ask for my bins to be emptied when I already pay my council tax to ensure it is collected?"

they said. Do you know what - I did not have an answer.

I hope you do not mind, Councillor Brett, but I did refer them to you. I told them that you are the person responsible for the service so you will probably have the answers. *(Laughter)*

I am sure that you will call into question these figures but I can assure you they are the results of me going out there and asking the questions. How many of you can stand up and say that you have done the same? Councillor Brett, any time you feel like coming out and taking the challenge, I am ready to go out into the city again. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am not going to pretend that everything is wonderful. 25% of calls in following up. I suggested four years ago nobody would have had those statistics. One of the things that the Contact Centre has given us is a lot more information about where we still need to improve and I am the first to say there are improvements still needed.

It is still our wish to move towards a golden number. Some of the things that we said four years ago are still our aim. You cannot get to the sort of vision that we wanted then in a year or two years and yes, it takes time, we are still trying to improve this service.

Two years ago or more when Councillor Harris and officers were discussing the number to use, at that time the 0845 number seemed to the people concerned the best bet. I will readily concede that there are problems with the 0845 number and I welcome this discussion because it does mean that this is something that is aired and we on our side have to look into this.

Had we chosen 0113 numbers two years ago there would have been some difficulty for residents whose number does not start with 0113 - in Otley, in Wetherby. Had we chosen 0800 numbers there would clearly have been revenue implications and if this is what Labour are suggesting, then clearly they need to suggest to us how you would do that, what efficiencies, what savings you would need.

There has been I understand, when I first heard of this I did think I would need to talk to officers about doing a review and I need not have worried because I found that Councillor Harris had instigated a review for some considerable time, since February 2007 when OFCOM made the announcement about the 03 numbers. It is true that in February of last year the announcement about the 03 numbers was made and I understand at that time Leeds booked a suite of numbers ready for us to move to as soon as we could get the reassurances that we need about what charges would be made for the 03 numbers.

I understand that OFCOM recently has made some considerable progress on that and we are close to being able to take a decision to move to 03 numbers. I am certainly doing all I can to move that decision along as quickly as possible but it would be wrong for us to jump to 03 numbers with all the implications for advertising those numbers until we were quite certain that that was going to give us a better service.

I am aware that when the difficulties with 0845 numbers were highlighted, a number of parallel 0113 numbers were produced and had been advertised. I suspect I will be told they have not been advertised well enough but for every Contact Centre 0845 number there are parallel 0113 numbers, so nobody has to use an 0845 number.

In case anyone is in any doubt about whether Leeds is the only Council that is in this position, I think if you look at certain Government departments you do not need to look very long and hard to find cases where there are all sorts of things going on in a very similar way. The Independent, for example, is claiming that in 2006 the DVLA made £2.5m from their calls on an 0870 number; that the Department of Work and Pensions received quarter of a million for the calls that they have.

This is an issue that has been around for some time. We are doing our best to move as quickly as possible to a system that will be cheaper and better for the people of Leeds but in a climate where the telephone industry is changing rapidly. In the two years since we took the decision far more people now are on packages where they get so many minutes of free calls. Two years ago that was not the case. I want to just restate the situation that we are currently actively reviewing this with a view to moving to 03 numbers as soon as we can. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

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

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Gone are the days when a caller lifted the receiver of the telephone to be greeted by a cheery voice asking "Exchange, which number please?" The world of telephony has developed at an exceptional rate. Routing calls through an intelligent network has now become the norm in dealing with large volume calls delivered to contact centres. The use of non-geographical numbers, 0845, 0870 and such, is standard within the call centre industry. I can bore you all evening if you want on this subject! Not very long ago the idea of dealing with such a large number of calls would have been almost impossible save for at a telephone exchange. As we have previously heard, the percentage of calls answered by Leeds City Council's Contact Leeds call centre has increased dramatically from before the call centre was in existence. In part this is a result of routing the calls via an intelligent network, the 0845 number.

As well as the 0845 number it should be remembered that a raft of other methods of contact are available to members of the public - One Stop Shops, the e-mail, the internet are also available as well as the Leeds number 2340808 which I believe delivers to the call centre by what is known as a conformance number.

I am sure that the staff at Contact Leeds do a sterling job. I think it is a little unfair that the staff are being used in the way that they have today. I know that being in a customer facing role is sometimes extremely difficult and I trust that all Members of Council support the staff at Contact Leeds.

The use of IN routed numbers is the norm in delivering high volume calls and it brings a number of benefits that a geographical number cannot.

In conclusion, Lord Mayor, the use of an 0845 number or any other number routed through an intelligent network brings considerable benefits to the call delivery capabilities of the Contact Leeds Centre and I am sure when the number was chosen that is why it was chosen rather than a geographical number, i.e. 0113. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I cannot say I am surprised at Councillor Wakefield's motion, really. The 0845 was introduced three years ago and it was introduced in good faith as the best option. All right, there were problems that occurred after that mainly due to the telephone companies and the packages that they introduced, as has been explained earlier, but at that time every 0845 number has got an 0113 number to back it up and everything that has gone into

the call centre since that time has got an 0113 number for it. In fact the only things that have not are the ALMO ones which are 0800, so-called free phones, and the Energy Advice Line which is an 0800 for free-phone as well, but if you are on a package that is not free and that is not down to the Council to decide to do that.

As regards the 03 number, as I understand it, it was not until December that the information regarding what the 03 number could and could not do came out and the fact is it is no good introducing another number then finding you are going to have the same problems with packages.

When we are talking about the call centre, take the Academy. We recruited 23 people for training at the Academy - we have still got 22 working for us. Four of them have been promoted - that is a success.

Answer ratios - October, 95%; November, 97%; December 96%. This compares with figures like 26% in 2002 and 40% four years ago. What we are talking about, it is not perfect, it is a journey, a long, long journey that I have got to say I played my part in and that is why I am defending our administration on that. It is a long journey and we are getting there but what we have got, we have got a 21st Century service here, that some of the back-up stuff - and maybe the Council with 25% of the call backs we get - some of the other stuff we do we have improved but certainly the call centre is a 21st Century success. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I have been inundated with complaints from constituents about the Contact Centre for a long time now. The most frustrating complaints for our constituents is they were kept waiting for several minutes on the answer phone, then they are put through to someone and, after you have gone through the problem they will give you another number to ring or put you through to someone else and you start all over again.

An example of that in November, one of our constituents from Potternewton rang the Contact Centre on the 08457 number about an urgent environmental query. She was kept waiting on the answer phone with a pre-recorded message for nearly ten minutes. Once she got through to someone, explained the issue and then she was given another number to ring and asked to start the same thing again.

Members of Council, it is extremely frustrating when you have an urgent matter issue which needs immediate attention and in the process of ringing the Contact Centre you are passed from pillar to post. To add insult to injury, most callers do not even realise about the huge payment costs that are incurred in the process.

Another constituent, who also happens to live in the same block of flats in Potternewton Heights, experienced a very similar problem when she rang the Contact Centre about an urgent query. Eventually she was promised that someone would ring her back and she has heard absolutely nothing. I found out when she explained the issue to me at an open residents' meeting a week later.

On a similar note, an e-mail sent by the Contact Leeds to one of our constituents, Mr H, reads as follows:

"Thank you for your e-mail. I am totally agreed with your conclusions that the area is not..."

- this is an environmental query -

“...being serviced to a satisfactory standard and I would be more than happy to provide answers to your queries if I had access to individual street cleaning reports and rotas.”

It goes on:

“Unfortunately I can only advise on the designated street cleaning schedule, not on any problems arising from the failure of a particular depot to comply with this arrangement. As previously suggested, I suggest you follow our official complaints procedure as the best means of receiving specific replies to the problems you are experiencing as we are then obliged to carry out a full investigation of the circumstances. If we cannot sort out your problems immediately we will contact you in three working days to explain what is happening and who is dealing with your complaint. We will provide a detailed response within 15 working days to let you know the outcome. If it is going to take longer to sort out we will let you know.”

As someone who has actually worked briefly in one of the first Stop Centres at 2, Great George Street when it was first set up back in the mid-1990s under the leadership of Councillor Wakefield, I realise and not for a moment doubt the dedication and hard work of all the staff who work in the Contact Centre. The fact of the matter is that the centre is under-resourced, mismanaged under your leadership and under your leadership despite the fact that we made thousands of pounds indirect profits from the taxpayers of this city through the calls taken through this centre. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: Lord Mayor, listening to Councillor Brett reminded me of the little boy saying his prayers and saying, “God, make me a good boy but not quite yet.”

There is a sense of that in the way in which he warned us that the 0845 numbers may be there for a little longer and a little longer and a little longer. All that time it will be a double disadvantage to the very people who need those services most, because those are the people who have mobile phones, who do not have landlines because they cannot afford the upkeep charges and all of that.

I want to argue and, indeed, support Councillor Wakefield, in saying that these charges are unacceptable, they are counterproductive to the very kind of service that we want to be able to provide to the very people who we want to target.

As a ward Councillor, one of the twelve most socially deprived wards in the city and who has, like all the others I am sure, a weekly caseload of numerous distressing problems, I am aware that many, many people call me on mobiles which they have to top up with a card and if that card is being spent at the kind of rates that we are talking about, 30p plus, it quite clearly is not a way in which they are going to get very far very quickly, given the kinds of experiences that Councillor Rafique mentioned.

I just want to take - and it may be anecdotal but I am sure it is right - one example of, I will call him Mr Smith, a man in my ward in his 60s who is housebound and it was very good citizenship, he wanted to get his green bin emptied. He tried in November and did not get anywhere. Coming up to Christmas he tried again. On both occasions he reported that he had rung the 0845 number and, to use his words and I will quote what he said in his message to us, “When you try to ring Household

Waste, 0845 1240113, you are not able to get a connection and are cut off immediately after answering and you are not able to make a complaint.” That is obviously an unfortunate situation but if it happens, then clearly the quality of the service is not to the standard that we need to be providing. Obviously Mr Smith, as I call him, has become extremely upset and come to the only view that is practical in the circumstances - call the Councillors. We, the Councillors, get the load that should be being carried by that service.

Councillor Brett, you are a Councillor for another inner city ward - I am sure you know what I am talking about. That is something which I am quite prepared to do but I think if we have set up a service, it has got to be fit for purpose, it has got to be a quality standard.

Lord Mayor, the exorbitant charges are serious enough but the quality of the service that we provide - again not criticising the individuals in the call centre but the way in which the response is then managed - does not seem to be suitable and, as I said before, we are talking about this service being most needed and, indeed, not only did they use it once or twice but they have to make multiple calls on 0845 numbers. I think we have to stand up and say enough is enough, support the White Paper resolution that Councillor Wakefield has put forward and let us make sure that it is not jam tomorrow but jam today. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. I hear a lot about this golden number. I thought we had got 32 golden numbers because that is what we could have made with what we are charging people out there. You shake your head. I will tell you and I will prove, on an 0845 number the people that are using them that are not BT customers are charged and charged over the rate. You know it, I know it. The worst thing about it is this Council is taking a profit out of people that are ringing up with complaints.

You all know, your Executive Members and Lead Members, the amount of complaints that come through. It would have been about 30,000 calls coming through regarding the complaints and, after all the service should have been done, there should have been no need for them to ring up.

If I tell you this, that out of every 100 households there are 50 of them that are not on landlines. If you go to how many are on mobiles, there is about 120 out of much more, it is a higher proportion, a much higher proportion of households that are on mobiles. This goes to say that if you are ringing up these call centres - and it can be checked out - and most people are ringing up on mobiles. Why are they ringing up on mobiles? Because in your ward, Richard, and my ward, they have not got landlines in, they all use mobiles. You know very well with the casework you are not ringing an 0113 number, you are ringing a mobile number that is from you. What happens, they get in touch with the Councillor because they cannot make sense out of these call centres because they are being put all over the place. I dare not tell them that Leeds City Council is making a profit out of them as well as that when, at the end of the day when they have charged them for all this, they have still got to come to the Councillor for whatever colour of Councillor is, for the advice so that you can get through on one of these golden numbers that is not an 0845 number and ring up on their behalf.

They take notice of us. Why in Heaven's name have we got such a marvellous thing like a call centre and it is not working right? It should be working right and to not accept the White Paper in my opinion is just churlish because what we are saying is the people out there are paying for a profit for you - I am talking about the Council not doing the work looking after their interests like emptying bins, etc.

We talk about circumstances. Terry Grayshon said some things about packages and all that. If he had been with me on Dunhills when it was flooded and we were up to knees in water and there were women and kids coming across saying, "We need to get in touch with education because our kids cannot get from school", I could not very well say we were having the police, the coppers, the area managers to ring the schools up and everything else. These people that were using their own telephones were charged a tremendous rate but the worst of it was that they were not getting - if they were ringing up and I actually rang Mark up and I said, "Where do I get a load of sand bags because they have run out at one depot?" and after a day they made a special number so we could get sandbags out. If they can do it for that emergency when everyone was in dire need, we can do it here.

Richard, it takes a little bit of thought and courage. If you try and fail we will not attack you. On our White Paper it says what we are doing and what we are not doing. Out of hours - that out of hours calling, does nobody call at night? Don't things go wrong at night? They ring me up at night so they must ring everybody else up at night. The out of hours, it is just ridiculous because you have got to pay that premium then.

It is for the people that you all represent, no political points. It should be a free number because it is us that is making the mistake in not putting Council services right. We cannot get it 100% right all the time but when people ring up and say, "You have not done it right" and are being pulled from pillar to post and they are paying at least 50p a minute, it is not good enough. You know it, you know it, we have had all your leaflets. You know it, everybody else knows it and we should be looking after the people that we represent and this is the way to do it by voting for this White Paper. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: Very much has been made by the colleagues regarding the 0845 number so I would just like to move away from that because I think that there is a more fundamental issue that we need to really look at regarding the call centres. It is actually an issue of plain and simple effectiveness. If we as a Council are serious and committed to providing a really good, positive service for customers wanting to contact us whatever the issue - and I think we all are in general agreement there, there is no real problem, no political point scoring to be made here, I think it is an issue that we can all agree on. It is an extremely important debate but also one where I am sure we can reach some consensus.

I am concerned not to just rubbish the concept of the dedicated silver number or, indeed, any proposed golden number to handle the general queries, but the question I would like to raise is, are we actually ready to make that next step towards a golden number? I think at the moment the answer has got to be "No".

I have a lot of informal conversations and I am sure we all do with members from all political parties and I do not think anybody is really actually satisfied at the moment with the way things are working. Councillor Brett alluded to that in his comments.

The silver numbers that we all seem to share similar frustrations with are all based around experiences related to us by disgruntled constituents. This year an estimated one-and-a-half million people will ring one of these five silver numbers and I believe it is 26% of which these are follow-up calls, so you can say in excess of 375,000 calls per annum are follow-ups. When you look at call centre staffing levels for sickness in 2006/07 it was way above the Council average. Really I am not surprised. Anybody who has actually worked in front line public services, in a call centre, on a counter, will really testify that it is really the toughest job in the world.

Why this high rate of call backs and how can we address it? Without wanting to go too far back into the dim and distant past, my first experience in work was in the Civil Service back in the late 1970s and in those days, before you were allowed near a telephone never mind a member of the public, you had 13 weeks intensive training and it really stood us in good stead. I clearly recall joining Local Government in the late 1980s and it was a huge culture shock when one minute you were shown the canteen and the next minute it was, "Oh by the way, can you cover the counter at dinnertime?" That changed then really dramatically and for the better in the early 1990s. It was part through necessity and part through the simple raising of our collective game. Over that ten year period there were huge increases in training, staff were motivated, they were knowledgeable, many specialised and I think that is the key.

With the call centres what really concerns me and it is a genuine concern and a concern I have actually heard from call centre staff, is that they are kind of expected to be an everyman, to know everything about every aspect of whatever query they are asked to pick up on and personally I find that unsustainable. I suggest that an average 18 days sickness a year for staff who work in call centres, it bears that out.

Councillor Blackburn talked about 90%-plus answer rate and great, phones are being answered and I think we can all appreciate that. There is nothing more frustrating...

COUNCILLOR BLACKBURN: 84.

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: I am agreeing with you, there is nothing more frustrating than being on the end of a phone that is either permanently engaged or ringing endlessly.

On the issue of effectiveness, we are told that a successful rate for the first point of contact calls is 80% - that 80% of these calls are handled straightaway at the first point of contact. How is that measured? What tangible terms are we using to measure that? I believe call centres should be subject to at least a one-in-ten test check, some sort of tangible audit trail so if a guy rings you up and wants his bins emptied, fair enough but how is it followed through from the point of that person ringing up to the bin being emptied? Really for me that is the only measure that is actually worth anything.

We can all share anecdotal stories and evidence about we have all had constituents who have had problems in this area and you hear these stories and you think it is too strong and too compelling and we have heard it too often to remain unaddressed.

There should be an audit trail, for me, when the initial call starts to the actual end result and the percentage of cases will then allow us to form a much more accurate picture. I would feel utterly demoralised as a member of a call centre team if you are getting one of those 26% of call backs and you are getting that flak on the other end of the phone. It is deeply unpleasant. Been there, not in a call centre sense but working in a busy office and really it is not a pleasant place to be.

Moving on, I just wonder about the actual relocation of the call centre and I look around about relocating Councillor functions out of the city. I really think that should be the focus of our thinking. I remember under the Labour administration there were some successful moves - back in 1993 we moved Merrion House up to Hough Top Court with a great deal of success. We also refitted the --- (*Interruption*).

Call centres, yes, are boring but we have got grave and genuine concerns.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Dobson. Before I call the next speaker, could I just ask of Councillor Les Carter, Councillor John Procter, as they are not involved in this White Paper in any way, if they wish to continue their discussion would they do it outside, please? (Applause) Thank you very much.

COUNCILLOR ARMITAGE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. These 0845 numbers were supposed to make it much easier for residents to get through to Council departments. However, the high cost of calling may have quite clearly put a lot of people off who really did need our help. Why is the Council continuing to use the 0845 numbers when there are visible and cheaper options available? Was there any real intention to switch to a single number? Can the administration guarantee to the public that the single number will be an 03 number and when will that happen?

Why can you not see the difficulties, or can you, caused to people on low and fixed incomes who need to call the Council for help and are charged anything from 30p per minute to 50p or even more on some 0845s, for sitting in a queue? That is absolutely outrageous and not good enough.

Why are you charging people who can least afford it when they turn to us for help or ask why you have failed to deliver services they have already paid for? Why are you making a profit out of people who cannot afford to pay? Most people are totally unaware of the costs of the calls. How difficult would it be for you, when somebody is in a queue, to add a recorded message so that they can then decide whether or not to stay on hold or try again later at the prices that you are charging?

This administration should scrap the 0845 numbers. It is prohibitive, it is not effective and it is causing difficulties for low fixed income residents in this city and I ask you to support the motion in Councillor Wakefield's name. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I want to start by thanking Councillor Wakefield for the responsible way in which he introduced this White Paper. I want to thank Councillor Brett for responding in a similar way.

Councillor Brett actually said there are areas where things are not going well, we welcome the debate, welcome further discussion and we know we have to improve. The problem I have with this is when I read the self-congratulatory rubbish that is actually in your amendment. It bears no relevance whatsoever to what you actually said and it does not do you any favours to try and hide behind something that says everything is rosy in the garden, we won this award, we won that award, when actually you know that the key issue is the 0845 number is something that you cannot possibly continue with.

If it is the case that callers are being double charged and the Council is profiteering, then actually the longer you keep them on hold the more money you make. That cannot possibly be right. In the BBC heads rolled about that kind of lack of integrity. It may be different, it may not be different but we are a public sector, bona fide organisation which wants to be best in class, wants to be excellent and we are sagging, actually, we are ripping people off by giving them a telephone number that they are being charged on.

I also share Councillor Wakefield's sentiments about the staff in the Contact Centre. I have actually visited there, I know the work they do and through Scrutiny and elsewhere I think Paddy Clarke leads them effectively and well. The political

barriers and the bureaucracy in the way is something with the central recharges which I think are stymieing the effort.

I want really to make the rest of my comments in terms of the ALMOs, who have been overcharged from Day One through central recharges and this is the point about it being right or being wrong. We took the matter up that they paid some considerable time ago and I hope you have, central recharges almost cost us the first lot of inspections of the ALMOs.

The Contact Centre is a huge issue for us in the forthcoming new inspections and I want to pay tribute also to Graham Hyde and to North East and East Homes who are pioneering work with the Contact Centre and their staff in trying to get more effective and better solutions.

At Aire Valley Homes we have very carefully examined our relationship with the Contact Centre. The problem so far is that there are no meaningful key performance indicators against which we can regularly measure. For example, you think the Leeds City Council target of 92% calls answered sounds high. If 92% can be answered that is almost 100, that is fantastic, isn't it? No it is not, because the public sector average is 94.5% and the all sector average is 94.7%, so we are actually setting a target a bit lower than everybody else's target and we cannot achieve it.

I have here the statistics for the last several months in terms of the performance for Aire Valley Homes. It has improved - it has improved but it is not yet where it ought to be and we do not have---

COUNCILLOR: Pompous.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: There is nothing pompous about that. I am telling you the truth. Our target is 80% of calls answered within 20 seconds. That is what we want. At the moment the contract costs us £474,000 with an assumed annual number of calls of 106,400 and this means each call is worth £4.45. That is an exorbitant figure in terms of number of calls and payment for those calls. There has to be improvement.

The reason we are still with the Contact Centre is, frankly, because the alternatives are very difficult. To come out of the sector here and do an alternative is costly in terms of resources and how we might do it, so we are sticking with the Contact Centre but really all is not happy and you need to further improve.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR RUSSELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am probably one of the few people in here who actually has a professional opinion on this because I am a call centre worker and have been for five years, working for one of the largest UK based insurers.

As you might know, private companies are always striving to make greater efficiencies in their businesses and the industry standard for the answer rate varies between 85% and 95%. From my day-to-day experience most companies fail to achieve this and my own company do rather well - the target is 95% for us and most days we do achieve that.

The Council Contact Centre though, I believe, is to be congratulated on achieving 95% because as Councillor Dobson said, working in a call centre or any kind of customer service position is, in my experience, the most difficult job you can do. You get so much grief. I was on the phone today at work and it was one of those

days unfortunately, and I got called many, many names that I cannot repeat in this Chamber.

For example, December, we reached a target of 96%. In the winter months when the call centre's call rates tend to go through the roof, I think that is just absolutely fantastic. I know you are trying to say you are not criticising the workers but these workers in the call centre will take it personally. I know if someone criticises my call centre for not performing, I would take that as a personal thing. I am sorry but there is no other way to look at that.

In the space of three years they have gone from 38% calls answered to 95% and that is just unbelievable to achieve that, and again staff are to be congratulated. The staff and management at the centre have done a great job in turning things round but from my experience, the call centre I work in at the moment, when I first started working there we were doing poorly, appalling badly on a similar par to how the call centre was doing back a few years ago. I really do believe that the only way to turn it around, to get to where it is now, is that everyone has worked together as a team - that is the staff, the management and those in the administration who have been involved because it takes everyone pulling together as a team to get a result like that.

In closing I believe that the Contact Centre has now reached a target that many private sector call centres would envy and I would wish more would emulate it because it would make my job a lot easier. Thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think I would have more time for the Labour Party's synthetic outrage if they directed some of their alleged anger against what central Government is doing with some of its 0845 numbers, and perhaps a little bit of a trick round what central Government is doing, they are earning loads and loads of money, might be worth investigating.

For example if you are unemployed, you have no money at all, what sort of number do you ring to ring the Job Centre Plus? An 0845 number. If you are on Income Support and you are in a situation where you have had your money stolen, what sort of number do you ring? An 0845 number.

Unlike ours, any of the numbers that you ring in Leeds, if you are not happy you walk into your local Town Hall, a One Stop Shop centre and say to them, "Sort my problem out." If you have a problem with a crisis loan, who deals with it? Bradford. Bradford call centre. Can you get in to see the Bradford call centre? No.

CSA. What number do you ring for the CSA? An 0845 number. Do you know where the call centre is for that particular point? Can anyone guess? Who deals with your CSA? Fife? Maybe. Belfast? Maybe. Plymouth? Maybe. I will tell you one thing, you cannot get into any of those offices and discuss your CSA problems. If you are in a situation where you are a lone parent, you want to try and get a dead-beat dad to pay some of his cash, what can you do about it? Absolutely nothing. Ring Belfast, ring Scotland, ring anybody else. You cannot actually resolve that particular problem yourself directly by going into an office.

Let us deal with if you have an industrial injury. What number do you ring? 0845. Where are they based? Castleford. That is where they are actually based, Castleford. You cannot actually go in and sort out your benefit problem. What you have to do is ring and hold and hold. Has anyone rung the CSA line? The Job Centre Plus Line? I find that difficult to believe in your case, Jim! If you do do it you can be on for 15, you can be on for 20 minutes. Again, another 0845 number. Not

only are they not resolving your problem with maintenance, they are actually charging you well for the privilege and pocketing the difference.

If you have a benefit overpayment, if they are actually reducing your income below the minimum the Government says you should be on to live on, what number do you ring? An 0845 number, and who deals with it? Where is the office that deals with your benefit overpayments? The Shetland Isles! *(Laughter)* That is where it is. If you have got a benefit problem can you get it resolved? You cannot. If you have a housing benefit problem you pop into your local Town Hall to get it sorted out. You can get it sorted out here.

Fundamentally the problem that we have got is that the Labour Party do not seem to be consistent on this particular issue. Get central Government to sort out its own 0845 numbers and not screw those who are trying to get a crisis loan, not screw those who - if that is not an inappropriate phrase - are looking for some deals out of the CSA, but get that side of the problems resolved. The bottom line is with the 0845 number in Leeds, you have an alternative. You have 0113 2348080.

Just to come back to something that Councillor Lyons was on about, if you have a problem, if you have an emergency you ring an 0113 number, you do not bother with the 0845 number. Everybody in this Council should know that. The bottom line is that that if you want to be outraged about 0845 numbers if you want to be outraged about the poorest people in our communities, actually paying lots and lots of money to central Government, do something about that and then come back and talk to us. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, that was a standing ovation before I even spoke! I told you, life is so wonderful here on the back benches I am sorry I did not spend all 24 years here!

I was responsible, it was my portfolio that was responsible for the introduction of the call centre and the decision to use 0845 numbers in the first instance. This was the best information available to us then, that that was the cheapest way for anybody locally to contact us. That was the information available to us and was two-and-a-half, three years ago.

I accept that circumstances may have changed and you have been told in the light of that it is being reviewed, but the assertion by the Labour Group that 0845 numbers were introduced and have been maintained in order to fleece the public is a grotesque distortion. Worse still - and I say this to Peter Gruen and I say this as somebody who in other circumstances has been extremely decent to me and I regard him - always have - as a decent person, but the suggestion that we actually have a policy of keeping people holding on so that we can make profit is absolutely beneath you and I do not know where your brain has gone to start suggesting that sort of thing. Debate in this place has deteriorated to the bloody something level - SH, I will not go any further.

Councillor Rafique, we have the statistics to refute the complete drivel that you came up with. The suggestion that people, anybody who phones or substantial numbers of people, are held for seven or ten minutes - we have the computer records to completely refute that. It may in very, very, very - do not shake your head, come with me and I will show you the statistics and when I do I want you to stand up in the Council and say I showed you the statistics and you withdraw the assertion. If not, do not open your mouth because it is not worth the breath with which you spoke it.

I might be on the back benches but I do not lose my wit and I do not lose my ability.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You never had it. (*interruption*)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Dream on. You are right, Mick, I do sometimes lose my temper, quite right. Not very becoming. Naughty boy.

In the end what really is farcical about this debate is the comparison between what we inherited and what we now have. That is what is so farcical. You may complain about the imperfections and there will always be imperfections. There is always room for improvement, there is always room for review, there is always a need to be open minded and look at change. To have gone from that high 30% average answer rate across all departments, which is what we inherited, to mid-90% is like talking about chalk and cheese and whatever you say there is no getting away from this - in your day there was no chance of getting anything done because you could never speak to anybody. At least now you can speak to somebody.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I was not going to speak today but now because of some of the things that have been said the other side of the Chamber I have been goaded into speaking.

Like Councillor Russell I have experience of contact centres but I have been a project manager rolling out large scale Government telephony call centre equipment and I have to say that some of the things - I would like to take up a couple of points.

One of the points raised by Councillor Gruen where he said that £4 per call was a disgusting charge for a Contact Centre to charge customers. Let me tell you that normally out there a private firm would charge around £20 per call just to take a call, log it, deal with it, close it, so £4 is an utter bargain.

In my experience of contact centres I have paid a great deal of attention during the time that Paddy Clarke came in and transformed the services that were split over several sites into one dedicated Contact Centre with a bang up-to-date IT telephony solution and I have to say I hope everyone who has commented today has actually been for a tour round the Contact Centre because it is absolutely world class what they have got there. It is first class and you can tell this and you can tell the staff are happy working there because there is a low staff turnover rate, they have a fantastic academy programme that takes people - you are always moaning about the most deprived people in society and how badly done to people are. There are people who have been very badly done to in their lives who have been taken on by this programme and they have been given a life.

I went and sat in on a presentation from some people who had had a rotten, rotten time and they had been given an opportunity and they had taken it and they were completely dedicated to it. It was fantastic to see and I am delighted that they got the award for that.

On other matters, 97% of calls answered in November. As I say, from my experience of contact centres that is a superb rate because what you will find with that as well is that some people will ring for 20 seconds, which is probably about seven rings on the phone, and then they will give up and then they will ring back again. There you go, that is one of the calls that has supposedly failed.

That is statistics for you. If you are going to take into account, 97% is about as good as you can ever get from a contact centre when you take into account peaks and troughs. If you have a street where all the street lights go out one evening...

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: What about the profits you are making out of people ringing?

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: What about the profits we are making out of people? Let me just stray on to that. We are going on about how it should be an 0845 number. Does anyone on that side of the Chamber actually own a mobile phone? Have you ever used one? Have you ever rung an 0800 number and the message will immediately tell you you are going to be charged at standard network rates for this call, so this absolutely nonsense that if you gave out an 0800 number it would be free to people to call in on mobile phones - they would be charged the same rate. Look at your facts before you get started. *(Applause)*

You say next that we should move on to an 03 number. That is fantastic. I think that is something that we should look into. However, it would be good if the product was actually on the market and available with all of the information associated with it so that we can move to it. Why don't we move to another fictional product that might be coming in the future that might be free to Leeds City Council and completely free to everything else? You cannot do it. We have got to appraise these things before you move to them.

I am delighted to see we are looking into it but for goodness' sake, get a grip. *(Applause)*

I would like to finish off by again congratulating Paddy and his entire team and all the dedicated staff working at the Contact Centre. They do not have an easy job, they deal with people who are angry and upset because of all sorts of things that have happened and they deal with them very professionally. I extend my thanks to all of you for your continued hard work and I wish you every success for more quality results like the 97% calls answered rate in future months. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Really, if your criticism is to be taken seriously you have got to compare like with like, Peter. You should be comparing Leeds City Council call rate with other Local Authorities, not with the DWP with its thousands of people sitting on the phone lines and not with commercial companies that have probably outsourced the work to India, so please compare like with like. To bring up the BBC is a nonsense because the people who made those phone calls were volunteering for a vote at higher charging rates. There is no comparison whatsoever with the 0845 number currently in operation in Leeds.

I waited through all the Labour Party contributions so far - and there may be some others later on - for an answer as to how the needy, who got a mention from somewhere, are going to have presumably free calls. I am waiting for someone to suggest 0800. Matthew has demolished it, of course, because people have a choice as to which telephone supplier they use and most people with mobile phones get charged for 0800 numbers.

The only way you can give free calls to the needy that you go on about, is to means test everyone. How on earth are you going to do that? Or are you going to ask people, "How long were you on the phone for? We will send you the money in a postal order." It is a nonsense, it really is.

There is another more relevant case that I think Councillor Rafique was talking about emergencies earlier on. For almost anybody who is calling Council services it is an emergency for them because one number, a local number that people call in greater emergency than most of ours and that is the West Yorkshire

Police 0845 number. Never, ever have I heard any Labour politician criticise the police for having an 0845 number, so we will wait for it in your summing up.

Overall, the implication of your argument is that there should be a free number. Present us with the solution and we will implement it. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I have been listening very carefully to what has been said from over that side of the Chamber and there seems to be two different worlds emerging here - the world that the residents of Kippax and Methley live in and the world that the political boss class, those that rule over us over there, live in.

David Blackburn, who I know is an acknowledged expert on most matters, pointed a series of fingers at us. I think it must be of that of a very small percentage of people he said that do not get through a rather large number of those seem to live in my ward because all I seem to receive when I pick up my phone at home is people complaining saying, "I am ringing you, Councillor, because I cannot get through to the call centre." Maybe they should investigate why people in my ward cannot get through because the rosy picture presented over there just does not exist.

Also, I looked at this White Paper and I looked at your amendment to Councillor Wakefield's very sensible White Paper and it is all full of self-congratulating fluff. I thought I would have a look at it. European Contact Centre of the Year Award 2006. I thought I would have a look at that. How did we win this runner-up? The Council paid £293.75 including VAT to enter this award. I tried to find out how many other entries there were. They would not tell me how many entries there were for this prestigious award which the council paid £293 to enter. Come on, if you wanted to give yourselves an award you could have gone to a trophy shop *(laughter)* and brought yourself a little cup for £50 and saved yourself over £200 there.

What is beginning to really anger me about this debate is the number of people, including Councillor Finnigan, who wanted to go for a wander around the country to talk about everything else but this Council. I am going to talk about decisions made by this Council that affect the people of Leeds. We are here in the Council Chamber at Leeds to talk about Leeds and that is what I am going to talk about.

First of all, 0845 numbers. Councillor Wakefield and many others have talked about the profit that this Council makes. The Council can choose not to make a penny from those numbers and it is a choice that has been made in this Council to make money from it. It has got nothing to do with any other Government, nothing to do with any other organisation. It is a choice that has been made by this administration to rip people off in Leeds. All this talk of "We are looking at it, we will see what we can do, we will look at this, we will look at that", every day you look at it you continue to rip people off. You might think you can quote call centre statistics but may when people like Councillor Pryke lose their seats in May they will reflect on their justification of these disgraceful arrangements for the reason why the people of Leeds have rejected this rip off administration. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. On behalf of the administration I have to say you are doing a pretty good job of doing a rip off of genuine public thought about our call centre because it is exactly what Councillor Finnigan has said, it is purely synthetic.

I have to say in terms of your performance particularly, Councillor Lewis, I think it is disgraceful, absolutely disgraceful that you think that our member, because he actually mentioned success within the council sphere, that we are actually congratulating ourselves. We are congratulating our staff. *(Applause)*

When Councillor Wakefield started at the beginning - and I have to say I was busy because I was wheeling Penny in because she is a bigger priority than listening to a Wakefield speech *(laughter)* - he was rather disparaging when he talked about my speech was over-long, blah, blah, blah, and he talked about how we had gone for this vision of a 24/7 call centre which had a golden number which would aim to have more responsive, more value for money services for the city.

I have to say, if he had been giving that speech a few years back, I could appreciate why you would be a little bit more sceptical because the situation that we had in front of us was a customer services establishment which was disjointed, it was isolated in many cases, different departments did different things, there was not any kind of secure standards that they could all work to and, more importantly, the experience of our taxpayers was that only 38% of their calls were actually being answered first time round, so to actually go for the ambition of a 24/7 golden number orientated call centre, yes, it was pretty big stuff. I will tell you what, administrations with ambition are the ones which stay where they are and those without ambition are the ones that go by the wayside. *(Applause)*

One of the ways to achieve what we have done is that we have done it in stages, so we might not have got to the point where we are aiming for, but that does not mean to say that we are not getting there in the first place, so you do it in stages, you do it department by department because what you do not want to do is see the performance for our taxpayers drop off because you have actually put in a different regime. We had to be very careful that people kept the confidence within the system.

As for the 0845 choice, I have to say at the time, as Councillor Harris has said, it was the best value option that we could have, not just for our own people calling in, because it was a local rate call of course, but more so it was more compatible with the systems that you have to use which are able to handle a high volume of calls efficiently and timely. Of course, the 03 number is coming soon, so this is the next stage in the story of the Leeds Call Centre.

Councillor Wakefield talks about restoring confidence in customer services. As I have already pointed out, I think that is a little bit rich considering the situation we have before we even came in. You have seen that the performance has got better - we had that mentioned by several others - and you have also had the endorsement of several senior members of this Council who are involved within the call centre business. I have to say I myself was also involved in the call centre business. We know that this is an 'A' standard service which this Council and our officers have provided for the people of the city.

I also have to say, with my other hat on as a member of the ALMO - and I will have to declare an interest retrospectively on this one because I was not expecting to talk about this - yes, the auditors for Aire Valley Homes, for instance, did point out that one of the pressures for us achieving what we wanted in terms of Two Star performance, was the customer call rate. We did call in the Leeds Call Contact Centre to discuss the issue and Councillor Gruen is right, as the new Chair of Aire Valley Homes, the performance had increased. The reason why the performance has increased and the reason why Aire Valley Homes has chosen to keep our call centre is because it is good value for money and it is responsive to our needs. The reason why, to a very great degree, that performance has improved, is because the ALMO has learned to work more effectively with our call centre.

For instance, if we do send out our tenants' newsletter with a lot of numbers on the back - some of which I think, I am not quite sure, might be 0845 numbers - it meant that there was a huge volume on the call centre, but unfortunately we had not told the call centre that and that is why we had our auditor visit and they were checking calls at that moment in time and it did not look too good. Thankfully it is a little bit better now. Thank you for bringing that up, Councillor Gruen.

In terms of Councillor Rafique, inundated with complaints on his phones. I had a straw poll of my own and I have talked to people on this side because that is what I have got access to. We do not know what you are talking about.

(Interruption) Just bide your time. *(Applause)* I have not had one complaint about the 0845 number, not one, and neither have any of my colleagues. If you have got such a problem, I give you an offer. You hand over your call records ---

THE LORD MAYOR: The colour has changed and it is not in your favour.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: I do apologise, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Come on, Councillor Wakefield, show us how to do it without the colour changing against you.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. First, let me repeat that have been round the call centre on a number of occasions and all of us, as I said at the outset, applaud the work of all the staff there. It is a very stressful job. I was rather disappointed in Councillor Russell trying to use what I think generally intellectually was a pathetic argument about if we criticise political decisions we criticise the staff. That is completely unfair and illogical.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: It is all pathetic.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Secondly, I am glad Matthew got himself - I am terrified, Matthew, after that contribution to say anything to you. Wasn't he frightening? I saw the floor shaking.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: He was accurate, more than you are.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: The real problem with this is that Councillor Brett has a political problem because the problems, as I said from the outset, lie politically with politicians, not with staff. He has got a problem because on the one hand he is always looking over here for Andrew. Andrew has got fed up of it and gone to the back. *(Laughter)* He starts eyeballing him. On the other hand, he has got his old boss, still the backseat driver, still pulling the strings and he has got to look up there. Of course, by the "We have got jam tomorrow" man, Councillor Golton, who is trying to be the Vince Cable of the Liberal Party and he is not doing very well.

Richard, we were having a sensible discussion but I have to say, all the contributions made, including yours, did not answer the fundamental question which is, if you promised in 2004 to introduce a golden number and 24/7, why have you not? You used the term "We wish..." I wish Father Christmas would buy me a new bike but we know what wishes are.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: You have not been a good boy so he did not. *(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: No, and I will not be either. It is a big difference between wishing and having clear, intelligent plans of how you are going to do it. I have got to say this, you do like a bit of thrashing do you Les, you keep talking about it. You remind me of Harvey Procter - do you remember him? He liked his bum smacked as well. *(Laughter)* Even Councillor Golton did not answer it.

I have got to say Councillor Blackburn and Councillor Grayshon, honestly, I know you are desperate to keep friends, I know you are desperate to keep in.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Not with you! *(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Do you have to be so spineless? Not with me, no. You never said once either of you whether you justify this Council making profit out of 0845. You refused to deal with it. All of you deflected yourselves from that central question, do you agree that this Council should make profit out of people's need to a telephone Contact Centre. That was the question and none of you answered it.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Show me the figures. Produce the figures.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I have to say, Councillor Finnigan, I like your grandstanding but in actual fact you are wrong. You are wrong. The facts are here. All Government departments are now moving to an 03 number.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Now moving. *(Interruption)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I will tell you what, I do not care whether they still use 0845. If it is wrong for this Council it is wrong for any Government department to take a profit. It is as simple as that, but you refused to deal with the Council and 0845 in your desperate attempt to continue to suck up to this lot.

Let me just repeat what I think, what the Labour Party has asked for. The Labour Group is not asking for the world. It actually supports the Contact Centre and supports the work. What it is saying is this, investigate the complaints; secondly, apologise to the people of Leeds for actually ripping them off; thirdly, move to 03 straightaway.

I will tell you simply this, we heard plenty of stuff pre-2000. If you are not prepared to put a fair service to the people of Leeds, then it is time you lot gave up, went back and give it back to the party that will do something and will not rip off the people of Leeds in this way. We will give the money back to them. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Wakefield. Can I call for the vote on the amendment in Richard Brett's name? Those in favour? Those against? Abstentions? I think it is fair to say that is CARRIED.

That becomes the substantive motion so those in favour of the substantive motion? Against? Abstentions? That is CARRIED. Thank you.

ITEM 11 - WHITE PAPER MOTION
DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING SETTLEMENT

THE LORD MAYOR: We move on to Item 11, White Paper, Draft Local Government Funding Settlement. Councillor Brett.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The settlement is still at a draft stage. When we got the announcement before Christmas there were discussions with Hilary Benn, Fabian Hamilton, I talked to Greg Mulholland. All of the MPs that I talked to have been helpful in trying to get first of all a meeting with Government Ministers and then to try and improve the draft settlement.

As Councillor Carter has already said, this is a settlement almost without precedent. Nobody can remember a draft settlement where we are actually getting, we believe, £8m less than we have in this current year. It was therefore no surprise that for the first time in twelve years, because we are not habitual moaners, an all-party delegation on Monday week back went down to London. I am sad to say we did not see the Minister, we saw the Parliamentary Under Secretary and Andrew Carter, myself and Geoff Driver representing the Labour Party had half an hour to put our case and, I have to say at the risk of embarrassing Geoff, that Geoff did a very good job. He was possibly tougher on Parmjit Dhanda MP than either Andrew or I in tackling him about the inadequacies of the settlement. At the end of that meeting we were told that we had made a good case but we have heard relatively little back as a result of that visit.

You have already heard this afternoon that the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund is something of a disaster for us. You can look at this two ways. You can say that we have been so successful with 31 under performing, bottom 3% super output areas that it is actually good news that nine of those bottom poor performing areas have now moved up and they are out of the bottom 3%. In terms of the money that we get to support the poorest folks in Leeds, the most deprived areas in Leeds, the extra money, the fact that we missed out on the Working Neighbourhoods Fund by an absolute whisker, it really was a knife edge as others have said, has made all of us feel that this is most unfair.

As a result of that very, very narrow decision, Leeds is £6m worse off next year. The LABGI business rate incentive scheme was relatively suddenly cancelled. I think we expected that it would not continue at the same rate because I suspect the Treasury found they were paying more than they had anticipated, but there had been no interim arrangements for next year. The scheme returns the following year but on a smaller scale but because that was summarily cancelled, we find ourselves about £10m worse off.

Instead of being, apparently, about £8m better off, which is what the Minister suggested, a 2.8% increase, we find ourselves £8m worse off.

On top of that, we have with Maureen Taylor's department some very effective staff working on debt rescheduling. I am told that in this financial year those staff are likely to save around £10m. Actually over the last couple of years we have saved the Treasury on the Housing Revenue Account, about £7m, so we have done this for the Government. Relatively suddenly in November the rules were changed and it means effectively that we are unable to continue this work.

I had hoped when this White Paper motion was drafted that it would get all-party agreement. I am very sad to say that that appears not to be happening because it does appear to me that the Labour amendment does not actually cause me, in one sense, great difficulty. I would be happy to have it as an addition but not taking out the last part of my motion, which is what I think Keith and the Labour Party are suggesting.

This motion is not directly critical of the Government. We are saying this in sadness, although some of us obviously feel very annoyed about it and I hope still that we can reach all-party agreement on this fundamental issue, because whoever is in charge in this Chamber, whoever is running Leeds, the total amount of funds that we have to run this great city are clearly going to matter to every single one of us and to be £8m worse off next year is such an about change that we cannot but be concerned about our ability to deliver services to the people of Leeds. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I am glad that Councillor Brett mentioned the delegation but I think that we did put a very robust case and I was delighted that, although Keith could not go with us, he sent a very senior member of his group and one who has a great deal of experience, particularly in NRF supported areas.

There are four issues about this settlement that, having come together at once, have caused the problem. I have to say that it seems to me that different parts of the Government have not taken into account any Local Authority that might be hit in four directions at once and that became pretty apparent with the Parliamentary Under Secretary. Indeed, we raised the issue of our ability to repay debt early through the Publics Works Loan Board and he turned to the man he had introduced to us as the man from the financial department or section of his department of Government, he passed this question to him and he said, "I do not really understand this. Can you send it to me in writing?" because, of course, that has been dealt with by the Treasury, not with the Department for Communities and Local Government.

One of our four issues straightaway they had not a clue what we are talking about yet that, because it has been used so successfully by our Finance Department has, over a number of years under our administration and under yours, bailed the Council out because we have been able to so astutely manage our debt and our borrowing and our ability to re-lend at higher rates, we have been able to sustain schemes that would not have had mainline funding otherwise.

The settlement itself. Once again, the average for the core cities is 3.7 and we get 2.8. The average for English Local Authorities is 3.5 and we get 2.8. There is something radically wrong with the way in which they calculate the settlement itself and that has been the case under successive Governments - absolutely under successive Governments - that somehow, Leeds, the deprivation, the fact we have 149,000 people living in super output areas, it does not seem to register and does not seem to get us the support that we ought to have.

Then we come to LABGI. Because Leeds has been so economically successful over a number of years this scheme has been hugely beneficial to us. Now I understand and anyone, any politician should understand, that Governments will revise schemes if they start to cost them too much money but the Treasury again have been very clever. They are in a time of economic difficulty, they want to save money so they announce they are going to revise the scheme but they take a holiday for a year, so once again we are hit. Then, of course, finally, NRF.

You tell me, Councillor J L Carter gave some statistics a little earlier but I will give you a few more. Under the proposed Working Neighbourhoods Funding, the new scheme coming in, under which we get three years of reduced funding going down to zero, we will receive £12.5m. That is in total over three years. Birmingham will receive £114.1m; Liverpool will get £98.6m; Manchester will get £85.9m; Newcastle will get £28.3m; Nottingham will get £35.3m; and Sheffield will get £38.3m. Only Bristol, with £5.1m, is in a worse situation than ourselves.

The Minister said, "Well, of course, you have been successful", as Councillor Brett said, but I pointed out to him that that success is very fragile. It has come about over the last couple of years and next year - I am not claiming that we have done that, it is a fact because that funding has been in place for a number of years the Government funding has been successful and they are pulling it away from us. The point I was making was that you pull this funding away now and these schemes which take a while to build up the success and are now being successful, you pull the money away and next year we are back to square one, but you will not review it for three years, so then we have two years with little or no funding and three years' time where are we? We will probably get a load of money to start all over again.

I tried to point out to the Minister that what this was, was merely a crude mathematical calculation which did not take people into account at all and all these NRF schemes are people based, they are designed to help the people who are in the most deprived areas of the city. Because together then, Pauleen, these schemes have been successful and one or two super output areas have improved, we are now reduced...

THE LORD MAYOR: Andrew, if you would finish.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: It is not fair, we should stick together and remind the Government day after day. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I think we are going to stick together. It has got to five-past seven and I am afraid that is the end of the debate. We move straight to voting on that White Paper. The Whips have not asked for any change so that is where we are at. I am going to ask for the vote.

Those in favour of the White Paper in the name of Richard Brett? *(A vote was taken)* Against? Abstentions? I think it is fair to say, Council, that is CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. *(Applause)*

ITEM 12 - WHITE PAPER MOTION RENEWABLE ENERGY IN NEW DEVELOPMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: The rules now simply allow for each White Paper in turn to be put and then seconded and then voted upon - and any amendments - so can I ask David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: I formally move, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR RUSSELL: I formally second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: The vote - those in favour? *(A vote was taken)* Against? Abstentions? That is again CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

ITEM 13 - WHITE PAPER MOTION NHS YORKSHIRE CANCER CENTRE

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hanley.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Formally move, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LANGDALE: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) I think it is fair to say again that is CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Thank you, Council. I think you have done very well today, very good really. I have only had to admonish the front bench once! Can I wish you all a very safe journey home and see you soon. Thank you.

(The meeting closed at 7.07 p.m.)
